

Penitence and the English Reformation

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ABBREVIATIONS

BL	British Library
CCC	Corpus Christi College, Cambridge
CUL	Cambridge University Library
DCA	Denbighshire County Archives
ECL	Emmanuel College Library, Cambridge
EDC	Ely Diocesan Records
GDR	Gloucester Diocesan Records
JEH	Journal of Ecclesiastical History
ODNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
PRO	Public Record Office
PS	Parker Society
RLM	Rylands Library, Manchester
RSTC	Revised Short-Title Catalogue
TRHS	Transactions of the Royal Historical Society

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INTRODUCTION

Penitence was of considerable importance in sixteenth-century England whether it was thought of as auricular confession and the sacrament of penance, or personal repentance and the penitent seeking “suche ghostly counsaill, advyse, and comfort, that his conscience maye be releved.”¹ Prior to the Edwardian reforms of the mid-sixteenth century, the sacrament provided an opportunity, with the help of a confessor, for self examination using the seven deadly sins or the Ten Commandments, instruction in the basics of the faith, and the challenge to be reconciled with God and neighbours by performing penitential good works. These, and the priest’s absolution, were seen as necessary for salvation. But confession and the performance of penance as good works, priestly absolution, prayers for the dead and purgatory came to be seen by evangelical reformers as contrary to scripture and out of harmony with their key hermeneutic of justification by faith. Nevertheless penitence, expressed in prayers of repentance, mattered deeply to evangelicals too. Some even regarded auricular confession as helpful “if properly used”, and although they condemned the thought of obtaining God’s forgiveness by works of satisfaction as blasphemous, reformers such as Latimer valued restitution as a means of satisfaction to neighbours who had been defrauded or offended. Penitence mattered to everyone in sixteenth-century England whether they were concerned for the souls of deceased relatives thought to be in purgatory (or the future of their own souls), or were anxious that afflictions they were suffering were due to God’s providential judgement on their failure to repent. Grasping how and why attitudes to penitence changed over the course of the century, therefore, is important for a wider understanding of the Reformation in England. Such issues had pastoral, social, political and cultural implications throughout the sixteenth century.

Historians have paid considerable attention to these questions. Writing his three volume history of confession at the end of the nineteenth century, Henry Charles Lea was not, however, concerned about the implications of penitential practice.² His work remains a useful reference book only, for although he was factually thorough Lea was strongly anti-clerical.

¹ *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662*, ed. Brian Cummings, (Oxford 2011), p. 25.

² Henry Charles Lea, *A History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences in the Latin Church*, (New York 1896).

He was fascinated by the operation of the church's penitential system from the early church to his own day but never tried to see how it served people's social and spiritual needs. In the second half of the twentieth century John Bossy and Thomas N Tentler produced important studies on penitence. Bossy saw changes in penitential practice from the late middle ages to the Counter-Reformation as a shift from social relationships to concern with personal guilt.³ In the middle ages, Bossy argues, penitents achieved reconciliation with God by being reconciled with the church. Whereas medieval confessions took place in public or semi-public in church, auricular confession in post-Tridentine Milan was in the privacy of the confessional box.⁴ He attributes this to a change of emphasis from the seven deadly sins to the Ten Commandments, seeing the seven as a system of "community ethics", while the ten are primarily concerned with the individual's relationship with God.⁵ The outcome, he argues, was a decline in what he calls "the moral tradition" or loving your neighbour.⁶ Tentler considered the psychological functions of the penitential system as "discipline (or social control) and consolation (or cure of anxiety)."⁷ He uses the phrase "sacramental confession" rather than "the sacrament of penance", since he is more concerned with the structure and practice of the penitential system than with its theological rationale. The aim of the system, as he understood it, was to make the confessant aware of sin and forgiveness: to make him/her feel guilt and understand how it can be cured. He sees it as "a coherent system of religious belief and practice performing vital social functions."⁸ In the process, however, he finds an unequal power relationship in which the clergy hold the keys and the laity submit. He argues that categories of consolation and discipline continued to be basic to penitential systems in the Reformation and although salvation through faith was liberating there was an increasing emphasis on ecclesiastical discipline.⁹ The seminal works of these two historians have been influential on much subsequent thinking on the subject of penitence. Bossy reminds us that penitential practice always has social (and cultural) implications and challenges us to attempt to see its impact on the average lay person. Tentler's focus on the judicial side of the sacrament of penance raises the question of how church discipline was to

³ John Bossy, "The Social History of Confession in the Age of the Reformation", *TRHS.*, (5th series 1975), p. 21-2.

⁴ John Bossy, "The Counter-Reformation and the People of Catholic Europe", *Past and Present* 47, (1970), p. 63.

⁵ John Bossy, *Christianity in the West 1400-1700*, (Oxford 1985), pp. 35-38.

⁶ John Bossy, *Peace in the Post-Reformation*, (Cambridge 1998), p. 2ff.

⁷ Thomas N Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation*, (Princeton 1977), p. xvi.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Thomas N Tentler, "Postscript", *Penitence in the Age of Reformations*, eds. Katharine Lualdi and Anne T Thayer, (Aldershot 2000), pp. 240-259.

be exercised without the sacrament. The following study has attempted to deal with these issues.

There has been considerable interest in the topic recently as exemplified by two collections of essays on penitence in the European Reformation. *Penitence in the Age of Reformations*¹⁰ provides a summary of more recent work on confession, which suggests interesting avenues for research into the subject in England. The essays consider the development of new forms of penitential practice on both sides of the confessional divide. Jesuits introduced general confession, not as a substitute for the sacrament but as a means of reviewing sins that had already been absolved with a view to breaking sinful habits and patterns.¹¹ They also used penance in their missionary activities, by holding penitential processions and using theatrical methods to “shock penitents into a recognition of the continual threat which sin and evil pose in their daily lives.”¹² Calvinists in France and the Netherlands introduced consistories which demanded explicit and often public expressions of contrition and remorse and applied a range of punishments from private admonition to complete public excommunication.¹³ Lutherans struggled to impose private confession before communion. This was eventually introduced in Nuremberg by order of the city council to give the impression of the sacrament following the city’s acceptance of the Interim. A further collection of essays, edited by Abigail Firey, is critical of the historiography of penitence, especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹⁴ Protestants had focused on the “mythic importance” of the text of the Lateran Council decree of 1215 “Omnis utriusque sexus” but this, it is argued, enjoyed no special historical value for the manuals or how penitents experienced the sacrament. Most of the essays caution the handling of official decrees and documents as normative or definitive and ask about the interests and experiences of penitents themselves. These works (including Bossy and Tentler) focus on a longer time-span and demonstrate the advantage of doing so – allowing us to trace major themes over time and compare and contrast Catholic and Protestant practices. For these reasons this study will take a similar approach.

¹⁰ *Penitence in the Age of Reformations*, eds. Katharine J Lualdi and Anne T Thayer, (Aldershot 2000).

¹¹ Michael Maher, “Confession and Consolation: the Society of Jesus and its promotion of the general confession”, *Penitence in the Age of Reformations*, p. 185.

¹² Jennifer D Selwyn, “‘Schools of Mortification’: theatricality and the role of penitential practice in Jesuits’ popular missions”, *Penitence in the Age of Reformations*, p. 211.

¹³ Raymond A Mentzer, “Sin and Penitence in the French Reformed Community”, *Penitence in the Age of Reformations*, pp. 84f.

¹⁴ *A New History of Penance*, ed. Abigail Firey, (Leiden 2008), p. 2.

The above works give little consideration to penitential practice in England, with nearly all the evidence being drawn from the continent. Yet they raise important questions as to whether attitudes to penitence in the English Reformation promoted change from the social to the individual; whether ministry to penitents focused on pastoral care or church discipline; and whether there were new penitential ministries developed in England over the sixteenth century. These questions remain under-explored for Reformation England. This present work aims to fill that gap with special reference to the changing nature of pastoral ministry to penitents in the sixteenth century. Historians have considered other religious themes across the sixteenth century such as the mass,¹⁵ death and purgatory,¹⁶ images¹⁷ and preaching,¹⁸ but not penitence. Such an important matter is obviously referred to by historians who have other issues they wish to emphasise in general treatments of the English Reformation. A G Dickens gives it little attention.¹⁹ He merely records that certain Lollards rejected auricular confession and priestly absolution; Tyndale believed it did not represent the teaching of the New Testament; and how he sees its standing in the formularies of the 1530s and 40s. Similarly penitence plays only an intermittent part in Christopher Haigh's narrative.²⁰ The church courts made Lollards do public penance; confession was significant in Whitford's educational and devotional programme; in 1538 Henry vetoed a claim that auricular confession was demanded by divine law. Haigh points out that Bonner and Watson stressed the importance of contrition, and that Robert Southwell's rule for Elizabethan recusants involved auricular confession twice weekly when possible. These examples fit in well with his overall effort to point out the strength of opposition to change. But there is little analysis and no reference to the development of evangelical thinking about penitence.

Eamon Duffy focuses fully on the role of the sacrament of penance in the pre-Reformation period but says little about how it was reformed.²¹ The sacrament of penance was, he argues, "an immensely valuable pastoral and educational tool" allowing the priest to assess the parishioners' knowledge of the basic articles of the faith.²² The importance of the confessor's role has also been stressed by Peter Marshall.²³ He asks how important confession was in the

¹⁵ C W Dugmore, *The Mass and the English Reformers*, (London 1958).

¹⁶ Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England*, (Oxford 2002).

¹⁷ Margaret Aston, *England's Iconoclasts. I. Laws against Images*, (Oxford 1988).

¹⁸ Susan Wabuda, *Preaching during the English Reformation*, (Cambridge 2002).

¹⁹ A G Dickens, *The English Reformation*, (London 1964).

²⁰ Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics and Society under the Tudors*, (Oxford 1993).

²¹ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, (London 1992).

²² *Ibid.*, p. 60.

²³ Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation*, (Oxford 1994).

life of the laity and whether their experience of confession caused them to view priests positively or negatively.²⁴ He notes that after auricular confession became optional in 1548 it was “little used” and that while penance could be a focus of unity and social harmony it could also produce social tension.²⁵ Since Marshall’s focus is on the Catholic priesthood there is little consideration of how penitential practice changed over the century or the significance of the changes. Christopher Marsh thinks that the populace did not have a profound attachment to confession, which is why it declined so suddenly, but nevertheless claims that it made a profound impact in terms of propagating moral values.²⁶ Although he argues that one reason for the compliance of English people to religious changes brought about by the Reformation was the continuities that linked them with the past, Marsh does not give any examples from the area of penitential practice. In fact the central importance of penitence in the wider history of the English Reformation is not well reflected in the historiography.

Clare Costley King’oo has recently described an important continuity among the changes in English penitential practice: the penitential psalms.²⁷ Her book is one of several by scholars of English literature who have noted the significance of penitence in the history and literature of sixteenth-century England.²⁸ She shows how these seven psalms, which had been linked with penitence from at least the sixth century,²⁹ were important to Luther as well as Fisher (despite fundamental differences of interpretation), and were to be found in Elizabethan protestant works of devotion as well as in catholic primers. Another writer from that school, Debora Shuger, quotes Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* to show that penitential works of mercy and God’s saving mercy were interwoven in the traditional penitential model.³⁰ She sees continuities in the reformers’ attitudes to penitence, especially in making satisfaction by restitution to those who have been sinned against.³¹

Other writers have focused on the theology of church leaders, though their penitential thought has not been studied in the same depth as areas such as the eucharist and justification.

Richard Rex has shown how John Fisher reinvigorated “the old blood of the scholastics with

²⁴ Ibid., p. 6.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 19-27.

²⁶ Christopher Marsh, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England*, (Basingstoke 1998), p. 79.

²⁷ Clare Costley King’oo, *Misereri Mei: The Penitential Psalms in Late Medieval and Early Modern England*, (Notre Dame 2012).

²⁸ Eg. Ramie Targoff, *The Language of Public Devotion in Early Modern England*, (2001); James Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution*, (2002); Dennis Taylor and David Beauregard eds., *Shakespeare and the Culture of Christianity in Early Modern England*, (2003).

²⁹ Clare Costley King’oo, *Misereri Mei*, p. 4.

³⁰ Debora Shuger, “The Reformation of Penance”, *Huntington Quarterly* vol. 71, No. 4, (2008), p. 561.

³¹ Ibid., p. 570.

the new blood of the humanists.”³² He shows how Fisher used humanist techniques of scripture and patristics to justify scholastic doctrines of contrition, confession and satisfaction as basic to the sacrament of penance. William Tyndale is seen by Ralph Werrell (and his case is backed by Rowan Williams) as “a serious and creative intellect”, and not simply a clone of Luther.³³ For one thing, he understood justification by faith differently. It was the concept of God’s covenant, according to Werrell, that was the basis of his theology. Because of this, Tyndale not only denied that penance was a sacrament in his *Answer* to Sir Thomas More, but also claimed that auricular confession was “the very work of Satan.”³⁴ Diarmaid MacCulloch’s biographical study of Thomas Cranmer notes some significant steps in the archbishop’s thinking about penance. In challenging Hugh Payne in 1536, at the vice-gerential synod in 1537, and in the debate on the six articles in the Canterbury convocation in 1538, Cranmer showed that he rejected the medieval definition of penance: he regarded it as unscriptural and therefore it could not be classed as a sacrament, and so it was not necessary for salvation.³⁵ Ashley Null’s *Thomas Cranmer’s Doctrine of Repentance: Renewing the Power to Love* describes how Cranmer came to reject the sacrament of penance and outlines his theology of repentance. It is, to date, the best and most detailed study of Protestant thinking on repentance in the English context. Although he sees Cranmer as a committed evangelical by 1532 Null shows that his penitential theology developed gradually. He came to define *poenitentia* as contrition (or repentance) plus faith, which gave assurance of God’s promise of mercy. “As the practical, pastoral expression of justification *sola fide*, Cranmer made repentance the focus of his theology and liturgy.”³⁶ Null’s important work focuses closely on Cranmer but does not take into account the wider context of humanist evangelicals (there is no reference to Tyndale or Frith in Null) and the new approach to pastoral ministry first expressed in the Edwardian Injunctions. This survey of current writing shows the need for a more general treatment of penitence over the sixteenth century to supplement these specific works.

³² Richard Rex, *The Theology of John Fisher*, (Cambridge 1991), p. 1.

³³ Ralph S Werrell, *The Theology of William Tyndale*, (Cambridge 2006), p. 5.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

³⁵ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, (London 1996), pp. 143, 278, 246.

³⁶ Ashley Null, *Thomas Cranmer’s Doctrine of Repentance: Renewing the Power to Love*, (Oxford 2000), pp. 85, 223, 246.

This thesis considers the changes in penitential thinking in England across the sixteenth century and their out working in pastoral ministry. In medieval thought private confession to a priest was part of the sacrament of penance. The penitent was required to do good works as an act of penance to compensate for his/her venial sins. This was followed by priestly absolution which offered the penitent the hope of God's forgiveness. Purgatory might be needed if penances were insufficient, but even this assured the penitent that his/her journey was ultimately heavenwards. When annual confession was made obligatory this gave greater opportunities for pastoral (and teaching) ministry, but also gave priests power which was open to misuse. Humanist scholars were aware of this and looked for the reform of abuses. Purgatory, dispensations and the penitential structure they were part of, were closely related to the papacy, so when Henry VIII disconnected the English Church from the papacy the question was raised about whether the penitent could be assured of God's forgiveness. The sacrament of penance came to be replaced as the answer to that question by the promises of God found in the English Bible and emphasised in Cranmer's prayer books. The Marian Church tried to restore the sacrament but its leaders were divided as to whether its purpose was legal discipline or pastoral ministry. The persecution of evangelical reformers led many to conform against their heart beliefs and resulted in their having an 'afflicted conscience'. Elizabethan 'practical divinity' was a concentrated effort to meet the needs of such penitents. As Elizabethan pastors and preachers called people to repentance they were increasingly aware of the loss of private confession which they felt would help them to minister to the needs of the penitent.

Penitence is a complex subject. It is difficult for any historian writing on penitence to draw boundaries, since the subject relates closely to the mass, purgatory, sin and guilt, the dead, and other key areas of sixteenth-century religious thought and practice. It concerns the matter of how a person can know God's forgiveness; the whole area of salvation. Such matters might be examined from psychological, sociological or ecclesiological viewpoints. This thesis, however, focuses on how penitential thinking changed and how that affected ministry to penitents. Pastoral ministry has been the central concern and has helped in decisions as to what to include and what to exclude. Facets focused on, therefore, relate to this theme. They include auricular confession, purgatory, liturgy, preaching, conscience, consolation and discipline. For all its complexities and the fundamental changes in ministry to the penitent in the sixteenth-century English Church there were deep continuities. What priests before the

Reformation spoke of as ‘contrition’ related very closely to what Elizabethan pastors and preachers called ‘repentance’.

In order to understand changes in penitential thought and practice over the sixteenth century, it has been necessary to use a wide variety of sources. They include treatises, devotional works (including primers), and polemics, such as Thomas More’s *Dialogue concerning Heretics*. Other ecclesiastical works cover liturgy and sermons, catechisms and instructional works for clergy, such as Myrc’s *Instructions for Parish Priests*. Important information has been gathered from injunctions, visitation articles and records of convocation. Letters, such as those of Reginald Pole, Stephen Gardiner and John Bradford, help us to see how different individuals thought about and understood matters as varied as penitential theology and pastoral needs. Richard Greenham’s collected sayings and William Perkins’ cases of conscience are important in understanding how practical divinity was exercised by the Elizabethans. The government’s position is gleaned from state papers, statutes and proclamations, whereas to try to gain access to popular opinion metrical psalms (which people of all ages and classes engaged in singing), plays, ballads and other cheap print have been examined.

Despite the challenges of studying the evolution of penitence over the entire sixteenth century, taking the long view offers a new perspective on the Reformation in England. Penitence is vitally important at each stage: from Mirk and the confessors’ manuals, to Fisher and the conservative humanists; from Frith, Fish and Cranmer, to Jewel, Cartwright and Perkins. Its significance is emphasised during the Marian restoration when it was at the heart of Pole’s strategy, and it is notable that Watson wrote more sermons on penance than he did on the mass. The importance of the shift from penance to repentance is seen in the great debates between More and Tyndale, and Jewel and Harding. We are able to trace the development of pastoral theology over the century and its practice in both the administration of the sacrament during the reign of Henry VIII and the practical divinity of Elizabethans such as was exercised by Greenham and Perkins. While the theological concepts around the sacrament of penance were embedded in the culture of the early part of the century, demonstrated in guilds and the embellishing of church buildings as works of satisfaction, at the end of the century we see the internalisation of the concepts of repentance and grace in cheap literature, ballads and plays. Taking the long view enables us to see not only development and change but also to see continuities.

A number of important conclusions emerge from this approach. An examination of penitence on the eve of the Reformation, in the first chapter, reveals the diversity of penitential theology and practice. The system was functioning well and nothing in it made the Reformation inevitable. However the integration of purgatory and indulgences with the penitential system, and its association with pilgrimage, made it vulnerable to political and theological criticism.³⁷ Humanist scholarship created a conscious demand for reform. The second chapter considers the penitential teaching of four leading Humanists and shows how significant the theology and practice of penance was in the English church in the first part of the sixteenth century. Fisher regarded it as the key to personal piety and pastoral care. Erasmus saw areas of abuse that needed correcting. Tyndale opposed it since he felt it prevented people from finding assurance of forgiveness through Christ's satisfactory work on the cross. But Thomas More saw opposition to the sacrament of penance as a threat to the unity of the church and the social order. Erasmus rejected the Vulgate's translation of the New Testament word *metanoia* as *poenitentiam agite*, 'do penance', seeing it as a call to 'repent' (*poeniteat vos*) or 'come to your senses' (*resipiscite*). This was a serious challenge to the system and was used by evangelicals to show the need for reform.

Focus on penitential issues during the Henrician reforms, in chapter three, shows Henry as more radical in this area than is often supposed. Evidence is given to suggest that Cranmer believed the king to be open to persuasion, and that, by the end of the reign, a number of the changes to the penitential system that evangelical preachers had been calling for were officially allowed. The rejection of the sacrament of penance and the abandonment of compulsory annual auricular confession during the reign of Edward VI made a profound change in the life of the church in England, which is considered in chapter four. The role of the priesthood changed from administering the sacraments to preaching, and from pronouncing penances to pastoral care. Many historians and liturgists, in considering the 1549 Prayer Book, have focused primarily on the eucharist and have viewed the new liturgy as less radical than its 1552 successor. A focus on penitence, however, shows that the 1549 Prayer Book was more reformed and less of a compromise on this issue. From the evidence it appears that Martin Bucer and John Bradford had a significant influence on the development of protestant penitential theology and practice both in their lifetimes and for decades to come. The Marian persecution also had a profound influence on protestant penitential development.

³⁷ G W Bernard, "Vitality and Vulnerability in the Late Medieval Church: Pilgrimage on the Eve of the Break with Rome" *The End of the Middle Ages?* ed. J Watts, (Stroud 1998).

Exiles were politicised and some experienced church life in Geneva and Zurich which had clear lines of church discipline. At home many who were protestant at heart conformed to the religious policy of the regime and consequently struggled with their conscience. Ministry to the 'afflicted conscience' and the problem of how to affect church discipline were to become important issues for the Elizabethan church.

Chapter five demonstrates that penance was also a major issue in the restoration of the Catholic Church in Marian England. It is argued that during Mary's reign penance was used in a variety of ways, all absolutely central to the restoration of Catholicism. Cardinal Pole used it in a legalistic way to reconcile individuals and the nation to the Papacy. For others penance was more significant liturgically and pastorally. This suggests tension between church leaders about where their priority lay in their efforts to restore Catholicism. Evidence is presented which also suggests that people did not return to the sacrament of penance as readily as Cardinal Pole had hoped.

Chapter six shows that Elizabethan Protestants did not simply abandon the sacrament of penance but searched for alternatives that would meet their social and religious needs in keeping with their distinctive beliefs concerning sin and salvation, and the nature of the church. For Jewel it was preaching which replaced the sacrament by calling people to repentance, and declaring to them the assurance of God's promise that their sins would be forgiven. This, it turned out, needed to be supplemented by the routine of the liturgy, catechisms, and pastoral counselling. Church discipline, however, remained under the auspices of unreformed church courts and was a cause of conflict and dissatisfaction. It is difficult to know how the average lay person felt about these things, but it is suggested that the experience of the liturgy and preaching, singing metrical psalms, reading religious ballads which often had a penitential slant, and awareness of the processes of the church courts, had an impact on many.

This thesis contains the story of a profoundly significant change which impacted on the man in the pew: a change which concerned his salvation and his place in the church and society. It is the story of painful change and the loss of centuries-old ways of dealing with sin. It is the story of how change was resisted and how eventually the priest pronouncing penances became the minister shepherding his flock and assuring them of God's promises. It is the story of how the church adopted new ways of worship and teaching both of faith and moral

and social values. It is the story of how changes in attitudes to penitence and penitential practices, and in pastoral ministry to penitents, had an impact on the culture of England.

.

1. PENITENTIAL PRACTICE ON THE EVE OF THE REFORMATION

In considering why and how Protestant reformers in England rejected the sacrament of penance and the consequences of that decision it is necessary first to try to assess what it was that was being rejected and whether the medieval penitential system was being administered efficiently on the eve of the Reformation. How was it experienced by penitents? Is it possible to assess their feelings about it? And were there faults in the system that in any way made it a catalyst to the reforms that took place?

HISTORIOGRAPHY

In his study of the historiography of penance, R Emmot McLoughlin issues a warning that no study of the subject will escape “the gravitational pull of ideology.”¹ He argues that Protestant polemic gave “a mythic importance” to canon 21 of the Fourth Lateran Council, and that Catholics found the shift from theology to history difficult to deal with. This can be seen in writings on the subject in the past century, which have produced some very different interpretations. The father of modern historical analysis of auricular confession and the penitential system of the Latin Church is Charles Henry Lea, who wrote at the end of the nineteenth century.² Many subsequent historians have been indebted to his thorough and comprehensive study of penance across two millennia.³ Lea’s work is dated, however, in that he does not see that the changes in penitential theology and practice had social and ecclesiastical consequences and he reveals something of his own ideological position in his anti-clericalism. Lea considers that on the eve of the Reformation the church’s penitential system was in a state of confusion. He attributes this to a general laxity in the imposition of penance,⁴ and a struggle between regular and secular clergy, with bishops trying to maintain control by increasing the number of reserved cases.⁵

¹ R Emmot McLoughlin, “Truth, Tradition and History: a Historiography of High/Late and early modern Penance”, *A New History of Penance*, ed. Abigail Firey (Leiden 2008), p. 68.

² Henry Charles Lea, *The History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences in the Latin Church* (New York 1896), 3 volumes.

³ Thomas Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation* (Princeton 1977), p. xi: describes him as “an energetic and reliable researcher who seldom made factual mistakes.”

⁴ Tentler agrees showing that the history of penance reveals a tendency to decreasing severity. “The Summa for Confessors as an Instrument of Social Control”, *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance*

Peter Biller argues that modern historians of pre-Reformation penance are writing on two levels.⁶ Pantin, Boyle and Duffy claim that the church should be seen positively in its response to the reforms of 1215 rather than by looking back at later medieval abuses from the viewpoint of the Reformation.⁷ There is, however, an evident ideological edge to Eamon Duffy's contention that "late medieval Catholicism exerted an enormously strong, diverse, and vigorous hold over the imagination and loyalty of the people up to the very moment of Reformation."⁸ This is challenged by a cultural historian as "a postmodern remake of a nineteenth century nostalgic idealisation of the Middle Ages at the expense of the early modern period – the latter always understood as loss where 'Catholic virtues of the sacred ... the ritual, the communal give way to a cascade of cultural destruction'."⁹

According to Biller, Bossy, Ozment, and Tentler "have broader interpretive schemes", "and they are often using medieval confession in order to write history of something else."¹⁰ Bossy is concerned that the focus in the penitential system moves from a concern for community to the individual. He attributes this to the increasing stress in the sacrament of penance on contrition rather than satisfaction, and the move from the Seven Deadly Sins, as the basis of examining a penitent, to the Ten Commandments, which he sees as moving the emphasis from love of neighbour to the individual's personal relationship with God.¹¹ Ozment believes that pre-Reformation confession can be seen as "a veritable tyranny" which, as in the case of Luther, created deep anxiety.¹² This has been challenged by Lawrence G Duggan on the grounds that it presupposes frequent confession, the norm of private confession, and that confessors were harsh and legalistic, for which, he claims there is insufficient evidence.¹³

Religion, eds. Charles Trinkhaus and Heiko Oberman (Leiden 1974), p. 112; Peter Heath shows a readiness to commute penances for monetary payment in the dioceses of Canterbury and London. *The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation* (London 1969), p. 114.

⁵ Lea, 1.450, 2.11, 1.318: In 1518 Charles V tried to simplify confessions, abolishing all reserved cases. This was later reversed by the Council of Trent.

⁶ Peter Biller, *Handling Sin: Confession in the Middle Ages* (York 1998), p. 27.

⁷ W A Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century* (Toronto 1980); L E Boyle, *Pastoral Care, Clerical Education and Canon Law 1200-1400* (London 1981); Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (Yale 1992).

⁸ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 4.

⁹ Dennis Taylor, "Introduction: Shakespeare and the Reformation", *Shakespeare and the Culture of Christianity in Early Modern England*, eds. Dennis Taylor and David Beauregard (New York 2003), 1.14.

¹⁰ Biller, *Handling Sin*, p. 27.

¹¹ John Bossy, *Christianity in the West, 1400-1700* (Oxford 1985); idem, "Satisfaction in Early modern Europe c.1400-1700", *Studies in Church History* 40, eds. K Cooper and J Gregory (2004); idem, "Moral Arithmetic: Seven Sins to Ten Commandments", *Conscience and Casuistry in Modern Europe*, ed. Edmund Leites (Cambridge 1988).

¹² Steven Ozment, *The Reformation in the Cities* (London 1975), pp. 22-32.

¹³ Lawrence G Duggan, "Fear and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation", *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 75 (1984), pp. 153-175.

Thomas N Tentler is concerned with the social and psychological impact of penance. Although the sacrament was intended to offer consolation to the penitent, Tentler claims that it also had functions of discipline and social control. He sees the summae, written as a practical directory for confessors, “as an instrument of social control.”¹⁴ Leonard Boyle, rejecting his arguments, insisted that the summae were written as an aid for confessors,¹⁵ but Tentler refused to give way, pointing to the legal aspect of the penitential system which held penitents accountable and as such was a powerful means of control.¹⁶ Historians have radically different interpretations of the efficacy and direction of the late medieval penitential system and how it was administered. This chapter will test some of these interpretations of the church’s penitential system on the eve of the Reformation.

CHALLENGE TO CONFESSORS

However it is not only the ideology of historians which has led to the production of various descriptions and evaluations of ritual forgiveness in the late medieval church, but the complexity of theology and practice within the church itself resulting from the long refinement and continual adaptations of older historical traditions.¹⁷ The 21st decree of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), *Omnis utriusque sexus*, made annual confession and Easter communion a legal requirement for all in the Latin Church. Diversity of ritual and pastoral practice remained, but there was now unity under the law which had the authority of the Pope and Council.

The 1215 decree declared that the confessor should be “discerning and prudent so that like a practised doctor he can pour wine and oil on the wounds of the injured, diligently enquiring into the circumstances both of the sinner and of the sin, from which to choose intelligently what sort of advice he ought to give him and what sort of remedy to apply among the many available for healing the sick.”¹⁸ In confession “the priest’s role was increasingly a matter of judgement”. Whether the act was sinful? How sinful? What were the circumstances? Is the penitent truly contrite? What would be an appropriate penance?¹⁹ Priests were given authority

¹⁴ Tentler, “The Summa for Confessors as an Instrument of Social Control”, p. 103.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 126.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 136.

¹⁷ Anne T Thayer, *Penitence, Preaching and the Coming of the Reformation* (Aldershot 2002), p. 48; Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation* (Oxford 1994), p. 5.

¹⁸ O D Watkins, *A History of Penance* (London 1920), pp. 748-9.

¹⁹ Alexander Murray, “Counselling in medieval confession”, *Handling Sin*, p. 65.

to undertake this ministry in the sacrament of penance by their ordination. But they also needed pastoral ability, good judgement and legal knowledge which many lacked. It was to meet these needs that Raymond of Penaforte drafted his *Summa de casibus poenitentiae* in 1220. He followed Gratian and Lombard in stressing that contrition was essential to receiving God's forgiveness,²⁰ and that the confessor's role was to help the penitent both to be contrite and make a full confession. Bartholomew of Pisa and Nicolaus de Ausimo followed Thomas Aquinas in stressing absolution as the key element in the sacrament, while Angelus de Clavasio took up the tradition of Scotus, asserting that the power of the keys means that remission is possible even where contrition is inadequate: this was known as attrition, and made the performance of the penance central to the sacrament.²¹ It was in the universities, with their academic method of disputation, that these emphases were developed. There was a direct flow outwards from these academic moral theological debates into works of instruction.²²

University faculties of Law and Theology became autonomous where, according to Joseph Goering, they should have been inter-dependent: "Without theology, the jurist is in danger of treating penance as primarily a judicial exercise, ... without the law, the theologian feels increasingly free to follow whatever interpretations please him and to ignore those that do not, as Peter Lombard warns at the beginning of his *Sentences*."²³ It is the argument of a later chapter of this thesis that the division between a pastoral/theological vision and a legal vision of the sacrament is significant in understanding attempts to restore the Catholic Church in Marian England after the Edwardian Reformation.

As the bishops sought to implement the decree of 1215 they sent simple tracts on confession to the clergy for them to copy and memorise.²⁴ As the decree was written into provincial statutes local practice was stipulated and expounded. The statutes for the diocese of Salisbury issued by Bishop Poore (1217-21) shortly after the Council's decree, were developed by Archbishop Sudbury (1375-81), and expounded by William Lyndwood in his *Provinciale*

²⁰ Joseph Goering, "Penitential Theology and Law in the Schools", *A New History of Penance*, p. 233: "Gratian and Lombard had presented the long and rich tradition of penance primarily in terms of three elements that concern the sinner: contrition, confession and satisfaction."

²¹ Tentler, "The Summa for Confessors ...", pp. 110-111.

²² Biller, *Handling Sin*, p. 12.

²³ Goering, "Penitential Theology", p. 236.

²⁴ Pantin, *The English Church*, p. 194.

(c.1434).²⁵ Archbishop Pecham's legislation was issued in 1281 and accompanied by *Somme le Roi*, "one of the most influential manuals on the vices and virtues in England at the end of the 13th century"²⁶, to help clergy, and in this case also friars, with the spiritual and intellectual demands of being a confessor. Bishops were concerned to help them see the sacrament not only as a pastoral opportunity but also as a basis for teaching the faith. Archbishop John Thoresby wrote *The Lay-Folk's Catechism* to help with this, and instructed John Gaytrick to make an expanded English edition in verse. Most significant in helping priests were manuals. These often drew from summae and were handbooks on ministry, usually having a main section on confession. The first manual produced in England was William of Pagula's *Oculus Sacerdotis*. It deals with all matters which should come within the vision of a priest, and considers pastoral care from three angles: confessional practice, sacramental theology and preaching.²⁷ The first part was written to help confessors examine penitents thoroughly, suggest remedies for their weaknesses, and assign suitable penances. The examination of penitents from many walks of life is based on the articles of faith, the commandments, seven deadly sins, and venial sins. John Myrc, in his *Instruction for Parish Priests*, put most of these contents into English verse. Twelve chapters of the first part of the *Oculus* are on penances to be imposed for certain types of sin in the manner of earlier penitentials.²⁸ John de Burgh summarised and systematised the *Oculus* in his *Pupilla Oculi*, which for many replaced Pagula's work, though Leonard Boyle points out that the *Oculus* was influential in subsequent manuals until the very eve of the Reformation in England.²⁹

By using the seven deadly sins as part of the examination of the penitent, and by considering penitents according to their status, the instruction of the *Oculus* fits in well with Bossy's thesis that medieval confession was concerned with social sins, i.e. sins against neighbours. This is even more so with the *Memorale Presbyterorum*, a manual that came out of Bishop Grandisson's reform circle in 14th century Exeter. The unknown author is a critic of the social evils of his time. He goes into great detail about how to examine people of different occupations and positions in the community, including proctors, bailiffs, knights, servants,

²⁵ Henry A Kelly, "Penitential Theology and Law at the Turn of the Fifteenth Century", *A New History of Penance*, ed. Abigail Firey (Leiden 2008), p. 254; C R Cheney, "William Lyndwood's *Provinciale*", *The Jurist* 21 (1961), p. 172.

²⁶ Jonathan Hughes, "The Administration of Confession in the Diocese of York in the 14th Century", *Studies in Clergy and Ministry in Medieval England*, ed. David Smith (York 1991), p. 88.

²⁷ Boyle, *Pastoral Care*, pp. 83-4.

²⁸ Lea, *A History of Auricular Confession*, 2.103.

²⁹ Boyle, *Pastoral Care*, p. 95 n. 1: "The copy of the *Oculus* in the Dean and Chapter Library, Canterbury (Ms.D.3) belonged, the fly leaf tells us, to Dom. W Ingram, 'penit(tentarius) ecclesiae .. Cant. olim'. A note in pencil on the Ms. tells us that Ingram was penitentiary from 1511-32."

villeins, widows and even children. He is at his fiercest in questioning those with ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Confessors were asked whether they gave penances that were oppressive and whether they discriminated in favour of the rich.³⁰ The author has “a strong sympathy for the underdog, for the poor and weak who are the victims of officials or powerful neighbours.”³¹ He is also critical of friars in the role as confessors.

Omnis utriusque sexus, and other penitential statutes, insisted that the penitent confess to his own parish priest.³² This, of itself, suggests that some preferred not to. Friars were well educated and trained as confessors: “all the summists were Franciscans and Dominicans.”³³ The friars were doubtless very useful where they assisted in large parishes during Lent when most people would want to fulfil their annual obligation. But they also conducted private confessions for some who did not wish to confess to their local parish priest, often the aristocratic and wealthy. Parishioners may have made this choice for a number of reasons: to avoid embarrassment and disapproval in confessing to their parish priest; parish clergy in some cases were not as well educated as their confessants and may not have had the ability to determine their contrition; some failed to keep the seal and “Erasmus alludes to the garrulity of confessors as a matter of common notoriety”³⁴; and in some cases because of the known immorality of the priests. Whatever reason, and Gratian quotes Augustine as saying “just as we should seek out the more experienced doctor for a bodily cure, so, for the same reason, for the cure of souls we should seek the wiser priest”³⁵, the choosing of a confessor by the penitent was a move towards individualism. Pastoral and devotional works relating to penance written early in the fifteenth century had a similar tendency. Walter Hilton, in *The Scale of Perfection* wrote of buried memories, the unconscious in the personality, and the habitual in patterns of thought and will.³⁶ John Morton showed the influence of these mystical writings when he wrote his confession in a copy of Nicholas Love’s *The Mirror of the Lyf of Christ*: “I have not loved God with all my spirit, with all my will, with all my might. I have been more busy about my weak body than pleasing God. I have committed all manner of unkindnesses against God. I have thought little of his agony. I have not had in

³⁰ Michael Haren, “Confession, Social Ethics and Social Discipline in the *Memorale Presbiterorum*”, *Handling Sin*, pp. 129-133.

³¹ Pantin, *The English Church*, pp. 210-11.

³² “All the faithful of either sex, after they have reached the age of discernment, should individually confess their sins in a faithful manner to their own priest at least once a year.” Norman P Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (London 1990), 1. 245.

³³ Tentler, “The Summa for Confessors”, p. 122.

³⁴ Lea, *A History of Auricular Confession*, 1.452.

³⁵ Murray, “Counselling in Medieval Confession”, *Handling Sin*, p. 70.

³⁶ Hughes, “The Administration of Confession”, *Studies in Clergy and Ministry*, p. 139.

mind the goodness of God almighty, all that he has done for me. God who has fed and sustained me and kept me from all manner of sins, bodily and spiritual.”³⁷ His concern was only for his personal relationship with God and has no reference to his responsibility to love his neighbour. Richard Rolle, in his *Judica Me Deus* gave a mystical interpretation of the sacrament claiming that the true penance that was pleasing to God was a genuine personal love of Christ.³⁸ He, and the other writers of penitential devotional works, encouraged more frequent confession than the legal obligation of at least once a year.

Pastoral practice in confession varied according to the priorities of bishops and their officials, and the abilities of their parish priests. The emphasis of Grandisson at Exeter was social reform; Thoresby of York was concerned with teaching the faith; Atwater of Lincoln was flexible – he never imposed full public penance on an offender, making frequent commutations of penance, and when John Davies of Toynton confessed sexual intercourse with his penitents he was simply ordered to exchange benefices.³⁹ Priests needed to understand that some sins were reserved and could only be absolved by bishops or those appointed as penitentiaries to act for them. Penitents were encouraged to see the confessor as representing Christ but in reality “the hearing of confessions was ... a pastoral undertaking which could be performed well or performed badly.”⁴⁰

PENITENTIAL PRACTICE

Summae and manuals were intended to help confessors, but did they read them? How far did they determine practice and influence the priests’ explanation of the sacrament, and to what extent did confessors use the opportunity to teach the faith in their one to one meetings with penitents? It should not be assumed that what is in the manuals is how the sacrament was performed in practice. The devotional writings of the mystics were intended for laity as well as priests but only the educated would benefit from them, and Duffy cautions that “we should not take the devout introspection of a Lady Margaret ... as our model of what late medieval

³⁷ Ibid., p. 156.

³⁸ Jonathan Hughes, *Pastors and Visionaries: Religion and Secular Life in Late Medieval Yorkshire* (Woodbridge 1988), p. 262.

³⁹ Margaret Bowker, *The Secular Clergy in the Diocese of Lincoln* (Cambridge 1968), pp. 21, 35, 120.

⁴⁰ Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation* (Oxford 2002), p. 33.

confession entailed.”⁴¹ So what can we know of what it did entail for the ‘ordinary’ parishioner in England on the eve of the Reformation?

Although the words spoken between penitent and confessor can never be known, apart from the set phrases which mark the beginning and end of the sacrament, their positions, postures and gestures, and the surrounding environment have been recorded in relief carvings on seven sacrament fonts. Ann E Nichols is surely justified in claiming that “because of the importance of gesture in liturgical celebration, the frozen postures of the seven sacrament fonts provide an insight into the pre-Reformation celebration of penance every bit as valid as the theological and pastoral treatises of the same period.”⁴² The fonts (there are 33 in East Anglia that were built 1463-1544) have sculpted reliefs on eight sides. They depict the seven sacraments, and on the eighth side the crucifixion and baptism of Jesus.

In the depictions of the sacrament of penance the priest is generally shown sitting in judgement, sometimes on a bench, in others on a chair, with the confessant kneeling. John Myrc had instructed confessors “teche hym to knele downe on hys kne.”⁴³ Five out of nine panels which show women making confession show them at a kneeling desk or faldstool. These may be what some churchwardens’ accounts refer to as shriving stools.⁴⁴ The confession takes place in an open space, often in front of the rood screen; at Denton it is behind the rood screen with the priest in the corner.⁴⁵ In fourteen panels the priest is seen wearing a hood, and on the Badlington font the heads of a woman and the priest are turned away from each other, though none of the panels show a woman confessant at the side of the priest, which Myrc says is how she should be positioned.⁴⁶ Myrc is very concerned about how the priest should relate to women. He should pull his hood over his eyes to hide his face from the penitent and never give the impression of disapproval, even by coughing or spitting: “Lest heo suppose thou made that fare For whatynge that thou herest thare.”⁴⁷

On four panels the priest holds his hand over the penitent and in seven he lays his hand on the penitent. This may relate to the priest’s blessing or absolution, in which this was a symbol

⁴¹ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 60.

⁴² Ann E Nichols, “The Etiquette of Pre-Reformation Confession in E. Anglia”, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. .XVII (Summer 1986), p. 163.

⁴³ John Myrc, *Instructions for Parish Priests*, ed. Edward Peacock (London 1868), p. 25.

⁴⁴ Nichols, “The Etiquette”, pp. 153-4.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 145, 155.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 158, 150; Myrc, *Instructions*, p. 27.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

of reconciliation with the body of the church community. Thomas Becon was critical of easy forgiveness, fearing lest people “are persuaded, that if the priest layeth his hand once upon their head and say, “Ego absolvo te”, they are quite delivered from their sinful burden.”⁴⁸

Fifteen panels show other penitents waiting to make their confession. This was clearly a public action, even if the words of the actual confession were private to the priest. Duffy agrees with Bossy in seeing this as a sign that, for most parishioners, confession was “a time for practical reassessment, reconciliation with neighbours, and settling of spiritual accounts. It was, moreover, an exercise carried out with queues of fellow-parishioners looming close behind, the mutters of their rosaries or their chatter plainly audible.”⁴⁹ It was this “moral tradition” that Bossy sees as endangered by the focus on contrition in the manuals and the other factors that were emphasising the individual’s relationship with God rather than the well-being of the community.⁵⁰ The panel at Gresham shows the priest with a scroll on his lap, and at Great Witchingham using a book, with two others under his seat. These may have been used to remind him of questions he might ask to help the penitent make a full confession, or to see what might be an appropriate penance. It was important that the penitent would accept and would perform this.⁵¹

Ann E Nichols makes the interesting suggestion that where penance panels have been defaced by iconoclasts, especially where the other panels have not, this may indicate that harsh treatment had been experienced at the hands of the confessor and that the experience had been “an intolerable burden.”⁵² Tyndale certainly saw it as such when he wrote: “How sore a burden, how cruel a hangman, how grievous a torment, yea, and how painful a hell, is this ear-confession unto men’s consciences.”⁵³ This supports Ozment and Tentler, though Duggan insists that “whatever proof is cited from the period after 1520 at the very latest is inadmissible, for the ‘Reformation crisis’ had clearly begun by then and would have stirred up in many a sensitive conscience doubts which did not necessarily exist before 1518.”⁵⁴ Perhaps evidence is to be found beyond the font, in embellishments to the fabric of the church and its furnishings, given by generous benefactors, but with the aim of speeding

⁴⁸ Nichols, “The Etiquette”, p. 148; Thomas Becon, *The Castell of Comfort* (London 1549), sig. Avii.

⁴⁹ Duffy, *Stripping...* p60; Bossy, “The Social History of Confession in the Age of the Reformation”, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series (1975) p. 21.

⁵⁰ Bossy, *Christianity in the West*, p. 48.

⁵¹ Myrc, *Instructions*, p. 50 (lines 1640-44).

⁵² Nichols, “The Etiquette”, p. 146, n. 5.

⁵³ William Tyndale, *Doctrinal Treatises*, ed. Henry Walter (PS Cambridge 1848), p. 245.

⁵⁴ Lawrence G Duggan, “Fear and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation, *Archiv für Reformationgeschichte* 75 (1984), p.155: there is no reference to purgatory in Duggan’s paper.

deceased loved ones, and in turn themselves, through the pains of purgatory. Clive Burgess cannot see such works as “emanating from fear”,⁵⁵ although he admits that to foster contrition and penitential activity the church exploited the threat of damnation or the extension of purgatory.⁵⁶ The author of *The Prick of Conscience* describes Purgatory as a world where disembodied spirits felt the pains of fire, their exile and anxiety about future judgement, insisting that the least pain of Purgatory is greater than the greatest of earthly miseries.⁵⁷ Although Duffy stresses that the pains of Purgatory were of a different kind to those of hell, since ultimately those in Purgatory will achieve purgation of sin and so it is “full of goode hope and of grace”,⁵⁸ he admits that the revelations about the afterlife which circulated among the laity described dreadful physical torment: people “suspended by meat-hooks driven through jaws, tongue, or sexual organs, frozen into ice, boiling in vats of liquid metal or fire.”⁵⁹ Since the manuals encouraged priests to inspire penitents to confess fully by fear of the consequences of sin in the next life, one can easily imagine sensitive souls not having to wait for the stirrings of the Reformation (pace Duggan) before having considerable anxiety and doubt about the state of their souls.

The infrequency of people being brought before the church courts for failing to make confession before Easter communion suggests that most went through the process, just as they fasted in Lent. “In confessing their sins, lay men and women made a substantial investment in the integrity of their parish priest.”⁶⁰ They would need his support when they or members of their family were on their death-beds.⁶¹ For many the priestly absolution would have assured them they were right with the Church and hopefully with God, for another year. But there was always the thought of purgatory and both responsibilities to pray for deceased loved ones and to prepare for their own departure.

⁵⁵ Clive Burgess, “‘A fond thing vainly invented’: an essay on Purgatory and pious motive in late medieval England”, *Parish Church and People*, ed. Susan Wright (London 1988), p. 69.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁵⁷ Hughes “The Administration of Confession”, p. 115; *The Prick of Conscience*, ed. R Morris (Berlin 1863), II. 2,692-2,765.

⁵⁸ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 345 quoting from *The Gast of Gy: A Middle English Prose Tract*, ed. R H Bowers, pp. 23-25.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 339.

⁶⁰ Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood in the English Reformation*, p. 27.

⁶¹ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 16.

PURGATORY AND PENANCE

“There is a case for saying that *the* defining doctrine of late medieval Catholicism was Purgatory.”⁶² Peter Lombard was the first to link purgatory with penance.⁶³ Since every venial sin had to be repented and abandoned before it could be remitted, some would have to be remitted after death by suffering in purgatory. Aquinas had distinguished between guilt, which could only be dealt with by God’s grace, and sin, which needed to be punished (*poena*) to satisfy God’s justice. By virtue of the power of the keys priests could transform the punishment deserved in purgatory to suffering in this life.⁶⁴ Penances had included acts of suffering such as fasting and pilgrimages⁶⁵, but by the eve of the Reformation these had been reduced in many cases to saying a few paternosters or hail Marys, or the giving of alms. Good works might acquire merit and so reduce *poena*. The decrees of Clement VI made the works of Christ and of the saints a treasury of merit which could be bought into by his indulgences.⁶⁶ Sixtus IV’s bull *Salvator noster* (1476) applied indulgences to souls in purgatory.⁶⁷ The belief that the living could assist those in purgatory, by prayer and good deeds, created reciprocity between the living and the dead in which “self-interest and altruism became hopelessly entangled.”⁶⁸ The dying left material resources for the improvement of church buildings and extension of ministry through masses and prayers, and the living committed themselves to maintaining their prayers, penances and other good works on their behalf in perpetuity.⁶⁹

Peter Marshall contends that “the ways in which late medieval Catholicism articulated its relationship with the dead may serve as a kind of synecdoche for that religious system as a whole; one that helps us to understand both its remarkable vitality and tenacity, and also its

⁶² Ibid., p. 8.

⁶³ Jacques le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory* (Chicago 1984), p. 320: “Purgatory is closely related to penance: either penance delivers the soul from Purgatory, or Purgatory completes the penitential process.”

⁶⁴ R Rittgers, “Embracing the ‘True Relic’ of Christ”, *A New History of Penance*, p. 379.

⁶⁵ G W Bernard, “Vitality and Vulnerability in the Late Medieval Church: Pilgrimage on the Eve of the Break with Rome”, *The End of the Middle Ages?*, ed. J Watts (Stroud 1998), pp. 199-233 shows how pilgrimage with its magical and mechanical approaches to salvation was popular yet vulnerable theologically (it was largely based on the intercession of the saints), and politically. It was also identified with the penitential system.

⁶⁶ B J Kidd, *Documents illustrative of the Continental Reformation* (Oxford 1911), pp. 1-4: Clement VI’s bull *Ugenitas* (1343).

⁶⁷ Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford 2002), p. 30: “It is noteworthy that the earliest dateable piece of printing undertaken in England was Sixtus IV’s bull of 1476, which for the first time extended the benefits of indulgences to the souls in purgatory.”

⁶⁸ Burgess, “A fond thing vainly invented” *Parish, Church and People*, p. 67.

⁶⁹ Clive Burgess, *The Pre-Reformation Records of All Saints, Bristol* (Bristol Record Society, 46, 1995), p. 4: The bede-roll preface relates its purpose: “that they shall not be forgotten but be had in remembrance and be prayed for of all this parish that be now and all them that be to come”.

sometimes perplexing brittleness facing the chill winds of religious reform.”⁷⁰ What Clive Burgess calls “the tariff mentality”,⁷¹ meaning the reduction of specified amounts of time from purgatory by the prayer or good works of the living, became too easily identified with monetary payments for masses, trentals, obits, and the like, and was open to Hugh Latimer’s jibe of “purgatory pick-purse”.⁷² Simon Fish protested that “if there were a purgatory, And also if that the pope with his pardons for money may deliver one soule thens; he may deliver him aswel without money; if he may deliver one , he may deliver a thousand: yf he may deliver a thousand, he may deliver them all, and to destroy purgatory.”⁷³ He clearly touched a nerve, as Thomas More and John Rastell responded by publishing defences of purgatory.⁷⁴ John Frith attacked these and John Fisher’s *Confutations of Lutheran Assertions* (1523), in his polemical *A Disputation of Purgatory*. In this he focused on the theology of salvation, claiming that Catholic teaching about purgatory denied the efficacy of Christ’s work on the cross, and by its idea of merit and good works failed to have an adequate understanding of the nature of sin.⁷⁵ Controversies over purgatory were “tied up inextricably with the most fundamental questions of soteriology and authority, while at the same time touching issues of great pastoral sensitivity.”⁷⁶

CONCLUSIONS

Penitential practice involved issues concerning salvation. *Omnis utriusque sexus* was concerned to offer consolation to the penitent while at the same time establishing discipline. Its implementation locally provided pastoral and didactic opportunities. The summae and manuals provided scholarship and practical aid for this ministry. There was variety of penitential practice from diocese to diocese, and from parish to parish, and from the court records it appears that most people in England fulfilled their annual obligation of confession prior to Easter communion. For many it was doubtless a seasonal ritual which they accepted and from which they may have benefitted. Some however felt oppressed by attempts to bring them to contrition and to confess their sins in full. Penances varied from priest to priest with some using the system to their own advantage. By the focus on contrition, as well as the

⁷⁰ Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, p. 7.

⁷¹ Burgess, “A fond thing vainly invented”, p. 66.

⁷² Hugh Latimer, *The Sermons of Hugh Latimer*, ed. G E Corrie (PS. Cambridge 1844), p. 36.

⁷³ Simon Fish, *The Supplicacion for the Beggars*, ed. F J Furnivall (EETS London 1871), p. 10.

⁷⁴ Thomas More, *The Supplication of the Soules*, 1529; John Rastell, *The New Book of Purgatory*, (1530).

⁷⁵ Carl R Truman, *Luther’s Legacy* (Oxford 1994), p. 130.

⁷⁶ Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, p. 47.

devotional writings of the mystics, the individualism that so concerns Bossy was inevitably being promoted. But the pastoral ministry of priests was also concerned with establishing peace within the church community. While the polemic of Tyndale and the damage caused by iconoclasts may have been a reaction to what some felt as the “tyranny” of the confessional, the fellowship of guilds, and the embellishing of church buildings, suggests that this was not the case for everyone. Nevertheless by making confession a legal matter and integrating purgatory with the penitential system, as Tentler argues, auricular confession to a priest did become a powerful instrument of social control. The penitential system and especially its connection with purgatory was vulnerable to political and theological attack.⁷⁷ It cannot, however, be said that any of these things made the Reformation inevitable.

⁷⁷ “The free distribution of Simon Fish’s *Supplication of Beggars* was organised for maximum dramatic impact, the tracts scattered in the streets of London on the day that Parliament opened on 3rd November 1529.” James Davis, “The Christian Brethren and the Dissemination of Heretical Books”, *Studies in Church History* 38 (2002), p. 197.

2. HUMANISTS, PENITENCE AND REFORMATION IN EARLY SIXTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND.

This chapter largely focuses on four great Christian leaders (Fisher, Erasmus, Tyndale and More) prior to the break with Rome, who despite their differences may be regarded as part of the humanist movement. Their concerns show how important penance was in the English church in the early part of the sixteenth century. Each of them showed a practical concern for ministry to penitents.

While the theological and social deficiencies of penitential practice in medieval England cannot be said to have made the Reformation inevitable, neither did the Christian humanist movement. What humanism did do was to undermine “unsatisfactory certainties” and create “a conscious demand for reform.”¹ Nevertheless many of its significant advocates retained a conservative ecclesiology. John Fisher sought to promote a clergy better equipped for their task through his educational reforms at Cambridge,² and a devout and pious laity through his devotional writings, yet he was the prime leader of English polemical attacks on Luther. His theology of penance was important since it became the orthodox Catholic position in England that Cranmer found himself having to argue against in the 1530s.³ Yet, at the same time “much that seems most medieval in Fisher’s work can be paralleled in the devotional literature, both Catholic and Protestant, of Elizabethan and Jacobean England.”⁴ Despite the desire of Erasmus to see the Church reformed, the maintenance of its unity was fundamental to his thinking, which is why initially he did not speak out against Luther, hoping that his challenge might lead the Church to reform itself.⁵ He had considerable influence on many reformers, not least upon Henry VIII.⁶

¹ G R Elton, *Reform and Reformation England 1509-58* (London 1977), p. 16.

² Malcolm Underwood, “John Fisher and the promotion of learning”, *Humanism, Reform and the Reformation*, eds. Brendan Bradshaw and Eamon Duffy (Cambridge 1989), p. 31.

³ Ashley Null, *Thomas Cranmer’s Doctrine of Repentance: Renewing the Power to Love* (Oxford 2000), pp. 157-158, 197-199.

⁴ Eamon Duffy, “The Spirituality of John Fisher”, *Humanism, Reform and the Reformation*, p. 206: Duffy refers to Fisher’s tendency to ‘emotionalise’ piety in his devotional works and sees similar tendencies in the devotional works of Richard Whytford and even in the Book of Common Prayer. He does not say what examples he has in mind from the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras but devotional collections by Henry Bull and John Day in the 1560s fit in this category. Bull’s collection includes prayers by humanist Juan Luis Vives and Day’s collection includes the seven penitential psalms.

⁵ Andrew Pettegree, however, considers that his reluctance to speak out against Luther “probably owes as much to Erasmus’s terror of risking his hard won wealth and social position late in life as to the high-minded commitment to church unity that he proclaimed.” “Humanism and the Reformation in Britain and the

For Luther soteriology trumped ecclesiology, and as a result he felt bound to oppose much, though not everything, in the Church's penitential system. Although English reformers, most of whom had been trained in the school of humanism, did not follow Luther's theology in detail, his stand, and new access to the Bible which they accepted as the word of God, gave them confidence to speak against what they saw as abuses and forms of idolatry promoted by the Church. *Sola fideism* was not only a doctrine they derived from the Pauline epistles via Luther, but also the hermeneutic by which they interpreted the Bible and critiqued the sacrament of penance.

Humanism has attracted considerable interest from historians of early modern England in recent decades, including the work of James McConica, Maria Dowling and Richard Rex.⁷ McConica has shown the importance of patronage and the influence of humanists in the church, the universities and at court, and that their influence in England extended beyond the execution of Sir Thomas More. The grouping of humanists around Thomas Cromwell and the impact of humanism on the Marian bishops will be considered in subsequent chapters. There are specialist writings on the theology and ministry of each of the four humanists under consideration in this chapter. Richard Rex has portrayed Fisher as a model pastor and polemicist for the leaders of the Counter-Reformation.⁸ John Payne has examined Erasmus's sacramental theology and Erica Rummel has made a helpful addition by focusing on his philology.⁹ Ralph Werrell has shown that Tyndale was an original theologian of independent thought and not merely a follower of Luther.¹⁰ This chapter adds to the historiography by drawing all four together and examining their thinking on penitential issues. This enables comparisons to be made as well as examining the roots of their diverse views, and helps in seeking to consider the impact of each of these thinkers' penitential theology on the English Reformation. This comparative approach helps us to analyse what were the main controversial issues, and to consider whether there were agreements. In later chapters it will

Netherlands", *The Education of a Christian Society*, eds. N Scott Amos, Andrew Pettegree and Henk van Nierop (Aldershot 1999), p. 8.

⁶ George Bernard, *The King's Reformation* (Yale 2005), p. 228.

⁷ James McConica, *English Humanists and Reformation Politics under Henry VIII and Edward VI* (Oxford 1965); idem, "Thomas More as Humanist", *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas More*, ed. George M Logan (Cambridge 2011). Maria Dowling, *Humanism in the Age of Henry VIII* (1986). Richard Rex, "Humanism", *The Reformation World*, ed. A Pettegree (New York 2002); idem, "The Role of English Humanists in the Reformation up to 1559", *The Education of a Christian Society: Humanism in Britain and the Netherlands*.

⁸ Richard Rex, *The Theology of John Fisher* (Cambridge 1991); idem, "The Polemical Theologian", in *Humanism, Reform and the Reformation*.

⁹ John B Payne, *Erasmus and his Theology of the Sacraments* (Richmond 1970); Erica Rummel, *Erasmus's Annotations of the New Testament: From Philologist to Theologian* (Toronto 1986).

¹⁰ Ralph Werrell, *The Theology of William Tyndale* (Cambridge 2006).

be seen that some of these agreements, such as the importance of penitential practice for pastoral care and church discipline, continued to be socially and politically significant. Attention has recently been drawn, by the publication of *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas More* (2011), to the controversy between historians about Thomas More's polemical writings. Alistair Fox, Richard Marius and John Guy consider that More left his humanism behind when he engaged in polemical debate with Tyndale,¹¹ while Brendan Bradshaw argues that he was a consistent Erasmian.¹² This chapter will look at penitential issues in his debate with Tyndale and show how More's position differs substantially from the teachings of Erasmus with which he had earlier concurred.

CATHOLIC HUMANISTS

At the beginning of the sixteenth century reform was in the air. In 1500 Wynkyn de Worde published John Fisher's sermons on seven penitential psalms, in which Fisher held church leaders responsible for failing to rebuke the vices of society since "bisshoppes be absent from theyr dioceses and parsons from theyr chyrches."¹³ In his 1512 convocation sermon John Colet outlined the corruptions of the church, especially among the clergy, and called on convocation to see that such matters were reformed.¹⁴ Both showed themselves to be practical reformers. Fisher established two new colleges at Cambridge, and was a conscientious, and resident, Bishop of Rochester. Colet founded St Paul's school, and restored discipline to the cathedral. Both were eloquent preachers and sympathetic to the ideas of Lorenzo Valla, Pico del Mirandola, and Desiderius Erasmus. Both set themselves to learn Greek and Hebrew late on in life and applied the dictum *ad fontes* to seeing the scriptures and the writings of the early church fathers as the main source for their Christian teaching and living.¹⁵ This was Christian humanism; and they, along with their mentors, were

¹¹ Alistair Fox, *Thomas More History and Providence* (Oxford 1982); Richard Marius, *Thomas More: a Biography* (London 1984); John Guy, *Thomas More* (London 2000).

¹² Brendan Bradshaw, "The Controversial Sir Thomas More", *JEH*. vol. 36 no. 4 (October 1985).

¹³ *The English Works of John Fisher*, ed. John E B Mayor (EETS. London 1876), p. 77.

¹⁴ E W Hunt, *Dean Colet and His Theology* (London 1956), pp. 20-62; his text was Romans 12.2, which he translated for publication: "Be ye not conformable to this world, but be ye reformed"; "Dean Colet: From A Sermon before Convocation, 1511", *Humanism, Reform, and Reformation in England*, ed. Arthur J Slavin (London 1969), p.16.

¹⁵ Alister McGrath, "Humanism and the Reformation", *The Reformation*, ed. Stephen P Thompson (San Diego 1999), p. 129: "it was a life-line to those who despaired of the state of the late medieval church. The Apostolic Age, the Golden Age of the church, could once more become a present reality".

part of “the medieval catholic spiritual tradition.”¹⁶ They looked for the reform of abuses; the simplification of doctrine; and a Christocentric piety for laity as well as clergy.¹⁷

Bishop John Fisher

Fisher “wanted to increase traditional piety by scriptural preaching and new learning.”¹⁸ His aims were pastoral and theological. His penitential theology is found in both his pastoral preaching and in his polemics, especially his *Confutatio* against Luther. Although he stressed, along with Scotus, the importance of good works as *meritum de congruo* in order to receive contrition he followed Augustine in maintaining that this was by prevenient grace, so distancing himself from classical Scotism on the issue, and thus avoiding the accusation of pelagianism directed at Scotus.¹⁹

It was “at the exortacion and sterynge” of Lady Margaret Beaufort that he preached on the penitential psalms.²⁰ The psalms are penitential because they show King David seeking God’s mercy on his sinful life, but they also show, according to Fisher, how that mercy was received in an act of penance that David made, even in the very writing of the psalms: “he dyde holesome penaunce makynge this holy psalme wherby he gate forgyvenes and was restored to his soules helth.”²¹ He outlines three ways that God deals with sinners: the eternal pain of hell; pain in purgatory “whiche have an ende, and they be mynstred by his aungelles”; and those who are accepted by God since “by grace in this lyfe (they) hath so punished themselfe by penaunce for theyr offences, that they have made a sufficient recompence for them.”²² He saw penance as comprised of contrition, confession and satisfaction, and claimed that sins are forgiven by contrition, forgotten by confession and done clean away by satisfaction.²³ The contrition that God requires consists in “sorowe and inward repentaunce of the mynde.”²⁴ When Erasmus made the same point, that true contrition

¹⁶ Alister McGrath, *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation* (Oxford 1987), p. 37.

¹⁷ The cult of the Holy Name was promoted by both Fisher and Colet and was “a sign of the revitalised Christocentricism that was the hallmark of evangelical Catholic piety in the decades that preceded the reforms”. Susan Wabuda, *Preaching during the English Reformation* (Cambridge 2000), p. 148.

¹⁸ Duffy, “The Spirituality of John Fisher”, p. 216.

¹⁹ Richard Rex, *The Theology of John Fisher* (Cambridge 1991), p. 189: Rex claims that Fisher never spoke on his own behalf of “attrition” but only when citing the views of others. pp. 39, 125.

²⁰ *The English Works of John Fisher*, p. 1.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

is the one requirement for God to forgive, he was accused of questioning the need for confession.²⁵ Because Fisher stressed that the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice was received in the sacraments he avoided such criticism. He taught that it is by virtue of the sacrament of penance and the precious blood of Christ that the sinner is made clean from sin and justified with the righteousness of Christ.²⁶ Despite that, he insisted that satisfaction must be made "eyther here in this lyfe by temporal payne or ells after this lyfe in purgatory."²⁷ He explained that a work of satisfaction is determined by the confessor and has great virtue if accepted and performed. Then the confessor is able to pronounce the absolution, which sums up the whole purpose of the sacrament, so much so that Fisher even termed it "the sacrament of absolucyon."²⁸

He began his exposition of Psalm 51 by asking "who may ells forgyve synnes but only our blyssed lorde almighty god?"²⁹ This, however, is far from Wyclif's objection to sacramental absolution, as Fisher went on to make the point that it is through the sacrament that God's grace operates. He later stressed this in his sermon (1521) against Luther when "he took pains to show precisely where Luther misconstrued Paul by failing to assign to the sacramental system of the Church the agency of infusing divine grace into human existence."³⁰ He taught that it is by God's grace that we feel sorrow for sin, that we are willing to make confession and that we are able to perform works of satisfaction. Duffy considers that this is the key to Fisher's spirituality. He claims that "since true penitence and due satisfaction were gifts of God, they were a source of joy."³¹ The outcome of the sacrament according to Fisher himself is gladness for the "undoubtefull obteynynge of forgivenesse."³² For all that, Fisher did not have grounds for assurance since he insisted on free will. In his sermon on Psalm 51 he found "grete confidence to obteyne forgiueneess" but also "many grete causes to fere almighty god, yf we remember how many and grete our synnes be, wherewith we dayly offend his goodness."³³ God mixes hope and fear lest we should be "lyfte vp by presumpcyon nor caste downe by dyspayre."³⁴ But this left him no certainty of dying in a state of grace. And so,

²⁵ Erika Rummel, *Erasmus' Annotations on the New Testament: From Philologist to Theologian* (Toronto 1986), p. 154.

²⁶ *The English Works of John Fisher*, p. 127.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

³⁰ William A Clebsch, *England's Earliest Protestants 1520-1535* (Yale 1964), p. 16.

³¹ Duffy, "The Spirituality of John Fisher", *Humanism*, p. 209.

³² *The English Works of John Fisher*, p. 8.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

neither gladness, nor the assurance of being forgiven are evident in his tract, *A Spiritual Consolation*, written for his sister Elizabeth while he was a prisoner in the Tower and shortly before his execution. He told her that his approaching death had caught him unprepared, and that all his good works, even “building of colleges, nor making of sermons, nor giving of almes”, were not able to give him assurance. There is little consolation even in his personal advice to her:

Recounte your self as dead, and thinke that your soules were in pryson of Purgatorie, and that they must abyde till that the Raunsom for them be truly payde, eyther by long sufferance of payne there, or els by suffrages done here in earth by some of your speciall friends.³⁵

It is in his polemical writings that Fisher’s theological position is most clearly seen. On the sacrament of penance he upheld the doctrines of contrition, confession and satisfaction “with a mass of scriptural and patristic argument.”³⁶ He justified indulgences primarily by appealing to the papal power of the keys, and claimed that in the primitive Church “charity had burned so ardently that there had been no pastoral need for indulgences. But, as Christians had become more tepid, the doctrines of indulgences and purgatory had become necessary to obviate despair.”³⁷ He persistently attacked Luther’s doctrine of justification by faith alone, seeing it as dispensing with the need for sacraments.³⁸ He argued that “only in the company of the Catholic Church, entered by making that Church’s faith wholly *fides tua*, that is to say, by assent, was justification found.”³⁹ In article 6 of the *Confutatio* Fisher claimed that hatred of sin came by *auxilium Dei speciale* and that the process of justification begins with this divine grace, and that the penitent could gain justification through persistent sorrow until God infused *gratia gratum faciens*. This was a revision of Scotus’s doctrine of attrition. He defended auricular confession using the Scotist argument that the Early Church would not have imposed it as an obligation if they had not been convinced that either scripture taught it or the apostles had instituted it. Fisher pointed out that in Ephesus penitents came to St Paul and openly confessed their sins (Acts 19.18); the Mosaic regulations insisted that lepers should show themselves to a priest before they could be declared clean; and it was to the

³⁵ Ibid., p. 362; Duffy, “The Spirituality of John Fisher”, p. 212, sees this as “essentially a formal exercise in the tradition of the rhetorical *memento mori* ... despite some passages with a superficially autobiographical ring to them.”

³⁶ Rex, “The Polemical Theologian”, p. 122.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 121.

³⁹ Clebsch, *England’s Earliest Protestants*, p. 30.

apostles that Jesus gave the authority to forgive sins (John 20.23).⁴⁰ He also frequently addressed the issue of faith and good works in relation to justification, as he used the example of Cornelius's prayers and almsgiving as good works by a *prima gratia* before baptism, and his faith and baptism after hearing Peter's message as *secunda gratia* for salvation.⁴¹ He is alleged to have helped with the composition of King Henry's *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum*, which, in commenting on the sacrament of penance, "lamented Luther's magnifying baptism to the detriment of penance, because it exaggerated faith and played down good works."⁴² In his 1521 sermon attacking Luther he placed Luther in an historical line of heretics going back as far as Arius. The Church, he argued, is inspired by the Holy Spirit who brings all members into unity. Since Luther has broken that unity, especially by his breaking with the papacy, he is not inspired by the Holy Spirit.⁴³

Fisher did not repudiate humanist techniques: eloquence and style were important to him, as was his ability to argue with his opponents over the interpretation of Greek and Latin texts. He was a gifted preacher but his use of dogmatic authority against critical method was "fundamentally irreconcilable with humanist ideology."⁴⁴ His use of Augustine to revise Scotus shows him to have been essentially a scholastic. With Gratian he stressed the importance of contrition. As a pastor and sacramentalist he valued absolution as offering the penitent hope. But because the penitent needed to make satisfaction there was always the fear that neither the contrition nor the penance would be enough. So ultimately he offered no assurance. In fact those who claimed assurance he regarded as presumptuous.⁴⁵ Such an accusation was later made of many of the Marian martyrs at their trials. In his polemics the unity of the Church was the touchstone from which he argued. Scripture was important for Fisher, yet where Luther saw it as self-explanatory and accessible, for Fisher it was obscure, needing theologically trained preachers to interpret it. In contrast to Erasmus, Fisher saw the interpretation of scripture as belonging to the Church and not, as Erasmus, to the humanist student of philology.

⁴⁰ John Fisher, *Assertionis Lutheranae Confutatio*, article 8: quoted by Null, *Thomas Cranmer's Doctrine of Repentance*, p. 76.

⁴¹ Ibid., article 36.

⁴² Clebsch, *England's Earliest Protestants*, p. 22.

⁴³ *The English Works of John Fisher*, p. 322.

⁴⁴ Rex, "The Polemical Theologian", p. 126.

⁴⁵ *The English Works of John Fisher*, p. 113; Null, *Thomas Cranmer's Doctrine of Repentance*, p. 223 claims that Cranmer parted with Fisher over the issue of assurance. He preached trust in Christ's merits. "Fisher would have considered such preaching as promoting presumption."

Desiderius Erasmus

The name of Erasmus is almost synonymous with humanism in Northern Europe. His erudition and love of the classical world was matched by his knowledge of scripture and the early church fathers. He corresponded with Colet and Fisher, who both had an influence on his career. The Dutch scholar always acknowledged his intellectual debt to Colet, and it was Fisher who appointed him to a teaching post at Cambridge. A great educationalist, he saw ignorance and corruption in the church as the issues he wanted to overcome. He was very aware of the potential of the printing press and was prodigious in the number and significance of the publications to his credit.

Initially Erasmus saw himself as a philologist and moralist rather than a theologian. Through Colet he came to value theology, but in a practical way. For him theology “has to do with transformation of life rather than a display of knowledge.”⁴⁶ His first attempt at such practical theology was his devotional masterpiece *Enchiridion Militis Christiani* (1501), which is “unsacramental and un-theological and its strength lies in its elevation of the layman’s vocation, seen as the potential source of new life in a Church and society fallen into decay.”⁴⁷ It was a best-seller. His aim was that the reader “be cleane converted from synne and with due repentaunce reconciled to god agayne.”⁴⁸ To help in the practice of Christian living he gave twenty two rules, and four remedies against deadly sins. With reference to auricular confession he wrote: “Thou accusest and utterest thy sinnes to a preest whiche is a man: take hede how thou accusest and utterest them before god. For to accuse them afore hym is to hate them inwardly.”⁴⁹ He did not approve of indulgences and advised “it is more sure to trust unto good dedes, than to trust to the pope’s pardon.”⁵⁰ Satire was a weapon he found useful against abuses of the confessional. Mendicant confessors, he related, “have a complete knowledge of everyone’s secrets ... Of course, they hold it wrong to reveal them, except every now and then and when they are in their cups, and want to amuse themselves with some funny stories ... but obliquely ... without mentioning any names.”⁵¹

It was contemporary confessional practice which mainly concerned Erasmus. In his 1524 treatise, *Exomologesis*, he listed abuses of auricular confession: the tyranny of the priest,

⁴⁶ John B Payne, *Erasmus: His Theology of the Sacraments* (Richmond 1970), p. 8.

⁴⁷ James K McConica, *English Humanists and Reformation Politics under Henry VIII and Edward VI* (Oxford, 1965), p. 23.

⁴⁸ Erasmus, *Enchiridion Militis Christiani*, ed. Anne M O’Donnell (Oxford 1981), p. 183.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 132.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 22.

⁵¹ Desiderius Erasmus, *In Praise of Folly* (Yale 1999), p. 101.

unnecessary dwelling on the types and occasions of sin, confession without contrition, and the betrayal of secrets of the confessional by the priests.⁵² He wrote a practical tract with advice to both penitents and confessors:

Confession, though not instituted by Christ, is useful. Its form has changed since the days of the early Church when it consisted of an act of public humiliation before the congregation. Today it is private. Confession requires genuine contrition. Do not, therefore, run immediately after an offence to confession, but search your heart as to whether your contrition is genuine and make your first confession to God. Do not repeatedly confess the same offence. Once is enough. Be not perpetually dissolved in tears. The confessor can be of great help as a spiritual guide. He should cast down the proud, encourage the despairing, and relieve scrupulants ... young priests, for example, who worry over nocturnal pollutions and whether they have pronounced every syllable correctly in saying the Mass. The confessor must guard himself. He will hear things he would not believe people capable of doing and this may put ideas into his head. His health may be in danger when he confesses lepers and syphilitics. Nothing is more dangerous than to inhale their breaths. He should not allow the penitent to go into too great detail. That leads to desperation, especially in the case of boys, women, and the aged, of whom I have known not a few.⁵³

In 1504 he discovered the manuscript of Valla's notes on the text of the Vulgate in an abbey near Louvain. These were published the following year as *Adnotationes in novum testamentum*.⁵⁴ They confirmed him in his appreciation of philology as the means of critical study of the New Testament.⁵⁵ In note 1 on Matthew 3 of his own *Annotations* (1516) he agreed with Valla that the Vulgate's *poenitentiam agite* was not a satisfactory translation of the Greek *metanoia*. People understand the Vulgate as meaning "to wash away one's sins by some prescribed penalty", whereas the Greek means "to come to one's senses afterwards ... when someone who sinned, finally, after the fact, recognises his error."⁵⁶ In 1516 he used *poeniteat vos* (repent), and in 1519 changed to *resipiscite* (come to your senses), and commented that "the man who comes to his senses is displeased with his former life."⁵⁷ In 1522 he went back to *poenitentiam agite* but added *prioris vitae* (of your former life). He stressed that it was wrong to connect *poenitentiam agite* with satisfaction and that there was no

⁵² Rummel, *Erasmus's Annotations on the New Testament*, p. 152.

⁵³ Roland H Bainton, *Erasmus of Rotterdam* (London 1969), p. 294, translating from *Desiderii Erasmi Roterdami opera omnia* (Leiden 1703-6), V. 145.

⁵⁴ McConica, *Erasmus* (Oxford 1991), pp. 31-32.

⁵⁵ He had already begun work on the Pauline epistles in 1501, considering the text and writing a commentary. This work is no longer extant. Rummel, *Erasmus's Annotations*, p. 13.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 152.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

precedent in classical Latin and quoted Suetonius (1519) and Pliny (1522) to that end.⁵⁸ Both Luther and Tyndale drew the conclusion that *metanoite* means ‘repent’.

Nevertheless, as we have seen, Erasmus believed that confession could be useful. In his major work on confession, *Exmologesis sive modus Confidendi* (1534), translated into English by John Biddell in 1535-6 as *A little Treatise of the Manner and Form of Confession*, he outlined nine possible advantages of confession: it crushes pride; gives a more accurate knowledge of one’s sins; it creates a sense of shame and hope in divine mercy; it strengthens those concerned with minor faults to love more and to fear less; premeditation prior to confession helps to stimulate contrition; the shame of confessing to another person restrains sin; it assists self knowledge; the penitent is helped by the counsel, encouragement, consolation and prayer of the priest; and it is the means of reconciliation to the Church. Thus it prevents hurt to the *res publica Christiana*, and “this also is part of piety, to fulfil all righteousness, to avoid all offence, and, as Paul says, to be pleasing in all things to all men.”⁵⁹ He repeatedly stated that “contrition and confession to God are the first, chief or necessary matters in penance.”⁶⁰ There is no contrition unless confession is willingly (rather than obligatorily) undertaken, where it is the priest who may help to awaken contrition. But not by fear, for hatred of sins from fear of hell is not true contrition. Such a ‘penitent’ would love his sins if there were no consequences. True contrition is a gift of God by grace on the basis of the life and death of Jesus Christ. For Erasmus contrition and love of neighbour were the *sine qua non* of receiving forgiveness. Absolution by the priest is only a confirmation of what God has already done. John B Payne makes the important point that “Erasmus thus criticises the judicial power of the priesthood.”⁶¹ Erasmus understood the priest’s role in confession as essentially pastoral and intercessory and demanding spiritual and moral integrity. He found no basis for sacramental satisfaction in the New Testament and believed that the actions and words of Christ run counter to it.⁶² He saw works of penance as being aimed at the avoidance of purgatory as much as dealing with sins against God. Nevertheless Erasmus kept satisfaction as an element in penance because of the authority of the Church’s tradition and as a remedy against sin.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 153.

⁵⁹ Payne, *Theology of the Sacraments*, pp. 202-204.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 192.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 210.

⁶² Ibid., p. 213.

In 1516 Erasmus looked to the early history of confession and argued that “there was of old some form of confessing a life of evil-doing, but it was public confession, in my opinion, and a general one, and we do not read that it was compulsory.”⁶³ He added in 1519 “the secret, aural form of confession practised now, seems to have originated in consultations with bishops.” Edward Lee, who became Archbishop of York in 1531, claimed that this was a denial of the sacrament of penance and that “if secret confession had no other authority than one based on human decree it could become obsolete by falling into disuse ... if no one confesses his sins to a priest, how can he be absolved? ... To me it appears truer and at the same time safer to declare that this form of confession was instituted by the authority of God.”⁶⁴ Erasmus argued that this view was not supported by scripture and that confession was not a prerequisite for absolution since “if this is true, how is it that sins are forgiven through baptism, even where there is no confession?”⁶⁵ Since Luther and Melancthon went a step further and claimed that baptism is a pledge of the gospel for the forgiveness of sins without the sacrament of penance,⁶⁶ it is no wonder that Albert Pio took it upon himself to investigate Erasmus’s writings for Lutheran tenets.⁶⁷ Erasmus vigorously denied any seminal influence on or by Luther.

After pressure from the Pope, his former friend, Adrian IV, the University of Louvain, and Thomas More, Erasmus eventually wrote an attack on Luther in his *De libero arbitrio* (1524). He defined free will as “the power of the human will whereby man can apply to or turn away from that which leads to eternal salvation.”⁶⁸ He stated that “I prefer the views of the sceptics wherever the inviolable authority of Scripture and the decision of the Church permit”, a position that Luther, in his response, refused to allow him if he wished to identify himself as Christian.⁶⁹ Erasmus claimed that faith is nurtured by love and there can be no love without free will. God cannot judge fairly unless humans are free to do good works and acquire merit: “Why does the Holy Scripture so frequently mention judgement, if merit cannot be weighed at all?”⁷⁰ Luther rejected such good works, God does not need them to bring us to salvation and they ultimately lead to despair, but, for Erasmus, they were essential for the sacrament of penance.

⁶³ Rummel, *Erasmus’s Annotations*, p. 154.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ *Library of Chistian Classics: Melancthon and Bucer*, ed. William Pauck (London 1969), p. 141.

⁶⁷ Rummel, *Erasmus’s Annotations*, p. 126.

⁶⁸ *Discourse on Free Will: Erasmus – Luther*, translated and edited by Ernst E Winter (London 2006), p. 17.

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 89-90.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 70.

He was careful to assert his belief in the sacrament, and that he himself both made and heard confessions. Despite his denunciation of abuses, “in the final analysis his conservatism wins out.”⁷¹ In response to a critical attack on him in the Valladolid Articles (1527) he was so anxious to satisfy his critics and accept the authority of the Church that he appears to have accepted its penitential system lock stock and barrel: “I accept confession as it is now practised with all its conditions, i.e. those pertaining to a suitable priest, to cases reserved for bishops and the pontiff, to the necessity of confessing, to the enumeration of the type, kind, occasion and whatever other conditions there are. I am not denying that it was instituted by Christ. I merely say that it seems to me instituted by the Fathers on a certain occasion.”⁷²

Erasmus’s influence on sixteenth-century England was not confined to or most effective in those who appeared closest to him. He and Thomas More were famous for their friendship. They shared many humanist ideals; they worked together translating Lucian; More wrote to defend Erasmus against his critics, even against Edward Lee who was closely connected to his family; and Erasmus stayed for a six month period in More’s home. Yet Tyndale⁷³ in his reply to the *Dialogue* was right when he claimed that he and not More was following in the steps of Erasmus, since “More was undoubtedly prepared to tolerate a good deal that Erasmus deplored as ‘superstition’.”⁷⁴ He was prepared to advocate the burning of books and even the burning of reformers. Eamon Duffy admits that in defending the banning and destruction of Tyndale’s English Bible “More’s own integrity and consistency were on the line”⁷⁵, though Brendan Bradshaw argues that “More’s opposition to the Reformation lay in his [very] commitment to Erasmian humanism.”⁷⁶ Certainly More was concerned in his penitential theology with the moral consequences of the removal of the sacrament of penance and defended Erasmus on free will. What would be the result if confession and the sacrament of penance were taken away? What would bring a man to repentance? Who would compel him to do good works of satisfaction? How will he amend?⁷⁷ It was not Christian humanism, however, but his conservative ecclesiology which determined his position on the sacrament of penance and that was the motivating factor for his bitter attack on the reformers, since in

⁷¹ Payne, *Theology of the Sacraments*, p. 185.

⁷² Rummel, *Erasmus’s Annotations*, p. 155.

⁷³ See the third section of this chapter for the More/Tyndale debate.

⁷⁴ Eamon Duffy, “‘The comen knowen multitude of crysten men’: ‘A Dialogue concerning Heresies’ and the defence of Christendom”, *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas More*, ed. George M Logan (Cambridge 2011). pp. 201-2.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 206.

⁷⁶ Brendan Bradshaw, “The Controversial Sir Thomas More”, p. 565.

⁷⁷ Thomas More, *A Dialogue Concerning Tyndale*, ed. W E Campbell (London 1927), p. 259.

the *Dialogue* “his principal concern ... is to defend the presence of Christ in the life of the Church as embodied in its devotional and sacramental practice.”⁷⁸

Humanism “did much to prepare the intellectual milieu of Reformation controversy”⁷⁹, not least in the work of Erasmus. The abuses in the penitential practice of the Church to which he drew attention were repeated over and over again by reformers. “As early as 1528 Tunstall was turning up heresy suspects in his diocese who attributed their fall from orthodoxy to reading Erasmus.”⁸⁰ Thomas Topley began his recantation by warning “all christen men” of Erasmus’s writings, claiming that these had weakened his faith.⁸¹ The link between justification and penance, fundamental to medieval penitential theology, was challenged by humanist philologists Valla and Erasmus.⁸² They made it clear that *metanoia* has to do with a change of mind rather than an activity, repentance rather than penance. Alister McGrath also points out that the origin of the very idea of forensic justification came from Erasmus’s 1516 Latin translation of the New Testament. Not only did he translate Romans 4.3 “Creditit aut Abraham Deo et *imputatum* est ei ad iustitiam” rather than “Creditit Abraham Deo et *reputatum* est illi ad iustitiam” (my italics), but pointed out the forensic implications of the new translation in his extensive notes on the passage.⁸³ Stephen Gardiner as a young man was caught up in the excitement of Erasmian humanism at Cambridge, but later became disillusioned with the long term effects of Erasmus’s teaching and famously agreed “with them that said Erasmus laid the eggs that Luther hatched.”⁸⁴ In England Erasmus’s teaching influenced Henry VIII’s reforms⁸⁵ and was later integrated into the life of the reformed church when the 1547 Royal Injunctions commanded that, along with a Bible in English, every church should also possess a copy of Erasmus’s *Paraphrases* of the gospels. Erasmus and the English reformers were at one in their textual and philological approach to the Bible which affected their understanding of belief and practice, for instance with regard to the penitential system. But ultimately Erasmus conceded to the authority of the Church, while reformers such as Tyndale held that the Scriptures were the Word of God and had ultimate authority. The Christian humanist movement did not make the Reformation inevitable in England but it did lead to a wide range of attitudes to penitence and to how the church might

⁷⁸ Duffy, “The comen knowen multitude of crysten men”, p. 197.

⁷⁹ McConica, *English Humanists and Reformation Politics*, p. 2.

⁸⁰ Duffy, “The comen knowen multitude of crysten men”, p. 204.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, p. 126.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 239.

⁸⁴ *The Letters of Stephen Gardiner*, ed. J A Muller (Cambridge 1933), p. 403.

⁸⁵ Bernard, *The King’s Reformation*, p. 236.

be reformed. While conservatives continued to stress the importance of the sacrament and at least annual confession, others wanted voluntary confession, reformers even suggesting it was not necessary to confess to a priest, and that confession should be before the congregation.⁸⁶ All stressed that confession to God was an essential part of Christian devotion though some would come to see this as being possible within a general confession.

THE REFORMERS

In February 1519 John Froben, the printer, reported from Basle to Martin Luther on the publication of a single edition containing his *Ninety-Five Theses*, the *Resolutions*, the *Answer to Prierias*, the sermon *On Penitence*, and the sermon *On the Eucharist*. Sales had gone well and he only had ten copies left. “The copies had gone not only to Germany but also to other lands, making of Luther not only a national but also an international figure.” Some copies had come to England.⁸⁷

Luther on penitence

Until 1521 Luther accepted that there were three sacraments. In his sermon *On Penitence* he spoke of “that most worthy, gracious and holy sacrament of penance.”⁸⁸ However, quoting Augustine, he made it clear that “not the sacrament, but faith that believes the sacrament is what removes sin.”⁸⁹ Forgiveness, “that heavenly indulgence”, is not granted for the worthiness of contrition or works of satisfaction but “only on account of ... faith in the promise of God.”⁹⁰ For him the basic elements of the sacrament were: the Word of God proclaimed by the absolution; faith exercised by trusting the absolution; and peace which comes as a consequence of such faith.⁹¹ The emphasis in the sacrament is on the grace of God. When that has been received “we can do a lot of good [works] ... to the glory of God alone and the benefit of our fellow men” and not to pay for our sin.⁹²

⁸⁶ Gerald Bray, “Tyndale’s Preface to the New Testament, 1526”, *Translating the Bible: from William Tyndale to King James* (London 2010), p. 38.

⁸⁷ Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation. Grammar and Grace* (Oxford 2002), p. 39; Roland H Bainton, *Here I Stand A Life of Martin Luther* (New York 1955), p. 93.

⁸⁸ *Luther’s Works* vol. 35: *Word as Sacrament*, ed. E Theodore Bachmann (Philadelphia 1960), p. 10.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 17.

In July 1520, just a month after his excommunication, Luther wrote *De Captivitate Babylonica Ecclesiae Praeludium*, in which he denounced all seven of the sacraments as practised under Roman authority and propounded three, baptism, the Lord's Supper and penance. Luther claimed that nothing of the true sacrament of penance remained and that "the penitential promise has been transformed into a most outrageous instrument of tyranny."⁹³ Contrition had been made superior to faith, and "confession and satisfaction ... have been made into an egregious factory of money and power."⁹⁴ His exception was secret confession which he admitted cannot be proved from scripture but declared that "it seems a highly satisfactory practice to me."⁹⁵ He argued, however, that the Roman system failed in this by pressing for details and circumstances of sins, and by differentiating between sins and reserving some for bishops, and even the Pope. Sins may be confessed to and absolved by any Christian brother. It was these views of Luther on absolution that were regarded as blasphemous by the papal nuncio, Aleander, at Worms,⁹⁶ and by the English humanist Thomas More in London.⁹⁷ By insisting on satisfaction, Luther claimed the Roman system leaves no room for Christ. Penitents, "with consciences pitilessly tortured by scruples", went on pilgrimages, flayed themselves with rods, and the like, but even then it is argued that sins had not been satisfied. Where, Luther asked, is Christ's word of forgiveness?

Luther was no humanist.⁹⁸ He had little interest in the literature of the ancient world and was more concerned to communicate truth than to be eloquent.⁹⁹ "By 1516 at the latest, he no longer considered good works as a necessity to gain God's favour."¹⁰⁰ This was due to his acceptance of Augustine's concept of operative grace. Human will is held captive by sin and is incapable of attaining righteousness unaided by grace.¹⁰¹ Medieval tradition had regarded justification as both an act and a process in which the status and nature of humans was

⁹³ Ibid., 1. 280-1.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 1. 282, 284

⁹⁵ Ibid., 1. 284; Ronald K Rittgers, *The Reformation of the Keys. Confession, Conscience and Authority in Sixteenth Century Germany* (Cambridge Ma. 2004), p. 216: claims that Luther's "famous waffling on the sacramental status of private confession in the *Babylonian Captivity* introduced a lack of theological precision into the reform of confession and tainted the entire process."

⁹⁶ Ibid, 1. 206.

⁹⁷ William Tyndale, *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, ed. Henry Walter (PS. Cambridge 1831), p. 171.

⁹⁸ Clare Costley King'oo, *Misereri Mei: The Penitential Psalms in Late Medieval and Early Modern England* (Notre Dame 2012), pp. 69-70: draws parallels between Luther and Fisher, however. Both wrote commentaries on the penitential psalms, believed that suffering related to the universal problem of human sin yet that it was also part of the solution of the sin problem.

⁹⁹ Owen Chadwick, *The Reformation* (Harmondsworth 1964), p. 46; Cummings, *The Literary Culture*, p. 30.

¹⁰⁰ Heiko A Oberman, *Luther: Man between God and the Devil* (London 1989), p. 77.

¹⁰¹ Alister E McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross* (London 1985), p. 130.

changed¹⁰², and in which human will and actions played a part. In his lectures on Romans (1515-6) Luther clearly stated that humans “are not capable of initiating, or collaborating with, the process leading to justification.”¹⁰³ He distinguished between justification and sanctification. In the former humans are “imputed” with the righteousness of Christ, in the latter they are being made righteous through regeneration and the work of the Holy Spirit by the Word of God. Faith is given in justification – it grasps Christ and makes him present. Humans are justified on account of Christ, *propter Christum* not *propter fidem*.¹⁰⁴ Philip Melanchthon spelled this out clearly in his *Loci Communes* (1521) and the 1530 Augsburg Confession. Justification is a change of status (humans declared righteous) rather than nature (made righteous), and the righteousness that justifies is Christ’s righteousness which is imputed to the believer. The basic themes of the *Loci* are law and gospel. “The law shows sin, the gospel grace.”¹⁰⁵

In *Loci Communes* (1521) Melanchthon reduced the sacraments to two. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are visible signs, testimonies and seals that give assurance to the conscience.¹⁰⁶ Luther called them “sealed covenants” by which penitents could find forgiveness and security by the death and passion of Christ.¹⁰⁷ This was confirmed in Luther’s Larger Catechism of 1529. Huldrych Zwingli, on the other hand, spiritualised the sacraments and whole penitential process: “This, I say, is our absolution, expiation, satisfaction, and remission of all sins, when we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”¹⁰⁸ He felt that Luther had not gone far enough and chided him that “if you saw by the light of the gospel that purgatory was a net to catch money, and absolution of ‘keys’ but faith in the gospel, that the Son Christ Jesus was the only one God and mediator between God and humanity, you would not only have cleaned out the stables of Augeas, but have scaled heaven itself.”¹⁰⁹ Luther had made an unwarranted concession to private confession, according to Zwingli, who would not see it as more than seeking advice from a priest or even a neighbour. For him confession should be made privately to God each day “when you address and worship the Father in your closet, and show him the troubles of your wounded soul. There you will be absolved by Christ Jesus whom you gaze upon with the eye of faith ... as he hangs

¹⁰² McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, p. 213.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 220.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 229.

¹⁰⁵ *Library of Christian Classics XIX: Melanchthon and Bucer*, p. 71.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 134.

¹⁰⁷ *Luther’s Table Talk*, ed. William Hazlitt (London 1902), p. 160.

¹⁰⁸ Huldrych Zwingli, *Writings*, trans. H W Pipkin (Pennsylvania 1984), p. 344.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 346.

upon the cross, your heart will be assured you that nothing could be denied by the Father who could bear that his son be crucified for your sake.”¹¹⁰ Here, Zwingli stressed, was a powerful motivation for amendment of life, and this, and not the words “I absolve you”, gives assurance of forgiveness. Zwingli described his penitential views to Luther in his *Friendly Exegesis*, published in February 1527 prior to their famous meeting at Marburg. Since John Frith was present at Marburg it could be that he was aware of Zwingli’s views and mediated them to Tyndale.

Luther’s Impact on England

The Papal bull *Exsurge Domine* declared that Luther’s books contained forty-one heresies and should be sought out and destroyed. Within the year (1520) a burning of heretical books was held outside Great St Mary’s church in Cambridge.¹¹¹ A demonstration at Paul’s Cross in May the following year involved more burning of Luther’s books and a sermon by Bishop Fisher attacked his heresies. This may well have been motivated more by Wolsey’s ambition than providing evidence of Luther’s impact in England. However within weeks Archbishop Warham notified Wolsey that Oxford University, of which Wolsey was chancellor, was “infected with Lutheranism, and many books forbidden by Wolsey had obtained circulation there.”¹¹² The extent of the ‘infection’ at this stage is difficult to assess but by 1525 a group of humanists had been discussing publications by continental reformers at Cambridge, with some of their conclusions expressed in Robert Barnes’ Christmas Eve sermon. In early 1528 Wolsey had to deal with fellows from his own Cardinal College who had succumbed to heresy. The increasing concern of the authorities is seen in the second burning of books at St Paul’s in 1526 with Fisher preaching again, this time by royal commission, and in Bishop Tunstall’s request to Thomas More in 1528 to refute the heretics. This resulted in More’s *Dialogue Concerning Heresies* (1529) which was largely an attack on the teaching of Luther and Tyndale.¹¹³

Luther had spoken out against abuse and corruption in the Church and those who did the same in England were easily identified with him. But had they absorbed his ideas and how

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 369.

¹¹¹ *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the reign of Henry VIII*, eds. J S Brewer and J Gairdner (London 1862-1908), vol.3 part 1, document 1193.

¹¹² Clebsch, *England’s Earliest Protestants*, p. 12.

¹¹³ Richard Rex, “More and the heretics: statesman or fanatic?”, *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas More*, p. 99.

much were they influenced by them? According to John Foxe, Thomas Bilney's reform evangelism began by his reading Erasmus's Latin translation of the New Testament.¹¹⁴ It enabled him to find "peace for his troubled soul in a conviction of God's saving grace that alienated him from the penitential system of the Church."¹¹⁵ "Such was his conviction of the saving power of the cross of Christ that the secondary aids of Catholic practice, images, penances, pilgrimages were distractions, at best irrelevant and at worst idolatries."¹¹⁶ Haigh correctly concludes "he was no Lutheran."¹¹⁷ Robert Barnes, among others, was converted by Bilney's fervour. He spoke out against worldliness within the church, especially the affluence of bishops and their lack of concern to preach and he condemned images in his Christmas Eve sermon. "Those portions of the sermon which were offensive ... had little or nothing to do with Luther"¹¹⁸, even though the sermon was based on Luther's postil of the epistle for the day.¹¹⁹ It was the Bible, especially the Pauline renaissance as experienced at Cambridge in the teaching of George Stafford¹²⁰, which motivated many to speak out against the abuses in the Church and to dissociate the gospel from the Church's penitential system.

While later English reformers picked up on themes of law and gospel from the *Loci*, "it is clear that the doctrines of justification circulating in English reforming circles in the 1520s and early 1530s were quite distinct from the mainstream continental Reformation."¹²¹ Bilney saw justification as the non-imputation of sin without any reference to the imputation of righteousness.¹²² George Joye's definition, in 1531, was that "to be justified, or made righteous before God by this faith, is nothing else but to be absolved from sin of God, to be forgiven, or to have no sin imputed of him by God."¹²³ The first clear and unambiguous statement of the concept of the imputation of righteousness to be found in the writings of an English Reformer is in the 1534 edition of Robert Barnes' *Supplication unto King Henry VIII*.¹²⁴ William Tyndale, the first theologian of the English Reformation, despite his

¹¹⁴ John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, The Variorum edition (hriOnline, Sheffield 2004-<http://hri.shef.ac.uk/foxe>), 1563, Book 3, p 520.

¹¹⁵ G R Elton, *Reform and Reformation* (London 1977), p. 74.

¹¹⁶ Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations* (Oxford 1993), p. 58.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p. 61.

¹¹⁸ Clebsch, *England's Earliest Protestants*, p. 45.

¹¹⁹ Allan G Chester, "Robert Barnes and the Burning of the Books", *Huntington Library Quarterly* 14 (1951, no.3), p. 212.

¹²⁰ H C Porter, *Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge* (Cambridge 1958), p. 42.

¹²¹ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, p. 258.

¹²² G Rupp, *Studies in the making of the Protestant Tradition* (Cambridge 1947), p. 161.

¹²³ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, p. 259.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

contacts with Wittenberg, tends to interpret justification as ‘making righteous’, focusing on the work of the Holy Spirit, quite distinct from Luther’s emphasis on faith.

The main ways that differing views of justification by faith affected English penitential theology were in areas of good works, indulgences and assurance. Works do not contribute to justification. Hence Bilney and Barnes attacked pilgrimages, prayers to saints, and other activities that had hitherto been categorised as satisfactory good works. Since Christ’s death is the satisfying work that enables the penitent to be forgiven there is no necessity for these or indulgences. Good works, however, had a place as a consequence of justifying faith for Barnes¹²⁵, and as a basis of assurance for Tyndale.¹²⁶

William Tyndale

While he was a student at Oxford and Cambridge William Tyndale learned Greek and was clearly influenced by teachers sympathetic to humanism.¹²⁷ When his employers at Little Sodbury, Sir John and Lady Walsh, asked for help with their faith he gave them a copy of Erasmus’s *Enchiridion Militis Christiani*, which he was in the process of translating,¹²⁸ rather than any work of Luther. This suggests that “his basic position at the time is that of an Erasmian humanist and not a Lutheran.”¹²⁹ He recommended those who read his writings to also read Erasmus’s *Annotations*,¹³⁰ to which he himself refers when defending his own translation.¹³¹ When looking for a patron to support his intended work of translating the New Testament from Greek into the vernacular, he went to Cuthbert Tunstall, Bishop of London, who was known for his humanist sympathies, and presented him with a translation of Isocrates to demonstrate his linguistic ability,¹³² but was turned down. Although, coming from a humanist position and influenced by Wyclif and his followers, and by Luther and Melancthon, Tyndale is increasingly seen by historians as having had an independent

¹²⁵ Carl Trueman, *Luther’s Legacy: Salvation and English Reformers 1525-1556* (Oxford 1994), p.197.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 119: “an outward sign of an inward justification.”

¹²⁷ Rosemary O’Day goes so far as to suggest he was a “pupil of John Colet” though this is unlikely: *The Debate about the English Reformation* (London 1986), p. 7.

¹²⁸ David Daniell, *William Tyndale A Biography* (Yale 1994), p. 55. Trueman, *Luther’s Legacy*, p. 46.

¹²⁹ Trueman, *Luther’s Legacy*, p. 46.

¹³⁰ Daniell, *William Tyndale*, p. 119; William Tyndale, *Doctrinal Treatises and Introductions to Different Portions of the Holy Scriptures*, ed. Henry Walter (PS. Cambridge 1848), p. 316.

¹³¹ Tyndale, *An Answer to Sir Thomas More’s Dialogue*, p. 16.

¹³² Trueman, *Luther’s Legacy*, p. 47 n. 67: Isocrates was an Athenian rhetorician whose writings were noted for their “stylishly polished prose” and so a “favourite classical author among Humanists.”

mind.¹³³ Rowan Williams considers him to be “the true theological giant of the English Reformation”¹³⁴ and ahead of his time, which may explain the fact that though his English Bible was the foundation stone of the English Reformation his theology did not have the same impact on leading figures until William Perkins at the end of the century.

It was reading the Bible that determined Tyndale’s theology. As he read he discovered that “Purgatory is not there; there is no aural confession and penance. ... Instead there was simply individual faith in Christ as Saviour found in Scripture. That and only that ‘justified’ the sinner, whose root failings were now in the face of God, not the bishops or pope.”¹³⁵ He saw the Catholic Church profiteering from a penitential system which he concluded they must have invented since it was not in the Bible. It was a system that excluded the very means by which the sinner might have found God’s forgiveness. By their system “you can buy out your sins”, but in it the prelates “have clean excluded the faith in the satisfaction of Christ’s blood.”¹³⁶ He told Thomas More, in true humanist style, that all Purgatory does for the penitent is that it “purgeth his purse of his money, and his brain of its wits, and maketh him so beastly that he can understand no godly thing.”¹³⁷

He outlined philologically his reasons for translating the word *metanoite* as repentance rather than do penance in the preface to his 1526 New Testament, comparing the Hebrew *sob*, and St Jerome’s *converti*, to turn or be converted, as well as Latin variations. Among these he referred to Erasmus’s use of *resipisco* “I have come to myself, or to my right mind again.”¹³⁸ He went on to explain how confession should be “to God in the heart and before all the congregation” and “satisfaction, or amends-making, not to God with holy works, but to my neighbour whom I have hurt.”¹³⁹ In *The Obedience of a Christen Man* (1528) Tyndale analysed the sacrament of penance. Penance was a word to deceive, since *metanoite* means to repent. “Of repentaunce they have made penaunce, to blynde the people, and to make them thinke that they must take payne, and doo some holy deades to make satisfaccion for their synnes.”¹⁴⁰ Repentance is not a sacrament, it is “a mornynge and sorowe of herte [that] lasteth all oure lyves longe”; “and all the good deades which accompanie repentaunce, to sley

¹³³ Rowan Williams, Forward to Ralph S Werrell, *The Theology of William Tyndale* (Cambridge 2006), p. 5.

¹³⁴ Rowan Williams, *Anglican Identities* (London 2004), p. 3.

¹³⁵ Daniell, *William Tyndale*, p. 58.

¹³⁶ William Tyndale, *Expositions and Notes on Sundry Portions of the Holy Scriptures*, ed. Henry Walter (PS. Cambridge 1848), p. 162.

¹³⁷ Tyndale, *An Answer to Sir Thomas More’s Dialogue*, p. 103.

¹³⁸ Gerald Bray, *Translating the Bible: from William Tyndale to King James* (London 2010), p. 37.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹⁴⁰ William Tyndale, *The Obedience of a Christen Man* (Antwerp 1528/ facsimile Amsterdam 1977). fo. xciiii.

the lustes of the flesh are signified by baptism.”¹⁴¹ He regretted that “our old doctors have made no mention at all [of faith] in the description of their penance.”¹⁴²

He saw four ways of defining confession. It is by confessing with the mouth that we put our trust in Christ. Paul says that if we believe in our hearts and confess with our lips we will be saved. That is, if we repent and believe God’s promises “then God justifieth us” (forgiving our sin and sealing us with the Holy Spirit).¹⁴³ Tyndale’s second definition is that we confess our faith when we say the creed. A third is when we acknowledge sin in our heart. This confession is included in the sacrament of baptism. “For we allwayes repente and allwayes knowledge or confesse oure synnes unto god, and yet dispeare not; but remember that we are washed in Christes blood; which thinge oure baptism doth represente and signifie unto us.”¹⁴⁴ The fourth use of the word confession is “shrift in the ear (and) is verily the work of Satan” since it deceives as to the nature of man. “A christen man is a spirituall thinge and hath Gods worde in his herte and Gods sprite to certifie him of all thinge. He is not bound to come to any ear.”¹⁴⁵ Tyndale put the reasons given by the church for confessing to a priest: they hold the keys for binding and loosing, and how can they unbind and loose and forgive a sin which they do not know? He quoted Acts and Paul’s epistles to show that the Spirit came at the preaching of faith, and those who believed the promises were justified and forgiven. Preaching the faith is the means by which the keys are exercised. He asked how did the apostles loose people from sins they did not know, and insisted that when all is told and all circumstances, it is still only by repentance and faith in God’s truth that will save the sinner for Christ’s sake. And as far as the priest goes: “Thou seist not myne herte thou knowest not whether I repente or no ... whether I beleve the promyses or no, is also unknowen to thee.”¹⁴⁶

Contrition, for Tyndale was the same as repentance, “nothings else but a sorowfull and mornynge herte.”¹⁴⁷ In order to pervert God’s word the idea of attrition has been invented. The penitent, they say, cannot be sure he is truly contrite, and the priest can tell him only after he has confessed his sins. With regard to making satisfaction for sinning against God,

¹⁴¹ Ibid., fo. xcv.

¹⁴² Bray, *Translating the Bible*, p. 38.

¹⁴³ Tyndale, *The Obedience*, fo. xcvi; McGrath points out that “Tyndale’s emphasis upon the renewing and transforming work of the Holy Spirit within humans is quite distinct from Luther’s emphasis upon faith, and clearly parallels Augustine’s transformational concept of justification.” *Iustitia Dei*, p. 258.

¹⁴⁴ Tyndale, *The Obedience*, fo. xcvi.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., fo. xcvi.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., fo. xcvi.

Tyndale declared that “Christe is a perpetuall and everlasting satisfaccion for ever moare.”¹⁴⁸ If the sin is against a neighbour, confession should be to the neighbour, and if the neighbour forgives, God will forgive. Satisfaction should only be seen as making amends to the offended neighbour.¹⁴⁹ Since justification comes by faith, Tyndale was sure that “Their absolution also justifieth no man from sinne.”¹⁵⁰ If the absolution is in Latin the unlearned will not understand, but even if it is in English it is a lie as it is only Christ who forgives and takes away sin. “They (also) preach that the waggyng of the Bisshopes hande over us blesseth us and putteth awaye oure synnes” but in truth this brings “shame to Christes bloud.”¹⁵¹ Loosing and binding is by the word of God preached: “to bynde and to loose is to preach the law of God and the gospels or promyses.”¹⁵² The absolution says ‘I forgive’. The gospel says only Christ forgives.

In his *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, Thomas More claimed that no one pleased Tyndale except Wyclif.¹⁵³ Certainly there were similarities between the two, not least over penitential issues. Both agreed that contrition alone can secure forgiveness, that only Christ can truly absolve, and both denied Purgatory. Their “hostility to auricular confession was in practice exacerbated by what (they) saw as its exploitation for immoral purposes and financial gain.”¹⁵⁴ Early sixteenth-century Lollards were frequently accused, among other things, of false teaching with regard to confession.¹⁵⁵ However, Wyclif continued to give confession the status of sacrament, though having a greatly reduced role,¹⁵⁶ while Tyndale saw matters of repentance and faith as relating to the sacrament of baptism. The theological basis of Wyclif’s thought on penitence was his belief in predestination, that only the elect can be contrite, and only God can know who is contrite,¹⁵⁷ while the theological basis for Tyndale was his understanding of biblical teaching on justification by faith.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., fo. xcix.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., fo. c.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., fo. cxiiii.

¹⁵² Ibid., fo. ci.

¹⁵³ Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation* (Oxford 1988), p. 505.

¹⁵⁴ Richard Rex, *The Lollards* (Basingstoke 2002), p. 47: Rex applies this to Wyclif, but it applies equally to Tyndale.

¹⁵⁵ Margaret Aston, *Lollards and Reformers* (London 1984), p. 88, re. William White; p. 226, re. William Thorpe; Hudson, *The Premature Reformation*, p. 469, re. John Godwyn.

¹⁵⁶ Rex, *The Lollards*, p. 46.

¹⁵⁷ Hudson, *The Premature Reformation*, pp. 314, 294.

Although Tyndale saw justification as key to knowing how a sinner can be forgiven, his understanding of this doctrine differed considerably from Luther's.¹⁵⁸ Where Luther stressed that the sinner was counted (imputed) as righteous by repentance and faith in Christ's work, Tyndale saw justification as meaning the sinner was forgiven and 'made righteous' by the work of the Holy Spirit.¹⁵⁹ Good works which followed as a consequence were evidence that he had been justified, both to himself and to the world around him, and the grounds of his assurance.¹⁶⁰ He integrated this into his covenant theology which, Paul Laughlin claims "exhibited a unique character among the theologies of the Reformation,"¹⁶¹ since the covenant is made for God and his glory. Gerald Bray, however, notes that Tyndale understood the Bible itself as covenant and that this was "a view which would later give rise to the most characteristic type of Puritan theology."¹⁶² This covenant theology fits well with his humanism, which is seen not only in his philological skills in translation and interpretation of the Bible, and his attack on abuses of power by the hierarchy of the Church, but especially in the strongly ethical dimension of his theology,¹⁶³ a dimension which Thomas More, for one, failed to appreciate.

PENITENCE AND POLEMICS: THE MORE/TYNDALE DEBATE

The publication of *A Dialogue concerning Heresies* (1529) by Thomas More marked the beginning of the classic public disputation of the early English Reformation. "The violent antipathy between More and Tyndale shows something of the vanity of using humanism to distinguish parties in the practice of letters in England after the first few years of Henry's reign."¹⁶⁴ Bishop Tunstall asked More to produce a simple vernacular apologetic to counter heresy and strengthen the faith of the orthodox.¹⁶⁵ More was very willing. He had already written his *Responsio* against Luther's attack on Henry's *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum*. For him heresy "was not just a matter of life and death; it was a matter of eternal life and

¹⁵⁸ Bray, *Translating the Bible*, p. 7.

¹⁵⁹ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, p. 258.

¹⁶⁰ Trueman, *Luther's Legacy*, p. 119.

¹⁶¹ Paul A Laughlin, "'The Brightness of Moses' Face': Law and Gospel, Covenant and Hermeneutics in the Theology of William Tyndale," Unpublished Ph.D. (Emory University 1975), p. 87f.

¹⁶² Bray, *Translating the Bible*, p. 7.

¹⁶³ Trueman, *Luther's Legacy*, pp. 119-120.

¹⁶⁴ Brian Cummings, "Reformed Literature and Literature Reformed", *Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge 1999), p. 833.

¹⁶⁵ *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More*, ed. Elizabeth F Rogers (Princeton 1947), pp. 386-8.

unending death.”¹⁶⁶ For both the participants the disputation concerned issues of salvation and so of penitence and how sins can be forgiven. These lay beneath the overt issues of scripture, church, miracles, pilgrimages, images and prayers to the saints, on which historians have largely focused in their treatment of the debate, as well as being controversial issues in themselves.

Despite the bitterness of the controversy between them, More and Tyndale had a great deal in common. While More was zealous to refute heresy, and Tyndale was zealous to promote the gospel, both belonged to the new world order and were contemptuous of Aristotle; both inveighed against enclosures and disapproved of the annulment of the king’s marriage; and they were alike in their fate.¹⁶⁷ “Both place a high value on the response of the pious educated reader.”¹⁶⁸ “More, Tyndale and Erasmus saw the ideal household as a centre of religious education and practice.”¹⁶⁹ In *The Practice of Prelates*¹⁷⁰ Tyndale suggested, even as More had done in *Utopia*,¹⁷¹ that confession might take place within the family.

Tyndale’s writings which aroused Tunstall’s concern were his 1526 English New Testament, followed by *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon* (1527), and *The Obedience of the Christian Man* (1528). *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon* concerned justification by faith. His starting point was that “faith only before all works and without all merits, but Christ’s only, justifieth and setteth us at peace with God.”¹⁷² He went further considering the purpose and nature of ‘good works’. He “is asking, we might say, what society might look like that took justification by faith as its cornerstone.”¹⁷³ *The Obedience* considered true and false authority and included a response to Fisher’s 1526 sermon. More’s *Dialogue* countered these as well as engaging with other matters such as the Erasmus/Luther conflict over free will.

¹⁶⁶ Richard Rex, “More and the Heretics: statesman or fanatic?” *A Cambridge Companion to Thomas More*, p. 98.

¹⁶⁷ C S Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century excluding drama* (Oxford 1953), p. 164.

¹⁶⁸ Eilean Ni Chuilleanain, “The Debate Between Thomas More and William Tyndale, 1528-33: Ideas on Literature and Religion”, *JEH* vol.39, no. 3 (July 1988), p.386.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.394.

¹⁷⁰ William Tyndale, *Expositions and Notes on Sundry Portions of the Holy Scriptures with the Practice of Prelates*, ed. Henry Walter (. Cambridge 1848), p. 284.

¹⁷¹ Thomas More, *Utopia*, trans. Paul Turner (London 1965), p. 126.

¹⁷² Tyndale, *Expositions*, p. 46.

¹⁷³ Williams, *Anglican Identities*, p. 11.

A Dialogue Concerning Heresies

In the *Dialogue* a friend urges More to advise a young man (Messenger) who was being influenced by religious reformers. The *Dialogue* is a fictional conversation between them in the Platonic style.¹⁷⁴ Their first discussion concerned a certain person who has abjured of heresy over preaching against pilgrimages, images and prayers to the saints (almost certainly Thomas Bilney who abjured in 1527, but who remains anonymous). More declares his mind on these matters. The foundation of all his reasoning is that “the church cannot err in any necessary article of faith” since Jesus promised never to leave the church and that the Holy Spirit will teach the church his truth. Messenger agrees that we should believe the church where it is in accord with scripture and that Christ is present with the church through the scriptures. Erasmus had made this last point in his *Paraclesis*.¹⁷⁵ More responds that Christ is present in the devotional and sacramental practice of the church and that without the church people would not know which scriptures to believe and “the church in all things needily requisite to salvation hath the right understanding of the holy scripture.”¹⁷⁶ Tyndale, he claims, calls on people to believe the scriptures but perverts them “to the intent that he would set forth Luther’s heresies and his own thereby.”¹⁷⁷ More lists six important words which he claims Tyndale maliciously twisted to his own ends. He translates ‘charity’ by ‘love’; ‘church’ by ‘congregation’; ‘priest’ by ‘senior’; ‘grace’ by ‘favour’; ‘confession’ by ‘knowledge’; and ‘a contrite heart’ by ‘a troubled heart’¹⁷⁸.

More claims that Tyndale is worse than Luther.¹⁷⁹ Luther saw the value of confession but Tyndale has been seeking to destroy the sacrament altogether. “What conscience hath this Tyndale that thus can write to blind unlearned people with, when himself well knoweth that

¹⁷⁴ Lewis, *English Literature*, p. 171. For example: More asks “when one is accused and convicted of heresy, what thing will the law that the church should receive him unto?

Mary, to mercy.

Nay, quod I. Mercy is the thing as it seemeth that they receive him by, not by the thing that they receive him to. Then is it, quod he, to penance?

But now, quod I, doth the church openly receive to penance any person appearing and proving himself impenitent? Nay, quod he.” *Dialogue*, p. 201.

¹⁷⁵ *Christian Humanism and the Reformation: selected writings of Erasmus*, ed. John C Olin (New York 1975), p.106: “these writings [the gospels] bring you the living image of his holy mind and the speaking, healing, dying rising Christ himself, and thus they render Him so fully present that you would see less if you gazed upon Him with your very eyes.”

¹⁷⁶ Thomas More, *A Dialogue concerning Tyndale*, ed. W E Campbell (London 1927), p. 79. This is a reprint of the 1529 edition with a transcription in modern spelling. Campbell has given it a new title since the long title of the original concludes with: “many other things touching the pestilent secte of Luther and Tyndale, by tone bygone in Saxony, and by tother laboured to be brought into England.”

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 210-11.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

they do all with one voice prove that shrift and confession is of necessity requisite to our salvation.”¹⁸⁰ Such arguments show that this was not merely an academic debate as More and Tyndale were both concerned with popular religion. Tyndale, according to More, was trying to destroy the sacrament by saying that confessors reveal the secrets of the rich to the bishops, who then “either put them to open shameful penance, or compel them to pay at the bishop’s pleasure.”¹⁸¹ More argues that this is not the case. In his *Assertio* the king himself made the point that people confess often more than once a year and “find we never any man take harm by his confession or cause given of complaint through any such secrets uttered or shewed by the confessor.”¹⁸² Tyndale also, more claims, sees no need for a priest to hear confessions and that any man or woman could fulfil this role. More imagines a young man confessing to a fair young woman and wonders “what manner of amendment shall this man come to?” He also wonders whether women are more likely to reveal the secrets than priests. It’s all a joke; surely Tyndale “so playeth with this holy sacrament that he goeth about utterly to destroy it.”¹⁸³ According to More, the abandoning of the sacrament would lead inevitably to “frantic fantasy” and “dissolute living.”¹⁸⁴ To prevent such spiritual and national chaos¹⁸⁵ More declares that the burning of heretics is both lawful and necessary. He was appointed Lord Chancellor just a few months after the publication of the *Dialogue*.

Answer to Sir Thomas More’s Dialogue

In his *Answer to Sir Thomas More’s Dialogue* Tyndale started by making it clear what the basic issues were between him and More, and invites the reader to be the judge. “Judge ... reader, whether the pope with his be the church; whether their authority be above scripture; whether all they teach without scripture be equal with the scriptures; whether they have erred and not only whether they can. ... Judge their penance, pilgrimages, pardons, purgatory, praying to posts, dumb blessings, dumb absolutions, ... their satisfactions and justifying.”¹⁸⁶

More’s constant assertion that “the church cannot err” raises the question as to the nature of the church. Tyndale assumes somewhat unfairly, that for More it consists of the pope,

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 316.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 257.

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 259.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 315.

¹⁸⁵ More held Luther responsible for the peasants’ revolt in Germany.

¹⁸⁶ Tyndale, *Answer to Sir Thomas More’s Dialogue*, p. 9.

cardinals, legates, archbishops, bishops, abbots, priests, monks and friars of various colours. Tyndale sees these as “a thousand names of blasphemy and of hypocrisies.”¹⁸⁷ The church is a gathering of “all degrees of people” and not the hierarchy. It is the whole congregation of those that believe in Christ. He stresses that in giving ‘congregation’ as his translation of *ecclesia* he did not do it “of any mischievous mind or purpose to establish heresy”, as More declared, but because the word ‘church’ was so misused. Tyndale contrasts “the great multitude” (More’s word) with “the little flock”. The multitude try to intimidate the little flock: “they roar out ‘Where art thou? Why comest thou not forth and takest holy water?’ ‘Wherefore?’ said little flock. ‘To put away thy sins.’ ‘Nay, brethren, God forbid that ye should so think; Christ’s blood only washeth away the sins of all that repent and believe.’”¹⁸⁸ Tyndale developed this accusation in the introduction to his commentary on the First Epistle of John (1531), where he claimed that “little by little [the bishops] gat the whole [penitential system] in their hands.” They sold penance to the rich and overloaded the poor “until their tyranny was waxen so grievous that the people would bear it no longer ... the sacrament of penance: contrition, confession, satisfaction, feigned purgatory, feigned pardon, - praying to saints – lighting candles.”¹⁸⁹ Tyndale’s own definition of the church is that it consists of “all repenting sinners that believe in Christ, and put all their trust and confidence in the mercy of God; feeling in their hearts that God loveth them, - - and forgiveth them their sins.”¹⁹⁰

With regard to his translation ‘senior’ instead of ‘priest’, Tyndale points to many instances where the Vulgate used the word ‘senior’ or ‘elder’ and questions why, if More’s view of ministry is right, the apostles did not use the Greek word *hiereus* rather than *presbyteros*, and why was it not translated into the Latin *sacerdos*. He defends his use of the words ‘love’ and ‘favour’ in place of ‘charity’ and ‘grace’ on the grounds that that last two are not sufficiently expansive. “I say not , charity God, or charity your neighbour”, and “when we say ‘he standeth well in my lady’s grace,’ we understand no great godly favour.”¹⁹¹ The words ‘confession’ and ‘penance’ carry too much baggage of unbiblical theology and practice. “Of confession they ... made people understand shrift in the ear; whereof the scripture maketh no mention: no, it is clean against scripture, as they use it and preach it.” By the word penance they make people understand “holy deeds of their own enjoining; with which they must make satisfaction unto Godward for their sins: when all the scripture preacheth that Christ hath

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 109.

¹⁸⁹ William Tyndale, *Expositions of Scripture*, ed. Henry Walter (PS. Cambridge 1849), p. 161.

¹⁹⁰ Tyndale, *Answer to Sir Thomas More’s Dialogue*, p. 30.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 21-2.

made full satisfaction for our sins.” He also stresses that ‘do penance’ is not an accurate translation of *metanoite* which “M. More knoweth well enough: for he understandeth the Greek, and he knew them long ere I.”¹⁹²

In parts of his response to Books 3 and 4 of the *Dialogue* Tyndale used dialogue form himself quoting statements made by More and giving his answer.

More: in penance Martin {Luther} saith, there needeth no contrition nor satisfaction.

Tyndale: Call it repentance and then it is contrition of itself. And as for mends-making with worldly things, that do to thy brother whom thou hast offended: and unto God offer the repentance of thine heart and the satisfaction of Christ’s blood.

More: Tyndale saith that confession is the worst invention that ever was.

Tyndale: People are made to think that their sins be never forgiven until they are shriven by a priest which destroys the benefit of Christ’s blood. They must perform ‘holy deeds’ enjoined by the confessor, more profitable oft-times for himself than any man else.¹⁹³

More thought that Tyndale’s claim that priests broke the seal of the confessional was evidence that he was attempting to destroy the sacrament of penance. In his *The Practice of Prelates* (1530), Tyndale’s accusations must have been even more painful. The first because More may well have suspected it was true, and the second because of More’s personal connections. Tyndale claims that Henry VIII persuaded people to betray others with regard to their views about his divorce from Queen Catherine, and “in king Henry the seventh’s days the cardinal Morton¹⁹⁴ and bishop Fox of Winchester delivered unto the king’s grace the confessions of as many lords as his grace lusted.”¹⁹⁵

Tyndale was also forceful in responding to More over free will. More had repeated Erasmus’s arguments against Luther. Tyndale affirmed “that we have no free will to prevent God and his grace, and before grace prepare ourselves thereto.” Although the power to do good and evil is from God, God does not consent to evil and God’s law is to enable us “to use his will and power right.”¹⁹⁶ However, over the use of images in devotional worship and New Testament translation Tyndale claimed that he rather than More was nearer to Erasmus, who had acknowledged that there was much superstition in the devotions of the church.

¹⁹² Ibid., pp. 22-3.

¹⁹³ Ibid., pp. 171-2.

¹⁹⁴ As a boy More had worked as a page for Cardinal Morton at Lambeth.

¹⁹⁵ Tyndale, *Expositions*, pp. 309, 305.

¹⁹⁶ Tyndale, *Answer to Sir Thomas More’s Dialogue*, p. 174.

Confutation of Tyndale's Answer

More denied Tyndale's claims to kinship with Erasmus, who "detesteth and abhorreth the errours and hereseyes that Tyndale playnely techeth." Since Tyndale had denied various beliefs and practices of the church that More had tried to justify on the ground that there was insufficient scriptural evidence, More set about arguing from fundamentals as he reiterated his claim that the church cannot err and it is the church that is "the bearer and interpreter of scripture."¹⁹⁷

The *Confutation* (1532) is a massive work of nine books and almost half a million words. Opposition aroused More's determination to confute every argument and to show that heretics were wrong about everything. "The excessive length and tediousness of the *Confutation* ... frustrated its very purpose."¹⁹⁸ It pillories Tyndale over and over again. He is "a new Judas ... worse than Sodom and Gomorrah ... an idolater and devil worshipper ... a hell hound in the kennel of the devil."¹⁹⁹ More attacks Fish, Joye, Frith, and Barnes for their works and reminds Tyndale that Bayfield was executed because he had brought Tyndale's books into the country, linking his infamous death with Tyndale's infamous books. More is vindictive about the execution of Hitton, "the dyuyls stynkyng martyr"²⁰⁰, and Roye who "made a mete ende at laste ... burned in Portyngale."²⁰¹ This is more than conventional polemics. More hated heretics. The purpose of this work was not to debate with them but "to gyue men warnynge what mischyeffe is in theyr books."²⁰² More argues for the development of doctrine and practice from apostolic times as "an appropriation in consciousness by the [church] community of the significance of primitive revelation."²⁰³ To justify devotional practices that are not in the Bible, More claims that God reveals himself not only in scripture but through the church and in new ways: "the same spyryte of God inclyneth his chyrche eyther at a new counsaile, or by as full and whole consent as any counsaile can haue, to abrogate the fyrste and turne it in to the better,"²⁰⁴ thus "ledyng them sectrely in the consent

¹⁹⁷ Seymour Baker House, "Thomas More", *ODNB*, 39. 72.

¹⁹⁸ Alistair Fox, *Thomas More: History and Providence: History and Providence*, (Oxford 1984), p. 124.

¹⁹⁹ Daniell, *William Tyndale*, p. 277.

²⁰⁰ *The Complete Works of St Thomas More*, eds. L A Schuster, R C Marius, J P Lusardi and R J Schoeck (London 1973), I. 17.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, I. 8.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, I. 27.

²⁰³ B Grogan, *The Common Corps of Christendom: ecclesiastical themes in the writings of Thomas More* (1982), p. 233.

²⁰⁴ *Complete Work of Thomas More*, II. 922.

and concorde and bylyefe of the trouthe by his holy spirite.”²⁰⁵ Brendon Bradshaw argues that this is consistent with his treatment of history in *Utopia* where he “justified resistance to reform by appealing to the values of historical experience.”²⁰⁶

Salvation, More argued, is conditional upon contrition and a willingness to turn to God, and so it follows that human will must be free. Only thus can we obey God’s commandments “Bothe in the bylyefe and in the worke.”²⁰⁷ This necessarily involves the sacrament of penance since “onely god hathe brought in wythe the grace of the sacrament, that men are so supled and made humble in harte, that they wyll wyllingly go shewe them selfe theyr owne synnes to the preste, whom God hath there appointed in hys stede and there abyde the shame and rebuke therof, and lowly sumiytte them selfe to such payne and penaunce as theyr confessour shall assygne them, and ye same faithfully in punysshement of them selfe for theyr synne.”²⁰⁸ Since this cannot be fully achieved in this life it will be completed in the cleansing fires of purgatory. But now, within the church, the sacraments are the “meanys by whiche we come to clensyng of the soule and to saluacuon.”²⁰⁹ But More’s polemic did not end with the *Confutation*, despite its size. In 1533 he wrote *The Apology* against Christopher St German’s book justifying the Submission of the Clergy. His *Letter to Frith*, written in 1532 when Frith was in the Tower but published in 1533, is a response to Simon Fish and John Frith’s writings against purgatory, and also an attack on Frith’s rejection of the corporal presence of Christ in the mass. In all his polemics More’s consuming passion was the church which Christ had promised to be with for ever.

Tyndale never responded directly to the *Confutation*. Apart from *Practice of the Prelates* his later writings were expository and devotional rather than polemical. The themes which consumed him were scripture, preaching and penitence. These are intertwined as he explained in his *Prologue to the Prophet Jonas* (1531): “The scripture containeth three things in it: first, the law, to condemn all flesh; secondarily, the gospel, that is to say, promises of mercy, for all that repent and acknowledge their sins at the preaching of the law and consent in their hearts that the law is good, and submit themselves to the scholars to learn to keep the law, and to learn to believe the mercy that is promised to them.”²¹⁰

²⁰⁵ Ibid., I. 248.

²⁰⁶ Bradshaw, “The Controversial Sir Thomas More”, p. 544.

²⁰⁷ *Complete Work of Thomas More*, I. 464.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., II. 158.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., I. 105.

²¹⁰ Tyndale, *Doctrinal Treatises*, p. 449.

Ironically both More and Tyndale were executed in 1535 and counted as martyrs by their followers. Although it was so vast More's *Confutation* was never completed. His writings while in the Tower appear to be devotional but in fact his polemics against heresy did not entirely cease. His *Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation* was an allegory of the threat to Christianity posed by heretics. *De Tristitia Gethsemane* included attacks on heretical interpretations of the mass, and bishops who failed in their duty to combat heresy. Tyndale continued with Bible translation and commentary. He is said to have requested a Hebrew dictionary while incarcerated to continue translating the Old Testament. His desire was for the Bible to be available to the English people in the English language.²¹¹ A vernacular Bible was authorised in 1537.

CONCLUSIONS

By considering the penitential teaching of these four important church leaders together we learn primarily how significant penitential theology and pastoral ministry to penitents was in the English church in the first half of the sixteenth century. For each of them it was a matter of crucial importance. Fisher regarded the penitential system as the key to personal piety and pastoral care. Erasmus saw areas of abuse that needed correcting, especially in the practice of auricular confession. He thought this important because he saw how helpful it could be. One of the best known of his corrections to the understanding of the New Testament, based on his expertise in philology, was in revealing that the Greek text showed that Jesus called on people to repent rather than do penance. Tyndale opposed the traditional system since he felt that it prevented people from finding an assurance of forgiveness and peace through the satisfactory work of Christ, his sacrificial death. For Thomas More opposition to the penitential system was a threat to the unity of the church, to the traditional patterns of devotion of many devout Christians, and to the social order. It is noteworthy how frequently in his polemical writings he returns to penitential issues, even when commenting on Bible translation.²¹² Each saw the value of reforming penitential practice from a pastoral dimension. Fisher wanted a better trained priesthood who would promote piety in their

²¹¹ J F Mozely, *William Tyndale* (London 1937), p. 198 quotes a letter Tyndale sent to the king in May 1531 asking that "a bare text of scripture be put forth among his people."

²¹² Three of the six words that More challenges in Tyndale's translation "to the intent that he would set forth Luther's heresies and his own thereby" relate to penitential issues; and in responding to the preface of Tyndale's *Answer* at the opening of his *Confutation* More immediately makes five points concerning penance.

teaching and would provide able confessors. Erasmus saw the pastoral value of voluntary confession, but was aware of abuses that oppressed penitents. For Tyndale it was God's word which offered assurance of forgiveness to penitents because it directed them to Christ's sacrificial death on their behalf. More feared that evangelical reform would lead to spiritual and social anarchy, and would take away the penitent's confidence in the authority of priests to absolve sins.

Historians have recently been aware of the importance of penitence in the early debates of the Reformation era but most attention has been paid to the situation on the continent rather than in England.²¹³ The evidence here shows that it was a major issue in England also and not only because of the influence of continental reformers. The claim of this chapter is that penitential practice was fundamental to the More/Tyndale debate, which would not be appreciated from the historiographical focus of recent works. Alistair Fox focuses on the interpretation of scripture and the importance of free will in the debate. Brian Cummings focuses on the importance of the vernacular, and Eilean Ni Chuilleanain on the light that the debate throws on humanism.

Tyndale and Erasmus both identified abuses in the penitential system and new possibilities of how confession might be made and the penitent assured of God's forgiveness. However, there could be no change in penitential practice in England until it was agreed by the king and put into effect by statute. Although there was no uniformity on the issue, even among conservatives, there is significance in agreements as well as disagreements. It is because of such agreements that unexpected continuities regarding penitential issues are to be found in England later in the century. A later chapter of this thesis will show, for instance, how Puritans felt that for them the lack of private confession created pastoral as well as disciplinary problems.

Preaching from scripture was important to John Fisher. He not only had this in common with Tyndale but they both gave a high place in their theology to the Holy Spirit. For Fisher it was the Holy Spirit who united the church and kept it in the truth. Salvation was not simply an individual matter but involved being incorporated into the church by the Holy Spirit. For Tyndale the penitent believer was justified by the death of Christ and made righteous by the Holy Spirit who then demonstrated that justification by producing good works in his life. Good works mattered to Tyndale as they did to Fisher but for different reasons.

²¹³ For example: *Penitence in the Age of Reformations*, eds. K J Lualdi and Anne T Thayer (Aldershot 2000).

Erasmus was very conscious of how the priest might misuse his pastoral role in the sacrament of penance, by revealing secrets or requiring penances that, financially or in other ways, benefitted the priest himself. He also believed that it is more important to be contrite and make confession to God than to a priest. These were important issues for Tyndale too. He and several other reformed scholars and Bible translators also made use of Erasmus's Greek text of the New Testament. When he wrote *Enchiridion* Erasmus had lay Christians in mind. He was not so focused on the sacraments as Fisher and More. His satirical mockery of the hierarchy and superstitious devotional practices in his *Colloquies* was not appreciated by conservative church leaders. Nor was his call for a middle way, "a moderate opinion", ²¹⁴ appreciated by reformers. Despite Brendan Bradshaw's thesis that "More's opposition to the Reformation lay in his commitment to Erasmian humanism," ²¹⁵ Erasmus would hardly have agreed with More's contention that harm had never come to anyone through confession, ²¹⁶ and his *Paraclesis* is something of a contrast with More's sacramental ecclesiology. For all More's protests Tyndale was right to point out that his affinity with Erasmus was closer than that of the polemical More.

Tyndale was the only one of the group who adhered to *sola fideism* and resisted the argument for free will. He not only advocated a vernacular Bible, he produced one, and outlined his thoughts on penitential practice in his preface to the 1526 New Testament. His *Obedience of a Christian Man* was a seminal text of the English Reformation, and that also had a significant section on penitence. Nevertheless he had little or no influence on the penitential reforms of the Edwardian Protestant Reformation. ²¹⁷ This may be due in some way to the fact that he wrote his important work and was executed in exile and never held a significant post in the church in England. Thomas More, on the other hand, did have a significant afterlife in the reign of Mary and was a major influence on Reginald Pole.

With Erasmus having left England for good, and Fisher, More and Tyndale all having been executed, the future of the penitential system was in the hands of the king, his council, bishops and preachers, all humanists to a man. ²¹⁸

²¹⁴ Erasmus and Luther, p. 68.

²¹⁵ Bradshaw, "The Controversial Sir Thomas More", p. 565.

²¹⁶ More, *A Dialogue Concerning Tyndale*, p. 259.

²¹⁷ There is not a single reference to Tyndale in Null's *Thomas Cranmer's Doctrine of Repentance*.

²¹⁸ Rex, "The role of English humanists in the Reformation up to 1559", p. 23.

3. PENITENCE, POLITICS AND PREACHERS 1533-47

The penitential system based on the sacraments and auricular confession was increasingly under attack by radical preachers in the 1520s and 30s. The doctrine of purgatory was undermined by its association with the papacy and by the fact that it could not be found in the Bible. Cranmer came to believe that there was no divine law for auricular confession, and that it was not sacramental. This chapter argues that he persuaded Henry VIII of the former, and that in the King's Book he distinguished between penitence and the sacrament, even concluding with the possibility of God's forgiveness without the sacrament. In the King's Primer he provided new ways of personal confession to God. These were profound changes in penitential thinking and raised the question of how best to minister to those seeking the assurance of God's forgiveness.

PREACHERS CALL FOR PENITENTIAL REFORM

The fundamental reforms of the Henrician Reformation were the break with Rome and the declaration that the King "rightfully is and ought to be the Supreme Head of the Church of England."¹ It was in the light of these and "to keep unity and quietness in this realm" that Archbishop Cranmer issued an order for preaching in June 1534.² In this he instructed that "no preachers shall contend openly in the pulpit one against another," and that, for a year, none "shall preach neither with nor against purgatory, honouring of saints, priests having wives, faith only justifieth, pilgrimages, ... considering these things have caused dissention among the subjects of this realm already." Chapuys took this as the muzzling of reformist teaching, but it also muzzled conservative defence and raised the question whether such matters were uncertain.³

¹ Henry VIII, c. 10: *Statutes of the Realm*, iii, 663. The break with Rome may be considered to have begun in 1531 with the 'Pardon of the Clergy' and to have been total by the 1536 Act against Papal Authority. J R Tanner traces Henry's referring to the Pope as "our most holy Lord, and true and only Vicar of Jesus Christ upon earth" in 1527 to his description of him in 1536 as "the pestilent idol, enemy of all truth and usurper of princes." *Tudor Constitutional Documents 1485-1603* (Cambridge 1930), p.48, n. 1.

² Thomas Cranmer, *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters*, ed. John E Cox (PS. Cambridge 1846), p. 460.

³ Alan Kreider, *English Chantries: The Road to Dissolution* (London 1979), p. 106; Cranmer, in his "Considerations offered to the King to induce him to proceed to further Reformation", had asked him to consider "whether the holy scriptures teacheth any purgatory to be after this life or not?" Thomas Cranmer, *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters*, p. 466.

Thomas More had battled in print with Tyndale, Frith and Barnes, but now tracts justifying the royal supremacy by Clement Armstrong, who was on the fringe of the court and had connections with Cromwell, were also critical of the penitential system. On confession, he asked “what need hath a man to show sin to the priest, that cannot forgive him?” and echoing Luther, he declared “whatever pardons, absolution, dispensations, forgiveness, and mercy we believe in and trust to have without the righteousness of God by his judgement of the son of man, we must needs be deceived.”⁴ Such sentiments were undoubtedly being expressed in many pulpits, and “as contentious and divisive preaching emerged in the 1530s, one certainty amid the doubts was that almost any preacher could quickly gather an audience.”⁵ Robert Whiting reports that in the West Country penitent submission to ecclesiastical discipline declined markedly in the 1530s. He names Thomas Bennett, an Exeter schoolmaster, Philip Gammon, an Axminster shoemaker, and Agnes Priest, a poor woman from Boyton, all who spoke out against auricular confession to a priest.⁶ With such gifted orators as Latimer, Bale and Garrett preaching radical doctrine, the government had considerable difficulty in controlling the pulpit.⁷ Robert Ward, a friar, was indicted for heresy at Chelmsford for preaching that it is wrong to believe “that satisfaction is necessary and profitable for the wealth of Christian souls; for the truth is contrary, for satisfaction is but superstition, and that only to believe in Christ is sufficient for our salvation.”⁸ John Bale defended his preaching with studied ambiguity. He asserted that he never denied auricular confession to be necessary, but said that no priest could absolve those who would not reconcile themselves to those whom they had offended.⁹

The fundamental reforms created an expectancy of further change. The Act of Supremacy had declared that the sovereign had authority “to visit, repress, redress, reform, order, correct, restrain and amend all such errors, heresies, abuses ... (that) ought or may lawfully be reformed, repressed, ordered”¹⁰ Some preachers hoped this would be in the area of penance. There was sympathy at the centre where some radical preachers found protection

⁴ Ethan H Shagan, ‘Clement Armstrong and the godly commonwealth, *The Beginnings of English Protestantism*, eds. Peter Marshall and Alec Ryrie (Cambridge 2002), p. 64.

⁵ Richard Rex, *Henry VIII and the English Reformation* (Basingstoke 1993), p. 77.

⁶ Robert Whiting, *The Blind Devotion of the People: Popular Religion in the English Reformation* (Cambridge 1989), pp. 23, 140, 141.

⁷ G R Elton, *Policy and Police: The Enforcement of the Reformation in the Age of Thomas Cromwell* (Cambridge 1972), p. 23.

⁸ PRO SP 2/R fo. 17.

⁹ PRO SP 1/111 fos. 182-187.

¹⁰ *Documents of the English Reformation*, ed. Gerald Bray (Cambridge 1994), p. 114.

and support through Cromwell and Cranmer,¹¹ and even promotion (Latimer) via the good offices of Anne Boleyn.¹² Moreover the use of the confessional by some priests in support of the papacy and against royal supremacy gave a political edge to the arguments of those who wanted reform of the penitential system. A curate in St Albans told three confessants that when the king is dead these new fashions would be changed.¹³ John Stanton told his priest at Crossed Fryers, George Rowland, that his faith had been shaken by hearing Latimer preach. The priest tried to restore his belief in the Pope's supremacy, the efficacy of absolution, purgatory, and the duty of offering to the images of the saints.¹⁴ Cromwell frequently heard complaints of priests who stirred the people in confession to the old fashion.¹⁵

Clerical anxiety at the preaching of evangelical reformers was revealed in the Lower House of the 1536 Convocation of Canterbury in its 'protestation of the clergy'. Sixty-seven matters were listed that needed to be dealt with. Over twenty of these concerned the confusion caused by preaching against the penitential system and the advocacy of justification by faith alone:

Item 57: "*it is preached and taught* [my italics] that since Christ has redeemed us by the shedding of his blood we need not do anything but believe and repent if we have offended."

Item 59: "*it is preached* that because auricular confession hath brought forth innumerable vices, it is clearly to be taken away."¹⁶

A year later such problems still remained. Richard Morison wrote to the King "there is a great controversy in the Church of the number, use and efficacy of the sacraments."¹⁷ In a memorandum entitled "Of Preaching" Thomas Starkey warned that radical preaching, especially "with the despising of purgatory", might lead people away from their "due obedience."¹⁸

¹¹ Susan Brigden, "Thomas Cromwell and the Brethren", *Law and Government under the Tudors*, eds. Claire Cross, David Loades, and J J Scarisbrick (Cambridge 1988), p. 45.

¹² Eric Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn* (Oxford 2004), p. 261.

¹³ PRO SP 1/91, fo. 95.

¹⁴ PRO SP 1/102, fo. 67.

¹⁵ PRO SP 1/141, fo. 239.

¹⁶ *Records of Convocation, VIII Canterbury 1509-1603*, ed. Gerald Bray (Woodbridge 2006), pp. 214-19.

¹⁷ PRO SP. 1/6 fos. 8f: "A Treatyse in the Seven Sacraments".

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, SP. 1/105, fo. 119; G R Elton, *Reform and Renewal: Thomas Cromwell and the Commonweal* (Cambridge 1973), p. 52 dates this paper "about July 1536".

PARDONS AND PURGATORY¹⁹

However, it was not only preaching which was the source of confusion. Papal indulgences and the doctrine of purgatory had been integral to the penitential system. There was a legal as well as a pastoral side to penance, and D S Chambers rightly stresses that dispensations must be clearly distinguished from the privileges of the confessional such as pardons and absolutions.²⁰ By the statutes removing papal authority from the Church of England the Pope's power to issue both dispensations and pardons was removed.²¹ The legal power to issue dispensations, licences and the like was placed into the hands of the Archbishop, and through him to the church courts and then supremely to the court of arches, though the ultimate power "to loosen and to bind" rested with the king.²² Both legal acts and pardons issued by the Pope prior to 1533 were to be "of the same value, force and effect as they were before the making of this Act."²³ Although the king was given power "for the ordering, redress and reformation of all manner of indulgences"²⁴ it is unlikely (though not stated) that he would have had the power to issue spiritual pardons, just as he could not pronounce absolution, which power was given to priests by ordination. "Whether priests now thought they could absolve for all sins is not clear, as the issue of reserved sins was seemingly overlooked."²⁵ In June 1535 a proclamation enforced what statute had established and all references to the Bishop of Rome, as he was now to be referred to, were to be "abolished, eradicated, and erased out" of all service books.²⁶ It was hardly coincidental that a proclamation of 1st January 1536 banning books by Bishop John Fisher also prohibited the publication and sale of pardons "corruptly and deceitfully obtained of the Bishop of Rome",

¹⁹ Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford 2002), p.4: "'the death of purgatory' ... has a good claim to be considered the most radical and complete of all the disjunctures brought about by the Reformation in the sixteenth century."

²⁰ D S Chambers, *Faculty Office Registers* (Oxford 1966), p. xiv.

²¹ "The Ecclesiastical Licences Act 1534 (25 Henry VIII, c. 21)", *Documents of the English Reformation*, pp. 94-110.

²² Chambers, *Faculty Office Registers*, p. xx. Decisions of the Archbishop had to be confirmed under the great Seal, and enrolled in the court of Chancery. A Special commission was set up in November 1536 to examine these arrangements. Thomas Cromwell removed canon law from the syllabus of the universities in 1535, possibly expecting that ecclesiastical law would quickly merge into the common law. R N Swanson argues that although Henry had taken the Pope's place in the English Church and made episcopal powers dependent on his own juridical authority as Supreme Head, "not even he had the temerity to claim for himself the papalist reading of the power to bind and loose contained in St Matthew's gospel." R W Swanson, *Indulgences in late Medieval England* (Cambridge 2007), p. 494.

²³ Clause 17 of the Ecclesiastical Licences Act, *Documents of the English Reformation*, p. 106.

²⁴ Ibid., clause 21.

²⁵ R N Swanson, *Church and Society in late medieval England* (Oxford 1989), p. 497.

²⁶ *Tudor Royal Proclamations 1: 1485-1553*, eds. Paul L Hughes and James F Larkin (London 1964), p. 229.

equating pardoners with beggars and vagabonds.²⁷ Although R W Heinze claims that “royal proclamations played no role in the major doctrinal formulations of the 1530s, nor were they used in the initial attack on ceremonies,”²⁸ in fact the attack on pardons in the 1536 proclamation “was part of the larger assault on Purgatory.”²⁹

Crome and Shaxton, evangelical preachers, abjured for preaching against purgatory in 1531. Latimer was required to sign fifteen articles including affirmations of purgatory and soul-masses.³⁰ In 1532 James Bainham of Gloucester was burned as a heretic for speaking against such matters. William Tracy had demonstrated his rejection of purgatory, and the penitential means of avoiding it, by his will and funeral arrangements. He was declared heretical by convocation and his body was exhumed and burned.³¹ Yet Latimer continued to preach on this dangerous matter in Bristol in 1533. Following Simon Fish’s economic argument,³² Latimer would rather that money was spent on repairing roads, providing for the unmarried daughters of poor men, for the unemployed and the sick rather than “for any provision of purgatory.”³³ Fish’s pithy short tract and John Frith’s erudite response to those who argued for purgatory³⁴ had a powerful impact on evangelical preachers.³⁵ Frith’s challenging arguments included: purgatory cannot be proved from scripture; if there were purgatory the pope should deliver those in it; and asking the question as to what gives the pope authority to reserve Christ’s work and sell it for money.

The appointment of Latimer to preach the opening sermon at the 1536 convocation suggested that further reform was to be expected. He drew on Frith’s polemic against purgatory as he attacked “the ancient purgatory pick-purse” that was “born and brought forth in Rome.”³⁶ When the convocation produced an article on purgatory (as the last of its Ten Articles) it attacked the Bishop of Rome’s pardons and conceded that purgatory is “uncertain by Scripture”. Nevertheless it was ambiguous and contradictory, since this was the only way that

²⁷ Ibid., p. 236.

²⁸ R W Heinze, *The Proclamations of the Tudor Kings* (Cambridge 1976), p. 137.

²⁹ Swanson, *Church and Society*, p. 497.

³⁰ *Sermons and Remains of Hugh Latimer*, ed. G E Corrie (PS. Cambridge 1845), pp. 218-20.

³¹ Kreider, *English Chantries*, pp. 100-101.

³² Simon Fish, *Supplication for Beggars* (1529) lists the vast amounts of money spent to deliver souls from the pains of purgatory.

³³ Latimer, *Sermons and Remains*, p. 238.

³⁴ John Frith, *A Disputation of Purgatory* (Antwerp 1531).

³⁵ Marshall, *Belief and the Dead*, p. 57: while purgatory was vulnerable on social and economic grounds, it was primarily a theological issue since it was incompatible with justification by faith alone.

³⁶ Latimer, *Sermons and Remains* (1844), p. 50.

agreement, on which the king insisted, could be found. The article encouraged prayer for the souls of the departed, because of traditional church practice and out of charity, although “the place where they be, the name thereof, and kind of pains there, also be uncertain by Scripture.” Masses said at *Scala coeli*, or before an image, or in any place, were rejected as a means of sending the departed straight to heaven. Nevertheless departed souls should be prayed for at mass and alms given that others might pray for them, “whereby they may be relieved and holpen of some part of their pain.”³⁷ Bernard and Elton see this as Henry’s *via media* “constructed by infusing tradition with a dissolving dose of the new teaching.”³⁸ But Latimer found the whole situation illogical when Henry pursued his policy of suppressing monasteries, since

The founding of monasteries argued purgatory to be; so the putting of them down argueth it not to be. What uncharitableness and cruelty seemeth it to be to destroy monasteries, if purgatory be! Now it seemeth not convenient the Act of Parliament to preach one thing, and the pulpit another clean contrary.³⁹

Thomas Cromwell’s 1536 Injunctions to the clergy (relating to a royal visitation by commissioners authorised by Cromwell as the King’s vicegerent) aimed to see that the doctrinal provisions of the articles agreed by convocation were implemented in the parishes. The clause against superstition not only attacked images, relics and miracles but also pilgrimages.⁴⁰ Clergy were enjoined to persuade parishioners “that they shall please God more by the true exercising of their bodily labour, travail or occupation, and providing for their families, than if they went about to the said pilgrimages.”⁴¹ Pilgrimages were popular, often undertaken as penitential good works, and the relic or other focus of the pilgrimage frequently offered the reward of an indulgence. In 1538 Cromwell’s instructions were to exhort hearers “not to repose their trust ... in ... works devised by men’s fantasies beside Scripture; as in wandering to pilgrimages.”⁴² The most important pilgrimage site had been Canterbury and its association with St Thomas a Becket. In September 1538 Henry presided

³⁷ *Records of Convocation*, p. 231; *Formularies of Faith*, ed. Charles Lloyd (Oxford 1856), p. 210.

³⁸ Bernard, *The King’s Reformation*, p. 288; G R Elton, *Reform and Reformation* (London 1977), p. 257.

³⁹ “Bishop Latimer’s Arguments against Purgatory, with King Henry VIII’s Answers”, *Sermons and Remains*, p. 249; Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, p. 82.

⁴⁰ *Documents of the English Reformation*, p. 176.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 180; The anxiety caused by the so called “Pilgrimage of Grace” did not help the cause of pilgrimages, and the attack on these tied in with the policy of suppressing monasteries.

over the destruction of the shrine and the burning of the former archbishop's bones. Richard Rex claims that this "was the symbolic turning point of Tudor history, when the repudiation of England's Catholic past was dramatised in the most vivid way imaginable."⁴³ This was a severe blow to pilgrimage and to indulgences, and therefore to the doctrine of purgatory. Both the Bishops' Book (*The Institution of a Christian Man* 1537), and the King's Book (*A Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for any Christian Man* 1543) repeated almost word for word the tenth article of the 1536 Convocation. Along with pardons and pilgrimage, belief in purgatory had been undermined. *The Prick of Conscience* had been a popular devotional book of the 1530s. Part Four had included a discussion of purgatory. When it was republished in 1543 this part was excluded.⁴⁴

THE NECESSITY OF PENANCE

The preface to the Ten Articles implies the need of concessions by both traditionalists and reformers so that "unity and concord in opinions ... may increase and go forward", since "we being of late, to our great regret, creditably advertised of such diversity in opinions, as have grown and sprangen up in this our realm."⁴⁵ The third article is on the sacrament of penance and is categorical that the sacrament was instituted by Christ and necessary for salvation. It appears to take a traditional stance and to counter some of the concerns about the reformers' teaching on penance. For example: item 31 of the 'protestation of the clergy' was concerned that some reformers taught "that it is sufficient that the sinner do say 'I know myself a sinner'", and item 46 that "prayers, suffrages, fasting or alms deeds do not help to take away sin."⁴⁶ Against these the article defines contrition as the penitent's sorrow and shame at offending God, brought about by hearing and considering God's laws and acknowledging the abomination of his sin, and insists that "by penance and further good works of the same we shall not oonly obteigne everlasting lif but also we shall deserve mitigassion of these present paynes."⁴⁷ Yet some of the phraseology seems set to conciliate reformers. There is a Lutheran tone to the sections on absolution and faith: "for the absolution given by the priest was institute of Christ to applie the promises of godd's grace and favor to the penitent"; and faith

⁴³ Richard Rex, "Introduction", *Henry VIII Fid, Def.: His Defence of the Faith* (London 2008), p. xxvi.

⁴⁴ Swanson, *Church and Society*, p. 506.

⁴⁵ *Records of Convocation*, p. 220.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 216-7.

⁴⁷ BL. Cleopatra E v fo.68v.

is trust in God's mercy "that god will forgive him his synnes and *repute him justified* [my italics] ... but for thonly merites of the blodd and passion of our Saviour Iesu Christ."⁴⁸ The article makes no mention of the frequency of confession, nor whether it is essential for all sins to be confessed, nor of sins which previously had been reserved for bishops to pronounce penance. Yet while the tone might have been more acceptable to evangelicals they would have found it hard to accept that contrition, confession to a priest, and penitential good works were necessary for salvation.⁴⁹

How far did the Lutheran tone of the Ten Articles reflect the position of the evangelical reforming group in convocation? Negotiations had been undertaken with Lutherans from Germany in 1535⁵⁰ but had soon collapsed since the Lutheran theologians were not prepared to recognise Henry's divorce. However before this the theologians had prepared a draft confession for the English to consider. These Wittenberg Articles were not published and were unknown before a German copy was rediscovered in 1904. George Bernard considers that "it is unlikely that the Ten Articles were directly and specifically influenced by the Wittenberg Articles."⁵¹ The Ten Articles, however, deal only with three sacraments, follow the same sequence as the Wittenberg Articles, and use many of its key ideas, especially in the first five of the Ten Articles.⁵² There is strong emphasis on repentance, justification and good works, "which had become the mainstays of Lutheran theology by the mid 1530s."⁵³ The section in the Wittenberg Articles on "Penitence and Justification" insists that "penitence and remission of sins are necessary in order to obtain salvation and eternal life."⁵⁴ The value of confession is that the penitent may be "strengthened by the gospel and by absolution which applies the promises of God's grace to the individual."⁵⁵ These words are used verbatim in the Ten Articles. Similarly ideas are taken and applied to the English situation, though without reference to their origin. Ashley Null finds the influence of Philip Melanchthon (thought to have been the author of the Wittenberg Articles as well as his *Loci Communes*) in

⁴⁸ Ibid., fos. 67v, 66r.

⁴⁹ It was the conclusion of Cranmer's *De Sacramentis* that "because of its positive benefits the sacrament was expedient to be retained but *not necessary*." Ashley Null, *Thomas Cranmer's Doctrine of Repentance: Renewing the Power to Love* (Oxford 2000), p. 138.

⁵⁰ Rory McEntegart, *Henry VIII, the League of Schmalkalden, and the English Reformation* (Woodbridge 2002), pp. 51-61: considers that in 1534 Henry was not far from considering a definitive statement of faith. Melanchthon was invited to England in 1534 and approached again by Robert Barnes in 1535. However after the breakdown of these talks Henry "retained particular yet profound suspicions of Lutheranism."

⁵¹ Bernard, *The King's Reformation*, p. 650, n. 238.

⁵² Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer* (London 1996), p.161.

⁵³ *Documents of the English Reformation*, p. 118.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 123.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Archbishop Cranmer's Great Commonplace books and also in *De Sacramentis*,⁵⁶ which he attributes to Cranmer after careful scrutiny.⁵⁷ From these he concludes "that one of the tactics of Cranmer and the evangelical party was to try to define in Lutheran terms the traditional Catholic instrument for justification after mortal sin – the sacrament of penance."⁵⁸ Some parts of the article on penance may have had a Lutheran tone, and the omission of the word 'satisfaction' may have encouraged evangelicals but the fact that the sacrament of penance continued to be necessary for salvation, and justification was attained "by contrition and faith joined with charity" ("an explicit repudiation of Lutheran solifidianism"⁵⁹) suggest that the traditionalists, rather than the evangelical reformers, would have been best pleased with the outcome.

The Ten Articles were not a comprehensive statement of the doctrine of the Church of England under Henry's headship but a response to areas of dispute caused by radical preachers.⁶⁰ A fuller account of the faith of the Church was soon produced by the bishops. This included the articles but set them in the context of an exposition of the Apostles' Creed, Ten Commandments, Paternoster and Ave, with an exposition, or declaration⁶¹ of the Seven Sacraments and with articles on Justification and Purgatory.⁶² The Bishops' Book (*The Institution of a Christian Man*, 1537) was not formally authorised by the king but he took a considerable interest in it. On 14th January 1538, Cranmer received a copy of the Bishops' Book with corrections by the king, which he was commanded "to peruse, oversee, and inform the King of his opinions."⁶³ Cranmer had by this time rejected the traditionalist penitential theology of John Fisher.⁶⁴ He responded to the king's instruction with surprising openness. Although the Book insisted that penance was necessary, since "such men, whiche after baptisme do fal agayne into synne, if they do not penaunce in this lyfe ... shall undoubtedly

⁵⁶ Lambeth Palace Library Ms. 1107, fos. 84-93.

⁵⁷ Null, *Thomas Cranmer's Doctrine of Repentance*, pp. 269-276.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 134.

⁵⁹ Rex, *Henry VIII and the English Reformation*, p. 147.

⁶⁰ With the exception of article 9, on the controversial article 'Of rites and ceremonies', each article began with the instruction that "we will that all bishops and preachers shall instruct and teach our people committed unto their spiritual charge ..."

⁶¹ Some of the bishops had been concerned that only three sacraments had been referred to in the articles.

⁶² Bodleian 4o Rawlinson 245; BL. Cleopatra E v fos. 64v-74r; *Formularies of Faith*, ed. Charles Lloyd (Oxford 1956), pp. 21-211.

⁶³ PRO SP 1/128, fo. 69.

⁶⁴ He had declared the preaching of Hugh Payne to be "erroneous and seditious", when the ex-Observant curate of Hadleigh had been quoting from the fourteenth century manual *Manipulus Curatorum*, Null, *Thomas Cranmer's Doctrine of Repentance*, pp. 120-1.

be damned”⁶⁵ Henry wanted to stress the importance of good works. Where the text stated that penitents have the hope of forgiveness, justification and election “not * for the worthynes of any merite or worke done by the penitent but * for the onely merites of the blode and passion of our Savyour Iesu Christe”, Henry wanted to insert (in places marked *) the words “only” and “chiefly”.⁶⁶ Cranmer forcefully commented:

These two words may not be put in this place in anywise: for they signify that our election and justification cometh partly of our merits, though chiefly it cometh of the goodness of God. But certain it is, that our election cometh only and wholly of the benefit and grace of God, for the merits of Christ’s passion, and for no part of our merits and good works: even as St Paul disputeth and proveth at length in the epistle to the Romans and Galatians, and divers other places, saying “Si ex operibus, non ex gratia; si ex gratia non ex operibus.”⁶⁷

He stressed later that assurance of forgiveness comes from heart-felt repentance and faith, and that these will be followed by good works, “but they be not the cause thereof. And if we should esteem our works so highly we should glorify against Christ.”⁶⁸ Henry was adamant in his rejection of solifidianism. Again he felt the Book did not leave enough space for good works. The text made it clear that justification is received through “only goddes grace promised in the merites of Christes passion”, though by means of the sacrament of penance.⁶⁹ Henry wanted to insert into the heading of this section: “Item that the chefe and first mene werby sinners atayne ... iustification” was the love of Christ, implying that human merits also have a part.⁷⁰ Cranmer boldly declared that “they that think they come to justification by performance of the law, by their own deeds and merits ... go from Christ, they renounce his grace.”⁷¹ Cranmer returned the Book on 25th January with some annotations, which he trusted that the King will pardon, and he referred all to the King’s judgement.⁷²

Ashley Null has carefully traced the trajectory of the development of Cranmer’s penitential theology. By 1536 he did not believe that sacramental penance was necessary for salvation.⁷³

⁶⁵ Bodleian 4o Rawlinson 245 fo.37v.

⁶⁶ Ibid., fo. 37r.

⁶⁷ Henry Jenkyns, *The Remains of Thomas Cranmer* (Oxford 1833, 4 volumes), 2. 78.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Bodleian 4o Rawlinson 245 fo. 96v.

⁷⁰ Ibid., fo. 96v.

⁷¹ Henry Jenkyns, 2. 95.

⁷² BL. Cleopatra E v 101v.

⁷³ Gordon Jeanes, “A Reformation Treatise on the Sacraments”, *The Journal of Theological Studies* (April 1995), p. 157: “Proposed corrections in Cranmer’s hand to a surviving text of the Thirteen Articles of 1538 show that he opposed the obligation of auricular confession. Throughout the section Cranmer three times changes ‘necessarius’ to ‘commodus’.”

By 1540 he rejected penance as a sacrament. In his answer to the *Questions concerning the Sacraments and the Appointment and Power of Bishops and Priests* he stated:

the scripture speaketh not of penance, as we call it a sacrament, consistyng in three partes, contrition, confession and satisfaction; but the scripture taketh penance for pure conversion of a synner in harte and mynde from his synnes unto god, making no mention of private confession of all deadly synnes unto a priest, nor of ecclesiasticall satisfaction to be enjoyed by him.⁷⁴

In the debates on this subject he had one significant victory. During the debate in the House of Lords on the Six Articles the Duke of Norfolk put the question “whether auricular confession was necessary by divine law of God, or not?” Cranmer argued for three days that it was not necessary by scriptural injunction for salvation but was expedient “for encouraging the spiritual health of God’s people.”⁷⁵ The outcome in the last of the Six Articles of 1539 was that auricular confession was declared to be “expedient and necessary to be retained and continued, used and frequented in the Church of God.”⁷⁶ As with the other articles, the punishment for refusing, denying or abstaining from the sacrament of penance was severe. Such offence was counted as felony. However in the proceedings ten bishops and two abbots had stated that they can not find expressly by the word of God that auricular confession is necessary, but they do affirm that it is “expedient to be retained and continued, used and frequented in the church of God.”⁷⁷ Tunstall, who had been leading the discussion of the very issues contained in the Six Articles with the embassy from the Schmalkaldic League,⁷⁸ was unhappy that the article did not say auricular confession was necessary by divine law and sent a note to the king to that effect.⁷⁹ Henry’s stinging reply not only referred to Cranmer’s arguments in Parliament but he identified himself with them. Henry claimed that Tunstall’s authorities, Bede and Paul, “shewyth nothyng but that they did confesse theyre syns and yet do nott they affirm that it was by commandement wherefore they make for myne argument and not for yours.”⁸⁰ Bernard sees Henry’s religious policy as being what he wanted it to be rather than being influenced or determined by others. He sees Henry’s involvement over

⁷⁴ BL. Cleopatra E v fo. 57v.

⁷⁵ David Wilkins, *Conciliar Magnae Britanniae ab MCCCCL ad MDXLV* (4 volumes 1737), III.845.

⁷⁶ *Documents of the English Reformation*, p. 224.

⁷⁷ David Wilkins, *Concilia Magnae Britanniae ab MCCCCL ad MDXLV* (1737).

⁷⁸ Glyn Redworth, “A Study in the Formulation of a Policy: the Genesis and Evolution of the Act of Six Articles” *JEH*, vol. 37, no. 1 (Jan. 1986).

⁷⁹ BL. Cleopatra E v fos. 123v-125r.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, fo. 131r; Henry concludes: “I be nott of your opinion ... and I think that I have more case to thynke you obstinate than you me.”

auricular confession as showing that he was not so straightforwardly conservative as has been characterised.⁸¹ Henry was conscious of abuses of the confessional from the writings of Erasmus⁸² but Cranmer had discussed penitence with Henry on theological grounds rather than using the more practical arguments of Erasmus, and as he demolished Tunstall's arguments Henry claimed that these were the opinions "both of the bishop of Canterbury and me."⁸³ It was a considerable change of heart for Henry who had affirmed in his *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum* that "I am unable to believe or conceive that [auricular confession] was established or upheld by any human invention but rather by the divine order of God" "*sed divino plane mandato et constitutam esse, et conservatam.*"⁸⁴ Having stressed that the evangelical reformers "conformed to the king's reformation", Bernard eventually concedes that some, for example Cranmer, did influence Henry's policy but only over details.⁸⁵ What was conceded in the sixth article, however, was a principle rather than a detail, a principle that would be fundamental to Cranmer's policy on penance in the reign of Edward VI, that auricular confession may be helpful to the penitent but was not instituted by Christ and is therefore not necessary for salvation.

PENANCE AND JUSTIFICATION

Henry's attempts to provide a doctrinal position for the Church of England arrived at a final set of formularies with *A Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for any Christian Man*, known as the King's Book (1543). The article on justification was much longer than the short statement in the Bishops' Book, and was accompanied by articles on freewill and good works. These positioned the King's Book firmly against solifidianism, yet its statement on the sacrament of penance was decidedly more clearly sympathetic to evangelicals than the Bishops' Book had been. It might even be said that the articles on justification and the sacrament of penance were contradictory rather than complementary.

⁸¹ Bernard, *The King's Reformation*, p. 505.

⁸² Ibid., pp. 236-7.

⁸³ BL Cleopatra E v fo. 131v.

⁸⁴ *Henry VIII FID. DEF.: His Defence of the Faith*, pp. 78, 202.

⁸⁵ Bernard, *The King's Reformation*, p. 603.

The statement on the sacrament of penance in the King's Book⁸⁶ is especially significant since, following the publication of the Six Articles, Henry had a strong disagreement with some of the leaders of the conservative group among the bishops. Its opening is unusual as it makes a distinction between penance and the sacrament: "For the clear understanding of this sacrament, it is to be considered what penance is, and also what is the sacrament of penance." Penance is described as "an inward sorrow and grief of heart for the sins by us done and committed." It also involves an earnest desire to be purged from them and a "steadfast purpose of mind never to offend again." Such penance, the statement declares, is necessary for salvation. Reformers might rather have used the word repentance but would otherwise have been entirely happy with this formulation.⁸⁷

The focus of the sacrament of penance is seen in the King's Book as absolution "pronounced by the priest upon such as be penitent and do knowledge and show themselves to be." "Contrition, confession and satisfaction [are] expedient and necessary to obtain the said absolution." But faith, it is stressed, is necessary "to obtain the benefits of the sacrament." Faith is defined as believing "that God is, and that in the New Testament, by the mean of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and by the force of his passion, there is promise made to the church to grant remission of sins by his ministers" to those who turn to God in penitence. Contrition involves an "inward sorrow and grief for sin, ... by knowledge of the word of God" which makes the penitent aware that he has provoked the wrath of God, and also to have an awareness of "the great love and goodness of God, shewed before towards him" and his own ingratitude and unkind response. So the penitent, lamenting his miserable state, is stirred in heart by the teaching of the church to repair to "such a minister as God hath ordained to pronounce the sentence of the remission of sin." There he is to make confession, in which he calls to remembrance his past sinful life and tells the priest such sins as his conscience tells him are an offence to God. In humility he admits that the cause of his sin has been in yielding to the world, the flesh and the devil, and willingly submits to "such discipline and ways of reformation as the priest ... shall think convenient." To receive this discipline is part of satisfaction, which shows his desire to please God. It is made clear that this does not mean that "the penitent sinner could worthily merit or deserve remission of sins ... or to make to God any just or full recompense equivalent to the sin he has committed, which he can never do; for that satisfaction hath only our Saviour Christ wrought in his glorious passion." To

⁸⁶ *Formularies of Faith*, pp. 257-262.

⁸⁷ Great Commonplaces of Cranmer II, 225v.

satisfy means to please God with a humble heart and to show a readiness to live a new life by bringing forth the fruits of penance such as alms, prayer and fasting, and to be reconciled to neighbours by forgiving them, or compensating for hurts caused to them. Then the penitent may hear the “comfortable words” of absolution, “that his sins be now freely forgiven by the merits of Christ’s passion.” It is commanded that auricular confession to a priest is to be “used and frequented”, and explained that it is a reminder of the goodness of God and the abomination of sin, and a means for the confessor to stir up contrition “by declaring unto them the word of God in such scriptures as serve for that purpose.” Thus absolution “may be effectively pronounced.” Finally, although it is stressed that this is the normal pattern for the sacrament, the statement on the sacrament of penance considers a case when there is no minister available to pronounce absolution, and the sinner has not had the opportunity to do works of penance. In such a case, if there is true repentance,⁸⁸ including a real desire for God’s grace for amendment, the penitent “shall undoubtedly have pardon and forgiveness for all his misdoings.” To support this, Cyprian is quoted and the example given of the thief on the cross. The section concludes with warning against presumption and a reminder of the certainty of divine judgement.

This statement is rather more sympathetic to the views of evangelicals than earlier Henrician statements on the doctrine of penance. The section on the sacrament of penance in the Bishops’ Book⁸⁹ is almost word for word the same as in the Ten Articles of 1536. It begins categorically with the statement that the sacrament “was instituted by god in the newe testamente.”⁹⁰ As we have shown, the Six Articles did not make this claim and this was an issue between the king and Bishop Tunstall. It is not surprising therefore that no such claim is made in the King’s Book, where auricular confession is seen to be church teaching rather than a divine ordinance. The Bishops’ Book had affirmed that those who had fallen into sin after baptism but had not done penance in this life “shall undoubtedly be damned”, whereas surprisingly the new statement offers the possibility of a truly repentant person dying without the sacrament and asserts that the penitent sinner “shall undoubtedly have pardon and forgiveness for all his misdoings.” Moreover the distinction between penance and the sacrament in the King’s Book is a new way of considering penitence in the church

⁸⁸ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 311: shows that in terms of pre-Reformation practice “repentance [was] sealed in the last sacraments” viz. confession, communion and anointing. This makes it clear that the case suggested here was a new concept.

⁸⁹ Bodleian 4o Rawlinson 245 fos. 36r-39v.

⁹⁰ Ibid., fo. 37v.

formularies (see below). The King's Book statement also strongly emphasises absolution, not only as being the most important element in the sacrament but states that "the sacrament of penance is properly the absolution pronounced by the priest." There was such an emphasis in Thomist penitential theology,⁹¹ but the pastoral nature of absolution was also stressed by Lutherans. The statement that by absolution the penitent "may desire to hear of the minister the comfortable words of the remission of sins" has a definite pastoral and Lutheran flavour.⁹² The pattern in the sacrament of contrition, confession and satisfaction remains key to penitential practice in the King's Book, but whereas the Bishops' Book declared that "by penance, and further good works of the same, we shall not only obteyne everlasting lif, but also shall deserve remission or mitigassion of these present paynes and afflictions, which we sustain in this world"⁹³, the King's Book to the contrary declares that "ye must understand that this satisfaction is not so to be taken as though the penitent sinner could worthily merit or deserve remission of sins", but rather "it is by virtue [of Christ's satisfactory work] that God accepts and is pleased with the little we do." There are fewer ambiguities in this statement than in the Bishops' Book, and it is a step nearer to Cranmer's position as seen in his introductory exhortation to the 1548 *Order of the Communion*.

Not only is the statement on the sacrament of penance in the King's Book more modified in the direction of evangelical penitential theology and practice than earlier formularies, it contrasts in tone from other sections within the King's Book. The opening section of the book is a 'Declaration of Faith,'⁹⁴ written in the scholastic style. It argues that there are two sorts of faith. Faith before justification assents to the testimony of creation and scripture of God's existence. The second, or "lively faith", is the response of faith to God's promises, in works of charity. Diarmaid MacCulloch considers that "for Cranmer neither of these were really faith at all."⁹⁵ Moreover the Declaration asserts that "God's promises made in Christ be immutable, yet he maketh them not to us but with condition." The penultimate sentence of the Declaration repeats that God's promises are conditional, which hardly fits with the assurance in the section on the sacrament of penance that the penitent's sins are "forgiven freely by the merits of Christ's passion." The 'Article of Justification'⁹⁶ is categorical in its

⁹¹ Thomas N Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation* (Princeton 1977), p. 24.

⁹² Melancthon described absolution as "gospel comfort". Charles Neil and JM Willoughby, *The Tutorial Prayer Book* (London 1959), p. 307.

⁹³ Bodleian 4o Rawlinson 245 fo. 68v.

⁹⁴ *Formularies of Faith*, pp. 221-225.

⁹⁵ MacCulloch, *Cranmer*, p. 346.

⁹⁶ *Formularies of Faith*, pp. 363-369.

denial of justification by faith alone: “it is plain, that not only faith ... is required for our justification”,⁹⁷ and “no faith is sufficient to our justification or salvation, but such faith as worketh by charity.” Contrarily, in emphasising the importance of absolution in the sacrament, the section on the sacrament of penance asserts that the penitent’s response to the absolution is to “give credence, and believe with a perfect faith that his sins are forgiven freely by the merits of Christ’s passion.” Reflecting Henry’s corrections to the Bishops’ Book the article on justification claims that “God is the *principal* and *chief* cause of this justification” and that faith works by charity and good works, while the section on the sacrament of penance asserts that “we must understand ... that satisfaction hath *only* our Saviour wrought in his glorious passion.” (my italics) The ‘Article of Good Works’⁹⁸ declares that “works of penance be required in us towards attaining of remission of sins”, while the section on the sacrament of penance claims that in the exceptional case where there is true repentance but neither works of penance or absolution are possible the penitent sinner “shall undoubtedly have pardon and forgiveness for all his misdoings.” Both theologically and practically there is a contradictory tone between the strong anti-solifidianism within the opening ‘Declaration of Faith’, the articles on free will, justification and good works, and the statement on the sacrament of penance.

With regard to the King’s Book, George Bernard challenges other scholars: “It is vital to treat ambiguities and contradictions sensitively, to understand how and why they came about”, since, he argues “Henry skilfully used ambiguity and even contradiction, to advance his own religious convictions.”⁹⁹ It may be that in refusing to say that the sacrament was by divine command, he was influenced by Erasmus whose practical advice had been that “confession, though not instituted by Christ, is useful.”¹⁰⁰ Since the statement on the sacrament of penance considers penance and the sacrament separately, this too may be seen as following in the steps of Erasmus. He had rejected the Vulgate translation of *poenitentiam agite* for the Greek *metanoite*, which he understood as meaning having a change of heart rather than an action. In this understanding he was following Valla, and by this they began to undermine the medieval

⁹⁷ *The Letters of Stephen Gardiner*, p. 336: Cranmer in debate over this matter had been willing to concede “faith alone”, accepting it would be accompanied by other virtues, but pressed for “only faith” as the means of justification. He was defeated in convocation and appealed to the king, who opposed him and so Cranmer, according to Gardiner, agreed to the doctrines of the ‘King’s Book’.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 369-375.

⁹⁹ George Bernard, “The Making of Religious Policy, 1533-1546: Henry VIII and the Search for the Middle Way”, *The Historical Journal*, 41, 2 (1998), p. 334.

¹⁰⁰ See n. 78.

linking of justification with the sacrament of penance.¹⁰¹ When the King's Book separates penance from the sacrament the result is that this also breaks the traditional link, as in the situation where there is repentance but neither a priest to give absolution, nor the opportunity for the penitent to do penance, yet we are assured the penitent will be forgiven. Cranmer had separated penance from the sacrament in his 1540 answer to the *Questions concerning the Sacraments* since "the scripture speaketh not of penance, as we call it a sacrament ... but the scripture taketh penance for the pure conversion of the synner in harte and mynde frome his synnes unto god."¹⁰² The extraordinary situation where there is no minister to pronounce absolution and the penitent unable to do works of satisfaction yet, we are told, if repentant can be assured he is forgiven, is a clear step in Cranmer's direction. How can these significant changes be explained?

The battles between evangelicals and traditionalists over the King's Book were intense, though Bernard argues that they were "orchestrated within a framework set by the king."¹⁰³ Unity was always on his terms. However Cranmer and other leading evangelicals believed that Henry was persuadable. Soon after becoming archbishop in 1533, Cranmer wrote *Considerations offered to the king to induce him to proceed to further reformation*. These included the need for mature deliberation, but the test was to be whether church practice and doctrine were agreeable with scripture or not. He also raised the question of whether purgatory could be found in scripture and whether there could be any satisfaction other than Christ's offering to God.¹⁰⁴ It is difficult not to imagine Cranmer had a major influence in the statement on the sacrament of penance in the King's Book. We know his views were radical, and that he had been bold in arguing with the king in his *Annotations* to the king's corrections of the Bishops' Book. In his Thirteen Articles (1538) he had written of penitence without referring to it as a sacrament, and had stressed the benefit of absolution by which "assurance is conceived and confirmed."¹⁰⁵ He also presided over the sub-committees which "examined"

¹⁰¹ Alister E McGrath, *Iustitia Dei. A History of the Christian Doctrine of Repentance* (Cambridge 2005), 3rd edition, p. 126.

¹⁰² BL. Cleopatra E v fo. 57v.

¹⁰³ Bernard, *The King's Reformation*, p. 600; Marillac wrote to Francis I that "the bishops [are] in great trouble - - [there are] differences upon religious questions, as each party [seeks] to establish what they maintain [which] would destroy those who sustain the contrary." *Letters and Papers*, XV, 736: transcript from Paris, Baschat 1540, PRO 31/3/10.

¹⁰⁴ Cranmer, *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters*, p. 466.

¹⁰⁵ *Documents of the English Reformation*, p. 195. The Thirteen Articles were composed by Cranmer c.1538 and discovered among his papers in the early nineteenth century. They never had any official status and are of interest in revealing his link with Lutherans. His article on justification quotes from the Augsburg Confession.

the Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary, Ten Commandments, Creed and the Sacraments (including the sacrament of penance) in the King's Book.¹⁰⁶ MacCulloch is convinced that "these were no formal or nominal examinations."¹⁰⁷ In the debates over the Six Articles bishops and abbots had decided that they could not find in scripture that Christ had instituted auricular confession¹⁰⁸ and the king wrote to Tunstall that this position was accepted "both by the bishop of Canterbury and me."¹⁰⁹ Without external evidence it seems reasonable to think that Henry, having been progressive on auricular confession in the Six Articles on the basis of scripture, would have been willing to accept further changes on the same grounds, his pride also being at stake; and that the conservative bishops, having had their fingers burned over the Six Articles, would have been unwilling to challenge changes to the statement on the sacrament of penance. Stephen Gardiner later reminisced on Cranmer's defeat over justification in discussions surrounding the King's Book. He named the sub-committee responsible for the definition of justification as Bishops Heath, Thirlby and Day, and Drs Cox, Robinson and Redman, and he forcibly made the point that Henry VIII himself "did speciallie improve (i.e. condemn) the doctrine" of "onely faith."¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, Gardiner said the aim was to produce a statement with which conservatives and evangelicals would agree. He described discussions and compromises among the bishops. "Bysshope Stokesley would somewhat relent in the forme, as Bysshope Foxe dyd the lyke."¹¹¹ Ultimately, he argued, "the Kinges Majesties booke [proved to] be suche a fountain as wherat both parties may fetch water ... and had water ynoughe in yt to serve us and Germany also."¹¹² The outcome was "a radical incoherence"¹¹³ between the statements in the King's Book on justification and the sacrament of penance.

Bray comments that the article on penitence is "extraordinarily long, reflecting concern felt more deeply in England than on the Continent." p. 184.

¹⁰⁶ Wilkins III. 868.

¹⁰⁷ MacCulloch, *Cranmer*, p. 308.

¹⁰⁸ Alec Ryrie, *The Gospel and Henry VIII: Evangelicals in the Early English Reformation* (Cambridge 2003), p. 31: Bishops Cranmer, Latimer, Shaxton, Barlow, Goodricke and Hilsey (evangelicals) were joined by Salcot, Holgate, Warton and Reppes, together with the abbots of Westminster and Gloucester in denying that confession was "necessary by the lawe of god" and "canne not fynde expressly by the worde of god that Auriculare confession is necessary by the same, but thei done sai and affirme that yt is very requysyte and expedient to be obserued and vsed." PRO SP 1/152 fo. 19r.

¹⁰⁹ BL Cleopatra E v fo. 131v.

¹¹⁰ *The Letters of Stephen Gardiner*, pp. 362, 364.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 351

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant* (London 1999), p.58: uses these words to show how by losing a hold of purgatory and not accepting justification by faith, Henry had no basis for a doctrine of salvation. The argument might also apply to rejecting justification by faith and at the same time modifying the sacrament of penance in away more acceptable to evangelicals.

Most historians view the King's Book as a conservative revision of the Bishops' Book. Christopher Haigh claims that it undermined endowed prayers but "it retreated from the Bishops' Book on almost every other issue."¹¹⁴ Margaret Aston describes it as "conspicuously more conservative" than the earlier work.¹¹⁵ Eamon Duffy declares that, together with the Act for the Advancement of True Religion, it was "a catastrophic set-back for the cause of reform."¹¹⁶ Consideration of the statement on the sacrament of penance, however, shows that there were more modifications in the evangelical direction than issues of purgatory and prayers for the dead alone. Historians do not seem to have taken into account Stephen Gardiner's claim that "the Kinges Majestie's book ... had in yt water ynough to serve us and Germany also."¹¹⁷ Since it took a clear stand against justification by faith, how would it have served Germany? Was Gardiner referring to the fact that it equated the sacrament of penance with absolution? Alec Ryrie sees 1543 as "the high watermark of Henrician conservatism", but argues that the King's Book, despite its rigid position on justification, was "not an unmitigated disaster ... its treatment of that mainstay of medieval piety, purgatory and prayer for the dead, was uncompromising."¹¹⁸ Although he makes the point that evangelicals had tried to promote solifidianism by attacking traditional practices, such as auricular confession, purgatory, prayers for the dead, and pilgrimages, which were seen as detracting from the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice, he does not refer to a possible attempt to do this in the article on the sacrament of penance. David Loades recognises that the King's Book was less conventional and opened "the door to dissent on the sacrament of penance", but the only evidence he gives is its uncertainty with regard to the state of souls after death, and he does not refer to the article on penance.¹¹⁹ George Bernard also fails to refer to the article, which would add grist to his argument that "the king's involvement over auricular confession [in the Six Articles] reinforces further the overwhelming case that the Six Articles reflected royal convictions ... and that the king's convictions were not, as the debate over auricular confession shows, to be characterised as straightforwardly conservative."¹²⁰ The fact that Henry dialogued with Cranmer over the Bishops' Book, and subsequently changed his mind in conceding that sacramental confession was useful rather than necessary for

¹¹⁴ Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford 1993), p. 103.

¹¹⁵ Margaret Aston, *England's Iconoclasts, vol.1 Laws against Images* (Oxford 1988), p. 239.

¹¹⁶ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 432.

¹¹⁷ *Letters of Stephen Gardiner*, p. 351.

¹¹⁸ Ryrie, *The Gospel and Henry VIII*, pp. 45, 50.

¹¹⁹ David Loades, *The Religious Culture of Marian England* (London 2010), p. 7.

¹²⁰ Bernard, *The King's Reformation*, p. 505.

salvation, and that Cranmer submitted his declaration on the sacraments to the king, in which he denied the sacramental nature of penance, together with the statement on penance in the King's Book which separates penance from the sacrament, strongly suggest that Henry's radicalism on penitential issues was heavily influenced by Cranmer. Bernard insists that Henry's "religious convictions, complex as they were, [were] none the less coherent and consistent."¹²¹ In the King's Book, however, policy on penance and justification were in fact contradictory rather than coherent. Bernard argues that in seeking a *via media* Henry had his radical side as well as his conservative side, though making the point that his radicalism was not synonymous with Luther's doctrine of justification.¹²² MacCulloch, on the other hand, describes Henry's radicalism as "radical incoherence",¹²³ although he too fails to refer to the statement on the sacrament of penance. Since justification by "onely faith"¹²⁴ is implied strongly in this statement, Cranmer would doubtless have agreed with his biographer's description of the king's theology.

The Article on Justification was a serious defeat for Cranmer¹²⁵ and undermined the gains he may have felt he made by the statement on the sacrament of penance. Moreover the subsequent Act for the Advancement of True Religion forbade preaching or any publications which were not in agreement with the doctrine set forth by the king since 1540. Cranmer responded to this defeat by continuing to gather evidence against this conservative position on justification. In his library was a treatise on which he had inscribed "De iustificione D Redman"¹²⁶, which reflected John Fisher's doctrinal position. The third section of his 'Great Commonplaces' contains material on justification which has "been assembled as a systematic attempt to demonstrate that Protestant reformed soteriology was the true heir to Augustine's writings and that its doctrine was in agreement with other recognised theological authorities."¹²⁷ Where scholastics saw grace enabling good works (prevenient grace) by

¹²¹ G W Bernard, "The piety of Henry VIII", in *Education of a Christian Society. Humanism and the Reformation in Britain and the Netherlands*, eds. N Scott Amos, Andrew Pettegree, and Henk van Nierop (Aldershot 1999), p. 88.

¹²² G W Bernard, "The Making of Religious Policy, 1533-1546: Henry VIII and the Search for the Middle Way", pp. 321-349.

¹²³ MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant*, p. 58.

¹²⁴ *The Letters of Stephen Gardiner*, p. 362.

¹²⁵ Ryrie, *The Gospel and Henry VIII*, p. 45.

¹²⁶ Null, *Thomas Cranmer's Doctrine of Repentance*, pp. 266-7: Tunstall published this in 1555. He claims that Redman presented the manuscript to Henry. Null suggests that Henry may have passed it to Cranmer for his comments, which seem to have been ignored.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 262-4.

which justification might be attained, Cranmer saw Augustine as teaching that justification was by grace alone and was received by faith. In his *Annotations* he had written

They that think they may come to justification... by their own deeds and merits ... they go from Christ, they renounce his grace: *evacuate estis a Christo*, saith St Paul, Gal. v., *quicumque in lege justificamini, a gratia exidistis*. They be not partakers of the justice that he hath procured, or the merciful benefits that be given by him. For St Paul saith a general rule for all them that seek such by-paths to obtain justification: those, saith he, which will not knowledge the justness or righteousness which cometh of God but go about to advance their own righteousness, shall never come to that righteousness which we have by God; which is the righteousness of Christ: by whom only all the saints in heaven, and all other that have been saved, have been reputed righteous and justified. So that to Christ our only Saviour and Redeemer, on whose righteousness both their and our justification depend, is to be ascribed all the glory thereof.¹²⁸

In his gleanings from Augustine he recorded those sayings which showed faith as more than assent to propositions about God but presented it as “an interior divine gift by which the believer was joined to God.”¹²⁹ So it is by faith that the believer appropriates the sacrifice of Christ as the means of forgiveness. This “must needs kindle a warm fire of love in our hearts towards God and towards all other for the love of God, ... *in summa*, a firm intent and purpose to do all that is good and to leave all that is evil.”¹³⁰ This is the spirit of repentance which for Cranmer is the sign of a person’s justification.

He who now has turned to God, grieves from his heart to have sinned, and he has in his heart a firm amendment of a better life ... he has rejected all will to sin. Why is he not already just?¹³¹

Cranmer had “systematically narrowed the requirements for justification down to having a right will made known by repentance.”¹³² This is evidenced also by the separation of penance (repentance) from the sacrament in the statement on the sacrament of penance in the King’s Book, and the case where there was no priest to give absolution to the repentant sinner. Making the focus of the sacrament absolution

¹²⁸ Jenkyns 2. 95-96.

¹²⁹ Null, *Thomas Cranmer’s Doctrine of Repentance*, p. 165.

¹³⁰ Jenkyns 2. 70.

¹³¹ Null, *Thomas Cranmer’s Doctrine of Repentance*, p. 186.

¹³² Ibid.

and the comforting of the penitent's conscience changes the emphasis of auricular confession from the sacramental to the pastoral. Cranmer's penitential theology, despite the setback of the articles on justification and good works, was set on a course that would lead to his 'Homily of Salvation' and the exhortations in the communion services in the reign of Edward.

LITURGY, PRIMERS AND PENITENCE

Cranmer was dependent upon the good-will of the king, especially during and after he was accused of heresy by the prebendaries and justices of Kent.¹³³ Rather than arguing his case in convocations it was homilies and vernacular liturgy that would be his means of conveying evangelical doctrine and teaching on repentance to the English people in the final years of Henry VIII's reign. In 1542 the bishops in convocation had agreed to the publication of homilies "to make for stai of such errors as were then by ygnorant preachers sparkeled among the people."¹³⁴ These do not survive as such but some of them may have been incorporated into the 1547 Homilies. In any case Cranmer spoke of them positively in his correspondence with Stephen Gardiner and it may be deduced from this that they expressed reformist doctrines.

It was "various authors of contemporary English primers [who] brought Cranmer inspiration" for his liturgical work.¹³⁵ MacCulloch shows that some phrases and even whole collects, used by Cranmer in his liturgical writings, can be traced back to George Joye's *Hortulus anime*, which had probably been translated by Richard Taverner and were also incorporated into the 1545 *King's Primer*.¹³⁶ Robert Redman's 1535 primer included the translation of a prayer from an eighth-century Gelasian sacramentary, which with various emendations became the Collect for Peace in the 1549 Prayer Book, and in all subsequent editions. While retaining the traditional pattern of the primer, English primers subtly utilised material in keeping with

¹³³ Ralph Morice, "Anecdote and Character of Thomas Cranmer", *Narratives of the Days of the Reformation*, ed. J G Nichols (Camden Society LXXVII, London 1859), pp. 250-58.

¹³⁴ *The Letters of Stephen Gardiner*, p. 296.

¹³⁵ MacCulloch, *Cranmer*, p. 418.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

evangelical doctrine. Prefaces and explanations enable authors to use traditional material and at the same time convey evangelical doctrine. Bishop Hilsey explains in his 1539 Primer¹³⁷ that despite false promises in earlier primers of delivering fifteen souls from purgatory by saying these prayers “yet are the prayers selfe right good and virtuous ... and for as much as these prayers are a goodly and godly meditacion of Christes passion, we have not thought it nether to us grevous, nether to thys primer superfluous to set them in thys place.”¹³⁸

Primers usually had a penitential tone, a tendency which “was re-enforced by the highly penitential mood of sixteenth-century religion in general.”¹³⁹ William Marshall had introduced Savonarola’s meditation on the 51st Psalm into the 1538 edition of his primer.¹⁴⁰ Whereas the royal proclamation (6th May 1545) preceding the publication of the *King’s Primer* focused on the need for uniformity and an aid to religious education, the preface to the diglot edition stressed the need for a spiritual understanding of prayer. This “seems to bear the imprint of Cranmer’s composition.”¹⁴¹ In keeping with tradition the *King’s Primer* included the seven penitential psalms, but followed them with psalms of the passion, and then the passion narrative from St John’s gospel.¹⁴² This directed attention to Christ’s death as the means of redemption. These were followed by “Praiers of the Passion”, which Butterworth suggests were written by Cranmer. They focused on the sinfulness of humanity and the mercy of God in redemption through Christ’s passion. Duffy discerns that “a consistently reforming emphasis is evident.”¹⁴³ After a large collection of prayers the primer concludes with a general confession, followed by two prayers of Vives against the devil and “for the desire of the lyfe to come.”¹⁴⁴ This ending suggests that there is an alternative to auricular confession for the penitent devotee.¹⁴⁵ Katherine Parr’s *Lamentacion of a Sinner*, moreover, shows that penitence was becoming a deeply personal and significant matter in the lives of some even in the

¹³⁷ *Three Primers put forth in the reign of Henry VIII*, (Oxford 1848), pp. 321-436.

¹³⁸ Helen C White, *The Tudor Books of Private Devotion* (Wisconsin 1951), p. 217.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

¹⁴⁰ *Three Primers*, p. 130.

¹⁴¹ Charles C Butterworth, *The English Primers 1529-49* (Philadelphia 1953), p. 258.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 259-71.

¹⁴³ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 446.

¹⁴⁴ Butterworth, *The English Primers*, p. 271.

¹⁴⁵ White *The Tudor Books of Private Devotion*, pp. 85-6: suggests that this primer is “anti-monastic, anti-papal, and possibly anti-confessional.”

royal household who were closest to the king; the sort of people most likely to make use of the primers. *Lamentacion of a Sinner* is a book of personal penitential devotion which reveals Katherine's evangelical faith, and though it was written while she was queen it was not published until after Henry's death. In the preface William Cecil sees her repentance as a heavenly regeneration.¹⁴⁶ David Starkey goes so far as to suggest that Katherine's Privy Chamber was "a conventicle of the 'new' religion."¹⁴⁷ For those who used primers penitence could be intensely personal focusing on the death of Christ as the basis on which sins were forgiven. "The handling of scriptural narrative was for the sixteenth century devotional writer not only a means of satisfying perennial spiritual needs, but also of reinforcing what he held to be the right doctrinal positions and attitudes",¹⁴⁸ for example the use of verses of scripture in the *King's Primer*¹⁴⁹ in place of references to the Virgin Mary, and the use of the Johannine passion narrative. Although the pattern of the 1545 primer followed the tradition and included the *Dirige*, it so expressed the aims of evangelical reformers that Duffy sees it as "a notable blow at one of the strongholds [i.e. primers] of traditional religion."¹⁵⁰

"Cranmer's steady liturgical work bore its first substantial fruit ... in the new English litany, published with royal approval in 1544."¹⁵¹ The service had ancient penitential overtones. St Basil the Great (d.379) used the word litany to signify penitential services.¹⁵² It was widely used for church processions. Cranmer drew from the Sarum and York rites and also from the litany by Melanchthon and Bucer in Hermann von Wied's 'Consultatio'. The new English service was much shorter. Where there had been sixty two invocations to saints and angels, Cranmer reduced these to three. The service opens with penitential invocations and Cranmer intensified the penitential feeling by eight times making penitents describe themselves as "miserable sinners". An abbreviated form of Cranmer's litany was included in *The King's Primer* "for edifying and stirring of devotion of all true faithful Christian hearts." The readers are advised that the litany is not only for public worship but also that they may read it

¹⁴⁶ *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works. Vol. 3 Katherine Parr*, selected and introduced by Janel Mueller (Aldershot 1996), no pagination.

¹⁴⁷ David Starkey, *The Reign of Henry VIII: Personalities and Politics* (London 1985), p. 141.

¹⁴⁸ White, *Tudor Books of Private Devotion*, p. 227.

¹⁴⁹ *Three Primers*, pp. 437-end.

¹⁵⁰ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (London 1992), p. 444.

¹⁵¹ Ryrie, *The Gospel and Henry VIII*, p. 51.

¹⁵² Neil and Willoughby, *The Tutorial Prayer Book*, p. 137.

“quietly and softly to themselves.”¹⁵³ The lay devotee did not need the mediation of a priest.

But how much did evangelicals achieve by pressing forward their ideas on repentance in these ways? After a careful examination of the *King's Primer* Eamon Duffy suggests that “under the exuberance of traditionalist rejoicing over victory [through the ‘King’s Book’] the foundations were slowly but decisively shifting.”¹⁵⁴ Those who used primers were praying into their minds and hearts evangelical doctrine, not least about repentance. They were to confess their sins to God and even use a general confession and find comfort in God’s word. Primers did not reach the illiterate but had a considerable power to influence the thinking of those at court and among the nobility.

OTHER MEANS OF PERSUASION

When they were not allowed to preach their message, supporters of Catherine of Aragon had used other means of persuasion in defending traditional orthodoxy. Some found it effective to use the ‘Tyndalian’ vocabulary of obedience to argue against solifidianism in favour of the orthodox doctrine of good works.¹⁵⁵ Although Stephen Gardiner, in his *De Vera Obedientia* “makes the king head of the church by turning him into a quasi-clergyman,”¹⁵⁶ he argues against faith alone and substitutes ‘the obedience of faith’ quoting “obedientia fidei” from Galatians, as he seeks to salvage the Catholic tradition. John Heywood, who was married to Thomas More’s niece, wrote a series of plays which were part of an energetic campaign by William Rastell [his publisher] to support Thomas More after his resignation as Chancellor in his private stand for the old beliefs and loyalties.”¹⁵⁷ *The Pardoner and the Frere* (1533) sounds “a conservative alarm at the confusing and rapidly deteriorating religious situation in England.”¹⁵⁸ It is especially concerned with the reformers’ attack on the

¹⁵³ *Three Primers*, p. 480.

¹⁵⁴ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 447.

¹⁵⁵ Richard Rex, ‘The Crisis of Obedience: God’s Word and Henry’s Reformation’, *The Historical Journal* 39.4 (1990), p. 864.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 886.

¹⁵⁷ *The Plays of John Heywood*, eds. Richard Axton and Peter Happe (Cambridge 1991), p. 7.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

penitential system. The play contains many close parallels with the wording of More's *Dialogue and Confutation*. Frere is associated with the Lutheran heresy and enters "to preche the gospel." Pardoner accuses him of offering the congregation "no salve for theyr sore".¹⁵⁹ But Heywood also recognised the abuses of Pardoner who offers those who buy his indulgences "clene remysson – without confession or contrycyon."¹⁶⁰ Heywood was for correcting abuses but not introducing doctrinal reform.

At about the same time as Heywood was producing a *Masque of King Arthur's Knights* for Cromwell in 1539, John Bale's company was presenting his play *King Johan*. Bale was an evangelical whose plays "reveal his wholehearted engagement with Cromwell's reform programme."¹⁶¹ *King Johan* is such a play "as takes one to the heart of religious and political controversy in this period."¹⁶² In it Bale attacks auricular confession "as an instrument of the alleged papal conspiracy to subjugate princes to Roman authority."¹⁶³ In the play the Pope is named as "Usurped Power". His campaign for political dominance consists of:

First eare confession, than pardons, than purgatory
 Sayntes worchyppynge than, sekkyng of ymagery
 Than laten service, with the ceremonyes mony - -
 I wylle alleso reyse up, the fower beggyng orders
 That they may preche lyes, in alle crysten borderes.¹⁶⁴

Although the Six Articles (published in June 1539) would soon declare auricular confession to be "expedient and necessary to be retained and continued, used and frequented in the Church of God",¹⁶⁵ Bale linked it with the Papacy, and tried to undermine the ritual by dramatically depicting it in burlesque form. This was an attack on current practice without suggesting an alternative. However in his *Comedy Concerning Three Laws*, although Bale continued to attack the alleged corruptions of the Church of Rome, through the character "Gospel", he was able to make a more positive statement of evangelical doctrine. Gospel affirms:

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 94, line 16.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 40, lines 321, 323.

¹⁶¹ Andrew Pettegree, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion* (Cambridge 2005), p. 90.

¹⁶² Greg Walker, *Plays of Persuasion: Drama and Politics at the Court of Henry VIII* (Cambridge 1991), p. 221.

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 212.

¹⁶⁴ John Bale, *King Johan*, ed. J Payne Collier (London 1838), p. 42, lines 1112-7, 11120-1.

¹⁶⁵ *Documents of the English Reformation*, p. 224.

In the blood of Christ I am a full forgiveness
Where faith is grounded with sure confidence
I am grace, and so high tidings of gladness ...
As raise the sinner and pacify his conscience.¹⁶⁶

Though the play was written around 1538, this was around the time of the notorious Six Articles when evangelicals needed to exercise caution, so it was not published until 1548. Nevertheless even in the late 1530s “outside the confines of the court drama played an important role in promoting the new evangelical agenda.”¹⁶⁷

From 1540 Bale wrote from exile. He saw Henry as at heart an evangelical who was being deceived by popish bishops. He imagined that they have a plan to restore the Pope by auricular confession and “to bringe the people in bondage of blyndnesse”.¹⁶⁸ He claimed that evangelicals were the true heirs of the New Testament church, and that Rome had strayed from the primitive faith. It has been argued that “Bale’s most controversial technique is his use of ecclesiastical and secular history, or rather, his own particular version of history,”¹⁶⁹ which showed how popes had used confession, purgatory and other doctrines and practices as a means to gain money and power. To use history to attack the papacy was acceptable, and could be a more oblique way of criticising current practice than sermons, tracts or treatises, and made the point that evangelical understanding was not a novelty. Bale “emphasised continuity between early Christian martyrs, those persecuted by the medieval church, and those who died in defence of the Reformation.”¹⁷⁰ He compared Anne Agnew’s martyrdom at Smithfield with that of Blandina, a second century martyr.¹⁷¹

Unlike Bale, Richard Taverner remained in England in the 1540s and contributed to the production of the *King’s Primer*.¹⁷² He had been in the service of Cromwell and the king as a translator. He translated the *Augsburg Confession* and Melanchthon’s *Apology* in 1536, along

¹⁶⁶ *Voices of the English Reformation*, ed. John King (Pennsylvania 2004), p. 94.

¹⁶⁷ Pettegee, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion*, p. 91.

¹⁶⁸ John Bale, *Epistell exhortynge of an Englyshe Christiane* (Antwerp 1544), sig. B2r (RSTC 1291).

¹⁶⁹ Rainer Pineas, “John Bale’s Nondramatic Works of Religious Controversy”, *Studies in the Renaissance*, 9 (1962), p. 222.

¹⁷⁰ Helen L Parish, *Monks, Miracles and Magic: Medieval representations of the Medieval Church* (London 2005), p. 157.

¹⁷¹ John Bale, *The first examinacyon of Anne Askewe lately martyred in Smythfelde* (Wesel 1546), p. 7, (RSTC 848).

¹⁷² Butterworth, *The English Primers*, p. 272: considers various contributions to the *King’s Primer* by Taverner concluding that “there is at least some support for the hypothesis” that the primer was Richard Taverner’s work.

with other Lutheran works. From 1538 to 1540 he issued translations of popular ethical, pietistic and doctrinal works, including six volumes of Erasmus. He presented evangelical teaching on justification and repentance in his catechism and postils. In 1539, the year of the Six Articles, he put forth his *Catechisme or Institution of the Christen religion*, published *cum privilegio*. In it he taught that “whereas by workes we be unryghteous, by fayth in Christ we be made ryghteouse.” With regard to good works he conceded that they are allowed before God for he “seeth his owne ryghteousnesse in them.” But he went on the stress “He can not but allowe them, yet must we take hede, least beare oure self so hault in the wayne affiance and trust of our good works, that we forget not how we be iustified by the fayth in Christ alonely.”¹⁷³ In this Taverner, P J Yost argues, was close to the doctrinal position of Tyndale in conceiving “justification in covenantal terms.”¹⁷⁴ In 1540 he wrote his *Postyl on the epistles and gospels*, which went through five editions in its first year and was reprinted in 1542 and 1545. This, according to Coverdale, was examined by the king himself¹⁷⁵ and was printed with “copy of the kynges gracious privilege.” In the opening postil on a verse from Romans 5, “Christ was delivered for our synnes, and rose agayne for the iustification of us”, Taverner declared “only bringe thou faith to Christes holy word and sacrament, let thy repentaunce show thy faith, let thy purpose of amendment and obedience of thy harte to God’s law, declare thy true virtue.”¹⁷⁶ This anticipates Cranmer’s development with regard to justification. Having abandoned penance as a sacrament, Cranmer “recast the medieval emphasis on contrition into a Protestant practice of repentance”, not making repentance a good work initiating justification but seeing it an acknowledgement of God’s glory and human helplessness.¹⁷⁷

Another important evangelical writer on the subject of penitence was Thomas Becon. In 1542 he published *Potation for Lent*, which is a sequel to his evangelistic *Christmas Banquet*. It is written in dramatic style with four characters discussing “the moost comfortable sacrament of penance”¹⁷⁸ and the ceremonies connected with Lent, for which he gives an evangelical explanation. Ryrie points out that “creative

¹⁷³ Richard Taverner, *A Catechisme or Institution of the christen religion*, (London 1539) pp. 32-35.

¹⁷⁴ J K Yost, “German Protestant Humanism and the English Reformation: Richard Taverner and official translation”, *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance* 32 (1970), p. 621.

¹⁷⁵ *Coverdale’s Remains*, ed. George Pearson (PS. Cambridge 1846), p. 498.

¹⁷⁶ Richard Taverner, *Postyls on the epistles and gospels* (London 1540).

¹⁷⁷ Null, *Thomas Cranmer’s Doctrine of Repentance*, pp. 192-4.

¹⁷⁸ Thomas Becon, *A potacion or drinkeinge for this holy time of Lent* (London 1542), B.v, RSTC 1749; in the 1566 edition he speaks of “the doctrine of penance, as they term it.”

interpretations of the ceremonies could yield distinctive evangelical messages.”¹⁷⁹ Becon argues that fasting is not only doing without meat but eschewing evil. Ashes are a reminder of what humans are. Covering images speaks of the fact that all have sinned, should mourn for those who have died in sin, and is a warning against turning images into idols.¹⁸⁰ For Becon penance meant putting off the old and putting on the new. He defined it in traditional terms. Contrition is a heart humbled by the knowledge of sin yet trusting in God’s promises.¹⁸¹ Confession is defined as: confessing our faith; confessing our sin to God; admitting and confessing our sin to those we have offended; and open confession of sins before the congregation, as in the manner of the early church. This leads to questions about auricular confession, which, it is agreed, has been greatly abused. This is followed by a discussion on the requirements of a godly confessor who should be learned and discrete and bring peace to troubled consciences through the comfortable words of absolution.¹⁸² Christ alone is “the omnissufficient satisfaction for all our sins unto God the Father” by the shedding of his blood.¹⁸³ This dramatic sermon ends with a series of exhortations: to put away all sinful living and put on godly virtues, trusting not in good works but in God’s grace; to hunger for righteousness and to receive by faith.

Bale disbanded his players and went into exile after the fall of his patron Cromwell, and the Act for the Advancement of True Religion in 1543 specifically prohibited interludes and printed matter meddling “with interpretations of Scripture, contrary to the doctrine set forth or to be set forth by the kynges maieste.”¹⁸⁴ Becon was arrested in 1543. He recanted at Paul’s Cross and was made to destroy copies of each of his books before the crowd, denouncing the heresies they contained. His method in *A Potacion for Lent* and his consequent arrest show the problems for evangelicals after 1540 in stating their beliefs openly. The fact that despite the danger, Maylor and Gough published a second edition in 1543¹⁸⁵ shows that there were some who would

¹⁷⁹ Ryrie, *The Gospel and Henry VIII*, p. 130.

¹⁸⁰ Thomas Becon, *A potacion or drinkyne for this holy time of Lent*, F.ii, H.ii, H.iv.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., D. iii..

¹⁸² Ibid., D.v-E.iiii.

¹⁸³ Ibid., E.v.

¹⁸⁴ Pettegree, *The Culture of Persuasion*, p. 90.

¹⁸⁵ RSTC, 1750.

still take risks to read their message.¹⁸⁶ The effectiveness of postils, catechisms, plays, and other ways of presenting the evangelical message of justification by faith and critical of the sacrament of penance is seen in the considerable efforts made to silence them, culminating in the Act for the Advancement of True Religion.

THE END OF HENRY'S REFORMS

In 1546 John Hooper wrote to Heinrich Bullinger that “our King has destroyed the Pope but not popery.”¹⁸⁷ But was it not, as the illustration at the front of the Great Bible showed, Henry who had given the English Bible to the nation? Over the course of Henry VIII's reign there had been a significant loosening of the old penitential system. Pardons and indulgences had gone. Pilgrimages were prohibited and purgatory was uncertain, though Henry's will showed he was not prepared himself to take chances about the after-life. The separation of penance from the sacrament in the ‘King's Book’ paved the way for a change from the sacramental to the pastoral in penitential thinking. Even auricular confession no longer had the authority of being instituted by Christ, and increasingly it was seen to be more important to be repentant and to confess to God, and that this might be done in a general confession as well as individually. This weakening of the traditional system, along with the dissolution of the monasteries, arguably meant that there was no great resistance to the 1545 Chantries Act, though in fact it was hardly implemented during Henry's last years.

Bernard argues that the religious changes that took place from 1533 to 1546 are best described as “the *king's* reformation, rather than catholic reform or protestant reformation.”¹⁸⁸ It has been demonstrated in this chapter that the period 1536-47 saw significant changes in attitudes to the penitential system. These suggest that over this issue Henry was open to persuasion. The statement on the sacrament of penance in the King's Book and the penitential devotion in the *King's Primer* allowed officially much of what evangelicals were calling for in their preaching. However since Henry

¹⁸⁶ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 430: seems to miss the point when he says that “the pamphlet contained a detailed ‘rationale’ of the ceremonies of Holy Week ... and [Becon] displayed little discomfort with any of them” when in fact he used them as a means of teaching what evangelical penitential practice might be.

¹⁸⁷ *Original Letter relative to the English Reformation*, ed. Hastings Robinson (PS. Cambridge 1847), 1. 33.

¹⁸⁸ Bernard, *The King's Reformation*, p. 605.

maintained his commitment to the mass, and hostility to Luther and the doctrine of justification by faith, his religious policy in this instance was not merely ambiguous it was contradictory. Henry's religious policy may have been a search for a middle way, as Bernard argues,¹⁸⁹ but by giving up on purgatory and rejecting justification by faith he had no basis for a theology of salvation. The arguments, in this chapter, that he was influenced by Cranmer and that his policy was in parts contradictory go firmly against Bernard's hypothesis in his articles on Henry's piety and consistency in searching for a middle way. His policy was in fact inconsistent and incoherent as MacCulloch has shown.¹⁹⁰ When the opportunity came Cranmer was prepared to work for a reformation consistent with his theology of justification.

¹⁸⁹ Bernard, "The Making of Religious Policy, 1533-1546: Henry VIII and the Search for the Middle Way", pp. 321-349.

¹⁹⁰ MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant*, p. 58.

4. REPENTANCE AND PROTESTANTS IN THE REIGNS OF EDWARD VI AND MARY I

The death of Henry VIII marked a sudden transition in the story of the Reformation of the English church. So far it had been “the King’s Reformation”; now it became a Protestant Reformation, and its driving force was Archbishop Cranmer. Henry’s church was distinctive: anti-papal, anti-heretical, Biblicist, sacramental, and Erasmian. Cranmer identified with continental reformers. High on his agenda was solifidianism. The sacrament of penance, with its obligatory auricular confession, was associated in his mind with good works. His early abandoning of this was a sign that the Protestant Reformation had begun and there would be a new approach to pastoral ministry to penitents.

Ashley Null has carefully traced the development of Cranmer’s penitential theology. He argues that Cranmer was still thinking in sacramental terms in 1549.¹ This chapter will argue that having established his position with regard to the sacrament during Henry’s reign, in the new regime Cranmer approached penitence in evangelistic and pastoral mode rather than sacramental: his focus, and that of Edwardian Protestants more generally, was on preaching repentance and comforting those with troubled consciences. Neither Null nor other commentators have taken into account the new pastoral role for ministers in the 1547 injunctions. MacCulloch, for example, presents the injunctions and the subsequent visitation as a destructive “holocaust”, but fails to mention their positive side in the introduction of homilies and pastoral ministry.²

Apart from Null’s work on Cranmer, there has to date been little research on penitential theology and its practical outworking in pastoral ministry in the writings of the Edwardian reformers. John Bradford, having been deputy

¹ Ashley Null, *Thomas Cranmer’s Doctrine of Repentance; Renewing the Power to Love* (Oxford 2000), pp. 239- 240.

² Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant: Edward VI and the Protestant Reformation* (London 1999), p. 73.

paymaster for Henry's forces in Boulogne in 1544, was converted to evangelicalism through the preaching of Latimer at the beginning of Edward's short reign. He became an eminent preacher, and during the Marian persecution he exercised from prison a remarkable pastoral ministry by correspondence with fearful evangelicals. His sermon 'On Repentance' and his extensive pastoral letters provide excellent material to consider him as a case study of what preachers were saying about penitence during Edward's reign and how they applied their message pastorally to those who were troubled in the subsequent persecution. Although Foxe and Strype saw Bradford's significance recent historians have not given him the attention that his ministry deserves³.

From being a small but influential group under Henry, evangelicals found themselves to be a minority within the population but controlling the government under Edward. This meant that they could enforce change by statute and could overcome conservative opposition, as when Gardiner and Bonner were deprived of their sees. Nevertheless, "the result was not only elation but disorientation"⁴ they were not always at ease working with the responsibilities and pressures of government.⁵ They found themselves up against those seeking personal benefit from the dissolution of the chantries and other "carnal gospellers", and were increasingly aware that they were unable to coerce people to repent. Nevertheless, as Andrew Pettegree has shown, by 1553 Protestantism had "made sufficient progress ... to leave a robust residue; indeed, a far more robust and numerous remnant than has often been recognised."⁶ Cranmer's focus on preaching and pastoral care played an important part in this. The early death of Edward changed everything. The second part of this chapter will consider how the experience of the Marian persecution affected the penitential thinking of Protestants and the difference between those who remained in England, especially those imprisoned and

³ John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1570) Book 11, p. 1805 variorum edition (hriOnline Sheffield 2004); John Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials* (Oxford 1822), 3.1.362.

⁴ Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford 2013), p. 418: argues that they relied on persecution as evidence of their election, and preferred to see themselves as "a poor, persecuted little flock."

⁵ Catharine Davies, *A Religion of the Word* (Manchester 2002), p. 231.

⁶ Andrew Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism: Six Studies* (Aldershot 1996), p. 154.

ultimately executed for their faith, those who fled into exile on the continent, and those evangelicals who “accommodated” with the religious requirements of the Marian regime. It will also suggest that these experiences forged a new and distinctive English Protestantism, which found its expression in Elizabethan “practical divinity.”⁷

PART ONE: PENITENCE AND THE EDWARDIAN REFORMATION

It was eucharistic theology and liturgy rather than penitential theology which dominated the thinking of evangelicals during the short reign of Edward VI.⁸ Nevertheless these were interrelated as the concern of Cranmer and leading evangelicals was to express justification by faith alone as fundamental to the formularies and worship of the Church of England. The reformed liturgy, under the direction of Cranmer, became the official context of the church’s penitential practice. “Thomas Cranmer was the one man who guaranteed the continuity of the changes and was chiefly responsible for planning them as they occurred, although the more practical politicians decided on the pace at which they should be put into effect.”⁹ The direction of reform was very rapidly asserted¹⁰ when, just six months after Henry’s death, the Duke of Somerset and the Council issued injunctions, in the name of the king, as a prelude to a royal visitation “to plant true religion to the extirpation of all hypocrisy, enormities and abuses.”¹¹ Some of the injunctions were a repeat of Cromwell’s injunctions of 1536 and 1538. Item 9 repeated the 1538 instruction to priests to hear confessions in Lent and to make sure the confessant could recite the creed, the Lord’s Prayer and the Ten Commandments. However, the new injunctions were a charter for revolution, not only in their instruction to destroy all shrines, candlesticks, pictures, paintings, glasses, and windows, so that “there remain no

⁷ See pp. 189f.

⁸ *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662*, ed. Brian Cummings (Oxford 2011) There is no reference to the penitential sections in the introduction.

⁹ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer* (London 1996), p. 366.

¹⁰ W K Jordan, *Edward VI The Young King* (London 1968), p. 128: “The course of policy was firmly and clearly set when within a few weeks England was to be a Protestant Nation.”

¹¹ *Documents of the English Reformation*, ed. Gerald Bray (Cambridge 1990), p. 247.

memory of ... feigned miracles, pilgrimages, idolatry, and superstition”,¹² but also in their intention to change the focus of priestly ministry from the administration of the sacraments, to preaching, teaching and pastoral care. Clergy were instructed to “learn, and have always in readiness, such comfortable places and sentences of Scripture as do set forth the mercy, benefits and goodness of Almighty God, towards all penitent and believing persons, that they may at all times, when necessity shall require, promptly comfort their flock with the lively Word of God, which is the only stay of man’s conscience.”¹³ The destructive elements in the new injunctions have attracted the attention of historians, such as Duffy and MacCulloch,¹⁴ but there were also positive elements that deserve consideration. The words ‘comfort’ and ‘conscience’ appear frequently in Edwardian religious publications, almost always in relation to penitential issues.¹⁵ Where the Henrician injunctions had focused on education and administration, these added a pastoral dimension, and gave Edwardian Protestants “a strong sense of the importance of the pastoral role.”¹⁶ The ministry of the word was to provide comfort to the troubled conscience since the assurance of God’s forgiveness was based on the word of God rather than the sacrament.

The *Book of Homilies* was published on the same day that the injunctions were issued (31st July 1547) and homilies were to be read in the churches every Sunday. As Susan Wabuda has argued “The placement of the *Book of Homilies* in every parish for the clergy to read to the laity was as great a landmark in the English Reformation, in its way, as Erasmus’s *Ecclesiastes* had been.”¹⁷ The homilies provided both model sermons and a clear exposition of justification by faith. Three of the homilies, ‘Of Salvation’, ‘Of Lively Faith’, and ‘Of Good Works’, were by Cranmer himself and “established solifidianism as the official soteriology of the Edwardian era, much to the objection of Stephen

¹² Ibid., pp. 256-7 items 32, and 35.

¹³ Ibid., p. 253, item 22.

¹⁴ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant* (London 1999), pp. 69-73; Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (London 1992), pp. 450-452.

¹⁵ For example Thomas Becon, *The Castell of Comforte*. (London 1549?), sig. F, iii: “so comfortable a thyng is to a troubled conscience, for to heare any thyng that may quiet it ... they were very much comforted when they hearde Sainct Peter, it was hope of theyr synnes to be forgiven, so that they repenent theym of their wickedness.”

¹⁶ Davies, *A Religion of the Word*, pp. 100-101.

¹⁷ Susan Wabuda, *Preaching during the English Reformation* (Cambridge 2000), p. 144: *Ecclesiastes* (1535) was Erasmus’s handbook on preaching.

Gardiner.”¹⁸ In the homily ‘Of Salvation’ he explains that since all are sinners and have no righteousness of their own, all must seek righteousness from God. To obtain this three things are required: God’s mercy, Christ’s justice (Christ fulfilled the law by his life, and assuaged God’s wrath against sin by his sacrificial death), and a true and lively faith (lively because it produces good works).¹⁹ Such a faith begins with repentance seeking forgiveness, and goes on in repentance “determining ... through his grace, to obey and serve him in keeping his commandments, and never to turn back again to sin.” But without true repentance a man will live “after his own sensual mind and pleasure, not regarding to know God’s word, and much less to live according thereunto.” Such faith is not lively but dead.²⁰ Repentance, according to Cranmer’s homilies, is the key to a lively, justifying faith. In repentance and faith the comfort of the gospel is to be found. Protestant preaching had a pastoral dimension. Justification by faith was to be at the heart of the preachers’ message as they called people to repent. To try to ensure that preachers would be faithful to the word of God and not encourage disobedience a proclamation of 24th April 1548 prohibited unlicensed preaching.²¹

LITURGY

A watershed moment came in the wake of yet another proclamation (30th March 1548).²² Here was another indication that penitential ministry was to be changed from being sacramental to pastoral. It was announced that Parliament had enacted that the body and blood of Christ should be ministered to the laity in “both kinds”, that is that they should receive both the bread and wine at Communion. The *Order of the Communion* was published in English for this new contingency as a supplement to the service, “without the varying of any other rite or ceremony in the Mass (until other order shall be provided).”²³ The

¹⁸ Ashley Null, *Thomas Cranmer’s Doctrine of Repentance*, p. 214.

¹⁹ Thomas Cranmer, *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters*, ed. John E Cox (PS. Cambridge 1846), p. 130.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 135, 136, 139.

²¹ *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, eds. Paul L Hughes and James F Larkin (London 1964), 1. 303: Reasons given were not only that unlicensed preachers incited disobedience, but that they did the same in confession.

²² *Ibid.*, 1. 300.

²³ *The Two Liturgies in the reign of King Edward VI*, ed. J Ketley (PS. Cambridge 1844), p. 4.

‘Order’ begins with an exhortation (used as the second exhortation in the 1549 communion service) by the vicar or curate instructing those who will come to communion to prepare themselves. Traditionally this would have been by auricular confession and the sacrament of penance. Now they were required to “search and examine [their] own consciences”, following which they were to repent and confess their sins to God, to seek his mercy and pardon and to promise to amend their lives, and especially to be reconciled to their neighbours.²⁴ Cranmer was at last free to implement views he had held since the early 1540s: the sacrament of penance was not necessary for salvation, and auricular confession was no longer to be obligatory.²⁵ For some this would have given a sense of liberation from the tyranny of the confessional, but for others a sense of danger that controls were being removed. An optional addition, for any one whose conscience was troubled and lacked “comfort or counsel”, is that he may confess “and open his sin and grief secretly” to a “discreet and learned Priest taught in the law of God” to receive “comfort and absolution, to the satisfaction of his mind, and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness”. Whereas in the sacrament the penitent could not be sure he had confessed all his sins or that the penance he performed was a sufficient satisfaction, now, the exhortation assures him of God’s forgiveness, by the ministry of the word of God. The exhortation then requires those who are satisfied with a general confession not to be offended by those who need “to their further satisfying, the auricular and secret Confession to the Priest”, nor are those who feel the need of confession to a priest to be offended with those who are satisfied “with their humble confession to God, and the general confession of the Church.”²⁶ There is no reference to the sacrament of penance, and auricular confession has become optional, a pastoral rather than a sacramental matter. Ashley Null sees the fact that the confessor is to be learned “in the law of God” (Cranmer changed this to have him learned in “the Word of God” in 1552) as juridical, and that this means that Cranmer was still

²⁴ *Documents of the English Reformation*, p. 254: Item 25 of the injunctions had instructed curates “in no wise admit to the receiving [of communion, any] who hath maliciously contended with his neighbour.”

²⁵ Cranmer, *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters*, p. 115-117: in his answer to *Questions concerning the Sacraments*.

²⁶ *The Two Liturgies*, p. 5.

thinking in sacramental and not pastoral terms.²⁷ But the fact that auricular confession was optional and for the comfort of conscience, and that he pressed the equal validity of general confession, suggests otherwise.

The 1548 *Order of the Communion* was the beginning of Cranmer's liturgical revolution, though since the 1552 Prayer Book was decisively Protestant it is hard "to capture any real sense of the radical discontinuity with traditional religion represented in the book of 1549."²⁸ The Western Rebels' demands reveal how radical the new liturgy appeared to them. They disliked being expected to receive 'common bread' rather than wafers at mass,²⁹ and demanded a return to Latin; the restoration of prayers "specially by name for the soules in purgatory, as oure forefathers dyd"; that lay people should be expected to receive communion only at Easter and then "but in one kynde"; and the restoration of images "and all other auncient olde Ceremonies used hereto fore."³⁰ They felt the new liturgy to be radical, even though Cranmer had allowed the Communion service to follow the structure of the mass, prayers for the dead in the Burial service,³¹ and certain old ceremonies such as anointing. He justified these to Bucer as "[temporary] concessions [that] have been made both to a respect for antiquity, and to the infirmity of the present age."³² He was aiming to wean the country gradually from Henrician Catholicism. Alec Ryrie argues that the fact that Stephen Gardiner and John Redman accepted the 1549 Prayer Book vindicated Cranmer's "decision to preserve a fiction of doctrinal continuity."³³ But it clearly was a fiction, as Cranmer implemented justification by faith into the liturgy and enshrined "turning to God in repentance and faith as the chief effect of saving grace and its chief means."³⁴ This is seen in the penitential section of the mass, which follows the consecration but precedes reception, and in which the priest asserts

²⁷ Null, *Thomas Cranmer's Doctrine of Repentance*, p. 240.

²⁸ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 464.

²⁹ Anthony Fletcher and Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions*, 5th edition (Harlow 2004), p. 59.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

³¹ *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662*, ed. Brian Cummings (Oxford 2011), p. 88.

³² *Original Letters relative to the English Reformation*, ed. Hastings Robinson (PS. Cambridge 1847), 2. 535.

³³ Alec Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation: The Tudor and Stewart Realms* (Harlow 2009), p.165.

³⁴ Null, *Thomas Cranmer's Doctrine of Repentance*, p. 236.

that “our heavenly Father ... hath promysed forgevenesse of sins to all them, whiche with hartye repentaunce and true fayth, turne unto him.”³⁵ Duffy bemoans another substantial change in that by removing elements of the eucharist that were suggestive of the corporeal presence of Christ, such as processions and elevation of the host, Cranmer had removed the very elements “that had till then been central to Eucharistic piety.”³⁶

The liturgical dimension of penance had a social rather than merely an individualistic focus (pace Bossy),³⁷ since it involved the church community and not just believers in isolation.³⁸ In the 1549 and 1552 Communion services the general confession is made “in the name of al those who are minded to receive the holy Communion [and in this way showed themselves to be part of the church community], eyther by one of them, or els by one of the ministers, or by the prieste hymselfe.”³⁹ In the liturgy Cranmer retained the healing focus of penitence, offering comfort to the guilty, by the application of God’s promise of forgiveness because of Christ’s finished work on the cross. But he did not forget the disciplinary aspect of penitence. The opening rubrics of the 1549 Communion service instructed clergy not to allow a known evil liver to the Lord’s table until he had “openly declared hymselfe to have truly repented and amended his former naughtie life: that the congregacion maie thereby be satisfied, whiche afore was offended.” The rubric also required reconciliation with neighbours where there had been hatred and malice.⁴⁰ The move from the sacrament of penance to repentance did not mean that social discipline was ignored.

Repentance was at the heart of Cranmer’s theology but for the first time since 1215 auricular confession was not obligatory. The 1549 Prayer Book followed the 1548 *Order of the Communion* in allowing those “lacking comfort or counsel ... auricular

³⁵ *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 33: this was a rewrite of the 1548 absolution which had been taken from the *Sarum Missal*. Null, *Thomas Cranmer’s Doctrine of Repentance*, p. 240, n. 107: points out that the phrase “to all which with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto him” is taken from Hermann’s *Simplex ac pia Deliberatio*, to which Bucer and Melanchthon were major contributors.

³⁶ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* p. 464.

³⁷ John Bossy, “The Social History of Confession in the Age of the Reformation”, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society (Fifth Series, 1975)*: sees the sixteenth century church “turning collective Christians into individual ones.”

³⁸ *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. xii: “Ritual is a social act basic to humanity, the means by which we draw our lives together in mutual practice.” Martin Bucer wanted a greater sense of participation in the liturgy hence “O Lorde, open thou *my* lyppes” became in 1552 “O Lorde, open thou *our* lippes.”

³⁹ *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 32.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

and secret confession to the Priest.”⁴¹ The general Confession came within the canon, following the prayer of consecration and the Lord’s Prayer, and was a new prayer of repentance, based on Hermann von Weid’s *Consultatio* and having no counterpart in the *Sarum Missal*. The absolution, though based on the 1548 prayer, left out the words “who hath left power to his church to absolve penitent sinners from their sins”, and replaced them with God’s promise of forgiveness to those who repent and believe. It is a prayer for forgiveness rather than a declaration of forgiveness. However the introduction of the “Comfortable Words”⁴² set a completely new tone stressing that assurance of forgiveness was not based on the sacramental words of absolution by the priest but on the promises of God in Scripture.

The same emphasis is found in other sections of the 1549 Prayer Book. The aim of the Visitation of the Sick was “to establish in the mind of the sufferer the probability of his election.”⁴³ Private confession is optional and if it is used the absolution is in the traditional form, including the priest’s words “I absolve thee from all thy synnes.”⁴⁴ This was possibly continued out of pastoral sensitivity to those not yet clear about the Protestant teaching. There may be anointing but only if requested; it is clear that this is not the sacrament of extreme unction. It may be followed by communion, but only if there are others present. The purpose of the communion is to emphasise the sufferer’s place in the company of the faithful.⁴⁵

Cranmer also introduced a special Lenten service in the 1549 Prayer Book which is a memorial of the solemn public penance which had become so distinct a feature in the discipline of the Church.⁴⁶ The service is a call to repentance. In the introduction the priest recalls that in the early church, at the beginning of Lent, discipline was exercised and such persons as were notorious sinners were put to open penance. This service is a warning “until the saide disciplyne maye be restored agayne, (whiche thyng is muche to bee wished).”⁴⁷ Martin Bucer, for whom discipline was a major

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 25.

⁴² Hermann von Wied’s *Consultatio*, which included prayers compiled by Bucer and Melancthon, has words of “Gospel-comfort” in “the preliminary discourse on the Lord’s Supper” including three of the four texts Cranmer used. Neil and Willoughby, *The Tutorial Prayer Book* (London 1959), p. 327.

⁴³ David Loades, “Rites of Passage and the Prayer Books of 1549 and 1552”, *Prophecy and Eschatology*, ed. Michael Wilks (Oxford 1994), p. 209.

⁴⁴ *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 76.

⁴⁵ Loades, “Rites of Passage”, p. 210.

⁴⁶ *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 92.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

pastoral concern (see below), and whom Ryrie claims “had decisive influence on the English Reformation,”⁴⁸ persuaded Cranmer to change the title in 1552 to ‘A Commination’ (warning), and suggested that the service should be used four times a year and not just on Ash Wednesday.

Many evangelicals were dissatisfied with the 1549 Prayer Book and Cranmer continued to press on with liturgical reform. Bucer and Calvin criticised the use of vestments and the inclusion of prayers for the departed, but were given an assurance that these would only be “retained for a time.”⁴⁹ The 1549 Prayer Book was in many ways “an interim measure”,⁵⁰ although its penitential sections reveal something of its radical nature. The 1552 Prayer Book was not radically more reformed in its penitential teaching though it introduced general confession at the opening of Morning and Evening Prayer, where there had been no distinct penitential section in the 1549 Matins and Evensong. This was to be said by the whole congregation. The prayer is based on Romans 7. 8-25 and was probably suggested by the confession in the Strasburg Liturgy.⁵¹ The absolution was an assurance of pardon following a 1545 prayer composed by John Calvin, which had been used by the Walloons under John a Lasco.⁵² It is well known that Martin Bucer made suggestions for the reform of the 1549 Prayer Book⁵³ and it appears that Cranmer was also glad to discover how other Protestant liturgies operated and to consult with those who had come to England from European churches as exiles.

Another significant penitential addition in the 1552 Prayer Book was the introduction of the Ten Commandments for self examination at the beginning of the Communion Service. This is part of a new antecommunion, providing a service of the word and prayers for the situation where the communion itself was rare.⁵⁴ The response after each commandment was the prayer “Lord have mercy upon us and incline our hearts to keep this law.” This was at the

⁴⁸ Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation*, p. 154.

⁴⁹ *Original Letters*, 2. 535.

⁵⁰ Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation*, p. 156.

⁵¹ *Original Letters*, 2. 404: John ab Ulmis writes to Henry Bullinger “I have ridden twice with ... Peter Martyr, to the palace of the archbishop of Canterbury, where I showed the primate the confession of the church at Strasburgh, which ... I had translated into Latin.”

⁵² Neil and Willoughby, *The Tutorial Prayer Book*, p. 95.

⁵³ In his *Censura* he made 58 suggestions for the reform of the 1548 book, nearly half were accepted.

⁵⁴ Colin Buchanan, *What did Cranmer think he was doing?* (Bramcote 1976), p. 28.

insistence of Bishop Hooper.⁵⁵ The focus of the 1552 Communion service is one of repentance and faith in the “full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world” made by Christ’s death on the cross.⁵⁶ Communicants are invited to come “not trusting in our own righteousness but in thy manifold and great mercies.”⁵⁷ The mention of ‘auricular confession’ in the warning exhortation was eliminated. The central penitential section of the 1552 communion service uses the same confession, absolution and comfortable words, as 1549, but no longer within the canon.⁵⁸ The whole service is reordered in the pattern of sin-grace-faith: Law-Gospel-Creed; Confession-Absolution-Sanctus; Prayer of Humble Access-Words of Distribution-Gloria.⁵⁹ This pattern reinforces its solifidian theology. The penitent comes acknowledging his sin; hears words of gospel promise; and expresses his faith. The climax of the service is no longer the prayer of consecration, but the reception by faith of the bread and wine as the body and blood of Christ. As Ashley Null rightly claims “the most significant change in the 1552 Prayer Book was Cranmer’s complete reordering of the Communion service to fit his Protestant understanding of what made repentance possible.”⁶⁰ What were the influences that led him to produce his 1552 liturgy, did he have a change of mind? Historians have varied in their response to these questions. C W Dugmore reckons that “Cranmer had to allow very substantial concessions to be made to the radical reformers”,⁶¹ but adds the incredible proviso that he may not have interpreted them the way they did. Colin Buchanan, on the other hand, stresses that “The doctrinal position of Cranmer, first publicly revealed in its full Swiss vigour in the Great Parliamentary debate in December 1548, was unchanged through the period of liturgical revision.”⁶² Gardiner’s assertions that he could find transubstantiation in various places in the 1549 rite encouraged some to celebrate the communion service as if it were a mass. This, and pressure from Hooper and the Zurich party, were, in the view

⁵⁵ *Two Liturgies*, p. 266; G J Cummings, *A History of Anglican Liturgy* (London 1969), p.106.

⁵⁶ *Two Liturgies*, p. 279.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 278.

⁵⁸ F E Brightman, *The English Rite*, 2nd edition revised (London 1921), pp.681,3 (1552), pp. 696,8 (1549).

⁵⁹ J I Packer, *The Works of Thomas Cranmer*, ed. G Duffield, p. xxvi.

⁶⁰ Null, *Thomas Cranmer’s Doctrine of Repentance*, p. 242.

⁶¹ C W Dugmore, *The Mass and the English Reformers* (New York 1958), p.171.

⁶² Buchanan, *What did Cranmer think he was doing?* p. 7.

of Basil Hall, the main issues that precipitated reform of the 1549 Prayer Book.⁶³ MacCulloch sees the 1549 liturgy as “experimental” and Cranmer’s responses to Gardiner’s criticisms, the *Defence* and the *Answer*, as steps leading to 1552. The outcome, to his mind, was closer to Bullinger than to Calvin on the spiritual presence of Christ being real only to the elect and not all who ate the bread and wine.⁶⁴ For Alec Ryrie, however, Bucer was “the decisive influence”, leading Cranmer to favour “the subtler Reformations of Strasbourg and Geneva, which allowed that Christ was spiritually present in each Eucharist and which favoured the doctrine of predestination.”⁶⁵ Ryrie also claims that Cranmer was influenced by Bucer, Peter Martyr and other Protestant refugees in the production of the 42 Articles, and that his attempt at canon law reform, the *Reformatio Legem Ecclesiasticarum* as Foxe later called it, which aimed to provide “a comprehensive system of moral discipline, based on that pioneered by Bucer in Strasbourg.”⁶⁶ Ashley Null shows how Cranmer’s doctrinal position is to be found in his *Annotations* and in his great notebooks. Cranmer was clear in his solifidian theology and applied this, focusing on repentance and faith, in his liturgies. The radical side of the 1549 Prayer Book is seen when the penitential aspects of the book are considered: the abandoning of the sacrament of penance; making auricular confession optional; having an absolution with a strong solifidian emphasis within the canon; and the introduction of the ‘comfortable words’. In 1552 the penitential emphasis was intensified by the addition of the Ten Commandments in the communion service, as well as its restructuring to make repentance key to its meaning, and having a new introduction to Morning and Evening Prayer with penitential sentences, a call to repentance, a new confession (to be said by the congregation together)⁶⁷ and a new absolution. Cranmer’s own position over penitence was clear by the early 1540s, but he eagerly consulted overseas exiles who had come to England, and drew ideas from other liturgies, notably:

⁶³ Basil Hall, “Cranmer, the Eucharist and the Foreign Divines”, *Thomas Cranmer, Churchman and Scholar*, eds. Paul Ayris and David Selwyn (Woodbridge 1993), p. 238.

⁶⁴ MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant*, p. 92.

⁶⁵ Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation*, p. 154; N Scott Amos, “The Alsatian among the Athenians”, *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 4.1 (2002), pp. 94-124: disagrees, claiming that Bucer was increasingly isolated from Cranmer while he was in Cambridge, and that Jan a Lasco and Peter Martyr were the main influences on Cranmer.

⁶⁶ Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation*, p. 169.

⁶⁷ *Two Liturgies*, p. 218: “to be said of the whole congregation after the Minister, kneeling.”

the 'Comfortable words' from Hermann von Wied's 'Consultatio'; the new confession for Morning Prayer from the Strasburg liturgy; and the absolution (originally by Calvin) from John a Lasco, which suggest that Bucer was a significant influence.

PREACHING

Justification by faith was not only important for the liturgy, but also for preaching. Thomas Becon argued in his treatise on penance, *The Castell of Comfort*,⁶⁸ that since faith comes by hearing the Word of God, there can be no absolution without preaching. The preacher is God's messenger bringing good news of God's forgiveness. He uses the illustration of a king who pardons a subject of treason. He sends a messenger with letters in his favour. Becon then asks "Who forgives?" to which he replies "not the messenger but the king." He poses a counter argument by papists: "If God alone forgives sin why did He give the keys to the Church?" His answer is that the words of God are the keys. The Church is to proclaim the Word which opens doors in hearts and minds, since faith comes by hearing. The preachers' message was the call to repent and believe the gospel.⁶⁹ In the new *Ordinal* of 1550 the newly ordained priest was given a copy of the Bible as well as a chalice and told to "Take authority to preach the word of God and to minister the holy Sacraments in this Congregation."⁷⁰

Hugh Latimer, preaching before the king declared "Take away preaching, take away salvation."⁷¹ Penance was much in vogue as a subject within sermons towards the end of Edward's reign. Latimer, the doyen of evangelical preachers, took up the theme

⁶⁸ It is difficult to know when *The Castell of Comfort* was published. The colophon indicates that John Day published it in London but no date is given. The *RSTC* suggests 1549 with a question mark. There is no indication in it that Becon was aware of Cranmer's liturgies. It is dedicated to the Duchess of Richmond who died in 1555. There is no reference to the death of Edward or the persecution unless we see one when he mentions penance and purgatory by which the penitent is "broyled, boyled and perboyled in the Pope's furnace".

⁶⁹ Peter Marshall, "Evangelical Conversion", *The Beginnings of English Protestantism*, eds. Peter Marshall and Alec Ryrie (Cambridge 2002), p. 21: "In many ways, conversion and repentance were more than linked concepts; they were virtual synonyms which together connoted that 'turning to God' which early Tudor evangelicals thought they were about."

⁷⁰ *Two Liturgies*, p. 179.

⁷¹ *Seven Sermons before Edward VI each Friday in Lent 1549* (London 1895), p. 67.

twice in a few months.⁷² He clearly has in mind the pastoral theology of the new (1552) Prayer Book. Regarding confession, he encouraged his hearers to be content with the general confession and to look for general absolution “which every minister of God’s Word giveth in his sermons.”⁷³ “Right penance” involves contrition, by which he means acknowledging having transgressed God’s holy law. It is preaching the law that brings the knowledge of sin. The believer must admit guilt and sorrowfully reckon that he deserves everlasting damnation, but he must not stay with the law as that will lead only to desperation. Rather he must believe that Christ came into the world to save sinners, and have personal confidence that “his blood was shed for me” and when Christ says “Come unto me...” he is calling the individual believer to come and receive everlasting life at his hands. By such faith Christ’s merit is applied to each one who responds. He was concerned that the individual believer must purpose to leave sin, and avoid evil, withstanding the devil and having the assurance that Christ has promised victory. In his Advent sermon⁷⁴ Latimer raised the issue of satisfaction. He links this with the absolution of sins, and he stresses “there is none bar in Christ.” But where sin is against a neighbour it is necessary “to make restitution to the neighbour we have hurt.” In these ways God and neighbour may be satisfied. But we also need to be satisfied ourselves and assured that we are forgiven. To this end, like the Prayer Book, he encourages those troubled in conscience to “go to some godly learned minister, which is able to instruct and comfort ... in the Word of God.” His Epiphany sermon was more polemical, attacking the papists’ interpretation of Jesus sending a leper to the priest as showing the need for priestly absolution.⁷⁵ They do this to justify auricular confession and priestly absolution, he explains, for they want to know the secrets of the heart “to their own commodities.” In Latimer’s case it could hardly be said because he called individuals to repent that he neglected social concerns since he is famed for preaching for social reform.⁷⁶

Anti-Lollard legislation required prospective itinerant preachers to obtain a licence from the diocesan bishop who had jurisdiction over the places where

⁷² First Sunday in Advent 1552; Third Sunday after the Epiphany 1553.

⁷³ *Sermons and Remains of Hugh Latimer*, ed. GE Corrie (PS. Cambridge 1845) , 2.12.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 2. 9-13.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 2. 179-180.

⁷⁶ S T Bindoff, *Tudor England* (Harmondsworth 1950) , pp. 130-132.

they intended to preach.⁷⁷ Cranmer conceived the idea of royal licences, to give preachers wide powers and protection from unsympathetic bishops, and by which they could preach throughout the kingdom. This was the beginning of a concerted preaching campaign to spread the evangelical gospel through the nation. In 1551 the king appointed six chaplains with such powers. Two were to be present in court and four preaching in the country. Edward named some of the ‘dark corners’, where they might minister, including Lancashire, Derby, Yorkshire, Devon, Hampshire, Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. The appointed preachers were Bill, Harley, Perne, Grindal, Knox and Bradford.⁷⁸ How successful these or other preachers were is uncertain, but Bradford is known to have preached across Essex, and had two preaching tours in Lancashire during which he visited at least thirteen communities, as well as preaching in Chester, Cambridge and London.⁷⁹ Since all this was within three years it was not an inconsiderable effort. His best known sermon was ‘On Repentance’. Other notable preachers included Latimer, Coverdale, who preached in the West Country after the Prayer Book rebellion, Lever and Hooper. The perceived effectiveness of preaching is shown by the fact that preachers were sometimes used for political purposes, for example in 1550 the Council used them to justify the trial of Bishop Bonner and his adherents, as when in his sermon at Paul’s Cross John Hooper “spake much against the Bishop of London.”⁸⁰

John Bradford provides a useful case study as to how evangelical thinking on repentance was developing under Edward. Among those who influenced his spiritual formation were Latimer, Sandys, Ridley, Melancthon and Bucer. His ‘Sermon on Repentance’,⁸¹ the only known sermon surviving from this period explicitly on the subject, was preached in the Manchester area in the summer of 1552, and was published just a few days after the death of Edward at a critical time for the Protestant cause. The sermon was reprinted in 1558 (before Mary’s death) and three times in 1574, with a preface by Thomas Sampson,

⁷⁷ 2 Henry IV c. 15: *Statutes of the Realm*, vol.11. 125-8.

⁷⁸ John Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials* (Oxford 1828), vol. 2, Book 3, p. 521.

⁷⁹ He sent farewell letters before his execution under Mary to London, Cambridge, Lancashire and Walden in Essex. BL. Add. 19400, fos.31r-32v.; Emmanuel College Library (Cambridge) Ms.260, fos.11r-13r; ECL. Ms.260, fos. 220v-223v; ECL. Ms.260, fos. 30r-31v.

⁸⁰ Susan Brigden, *London and the Reformation* (Oxford 1989), p. 451.

⁸¹ *The Writings of John Bradford*, ed. Aubrey Townsend (PS. Cambridge 1848), pp. 43-81.

and altogether ten times between 1574 and 1631.⁸² Bradford became a key figure in developing Protestant thinking on repentance.⁸³ It was not only Bradford's preaching which impressed Puritans but his practical application of the gospel to the "afflicted conscience", which became an important influence on their attempts at "practical divinity."⁸⁴

As well as being at the heart of his evangelistic preaching,⁸⁵ repentance was a key factor in Bradford's own spiritual journey. On hearing a sermon by Hugh Latimer, Bradford had an overwhelming sense of guilt about a fraud in which he had been involved. He had no peace until restitution was made. This was a turning point in his life. His friend, Thomas Sampson, in an introduction to the 1574 publication of his sermon, claims that as a consequence Bradford's life was "a practice and example, a provocation to repentance."⁸⁶ To aid his prayers he kept a journal and he continually exercised his conscience by meditation and the practice of repentance and faith in Christ. In this way he found an assurance which was "the pivotal point of his piety",⁸⁷ the key hermeneutic of his theology and the focus of his pastoral ministry. According to John Foxe, Bradford's last public words were "England repent!"⁸⁸

The fundamental axiom of Bradford's message in the sermon is that life is a gift from God, and so mortals should show gratitude by "the setting forth of God's praise and glory, by repentance, conversion, and obedience to his holy will and holy laws."⁸⁹ He took as his text the words of Christ's first recorded sermon: "Repent! For the kingdom of heaven is at hand."⁹⁰ From this he deduces that human nature is corrupt, and that

⁸² 1574 (3 times); 1581; 1599; 1617; 1619; 1621; 1623; 1631 (RSTC. 3399.5; 3500; 3500.5; 3501; 3502; 3503; 3497; 3504; 3498; 3499).

⁸³ Carl R Trueman, *Luther's Legacy* (Oxford 1994), p. 27: "the premature death at the stake of John Bradford most assuredly deprived the English Reformation of one of its potentially great theologians." For the impact of his teaching on repentance see *The Writings of John Bradford* 1.29-37, 558-560, 561-565: for prefaces to various editions of Bradford's *Sermon on Repentance* by Thomas Sampson, Henry Wilkinson and Robert Harris.

⁸⁴ Jason Yiannikou, "Protestantism, Puritanism and Practical Divinity in England c.1520-1620" (unpublished Ph.D. Cambridge 1999), pp. 3, 18, 31.

⁸⁵ See n. 68.

⁸⁶ *The Writings of John Bradford*, 1. 36.

⁸⁷ W S Barker, "John Bradford's Writings: an example of Reformation Piety" (unpublished Ph.D. 1970, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee), p. 92.

⁸⁸ John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, The Variorum edition (hriOnline, Sheffield 2004) 1570, Book 11, p. 804.

⁸⁹ *The Writings of John Bradford*, 1.43.

⁹⁰ Matthew 4.17.

repentance is a necessary requirement for participating in the kingdom of God. Following the humanists he considers the etymology of the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew words from which repentance is derived and concludes that “penance is a sorrowing or forthinking (regret) of our sins past, an earnest purpose to amend or turning to God, with a trust of pardon.”⁹¹ He distinguishes this from what has commonly been taken to be penance such as saying certain prayers, giving alms, fasting, etc., and also from the scholarly definition of contrition, confession and satisfaction. His test is whether the way these are taught agrees with God’s word.⁹²

His critique of traditional penitential teaching is that contrition involves a “just and full sorrowing” for sins, and Bradford argues that since justice for the sinner means hell and that in all sin “there is contempt for God”, this “just and full sorrowing” is more than a man can bear.⁹³ It is a doctrine of despair that drives people away from repentance. Similarly Catholic teaching is that “a man cannot repent ... unless his sins had been told by tale and number in the priest’s ear.” As the priest can only absolve sins he has been told, the penitent needs to be sure he has confessed all his sins, and Bradford shows that this is something the Bible says he will never be able to do. Because the focus is not on God’s word but in making full confession and in the priest’s absolution, there can be no assurance. As a result “to be certain of ‘forgiveness of sins’ as our creed teacheth us, they count as presumption.” The doctrine of satisfaction he sees as blasphemy: “prate the pope and his prelates as please them with their pardons, purgatory, purgations, placebos, trentals, diriges, works of supererogation, superabomination!”⁹⁴ He argues that if satisfaction can be made by man Christ died in vain. But he insists that no sin has ever been forgiven by God “but only through Christ’s death.”

However Bradford does not give up on the traditional concepts of contrition, confession and satisfaction. With regard to contrition, had the teaching omitted the words “just” and “full”, making it “simply a hearty sorrow for their sins, then, we would never have cried out against them.”⁹⁵ Evidence that a “just and full” contrition is not possible is seen, Bradford believes, in teaching about “attrition”. For him this is

⁹¹ *The Writings of John Bradford*, 1.45.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 1. 46.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 1. 47.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1, 49.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1. 51.

nothing less than an attempt to appease peoples' consciences. In this way they bid "a man to hope well of his contrition though it be not so full as required, and of his confession though he have not numbered all his sins."⁹⁶ As a result there is no assurance only "doubting whether our sins are forgiven."⁹⁷ If confession had been seen as something made to God privately, or as seeking counsel from someone learned in God's word, or if it had been seen as an expression of faith in Christ, "then they had done right well." And if satisfaction had been making restitution to someone wrongfully defrauded, or as a punishment for an offence against the congregation, "then they had done well, so that the satisfaction to God had been left alone to Christ."

Bradford's own description of repentance limits it to contrition and faith, with newness of life as its fruit. His approach is thoroughly practical.⁹⁸ To help readers to have a contrite hearty sorrow for sin, his first advice is to ask God for it.⁹⁹ They then should look into God's law, but in a spiritual way following the pattern of Christ in his Sermon on the Mount. (Matthew 5-7) The 'tag' or penalty tied to God's law should be noted. He then gives fifteen examples of God's anger at sin drawn from Scripture, and adds, as a further example, the death of the late king.¹⁰⁰ He concludes: "What followed Jewry after the death of Josias? God save England and give us repentance."¹⁰¹ He draws the readers to meditate on the passion and death of Jesus Christ and consider the cost to him of dealing with their sin. Since faith comes from hearing God's Word and especially God's promises, they are encouraged to meditate on these, remembering that God's promises do not depend on our worthiness but on God's truth. They are to reflect on the benefits they have received from God in this life, aware that "his mercy endureth for ever."¹⁰² Twelve examples are given from Scripture of God's grace and mercy, and again he concludes with a meditation on the passion and death of Christ, seeing it as "the great seal for the confirmation of the

⁹⁶ Ibid., 1. 47.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Trueman, *Luther's Legacy*, pp. 292-3: Trueman sees Bradford as "concerned to construct his theology in a manner which brought honour to God and emphasised the need for the believer to live out his Christian life in a practical, meaningful manner." *The Writings*, 1.44: early in the sermon, and repeatedly, Bradford states his practical aim: "I will do my best to help you, by God's grace."

⁹⁹ *The Writings of John Bradford*, 1.210 among his prayers is an example of how to do this.

¹⁰⁰ The sermon was preached extemporarily in 1552, but prepared for publication and published shortly after the death of Edward in July 1553.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 1.62.

¹⁰² Ibid., 1.68.

everlasting life to which we are called”¹⁰³ and “the very pledge of God’s love towards thee.” Those who are persuaded of God’s love, he argues, will respond with love for God and a hatred of those sins for which Christ died. Having been liberated from sin by faith in Jesus Christ and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, the penitent will want to proclaim his freedom from sin by giving his life “to the obedience of the Spirit.”¹⁰⁴ Such “newness of life” he insists, “is not indeed a part of penance, but the fruit of it, a demonstration of justifying faith, a sign of God’s good Spirit possessing the heart of the penitent.”¹⁰⁵ This, however, is not “double justification”¹⁰⁶ which was the position of some Henrician reformers including Tyndale. Bradford saw that by faith believers are united to Christ and thus elect, justified and sanctified.¹⁰⁷ Pastorally, therefore, he links feeling with faith (since faith is the gift of the Holy Spirit), election with assurance, and conscience with repentance. William Copeland republished the sermon in 1558, for which he was fined 20d. by the Stationers Society which shows that he and others saw its value in sustaining the cause of the Protestants in their persecution under Mary.¹⁰⁸

In Bradford’s sermon we see Edwardian teaching that was critical of the sacrament of penance, seeing it as representing a theology of good works, but positively reinterpreting and valuing concepts of contrition, confession and satisfaction to accord with the Bible. Like Cranmer in his homily “Of the True, Lively Faith”,¹⁰⁹ Bradford saw good works as the fruit of repentance and evidence of saving faith rather than meriting God’s favour. There is a clear pastoral dimension to the sermon. He multiplies biblical examples for penitents to meditate upon and is eager throughout to offer practical help. Like Cranmer and Latimer he wishes to offer voluntary confession to those burdened by their conscience together with ministry pointing them to the assurance of God’s promises. Experience, and Latimer’s ministry, has taught him the value of making restitution where neighbours have been defrauded or offended. Like his mentor, Martin Bucer, Bradford saw penitence as a vital matter,

¹⁰³ Ibid., 1.73.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 1.78.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 1.78-79.

¹⁰⁶ i.e. good works as “an outward sign of an inward justification before God”: Trueman, *Luther’s Legacy*, p. 102.

¹⁰⁷ Eric Bramhall, “John Bradford c1510-55: Preacher, Theologian, and Pastor” (unpublished Lambeth MA 2007), pp. 72-3.

¹⁰⁸ *Transcript of the Stationers’ Registers 1554-1640*, ed. E Arber (vol 1 London 1875), p. 93.

¹⁰⁹ Cranmer, *Miscellaneous Writing and Letters*, p. 140.

and although Basil Hall will not concede a direct influence, the fact that election and union with Christ were central to Bradford's soteriology, that he considered the place of the Holy Spirit as key to sanctification, as Bucer did,¹¹⁰ and that penitence was such a major issue for both, strongly suggest Bucer's influence.¹¹¹ While Drury and Duffy¹¹² see the Edwardian Reformation as destructive, and negative in its approach to penitence, Bradford's life and sermon offer a way of evaluating it more positively.

DISCIPLINE

Of all the various influences mentioned above on Edwardian thinking on penitence, that of Martin Bucer was the most important and far reaching. In 1548 Cranmer invited Bucer from Strasbourg to England and to take up the position of Regius Professor of Theology at Cambridge. Bucer had been a major player in the European Reformation before being forced out of Strasbourg in 1549. In describing the extent of Bucer's influence, David F Wright claims "he moulded Calvin's thought and practice in several significant directions during his exile in Strasbourg 1538-41" and "through the far flung influence of the Genevan Reformation, Bucerian patterns of evangelical practice and teaching were adopted in all strongholds of Reformed Protestantism."¹¹³ He had dedicated his 1536 commentary on Romans to Cranmer and they had corresponded thereafter. He approved Cranmer's proposal for an alliance of all Protestant churches. Scott Amos claims that in 1547 Cranmer "received a letter from Bucer on the doctrinal issue [with regard to the eucharist] that moved him decisively away from a Lutheran position".¹¹⁴ Cranmer was aware of the reforms, especially liturgical, that Bucer had been involved with in Cologne.

¹¹⁰ W P Stephens, *The Holy Spirit and the Theology of Martin Bucer* (London 1970), p. 63.

¹¹¹ Basil Hall, "Martin Bucer in England", *Martin Bucer Reforming Church and Community*, ed. D F Wright (Cambridge 1994), p. 158. Trueman takes a contrary view in *Luther's Legacy*, pp. 287-8.

¹¹² T W Drury, *Confession and Absolution* (London 1903); Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*.

¹¹³ Martin Bucer, *Concerning the True Care of Souls* (Edinburgh 2009) introduction by David F Wright, p. xiii.

¹¹⁴ N Scott Amos, "Martin Bucer", *ODNB*, 8. 438.

Bucer's penitential theology had a strongly pastoral emphasis. He declared that "all spiritual health consists of faith in the forgiveness of sins,"¹¹⁵ and to this end "there must be awakened in us by the operation of the Holy Spirit a heartfelt repentance and sorrow."¹¹⁶ He believed that a true attitude to penitence was the essence of the reform that the churches needed, claiming that "if it is our desire that the Lord Jesus should truly reign over us, it will be necessary that the whole discipline of penance and the correction of sinners should be restored to the churches."¹¹⁷ Bucer was in Cambridge for only two years and during that time produced few written works, though doubtless reformers would have been aware of his earlier works, not least his 'Congratulations to the English Church', written in 1548 and largely an attack on Gardiner, with whom he had crossed swords at the 1541 Colloquy at Regensburg. Nevertheless his manner of teaching at Cambridge and his deep personal concerns made a considerable impression. Thomas Horton, in a letter to Dryander, described how this was expressed in his teaching: "Dr Bucer cries incessantly now in daily lectures, now in frequent sermons, that we should practise penitence, discard the depraved customs of hypocritical religion, correct the abuses of feasts, be more frequent in having and hearing sermons, [and] constrain ourselves to some sort of discipline."¹¹⁸ As Patrick Collinson notes, "Both Bradford and Grindal would later appeal to the memory of Bucer's living impact on their generation not to anything in print."¹¹⁹ Writing a farewell letter to the university and town of Cambridge, Bradford exhorts them to "Remember the readings and preaching of God's prophet and true preacher Martin Bucer."¹²⁰

Bucer's own personal concerns were pastoral and ecumenical.¹²¹ His *Von der waren Seelsorge* has been described as "surely one of the noblest pastoral

¹¹⁵ Bucer, *Concerning the True Care of Souls*, p. 103.

¹¹⁶ D F Wright, *The Commonplaces of Martin Bucer* (Appleford 1972), p. 79.

¹¹⁷ E C Whitaker, *Martin Bucer and the English Reformation* (Alcuin Club, Great Wakering 1974), p. 132.

¹¹⁸ *Martin Bucer Reforming Church and Community*, ed. D F Wright (Cambridge 1994), p. 148.

¹¹⁹ Patrick Collinson, *Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism* (London 1983), p. 504.

¹²⁰ ECL. Ms. 260 fo. 11.

¹²¹ W H Stephens, *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Martin Bucer*, (Cambridge 1970) , p. 8: "His whole life bears these two marks: a pastoral and missionary concern on the one hand and an oecumenical concern on the other."

treatises to come out of the whole Reformation movement.”¹²² He was especially aware of the pastoral importance of a true understanding of repentance. The Lord has provided for “troubled consciences special comfort and refreshment ... by means of absolution... requested and received according to his Word, with genuine repentance and acknowledgement of sins and a sincere desire for God’s grace through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ.”¹²³ He also stressed the “necessity of the introduction of a system of evangelical penance”¹²⁴ to establish discipline which he considered the third mark of the church (the word and sacraments being the other two). His ideas were significant as Cranmer attempted to revise canon law.¹²⁵ On 21st October 1550 Bucer sent Edward VI (via John Cheke) a ‘thank you’ for the gift of a stove that he had received. This took the form of his treatise *De Regno Christi*. A whole section of this was concerned with ‘The Ministry of the Discipline of Penance’.¹²⁶ He would exclude from the sacraments of Christ any who had fallen into serious sin and who could not be seen as a true disciple of Christ. Penitents should attend services to hear the word of God, repent and ask help from the church. Secret confession should be allowed if requested and would provide an opportunity for the minister “to catechise the ignorant in faith and help those who experience less contrition to a definite acknowledgement of their sins.”¹²⁷ Ministers have responsibility in this matter and those who fail in this discipline “cannot say in truth that they seek the kingdom of Christ.”¹²⁸ While Bucer was influential in liturgical reform through his *Censura* and other writings, and may be seen to have had an influence on the preaching and pastoral ministry of Bradford, in this area of discipline his influence is less marked because of Cranmer’s problems in affecting the reforms that he saw were needed.

¹²² Wright, *The Commonplaces of Martin Bucer*, p. 21. *Von der waren Seelsorge* was published in Strasburg in 1538. It has recently been translated into English, and published in 2009 as *Concerning the True Care of Souls*.

¹²³ Wright, *The Commonplaces of Martin Bucer*, p. 89.

¹²⁴ Bucer, *Concerning the True Care of Souls*, p. xix.

¹²⁵ Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation*, p.169.

¹²⁶ *Library of Christian Classics. Vol. XIX, Melancthon and Bucer*, ed. Wilhelm Pauck (London 1969), p. 242.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 244-245.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 246.

Reformers who returned from exile in Europe on the accession of Edward were also aware of the need for a reformed system of discipline in the church. The old system of church courts remained unreformed. Cranmer was eager to deal with this problem, but Northumberland frustrated his plans for the reform of the church's canon law.¹²⁹ The only reference to discipline in the Articles was article 32 which allowed excommunication until the person denounced "be openly reconciled by penance, and received into the Church by a judge that hath authority thereunto."¹³⁰ When he became bishop of Gloucester in 1551 John Hooper, who had been made aware of the need for discipline during his time in exile in Zurich with Bullinger, determined to make the church court system work by placing himself as supreme judge and using the consistory courts both to deal with abuse and to bring about reform.¹³¹ "Though Hooper's overarching objective was the Protestantization of the laity, he justifiably saw the parish clergy as important agents in that process."¹³² The courts met almost daily. Attendance was vastly improved. "He was in the habit of making rapid and unpremeditated visits to various parts of the diocese"¹³³ and holding courts in the parish churches. Penance was by public repentance, often in the market place as well as the parish church. John Roundell and Alice Wyckes affirmed "we doo desir god to forgive us our offence", and John Asshebye asked the congregation at Micheldean for prayers for offending "the lyvyng God by my synfull lif and am sori for it."¹³⁴ No commutations were allowed. Nevertheless Hooper's discipline was not without compassion. John Hyckes, the rector of Cromhall was deprived for ignorance and not understanding justification by faith, but the deprivation was postponed, presumably to give him time to try to understand the new teaching. Fathers were frequently ordered to pay for the maintenance of illegitimate children.¹³⁵ "Many of the clergy were not entirely

¹²⁹ David Loades, "Thomas Cranmer and John Dudley: an Uneasy Alliance", *Thomas Cranmer Churchman and Scholar*, eds. Paul Ayriss and David Selwyn (Woodbridge 1993), pp. 170-171.

¹³⁰ *Documents of the English Reformation*, p. 304.

¹³¹ F D Price, "Gloucester Diocese under Bishop Hooper 1551-3", *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society* (vol. 60, 1938), p. 70.

¹³² Caroline Litzenberger, *The English Reformation and the Laity. Gloucestershire 1540-1580* (Cambridge 1997), p. 71.

¹³³ Price, "Gloucester Diocese under Bishop Hooper", p. 77.

¹³⁴ Gloucester Diocesan Records (GDR), VI.6; VI. 20.

¹³⁵ GDR VI,88; VI,56.

sure of the beliefs of the old religion, to say nothing of the new.”¹³⁶ Hooper’s examination of his clergy was intellectually demanding. There were fifty questions based on the Ten Commandments, Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer, but requiring scriptural references and an understanding of justification by faith, the Lord’s Supper, and Christ as the only Saviour.¹³⁷ Thomas Ethyn, curate of Marston Sicca was told to recant his teaching on auricular confession the following Sunday, and Roger Wynter, rector of Staunton was ordered “that he shall not from henceforth preache nor teache any transubstantiation or any reall or corporall presence of Christ to be in the sacrament.”¹³⁸ John Trigg of Dursley was ordered for his penance that “upon Sonneday next cummyng shall be in his sherte onely standing upon a fourme and there shall openly saye that I suffer this penance becawse I can not say oon of the commaundments of the myghtie god but am more lyk an ethnic than a christen man.”¹³⁹ Caroline Litzenberger concludes that “although Hooper could certainly not be faulted for the thoroughness and vigor which characterised his administration, coercion was not an efficacious means of achieving true conversion to the new religion.”¹⁴⁰ Ralph Houlbrooke, on the other hand sees his as “a pattern of the godly bishop unmatched by his sixteenth century successors.”¹⁴¹ Effective church discipline remained an issue for evangelicals throughout the century.

RELIGIOUS REVOLUTION?

The rejection of the sacrament of confession and abandonment of compulsory annual auricular confession marked a profound change in the life of the church in England. MacCulloch sees the Edwardian Reformation as “a dynamic assault on the past.”¹⁴² This overturned a penitential system that had been

¹³⁶ Stephen Thompson, “The Pastoral Work of English and Welsh Bishops 1500-1558”(Oxford unpublished D Phil. 1984), p. 101.

¹³⁷ John Hooper, *Later Writings*, ed. C Nevins (PS. Cambridge 1845), pp. 118-151. Details of the results of Hooper’s examinations of the clergy in the Diocese of Gloucester are to be found in D G Newcombe, *John Hooper, Tudor Bishop and Martyr* (Oxford 2009), pp. 253-279.

¹³⁸ GDR VI, 45; VI, 50.

¹³⁹ GDR, VI, 53.

¹⁴⁰ Litzenberger, *The English Reformation and the Laity*, p. 74.

¹⁴¹ Ralph Houlbrooke, “The Protestant Episcopate 1547-1603: The Pastoral Contribution”, *Church and Society in England, Henry VIII to James I*, eds. Felicity Heal and Rosemary O’Day (Basingstoke 1977), p. 79.

¹⁴² Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant*, p. 9.

practised since 1215, though “we know next to nothing about the popularity of confession, or about the extent to which annual participation was rigorously enforced.”¹⁴³ No one appears to have stood up for compulsory auricular confession after 1549,¹⁴⁴ and Peter Marshall notes its “sudden and ignominious decline.”¹⁴⁵ Justification by faith was not only part of the Church of England’s confession of faith in the 42 Articles, but was given expression in Cranmer’s carefully crafted liturgy and prayers. In this way it was able to find its way into people’s hearts and minds. His 1549 absolution assured penitents that God “hath promised forgiveness of sins to all them, which with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto him”. This was thrust into the heart of the canon, and followed by the comfortable words, showing the significance of justification by faith in penitential terms.

The role of the priesthood changed from administering the sacraments to preaching, from pronouncing penances to pastoral care. A new emphasis on pastoral care, with its focus on bringing comfort to troubled consciences, was significant in the Edwardian Reformation and has not been stressed enough by historians of the period. New liturgies involved a degree of lay involvement, and the vernacular Bible, together with primers and other evangelical literature, gave lay people (at least the literate) opportunities for new ways of understanding and expressing their faith.

Cranmer invited Protestant scholars of international reputation to teach in the universities, to train a generation of preachers, and to assist in framing the liturgy, doctrine and discipline of the Church of England.¹⁴⁶ Martin Bucer was “the most outstanding of these refugee divines.”¹⁴⁷ Through his *Consultatio*, prepared with Melancthon to help with reforms in Cologne, his other writings on liturgical matters, and his *Censura*, he may fairly be said to have been an

¹⁴³ Christopher Marsh, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth Century England* (Basingstoke 1989), p. 81.

¹⁴⁴ Alec Ryrie, “Paths not taken in the British Reformation”, *The Historical Journal* 52 (2009), p. 21: calls the failure of conservatives to offer resistance to reform “one of the most mysterious dogs that failed to bark in the English Reformation.”

¹⁴⁵ Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation* (Oxford 1993), p. 53.

¹⁴⁶ Basil Hall, “Cranmer, the Eucharist and the Foreign Divines”, *Thomas Cranmer, Churchman and Scholar*, p. 224.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

important influence of Cranmer's Prayer Books. He was also influential in the production of the 1550 Ordinal and his approval of the only purely penitential service in the Prayer Book, the Communion. His pastoral emphasis, his stress on the discipline of penance, and the example of how discipline was practised in Strasbourg, cohered with Cranmer's desire for the reform of canon law. Other international reformers also had significant role in the area of penitence, though historians have been more interested in which of them influenced Cranmer on the presence of Christ in the eucharist. Peter Martyr Vermigli's *Adhortatio ad Coenam Dominici Mysticam* was translated and became the basis of an exhortation to confession in the 1552 Prayer Book.¹⁴⁸ It begins with an exposition of St Paul's letter to the Corinthians urging repentance, faith and amendment of life before partaking of "these holy mysteries" and concludes with a prayer of submission to "[God's] most holy will".¹⁴⁹ Cranmer's sermon at St Paul's on 21st July 1549 in response to the Western Rebellion, calling for repentance and obedience, was based on a sermon by Martyr. John a Lasco became superintendant of the Strangers' Church in London's Austin Friars in 1550. The liturgy and disciplinary procedures of the church were of interest to the archbishop and Lasco, along with Martyr and Hooper, was an important member of the commission for canon law reform. Cranmer was eager to learn how other churches operated, and even to set up an alliance of Protestant churches, but he used the liturgical ideas of others within his own literary and theological framework.

Yet many problems remained. There was little sign of popular support and Edwardian Protestants saw themselves as a sort of permanent opposition attacking covetousness and unwillingness to repent.¹⁵⁰ Most parish clergy were unable to preach. The sacrament of penance had been a major player in the moral discipline of the nation: what would replace it? Ultimately the untimely death of Edward, the young Josiah, in whom there were so many hopes, meant that not only had time run out in which to bring about a complete

¹⁴⁸ Alan Beesley, An Unpublished Source of the Book of Common Prayer: Peter Martyr Vermigli *Adhortatio ad Coenam Dominici Mysticam*,", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, XIX, 1968, 83-88.

¹⁴⁹ *Two Liturgies*, p. 275.

¹⁵⁰ Catharine Davies, "Edwardian Concepts of the Church", *Protestantism and the National Church in the Sixteenth Century*, eds. Peter Lake and Maria Dowling (Beckenham 1987), p. 94.

reformation,¹⁵¹ but for evangelical reformers it was seen as God's judgement on the failure of the nation to repent at the preaching of the gospel.

Nevertheless important foundations had been laid. Repentance and faith in Christ's finished work, the liturgy, and the English Bible, were sufficient for Protestants to keep their faith even through the Marian persecution.

PART TWO: REPENTANCE AND PROTESTANT RESISTANCE TO THE MARIAN CHURCH

The death of the young king Edward was a massive shock to the leaders of the reformed Church of England. They saw it as God's judgement on the nation.¹⁵² For John Bradford, it was also a warning of what was to come. He even feared the possibility of civil war.¹⁵³ There had been requests for copies of his sermon, but since he had preached extempore, he had had to prepare it before publication. Now it was ready and, to his mind, urgently needed. It was published before the end of July 1553 by the Dutch printer Stephen Mierdman. Within a few weeks Mary had been acclaimed in London, Mierdman had fled to Emden, and Bradford had been incarcerated in the Tower.

The principal aim of this section is to consider the Protestant view of repentance and how it developed during time of persecution. Penitence offered grounds for assurance which was at the heart of the pastoral ministry of the imprisoned leaders. It also gave strong theological reasons for not compromising by attending mass. In these ways it provides an English example of Protestant comfort and discipline that Tentler shows were needed when the sacrament of penance was rejected.¹⁵⁴ By means of such comfort and discipline the call to repent strengthened Protestant resistance to the

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 1: the Edwardian Reformation was "long enough to destroy a way of life, but too short to grow the roots of a new planting."

¹⁵² *The Writings of John Bradford*, 1.40: "for our impiety and wickedness, as God hath taken away our king, so he will take away his gospel."

¹⁵³ Ibid. 1.40, "now he beginneth to brew such a brewing, wherein one of us is like to destroy another, the father is against his son, the brother against his brother." Bradford wrote this on 12th July 1553.

Lady Jane Grey was proclaimed on 10th July and Queen Mary on July 19th.

¹⁵⁴ Thomas N Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation* (Princeton 1977), p. 349.

Marian persecution. Dissembling had been a tradition among English dissenters since the Lollards, and Thomas Freeman asks why the tradition became no longer acceptable, and postulates that the shock of the Marian persecution led many to believe that these were the end of times.¹⁵⁵ Andrew Pettegree argues that it was those who did compromise, the Nicodemites, who won the day and enabled Protestantism to survive.¹⁵⁶ However, the call to repent created a sense of guilt, as well as offering the assurance of forgiveness, which strengthened the sense of Protestant identity even in those who, in Duffy's word, "accommodated."¹⁵⁷ We will also consider whether the message of those in exile was different from those who remained in England. The experience of exile, as Locher has shown deeply affects the outlook of faith refugees.¹⁵⁸ The English example strongly supports his thesis. Just as Reginald Pole's *De Unitate*, written in exile in 1536, was a politicisation of penance, implemented on his return to England, the Genevan exiles' calls to repent took on political overtones. Focus on the need for repentance raised issues of conscience and assurance which became significant culturally and politically for the next century in England.

PROTEST AND EXILE

Initial protest against the Marian regime was followed by rejection of rebellion by Protestant leaders who saw the true response to God's providential judgement as national repentance. On 6th August 1553 John Rogers preached at Paul's Cross confirming the Protestant doctrine of King Edward's days and exhorting people to keep to it and to beware popery, idolatry and superstition.¹⁵⁹ On the following Sunday, Gilbert Bourne, the first preacher appointed by the new regime, condemned the Edwardian authorities for imprisoning Edmund Bonner unjustly: the deposed bishop of London was present. He was restored to his see on August 22nd. Even more significantly Bourne prayed for the dead.¹⁶⁰ Protestants saw prayers for the dead as

¹⁵⁵ *Martyrs and Martyrdom in England c.1400-1700*, eds. Thomas S Freeman and Thomas F Mayer (Woodbridge 2007), p. 19.

¹⁵⁶ Andrew Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism: Six Studies* (Aldershot 1996), pp. 106-117, 154.

¹⁵⁷ Eamon Duffy, *Fires of Faith* (Yale 2009).

¹⁵⁸ Gottfried W Locher, "The Theology of Exile: Faith and the Fate of the Refugee", *Social groups and Religious Ideas in the Sixteenth Century*, eds. MU Chrisman and O Grundler (Kalamazoo 1978), pp. 85-92. His examples are mainly from the continent.

¹⁵⁹ Millar McLure, *The Paul's Cross Sermons 1534-1642* (Toronto 1958), p. 196.

¹⁶⁰ Charles Wriothesley, *A Chronicle of England*, ed. W D Hamilton (Camden Society 1877), 2. 97.

“contrary and injurious to the honour of Christ our only Mediator and Redeemer”,¹⁶¹ as they hinted at the restoration of purgatory and good works. Henry Machyn records that there followed “a great uproar and shouting at his sermon ... like mad people, young people and women.”¹⁶² Wriothesley says “certain lewd and ill-disposed people made an hollowing and such a crying “Thou lyest!” ... one lewd person threw a dagger and cast it at the preacher, which, as God would, hit against one of the posts of the pulpit.”¹⁶³ Wriothesley finds it hard to imagine that the same people who had acclaimed the queen two days before were now threatening to kill her chaplain, but concludes “a riot there surely was.”¹⁶⁴ Bradford quietened the crowd, and he and Rogers (prebendaries of St Paul’s) managed to get Bourne to safety in St Paul’s school. Later that day, Bradford preached at Bow Church. His testimony was: “I did in that sermon reprove their fact, and called it sedition at least twenty times.”¹⁶⁵ For Bradford true repentance prohibited rebellion,¹⁶⁶ since it meant acknowledging God’s providence in judgement and that faith in God is the way to victory over enemies. He concludes that such “faith is not without repentance.”¹⁶⁷ By repentance and not by rebellion “God would restore us politic peace.”¹⁶⁸ The royal Proclamation from Richmond on August 18th recognised “contentions” in the capital.¹⁶⁹ Although Mary told her Council that her conscience was fixed in matters of religion, she assured them that she intended “not to compel or constreine other mennes consciences.”¹⁷⁰

Nevertheless the rounding up of Protestant preachers and leaders had already begun. Nicholas Ridley, the bishop of London, was held in the Tower from 23rd July;¹⁷¹

¹⁶¹ *Later Writings of Bishop Hooper* (PS. Cambridge 1859) , ed. C Nevinson, p, 121.

¹⁶² *The Diary of Henry Machyn*, ed. J G Nichols (Camden Society 1848), p. 41.

¹⁶³ Wriothesley, *A Chronicle of England*, 2. 97; *Calendar of State Papers (Spanish)* Vol.XI, ed Royall Tyler (London 1916) p. 170; *Original Letters*, 1. 368; “The Originall of a lyfe”, *Examinations*, (London 1561), no pagination, RSTC 3477. The anonymous author says that stones and weapons and whatever came to hand were thrown.

¹⁶⁴ Wriothesley, *A Chronicle of England*, 2. 97-8.

¹⁶⁵ *The Writings of John Bradford*, 1.485.

¹⁶⁶ John Christopherson, *An Exhortation to all menne to take hede and beware of rebellion*, (1554) John Proctor, *The Historie of Wyates rebellion* (1554): Following Wyatt’s rebellion Proctor and Christopherson tried to prove that Protestantism was at the root of all treason. Bradford claimed that those who were executed as rebels died shamefully, and that God’s true servants would not find peace and favour “in anti-Christ’s regiment.” ECL. Ms.260, fo.182.

¹⁶⁷ *The Writings of John Bradford*, 1.40: so he calls “to repentance for ourselves privately, and for the realm and the church publicly.”

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 1. 41.

¹⁶⁹ *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, pp. 5-6.

¹⁷⁰ *Acts of the Privy Council, vol. .IV 1552-54*, ed. JR Dasent (London 1892), p. 317.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 302.

along with Bradford, Rogers, Veron and Becon, well known preachers, who were arrested on 16th August; John Hooper, bishop of Gloucester and Worcester, was summoned to the Council at Richmond on 29th August and was sent to the Fleet prison; and on 13th September Hugh Latimer was held, and the Archbishop of Canterbury interrogated by the Council. Both were incarcerated in the Tower. All this was no surprise to Bradford who had written some time before 16th August to his friends “B and C”: “our bodies are like to be laid in prisons, and our goods given, we cannot tell to whom. This should we look upon as a sign of God’s anger, procured by our sins ... that we might heartily lament them, repent them, hate them, ask earnestly for mercy for them, and submit ourselves to bear in this life any kind of punishment, which God will lay upon us for them.”¹⁷²

Before he attended the Council, Cranmer had a final meal with Peter Martyr. “If Martyr could not get a passport straight away, he said, he must take the initiative and flee.”¹⁷³ Exile was an option which Cranmer himself had rejected. Many, however, who could go into exile, did. Christina Garrett listed 472, though there were many more.¹⁷⁴ How did the exile affect them? What was their role in aiding the survival of English Protestantism? How important was the doctrine of repentance in their writings and how was it shaped by their experience?

Thomas Sampson wrote from Strasbourg to a congregation in London, where he had been the minister. He called on them to “humble youre selves unto unfayned repentance before the lorde.”¹⁷⁵ He was concerned that the mass would undermine their assurance “in that free Justificacion which we have in Jesus Christe.” His advice about auricular confession was idealistic and showed little awareness of the changed situation in London. He declared that “numbering of sinnes” is “the tyranny of their kingdome”, yet insisted that “in an anguishe and dute of conscience it is both good

¹⁷² *The Letters of the Martyrs collected and published in 1564*, preface by Miles Coverdale, and introduction by Edward Bickersteth (London 1837), p. 253.

¹⁷³ MacCulloch, *Cranmer* p. 553.

¹⁷⁴ CH Garrett, *The Marian Exiles* (Cambridge 1938); Foxe suggests almost 1000 and Dickens claims that 788 of these have been located and that they consisted largely of gentry, scholars and clergy. Foxe, (1563), p. 1691; AG Dickens, *The English Reformation* (Glasgow 1964), p. 386.

¹⁷⁵ Thomas Sampson, *A Leter to the trew professors of Christes Gospel inhabitinge the Parisshe of Alhallows in Bredstrete in London* (Strasbourg 1554), no pagination. RSTC 21683.

and necessary and comfortable for a man to counsaile with sum such learned elder in whose lippes doth lie the lawe of truth.” In this he was following the policy of Latimer and the Prayer Book, but where would they find such a learned elder? His successor as vicar of the parish, Lawrence Saunders, was imprisoned on 15th October 1554. Was he suggesting they should seek the advice of imprisoned preachers and ministers? Some in fact did this, and bishops and preachers continued to have a significant leadership role even from prison. Sampson’s concluding advice was to “offer youre selves to suffer all violence of blood by lawes for the truthe sake, kepe safe your consciences.” If the context of Sampson’s message of repentance was insensitive, John Bale’s was inflammatory. Having seen the articles for Bishop Bonner’s 1554 visitation, he wrote a response which was dramatic, personal and vindictive.¹⁷⁶ He claims that in the articles Bonner, “this lime of the devil’s working role of Satan ... seeketh to deprive you of your faith, true doctrine, and God’s religion.” He considers auricular confession by addressing it: “Dear confession, the popes sything net, the discoverer of princes hearts and betrayer of Christian kings and their kingdoms. England beware in time, for thine own Judases are about to betray thee to double strangers, to cruel Spaniards, for filthy lucre sake, to devils hell by their idolatries.” Becon, who after a short time in prison escaped into exile and settled in Strasburg, wrote a tract contrasting the Marian church with the church under Henry and Edward. Current failings were due to papist doctrines. He wrote: “Heretofore we were taught that thou alone forgivest all our sinnes whensoever we earnestly repent and unfaynedly turn to the. But now the papists teach that they have the power to forgive sinnes and that our sinnes cannot be forgiven except we confess them unto a priest with all circumstances. Heretofore we were taught to look for salvation through the blood of Christ, but now the papists teach us to look for salvation in our own good works.”¹⁷⁷

The English congregations in Frankfurt, Strasbourg and Zurich identified with their Edwardian heritage by using the *Book of Common Prayer* for their worship. Some of

¹⁷⁶ John Bale, *A Declaration of Edmund Bonner’s Articles concerninge the cleargy of Lo(n)don dyocese (London 1561 – but written in Basel in 1554)*, RSTC, 1289. It is possible that it was edited prior to publication since it speaks of “Bloody Bonner” though by 1554 there had been no burnings.

¹⁷⁷ Thomas Becon, *An Humble Supplication unto God for the restoring of his Holy Word unto the Church of England* (Strasbourg 1554), no pagination. RSTC 1730.

the exiles in Geneva were more radical.¹⁷⁸ They were critical of parts of the Prayer Book which they thought were unbiblical. They published a document which reveals something of their ecclesiology.¹⁷⁹ It provides a guide to the life of the church including a confession of faith, and congregational discipline. God had shown great mercy on England but “now the nation had fallen into judgement because of unfaithfulness and idolatry.” What was needed was repentance for “now the day of visitation had come, and the Lord hath brought plagues upon us, whereof before we were admonished and justly menaced.” Their *Forme of Prayers* included confessions of sin, one based on Daniel 9 which seems to have been a general confession. Perhaps because of the church life of Geneva of which they were a part, they felt that the exile congregations should become examples of doctrine and apostolic church polity to the church in England.¹⁸⁰ John Knox’s radical *Faithful Admonition* (in which he attacked Mary, Philip, and the Emperor Charles V),¹⁸¹ written while he was leader of the congregation in Frankfurt, led to his expulsion from the city, and victory there for Richard Cox and the Prayer Book party. Whitehead wrote to Calvin from Frankfurt that “that outrageous pamphlet of Knox’s added much oil to the flame of persecution in England.”¹⁸² Christopher Goodman, Knox’s co-pastor in the English congregation at Geneva, also wrote a seditious work suggesting rebellion against idolatrous sovereigns was a duty.¹⁸³

A move in this direction was also made by a former bishop. John Ponet, had been bishop of Winchester. He wrote a pamphlet discussing the right to resist tyranny.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁸ DCA, Ms. DD/PP/ 839, fo.21: In his first sermon to the English congregation in Geneva, Christopher Goodman exhorted them: “Let us therefore be bold to think all our travel and charges well spent seeing we have bought therewith, or may, if we will, buy the liberty and freedom of a Christian conscience to honour and worship our Lord and God in such sort and means as in his word onely is prescribed.”

¹⁷⁹ *The Forme of prayers and Ministration of the Sacraments & co. used by the English Congregation at Geneva and approved, by the famous and godly learned man, John Calvyn*, (Imprinted at Geneva by John Crespin, 1556).

¹⁸⁰ Dan G Danner, *Pilgrimage to Puritanism: History and Theology of the Marian Exiles in Geneva 1555-60* (New York 1999), p. 118.

¹⁸¹ DCA, Ms. DD/PP/839. fo. 45: Notes made by Knox as to why he was accused of treason before the Frankfurt magistrates include that he spoke against idolaters “and how they ought by the express commandment of god be put to death,” and that Mary had made herself a traitor by making a Spaniard king, contrary to the laws of England, and “to the destruction of the nobilitie and subversion of the realm.”

¹⁸² *Original Letters*, 2.761.

¹⁸³ *How Superior Powers ought to be obeyed of their Subjects*, published by Crespin in 1557.

¹⁸⁴ John Ponet, *A Short Treatise of Politike Power* (Strasbourg 1556) , no pagination. Capitals as printed.

He asserted that “God has left unto [the people] two weapons, liable to conquere and destroye the greatest tyrane that ever was, that is PENAUNCE and PRAIER.

Penaunce for their owne sinnes, which provoke the anger and displeasure of God, and make him to suffer tyranes, warres, famine, pestilence and all plages to reigne among the people. And praier, that he will withdraw his wrathe, and shew his mercifull countenance.” Much of his political theology came from the Book of Judges in the Old Testament. When the nation repented and destroyed their idols God delivered them. This repentance, however, involves not only rejecting idolatry but those (tyrants) who impose idolatry on the nation. If Parliament did not depose tyranny on behalf of the people, the people themselves should act. In this he was departing from non-violent obedience, which English reformers had accepted from Tyndale onwards, and which was the belief of Bradford and the other imprisoned Protestant leaders. In an astute assessment C H Garrett concluded that “between religion and politics in the mentality of the Marian exiles the difference was but a hair’s breadth.”¹⁸⁵

If repentance was the right Protestant response to persecution, exile was experienced by those who fled as God’s judgement. Exiles were vulnerable. Often with a problem over language; having to move on from place to place; suffering financial hardship and local hostility: life was not easy. Some benefited from warm hospitality and were aware of the English (Protestant) Church being part of a supra-national community. Some deep friendships were established which lasted for decades, but for most the exile must have been an arduous experience. Repentance was uppermost in their theological thinking. However its application was political rather than pastoral. Whereas Bradford and other Protestant leaders in prison in England were concerned with the pastoral support of the “little flock”, exiles were negotiating with magistrates and civic authorities. Leaders in England accepted the authority of the Marian government as appointed by God, in a reformist tradition going back to Tyndale,¹⁸⁶ whereas radicals among the exiles justified violent resistance not only to a papist church but also to an idolatrous government.¹⁸⁷ However their personal letters brought

¹⁸⁵ Garrett, *The Marian Exiles*, p.14.

¹⁸⁶ Gerry Bowler, “Marian Protestants and the Idea of Violent resistance to Tyranny”, *Protestantism and the National Church in Sixteenth Century England*, eds. Peter Lake and Maria Dowland (London 1987), p. 124.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.131: Bowler suggests that publications advocating violent resistance coming from England were mainly focused on the fear of Spanish domination and cut across confessional lines.

consolation to imprisoned church leaders and publications with calls to resist compromise stiffened the resolution of those standing firm for the truth.¹⁸⁸

PERSECUTION AND PASTORAL MINISTRY

But what about those who had neither gone into exile nor were in prison? How should they respond to the persecution? What would be their response to calls to repent? Elizabeth Longshaw from Eccles in Lancashire corresponded with John Bradford. Anxious as to the outcome of the visitation to the Chester diocese she saw three possibilities ahead of her: “either to flee, or abide and deny my God (which the Lord forbid), or else be cast in prison and suffer death.”¹⁸⁹ She says “The cause why I must suffer is for not going to church and committing spiritual fornication with their strange gods.” Her inner turmoil is evident as she prays “I beseech God for his tender mercies’ sake to have pity on my poor soul that I may never run after strange gods.”¹⁹⁰

Bradford turned to polemic when he responded from prison to his friends and ‘sustainers’, Robert and Lucy Harrington. Harrington had enquired about auricular confession in the Marian church. It may be that this was in response to Bonner’s visitation articles for the London diocese. Bradford gives eight reasons for not participating “because, as it is used, it is a note, yea, a very sinew of the popish church: and therefore we should be so far from allowing the same, that we should think ourselves happy to lose anything, in bearing witness there against.”¹⁹¹ In making it a “necessity” for salvation, the church is seeing it as “meritorious” and therefore it is “very injurious to the liberty of the gospel.” The temptation to participate is temptation to avoid the cross for the sake of self-preservation. Bradford refuted the argument that to participate would be for the sake of others who had identified with the reformed cause: “if they be weak, by your resorting to it they be made more weak; if they be strong, you do what you can to infirm their strength; if they be ignorant, therein you help keep them by your fact; if they be obstinate, your resorting to it

¹⁸⁸ Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, p. 163.

¹⁸⁹ ECL, Mss. 260 fo.220.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ *The Letters of the Martyrs*, p. 320.

cannot but rock them asleep in their obstinate error of the necessity of this rite and ceremony.”¹⁹²

Despite the fierceness of his arguments Bradford was sensitive to the pressure on the reformed community. Lucy Harrington was anxious about resisting conformity. Bradford wished to reassure her “that she is a child of God, whom God dearly loveth, and will in his good time, to her eternal comfort, give her her heart’s desire in sure feeling and sensible believing.”¹⁹³ There are at least sixty pastoral letters written by Bradford from prison to support troubled Protestants, which provide an important case study of how penitential teaching was applied in the midst of the Marian persecution. John Foxe describes them as “sundry comfortable treatises and godly letters – how tenderly he comforted the heavy hearted, how fruitfully he confirmed them whom he had taught.”¹⁹⁴ Those who were incarcerated also needed support and, amazingly, there was considerable correspondence even between prisons.¹⁹⁵ John Careless, imprisoned in King’s Bench, wrote to Bradford, in the Counter prison, requesting absolution. In a marginal note alongside Bradford’s response John Foxe has written “Practice of the keys of the gospel.”¹⁹⁶ Bradford’s absolution exemplifies both his reformed theology and his pastoral care:¹⁹⁷

My dearest brother, what shall I say, but even as the truth is,
that the Lord of all mercy, and Father of all comfort, through
the merits and mediation of his dear Son, thy only Lord and
Saviour, hath clearly remitted and pardoned all thy offences,
---and hath given to thee, as his dear child, brother John Careless,
in token that thy sins are pardoned – he, I say, hath given unto thee
a believing heart, that is, a heart which desires to repent and
believe.

Careless, in writing what he believed was his final farewell to Bradford, included a similar absolution “for the more assurance and certificate thereof to your mind and

¹⁹² Ibid., 321.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 320.

¹⁹⁴ Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1570), p. 1805.

¹⁹⁵ Thomas S Freeman, “Publish and Perish: the scribal culture of the Marian Martyrs”, *The Uses of Script and Print*, eds. J Crick and A Walsham (Aldershot 2004), pp. 235-254 describes how “messages and letters ... flowed in and out of various prisons during Mary’s reign.”

¹⁹⁶ Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1570), p. 2105.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

godly conscience.”¹⁹⁸ This clearly hit the target as Bradford wrote back: “I never received so much consolation as I did by your last letter ...I have more need of God’s merciful tidings than I ever had heretofore.”¹⁹⁹ This shows the psychological need of those facing imminent death on account of their faith, for the assurance of an absolution of their sins, not only by the promises of God, but in having those promises personally related to their fears and concerns by another believer.

RT Kendall has argued that Bradford’s pastoral ministry transcends his theology.²⁰⁰ Bradford himself, however, would have seen them as interwoven and inseparable. For him theology was practical and its application pastoral. Much of his best theology was in his devotional meditations, prayers and letters.²⁰¹ His devotional meditation *On a Good Conscience*²⁰² summarises his theology of forgiveness and demonstrates how he relates faith, assurance and conscience:

“A good conscience” I call a good purpose in all things to
live after God’s will. This is given by the resurrection of
Christ, that is, by knowing certainly, through faith, that
Christ by his death hath made purgation of your sins past,
and by his resurrection hath justified you; so that you,
purposing to live as God shall teach you, have in God’s sight
“a good conscience”, whose root you see is in faith: which
God for his mercy’s sake more and more increase in us, Amen.

Bradford saw repentance as the solution to troubled consciences and the means of personal assurance. Ian Hazlett says that Martin Bucer “affirms predestination as a pastoral means of stabilising faith’s certitude of salvation and trust, not in one’s own virtue, but in God’s benevolence.”²⁰³ This is exactly Bradford’s method. His many letters from prison “repeatedly deal with the issue of assurance in the face of persecution and provide first class material for examining how Bradford applied the

¹⁹⁸ ECL, Mss. 262 fos.198-212; *Letters of the Martyrs*, p. 484.

¹⁹⁹ ECL, Mss 262 fo.141.

²⁰⁰ RT Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1549* (Carlisle 1979) , p. 43.

²⁰¹ Bramhall, “John Bradford c.1510-1555”, p. 74.

²⁰² *The Writing of John Bradford*, 1.255.

²⁰³ Ian Hazlett, “Bucer”, *The Cambridge Companion to Reformation Theology*, eds. David Baghi and David C Steinmetz (Cambridge 2004), p. 109.

doctrine of election in a pastoral context.”²⁰⁴ The persecution created fear and agonies of conscience to those who were convinced Protestants. They often needed the personal reassurance of church leaders. Patrick Collinson suggests that Bradford’s letters had a profound influence on generations to come through Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*, and Henry Bull’s *Letters of the Martyrs*: “human affection was an authentic note of the English protestant tradition, resounding in those letters from John Bradford’s prison cell, which must have been heard so often by the fireside on Sunday evenings.”²⁰⁵ The call to repent was in itself an assurance of God’s love and forgiveness available in Christ.

John Hooper also wrote from prison (the Fleet) on 11th May 1554 to support those who were being persecuted. His *Sovereigne Cordial for a Christian Conscience*²⁰⁶ warns against “the idol of the mass,” and sees repentance as the way to keep a pure conscience and a strong faith: “Let us therefore earnestly repent, and bring forth the worthi frutes of repentaunce.” Following the re-establishing of the mass by law in December 1554 he wrote again aware of the pressure that many would be under to deny the truth and “dishonour it with idolatry.” To help them resist this pressure he encouraged mutual support: “There is no better way to be used in this troublesome time for your consolation, than many times to have assemblies together of such men and women as be of your religion in Christ, there to talk and review among yourselves the truth of your religion, to see what ye be by the word of God ... comfort one another, make prayers together, confer with one another.”²⁰⁷ Such Protestant “conventicles proliferated during Mary’s reign ... to the comfort of their consciences.”²⁰⁸ Robert Smith told Bishop Bonner, at his trial in July 1555 that persecuted Christians in apostolic times held meetings “in houses and privy places as they do now.”²⁰⁹ Secret congregations met in Shakerley in Lancashire,²¹⁰ Harwich,²¹¹

²⁰⁴ Trueman, *Luther’s Legacy*: p. 246.

²⁰⁵ Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants 1559-1629* (Oxford 1982), pp. 268-9.

²⁰⁶ John Hooper, *A Sovereigne Cordial for a Christian Conscience* (Rouen 1554), no pagination. Some (E J Baskerville) suggest it is the work of John Bale, but it is clearly addressed to Protestants facing persecution in England and the author identifies himself with them.

²⁰⁷ *Letters of the Martyrs*, p. 86.

²⁰⁸ J W Martin, “Secret congregations of Mary’s reign” *JEH*, vol .34.4 (1984), p. 521.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, (1570), p. 2280.

²¹¹ *Acts of the Privy Council* V, p. 334.

and Brighton,²¹² in fact they were considered “a familiar phenomenon in Marian England.”²¹³ Henry Machyn records the detection of such meetings “as casually as he does the placing of men and women in the pillory.”²¹⁴ Protestants gathered in such secret congregations to avoid the mass, which they saw as idolatry, to hear Bible preaching and to enjoy the wholesome worship of the *Book of Common Prayer*. Repentance meant turning from sin to God. John Hullier, the Cambridge martyr, identified Rome with the beast in the Revelation and called to believers “Come away from her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins,” and “separate yourselves from the Pope’s hirelings.” Those who did not but conformed and attended mass while holding their Protestant faith secretly were known as Nicodemites, after Nicodemus, who came to Jesus secretly at night.²¹⁵

NICODEMISM AND ISSUES OF CONSCIENCE

Is repentance a matter of heart and mind or does it also have a physical dimension? This question was of great significance to the persecuted Protestants. Many believed that they could be present at mass without compromising their faith. Andrew Pettegree argues that the number of those who witnessed boldly in England, either in secret congregations or by acts of defiance, risking arrest and execution, was even smaller than of those who had fled the country to exile.²¹⁶ The majority of Protestants chose to reconcile themselves to the new situation and conform, though it is important to realise that conformity involved a whole spectrum of positions from “the slightest gesture of compliance” with the requirements of the Marian government, to outwardly appearing as orthodox members of parish communities, including attendance at mass, while inwardly holding to a completely different set of beliefs.²¹⁷

²¹² Martin, “Secret congregations”, p. 524.

²¹³ Ibid., p. 525.

²¹⁴ Ibid; *Henry Machyn’s Diary*, pp. 79, 160.

²¹⁵ St John 3.2.

²¹⁶ Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, p. 87.

²¹⁷ Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England 1500-1700* (Manchester 2006), p. 188; Anne Overell lists possible options in the face of a religiously hostile government as “obey the government, wait and see, keep quiet, compromise a little, sort out essentials, equivocate, evade, flee into exile.” “A Nicodemite in England and Italy: Edward Courtenay, 1548-56”, *John Foxe at Home and Abroad*, ed. David Loades (Aldershot 2004), p. 117.

Reflecting on how Peter denied Christ but later repented and was restored, Lawrence Saunders wrote from prison in the Marshalsea to call a gospel preacher who had recanted to repentance.²¹⁸ He was not the only one. Scory, Barlow and Jewel recanted in Oxford in 1554 before escaping to exile. John Cardmaker, another preacher, recanted when interrogated by the Privy Council in January 1555 but repented of his recantation and was burned at Smithfield in May. Most of the 400 who were accused in London after the 1555 visitation, however, readily conformed. Just three were condemned to the flames. For most the issues were concern for their families, property and position as well as fear for their lives. Some, like Thomas Norton, a prominent Parliamentarian under Elizabeth, who had been in service to the duke of Somerset, corresponded with Calvin, and who was married to Cranmer's daughter, "simply retreated into the shadows."²¹⁹ Reformed clergy represented one of the largest distinctive groups among the exiles. Many, however, remained with their flocks, believing that, if they left, those who replaced them would be the more eager to reinstate the mass.²²⁰ Such was William Shepherd, rector of Heydon, who stayed and conformed where he had to, but was enthusiastic for reform under Elizabeth.²²¹ Martin Bucer had been concerned that clergy should remain as pastors, and coined the dictum: "every martyr gained is a minister lost."²²² Some, like William Alley, went into internal exile. He withdrew to be a tutor in a remote part of the north of England. Among those who kept their heads down and stayed, conforming one way or another, were those who were to become leaders of the church under Elizabeth, notably Matthew Parker. Elizabeth's Privy Council included Northampton, Sackville, Parry, Cave, Bacon and Cecil, who had all conformed. However, Anne Overell, makes the interesting point that anti-Nicodemite propaganda focused on the ordinary and powerless and not on aristocrats, yet it was aristocrats who had most reason to dissimulate as they were the most tempted and most vulnerable.²²³

²¹⁸ *Letters of the Martyrs*, p. 160: "repent thee, Peter, and no doubt thou shalt find mercy."

²¹⁹ Michael A R Graves, *Thomas Norton: the Parliament Man* (Oxford 1994), p. 27.

²²⁰ Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, p. 102.

²²¹ Mark Byford, "The Price of Protestantism. Assessing the Impact of Religious Change on Elizabethan Essex. The Cases of Heydon and Colchester, 1558-1594" (unpublished Oxford D.Phil 1989).

²²² Peter Matheson, "Martyrdom or Mission? A Protestant Debate." *Archiv fur Reformationgeschichte* 80 (1989), pp. 170-1.

²²³ Anne Overell, "A Nicodemite in England and Italy", p. 118.

They justified their conforming to the requirements of the Marian regime by claiming they were identifying with “the weaker brethren”,²²⁴ or that they were bound to out of respect for royal authority, or that liturgical ceremonies were *adiaphora* and not matters of faith.²²⁵ The issue of royal authority was a persistent problem for Cranmer who had published, along with the *Homilies*, an essay as “An exhortation concerning good order, and obedience to rulers and magistrates,” and it may have been one reason for his recantations. The story of Naaman in 2 Kings chapter 5 was one of the most frequent examples quoted by conformists as biblical justification in their defence.²²⁶ An Assyrian commander, Naaman, had come to faith in the God of Israel when he had been healed through the ministry of the prophet Elisha. As he returned to his homeland he asked permission to be with his king when he worshipped in the temple of Rimmon, and Elisha acceded to his request with the words “Go in peace”.

However in many cases Nicodemism was much more than a way of survival. Stephen Alford compares the Marian careers of Cecil and Walsingham and concludes that “the idea that Walsingham was a better Protestant because in exile and Cecil politique is flawed. Walsingham was studying law at Padua. Cecil was part of the underground support for Protestantism in England.”²²⁷ Nicodemites helped sustain those in prison and supported exiles. It was Nicodemites, including Cecil, who successfully opposed the Bill, in November 1555, to confiscate the property of those in exile.²²⁸ The jury that freed Sir Nicholas Throgmorton were Nicodemites, as were many among the evangelical members of the livery companies listed by Brett Usher.²²⁹ It can also fairly be said that “to a very large extent the Elizabethan Settlement was a Nicodemite Reformation.”²³⁰

²²⁴ *Letters of the Martyrs*, p. 321.

²²⁵ Alexandra Walsham, “Ordeals of Conscience, Casuistry, Conformity and Confessional Identity in Post-Reformation England”, *Contexts of Conscience in Early Modern Europe 1500-1700*, eds. Harald Braun and Edward Vallance (New York 2004), p. 39.

²²⁶ Perez Zagorin, *Ways of Lying: Dissimulation, Persecution, and Conformity in Early Modern Europe* (London 1990), p. 110.

²²⁷ Stephen Alford, *The Early Elizabethan Polity: William Cecil and the Succession Crisis 1558-1569*, (Cambridge 1998), p. 26; CH Garrett, *Marian Exiles* (Cambridge 1938), p. 319.

²²⁸ David Loades, *The Reign of Mary Tudor* (London 1979), pp. 218-9.

²²⁹ Brett Usher, “Backing Protestantism: the London Godly, the Exchequer and the Foxe Circle”, *John Foxe, an Historical Perspective*, ed. David Loades (Aldershot 1999), pp. 105-134.

²³⁰ Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, p. 106.

There were powerful arguments against conformism and the condemnation of those who called them to repent was a continual reminder to those who conformed of their Protestant identity. By 1553 both the exiles and imprisoned church leaders were clearly against what had come to be known as Nicodemism.²³¹ Eamon Duffy argues that the abundance of anti-Nicodemite literature was “a symptom of extreme anxiety among the reformed leadership.”²³² A Marian exile translated Musculus’s *Prosaerus* as *The Temporysious* to dissuade fellow believers from participation in popish rites, and almost two thirds of the writings of the exiles were in this direction. Bradford wrote a lengthy anti-Nicodemite tract, *The Hurte of Hearing the Masse*. Other prisoners helped to make copies of this and these were sent to at least three of his correspondents.²³³ Although he noted the names of Calvin, Viret, Bullinger and Hooper in the margin of the first page, most of the arguments represent his own theological position. His prime argument is that the mass dishonours Christ. It is “against Christ himself, against his priesthood and so his kingdom, against his death and sacrifice and so against our redemption, against his worship and true service, against faith, against prayer, repentance and ministry of God’s word, against his ordinance, institution, commandment and gospel.”²³⁴ Because it is against Christ it is against Christian living and piety, Bradford asks: “What needeth repentance when Sir John will save me by his masses, even when the time of repentance is prevented by death? What needeth faith, what needeth goodness of life, what needeth preaching, what needeth praying, what needeth any piety at all, when the mass hath all, and can and will serve for all?”²³⁵ Nicodemites accepted this. They argued that their physical presence did not mean they consented to the mass. They held unto repentance and faith in Christ’s finished work secretly in their hearts, and it was this that made them Nicodemites. It was the essence of their Protestant identity even if they did not reveal it.

²³¹ Ibid., p. 89. The first known use of the word in this way was in a letter from Frederick Hondebeke to his friend Caspar Heddio, in 1522, about Erasmus’s unwillingness to come out in support of Luther: “I am very annoyed that day by day Erasmus is cooling off and, as far as I can judge, is secretly reconsidering what he once seems to have said or written more freely, and I recognise a childish fear, which has more respect to the approbation of men than the glory of God. But such Nicodemites among us are in great number.”

²³² Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, p. 37.

²³³ Freeman, “Publish and Perish..” p. 246; suggests that “the actual distribution of Bradford’s treatise was probably much wider than this.”

²³⁴ *The Writings of John Bradford*, 2.317.

²³⁵ Ibid., 2.314.

The fact that there had been a reformed government under Edward was itself a reason for the exiles and others to challenge conformity to papal Catholicism. This was especially so when the burnings began. The deaths of bishops and preachers were a witness to the truth of the Protestant cause. Bishop Hooper's response to whether repentance was a matter of the heart rather than the body was to expound Romans 10.9-10: "with the heart a man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confesseth unto salvation"; and 1 Corinthians 6.20: "glorify God with your bodies". He concludes, "If we be present at such idolatry as God forbiddeth, and our own knowledge in conscience is assured to be evil, do we glorify God in our bodies? No, doubtless we dishonour him and make our bodies the servants of idolatry."²³⁶ Conformists ultimately justified themselves by an understanding of conscience which separated inner beliefs from outward actions and prioritised the former.²³⁷ But some who conformed were not assured of this and were left with what Puritans were to call an "afflicted conscience."

Elizabeth Young could not be persuaded to go to mass, claiming "my conscience will not suffer me."²³⁸ For many the experience of persecution gave rise to considerable anxiety. They experienced an intense tension between their desire for salvation and their instinct for self-preservation. Musculus's *Temporyseur* seeks counsel from his friends as to whether he should go to mass. One of them responds: "Thou hast a wife and children, over whom by the appointment of God thou hast especial charge: by what conscience then I pray thee (seeing thou dost so often allege thy conscience) canst thou abandon and forsake them?" But for all that, Temporiser declares that with regard to attending mass his conscience is "wonderfully troubled"²³⁹. In some instances this led to despair. Such was the case of Sir James Hales. Judge Hales was imprisoned in October 1553 for indicting priests who said mass before the new Marian laws were brought in. According to Holinshed, he conceded to the queen's desires in her presence.²⁴⁰ That night he attempted to take his own life. He was released and four months later he drowned himself in a river near his home in Kent. John Bradford wrote to the judge's son claiming that his father acted against

²³⁶ *Later Writings of Bishop Hooper*, ed. C Nevins (PS. Cambridge 1852), p. 571.

²³⁷ Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, p. 38

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 32; Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, (1583) p. 537.

²³⁹ Quoted by Jonathan Wright, "The World's Worst Worm: Conscience and Conformity during the English Reformation" *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 30 (1999), p. 114.

²⁴⁰ Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (London 1808), 4. 8-9.

conscience, for “conscience is soon wounded.”²⁴¹ Some sought advice over issues of conscience from the imprisoned reform leaders. A correspondent of John Bradford wanted to know whether she could “with safe conscience” attend popish matins and evensong.²⁴² “For Protestants, conscience was closely tied to a predestination theology of grace.”²⁴³ Since election was at the heart of reformed soteriology and the basis of assurance, anxieties built up around the issue of who was elect. Bradford’s best pastoral letters were to assure the doubting of their election. He assures Joyce Hales: “think you God to be mutable? Is he changeling? Doth he not love to the end whom he loveth? And are not his gifts and calling such that he cannot repent of them? For else he were no God.”²⁴⁴ In Elizabeth’s reign Puritans were concerned to minister to those anxious whether they were among the elect, who had an “afflicted conscience”. The experience of persecution under Mary was not forgotten. Even Bernard Gilpin, Elizabethan hero but Marian conformist, admitted that in supporting the doctrine of the real presence in 1550 “my conscience was somewhat wounded for granting before them in plain words the thing whereof I stood in doubt.”²⁴⁵ Resisting a bill to enforce compulsory church going by also making it compulsory to take communion, Edward Aglionby, in 1571, declared in Parliament that “the conscience of man is eternal, invisible, and not in the power of the greatest monarchy in the world, in any limits to be straightened, in any bounds to be contained.”²⁴⁶ Thomas Norton pointed out that that way had been tried under Mary. The bill was defeated.

The instruction in *The Order of the Communion* “to searche and examine your owne consciences” encouraged a new attitude to conscience. With the sacrament of penance the church had been in control of conscience by its doctrine and in the person of the confessor. The 1539 Act Abolishing Diversity of Opinions showed that the early modern state succeeded the church as the arbiter of the individual conscience.²⁴⁷ But the *Order* places responsibility and control of conscience with the individual. Anti-Nicodemite arguments acknowledged that those who conform outwardly claim that conscience allows them to do so, as in their hearts they are holding to their beliefs.

²⁴¹ *Letters of the Martyrs*, p. 240.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 308.

²⁴³ Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, p. 33.

²⁴⁴ ECL. Ms. .260 fo.179.

²⁴⁵ Wright, “The World’s Worst Worm”, p. 123.

²⁴⁶ ST Bindoff, *Tudor England*, (London 1950), p. 234.

²⁴⁷ James Spurr, “A Profane History of Early Modern Oaths”, *TRHS*, 6th series, 11 (2001), p. 59.

John Philpot was attempting to respond to issues of conscience when he wrote to “the Christian congregation” while in prison in King’s Bench in 1555 to counter their Nicodemite arguments.²⁴⁸ “Conscience? Many affirm, their conscience will bear them well enough to do all that they do, and to go to the idolatrous church to service ... whose conscience is very large, to satisfy man more than God. And although their conscience can bear them so to do, yet I am sure that a good conscience will not permit them to do so: which cannot be good, unless it is directed after the knowledge of God’s word: and therefore in Latin this feeling of mind is called *Conscientia*, which soundeth [is synonymous] by interpretation with knowledge. And therefore if our conscience be led of herself, and not after true knowledge, yet are we not so to be excused; as St Paul beareth witness saying, Although my conscience accuseth me not, yet in this I am not justified.”

Since individuals are responsible for their own conscience, this is a move towards accepting conscience as a relative concept. However those who simply refused the possibility of conforming to the mass and called to repentance those who conformed, created in some an “afflicted conscience.” Pastoral ministry to these during the persecution became a model for Puritans under Elizabeth. On the other hand, the claim to be assured in conscience by God’s word was, according to Hooker, “a licence for the ignorant to criticise their ruler.”²⁴⁹ The danger, as he saw it, was that this might undermine obedience to government “with its insistence that conscience trumped magistracy.”²⁵⁰

As a matter of conscience Hooper refused to wear episcopal vestments when elected bishop of Gloucester, but after a while in the Fleet prison he conceded to wear them. As a matter of conscience John Knox resisted kneeling to receive communion and Edward’s Council was persuaded and inserted the Black Rubric in the 1552 Prayer Book. For exiles in Geneva “freedom of a Christian conscience” enabled them to reject the Prayer Book and establish their own. As a matter of conscience some Elizabethan radicals refused to wear vestments despite the Act of Uniformity. And as a matter of conscience Archbishop Grindal even refused to obey Elizabeth’s

²⁴⁸ *Letters of the Martyrs*, p. 171.

²⁴⁹ Norman Jones, *Religion and Cultural Adaptation* (Oxford 2002), p. 186.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

command to suppress prophesyings.²⁵¹ Matters of conscience were increasingly significant.

Recently historians have found issues around martyrdom and Nicodemism in sixteenth-century Europe, and not least in Protestant writings during the Marian persecution, contain seeds of significant cultural change. Brad Gregory argues that the martyrs, both Protestant and Catholic, “through their willingness to die for contrary doctrines, which they understood as the very expression of God’s will, ... helped to render problematic the knowability of that will ...” and paradoxically their “concretely expressed religious convictions paved the path to a secular society.”²⁵² Alexandra Walsham sees anti-Nicodemite arguments as making “some tentative steps towards accepting [conscience] as a relative concept.”²⁵³ This corresponds well with CS Lewis’s study of conscience, in which he states that “The more boldly men claim conscience is, directly or vicariously, a divine lawgiver ... the more troublesomely aware they must become that this lawgiver gives different laws to different men; this mirror reflects different faces. Hence we have consciences in the plural ... meaning different inner laws they acknowledge”.²⁵⁴

In his discussion of the repression of non-conformity by Catholicism in France towards the end of the sixteenth century, Robin Briggs argues that this “marks the passage from what had essentially been a shame culture, in which norms were communally agreed and enforced, to a guilt culture, which placed greater stress on the individual conscience as an instrument of moral order.”²⁵⁵ It might be argued that the Marian persecution similarly had a major impact on English culture. Some who conformed to practices which were in opposition to their beliefs had afflicted consciences. Imprisoned reformers called them to repentance, which for some intensified their guilt but also reinforced their Protestant faith. Exiles in Geneva claimed that by their conscience they were free to decide on issues of church discipline and order, even to overrule authority. The fact that Nicodemites often

²⁵¹ *Religion and Society in Early Modern England*, eds. David Cressy and Lori Anne Ferrell (London 1986), p.98.

²⁵² Gregory, *Salvation at Stake*, (1999), p. 352.

²⁵³ Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, p. 40.

²⁵⁴ CS Lewis, *Studies in Words* (Cambridge 1960) , p. 199.

²⁵⁵ Robin Briggs, *Communities of Belief. Culture and Social Tension in Early Modern France* (Oxford 1989), p. 407.

claimed to be acting according to conscience and that even those who opposed their position recognised this was a move towards plurality. As a result, as Norman Jones argues, for Elizabethans “The empowerment of the individual arising from the ready accessibility of the word of God *and the emphasis on conscience* should not be underestimated [my italics].”²⁵⁶

CONCLUSIONS:

Edwardian Protestants regarded repentance as equivalent to conversion and saw the Christian life as one of continuous repentance. This involved an awareness of self as guilty before God but at the same time forgiven and made righteous by Christ’s finished work on the cross, which was confirmed by his resurrection. In other words, repentance and faith were virtually synonymous with justification. Repentance also related to the Law and the Gospel in Scripture, and to preaching, which became the means of absolution and assurance when God’s promises were related to the needs of the penitent believer. Hence for John Bradford, as for Martin Bucer before him, repentance was the key to pastoral ministry. The Marian persecution gave him considerable opportunities to exercise it.

For Catholics true penance required not only contrition but also satisfaction by good works; for Protestants repentance required contrition and faith. John Bradford and others stressed the importance of amendment of life, though not as a penitential work, but as the fruit of repentance. Since it is not this but Christ’s work which satisfies divine justice there can be assurance of forgiveness. However Mid-Tudor Protestants did retain satisfactory works as a penitential response to people who had been hurt or offended. Debra Shuger is impressed by this continuity from the old system: “that one element of the medieval penitential system survived the Reformation seems as

²⁵⁶ Jones, *Religion and Cultural Adaptation*, p. 185.

significant as the loss of others.”²⁵⁷ Lualdi and Thayer see the Protestants developing new penitential practices rather than merely abandoning the sacrament of penance.²⁵⁸ English Protestants learned to confess their sins corporately through the liturgy and privately through primers and other devotional material. John Bradford and other English Protestant theologians offered practical help in how to repent, and in fact Carl Trueman sees that practicality as a distinctive mark of English Protestant theology.²⁵⁹ Comfort and discipline were evident in the liturgy and in Protestant pastoral ministry which focused on penitence.

The fact that Mary’s accession, and all that followed, was seen by Protestants as a sign of the need to repent indicates that they had a deep sense of God’s providence. It also indicates a belief that they saw it as their vocation to hold to the truth of God’s word, even if that meant the ultimate witness of martyrdom. The challenge to repent was also a challenge to stand fast in their faith. For some it meant encouraging one another in underground congregations. For others it meant exile. Since repentance involved holding to the truth, exiles and church leaders in prison spoke out forcefully against compromise.

For exiles the message of repentance became politicised. Gottfried W Locher²⁶⁰ has pointed out that exile can create “psychological and spiritual tension.” He goes on to suggest that “Christian refugees by reason of their faith are both extremely progressive and extremely conservative. Every flight is a political criticism, and simultaneously contains an anarchistic element.” Although the English exiles held that repentance was basic to their theology, for some it meant holding on to their Edwardian heritage and for others justifying violent resistance to the tyranny of the Marian regime. In both cases their thinking was political rather than pastoral.

Both persecuted and exiles denounced compromise with the Marian church, largely on the grounds that the mass was idolatry and a denial of Christ. Both imprisoned and exiled church leaders questioned how believers could be present at such a ritual as the

²⁵⁷ Debora Shuger, “The Reformation of Penance” *Harvard Literary Quarterly* vol 71 No.4 (2008), p. 571.

²⁵⁸ KJ Lualdi and AT Thayer, *Penitence in the Age of Reformations* (Ashgate 2000), p. 2.

²⁵⁹ Trueman, *Luther’s Legacy*, p. 293.

²⁶⁰ Locher, “The Theology of Exile, pp. 89, 92.

mass. True conviction should have led to flight or martyrdom. But in fact as Andrew Pettegree argues “English Protestantism owed more to ... [Nicodemites] than it has so far been prepared to acknowledge.”²⁶¹ For Elizabeth Longshaw, it may be argued, the guilt of attending mass was more fearful than exile or even martyrdom. Fearful for their lives, their family, and property, those who attended mass against conscience, or against the consciences of their leaders and fellow Protestants in prison or in exile, had their own cross to bear. Some found this too much and converted back to Roman Catholicism, but those who held on to their Protestant beliefs were seared with their Protestant identity by the condemnation of those who called them to repentance. It seemed that Nicodemism would always be incompatible with the call to repentance by godly leaders who were burned for their faith. Moral philosopher, Oliver O’Donovan, however, argues that “moral incompatibilities” can be “reconciled historically.”²⁶² The Elizabethan settlement, and the role in it of Cecil, Parker, and Elizabeth herself, all Nicodemites, justifies this. Both Nicodemites and their critics were looking for the restoration of a Protestant church, which was achieved despite the incompatibility of their positions. It is perhaps apt to remember that Nicodemus himself, along with Joseph of Arimathea, rescued the body of Jesus, and gave it a burial, in preparation for resurrection. The critical attack on Nicodemism led to issues of conscience which persisted throughout the century. Theological issues were also greatly affected not only by the teaching of the famous reformed teachers of the continent, but also by the pastoral ministry of English reform leaders who were seeking to provide assurance to those who were anxious and doubting. The call to repentance and faith helped to sustain resistance to the Marian church and to forge in the fire of persecution a new and distinctly English Protestantism.

²⁶¹ Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, p. 89.

²⁶² Oliver O’Donovan, *Resurrection and the Moral Order: an Outline for Evangelical Ethics* (Leicester 1986) , p. 157.

5. PENANCE AND THE RESTORATION OF THE MARIAN CHURCH.

If Edward VI's reign was marked by preaching, Mary's reign was marked by penance. Thomas Watson in his *A Holesome and Catholyke Doctryne concerninge the Seven Sacramentes* included eleven sermons on penance out of a total of twenty-nine and just nine on the eucharist. Similarly in the face of almost universal attack on the sacrament by reformers, the Council of Trent had, in 1551, issued nine chapters on penance with some fifteen canons "this giving it a more extended treatment than the eucharist."¹ To this extent the Marian church was in tune with Counter-Reformation objectives. Penance is the key to understanding both the strengths and the weaknesses of the Marian church. For the leaders of that church, and for Mary herself, penance was the means of getting where they wanted to go. The restoration of the mass required confession, absolution and satisfaction by participants, as Bonner's pastoral letters² and visitation articles show.³ For Pole that was not enough. Until the Church of England was reconciled with Rome it was schismatic. Bishops, clergy, in fact the whole nation needed to be absolved. The significance of penance in these circumstances cannot be exaggerated. Focusing on penance reveals these different priorities and suggests possible tensions therefore among the church's leaders. For those who had been bishops under Henry VIII the catholicity of the church was rooted in the sacraments, while for Pole these were invalid without apostolic (papal) authority. Penance was used legally as part of the discipline of the church, but was also at the heart of the Marians' pastoral theology. This chapter points to a tension between the legal and pastoral use of penance which meant the church leaders were not single-minded in the restoration of Catholicism. The second decree of Pole's Legatine Synod declared: "whereas by the debility of (many) sins the soul becomes disordered and troubled, by penance it is spiritually healed."⁴ Leonard Pollard

¹ John P Marmion, "The London Synod of Reginald Cardinal Pole" (Unpublished Keele MA 1974), p. 245; *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (London 1687), pp. 49-55.

² E Cardwell, *Documentary Annals* (Oxford 1844), 1.174-6.

³ *Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the period of the Reformation*, eds. WF Frere and WC Kennedy (London 1910), pp.335, 350.

⁴ Marmion, "The London Synod", p.12.

advocated frequent confessions. For him this was the secret of the spiritual awakening that the Church needed. It was medicine for sick souls. It was the means of comfort for the distressed.⁵ Nevertheless a great deal of time and effort was spent by Pole on legal technicalities and dispensations to deal with the effects of the schism even after the reconciliation with Rome by the legate's absolution on St Andrew's day 1555.

The theological, pastoral and administrative abilities of the Marian bishops suggest a successful restoration of the Marian church. Penance, however, was fundamental to reconciliation with the papacy, and nearly all who had acquired ecclesiastical land under Henry and Edward refused to restore it, could they be penitent? For Pole this property issue was not only an economic problem but a moral and spiritual one. Despite "the pervasive culture of conformity," and the effective structure of coercion⁶ there is evidence which suggests some resistance to the restoration of the penitential system.⁷ Polemical and pastoral penitential publications reveal the influence not only of John Fisher, but also of Henrician and Edwardian reforms. Thomas Watson's format for the examination of conscience, and the desire for the more frequent reception of sacraments support Duffy's vision of "the same heightened interiority and more intense sacramentalism that we associate with post-Tridentine Catholicism."⁸ However, the republication of Bradford's *Sermon on Repentance* just months before Mary's death suggests that the Marians had not wholly won the argument with regard to penance.

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Because of the burning of Protestants, John Foxe saw Mary's reign as a disaster.⁹ As a consequence Mary has subsequently been denigrated at the hands of historians, who have seen her as weak and her attempt to restore Catholicism as an inevitable

⁵ Leonard Pollard, *Fyve homilies* (London 1556).

⁶ David Loades, *The Religious Culture of Marian England* (London 2010), p. 17.

⁷ See notes 215-218.

⁸ Eamon Duffy, *Fires of Faith: Catholic England under Mary Tudor* (London 2009), p. 190.

⁹ *Mary Tudor: Old and New Perspectives*, eds. Susan Doran and Thomas S Freeman, (Basingstoke 2011), p. 9.

failure.¹⁰ Doran and Freeman, however, have shown that now revisionism is “emerging as the dominant trend of current Marian scholarship.”¹¹ Revisionists emphasise the successes of the restoration and claim that the main problem of the Marian regime was lack of time.¹² Are they right in believing that it was only Mary’s premature death that prevented the restoration of the Marian Church being one of the great achievements of the Counter-Reformation?

Over against the Elizabethans’ view that Catholicism was doomed to failure, as expressed by Foxe and Holinshed, and that Mary herself was cruel and irrational, Duffy describes her ecclesiastical policy as surprisingly innovative and successful, and credits it with both being in tune with and influencing the Counter-Reformation.¹³ Thomas Mayer has demonstrated the importance of Pole’s strategy which is seen in the decrees of his Legatine Synod of 1556.¹⁴ In addition to having a strong bench of bishops, the Marian Church, according to John Edwards, benefitted from Pole’s productive collaboration with Bartholome Carranza.¹⁵ Lucy Wooding and William Wizeman, both revisionists, view the Marian Church as theologically sophisticated and intellectually coherent. Wizeman sees it as at the centre of European developments while Wooding sees the church as indebted to Henrician humanism and insular. The evidence presented here supports Wooding’s case.

It may be argued that their descriptions of the Marian church reflect the differences between the bishops who had served under Henry, especially Gardiner, and Cardinal Pole, who was appointed papal legate to England soon after Mary’s accession. When Stephen Gardiner wrote to Cardinal Pole on 12th March 1554, he accepted papal supremacy and therefore his own guilt in being part of a schismatic church under

¹⁰ Thomas S Freeman, “Inventing Bloody Mary: Perceptions of Mary Tudor from the Restoration to the Twentieth Century”, *Mary Tudor: Old and New Perspectives*, pp. 78-100; Elizabeth Russell, “Mary Tudor and Mr Jorkins”, *Historical Research* 63 (1990), p. 276: has, however, argued that Mary “created her own reputation for weakness and lack of skill, in order to serve her own political ends.”

¹¹ Doran and Freeman, “Introduction”, *Mary Tudor: Old and New Perspectives*, p. 13.

¹² *The Church of Mary Tudor*, eds. E Duffy and D M Loades (Aldershot 2006), p. xi.

¹³ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (London 1992), pp. 524-64; idem, *Fires of Faith*, p. 207.

¹⁴ Thomas F Mayer, *Reginald Pole: Prince and Prophet* (Aldershot 2000), pp. 235-245.

¹⁵ John Edwards, *Mary I, England’s Catholic Queen* (London 2011), pp. 240-65: though Edwards admits that it is “hard to deny that Carranza was central to the violence against reformed believers in Mary’s England.”

Henry.¹⁶ Whether this was a pragmatic decision, since the Queen herself was already determined on that course,¹⁷ or he had come back to it as an article of faith, is uncertain.¹⁸ Pole, in his response, certainly defined it in penitential terms: “acknowledging your own sin in having permitted yourself to be separated from the Church, with marks of true repentance for the frailty that did lead you to that.”¹⁹ He must have been disappointed by Gardiner’s reply which urged him to play down the restoration of papal jurisdiction²⁰ and to make it known “to the leaders of the people of this realm that in the reformation which we desire to effect in our native land there is no intention of making any alteration in the possessions and temporal inheritances ... but that each will be able to enjoy all which he holds either by gift or by right of purchase, according to the laws and decrees of the realm made to secure and confirm such possession.”²¹ While Gardiner was seeking to affirm Catholicism by restoring the sacraments through repealing the Edwardian reforms, Pole believed that to restore Catholicism meant first and foremost the restoration of the papacy.

Lucy Wooding follows Gardiner in seeing the Marian Church as having a distinct Catholic identity with its sense of unity being sacramental rather than organisational and therefore seeing the papacy as a secondary issue.²² While resisting Protestantism it accepted a good deal from its Henrician past. John Angel linked Mary’s endeavours to those of her father, and many writers spoke of Henry as a pious catholic prince

¹⁶ The letter is lost but is referred to in Pole’s reply of 22nd March. *The Letters of Stephen Gardiner*, ed. JA Muller (Cambridge 1933), p. 496.

¹⁷ *Calendar of State Papers, Spanish*, ed. Royall Tyler (London 1862), XI. iii. 290: He is reported as saying the queen went before him in this matter.

¹⁸ Glyn Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic: the Life of Stephen Gardiner* (Oxford 1990), p. 289; Rex H Pogson, “The Legacy of Schism”, *The Mid-Tudor Polity 1540-1560*, eds. Jennifer Loach and Robert Tittler (London 1980), p. 119: argues that it was during his imprisonment in the Tower (under Edward) that Gardiner came to believe that although the papacy was not divinely ordained it was necessary for Catholic revival in England.

¹⁹ *The Letters of Stephen Gardiner*, p. 496.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 464: “write to the Parliament now in session a letter which should treat in general only, the question of unity in religion, with such moderation that the right of the Pope would be rather suggested than expressed in clear words ...”

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 466.

²² Lucy Wooding, *Rethinking Catholicism in Reformation England* (Oxford 2000), p. 126; eadem, “The Marian Restoration of the Mass”, *The Church of Mary Tudor*, p. 229: the mass “was at the heart of Mary Tudor’s restored Catholic Church”; eadem, “The Marian Restoration and the Language of Catholic Reform”, *Reforming Catholicism in the England of Mary Tudor*, eds. John Edwards and Ronald Truman, (Aldershot 2005), p. 58: “Papal supremacy was not capable of providing the ... focus for Catholic loyalism.”

(much to Pole's abhorrence).²³ Wooding argues that Erasmian humanism had influenced many of the church's leaders, so that their humanist ideals were often the same as those which had also been important to Henrician and Edwardian Protestants. These involved seeing Scripture as the primary source of divine truth, the importance of preaching, the need for a reformed ministry, personal piety based on faith, and charity as a binding force.²⁴ Bonner's *Profytable and Necessarye Doctryne* was largely based on the 1543 'King's Book', and his *Homilies* followed the same headings as Cranmer's, with some being a direct reproduction. John Angel's *Agrement of the Holye Fathers* drew from the early Church, the Scriptures, and also from Erasmus, Luther, Calvin, and even from Cranmer.²⁵ Wooding claims that there was diversity among the Marian writers;²⁶ that many of them were ambivalent about transubstantiation;²⁷ and that only Pole and Standish wrote a theological justification of the papacy.²⁸ She sees a tension between the body of churchmen and scholars, such as Bonner, Watson and Pollard, and Cardinal Pole, which "reflects the difference between English and Roman Catholicism."²⁹ She claims that Marian interest in purgatory and the cult of saints was peripheral.³⁰ She is supported by Ronald Hutton's argument that prayers to the saints and prayers for the dead were "abiding casualties of the preceding Reformations."³¹ Even the Primers published during the reign of Mary are in English as well as Latin and include some protestant prayers.³² In his 1556 St Andrew's Day sermon, John Harpsfield reminded his hearers that the restoration of obedience to Rome was "by full consent and glad approbation of the whole realm, in that parliament represented." Wooding points out the irony of this, that the papacy was acceptable on the authority of parliament, and concludes that "it was one of the many indications of the success of Henrician propaganda."³³ She even

²³ Wooding, *Rethinking Catholicism*, p. 120: e.g. Roger Edgeworth and Thomas Paynell; *The Correspondence of Reginald Pole*, ed. Thomas F Mayer (Burlington 2002, 4vols.), 2. 236: "when Mary mentions Henry (she) should not honour him as she does in letters to me."

²⁴ Wooding, *Rethinking Catholicism*, p. 119.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

³¹ Ronald Hutton, "The Local Impact of the Tudor Reformations", *The English Reformation Revised*, ed. Christopher Haigh (Cambridge 1987), p. 131.

³² Wooding, *Rethinking Catholicism*, p. 176.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

claims that Marian concepts of orthodoxy “owe more to the pronouncements of Henry VIII than ... to the papacy.”³⁴ The argument of this chapter that Cardinal Pole viewed penance primarily as a legal requirement for restoring the papacy, while the bishops valued it liturgically and pastorally, supports her case.

William Wizeman³⁵ and Jonathan Dean³⁶ strongly reject Wooding’s analysis. Dean argues that there was no clearly consistent Catholicism in the Henrician Church.³⁷ Wizeman, has the same emphasis as Pole and insists that there is no true Catholicism without the Pope. For him “Wooding’s account of the Marian Church is problematic.”³⁸ The prime purpose of the papacy was the maintenance of church unity, which since the fifteenth century had always meant universality. Pole was aware that it was the papacy which gave order and validity to the sacraments which were so important to the Marians. Wizeman argues for the homogeneity of the Marian theological writings.³⁹ He refuses to accept that Marian definitions of dogma were very different from Trent, pointing out that Watson’s sermon *Of Satisfaction*⁴⁰ includes a translation of the Trent decree on this subject.⁴¹ He claims that Marian theologians stressed “a uniform approach to penance”⁴², its necessity, its healing qualities, its ability to restore Catholics as “coheirs” in God’s kingdom.⁴³ Marian theologians looked back to John Fisher who had successfully joined humanism and scholasticism in orthodoxy. Fisher’s soteriology was also influential in the Council of Trent.⁴⁴

³⁴ Ibid., p. 177.

³⁵ William Wizeman, *The Theology and Spirituality of Mary Tudor’s Church* (Aldershot 2006).

³⁶ Jonathan Dean, “Catholicae Ecclesiae Unitatem: Nicholas Harpsfield and English Reformation Catholicism” (unpublished Cambridge Ph D. 2004).

³⁷ Ibid., p. 7.

³⁸ Wizeman, *The Theology and Spirituality*, p. 8; Peter Marshall, “Is the Pope a Catholic? Henry VIII and the Semantics of Schism”, *Catholics and the Protestant Nation*, ed. E Shagan (Manchester 2005), p. 42: “In the reign of Henry VIII Catholicism ... was an unstable category, a contested construction, a matter of ascription rather than description, a contested discourse.”

³⁹ Wizeman, *The Theology and Spirituality*, p. 185.

⁴⁰ Thomas Watson, *Holesome and Catholyke Doctryne concernynge the Seven Sacramentes of Chrystes Church expedient to be known of all men* (London 1558), sermon 23, p. cxxxiv.

⁴¹ Wizeman, *The Theology and Spirituality*, p. 8.

⁴² Ibid., p. 185.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 96; Dean, “Catholicae Ecclesiae”, p. 7.

The unity of the Church implied its universality, and in the West that meant communion with the Pope. Despite Wizerman's claim of uniformity, however, there is evident diversity among Marian theologians. Pollard's approach to penance stressing personal humility and refusing to use technical wording of contrition and satisfaction contrasts with Bonner's approach. Six of Mary's bishops (Gardiner, Bonner, Tunstall, Heath, Day and Vesty) had held sees under Henry. They were Catholic in doctrine and had been deprived during Edward's reign. Nevertheless they had written and preached against the Papacy. They argued for the unity of the church based on the sacraments. Gardiner wrote in 1551: "Men cannot be gathered into any name other false, other true of religion, except they be tyed and ioned together by the communion and participation, of visible signs, or sacraments."⁴⁵ Nevertheless these men were pragmatic enough to accept the consequences of the restoration to the papacy but there were inevitable tensions, as Wooding points out. They knew that to restore the Church of England to the Catholic fold involved a change that could only be initiated by penance. For most clergy and bishops however, the sacraments were basic and penance was crucial in preparation for mass, while for Pole penance was needed first to deal with the schism and enable there to be reconciliation with the papacy. A focus on penance and the ways in which it was used helps to assess these tensions.

RESTORING PENANCE

Right from Mary's accession, the difficulties the Church faced in restoring penance reveal its weaknesses. Purgatory had been undermined in the 1540s and pressure to obtain a pardon for relatives who had died was no longer an impetus to the whole penitential system.⁴⁶ The monasteries and the chantries had been dissolved and it was not only the Protestants who had benefited from the spoils. The imperial ambassador, Simon Renard, told the Emperor Charles V that Catholics held more church property than the heretics.⁴⁷ There was a shortage of clergy to hear confessions, and no friars to supplement them, and the habit of annual confession in Lent had been broken by

⁴⁵ Stephen Gardiner, *An Explication and assertion of the True Catholique Fayth* (1551), sig. B i.

⁴⁶ Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford 2002), p. 4: "the death of purgatory has a good claim to be considered the most radical and complete of the disjunctions brought about by the Reformation in the 16th century".

⁴⁷ *Calendar of State Papers, Spanish*, XI. xxii. 46.

this not being obligatory from 1548. Primers and Edwardian Prayer Books offered ways for confession to be addressed directly to God⁴⁸ or in general confession by a congregation, avoiding the necessity of meeting one to one with a priest. Despite great efforts very few high profile Protestants recanted and did penance.⁴⁹ And despite the supplication of Parliament for absolution in November 1554 and the impressive liturgical drama of that absolution, as Pole's St Andrew's Day sermon three years later suggests, there remained an unwillingness (by those holding church lands) to forsake "carnal cravings" and be satisfied with the body of Christ,⁵⁰ which raises the question as to whether they could be truly contrite.

From the start there was an ambiguity in Mary's role. She saw herself as called by God to the monarchy so that she might restore the nation to the faith in which she had been brought up. This inevitably meant reconciliation with the papacy and so with the church universal. But by statute she was "the Supreme Head of the Church of England". Although she hated that title and in her Injunctions of Religion forbade the use of the phrase "regia auctoritate fulcitus"⁵¹ (enforceable by royal authority), it was only on the basis of that authority that she issued those injunctions and was able to bring about some of the changes she desired, for example through the appointment of bishops, royal commissions and visitations. Mary published her first proclamation, from Richmond on the 18th August 1553.⁵² It stated that the Queen would maintain "that religion which God and the world knoweth she hath ever professed from her infancy", but went on to assert that "her Majesty mindeth not to compel any of her subjects thereunto until such times as further order by common consent may be taken therein."

Her cousin, Reginald Cardinal Pole, had longed for this moment, ever since he wrote *De Unitate*, a tract which he described to Gaspar Contarini as being "all about

⁴⁸ *Horae Beatae Mariae Virginis with kindred Books and primers of the Reformed Roman use*, ed. Edgar Hoskins (London 1901), p. 190: quoting the 1555 Wayland Primer.

⁴⁹ The notable exceptions were the Duke of Northumberland and Sir John Cheke.

⁵⁰ Eamon Duffy, "Cardinal Pole preaching", *The Church of Mary Tudor*, eds, E Duffy and DM Loades, (Aldershot 2006), p.198.

⁵¹ *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, 2. 36: The "Injunctions of Religion" were published from Westminster on 4th March 1554.

⁵² *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, 2. 5-7.

penance.”⁵³ He wrote it as a call to penance for Henry VIII, for he saw penance as the only means for the restoration of the church’s unity.⁵⁴ Despite having been a leader among the *spirituali* during his exile in Italy, and sympathy with the Lutheran doctrine of justification, the executions of Fisher and More convinced him that the unity of the church was only “guaranteed in the teaching and authority of the Pope.”⁵⁵ He wrote to Mary on 13th August 1553, seeing her accession as the long awaited opportunity for those who had been given to the cause of human malice, now to be able to devote themselves to the service of God and to the benefit of the kingdom.⁵⁶ He urged Mary, on October 2nd, to submit to the Pope immediately and seek absolution.⁵⁷ Mary however, on the advice of Simon Renard, the imperial ambassador, and Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, whom she appointed Lord Chancellor, proceeded with caution. Nevertheless, Gian Francisco Commendone, a papal chamberlain, had visited her secretly in August and in consultation with him she had arranged for private absolution for herself and Stephen Gardiner so she could undergo her coronation with a clear conscience.⁵⁸

The immediate issues facing Mary were the suppression of heresy and the restoration of true worship. Mary had continued with private masses during Edward’s reign, despite efforts by Edward himself and Nicholas Ridley, bishop of London, to pressurise her into conformity. She felt bitterly about Cranmer’s prayer books and when the mass became illegal at Whitsun 1549 “she had the old rite celebrated with special (and public) pomp in her chapel at Kenninghall.”⁵⁹ On her accession many anticipated the restoration of mass. On August 10th 1553 she held a requiem for

⁵³ JG Dwyer, *Pole’s Defence of the Unity of the Church* (1965), p. xvi.

⁵⁴ Dermot Fenlon, *Heresy and Obedience in Tridentine Italy* (Cambridge 1972), p. 39: claims “it reveals the centrality of penance in his conception of the Christian life.”

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 283.

⁵⁶ *Calendar of State Papers, Venetian*, ed. Rawden Brown (London 1864-98), V. 384-7.

⁵⁷ David Loades, “The Enforcement of Reaction”, *JEH*, Vol.16, (1965), p. 54: Pole wrote :”Nor has it to be debated in the (Privy) Council whether obedience to the Head of the Church should be acknowledged or not, as that has already been determined by the council of God. But in the Royal Council the Queen had merely to manifest her debt to God and his Church.” *Calendar Venetian*, V. 422.

⁵⁸ BL Add. 25425 fo. 101r: A messenger from England reported to the Pope that Mary had told him that Parliament had to dissolve many laws but could not do this before the coronation. She wanted herself and the Bishop of Winchester who would crown her to be absolved so she could be crowned with a clear conscience. The coronation took place on October 1st.

⁵⁹ David Loades, *The Reign of Mary Tudor* (London, 2nd edition 1991), p. 13; “when ordered to desist, she responded that the statute authorising the Prayer Book was no true law, but “one of your own devising.” Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant* (London 1999), pp. 36-38.

Edward. Christopher Haigh suggests that “the news was leaked” as mass was said the following day at St.Bartholomew’s in Smithfield.⁶⁰ Duffy claims that some considered the royal proclamation of 18th August forbidding contention in religious matters was the green light for change.⁶¹ Mass was celebrated at St.Paul’s cathedral on the 27th. By early September mass was being said or sung in Latin in Yorkshire, Shropshire and Kent. Richard Thornden, bishop of Dover, celebrated Pontifical high mass at Canterbury. The law was being openly flouted, and when people protested at the Michaelmas assizes in Kent Judge Hales took their side and was, for his pains, imprisoned in King’s Bench on October 4th.⁶² There was some resistance and some services were disrupted but in many places mass was restored with no opposition. It was legalised by the Statute of Repeal on 20th December 1553. However Cardinal Pole subsequently reprimanded Thornden for having celebrated mass without a papal dispensation.⁶³ Technically Thornden, as the other English bishops, was still schismatic, and therefore, in Pole’s terms, heretical, since he had not yet been reconciled by confession and absolution. As a result his mass was invalid.⁶⁴

Gardiner had argued strongly during the previous regime that there should be no changes in religion while Edward was a minor, and that things should remain as set by the ‘King’s Book’ in 1543. He was consistent therefore in seeking to dismantle Protestantism by limiting his vision to changes brought in during Edward’s reign. Parliament passed the Statute of Repeal in December. Nine statutes were repealed including the two Acts of Uniformity, and Acts concerning the sacrament of the altar and the marriage of priests.⁶⁵ The Act was clear in reverting to “all such divine service and administration of the sacraments as were most commonly used in the realm of England in the last year of the reign of our late Sovereign Lord King Henry the Eighth.” For Pole, however, heresy began with Henry’s schism.

⁶⁰ Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations* (Oxford 1993), p. 206.

⁶¹ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 528; FA Youngs, *The Proclamations of the Tudor Queens* (Cambridge 1976), p. 3: shows that it was, as proclamations had prerogative power to frame temporary legislation in areas not already defined by law.

⁶² *The Writings of John Bradford*, ed. Aubrey Townsend (PS, Cambridge 1853), 2. 85: Hales had been alone among the judges and council of Edward VI in refusing to subscribe to Jane Grey’s succession.

⁶³ John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1583), the Variorum Edition (hriOnline Sheffield 2004) p.1693.

⁶⁴ BL Add. 25425 fo. 87v: Pole wrote to Mary on 2nd October 1553 concerning the schism and the invalidation of the sacraments.

⁶⁵ JR Tanner, *Tudor Constitutional Documents 1485-1603* (Cambridge 1930), pp. 121-122.

While Bonner was issuing pastoral letters to insist on proper preparation for Easter Communion (1554), which meant confession and absolution as in the old ways, for Pole there was a need for national penance to bring about reconciliation with Rome and to give validity to the mass. Bonner was eventually absolved by the Legate on 10th February 1555, and with his usual efficient administration he published a letter to the laity of his diocese on February 19th concerning the reconciliation.⁶⁶ This letter is full of tension as he reminds them of “the monition and charge whiche came from me the laste year conceryng your coming to confession in lent, and receauing of the Sacrament at Easter”. He clearly in no way regrets this or considers that Easter communion invalid though it was before he himself had been reconciled and now the thrust of his letter is calling them to absolution and reconciliation. That he sees this as a legal rather than pastoral matter is evident in his requiring clergy to submit to him a list of those who choose not to be reconciled and comments that they will be dealt with “acordyng to the Canons”.

Thomas More’s *Dialogue of Comfort* was the first polemic published by the Marian Church in 1553. More’s memory was “loaded with polemical significance.”⁶⁷ It deals at length and in a highly sophisticated manner with penance, showing that from the first it was seen as significant to reform and the importance of repudiating Protestant attacks on the sacrament. It tells of an ass at confession and concludes with martyrdom (the imitation of Christ) as the only means of satisfaction. The dialogue is set in Hungary and the issue is how to deal with the consequences of an invasion by the Turks. The Turks provide a satirical metaphor for heresy and the main underlying issues of purgatory and the royal supremacy. In all this, written in the Tower as More awaited execution, he fashioned himself as martyr. In this “ultimate spiritual testament”⁶⁸ More both justifies his own scrupulous conscience (the ass represents himself)⁶⁹ and defends penance against protestant polemic. He argues that those who teach that penance is justification by works “forget that the Church hath ever taught

⁶⁶ *The Declaration of the Bishop of London to be published to the laye people of his diocesse concernynge theyr reconciliation* (John Cawood London 1555). no pagination, RSTC. 3280.3.

⁶⁷ Michael Questier, “Catholicism, Kinship, and the Public Memory of Sir Thomas More”: *JEH* (2002), vol.53 no.3, p. 498.

⁶⁸ *The complete Works of Thomas More*, vol.12: *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, eds. Louis L Martz and Frank Manley (Yale 1976), p. lxxv.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. lxxiii.

them that all our penance without Christes passion were not worth a pease/ And they make the people were that we wold be saved by our own dedes without Cristes deth/ where we confesse that his one only passion meriteth incomparable more for us than all our own dedes do.”⁷⁰ However there is implied criticism of those who compromised their faith in the days of Henry. Vincent (the young man in this dialogue) says: “I here at myn eare some of our owne here among us, which within these few yeres could no more have borne the name Turke than the name of the devil, begun now to fynd little fault therein/ ye and some to prayse them to, little and little as they may/ more glad to fynd faults at every state of Christendome, prestes, princes, rites, ceremonies, sacraments, laues, and customs spirituall, temporall and all.”⁷¹ This reveals, and may have exacerbated, tensions between those who had been Henrican bishops and Pole and the More circle. Pole in his *Pro Ecclesiasticae Unitatis Defensione* had seen More and Fisher as true martyrs since they died for the unity of the church. On Mary’s accession he was keen to restore their memory in the nation. There is a double irony in this. First, Gardiner, the leading bishop and Lord Chancellor after Mary’s accession, had written to justify the execution of More in 1536; and secondly that More himself was no papalist.⁷² Later (in 1557) Pole encouraged the publication of More’s *Works* by Rastell, More’s son-in-law. Harpsfield’s biography was intended to accompany this, but in fact was not published until 1629. Pole promoted More as the antithesis of schism.

For many there was an eagerness to reinstate mass and the sacramental system which had been dismantled under Edward. But for Pole the main issue to be faced by the Marian church was schism. Penance and absolution were required to deal with that and until they were even masses were invalid. Although Bonner in his 1554 pastoral letter instructed lay people to do penance and to receive communion at Easter, he himself had not yet been reconciled to the papacy. As well as the problems of administering penance, differences between the bishops and Pole about priorities and why penance and absolution were needed inevitably produced a tension between them which is reflected clearly in the publication of More’s *Dialogue of Comfort*.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 96.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. lxxvii; Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, p. 10: “Pole himself lamented the necessity of employing the Henrician episcopate to undo the Henrician schism that it had helped to foment.”

⁷² Questier, “Catholicism, Kinship”, p. 510.

CARDINAL POLE AND NATIONAL REPENTANCE

For Pole the main issue was the unity of the church. “He concluded that the vital virtues were obedience to the church and penitence as the means of achieving this.”⁷³ Penance was the way to be put right with God but also the way of reconciliation with the church. The restoration of Catholicism in England required such reconciliation, especially with the church’s head on earth, the successor of Peter, Pope Julius III. Not only was the schism a matter of heretical beliefs and liturgy, but of Parliamentary statutes. The outcome was that the whole nation, including catholic devotees, was in schism and all church activities, including the mass itself, were invalid and by nature schismatic. Mary understood this and Pole’s letters to her continually stressed it. On 8th October 1553 she assured him of her faith that Parliament would abolish “all these statutes which have been the origin of all our plagues” and that she hoped for a general pardon from the Pope.⁷⁴ However her faith was not realised in her first Parliament, which, by the first Statute of Repeal, only restored the situation as it had been at Edward’s accession. Her immediate problem was the appointment of new bishops and she wrote to Pole on 23rd January 1554 and again on the 21st February asking whether he was he able to confirm those she was nominating.⁷⁵ Pole sent instructions via Henry Pynning saying that he would confirm the appointments once they were absolved from schism but first they must show signs of repentance.⁷⁶ Nevertheless he absolved her first seven nominations by proxy on 17th March.⁷⁷ He told them having been bound by excommunication or other ecclesiastical censure they incurred irregularity by celebrating mass or other divine office (*in illis sic ligati missas et alia divina officia celebrantes irregulari*), but since they went into schism out of fear and are sorry for their errors, he absolved them and told them to find a catholic confessor to confess and do penance.⁷⁸ It is not known who the catholic confessor was. However that same month Pole wrote to a William Sparkman giving

⁷³ Marmion, “The London Synod”, p. 46.

⁷⁴ BL Add. 25425 fos. 95v-96v.

⁷⁵ BL Add. 41577 fo. 109v; 25425 fo.189r.

⁷⁶ BL Add. 25425 fos. 197r-199r.

⁷⁷ Robert Parfew (or Wharton), bishop of St Asaph and nominated for translation to Hereford; John White (Lincoln); Gilbert Bourne (Bath and Wells); James Brooke (Gloucester); George Coates (Chester); Henry Morgan (St David’s); and Maurice Griffiths (Rochester).

⁷⁸ CUL Add. 4841 fos. 2r-5v.

him faculties to absolve penitents from heresy and schism.⁷⁹ It is uncertain who Sparkman was. Thomas Mayer believes he may have been a recluse in the diocese of Canterbury “to whom people spontaneously came for absolution.”⁸⁰

Just three days after his arrival in England Pole addressed Parliament.⁸¹ He told the members “my principal travail is for the restoration of this noble realm... as you have restored to me my nobility that was taken away from me without my fault, so I come to restore to you the nobility that [was taken] from you all ... that is the See Apostolic.”⁸² He blamed Henry’s carnality and the people’s avarice for the schism and subsequent innovations, and contrasted the power of the secular prince with “the power of the keys” which had the authority of God’s word. It was with this authority that he had come “to reconcile not condemn.” He concluded that for him to execute his commission two things were necessary: the members must return to God and repeal laws and statutes which block restoration to the papacy. In a remarkable act of humiliation, the following day (28th November) Parliament issued a supplication to Philip and Mary, asking them to intercede with the legate on their behalf. We “do declare ourselves very sorry and repentant of the schism and disobedience committed in this realm and dominions ... against the See Apostolic.” They requested that “we may obtain from the See Apostolic by the most reverend Father, as well particularly as generally, absolution, release and discharge from all danger of such censures and sentences as by the laws of the church we be fallen into; and that we may as children repentant be received into the bosom and unity of Christ’s church.”⁸³

On 30th November, St Andrew’s Day, Gardiner presented the petition to the Legate in Parliament, with Philip and Mary present. In a piece of intense liturgical drama

⁷⁹ *The Correspondence of Reginald Pole*, 2. 812.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 2. 264, note 97.

⁸¹ i.e. 27th November 1554. Philip and Mary had issued letters patent to allow him to exercise his legatine authority (on 10th November) and a statute (of 22nd November) had reversed the attainder that had stood against him since 1537.

⁸² John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1570), p. 1648. Editorial commentary: Foxe reprinted Pole’s speech from John Elder, *A Copie of a Letter sente unto Scotland* (London 1555), RSTC. 7552; Sigs. D1r-E2r. Elder says (sig. E2r-v) that he based his version on notes taken by his friend, an MP, who was present; *The Correspondence of Reginald Pole*, 2. 367.

⁸³ *Tudor Constitutional Documents*, pp. 126-7.

Pole absolved the nation.⁸⁴ All present “responded Amen, Amen.”⁸⁵ A Te Deum was sung. “Both for Mary and Pole the joy of this moment was supreme.”⁸⁶ But for Pole it was not enough. He wrote to Gardiner on 29th January 1555 (copies leave a space where Gardiner’s name was in the original, suggesting that the names of other bishops may have been inserted) delegating him authority to reconcile clergy, since it was not possible to do this all by himself. He gives details of what should be absolved including ordination by schismatic bishops, irregular oaths and improper presentations to benefices, including by laymen. The clergy were to be given a date when they were to appear and ask for absolution and the names of all reconciled were to be kept in a register.⁸⁷ The policy of reconciliation through penance continued. Pole himself pursued it conscientiously and in great detail. The wording of dispensations was specific to each individual. In February Bishops Heath, Bonner and Aldwich were absolved of heresy and schism. Shaxton’s absolution in March was carefully drafted with reference to his acceptance of the supremacy; his appointment as bishop of Salisbury by Henry; his consecration by schismatic bishops; and marriage. Nevertheless since he had put away his wife, he was absolved of each of these, reconciled to the papacy, and given dispensation to act as suffragan bishop in the diocese of Ely.⁸⁸ George London, who had been ejected against his will from a monastery, was found not guilty of schism. Yet despite this he was absolved in case he had fallen into sin during the schism.⁸⁹ On almost 250 occasions he absolved and gave dispensations for pluralism with considerable detail on each occasion.⁹⁰ He also absolved and appointed many notaries.

⁸⁴ “Our Lord Jesus Christ, which with his precious blood hath redeemed and washed us from all our sins ... that he might purchase unto himself a glorious spouse without spot or wrinkle ... he by his mercy absolve you. And we by Apostolic authority, given unto us by the most holy Lord Pope Julius the Third (his viceregent here on earth) do absolve and deliver you and every of you ... from all heresy and schism ... and also we do restore you again unto the unity of our mother the holy church.” Foxe, (1570), p. 1649.

⁸⁵ Loades, *The Reign of Mary Tudor*, p. 267.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ *The Correspondence of Reginald Pole*, 3. 1054.

⁸⁸ CUL Add. 4841 fo. 58r.

⁸⁹ *The Correspondence of Reginald Pole*, 3. 1096.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 3. p. 5.

Pogson concludes “Pole spent much valuable time on the past when he could have been considering the future ... fiddling with definitions while Rome burned.”⁹¹ Perhaps this judgement is unfair as he spent much time trying to resolve the church’s finances; there were thirteen dioceses visited by legatine authority as well as three by metropolitan authority during a vacancy in see, and two visitations of Canterbury as ordinary; to say nothing of his efforts to reform the universities.⁹² But it was his Legatine Synod at Lambeth which defined his goals and objectives. The first of his twelve decrees established that there should be an annual commemoration of the reconciliation with masses, sermons and special collects. At the heart of the sacramental system was “the act of penance.”⁹³ Its three parts were said to consist of contrition following sorrow for sin and with resolve not to sin in the future; oral confession to a priest “of all the sins the penitent can remember”, and “in full”; and satisfaction for sin, according to the judgement of the priest, mainly by prayer, fasting and alms. The form of the sacrament was to be in the words of absolution “Ego te absolvo” spoken by the priest who has authority to absolve, or the ordinary, or one appointed by a superior. The importance of preaching was stressed and homilies were to be produced (possibly Watson’s collection) for non-preaching clergy. His ideals included residential bishops and able clergy who were to be proven by examination before ordination and institution. Best known of the decrees was the seminary scheme based on cathedrals. The final decree was a detailed outline for visitations. The pressure of responsibilities, his early death, and the succession of Elizabeth meant that the decrees were never put into practice. However they filtered into catholic law through the final session of the Council of Trent, and influenced Cardinal Borromeno’s reforms in Milan through Ormanetto, Pole’s secretary, who became Borromeno’s vicar general.⁹⁴

Many people celebrated Mary’s succession. After the proclamation at Bridgnorth Fair on July 22nd 1553 “the people made great joy, casting up their caps and hats, lauding, thanking and praising God Almighty with ringing of bells and making

⁹¹ Pogson, “The Legacy of Schism”, *The Mid-Tudor Polity*, eds. Jennifer Loach and Robert Tittler (London 1980), p. 124.

⁹² *The Correspondence of Reginald Pole*, 3. Pp. 7-8; Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, pp. 200-203.

⁹³ Marmion, “The London Synod”, p. 16.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

bonfires in every street.”⁹⁵ According to Eamon Duffy the rejoicing at Morebath was because of the demise of the Edwardian regime.⁹⁶ But he points out that “the restoration of Catholicism” required “a social and economic reordering to match the liturgical and doctrinal one.”⁹⁷ Not only had images and pictures been taken down and destroyed, but plate and vestments had been confiscated or sold. To replace these, rood screens, altars, service books, and other items was an expensive business.⁹⁸ “The beauty of holiness so vital to Roman ceremonial and belief, could not be restored overnight.”⁹⁹ If this was true locally it was even more so nationally. Of all the problems facing the church in its efforts to bring about catholic revival the recovery of the lost wealth that had been surrendered in the schism was the most serious and difficult.¹⁰⁰

Reginald Pole was aware of this from his first discussions with Pope Julius III about the task with which he was charged as papal legate. Among the powers of dispensation he was given were those to absolve the holders of ecclesiastical property.¹⁰¹ The Privy Council saw the reluctance of holders to return what was formerly ecclesiastical property as a political problem. Despite the fact that Paul II had issued a bull to the effect that ecclesiastical property must not be alienated, Pope Julius, because of Mary’s concerns, was prepared to concede it *absque bonorum eorumdem largitione* [“without the free giving (returning) of those goods”].¹⁰² But Pole’s ultimate concern was that while continuing to hold the property the holders would be unable to make a true repentance.¹⁰³ Just an hour before Pole formally reconciled England the final dispensation for the holders of ecclesiastical property arrived.¹⁰⁴ For almost a month Pole resisted the inclusion of the dispensation in the act ratifying union with Rome, but was defeated. The Act passed on 3rd January 1555.

⁹⁵ J Charles Cox, *The Parish Registers of England* (London 1910), p. 30: from the register of Holy Trinity, Much Wenlock.

⁹⁶ Eamon Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath* (London 2001), p. 154.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

⁹⁸ By the Canterbury visitation of 1557, a third of the parishes lacked some vestments, 10% had no chalice, and 25% had no crucifix for the altar. *Archdeacon Harpsfield’s Visitation 1557*, ed. LE Whatmore (London 1950).

⁹⁹ Pogson, “The Legacy of Schism”, p. 120.

¹⁰⁰ Rex H Pogson, “Revival and Reform in Mary Tudor’s Church”, *The English Reformation Revised*, ed. Christopher Haigh (Cambridge 1987), pp. 140-141.

¹⁰¹ *The Correspondence of Reginald Pole*, 2. 620.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 2. 916

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 2. 1008.

¹⁰⁴ Mayer, *Reginald Pole*, p. 222.

It stipulated penalties of praemunire for the “disturbing [of lay possessors of the land] under the pretence of any spiritual jurisdiction.”¹⁰⁵ But for Pole the retention of ecclesiastical property raised moral and spiritual as well as ecclesiastical issues. Three letters he sent to Philip and Mary (two not dated but Mayer sees them as Pole’s arguments prior to the Bill being finalised) emphasise that the poor have suffered from the expropriation especially of the monasteries,¹⁰⁶ and that the holders of ecclesiastical property “not being altogether unmindful of their salvation” should make provision for the maintenance of ministry.¹⁰⁷ Pole was still using the first argument in his 1557 St Andrew’s day sermon. Progress was slow. Even Mary delayed in restoring first fruits and tithes until August 1556, because of her debts. At Pole’s suggestion she set up commissioners to try to recover church goods.¹⁰⁸ But bad experience of commissioners during Edward’s reign made many wary of such visitations. David Loades has shown how local people in Essex resisted their enquiries by professing ignorance¹⁰⁹ and that the commissioners were handicapped by poor administration.¹¹⁰ Even Mary’s generosity did not help Pole’s financial problems as it left him with responsibility for the pensions of those ejected by the dissolution of the monasteries and the difficulties of administration that that involved.¹¹¹ As a result of the church’s financial difficulties, and Mary’s obsession with depriving married clergy, there was a shortage of manpower. Inflation was a factor encouraging pluralism. So although a resident clergy was one of Pole’s ideals he was obliged to give dispensations to pluralists. Lack of finance also hindered the restoration of monasteries. Pogson sees it as creating “tension in many important issues”. It accentuated divisions both within the Council and Parliament. It created suspicion between commissioners and local communities. It gave the impression that the church was money grabbing (Latimer’s old criticism of Rome as “pick-purse”). Pogson seems right in his conclusion that Pole and Mary’s “obsession with the church’s former worldly glories”, complicated by lay determination to retain their property

¹⁰⁵ David Loades, “The Enforcement of Reaction 1553-1558”, p. 57.

¹⁰⁶ *The Correspondence of Reginald Pole*, 2.1009.

¹⁰⁷ *Documents Illustrative of English Church History*, eds. Henry Gee and W J Hardy (London 1914), p. 402.

¹⁰⁸ Pogson, “Revival and Reform”, p. 145.

¹⁰⁹ David Loades, “The Essex Inquisitions of 1556”, *The Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, xxxv no.9, (1962), p. 89; E Shagan, “Confronting Compromise: the schism and its legacy in mid-Tudor England”, *Catholics and the Protestant Nation*, ed. E Shagan (Manchester 2005), p. 61.

¹¹⁰ Loades, “The Essex Inquisitions”, p. 90.

¹¹¹ Pogson, “Revival and Reform”, p. 148.

gains meant Pole “could not begin to introduce the necessary reforms.”¹¹² However for Pole himself the matter of church property held by lay impropiators not only caused financial problems but demonstrated an unwillingness “ut mostrasse vera penitentia” [to show true repentance/penance].¹¹³

Pole saw dealing with the schism as his absolute priority. Penance and reconciliation with Rome had to precede reform since they were the true foundation of reform. Bonner, Gardiner and the others who had been bishops under Henry did not see things that way. Bonner was moving ahead with reform by his letters and visitation even before his own reconciliation. His *Profytable Doctryne* and *Homilies* show him implementing reform in his diocese and also reveal how much he was influenced by the Henrician Church.¹¹⁴ The unwillingness of those who held former ecclesiastical property to restore it to the Church suggests, in Shagan’s terms, “collaboration”¹¹⁵ with the reforms under both Henry and Edward. Pole’s priorities were idealistic and in the light of the shortage of time in which to restore the Church, which of course he could not know, actually delayed the clarification of his reforming policy in his Legatine Synod. It also meant he was not single-minded in implementing it.

MARIAN PASTORAL WRITINGS ON PENANCE

As well as being essential for the restoration of the Church to the Papacy penance was of vital significance in both pastoral and doctrinal terms. For Dean one of the major effects of the Edwardian Reformation was the loss of confession and the priestly understanding of spiritual counsel.¹¹⁶ He claims that “for those who had clung to traditional religion under Henry” this was “an unmitigated disaster.”¹¹⁷ As a result part of the strategy of the church leaders “was a determined effort for the re-introduction and invigoration of the sacrament of penance ... it was in the whole sacrament, of self examination, discussion with a priest, absolution and the performance of satisfactory acts that the Marians vested spiritual healing for the

¹¹² Ibid., p.155.

¹¹³ *The Correspondence of Reginald Pole*, 2. 1008.

¹¹⁴ Wooding, *Rethinking Catholicism*, p. 11.

¹¹⁵ Ethan Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge 2003), pp. 13-14.

¹¹⁶ Dean, “*Catholicae Ecclesiae*”, p. 10.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 11.

individual and the reordering of society.”¹¹⁸ Thomas Watson expressed it eloquently in his sermon “Of the necessity of penance in general”: “What a great power and virtue hath this virtue of penance, which by the mercye of God remytteth sinne, openeth paradise, healeth the contrite man, maketh glad the heavy, revoketh a man from destruction, restoreth hym to his former good state, reneweth his old honour, repayeth all the decays of virtue, maketh hym acceptable and bold with God, and doth purchase of God more plenty of grace that he had before.”¹¹⁹

It was important to focus on penance as it was “an essential factor in ... the sacramental system which the doctrine of justification by faith alone had so deeply undermined.”¹²⁰ Edmund Bonner linked the sacrament to the authority of the keys and claimed that “onely in the catholyke church and no where els the remissio of synnes is to be had.”¹²¹ Because they rejected the sacrament of penance, Edgeworth, Churchson, and Angel¹²² accused the reformers of the heresy of Novatianism.¹²³ John Churchson saw the seven sacraments as being the key to the unity of the Church, which had had a succession of priests from Peter to administer them.¹²⁴ Watson based the authority of the Church to bind and loose on the resurrection appearance of Jesus (in John 20, rather than the Petrine emphasis in Matthew 16) when he gave such authority to his disciples.

Bonner’s *A Profytable and Necessarye Doctrine* is largely based on the King’s Book of 1543. It is an exposition of the Creed, the Seven Sacraments, the Ten

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 15.

¹¹⁹ Thomas Watson, *Holesome and Catholyke doctrine concerninge the Seven Sacraments of Christes Church expedient to be known of all men* (London 1558), fo.lxxxii, RSTC. 25112.5.

¹²⁰ HO Evennett, *The Spirit of the Counter-Reformation* (Notre Dame 1968), p. 37.

¹²¹ Edmund Bonner, *A profytable and necessarye doctrine* (London 1555), RSTC. 1746.08.

¹²² John Angel, *The Agreement of the Holye Fathers, and doctors of the Church, upon the cheifest articles of the Christian religion* (London 1555), fo. lxxxviii; John Churchson, *A brief treatise declaring what and where the Church is, that it is known, and whereby it is tried and known* (London 1556); Roger Edgeworth, *Sermons very fruitful, godly and learned*, ed. Janet Wilson (Woodbridge 1993).

¹²³ Novatian was a candidate for the Papacy in 291 but Cornelius was preferred. He saw the Church as a society of saints, while Cornelius saw it as a school for sinners. He claimed that the Church had no power to forgive sins but only to intercede for mercy on the Day of Judgement. His followers became a sect and were suppressed at Rome c.400. In all other points Novatianists were orthodox if rigorist.

¹²⁴ RSTC. 5219: considers Churchson to be a pseudonym. Wizeman is critical of him for “hardly touching upon the keystone of Marian ecclesiology” i.e. the eucharist, but applauds his positive evaluation of the Papacy. Nevertheless because he distinguishes between the elect and the reprobate, Wizeman considers he had once “embraced evangelical views.”

Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, Ave Maria, Seven Deadly Sins, and the Beatitudes. It has a pastoral and theological coherence to make it a useful tool for the clergy. For Bonner the mass effectively joins the body and soul of the recipient to Christ and so to the communion of saints. Penance shows how great our sins are but how certain is God's forgiveness.¹²⁵ He states the problem that under the previous regime contrition, confession and satisfaction were derided and condemned, or at least "neglected of al folks."¹²⁶ He describes his section on penance as "an exposition and declaration of the sacrament." It considerably revises and extends the article on penance in the King's Book. Again it is absolution pronounced by the priest which is at the heart of the sacrament. But penitents need to come with deep inward sorrow for sin and a desire to be purged and regain the favour of God. He points to three stages in contrition: remembrance of sin, shame at having sinned, and awareness that such sins deserve hell.¹²⁷ Confession involves declaring these sins to a priest who has authority to absolve. This should be done "voluntarily" and "often."¹²⁸ It seems from this, Pollard's sermon, and penances given at Harpsfield's 1557 visitation, that annual confession was regarded as insufficient. The spirit in which confession should be made is "plain, humble, pure, faithful ... shamefaced, ... accusatory of self, and ready to obey." Satisfaction is made by submitting to the chastisement of the priest, the penitent's "ghostly father" and a determination to live a new life, which involves being ready to forgive others. Bonner quoted Scripture and the Fathers frequently to make his points and in summary called on his readers to embrace the mercy of God, on one side, and fear the justice of God on the other.¹²⁹ He saw the marks of the true church as being antiquity, universality and unity.¹³⁰ Of the essential parts of the sacrament, he wrote that they have "ever been continually received, used, and much set by, as things most necessary and profitable to the Catholic Church."¹³¹ Bonner also produced a catechism for children.¹³² It includes much teaching material, beginning with the alphabet and Paternoster, in English as well as in Latin. As a

¹²⁵ Bonner, *A Profytable and Necessarye Doctryne*.

¹²⁶ Ibid., sig. D. i.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid., sig. D. ii.

¹²⁹ Ibid..

¹³⁰ Wizeman, *The Theology and Spirituality*, p. 76.

¹³¹ Bonner, *A Profytable and Necessarye Doctryne*, sig. D. ii.

¹³² Edmund Bonner, *An honest godlye instruction and information for the training and bringing up of children*. RSTC 3281.

conclusion to the Apostles' Creed the child responds "Lead us not into temptation."¹³³ This is followed by a brief confessional section at the invitation "Confess to the Lord for he is good." The confession to God, Mary, all saints, "and to you" (the priest) "that I have sinned greatly in thought, in speech, in omission, and in deeds by my own fault" is followed by a request to Mary and the saints "to pray for me" and a priestly absolution. One imagines that satisfaction is made by the child learning the catechism, or at least part of it.¹³⁴

Thomas Watson was Master of St John's, Cambridge, chaplain to Stephen Gardiner, and Dean of Durham before becoming Bishop of Lincoln. His *Twoo Notable Sermons made before the Queen's highness*¹³⁵ preached on the third and fifth Fridays in Lent 1554, made a considerable impact, not least upon imprisoned reformers.¹³⁶ His *Holesome and Catholyke Doctryne concerninge the Seven Sacraments* (1558) is a collection of sermons to be used in parishes to teach the basis of catholic worship and devotion. Wizeman believes they "may be regarded as an official statement of the doctrine of the Marian Church."¹³⁷ It is by participating in the sacramental system that people are made worthy to receive the benefits of Christ's passion. In the spirit of Erasmus's *Enchiridion* he sees the sacraments as enabling the army of Christ to resist and fight against the devil. His military metaphor links in well with his focus on penance. He sees the medicinal benefits of that sacrament and states that "if any of his (Christ's) soldiers chance to be hurt or wounded, then to cause the surgeon to search his wounds and to lay playters (plasters) and medicines unto them, that having been made whole he might enter his place again."¹³⁸ His eleven sermons directly relating to the sacrament of penance are both pastoral and practical.¹³⁹ His style is simple and

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Thomas F Simmons and Henry E Nolloth, *Lay Folks Catechism* (London 1901), pp. xxix-xxxvii show that the aim of catechisms was didactic. Only in the 15th century was prayer introduced and this was the Ave Maria. The confessional emphasis in Bonner's catechism is unusual. It is in some ways more like a primer for children. Luther had published a *Little Prayer Book* for children in 1523.

¹³⁵ These were published in 1569 alongside a reply by Robert Crowley.

¹³⁶ ECL, Ms.260 fo.118: Nicholas Ridley annotated a copy of these and sent it to Bradford expressing his concern that they might "delude the inexperienced."

¹³⁷ William Wizeman, "The Theology and Spirituality of a Marian Bishop: the Pastoral and Polemical Sermons of Thomas Watson.", *The Church of Mary Tudor*, pp. 259-260.

¹³⁸ Watson, *Holesome*, fo. i.

¹³⁹ Ibid., fo. cxx, "what a sinner ought to do in making his confession"; fo. cxlv. "How a man should after penance avoid sin and live well."

direct: “Penance opens what sin has shut.”¹⁴⁰ His approach is deeply biblical, though he follows the Vulgate in translating *metanoite* as “do penance”, and astutely theological, as when he argues that John the Baptist preached penance before Christ’s act of redemption and so penance must go before the mercy of God and the remission of sins.¹⁴¹ From the start he sees penance as God’s gift. God calls us to penance: he quotes Peter on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and at the home of Cornelius (Acts 11), and Jesus standing at the door of our hearts knocking (Revelation 3). His concern for the despairing is strongly pastoral and in many ways similar to the concerns of Puritans later in the century. Two things, he claims, lead to despair: thinking our sins are too great for God to forgive, thus denying God’s omnipotence; and thinking God will not forgive, thus denying God’s goodness.¹⁴² Watson stresses that God has promised to forgive the penitent and has given the sacrament of penance, which focuses on absolution, as a witness to this promise. He even raises the issue of despair leading to suicide, seeing the reason for such despair being letting the anchor of hope (salvation) slip from our hands. Consideration of hell is important in preventing suicide, but he balances this by stressing God’s love. God is moved when we fall into madness and longs to heal. If we return even from the depths of sin we will receive a fatherly embrace like the prodigal son (Luke 15). This emphasis on God’s love is reminiscent of Cranmer.¹⁴³ But he has those who have been influenced by the reformers in mind when he warns “against presumption of mercy”,¹⁴⁴ that is by repentance and faith but without the sacrament. Watson uses powerful images of God as judge and as surgeon.¹⁴⁵ He sets the scene in the court of conscience. God is the judge, our thoughts accuse us, and conscience witnesses against us. Our guilt is confirmed by our confession. But unlike worldly courts God promises to forgive all who confess and humble themselves before him. The sentence is given in the absolution: pardon for the guilty. Contrition, he insists, is the cross of Christ which all his followers bear voluntarily and so receive the virtue of his passion. The role of the priest is vital. He is the judge in God’s kingdom. He determines crimes against God

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., fo. lxxx.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid., fo. lxxxvi.

¹⁴³ Ibid., fo. ci: contrition “proceeds from the love of God.” Ashley Null subtitles his book on Cranmer’s doctrine of repentance, *Renewing the Power to Love*.

¹⁴⁴ Watson, *Holesome*, fo. xciii.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. “Judge and Doctor; images of the confessor as printed in model sermon collections 1450-1520”, *Penance in the Age of Reformations*, eds. K J Lualdi and A T Thayer (Aldershot 2000), pp. 10-29.

and his laws. He assigns acts of penance (of satisfaction) as punishment in the manner of John Fisher,¹⁴⁶ for even when sins are remitted and absolution received the penitent sinner “remayneth yet still bounden to suffer certain temporal payne, according to the nature and quantitie of his former faults.”¹⁴⁷ But changing the metaphor to medicine, Watson asks, in words that could well have been used later by William Perkins, how a surgeon can minister wholesome medicine to the sick man who will not open his wounds to him. He describes the healing aspect of the sacrament: “If any infection or deadly sin or infidelity hath entered into his hart, let hym not bee ashamed to hym that hath cure and charge of his soule, to the intente that he might be cured by the woorde of God and holesome counsel, so that by perfit faith and good works he might leave the pains of eternal fyre, and come to the reward of eternal life.” However for Watson, confession was not merely a pious activity for the individual, it was also a means of reconciliation among neighbours and in the community.¹⁴⁸ Wizeman says that in this “penance was a matter of restoring charity among Christians, as well as an affair between the repentant sinner and God. In this emphasis Watson demonstrated a more complex picture of Reformation and Counter-Reformation penance than John Bossy’s view. Communal reconciliation as practised among late medieval Christians did not give way to reconciliation as a private matter between early modern Christians and God.”¹⁴⁹

Leonard Pollard’s *Fyve Homilies* were published two years earlier than Watson’s sermons, and so were nearer to the changes of the previous regime.¹⁵⁰ Pollard had stood against the Edwardian reformation, maintaining the sacrificial nature of the mass at the 1549 visitation, and preaching on purgatory in 1553. In the introduction to his homilies he argued that those who wished to destroy the church had been diligent in producing sermons and books and that these needed to be matched by those who wished to maintain the Catholic Church. The fifth of his homilies is titled “Of

¹⁴⁶ *The English Works of John Fisher*, ed. John E B Mayor (London 1876), p. 24.

¹⁴⁷ Watson, *Holesome*, fo. cxl.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, fo. xxxii.

¹⁴⁹ Wiseman, “The Theology and Spirituality of a Marian Bishop”, p. 269; John Bossy, “The social history of confession in the age of reformations”, *TRHS*, 5th series, vol.25 (1975), pp. 21-39.

¹⁵⁰ Leonard Pollard, *Fyve Homilies* (London 1556) RSTC 933.02: on the eucharist, the mass, faith, papal primacy and confession. Pollard was a Cambridge theologian; fellow of Peterhouse, fellow of St John’s (1554) who became chaplain to Bishop Pate of Worcester. The book is dedicated to Pate. Pollard was a controversial preacher.

confession and purgation or cleansing from sin.” The sermon is pastoral rather than polemical but it does have an overt awareness of heretics “who think they have a deeper insight into God’s mysteries than other men.”¹⁵¹ Nevertheless three of the New Testament texts he uses to emphasise “the wonderful clemency of God” are texts that Cranmer included as the “comfortable words” in his prayer books.¹⁵² Pollard makes no reference to contrition, full confession, or works of satisfaction in his description of the sacrament of penance but focuses on self examination and humility. The purging of sins is the work of Christ, he stresses. He links this with the sacraments: “Christ washeth but he doth it by the sacrament of baptism, he feedeth you upon his body and blood but he doeth it by the most blessed sacrament of the altar, and he doth purge you from your sins but likewise he doth it by the sacrament of penance ...you shall not only see him in this sacrament, but you shall hear him say unto you “Thy sins be forgiven thee.”¹⁵³ The priest is God’s messenger. It is on this basis that Pollard presses that the sacrament is vitally important as it prepares the penitent to meet with God at the eucharist, and that it should be used frequently for “it is not in dede to the priest [that he confesses] but to God. The priest is his minister and deputy ... tremble and quake ... if one had so greatly offended the king as ye have offended God ... Humble then yourselves in lyke manner under the mighty hand of God.”¹⁵⁴ The offence appears not to be the schism in legal terms but individuals departing from the church’s sacraments and basing their faith on their own understanding of God’s Word. He identifies these with “Turks, Jews, Lutherans, Oeclampadians, Anabaptists, Libertines and other sects.”¹⁵⁵ In fact, Pollard argues, God is not with any sect but in his kingdom, which consists of those who are humble in spirit, which is the Catholic Church. He concludes his sermon with a passionate call to penance remembering “how foul and ugly a thing sin is, then by whom, and in what means ye may be delivered from it, and finally use the same for your consolation and God’s glory.”¹⁵⁶ Pollard’s passion may have been simply due to his inward personal convictions but it

¹⁵¹ Pollard, *Fyve Homilies*, fo. jiii.

¹⁵² 1 John 3.16; Matthew 11.28; 1 Timothy 1.15: Cranmer derived these from Hermann’s *Consultatio*. The German editions had as a heading to these verses “Hear the Gospel-comfort”. The *Consultatio* included a litany by Bucer and Melancthon.

¹⁵³ Pollard, *Fyve Homilies*, fo. jvi.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., fo. kii.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., fo. jii.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., fo. kv.

may also have been out of a sense of what a difficult task it would be to persuade people back to catholic faith and practice.

Since the Book of Common Prayer had been made illegal by the first Act of Repeal it was appropriate and needful for a new primer to be published. In 1555 John Wayland¹⁵⁷ published what was self-consciously a Catholic primer.¹⁵⁸ By the sixteenth century literate lay people had a “very rich and diversified inheritance of prayer.”¹⁵⁹ Collections of psalms, scripture readings, prayers and other devotional material were patterned on a monastic cycle of prayer known as Horae. These expanded to include such material as the “Office of the Blessed Virgin” and the “Fifteen Os of St Bridgit” and came to be known as primers. “With the advent of Protestantism in England, it became inevitable that the Books of Hours would become a battleground.”¹⁶⁰ Certainly the primers of 1545 and 1553 were protestant in tone though they included much traditional material. Helen C White stresses the element of continuity in primers,¹⁶¹ and the Wayland Primer even included prayers by Becon and Cranmer. However the whole emphasis of the 1555 primer was penitential. Morning prayers for each day concluded “O Almighty God our heavenly Father, I confess and knowledge that I am a miserable sinner.”¹⁶² There were penitential psalms, collects and meditations. The primer concluded with prayers to use before and after receiving the sacrament at mass including a form of confession.¹⁶³ John Bossy defines penitential prayers as devotional rather than social (such as the Lord’s Prayer). He categorises them as “me-prayers” and on occasion describes them as no more than “sanctified whingeing.”¹⁶⁴ Virginia Reinberg has responded that prayer is discourse with a person or persons having supernatural power, whether God, the Virgin Mary,

¹⁵⁷ Eamon Duffy, *Marking the Hours* (Yale 2006), p. 167: “the characteristic and official Book of Hours of Mary’s reign was the so-called Wayland primer, a Catholic book printed by a committed Protestant publisher... who was just now, perhaps under constraint, working his passage back into royal favour.”

¹⁵⁸ Its long title is *A uniform and Catholic Primer in Latin and English with many godly and devout prayers newly set forth by certain of the clergy with the assent of the most reverend father in God the Lord Cardinal Pole*, Edgar Hoskins, *Horae Beatae Mariae Virginis* (London 1901), p. 186.

¹⁵⁹ Helen C White, *The Tudor Books of Private Devotion* (Wisconsin 1951), p. 26.

¹⁶⁰ Duffy, *Marking the Hours*, p. 147.

¹⁶¹ White, *Tudor Books of Private Devotion*, p. 196.

¹⁶² Hoskins, *Horae Beatae*, p. 186.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

¹⁶⁴ John Bossy, “Christian Life in the late Middle Ages: Prayer”, *TRHS*, 6th series (London 1991), pp. 137-50.

or the saints, and that “the form of discourse and relationship people used in prayer mirrored those they used in the wider social world.”¹⁶⁵ Use of the 1555 primer, seen in this way, would help deepen the relationship of the person praying not only with God but with the whole community.

The Marian writings on penance were educational, pastoral and devotional rather than polemical. Bonner wrote to enable priests fulfil their role. Watson and Pollard’s sermons gave pastoral guidance to penitents and the Wayland Primer provided a devotional aid especially useful as a prelude to mass. The writers were aware of the pastoral benefits of the sacrament, as Wiseman argues, but also sensitive to protestant criticisms. As far as possible Pollard avoids controversial areas such as works of satisfaction, full confession and even contrition. The focus in these writers is on absolution, and there is no reference to purgatory though Fisher’s concept of punishment in the sacrament finds a place in the works of Bonner and Watson. Not only is the humanist influence strong but Watson, Pollard and the compilers of the Wayland Primer are prepared to use prayers and scriptural references that appear to be derived from Cranmer’s liturgies. This evidence supports Wooding’s thesis that the Marian Church was distinctive as it drew on Henrician and Edwardian reforms. However in its eagerness to reinstate the sacrament of penance and enhance its role in the life of the church there is also evidence to support Duffy’s argument that it provided “a laboratory for counter-reformation experimentation.”¹⁶⁶

PENANCE AND PERSECUTION

Efforts to persuade leading Protestants to recant through a policy of persecution had limited success. Very few high profile Protestants recanted, and when they did the authorities did not make full use of the propaganda advantage. Northumberland’s recantation presented the still insecure Marian government a priceless opportunity. His speech from the scaffold was printed in English within weeks and translated into French, Dutch, Italian and Spanish. There were three Latin editions. Yet, as Jordan and Gleeson argue, “this great propaganda effort failed, largely because the Marian

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., as an added note.

¹⁶⁶ Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, p. 8.

government ... remained uncertain whether it dared embrace the reputation of one who had long been accurately regarded as the prime enemy of the ancient faith in England.”¹⁶⁷ Cranmer’s recantations were rushed into print signed by Spanish witnesses and then the government put out an official version “witnessed by trustworthy Englishmen.”¹⁶⁸ The archbishop’s final renunciation of his recantations was ignored in both editions, but denied the Marian Church what could have been its ultimate propaganda victory. Considerable effort was put into the capture of Sir John Cheke in exile, but his recantation was made “in almost semi-privacy before Mary and her courtiers” and never published.¹⁶⁹

It was Gardiner who persuaded Parliament to revive anti-Lollard legislation empowering royal commissions to arrest heretics, confirming the death penalty by burning, and decreeing the forfeiture of their goods and lands.¹⁷⁰ The evidence suggests that he did not anticipate the holocaust which was to follow, and such was not his intention. Following the royal assent to the legislation he had all the imprisoned preachers in London brought to St Mary Overy, where he tried to persuade them to recant.¹⁷¹ Out of about eighty, only two did. John Rogers, the minister of St Sepulchre, died heroically at Smithfield on 4th February 1555, the Protestants’ proto-martyr. Simon Renard wrote to Philip the next day telling him that some of the onlookers wept, others prayed God to give him strength, perseverance and patience to bear the cross and not to recant, others gathered the ashes and bones and wrapped them in paper to preserve them, yet others threatened the bishops. He went on to suggest that the haste with which the bishops have proceeded in this matter may well cause a revolt.¹⁷² In *Fires of Faith* Duffy tries “to put aside twenty-first century humanitarian sensibilities” and assess the effectiveness of the campaign.¹⁷³ He considers that it was successful and that Renard’s concern was that the burnings

¹⁶⁷ WK Jordan and MR Gleason, “The saying of John Late Duke of Northumberland upon the Scaffold 1553”, *Harvard Library Bulletin* 23 (1975), p. 139.

¹⁶⁸ Edward J Baskerville, *A Chronological Bibliography of Propoganda and Polemic 1553-58* (Philadelphia 1979), p. 12.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁷⁰ *Statutes of the Realm*, iv. 224: 1 & 2 Philip and Mary, c. 6.

¹⁷¹ Glyn Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic. The life of Stephen Gardiner* (Oxford 1990), p. 293. He also points out that at other times Gardiner had summoned protestant leaders to Winchester House. He gave them notice of the summons and, assuming they would be arrested, many fled the country. *Calendar. Spanish*, XI. 217.

¹⁷² *Calendar. Spanish*, XIII. 138.

¹⁷³ Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, p. 84.

would be blamed on Habsburg influence.¹⁷⁴ He argues that tracts and preaching gave a reasoned explanation for the importance of the campaign; that in Mary's last year numbers of executions were in decline; and that Pole reported to Carranza that same year that the church was "beginning to receive its pure form."¹⁷⁵ In fact Mary was cautious about the policy from the start. She insisted that there should be preaching at every execution and that none should be burned without some of the council's presence, especially in London. Nevertheless, she was aware that there was much want of good preachers to overcome the evil diligence of preachers in the schism.¹⁷⁶ In 1555 the Venetian ambassador, Giovanni Michieli, having witnessed the burning of Cardmaker in May 1555 wrote that in a few days four or five more would be burned, and that such severity was odious to many people.¹⁷⁷ This strongly makes the point that it is not only twenty-first century people who have had "humanitarian sensibilities". When Nicolaus Mameranus visited the court as an envoy of Charles V in 1556 he warned of a shortage of preachers and gave the queen a defence of auricular confession against sectarians that he had written himself.¹⁷⁸ Duffy cites measures enacted by convocation in February 1558, "to halt the circulation and possession of heretical books and to root out heretical teaching in the universities, and a new commission issued by Pole in March 1558 "to pursue heresy and heretics in the diocese of Canterbury", as evidence of the government's continuing determination to eradicate Protestants,¹⁷⁹ but these also evidence the failure of the burnings to silence them.

It may be argued that in fact the policy was counter productive. The fact that Miles Hoggarde needed to pour mockery on the "false stinking martyrs,"¹⁸⁰ and John Christopherson needed to argue that heroic suffering does not make a person a martyr, suggests anxiety that the burning of the preachers was having an adverse influence on public opinion. Those imprisoned and awaiting execution wrote letters, treatises and accounts of their examinations, which were copied extensively and in some cases

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 83.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 186-7.

¹⁷⁶ *Calendar of State Papers (Domestic Series) Mary I 1553-1558*, ed. C S Knighton (London 1998), p. 66.

¹⁷⁷ *Calendar Venetian*, vol. VI, part 1, pp. 93-4.

¹⁷⁸ *Calendar. Domestic*, p. 272.

¹⁷⁹ Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, pp. 186-7.

¹⁸⁰ Miles Hoggarde, *The Displaying of the Protestantes* (London 1556).

smuggled into Europe where they were published. It was reported in Parliament by the Earl of Derby that John Bradford was influencing more people by his writings from prison than he had by his preaching.¹⁸¹ Out of fear of disorder by the crowds, some burnings took place very early in the morning before crowds were about, and in some cases young people were prohibited from attending. Christopher Haigh concedes that “The persecution was not a success. It failed to intimidate all Protestants, and some continued to provoke the authorities and present themselves for martyrdom. It burned the stain of corruption and self-seeking from their religion.”¹⁸² It aimed at eradicating heresy, intimidating many to recant and confess the sin of schism. It resulted in giving people the opportunity of confessing not sin, but their faith, in laying down their lives. The goal of the persecution was to terrorise Protestants into recanting and by penance being restored to the unity of the church. But the heroic suffering of the protestant martyrs was the reverse of the recantations that Gardiner, Bonner and Pole had hoped for. Moreover, since “we know that persecution might be the product of local score settling as well as official policy”,¹⁸³ it may have added to tensions within communities. The religious changes over two decades must have created uncertainties. Mass had been restored but was there merit to be gained from daily attendance? Was the layman supposed to read his English Bible or not? Was God’s forgiveness dependant on confessing to a priest and receiving his absolution? “Heretics ... asked relevant questions, and did the fact that they got the answers wrong really deserve such a terrible fate?”¹⁸⁴ As a result despite the policy of persecution, Pole’s idealism, Gardiner and Bonner’s pragmatism, and the theological convictions of Watson and Pollard, a number of the laity were reluctant to have annual penance restored as an obligation, as will be seen below. Despite Duffy’s pleading, the very intensity of the government’s determination to eradicate Protestantism in the last year of the reign shows that its policy of persecution had not succeeded.

¹⁸¹ *The Writings of John Bradford*, 1. 469.

¹⁸² Haigh, *English Reformations* (Oxford 1993), p. 234.

¹⁸³ Duffy and Loades, “Editors’ Introduction”, *The Church of Mary Tudor*, p. xiii; David Loades, *The Religious Culture of Marian England* (London 2010), p. 113.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

PENANCE AND THE POPULAR REPOSE

The jubilation at Mary's accession did not, as she imagined, mean universal enthusiasm for the restoration of Catholicism, though in fact most people conformed. There was a "pervasive culture of conformity ... [after all] twenty years of royal direction had accustomed people to doing what they were told."¹⁸⁵ In addition to those Protestants who were ready to accept the fire rather than recant, and those who had the resources to live in exile, others resisted in their hearts and minds while conforming outwardly. Yet others were confused by the changes,¹⁸⁶ and some merely sceptical or apathetic. It was not a matter of returning to how things were in 1547 or 1534: things had changed.¹⁸⁷ Bonner was aware that the catholic penitential system had been derided by some and neglected "by al folks." Perhaps it was easier to believe that their forebears were not suffering the pains of purgatory since they had given up praying for the dead, acquiring indulgences, or paying for masses to ease their burdens. In inflationary times some may well have thought of better uses for their money than offering candles to images.¹⁸⁸ Even those who were devout may have been persuaded that to give to the poor was of more value than paying for candles or masses, and, as Stephen Thompson has shown, even Marian bishops were less inclined to leave money for prayer for their souls.¹⁸⁹

Concerns expressed at visitations, articles issued in preparation for visitations and subsequent injunctions and court proceedings are used below as one means of considering attitudes to the restoration of penance. Other evidence includes concerns shown by Cardinal Pole that lay people were avoiding confession to their own curate or avoiding confession altogether.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 17; 75.

¹⁸⁶ M Anne Overell, "A Nicodemite in England and Italy: Edward Courtenay, 1548-56", *John Foxe at Home and Abroad*, ed. David Loades (Aldershot 2004) describes how Courtenay "struggled to find his place in a Nicodemite world of pathological uncertainty about who was on whose side."

¹⁸⁷ Haigh, *English Reformations*, p. 215: "the world was not quite as it had been."

¹⁸⁸ Alec Ryrie, "Counting Sheep, counting shepherds: the problem of allegiance in the English Reformation," *The Beginnings of English Protestantism*, eds. Peter Marshall and Alec Ryrie (Cambridge 2002), p.104: "Perhaps as he [Roger Edgeworth] argued, those who doubted purgatory hoped for repentance without penance. It is equally likely they were glad of an excuse not to spend significant amounts of wealth on intercession."

¹⁸⁹ Stephen Thompson, "The Pastoral Work of English and Welsh Bishops 1500-1558" (unpublished Oxford D. Phil. 1984), p. 198.

Edmund Bonner had not waited for the reconciliation before engaging with the task of restoring Catholicism. His London diocese was the one in which Protestantism had made the biggest impact. He was also under pressure from Mary herself, as well as the Council, to make progress in eradicating heresy. The Royal Proclamation on 4th March 1554, announcing injunctions for religion or “certain articles of such special matter as among other things most necessary to put in execution”,¹⁹⁰ was addressed specifically to the Bishop of London and his officers. The introduction put massive pressure on him claiming that heresies and crimes from the previous reign were continuing “without any correction or reformation at all.” Blame was placed mainly on the clergy. Bonner quickly took action. His pastoral letter to “all parsons, vicars, curates and ministers” instructed them to certify the names of those who failed to make their confession and receive the sacrament that Easter (25th March) and to confirm that “you have your altars set up, chalice, books, vestments, and all things necessary for mass and the administration of the sacraments.”¹⁹¹ He also planned the visitation of his diocese, though without the authority of the Queen or Council,¹⁹² let alone dispensation from the papal legate. This took place from 3rd September 1554 to 8th October. During this 1554 visitation, 190 parishioners in the archdeaconry of London were accused of non-attendance at worship,¹⁹³ possibly reflecting “idleness or indifference rather than disapproval.”¹⁹⁴ Others looked away at the time of consecration in the mass or failed to attend processions.¹⁹⁵ Meriel Jagger concludes that “the visitation book reflects exactly what might be expected in the upheaval caused by Mary’s reversion to Catholicism... giving an impression of the feelings and opinions of those, not sufficiently heroic or convinced to burn for their beliefs but nevertheless unwilling to turn passively to Catholicism.”¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁰ *Tudor Royal Proclamations 1553-1587*, 2.187.

¹⁹¹ K Fincham and E Shagan, *Altars Restored: The Changing Face of English Religious Worship 1547-1700* (Oxford 2007), pp. 28-29.

¹⁹² Gina Alexander, “Bonner and the Marian persecutions”, *The English Reformation Revised*, ed. Christopher Haigh (Cambridge 1987), p. 168.

¹⁹³ Meriel Jagger, “Bonner’s Episcopal visitation of London 1554”, *The Bulletin of Historical Research*, vol.XLV no.112 (Nov.1972), p. 307.

¹⁹⁴ Haigh, *English Reformations*, p. 220.

¹⁹⁵ Jagger, “Bonner’s Episcopal Visitation of London 1554”, p. 308.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 310.

The magnitude of the task facing the Marian Church was well realised by Bishop Bonner as he prepared his massive 124 articles prior to the visitation.¹⁹⁷ Frere and Kennedy claim that these became widely known in Europe and were the basis for articles published by other bishops later in England and Wales. Article 20 asked “whether any person have condemned or refused to receive the sacrament of the altar, or to be confessed and receive at the priest’s hands the benefit of absolution, according to the laudable custom of this realm?”¹⁹⁸ Article 80 concerns Lenten confession before receiving communion at Easter, but requires the penitent to be confessed “of his own curate, or by his licence, of some other honest priest,”¹⁹⁹ thus enabling parish clergy to exercise control. Following the visitation 450 people were charged, mainly in the consistory court.²⁰⁰ Among these it is difficult to separate those with protestant convictions from those maliciously accused and others who may have simply been apathetic about catholic rituals. 57 had failed to make confession or receive Easter communion.²⁰¹ Among those burned as a consequence were John Warne of St Olave, Silver Street, aged 29, for denial of mass and refusing to confess,²⁰² and George Tankerville of St Dunstan in the West, charged with failing to confess to a priest for five years and attacking the mass as “full of idolatry.”²⁰³ Questions about Lenten confession were asked at other visitations. The Injunctions issued to the clergy in 1555, following on from the visitation, were bound up together with *A Profytable and Necessarye Doctryne* and a book of Homilies. Bonner took seriously his goal, set out in the first of his articles, to have an instructed and exemplary clergy.

The twelfth decree of the Legatine Synod of 1555 stressed the importance of such visitations in the restoration and reform of the Church. It declared them “very necessary for the taking away of vices and abuses, the improvement of manners, and

¹⁹⁷ *Visitation Articles and Injunctions or the Period of the Reformation*, eds. WH Frere and WC Kennedy (London 1910), vol.2, pp. 331-358.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 335.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 350.

²⁰⁰ Jagger, “Bonner’s Episcopal Visitation of London 1554”; Greater London Record Office, DL/C/614.

²⁰¹ Haigh, *English Reformations*, p. 220.

²⁰² Susan Brigden, *London and the Reformation* (Oxford 1991), p. 608.

²⁰³ Jagger, “Bonner’s Episcopal Visitation of London 1554”, p. 311; Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, (1570), pp. 344-5.

the keeping of the laws of the Church in full force and vigour.”²⁰⁴ The role of the ordinary was to expound God’s Word, confirm, “absolve in reserved cases, and impose salutary penance upon such as stand in need thereof and humbly ask for it.” They were to seek out heretics among the laity, specifically those who do not go to confession.²⁰⁵ The articles for the 1556 visitation of the Canterbury diocese touching lay people enquire “Whether they do condemn or despise by any manner any of the sacraments, rites or ceremonies of the church, or refuse or deny auricular confession?” and “Whether in the time of Easter last any were not confessed?”²⁰⁶ The visitation of Harpsfield’s archdeaconry discovered that at Hawkhurst, Staplehurst and Cranbrook there had been some resistance, and as a result it was “commanded that all parishioners be confessed before middle Lent Sunday, and then be confessed again and receive the sacrament weekly.”²⁰⁷ Moreover at Hawkhurst “the curate is commanded that he do not bury any that do refuse to be confessed or to receive the sacraments.”²⁰⁸ Elizabeth Post, along with eight others, had not received Easter communion and as penance was to declare openly in the church that the sacrament of the altar is the body and blood of Christ, to be confessed and receive communion, and “to make a certificate thereof at Canterbury on the Tuesday after Michaelmas.”²⁰⁹ More frequently the visitation record tells of those who “refused to wear beads, take holy bread, failed to kiss the pax, refused to serve in the choir or join in procession, were absent from services or acted in services without devotion.”²¹⁰ These were not always reformers of the Edwardian regime. Clark points to the influence of Lollardy in the county,²¹¹ and Collinson recalls Joan Bocher as having been part of a radical sectarian group in Canterbury. Henry Hart, a leading figure among the “Freewillers” is mentioned as having been an influence in Pluckley.²¹² It has been claimed that John Foxe whitewashed such “a very miscellaneous collection of victims” as orthodox Protestants.²¹³ For Harpsfield however the issue was that each should “conform

²⁰⁴ Marmion, “The London Synod”, p. 58.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ *Visitation Articles and Injunctions*, ii.424-5: items 24 and 36.

²⁰⁷ *Archdeacon Harpsfield’s Visitation*, 2. 177-179, 185.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 2.179.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 2.207.

²¹⁰ Patrick Collinson, “The Persecution in Kent,” *The Church of Mary Tudor*, p. 322.

²¹¹ Peter Clark, *English Provincial Society: From the Reformation to the Revolution* (Hassocks 1971), p. 101.

²¹² *Archdeacon Harpsfield’s Visitation*, 1. 119-120: “Henrie Harte iam mortuus.”

²¹³ Duffy and Loades, “Editors’ Introduction”, *The Church of Mary Tudor*, p. xxiii.

himself to the unity of the church” and that by penance.²¹⁴ There was an element of terror in the restoration of Catholicism in Kent. Perhaps because of its proximity both to the continent and to London, and a tradition of dissent within the county, there were several strong pockets of Protestantism. Between July 1555 and January 1556, 23 heretics were burned in Kent, more than twice the number who were burned during these months at Smithfield.²¹⁵ Altogether 54 were burned in the county, 41 of whom were burned in Canterbury itself. All but two of these were lay people and they included eighteen women. Of the two clergy, the best known is John Bland the dynamic vicar of Adisham. The focus of his teaching had been the denunciation of auricular confession.²¹⁶

It is difficult to know to what extent the restoration of penance was welcomed or resisted by the laity. However actions by Cardinal Pole suggest that there was significant resistance. In 1557 he issued a proclamation concerning confession that was read at Paul’s Cross.²¹⁷ The church’s requirements were not being met. This was followed by a letter to the Bishop of London expressing his concern that some were not confessing to the parish priest and some were avoiding confession altogether:

“Cumque, non sine animi nostril molestia interlexerimus, nonnullos gratis praefatis, in animarum suarum periculum ... abuti, utpote cum aliqui minus idoneo sacerdoti, peccata sua, vel forsan teiam nulli, confiteantur.”²¹⁸

(We understand, with some discomfort, that some have abused [the concessions made] to the danger of their souls, namely they are confessing their sins with an unsuitable priest or perhaps no priest at all.)

Although addressed to the Bishop of London, markings on the original document indicate that a copy may have been sent also to the Bishop of Ely, suggesting possible wider circulation. It seems that resistance to confession was not limited to London and Kent. In July 1558 William Copeland, according to the Stationers’ Register, “Was

²¹⁴ *Archdeacon Harpsfield’s Visitation*, 2. 177: as with “one Willard”.

²¹⁵ Collinson, “The Persecution in Kent,” *The Church of Mary Tudor*, p. 310.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 314.

²¹⁷ *Victoria County History of London*, ed. William Page (London 1909), p. 303.

²¹⁸ *The Trew Copy of the Transumpt/ orwrytynge of late sent to the Bishoppe of London by the mooste reverend father in God, the Lorde Cardinal Pole* (London 1558), CCC. Mss. 111.159, RSTC. 20088.5. Markings on the only surviving copy of this suggest it was also circulated to other bishops.

fined for printing [clandestinely] the *Sermon on Repentance* by Master Bradford xxd.”²¹⁹ Bradford’s sermon was an attack on penance. That Copeland would risk the fine, possible expulsion from the newly incorporated Stationers’ Company, and worse, suggests he believed some wanted to read such a publication and were prepared to resist the restoration. According to Bishop Bonner some, having experienced the Edwardian prayer books for five years, argued that mental confession was what God required and that was enough. He challenged them sternly:

And when I do saye. A declaration or utteryng, I do use the same to exclude mentall confessyon, whyche though it may and ought at al times to be made unto God, yet that is not that sacramentall confessyon of which we here speake.²²⁰

Clearly the restoration of penance was a major issue in the Marian reforms. The goal of the persecution was to terrorise Protestants into recanting and by penance being restored to the unity of the church. But the heroic suffering of the protestant martyrs was the reverse of the recantations that Gardiner, Bonner and Pole had hoped for, and Pole’s letter suggests that a significant number of the laity were reluctant to have annual penance restored as an obligation.

CONCLUSIONS

So what light does a review of penance shine on the restoration of the Catholic Church in Marian England? For Catholics penance was about reconciliation with God and neighbour by means of contrition, confession and works of satisfaction, followed by priestly absolution. But penance was being used in various ways. Pole saw it as vital for reconciliation with the Papacy. But he aimed not only for national reconciliation but personal and individual reconciliation. So bishops were absolved from their part in the schism and were given authority to absolve others so that clergy and laity would all be absolved. In many ways this may be seen as a legal technicality and may have created tensions with those who wanted to get on with restoring the church by means of the sacraments. The first bishops to be absolved in this way were

²¹⁹ *Transcript of the Stationers’ Registers 1554-1640*, ed. E Arber (vol. 1, London 1875), p. 93.

²²⁰ Bonner, *A Profytable and Necessarye Doctryne*, sig. Di.

absolved by proxy, although Pole had stressed the importance of repentance he absolved first before instructing them to confess and do penance. The same may be said of his dispensations. They were the means of establishing hierarchical authority and canon law. Efforts to bring heretics to recant and do penance on the other hand were using penance politically. Northumberland's recantation was a political victory for Mary and her government. For Bonner penance was the proper liturgical preparation for the mass, and since he saw the sacrament of the mass as the true basis of unity in the Catholic Church the sacrament of penance was vital. Hence it was "necessary doctrine" and to be taught as such to children in catechisms and to the laity through homilies.

However for pastoral theologians, such as Watson and Pollard, penance was a means of the individual sinner learning humility through auricular confession and being reconciled to God. Church leaders were united in seeing the importance of penance but used it in various ways which did not always reflect that unity. The Marian Church's chief weakness was in different perceptions of the nature of Catholicism. Some saw the unity of the church in the mass and its sacramental life, and others saw unity as dependent upon apostolicity (and therefore the papacy). Because of this there were tensions in the Church. We cannot know whether these would have been overcome had Mary lived longer.

For Pole the national reconciliation on St Andrew's Day 1554 must have seemed a triumph. Yet he knew it was not enough. His idealism demanded bishops, clergy, and every lay person contrite and absolved. Yet he was forced himself to compromise. He had seen schism itself as heresy yet he not only worked with bishops who had supported the break with Rome but even commended their "constancy and fortitude in defending the holy doctrine against heretics."²²¹ Although he believed that those who held ecclesiastical property needed to repent, he absolved the nation of schism even without this repentance. However, perhaps his detailed absolutions were effective in the medium and longer term. All the Marian bishops, saving Kitchen of Llandaff, refused to forswear their reconciliation to Rome and accept Elizabeth's supremacy in 1559. Mary, too, was in an ambiguous position from the start. Although she hated and

²²¹ *The Letters of Stephen Gardiner*, pp. 489-90: quoted by Ethan Shagan, "Confronting Compromise: the schism and its Legacy in mid-Tudor England," *Catholics and the "Protestant Nation"*, ed. E Shagan (Manchester 2005), p. 63.

renounced her title as “supreme head” of the church, she used that authority to restore mass, deprive married clergy and appoint bishops. And when her “loyalty to the papacy was put to the test it proved rather less strong than she claimed.”²²² She sided with Philip against Pope Paul IV and refused to accept Pole’s recall to Rome or William Peto’s appointment in his place. Most clergy and laity, despite their penance, were ready to accept yet another change with Elizabeth’s accession.²²³ They proved pragmatic rather than idealistic.

Eamon Duffy believes that “The Confessional was the ultimate weapon of the Counter-Reformation, the perfect forum for the meeting and integration of routinization and the zeal of conversion.”²²⁴ But it did not work out like that in the Marian Church. Pole’s forcing the way to reconcile the people to the papacy through penance must have felt more of coercion than pastoral care. His letter to the bishops in 1557 and Watson’s sermons (not published until 1558) suggest reluctance of a large number of people to willingly return to the practice of auricular confession. The theological arguments of the Protestants were persistent and coherent. Nicodemites, on the one hand, who were either fearful of the cost of open resistance or who were playing for the long game, and those who were confused and so hesitant and apathetic because of the changes in government policy, may have proved to be a substantial number and hard to win around.

²²² David Loades, “The Personal Religion of Mary”, *The Church of Mary Tudor*, p. 25.

²²³ Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath*, pp. 176-177.

²²⁴ Eamon Duffy, “The Long Reformation: Catholicism, Protestantism and the Multitude” in *England’s Long Reformation*, ed. N Tyacke (London 1998), p. 64.

6. PENITENCE AND THE ELIZABETHAN CHURCH

In a rare agreement Eamon Duffy and Patrick Collinson concur that the Elizabethan church failed in its mission to convert and minister to the English nation, and that “high on the list” of reasons for that failure was “the loss of confession on the catholic model without the gain of effective protestant discipline.”¹ Duffy considers that both Elizabethan Protestants and Counter-Reformation Catholics were in the business of evangelization. He argues that

The decisive advantage was the harnessing of the centuries old obligations of confession into the service of a newer and more demanding style of Christian commitment. The confessional was the ultimate weapon of the Counter-Reformation, the perfect forum for the meeting and integration of routinization and the zeal of conversion, and Protestantism had nothing to rival it.²

For Duffy parochial ministry was the key to the conversion of England. He acknowledges that itinerant preaching established “islands of Protestant conviction, but without a base in parishes [it] could hardly sustain the community thereby brought into being.”³ The loss of sacramental confession meant the loss in parishes of opportunities for instruction, personal contact between penitent and priest, and local church discipline on a regular basis.

Collinson’s response to Duffy in this instance was that

The loss of confession as part of a sacrament did not necessarily mean the lack in post-Reformation England of an effective pastoral ministry, rather than simply a preaching ministry. It was, it must have been, that pastoral ministry, not expounding sermons to the empty air or to unwilling hearers, which made the Long Reformation “the howling success” which even Eamon Duffy believes it to have been.⁴

However, in an earlier essay he had acknowledged the deleterious effect of the loss of the sacrament on discipline:

¹ Patrick Collinson, “Shepherds, Sheepdogs and Hirelings: the Pastoral Ministry in Post-Reformation England”, *Studies in Church History* 26 (Oxford 1989), eds. W J Sheils and Diana Wood, p. 219.

² Eamon Duffy, “The Long Reformation: Catholicism, Protestantism and the Multitudes”, *England’s Long Reformation*, ed. N Tyacke, (London 1998), p. 64.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁴ Patrick Collinson, “Comment on Eamon Duffy’s Lecture”, *England’s Long Reformation*, p. 83.

Anglican rather than Calvinist discipline was closer to coercive social control than to the genuinely pastoral and restorative cure of souls. It was capable of imposing conformity but not completing and complementing the preacher's work of conversion.⁵

This was in marked contrast to discipline in the kirk in Scotland. There "public confession of sin and demonstration of repentance ... arguably became the central ritual act of protestant worship."⁶ When the congregation accepted the contrition of the penitent, it absolved him and received him back into the community.⁷ However for Collinson the problem of discipline was more than a penitential rite or even a Calvinist consistory, it also related to how preaching was received. He argues that

It was left to the individual and self-selecting groups to decide on the basis of general exhortation whether they were morally fit, or could be bothered, to conduct themselves as fully communicant members of the Church or not. How they responded to that challenge, and to the Gospel itself, depended upon the preacher, the effectiveness of the sermon and the response of the hearers, that variety of soils on which English exponents of the Parable of the Sower had so often commented.

He concludes that "the Parable of the Sower was not a suitable foundation on which to erect a national church."⁸ Christopher Haigh has gone even further by arguing that preaching itself could be counter-productive. He argues that "godly" preaching was mainly about predestination. This he sees as divisive and considers that it left many uncertain about their salvation. His claim is that lay people wanted pastors rather than preachers and that "the Calvinist Reformation was contained and domesticated by consumer resistance as much as by conforming bishops and Arminianizing theologians."⁹

Not everyone has regarded Protestant attempts to replace the sacrament of penance as a failure. Eric Carlson responded to Haigh's claims by stating that "godly Calvinist ministry was self-consciously pastoral and needed no prompting from the laity in this regard."¹⁰ He credits this to the influence of Martin Bucer during his time in England, and rejects the idea of a dichotomy between preaching and pastoral ministry. He also makes the point that few sermons preached in parish churches have survived from the sixteenth century but "the evidence that exists suggests there was very little predestination in parish preaching, which

⁵ Collinson, "Shepherds, Sheepdogs and Hirelings", p. 219.

⁶ Margo Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* (Yale 2002), p. 129.

⁷ Ibid., p. 402.

⁸ Collinson, "Shepherds, Sheepdogs and Hirelings", pp. 219-220.

⁹ Christopher Haigh, "The Taming of the Reformation: Preachers, Pastors and Parishioners in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England", *History* 85 (2000), p. 572.

¹⁰ Eric J Carlson, "Good Pastors or Careless Shepherds?" *History* 88 (2003), p. 423.

was principally about repentance¹¹. In fact as we will see preaching was principally about repentance because reformers saw it as compensation for the absence of the sacrament of confession and it was the preaching of God's word that enabled penitents to know how their sins were forgiven. Neil Ennsle has also pointed out that in the Elizabethan church "every minister had an obligation to call parishioners to repentance of their sins"¹² since, although mandatory auricular confession had been abandoned, repentance remained a gospel imperative. Preaching was not the only means of compensating for the pastoral opportunities lost by abandoning the sacrament. Penance had been associated with teaching the faith and the gap left by the demise of the confessional was largely replaced by catechisms. Ian Green has noted the very large number of catechisms published in England in the second half of the sixteenth century. He sees this multiplicity as the product of "persistent attempts to improve new techniques of religious instruction to compensate for the loss of older techniques such as the use of visual aids and confession."¹³

There is therefore no clear consensus among historians about whether the Elizabethan church created adequate substitutes for the sacrament of penance and auricular confession. This thesis argues that Carlson is right and that preaching and pastoral care frequently went hand in hand, as was seen in the ministries of Greenham and Perkins, and in this way succeeded in persuading their flocks to regard themselves as Protestants.¹⁴ It also concurs with Collinson in noting the lack of a genuinely pastoral form of discipline. Issues of preaching, pastoral ministry and discipline merit careful examination.

The wider European context for these issues is highlighted in *Penitence in the Age of Reformations*, a collection of essays published in 2000. It shows that categories of discipline and consolation were present in Catholic, Lutheran and Reformed traditions revealing "the importance of continuity with the penance of the Middle Ages."¹⁵ Katharine Lualdi challenges John Bossy's hypothesis that there was a fundamental move from a social to an individualised sense of sin in the West in the early modern period, by showing both Catholics and Protestants monitoring social discipline. Taken together the essays reveal, in fact, that

¹¹ Ibid., p. 426.

¹² Neil R Ennsle, "Patterns of Godly Life: the Ideal Parish Ministry", *Sixteenth Century Journal* 28 (1997), p. 27.

¹³ Ian Green, *The Christian's ABC. Catechisms and Catechising in England c.1530-1740* (Oxford 1996) p. 558.

¹⁴ Arnold Hunt, *The Art of Hearing: English Preachers and Their Audiences 1590-1640* (Cambridge 2010), p. 241.

¹⁵ Thomas Tentler, "Postscript", *Penitence in the Age of Reformations*, eds. K J Lualdi and A T Thayer (Aldershot 2000), p. 242.

discipline was increasingly important across the European churches, and although the Reformed tradition emphasised it from the start, “reformers in that tradition carried an even stricter discipline to New England”¹⁶ in the next century. In a concluding essay, Thomas Tentler shows how the rights and demands of conscience, whether in Catholic casuistry or Reformed “cases of conscience” are examples of continuity since they are “inseparable from the medieval theology and practice of auricular confession.”¹⁷ The collection, however, includes only one essay relating to the English church: “Richard Greenham’s ‘Spiritual Physicke’: the comfort of afflicted consciences in Elizabethan pastoral care.” The examination in this chapter of Protestant penitential practices in England will look at how far the English situation confirms the Lualdi/Thayer thesis that matters of discipline were of increasing significance, and how far the English situation was distinctive.

Although some have minimised the extent of change, others have argued that the loss of auricular confession had even more deep-seated ramifications for the religious culture of Elizabethan England. The Geneva Bible (1560) frequently used and heavily annotated the phrase “afflicted conscience.”¹⁸ This “afflicted conscience” sometimes led to an obsession with self-examination and self-abasement, which became a “mental seam” running through Puritanism as part of its spiritual and cultural identity. Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales are, as a consequence, tempted to suggest that “Puritanism should be seen as one response to the Protestant abolition of the Catholic sacrament of auricular confession, since for many individuals this had proved a very effective safety valve for feelings of guilt and fear.”¹⁹ They admit that it was not only Puritans who experienced spiritual anxiety and indeed, not all Puritans experienced such a degree of mental strife. It was however theological and pastoral attempts to deal with such problems that became known as “practical divinity.”

It is the argument of this chapter that reformed penitential teaching was conveyed through preaching, supported by catechisms and practical divinity. Other forms of communication also had an impact, such as the liturgy, metrical psalms and even religious ballads with their focus on repentance. All these played a part in eventually winning over the nation to Protestantism. Nevertheless the lack of discipline was undoubtedly a serious problem for

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 249, 247.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 253.

¹⁸ Jason Yiannikou, “Protestantism, Puritanism, and Practical Divinity in England 1570-1620 (unpublished Cambridge Ph.D. 1999), p. 18.

¹⁹ *The Culture of English Puritanism 1560-1700*, eds. Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales (Basingstoke 1996), p. 13.

reformers. Patrick Collinson even sees “the religious plurality and secularity of modern Britain its ultimate consequence and legacy.”²⁰ Many of the leaders of the church had been influenced by Peter Martyr or Martin Bucer at the universities. Some had experienced reform on the continent in the ministries of the likes of Bullinger and Calvin. They expected further reform to bring the English church more in line with the continental reformation. Elizabeth ensured that the reform they wanted never came.

Sacramental confession played a complex role in the social and intellectual revolutions of the sixteenth century.²¹ Reformers in England did not always agree on how the consolation and discipline provided by the sacrament might be replaced but they saw that something was needed. Part 1 of this chapter looks at what was lost by the rejection of the sacrament, the anxieties caused by that, and how Elizabethan Protestants, up to Hooker, considered preaching as the right replacement. This will be examined along with the practical divinity and catechisms which supplemented the preaching. It will also look at the wide range of attitudes to the replacement of the sacrament of penance held by conformists and anti-Calvinists as well as Puritans, within the Elizabethan church. Issues around penitence were common concerns, and this is a perspective on the Elizabethan church that historians have previously not considered in sufficient detail. With the rejection of the Roman penitential system, Puritans felt that the church lacked an adequate discipline, and they were not the only ones. They did not accept that the church courts met that need and their own attempts to meet it with a presbyterian system of church discipline were thwarted. Meanwhile the business of the church courts increased. While Part 1 considers Protestant penitential thought and prescriptions for the loss of the sacrament of penance, in Part 2 the focus will be how all this worked out in the parishes and the response, as far as we can know, of the ordinary man in the pew. Consideration will be given to participation in parish life and the liturgy and whether the listening to sermons and the singing of metrical psalms may have had an impact in helping him/her see the importance of repentance and as a means of assurance of God’s forgiveness. Religious ballads, plays, and cheap print often stressed the importance of repentance and God’s providence. Since these were commercial constructs their sale suggests those who purchased them had some level of empathy with their ethos. Penitence was so much part of the church’s approach to reform and evangelism that it impacted on the wider culture.

²⁰ Collinson, “Shepherds, Sheepdogs and Hirelings”, p. 220.

²¹ Thomas N Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation* (Princeton 1977), p. 368.

PART I: THE REPLACEMENT OF THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

For political and personal reasons Elizabeth rejected the papalism that Mary had embraced. By the Act of Uniformity a slightly amended version of the 1552 Prayer Book was restored. This meant that the sacrament of penance and mandatory auricular confession were once again rejected. Where did that leave the church? The hierarchy remained unreformed, though some had a vision for “our bishops to be pastors, labourers, and watchmen.”²² There were problems even over the consecration of Matthew Parker. How would the returning exiles view the situation, having experienced churches with other leadership styles? On what basis could the church claim rights of jurisdiction? Could the church continue reformed in doctrine without a corresponding discipline? How could penitents know their sins were forgiven? Who had the power of absolution? What would be the significance of the abolition of the sacrament of penance in pastoral, social and political terms? And how would all this work out in the local church? There were many questions and John Jewel was the first to try to give protestant answers.

John Jewel justified the abolition of the sacrament of penance and established preaching as its replacement in his *Apologie for the Church of Englande* as he discussed the ministerial power of binding and loosing and the doctrine of the keys. By making the preaching of the gospel the means of exercising these ministries he described how the Church can offer assurance, discipline and reconciliation. In preaching “the merits of Christ” to the penitent the minister is able to “pronounce to the same a sure and undoubted forgiveness of their sins and the hope of everlasting salvation.” To those who are unbelieving the minister declares God’s everlasting punishment or shuts them “from the bosom of the church by open excommunication.” Others who offend the church with a “notable and open fault” are to be brought to amendment and then the minister “doth reconcile them, and bring them home again, and restore them to the company and unity of the faithful.”²³ He cites Chrysostom that the keys are “the knowledge of the Scriptures”, Tertullian that they are “the interpretation of the law”, and Eusebius that they are “the word of God.” He argues that Christ’s disciples received the authority of the keys, “not that they should hear private confessions of the people and listen to their whisperings, as the common massing-priests do everywhere now-a-days, ... but to the end that they should go, they should teach, they should publish abroad the gospel,

²² *The Zurich Letters*, ed. H Robinson (PS. Cambridge 1842, 2 vols), I. 51.

²³ *The Works of John Jewel*, ed. John Ayre (PS. Cambridge 1845, 3vols.), 3.60: The *Apologie* was first published in Latin in 1562, and an English translation by Lady Anne Bacon was published in 1564.

... that the minds of godly persons being brought low by the remorse of their former life and errors, after they once begun to look up into the light of the gospel and believe in Christ, might be opened with the word of God, even as a door is opened with a key.”²⁴ Christ’s great commission was for the church to go into the world and make disciples by teaching/preaching the gospel.

Within weeks of his arrival back in England from Zurich Jewel was defending the Protestant English church.²⁵ He was a disputant at the Westminster Conference against the Marian bishops, and part of the royal visitation to the western counties shortly before being nominated as bishop of Salisbury.²⁶ In his Challenge Sermon at Paul’s Cross on 26 November 1559 Jewel called on papists to give evidence from scripture or from the first six hundred years of the Christian church for their current teaching and practice.²⁷ Cecil and Parker encouraged him to write an apologia for the Elizabethan church.²⁸ He wrote *Epistola* explaining England’s absence from the Council of Trent, and early in 1562 his *Apologia pro Ecclesiae Anglicana* was published. Thomas Harding was not the first to respond to Jewel’s challenge but the debate between them became prolonged and bitter.²⁹ Both Harding and Jewel came from Devon, had attended Barnstable Grammar School, and had later studied at Oxford. Harding had been a Protestant under Edward VI and at one time had stayed in the home of Bullinger, to whom Jewel was devoted after his time in Zurich. He reverted to Rome under Mary and became treasurer of Salisbury cathedral. On Elizabeth’s succession his movements were limited by the ecclesiastical commissioners and he moved to Louvain from where he disputed with the apologist of the Elizabethan church.

The principal grounds for Harding’s confutation of the Church of England are his claims that the Pope is the successor of Peter and the Vicar of Christ on earth, and the Church of Rome is therefore the only Catholic church of God, and whoever is not obedient to it must be judged a

²⁴ Ibid., 3.61.

²⁵ Gary W Jenkins, *John Jewel and the English National Church: The Dilemmas of an Erastian Reformer* (Ashgate 2005), p. 57: points out that on seven separate occasions, in public sermons and in print, Jewel defended the Elizabethan Settlement.

²⁶ He arrived back in England on 18 March 1559; the conference was on 31 March. He set out as a commissioner with the visitation on 19 July and was nominated as bishop on 27 July. John Craig, “John Jewel”, *ODNB*, (2004), 30.108.

²⁷ Mary Morrissey, *Politics and the Paul’s Cross Sermons 1558-1642* (Oxford 2011), p. 162.

²⁸ Brett Usher, “John Jewel Junked”, a review article in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* (59.3, 2008), p. 503 claims that Cecil was the prime mover in encouraging Jewel to write the *Apologia*. He also suggests that Laski and Bucer may have been influential in Jewel’s thinking.

²⁹ Lucy Wooding, “Thomas Harding”, *ODNB*, 25.172. Brett Usher is highly critical of Gary Jenkins’ description of the debate as “tedious and pedantic.” Brett Usher, p. 507.

heretic. He argues that it is the sacraments that are the keys.³⁰ He compares Protestants to the Novatians who denied that penance was a sacrament and that the church's priests had authority to remit sins, and so they were counted as heretics. Jewel responded that there was no auricular confession in the days of Novatius and his heresy was in not believing that post-baptismal sin could be forgiven. The substance of the sacrament is the word of God. The word is the instrument for the remission of sin. The sacraments, Augustine calls them the "verba visibilia", are a seal to the word.

Harding considers that Jewel had made the mistake of confusing preaching with absolution, since the sacrament is efficacious without the word and not the reverse.³¹ Jewel, he claims, confuses preaching with loosing and binding and even with church government. The Elizabethan Church did not have proper priests to exercise the sacrament of penance and so "ye cause their everlasting damnation, for whom Christ shed his blood, the price of their redemption."³² In stressing the role of the priest as judge and the sacrament of penance as essential to forgiveness Harding is reiterating the logic of the chapters and canons on the sacrament in the 14th session of the Council of Trent.³³

He accuses Jewel of "contempt of the sacraments especially of the sacrament of penance," without which, if we sin after baptism, "we cannot attain to salvation."³⁴ Jewel's response is that the main task of the minister is "to preach repentance; so that we may amend our lives and be converted unto God."³⁵ He quotes Chrysostom: "I say not go confess thy sins unto thy fellow servant, that he may upbraid thee with them; but confess them unto God, that is able to cure them."³⁶ In this Jewel lays the foundation for pastoral ministry in which the pastor and minister of the word is a "physician of the soul." Not only is there no command in Scripture for private confessions but papists have used them "as a rack of men's consciences to the maintenance of their tyranny."³⁷ Since absolution in the sacrament can only be given to the contrite who confess all their sins, and since the heart is sinful, there can be no assurance in the sacrament. Jewel stresses that the only assurance lies in the mercy of God since "His

³⁰ *The Works of John Jewel*, 3. 353.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 3.355.

³² *Ibid.*, 3.361, 366.

³³ *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (London 1687), pp. 49-55: Canon 9 anathematised those who did not accept penance as a judicial act; and canons 1-3 anathematised those who deny its sacramental status as instituted by Christ or who claim it is not distinct from baptism.

³⁴ *The Works of John Jewel*, 3. 366.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.1131: in *A Treatise on the Sacraments*.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.120.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

mercy endureth for ever.”³⁸ He distinguishes three types of confession: secretly to God alone, openly in the whole congregation, and privately unto a brother.³⁹ The last is not to be rejected if rightly used. Although he quotes the epistle of James as encouraging such mutual confession among believers he claims it is neither commanded by Christ nor necessary for salvation.⁴⁰

Lacking a proper ministry the Church of England, Harding claims, does not have authority to bind and loose.⁴¹ Jewel’s riposte is that the Church of England has authority by God’s Word, for the power of loosing or binding “standeth in God’s Word; and the exercise or execution of the same standeth either in preaching, or else in sentence of correction and ecclesiastical discipline.”⁴² Although he repudiates the sacrament of penance, Jewel stresses the importance of continually examining “ourselves as to our faith and amendment of life and not on one day a year only.”⁴³

The issue of how the penitent could be assured of forgiveness was crucial to the debate since it involved the authority of “binding and loosing” that Christ had given to the church. Jewel insisted that auricular confession and the sacrament of penance could offer no assurance of forgiveness since all sins had to be confessed and Jewel argued that was not possible. Assurance, he claimed, came by faith in Christ’s work of redemption which was the message of the gospel. In this he followed Calvin with whom he was ready to be identified despite the strictures of Harding.⁴⁴ Because he saw preaching in the context of bringing hearers to penitence and faith, for Jewel preaching always had a pastoral significance. He declares that Christ calls sinners to repentance and “he healeth those that are sick.”⁴⁵ St James tells believers to acknowledge their sins to one another “that ye may be healed” by godly advice and earnest prayer, by private exhortation and catechising in the faith. Such practice is “not only allowed but needful and requisite.”⁴⁶ As Carlson has argued there was no dichotomy for

³⁸ Ibid., 2.1132.

³⁹ Ibid., 3.351.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 2.1133; James 5.16.

⁴¹ Ibid., 3.361.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 1.120.

⁴⁴ *The Works of John Jewel*, 3.370; Calvin claimed that the “command concerning remitting and retaining sins, and the promise made to Peter concerning binding and loosing, ought to be referred to nothing but the ministry of the word” which he claimed was “the very gospel”. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (London 1957), 2.444.

⁴⁵ *The Works of John Jewel*, 2. 1132.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 2. 1133.

Jewel or in the minds of the leaders of the Elizabethan church between preaching and pastoral ministry.

The debate between Jewel and Harding makes it clear that Jewel saw preaching as the necessary replacement for the sacrament of penance. Preaching fulfilled Christ's commission to the church. It was the means of true consolation and discipline for the faithful. Because preaching was the proclamation of the word of God it provided intellectual and spiritual justification for the Church of England. It was central to Jewel's own ministry. One portrait of him is inscribed with the words "Ve mihi si non evangelizavero." (Woe to me if I preach not the gospel).⁴⁷ For Jewel it was in preaching that the church exercised the keys of the kingdom. By it people were called to repentance and faith, assured of forgiveness, and given direction for living.

Jewel's writings became the apologia for the Church of England until the publication of Richard Hooker's *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, and even after that Archbishop Bancroft required each parish church to possess a copy, along with a copy of Erasmus's *Paraphrases*.⁴⁸ Nevertheless with regard to penitential issues he is open to practical criticism. He substituted preaching for the sacrament at the very time when there was such a shortage of ordained ministers that Parker, and even Grindal, felt they had to ordain large numbers of non-preaching clergy.⁴⁹ He encouraged self-examination and repentance but the church held to a Calvinist doctrine of predestination, and some considered anxiously whether they were among the elect. He claimed authority for ecclesiastical discipline by the Word of God but in its hierarchy and church courts the Elizabethan Church was unreformed and virtually no different from what it had been at the beginning of the century. He stressed assurance through Scripture and preaching but how that was received was a matter for the individual conscience. Although Jewel had successfully made the case for preaching to meet the needs left by the rejection of the sacrament of penance, these problems conspired to reduce its effectiveness as a pastoral tool in the early years of Elizabeth as Duffy has argued.⁵⁰ So how did Elizabethan Protestants go about their preaching and how successful were they in overcoming these difficulties?

⁴⁷ John Craig, "John Jewel", *ODNB*, 30.110.

⁴⁸ *Archbishop Grindal's Visitation, 1575, Comperta et Detecta Book*, ed. W J Sheils (Borthwick Texts 1977), p. 10: As early as 1575 the parish of Kirkby Overblow was presented as being in want not only of the Homilies and Erasmus's Paraphrases but also "the Apologye with the Confutatyon of Hardinge's Obiectyons made by Doctor Juell."

⁴⁹ *Correspondence of Matthew Parker*, eds. John Bruce and Thomas T Perowne (PS. Cambridge, 1838), p.120.

⁵⁰ See n.4.

PREACHING REPENTANCE

Repentance was the theme of many sermons, but there was a wide variety of approaches taken to the subject by Elizabethan preachers. Reformers saw preaching as “a great cosmic drama.”⁵¹ It was not merely a means of giving information about the teaching of Jesus. It was seen as a revelation of God by which the Holy Spirit implants faith in those who receive God’s word, enabling them to find repentance and a new life.⁵² St Paul had said that “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing cometh by the word of God.”⁵³ From this Arthur Dent deduced: “Faith cometh by hearing the Word of God preached...no preaching, no faith; no faith, no Christ; no Christ, no eternal life. If we will have heaven, we must have Christ. If we will have Christ, we must have faith. If we will have faith, we must have the word preached. Then, I conclude that preaching is of absolute necessity unto eternal life.”⁵⁴ Since repentance and faith come through preaching, in the minds of many reformed preachers it was preaching that replaced the sacrament of penance as the means of receiving God’s forgiveness.

Archbishop Parker enthusiastically supported the publication of Jewel’s *Apologie*. It was published “with the permission of the Queen and the consent of the bishops in 1562” and constituted the semi-official stance of the Elizabethan church. Neither Puritans nor conformists, before Hooker, questioned Jewel’s position on preaching and the sacrament of penance.

Since they saw preaching as the means of bringing people to repentance and faith, Puritans desired for themselves the role of preachers before anything else. Thomas Sampson wrote to Peter Martyr on his return from exile: “Let others be made bishops; as for myself, I will either undertake the office of a preacher only, or none at all.”⁵⁵ He may have realised that this would not be without its problems when he preached at Paul’s Cross on 2nd April 1559. All preaching licences had been withdrawn and preaching inhibited during the first six months of the new queen’s reign. There had even been no preaching at Paul’s Cross since Christmas 1558. “The pulpit had been locked during the inhibition of preaching, and when opened it

⁵¹ Richard Greenham’s words, quoted by Carlson, “Good Pastors”, p. 423.

⁵² Mary Morrissey, “Scripture, style and persuasion in 17th century English theories of preaching”, *JEH*, 53.4 (2002), p. 686.

⁵³ Romans 10; *Tyndale’s New Testament* (Yale 1989), p. 235.

⁵⁴ Arthur Dent, *The Plaine Man’s Pathway to Heaven* (1625), pp. 336-337.

⁵⁵ *The Zurich Letters*, 1 .63.

was found in a filthy condition.”⁵⁶ Sampson was the first to preach there after its reopening. Most parish clergy were unable to preach, and many in the first batch to be ordained in the new regime were “sundry artificers and others, not traded and brought up in learning” and “are thought to do great deal more hurt than good, the Gospel there sustaining slander.”⁵⁷ The second Book of Homilies was published, which church leaders saw as a temporary necessity.⁵⁸ However preaching became an issue when some “godly preachers” refused to wear certain vestments, and were suspended. The situation was described by a Mr Browne: “the Bishops prefere wearing the ceremonies before Preaching, and you prefere the not wearing of ceremonies before Preaching.”⁵⁹ The “godly” became increasingly critical of “dumb dogs” (non-preaching ministers) and argued that there should be a preacher in every parish, and that there should be no administration of the Lord’s Supper that was not preceded by preaching.⁶⁰ The debate intensified when Thomas Cartwright replied to John Whitgift’s *Answer to an Admonition*.⁶¹ Whitgift accused the “godly” in London of “loose, frivolous and unprofitable preaching,” “a cloke for their contentions,”⁶² while Cartwright condemned the bishops who allowed non-preaching and claimed that the fruit of “godly” preaching in London is “the knowledge and fear of God ... and faithful and true hearts towards the prince and the realm.”⁶³ Whitgift accepted that “none that favoureth God’s word (as I think) denieth that hearing the word of God is the most ordinary means whereby God useth to work faith in us, and that therefore preachers be necessary,” he went on, however, to argue that reading the scriptures can achieve the same object, and asked “is not reading preaching?”⁶⁴

Preaching was not the main issue between Puritans and conformists. The main issue was the authority of scripture.⁶⁵ Puritans were those, in Whitgift’s words, who believed that “ nothing is to be tolerated in the church of Christ, touching either doctrine, order, ceremonies, discipline, or government, except it be expressed in the word of God.”⁶⁶ Cartwright believed that there was a God given church order in the New Testament. Those who agreed with him

⁵⁶ Miller McLure, *The Paul’s Cross Sermons 1534-1642* (Toronto 1958), p. 200.

⁵⁷ *Correspondence of Archbishop Parker*, p.120.

⁵⁸ Arnold Hunt, “*The Art of Hearing: English Preachers and their Audiences 1590-1640* (Cambridge 2010), p. 17 claims that preaching was seen as being special because it was unrepeatable.

⁵⁹ *The Seconde Parte of a Register*, ed. Albert Peel (Cambridge 1915), 1.62.

⁶⁰ *The Works of John Whitgift*, ed. John Ayre (PS. Cambridge 1852). 3.17.

⁶¹ Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?* (London 1988), p. 26: makes the point that Cartwright and Whitgift “indulged in ... an unseemly struggle for the posthumous good opinion of Jewel”.

⁶² *The Works of John Whitgift*, 3. 2, 5.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 3.4.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.29.

⁶⁵ J S Coolidge, *The Pauline Renaissance in England. Puritanism and the Bible* (Oxford 1970), p. 1.

⁶⁶ *The Works of John Whitgift*, 1.176.

agitated for reform to bring in a presbyterian style of church government as in Geneva. Conformists, such as Whitgift, Bridges and Cooper, struggled with the question of how could a religion of the word centred on preachers, be accommodated in a church with many inadequate (non-preaching) ministers.⁶⁷ But even inadequate ministers meant the continuance of public worship and homilies. In the main both sides held a Calvinist theology and saw preaching as important in bringing people to repentance. Both claimed to be following Jewel. For Puritans, however, preaching was more than important, it was the means of building (edification) the church in a way that would glorify Christ.

These differences between conformists and Puritans raise the question what sort of preaching leads to repentance and faith and can be said to be a replacement for the sacrament. Most sermons were attempts to expound a book or passage from scripture. Edward Dering, whom Collinson calls “the great preacher of his day, the Elizabethan Spurgeon,”⁶⁸ emphasised that preaching was the key to repentance and faith. This is evident in his exposition of almost every Biblical phrase. Commenting on Matthew 3.2, he relates it to “children of the kingdom, that ys, who have repentyd of the preaching of the Gospell, which is the kingdome of heaven.”⁶⁹ Since preachers mostly held a Calvinist theology, the doctrine of predestination and the sovereignty of God would have been implicit in many sermons,⁷⁰ and to that extent Haigh is right, but the principal hermeneutic was repentance, and that necessarily has a pastoral dimension, as Carlson points out.

Whitgift was correct in claiming that some preaching was contentious. Some was critical of the bishops, but there was also a great deal of polemic against Rome, and this was more so with the excommunication of the Queen and the arrival of priests from Douai.⁷¹ Yet even some of these polemical sermons picked up the theme of repentance. Despite differing views on how people could be assured that their sins were forgiven, all Protestants agreed that they had an assurance that Catholics did not have. Anthony Anderson, the vicar of Melbourne in Leicestershire, in his extended exposition of Simeon’s Song (Nunc Dimittis) contrasts the Protestant’s assurance of forgiveness with the terrifying doubts of the Catholic, but his sermon is ultimately a call to repentance.

⁶⁷ Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?* p. 120.

⁶⁸ Patrick Collinson, *Godly People. Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism* (London 1983), p. 306.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 299.

⁷⁰ Arnold Hunt, *The Art of Hearing*, p. 17: shows that preaching about predestination was specially “packaged for public consumption.”

⁷¹ Morrissey, *Politics and the Paul’s Cross Sermons*, pp. 160-190.

They tell him that his friends shall praye for him, and the church shal be plyed with Trentals, to delyver him from Purgatory, which doctrine is most troublesome, and so the Papist, for all that the Pope can doe, dyeth thereby most doubtfull of rest, if not most fearfull of eternall payne ... can this worke peace in the hart?...O poore harte, be wise in God, imbrace his word, beleeeve on his Christ, walk in his statutes, by the grace of his spirite, so shalt thou be assured that the Popish Purgatory is Hell, from whence no man can be delivered. So shall all terror of death be drawne from thee ... no condemnation can come to thee, which by faith art ingrafted into Christ.⁷²

Both Archbishop Grindal and John Foxe showed that there is more to preaching than reading. In his letter to the Queen refusing to prohibit prophesying, Grindal emphasised his belief that “the preaching of God’s word is the ordinary manner and instrument of salvation of mankind” and that it is more personal and direct than reading homilies.⁷³ John Foxe, preaching on Good Friday 1570, “to them that bee heavy laden in conscience”, claimed that in order to see beyond the wood and the nails of the cross to its spiritual meaning “we need of Gods holy Spirite, and revelation, to open further unto us wherefore he died, wherefore he rose againe, and for who, that is, for our sinnes and our justification.”⁷⁴ Puritans claimed that it was such preaching that brought people to repentance and assured them that their sins were forgiven, and was therefore a more effective absolution than the sacrament of penance had been.

Arthur Dent’s *Sermon on Repentance*, which was preached in Leigh in 1582, was reprinted fifteen times by 1601, and is so forceful that even Christopher Haigh comments on its “energetic style.”⁷⁵ His text is Luke 13.5 “except you repent you shall likewise perish”, and from it he presents a very high view of repentance. Considering Paul’s conversion on the Damascus road and the change it brought about in his life, Dent concludes that “repentance is stronger than the whole world.”⁷⁶ He describes repentance as an ongoing, life transforming experience. It is an “inward sorrowing, and continuall mourning of the heart and conscience for sinne joined with faith and both inward and outward judgement. Inward in changing the thoughtes and affections of the heart and outward in changing the words.” It requires detailed self-examination. He sees a great danger of being deceived even about repentance. “Many think they have caught it when they have but a shadow of it.” True repentance always brings

⁷² Anthony Anderson, *The shield of our Safetie* (London 1581), Sig. liv-v.

⁷³ *Religion and Society in Early Modern England: a Sourcebook*, eds. David Cressy and Lori Anne Ferrell (London 1996), p. 95.

⁷⁴ John Foxe, *A Sermon of Christ crucified, preached at Paules Crosse, the Fridae before Easter* (London 1575), p. 6.

⁷⁵ Haigh, “The Taming of the Reformation”, p. 578.

⁷⁶ Arthur Dent, *A Sermon on Repentance* (London 1582), no pagination (Early English Books Online)

remission of sins, not because of what it deserves, but because it is God who works true repentance and pardon because of his promises. There are no benefits from Christ's death for the unrepentant. As a work of God, it brings life transforming change, or amendment of life. "Repentance violently pulls man out of the claws of Satan. It makes the proud, humble; the cruel, meek; of wolves, lambs; of lions, sheep; of adulterers, chaste lives; of drunkards, sober men; of devils, saintes. It effecteth that which all the wisdom and policie of man is not able to bring to passe." And the means for this is "repentaunce working this change and alteration in them, through the power of the Spirite, at the preaching of the word." Those who have experienced this change will be zealous for God's glory at all times and will never dissemble. They will "take revenge" on past sins: "if he has committed whoredom by bridling his lusts, if covetous by restitution" – for the latter he gives the example of Zacchaeus. Dent is aware that his teaching is hard and that some say "Here is nothing but damnation, damnation ... you preach nothing but the Lawe, let us have the Gospell." To which he responds "Would you have physic before you are sick? ... We preach damnation to bring you salvation." For Dent the pursuit of sanctification and the rooting out of sin give evidence of election and the assurance of forgiveness.⁷⁷ The danger in this is of pressing the merits of repentance rather than proclaiming the merits of Christ. The question at issue was whether repentance per se offers assurance. RT Kendall considers that some English Calvinists were influenced by Calvin's successor at Geneva, Theodore Beza. He argues that on this issue, while Calvin put faith before repentance, Beza put repentance before faith.⁷⁸ It is difficult to know who was influenced by Beza, and to what extent. In his *A Briefe and Piththie Summe of the Christian Faith*, Beza warns that "repentaunce can be fayned and counterfeit" and that the penitent must hate sin, love God and have assurance of salvation in Christ to be sure that his faith is true and that he is among the elect.⁷⁹ Dent, Greenham, Perkins and others among the "godly", have a similar emphasis, in that they see preaching as the key to repentance and salvation, and thus the means of true consolation in place of the sacrament.

Although all agreed on the importance of preaching, there was a considerable variety in how different thinkers and branches of the Elizabethan church thought that it should be used to

⁷⁷ Kenneth L Parker and Eric J Carlson, "*Practical Divinity*": the Works and Life of Richard Greenham (Aldershot 1998), p. 115.

⁷⁸ RT Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism* (Oxford 1979), pp. 29, 212; Paul Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists* (Edinburgh 1982), p. 81 disputes Kendall's position, arguing that: "Both Calvin and the Puritans held that when a person is converted through the preaching of Christ the will is renewed by divine grace and faith and repentance result."

⁷⁹ Theodore Beza, *A Briefe and Piththie s Summe of the Christian Faith made in forme of a confession, with confutation of all such superstitious errors, as are contrary thereunto* (London 1565), chap.20.

bring about repentance. There is for instance, a different focus in the preaching of conformist Thomas Cooper (Bishop of Lincoln 1570-84). He affirmed that “the gospel of our salvation in Christ ... was appoynted by his goodnesse not to be published in vaine, but so to fall and moysten the field of God’s church, that it may be fertile, and in deed bring forth the fruit of remission of sinnes, adoption into ye children of God, iustice before God and the world, and assurance.”⁸⁰ However by 1595 anti-Calvinist William Barrett was denying that “assurance was either possible or desirable for the ordinary believer.”⁸¹ For Dent it is the transformation effected by repentance which assures the penitent of his election; while for Cooper it is God’s purpose for the gospel that is certain, and for both preaching was the means of bringing people to repentance and to faith.

Although there were different views on how preaching brought about repentance in Elizabethan England all agreed that preaching was the best way to achieve this, that is up to Hooker.⁸² Ultimately Richard Hooker concluded that it was the sacrament of Holy Communion and not preaching which replaced the benefits of the sacrament of confession. He parted company with most English Calvinists when he “as good as collapsed the work of the Spirit either into a sort of direct revelation which only the prophets experienced or the testimony of reason, pure and simple.”⁸³ Hence he denied the understanding of faith as “a full and fixed assuredness”, and argued that “justifying faith” is always “mingled with doubts.”⁸⁴ Like Whitgift and Bridges, Hooker believed the mere reading of Scripture was sufficient “to convert, edify and save souls.” Puritans who restricted the saving power of God’s word to “good preaching” were separating “from all apparent hope of life and salvation thousands whom the goodness of almighty God doth not exclude.”⁸⁵ He saw “God in Christ” as “the medicine that doth cure the world”, and “Christ in us” as the means by which that medicine was applied to a wounded (sinful) human nature, and this by the means of the sacrament of Holy Communion. In speaking of it as “medicine for souls”, he made it clear that he saw the eucharist as replacing the sacrament of penance, as that very phrase was used of penance by the Council of Trent. W David Neelands stresses that “Hooker’s ultimate purpose was to

⁸⁰ Thomas Cooper, *Certaine Sermons wherein is contained the defense of the Gospell* (London 1580), p. 69.

⁸¹ Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?* p. 201.

⁸² Initially Hooker’s work was “a damp squib”, only a few friends and enemies took notice of him. Diarmaid McCulloch, “Richard Hooker’s Reputation”, *A Companion to Richard Hooker*, ed. Torrance Kirby (Leiden 2008), p. 573. However it was highly influential in the creation of Anglicanism after the Restoration.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

⁸⁴ Deborah H Shuger, “Faith and Assurance”, *A Companion to Richard Hooker*, ed. Torrance Kirby (Leiden 2008), p. 233.

⁸⁵ *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. W Speed Hill (Harvard 1982), V.22.20.

defend the ceremonies required by the *Book of Common Prayer*”⁸⁶ but his views were strongly criticised in *A Christian Letter*.⁸⁷ The authors claimed that he held “that the sacraments themselves have a mystical force and virtue; that they are marks to know when God *imparts grace* rather than seals to strengthen faith already given.”⁸⁸ In fact Hooker confirmed this by rejecting Cartwright’s contention that the sacraments are not “necessary” and emphasising that the words of Jesus infallibly teach “what [the elements] doe most assuredlie bringe to passe.”⁸⁹ He claims “that what *merit, force or virtue soever there is in his sacrificed bodie and blood*, we freely fullie and wholly have it [by the sacrament of the eucharist].” Thus he sees in the Holy Communion “a forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God, like that of justification” and the replacement of the sacrament of penance.⁹⁰

Jewel was clear that preaching was fundamental for a church based on the word of God, and the principal replacement for the sacrament of penance. Pastoral ministry and church discipline derive from the word of God and relate to preaching. Jewel’s apologia was seen to have authority and was far more influential than Bridges’ massive tome, *A Defence of the Government established in the Church of England*.⁹¹ His position on preaching was almost universally accepted in Elizabethan England. The importance of preaching, however, almost became an obsession with the “godly”. It was by preaching that the Holy Spirit convinced of sin, stirred up repentance and implanted faith, assuring the penitent of forgiveness because of Christ’s work on the cross. It was as he rejected this position that Hooker found the consolation of the gospel in the eucharist. However, John Donne reflected the teaching of Jewel and summarised the position of the Elizabethan church with regard to preaching when he taught that “the Keyes of the Church ... lock and unlock in Preaching ... Absolution is conferred, or withheld in Preaching, [and] ... in preaching is that binding and loosing on earth, which bindes and looses in heaven.”⁹²

⁸⁶ W David Neelands, “Christology and the Sacraments”, *A Companion to Richard Hooker*, p. 373.

⁸⁷ *The Folger Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. W Speed Hill (London 1977), Vol. 4: *A Christian Letter* (1599) was an attack on *The Lawes* on the basis of the Thirty-Nine Articles, accusing Hooker of attempting to reintroduce elements of Roman Catholic belief. It was probably the work of Andrew Willett, a fellow of Christ’s College and a colleague of Perkins. W B Patterson, “Elizabethan Theological Polemics” *A Companion to Richard Hooker*, p. 116.

⁸⁸ W David Neelands, “Christology and the Sacraments”, *A Companion to Richard Hooker*, p. 374: italics as in quotation.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 376.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 387: italics as in quotation.

⁹¹ John Bridges, *A Defence of the Government established in the Church of England for ecclesiastical matters* (London 1587), RSTC. 3734.

⁹² John Donne, *The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. George R Potter and Evelyn Simpson (10 vols. Berkeley 1953-62), 7. 320.

The problem of the lack of preaching ministers was gradually overcome. In 1573 John Whitgift claimed that Cambridge had already “bred” more than 450 preachers since Elizabeth’s accession and there were then 102 preachers at the university.⁹³ Before the founding of Emmanuel and Sidney Sussex colleges in Cambridge “to render as many as possible fit for the administration of the Divine Word and Sacraments ... and undertake the office of pastors, which is a thing necessary above all others”⁹⁴, most ministerial training was in exercises within clergy groups or in mentoring by individuals like Richard Greenham at Dry Drayton. Training was needed since, with the discontinuation of auricular confession, preaching had become the principal replacement for the sacrament and “the minister now had an obligation to call parishioners to repentance and to offer consolation as a ‘spiritual physician’.”⁹⁵

PRACTICAL DIVINITY AND OTHER SUPPLEMENTS TO PREACHING

In the Elizabethan church preaching was supplemented with catechisms, pastoral counselling, liturgy and devotional publications. The central argument in *Penitence in the Age of Reformation* is that “amidst the profound changes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries penitence assumed an increasingly prominent and characteristic place in personal piety, catechesis, pastoral care and disciplinary institutions.”⁹⁶ The authors are interested to consider developing Protestant penitential practices across Europe rather than the mere rationale for abandoning the sacrament of penance. In just one chapter on England the focus is on Richard Greenham and “the comfort of the afflicted conscience in Elizabethan pastoral care.”⁹⁷ Greenham’s ministry is an expression of “practical divinity”, a style of ministry which involved “unprecedented pastoral effort.”⁹⁸ It made connections between theology and practical living and was especially concerned with piety and conscience.⁹⁹ Anxiety was part of the ethos of Elizabethan Protestantism, and practical divinity was the style of those pastors who saw themselves as called to minister to the “afflicted conscience”. Yiannikou considers that “this phenomenon partly grew out of the struggles of godly Protestants in the reign of

⁹³ *The Works of John Whitgift*, 1. 313.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 239: the aim of the foundation of Emmanuel College in the words of its founder, Sir Thomas Mildmay.

⁹⁵ Ennsle, “Patterns of Godly Life. The Ideal Parish Ministry”, p. 27.

⁹⁶ *Penitence in the Age of Reformation*, eds. KJ Lualdi and AT Thayer (Aldershot 2000), p. 2.

⁹⁷ Kenneth L Parker, “Richard Greenham’s ‘Spiritual Physicke’”, *Penitence in the Age of Reformation*, p. 71.

⁹⁸ Yiannikou, “Protestantism, Puritanism and Practical Divinity in England 1570-1620”, p. 203.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-5.

Mary,”¹⁰⁰ and that John Bradford was “a divine who loomed over Elizabethans both as a martyr and an author.”¹⁰¹ Nearly a third of *Letters of the Martyrs*, published by Henry Bull in 1564 were written by Bradford from prison (a total of 73), mainly to minister to those who were troubled by the persecution, and, in several cases, anxious lest this should signify a failure of faith. In the absence of the sacrament of penance practical divinity, often making use of catechisms and devotional works, filled a significant gap in pastoral care.

Helen C White makes the important point that the reformers “faced the basic problem of all religious leaders: that of imparting inner meaning and actuality to profession in the private day to day life of the individual soul.”¹⁰² This was achieved by a range of means which included devotional material, as well as by preaching, catechisms, and pastoral counselling. William Copeland printed Bradford’s *Private Prayers and Meditations, with other exercises* in March 1559. It opens with a prayer “On the wrath of God against sin” which was “the constant and haunting worry of sixteenth century piety.”¹⁰³ Many of his prayers refer back to the primer tradition: for example, the opening sentence includes a key phrase from the “Conditor Coeli”,¹⁰⁴ “the most enduringly popular of all the prayers of the primer.”¹⁰⁵ There was also a strong didactic element in Bradford’s prayers and meditations, and especially when Rowland Hall published his *Godly meditations upon the Lord’s Prayer, the beleefe, and ten commandments, with other exercises* in 1562.¹⁰⁶ The pedagogical emphasis on the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed and the Ten Commandments was typical of the primer. These had been used by priests as part of auricular confession. In fact most of this material had a penitential tone. The popularity and influence of many such devotional books suggests a need for security in past primer traditions, in the absence of the sacrament of penance.¹⁰⁷ There was a strong feel of the primer in Henry Bull’s *Christian Praiers and Holi Meditations as well for Private as Publique exercise* (1566). It included prayers for the day from morning to evening, prayers of confession and thanksgiving, and meditations. There was no pretence at originality as the prayers were “very much on the classic primer order.”¹⁰⁸ This was even more evident in John Day’s *Christian Prayers* (1569) which had, in addition, the physical

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁰² Helen C White, *Tudor Books of Private Devotion* (Wisconsin 1951), p. 173.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 163.

¹⁰⁴ ECL. Ms.261 Fo.17: “which hast made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is.”

¹⁰⁵ White, *Tudor Books of Private Devotion*, p. 178.

¹⁰⁶ RSTC. 3484.

¹⁰⁷ White, *Tudor Books of Private Devotion*, pp. 227-8: claims that the expansion of primer material proved “familiar to all in the accepted teachings of the sacrament of penance”.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 183.

appearance of the primer, and included a special new penitential section consisting of the seven penitential psalms, a litany, suffrages, a small selection of Bible prayers and prayers through the day from waking to sleep.¹⁰⁹ “All in all, while this is unmistakably a Protestant book, it is still strikingly reminiscent of the Primer.”¹¹⁰ Such devotional works provided personal penitential material which helped compensate for the omission of auricular confession and to maintain a sense of continuity for those who had been accustomed to use primers.

Such material provided aids to penance for the literate but the advantage that the sacrament of penance had was that it provided an opportunity for pastoral and didactic ministry face to face. Catechizing provided the didactic element for Protestants and certain Puritan pastors provided a model for pastoral counselling. Although the “confessional practice and the catechetical and preaching programme of the English church in the fifteenth century were closely linked”,¹¹¹ Lancelot Andrewes believed that it was catechizing in the second half of the sixteenth century which established Protestantism in the English nation.¹¹² Peter Jensen has argued that catechising in the Elizabethan church was an aid to listening to and understanding sermons,¹¹³ though the fact that catechisms were used in church independently of sermons, and used in households, suggests that they provided a useful supplement to sermons. Cranmer’s catechisms of the 1540s had been influenced by the continental models of Osiander and Capito. At the request of convocation, Alexander Nowell drew up an extensive catechism in the 1560s for the use of more advanced catechumens, mainly students in schools and at the universities. He adopted a Lutheran framework but also drew from Calvin’s catechism. Nowell’s catechism was published in 1570 and there were 56 editions by 1645. This was the beginning of a great surge of English catechisms. A further 165 catechisms were published between 1560 and the end of the century. Samuel Clarke relates how catechizing became part of the regular teaching ministry of some of the “godly” clergy,¹¹⁴ but visitation articles show that this was not limited to one section of the Elizabethan church.¹¹⁵ Bishop Cox’s Injunctions and Articles for the Ely diocese in 1571

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 189.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 191.

¹¹¹ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (Yale 1992), p. 61.

¹¹² Paul C H Lim, “Puritanism and the Church of England”, *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, eds. John Coffey and Paul C H Lim (Cambridge 2008), p. 230.

¹¹³ Peter Jensen, “A Life of Faith in the teaching of Elizabethan Protestants” (unpublished Oxford Ph D 1979), p. 182.

¹¹⁴ Samuel Clarke, *A General Martyrology* (London 1677).

¹¹⁵ *Visitation articles and Injunctions of the Period of the Reformation*, eds. W H Frere and W C Kennedy (London 1910) 3.258: Articles of Archbishop Grindal’s visitation to the Province of York 1571.

required men and women to be able to say by heart the Ten Commandments, the Articles of Faith (the creed), and the Lord's Prayer before being admitted to the Lord's Table. Those between 12 and 20 years old must say the catechism by heart. And the incumbent was instructed: "you shall use to examine your parishioners at convenient times, to the intent you may know whether they can say the same."¹¹⁶

Edward Dering, writing in his introduction to John More's catechism of 1573, saw the publication of such teaching aids as being for household use and as an addition to the work of the minister who in his preaching was "but the mouth of God, in whose person Christ Himself is either refused or received."¹¹⁷ Ian Green, after much detailed research, has shown that Protestant catechisms provided an improved educational technique over against the methods used in the instruction given in the process of auricular confession.¹¹⁸ The content of the instruction was generally the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments and the sacraments. The catechumen had to recite these verbatim, but also answer questions to show an understanding of their meaning. Instruction at confession in the fifteenth century had been largely based upon the Seven Deadly Sins, Ave Maria, and the Lord's Prayer. However, John Bossy has shown that the Decalogue was increasingly incorporated into Catholic piety in the sixteenth century, ultimately being adopted by the Council of Trent.¹¹⁹ "For Catholics as for Protestants, the age of catechism was an age of the Commandments."¹²⁰ Bossy argues that as a moral code the commandments were stronger on obligation to God, and this was God's Law, but weaker on obligation to neighbour.¹²¹ The main aim of the authors of English catechisms was to convey the basics of their faith to the less educated members of the church rather than the social control and political indoctrination which Gerald Strauss thought was the case in Germany.¹²²

Leading Puritans realised that the abolition of mandatory auricular confession was a loss and saw a need which preaching alone could not meet, especially with the poor state of the

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 3.297.

¹¹⁷ Collinson, *Godly People*, p. 299.

¹¹⁸ Ian Green, *The Christian's ABC: Catechisms and Catechising in England c. 1530-1740* (Oxford 1996), p. 558.

¹¹⁹ John Bossy, "Moral Arithmetic: Seven Deadly Sins to Ten Commandments", *Conscience and Casuistry in modern Europe*, ed. Edmund Leites (Cambridge 1988), pp. 214-234.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 229: Catholics and Lutherans accepted the order of the commandments given by Augustine. Calvinists divided the first, so that the prohibition of graven images was a command on its own, and combined the last two concerning coveting wives and goods. This had good authority in both Hebrew and Greek traditions. The English church accepted the Calvinist enumeration.

¹²¹ Edmund Leites, "Introduction", *Conscience and Casuistry*, p. 8.

¹²² Green, *The Christian's ABC*, p. 564.

ministry in the early years of the Elizabethan church. Thomas Cartwright was in exile in Denmark when he wrote his classic statement “wherein is plainly opened the true way of confessing our sinnes.”¹²³ He was concerned that many ministers appointed by the bishops were “unlearned idyotes, which neither can nor will fede (them) with the Spirituall foode of Gods Woorde.” As a result there was ignorance of the gospel and many had no assurance that their sins are forgiven. “These have muche neede of a discrete spirituall Phisition to comfort them.” They should find a man, learned in the scriptures, who would beat “into this patient’s mind the promises of God and always be ready to help and pray for those who request it.”¹²⁴ In this way he saw the need for pastoral counselling because of the poverty of preaching. Richard Greenham saw it as a supplement to preaching for those with “afflicted consciences” or other particular needs. This sort of “practical divinity” was practised famously by Greenham, Foxe, Edward Dering, and William Perkins. Sometimes it was by correspondence but more usually face to face. In this way it was similar to auricular confession.

Just as the priest listened in the confession, asked questions to elicit contrition, and eventually spoke the reassuring words of absolution, Greenham also listened and tried to find the root of the problem for those who felt themselves “afflicted”, whether by fear, guilt, doubt, or practical issues of relationships or even health. He felt keenly that with the abolition of sacramental confession “our losses have been greater than our winnings.”¹²⁵ Leif Dixon insists that Greenham showed that “English Calvinism could be pastorally adaptive and successful, not by softening its core ideas, but by strongly emphasising man’s inability to earn his own salvation” and that “the concept of an all-powerful, all-determining deity was central to his pastoral method.”¹²⁶ He taught his students that “no sin is so great, but in Christ it is pardonable.”¹²⁷ His aim in ministering to those with a troubled conscience was ultimately to help them towards a deeper commitment to God.¹²⁸ He taught that “affliction” is a sign of God’s favour.¹²⁹ “His method of counselling never allowed a penitent to depart without assurance that particular sins proved no obstacle to God’s love and grace.”¹³⁰ Greenham,

¹²³ *Cartwrightiana*, eds. A. Peel and L. H. Carlson (London 1951), p. 88.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

¹²⁵ RLM, Ms. 524, fo. 40r.

¹²⁶ Leif Dixon, “Richard Greenham and the Calvinist Construction of God”, *JEH*, vol. 61 no. 4 (October 2010), p. 729.

¹²⁷ RLM, Ms. 524, fo. 14r.

¹²⁸ RLM, Ms. 524, fo. 8r.

¹²⁹ Richard Greenham, “Of Regeneration and Perseverance”, *The Workes of Richard Greenham* (London 1605), p. 455.

¹³⁰ Parker and Carlson, “*Practical Divinity*”, p. 90.

however, like Latimer and Dering,¹³¹ saw ordained clergy having a special role through the ministry of the word, as mediator between God and the laity. In this “startlingly Roman” view the ordained minister is the one who brings assurance of forgiveness like the priest at confession.¹³² Prior to the Reformation the aristocracy had sought out favourite confessors, and now Greenham became famed as a spiritual physician and many came to Dry Drayton to seek his help.¹³³ He kept a record of his confidential discussions, and ministerial students, who came to learn his methods, noted his wise sayings. One of his students, Richard Rogers, kept a spiritual diary. Christopher Marsh identifies such activities as “a continuation of the instincts encouraged by pre-Reformation confession.”¹³⁴

“Godly” ministers felt their responsibility before God for the souls of their flocks and wished more would be open about their sins so that they could minister God’s word to them in practical and relevant ways. Greenham claimed that “in times past men were too far gone with auricular confession, now men come short in Christian conferring.”¹³⁵ William Perkins thought that the lack of auricular confession “is a great fault in our churches, the cause why a minister cannot discern the estate even of his own flock.”¹³⁶ What resulted was more than pastoral counselling. Greenham felt called to “study cases of conscience, that thereby I may be able to succour the tempted and perplexed in spirit.”¹³⁷ William Perkins’ *Whole treatise of Cases of Conscience* was a directory in which he integrated the devotional and the moral.¹³⁸ Such works have an affinity to the confessors’ manuals that were widely used early in the century, and suggest that for many Puritans pastoral counselling in effect replaced auricular confession. Keith Thomas notes that many Puritan ladies tended to lean on certain ministers for regular advice and guidance “just as devout Catholics had looked to their confessor.” A similar point might be made about “sermon gadding” or going to hear favoured preachers. Thomas concludes that pastoral counselling “was too informal and uncoordinated to be capable of filling the gap left by the confessional.”¹³⁹ However pastoral counselling should not be considered on its own. Greenham and others who were famed for this ministry saw it

¹³¹ RLM, Ms. 524 fo.40r.

¹³² Parker and Carlson, “*Practical Divinity*”, p. 59.

¹³³ Samuel Clarke, *The Life of Master Richard Greenham* (London 1654), pp. 13-14.

¹³⁴ Christopher Marsh, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth Century England* (Basingstoke 1998), p. 82.

¹³⁵ RLM., Ms.524 fo.40r.

¹³⁶ Collinson, “A response to Eamon Duffy’s Lecture”, p. 83.

¹³⁷ Clarke, *A General Martyrologie*, p. 12.

¹³⁸ James F Keenan, “Was William Perkins’ “Whole Treatises of Cases of Conscience” casuistry?”, *Contexts of Conscience in early modern Europe*, p. 31.

¹³⁹ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London 1971), pp. 158-9.

as additional to preaching and catechizing in enabling penitents to be sure their sins were forgiven.

The most notable practitioner of ‘practical divinity’ was William Perkins. He saw auricular confession as the missing link in the structure of the English church. “For however we condemn auricular confession ... yet we not only allow but call and cry for that confession, whereby a Christian voluntarily at all times may refer to his Pastor and open his estate ... and crave his godly assistance.”¹⁴⁰ Perkins stressed the importance of getting and keeping a pure conscience. He states that

In the troubles of conscience, it is meete and convenient, there should always be used a *private Confession*. For James saith, *Confesse your faults one to another, and pray one for another*, thereby signifying, that confession in this case, is to be used as a thing most requisite. For in all reason, the Physitian must first know the disease, before he can applie the remedie: and the grieve of the heart will not be discerned, unless it be manifested by the confession of the partie diseased; and for this cause also in the grieve of conscience, the *scruple*, that is, the thing that troubleth the conscience must be known.¹⁴¹

J I Packer has called Perkins “an expert in spiritual psychology.”¹⁴² Perkins’ *The Whole Treatise of Cases of Conscience* was a directory of “eminently practical devotional guides for living an ordinary life.”¹⁴³ His “cases” provided a “moral ordinance map”, written as works of popular devotion and capable of being used by the godly layman.¹⁴⁴ He saw the Christian life as “participation in God’s government of creation and society.”¹⁴⁵ As a result he saw faith as having clear social obligations.

The examples given of practical divinity being a response in the Elizabethan church to the lack of auricular confession have all been of ministers who had a Calvinist theology. It could be argued that this was also true of anti-Calvinists. Richard Hooker justified his theologising by his concern for those who were anxious whether their faith was real or temporary. They were desolate and in despair as to whether they were elect or reprobate. “We ar hanged up lyke bottles in the smoke, cast into corners lyke sherds of broken pot, tell us not use the

¹⁴⁰ Tom Webster, “Early Stuart Puritanism”, *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, p. 231; *Five Pastorals*, ed. Thomas Wood (London 1961), p. 49.

¹⁴¹ *William Perkins 1558-1602*, ed. Thomas F Merrill (Nieuwkoop 1966), p. 89.

¹⁴² JI Packer, *An Anglican to remember. William Perkins: Puritan Populariser* (London 1996), p. 5.

¹⁴³ Keenan, “Was William Perkins’ ‘Whole Cases of Conscience’ casuistry?” *Contexts of Conscience in Early Modern Europe*, p. 27.

¹⁴⁴ *The Works of William Perkins 1558-1602*, ed. Ian Breward (Abingdon 1970), pp. 66-67.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

promises of goddess favour ... they belong not to us, they are made to others.”¹⁴⁶ His sermon on *The Certaintie and Perpetuitie of Faith in the Elect* attempts “to resolve the contradiction entailed by holding that justifying faith cannot yet be always mingled with doubts.”¹⁴⁷ Like Greenham, he wishes to assure those who are doubtful that the very fact that they are concerned as to whether they have a true faith shows they have. Their grief presupposes “a desire to beleev” and therefore “a secret love of those things that are believed.”¹⁴⁸ Similarly John Overall’s parishioners at Epping “could not be persuaded that Christ died for them.” Overall tried to reassure them. He argued that Christ died for all “sufficiently”, and for believers “effectively.” He used the analogy that “as water that is sufficient to quench all thirst, but doth it only to them that drink it” so Christ died for them and they should believe in him.¹⁴⁹ In seeking to comfort those whose spiritual affliction was doubt or unbelief Overall too, was bringing the consolation the priest would have offered in sacramental penance.

Penitence was increasingly significant in personal piety, catechesis and pastoral care in the Elizabethan church, as it was in the churches of the Reformation in continental Europe. One fact which made the English context different was the persecution of the Marian years, during which many had conformed despite their Protestant convictions. This resulted in the “afflicted conscience”. John Bradford and others had ministered to these fearful believers from their prisons. Their letters, prayers, sermons and other devotional materials were published during the early years of Elizabeth and were a major influence on the developing style of ministry known as “practical divinity.” Practitioners such as Greenham and Perkins wrote of their indebtedness to Bradford, and their awareness that they were compensating for the loss of auricular confession.

Like Christopher Haigh, Patrick Collinson in effect divides pastoral ministry from preaching. While he thinks pastoral ministry was the key to “the howling success” of the Reformation in England, he considers preaching an inadequate foundation for a national church.¹⁵⁰

Greenham, Perkins and other Puritan pastors would have seen both as the ministry of the word and important in personal edification and the building of the church.¹⁵¹ For conformists, such as Whitgift, the key to edification was church order and discipline. But while the church

¹⁴⁶ *Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, 5. 80. 15.

¹⁴⁷ Debora Shuger, “Faith and Assurance”, *A Companion to Richard Hooker*, p. 233.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

¹⁴⁹ H Porter, *Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge* (Cambridge 1958), p. 408.

¹⁵⁰ See notes 4, 5 and 9.

¹⁵¹ Coolidge, *The Pauline Renaissance*, pp. 23-54.

courts remained unreformed they continued to be identified with the Roman system of jurisdiction and the sacrament of penance.

DISCIPLINE

Thomas Lever wrote to Henry Bullinger on 10th July 1560, to report on the state of the Elizabethan church. Much of his report was positive, but he made the point that “no discipline is as yet established by any public authority.”¹⁵² What did he mean? The acts of Supremacy and Uniformity had already come unto the statute books. These, plus the 1559 Injunctions outlined how the church was to operate, and made it clear that uniformity was to be enforced by the bishops and the courts.¹⁵³ Visitors had been sent around the country to ensure that the necessary changes were taking place.¹⁵⁴ How could Lever say that there was “no discipline”? Was he looking for the sort of discipline exercised in Geneva that had impressed so many of the exiles? It seems unlikely since he was writing to Zurich where the church and magistrates exercised control in a way quite different from Geneva. It is more likely that he was looking for the sort of canon law reform that Cranmer had wanted to implement but which had been stalled in the 1530s and again in the early 1550s.¹⁵⁵ Lack of a system of pastoral discipline was, and remained a weakness for the Elizabethan church.

The sacrament of penance had been the keystone of local ecclesiastical jurisdiction prior to the Reformation.¹⁵⁶ Behind it stood the authority of the bishops with the papacy at its pinnacle. Pope and sacrament were now rejected, but the hierarchy and old church courts remained as they had been, unreformed. Earlier the parish priest had imposed a system of local discipline through the sacrament of penance. Now the Crown gave authority to the bishops and courts, so that the discipline of the sacrament was in effect replaced by the churchwardens making presentments at visitations which were dealt with by the courts. Many reformers, including some bishops, smelled popery in this system and wanted reform. A bill was introduced in the 1559 Parliament attempting to revive the committee Cranmer had worked with in 1551 to produce a code of ecclesiastical law. It failed. In 1563 Edwin Sandys,

¹⁵² *Zurich Letters*, 1. 84.

¹⁵³ *Documents of the English Reformation*, ed. Gerald Bray (Cambridge 1994), p. 333.

¹⁵⁴ *Zurich Letters*, 1.39: Jewel told Martyr how things were in the South-West.

¹⁵⁵ Inner Temple Petyt, Ms.538 fos.71-74: In 1572 Lever wrote his own notes for the reformation of ministry in the style of the proposed Cranmer reforms.

¹⁵⁶ *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* : in the 14th session (November 1551) canon 9 decreed “If anyone say that the sacrament of penance is not a judicial act but a bare declaration let him be accursed.”

Bishop of Worcester, proposed reform in convocation but no progress was made.¹⁵⁷ In the same convocation other reforms were muted in areas where it was felt that the taint of papism remained, but, as Collinson points out, “no blemish of the Elizabethan church was more prominent or more wounding to the puritan conscience than the general absence of discipline, in the reformed sense of the word.”¹⁵⁸

Historians have disagreed on how well the church courts were functioning. Their effectiveness across the 27 dioceses often depended on the local situation and the abilities of the personnel involved. In considering the state of the diocese of Peterborough (1560-1630), with Puritanism strong around the Northampton area, William Sheils claims that “the crucial problem was the decline in the authority of ecclesiastical law.” He attributes this to the religious changes of the sixteenth century so that “all bishops had to operate through a discredited system” but also shows that nepotic appointments made by the Bishop Howland proved inadequate.¹⁵⁹ Ralph Houlbrooke points to “the repudiation of papal supremacy, the attacks on clerical privileges and sacerdotal powers, the hardening reality of religious division, [which] all struck at the very roots of the moral authority of the church courts.”¹⁶⁰ He has also shown how geography and personnel in Norwich and Winchester dioceses helped to determine the effectiveness or otherwise of the courts there.¹⁶¹

On the other hand R H Helmholz shows that there was an improvement in record keeping by the courts during the reign of Elizabeth, which speaks of the self confidence of officials.¹⁶² There was an expansion of the courts’ work, partly due to increasing numbers of churchwardens’ presentments at visitations, which suggests that the wardens considered the system “legitimate and not ineffective.”¹⁶³ The total number of presentments made at

¹⁵⁷ Martin Ingram, “Puritans and the Church Courts 1560-1640”, *The Culture of English Puritanism* ed. Christopher Dawson (Basingstoke 1996), p. 66: claims that these were looking for stronger punishments and a more local system of discipline. *Synodolia*, ed. Edward Cardwell, (Oxford 1842), 2.513-514; Brian Outhwaite, *The Rise and Fall of the English Ecclesiastical Courts 1500-1860* (Cambridge 2007), p. 11; David J Crankshaw, “Preparations for the Canterbury provincial convocation 1562-3”, *Belief and Practice in Reformation England*, eds. Susan Wabuda and Caroline Litzenberger (Aldershot 1998), pp. 60ff. argues that the initiatives for the proposed reforms came from bishops in the Parker circle and not from the Lower house as W P Haughhaad had suggested.

¹⁵⁸ Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London 1967), p. 346.

¹⁵⁹ William Sheils, “Some problems of government in a new diocese: the bishops and the Puritans in the diocese of Peterborough 1560-1630”, *Continuity and Change*, eds. Rosemary O’Day and Felicity Heal (Leicester 1976), p. 186: The poor endowment of the new diocese was a major factor in inadequate administration.

¹⁶⁰ Ralph Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and People during the English Reformation* (Oxford 1979), p. 262.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 265-266.

¹⁶² R H Helmholz, *Roman Law in Reformation England* (London 1990), p. 6.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*; Brian Outhwaite, *The Rise and Fall*, p18; R A Marchment, *The Church under the Law* (Cambridge 1969), p. 204.

Grindal's visitation to the diocese of York in 1575 was 2,600,¹⁶⁴ and the visitation to the diocese in 1623 resulted in 4,874 presentments.¹⁶⁵ Martin Ingram argues that the courts were rooted in a system of local discipline as the churchwardens exercised a deal of discretionary authority to warn offenders before presenting them.¹⁶⁶ The courts, he claims, aimed at peace-making and that in the adjudication of instance (party and party) suits they aimed to settle by mediation, and "apparitors, proctors and judges can often be seen facilitating such informal settlements with the help of parish ministers, local notables, and friends and neighbours of the litigants."¹⁶⁷ This was the courts at their most useful. He goes on to argue that the work of the courts cannot be disentangled from the work of the church as a whole. By dismantling the apparatus of Catholic worship, by licensing and regulating clergy, by enforcing church attendance and punishing immorality, the courts, he claims, were assisting the church's pastoral mission.¹⁶⁸

Against these arguments it needs to be pointed out that churchwardens could be held responsible if they failed in their duty of responding to visitation articles and not making presentments. Though the number of presentments increased so did the number of those presented who refused to attend the courts. 68.4% attended at York in 1575 but only 43.75% in 1623.¹⁶⁹ The increasing number of presentments suggests, *pace* Ingram, that local discipline by churchwardens warning offenders was ineffective. The health of the courts and the health of the church are not the same thing,¹⁷⁰ and "the effect of church discipline (through the courts) was to remove appreciable numbers of the population from effective church membership by excommunication" and only a small number would be won back by absolution.¹⁷¹ Discipline was an essential part of the pastoral mission of the church, but the courts took it away from the pastors.

When "godly" clergy in London were either suspended or deprived for refusal to conform on matters of clerical dress, the question of discipline became a major issue. John Foxe's second edition of *Acts and Monuments* (1570) made the case for reform. He wrote pointedly that "princes which exhorte to concorde and charitie do well but princes which seke out the

¹⁶⁴ Sheils, *Archbishop Grindal's Visitation 1575*, pp. v, vi, vii.

¹⁶⁵ Marchant, *The Church under the Law*, p. 204.

¹⁶⁶ Ingram, "Puritans and the Church Courts", p. 67.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

¹⁶⁹ Sheils, *Archbishop Grindal's Visitation 1575*, pp. v, vi, vii; Marchant, *The Church under the Law*, p. 204.

¹⁷⁰ Helmholz, *Roman Law and Reformation England*, p. 44.

¹⁷¹ Marchant, *The Church under the Law*, p. 235.

causes of discord and reform the same, do much better.”¹⁷² He borrowed the manuscript of Cranmer’s 1551 plans for canon law reform, edited it and published it as *Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum* in the hope that Parliament would initiate reform. His hopes were frustrated.¹⁷³

The authors of *An Admonition to Parliament* were increasingly bitter about being “so farre of, from having a church rightly reformed, accordyng to the prescript of Gods worde.” They saw failings in “the outward markes wherby a true Christian church is knowne [which] are preaching of the worde purely, ministering of the sacraments sincerely, and ecclesiastical discipline which consisteth in admonition and correction of faults severalie.”¹⁷⁴ This ecclesiological position had its roots in the teaching of Martin Bucer, who claimed in 1538, that “there cannot be a Church without *ein Bann*”¹⁷⁵ (i.e. excommunication) and insisted on discipline being the third defining mark of the church (after Word and Sacraments). Bucer, during his time in England, gave a full exposition of his position in *De Regno Christi*. On the basis of the priesthood of all believers, he taught that “individual Christians should exercise care for their neighbours”¹⁷⁶ which meant the settling of disputes, and rebuking failings “in a gentle spirit”. If private persons neglected this, it should be taken up by elders and deacons. In this ministry of correction and admonition, the magisterium of Christ is seen and should be received “as becomes disciples of Christ”. This developed into full blown pastoral ministry in which elders are well acquainted with each person in their charge and “diligently observe how each progresses in the life of God, or how he is remiss.”¹⁷⁷ Where there are serious sins, he speaks of “the discipline of penance”. Faithful ministers should not tolerate within the fellowship of the church, nor admit to the sacraments, those “whom they cannot acknowledge by their fruits to be true disciples”. The Dedham classis and other local groups of Puritan clergy discussed how such a discipline might be implemented.¹⁷⁸ The aim of this, and all discipline, is, Bucer says, to bring such to true repentance and is the responsibility of “rectors and elders in the churches.”¹⁷⁹ Where it is requested, secret confession should be allowed,

¹⁷² Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, (1570), p. 1413.

¹⁷³ Thomas S Freeman, “The Reformation of the Church in this Parliament: Thomas Norton, John Foxe and the Parliament of 1571”, *Parliamentary History*, vol.16, part 2, pp. 137-47.

¹⁷⁴ *Puritan Manifestoes*, eds. W H Frere and C E Douglas (London 1907), p. 9.

¹⁷⁵ David Wright, *The Commonplaces of Martin Bucer* (Appleford 1972), p. 31.

¹⁷⁶ *Library of Christian Classics*, vol.XIX, *Melanchthon and Bucer*, ed. Wilhelm Pauck (London 1969), p. 240.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 242; *The Presbyterian Movement...Minute Book of the Dedham Classis*, ed. R G Usher (London 1905), pp. 69-72.

¹⁷⁹ *The Library of Christian Classics*, vol. XIX, p. 244.

and the opportunity taken “to catechise the more ignorant in faith and to help those who experience less contrition to a definite acknowledgement of their sins.”¹⁸⁰ Here “discipline” is clearly seen as a crucial component in filling the gap left by the rejection of auricular confession.

In his struggle to convince the people of Strasbourg of the necessity for the church to have independent pastoral competence in disciplinary matters, which David F Wright calls “a system of evangelical penance,”¹⁸¹ Bucer had stressed the importance of

the difference between the discipline and correction of rulers and the discipline and correction of carers of souls. Even when the civil authority exercises its office of warning against and punishing wrong with the greatest diligence, it is still necessary for the church to have its own discipline and correction ... It is not only that this ecclesiastical discipline is more exactly suited to the conscience, but also that it has as well as its own command, its own spiritual success and fruit, through the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ. These are the keys to the kingdom of heaven¹⁸²

Bucer not only outlines how discipline should be used, but condemns forcibly those who fail to use it, since “they cannot say in truth that they seek the kingdom of Christ”.¹⁸³ Carlson is right in pointing to the influence of Bucer on the concern for pastoral ministry in the Elizabethan church,¹⁸⁴ and Bucer’s understanding of what pastoral ministry involves also helps to explain why discipline was so important and why it was thought by some that the ecclesiastical courts did not meet the need left by the abolition of sacramental confession.

Prior to 1549 the local parish’s involvement in ecclesiastical jurisdiction was by means of the parish priest. He heard confessions, enjoined penance, tried to uphold Christian morality and keep the peace between parishioners. Although this system was abandoned the reformers saw the need to maintain a means of church discipline. Calvin, who was strongly influenced by Bucer during his exile in Strasbourg 1538-41, established a consistory in Geneva which was responsible for discipline and under the control of elders,¹⁸⁵ and “through the far-flung

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Martin Bucer, *Concerning the True Care of Souls* (Edinburgh 2009), p. xix: this is the first English translation of *Von der waren Seelsorge*, (Strasbourg 1538).

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 143.

¹⁸³ Ibid., pp. 245-246: “How great a crime it is that those to whose trust and care our salvation has been committed should be plainly and seriously deficient in any remedy which our Saviour handed on and commanded to be used.”

¹⁸⁴ Carlson, “Good Pastors,” p. 436.

¹⁸⁵ Basil Hall, *John Calvin* (London 1956), p. 27.

influence of the Genevan Reformation, Buceran patterns of evangelical practice and teaching were adopted in all the strongholds of reformed Protestantism.”¹⁸⁶

However, in Elizabethan England there was still a vast range of ecclesiastical courts from provincial to archdeacons’ courts, but subject to statute and as such they were an arm of the government.¹⁸⁷ In some cases secular and ecclesiastical courts were given concurrent jurisdiction and in others cases were removed from ecclesiastical cognizance. The courts and their officials had at least four important functions: they issued licences to clergy, schoolmasters, and even midwives (for which courts officials received fees); they verified and proved wills; they adjudicated in grievances of private litigants over matters such as titles, defamation and marriage; and they judged and corrected clergy and laity in spiritual matters.¹⁸⁸ It was in this latter function that the courts were nearest to the role of the priest in the confessional. These matters were mainly those that had been raised in visitation articles and involved issues of faith and practice and a wide range of moral offences. The court might admonish those presented, or in more serious cases require them to perform a public penance.¹⁸⁹ Excommunication was a very serious matter but was used frequently by the courts for contumacy (being unwilling to recognise the authority of the court). Ingram argues that in these ways the courts raised “popular standards of religious observance and moral conduct.”¹⁹⁰ By enforcing the bishops’ visitation articles the courts enabled the church to have the outward face of Protestantism. But the courts were open to criticism. Both Puritans on the one hand and Catholic recusants on the other had no fear of the spiritual sanctions of the courts. In fact they despised them since even laymen had the power to excommunicate.¹⁹¹ In matters of litigation, for example over titles, discontented litigants sought the intervention of secular judges through writs of prohibition. Civil lawyers were critical of the fact that defendants in ecclesiastical courts were ex-officio on oath, and thereby may have been forced to condemn themselves. It was claimed that suits could be long and drawn out, but, it has been argued they could also be quick.¹⁹² The 1571 canons prohibited the commutation of

¹⁸⁶ David F Wright, introduction to *Concerning the True Care of Souls*, p. xiii.

¹⁸⁷ Houlbrooke, *Church Courts* p. 18.

¹⁸⁸ Outhwaite, *The Rise and Fall of the English Ecclesiastical Court*, s pp. 5-7.

¹⁸⁹ Examples will be found in part 2 of this chapter.

¹⁹⁰ Ingram, “Puritans and the Church Courts”, p. 70.

¹⁹¹ Although it was often a lay judicial officer who decided on excommunication as the punishment, there was a cleric on hand to pronounce the sentence.

¹⁹² Ingram, “Puritans and the Church Courts”, p. 62.

penance but these were frequently ignored and over and over again complaints of commutation were made in the convocations.¹⁹³

In 1584 Archbishop Whitgift drew up a list of articles to restrain the excesses of the courts. He was especially concerned about the abuse of excommunication, the commuting of penance, the issuing of licences to allow marriage without banns, and dispensations for pluralities.¹⁹⁴ Because of the effectiveness of the courts in suppressing nonconformity, the complaints of Puritans were loudest but should be viewed with caution. They saw judges, advocates and proctors as “for the most part papists”, and notaries “as greedy as cormorants.”¹⁹⁵ Field and Wilcox set out a programme for Presbyterian reform. In every congregation there should be elected elders and deacons in addition to (and not to be confused with) ministers or pastors. Christ, they claimed, had committed “the whole regiment of the church” to these officers in the local congregation. “This regiment consisteth especially in ecclesiastical discipline, -- wherby men learne to frame their willes and doings according to the law of God by instructing and admonishing one another, yea by correcting and punishing all wylfull persons, and contemners of the same.”¹⁹⁶ By contrast they saw the church courts as “a filthy quauemire, and poisoned plashe of all the abominations that doe infect the whole realme.”¹⁹⁷ They spoke out strongly against excommunications, especially that whereas in the past an excommunicant was only absolved and received back into the fellowship of the church after making a public confession, now he may pay a court fee and be absolved in private, or even by proxy. The system was unable to satisfy local congregations.¹⁹⁸ Satisfaction had been one of the basic elements of the sacrament of penance. It continued to be important to Elizabethans to the amazement of Debora Shuger. She sees Protestantism as being about inward religion in which “problems of social and economic justice seem irrelevant,”¹⁹⁹ yet here was concern for restitution for the offence suffered by congregations. She feels the fact “that one element of the medieval penitential system survived the Reformation seems as significant as the loss of the others.”

¹⁹³ *Records of Convocation*, pp. 493,501; R A Marchant shows that at York excommunication and absolution cost 2d.6d in 1560, 1s.0d in 1570, and 3s.0d in 1590.

¹⁹⁴ John Strype, *The Life and Acts of John Whitgift* (Oxford 1822), pp.365-6.

¹⁹⁵ *Puritan Manifestoes*, p. 34.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹⁹⁸ Archbishop Whitgift was concerned that the commutation of penance prevented “satisfaction” being made. He requested that “if the fault be notorious, - the offender make some satisfaction, either in his own person, with declaration of his repentance openly in the church; or else that the minister of the church openly in the pulpit signify to the people his submission and declaration of his repentance, done before the Ordinary.” Strype, pp. 321-2 .

¹⁹⁹ Deborah Shuger, “The Reformation of Penance”, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, vol.71, no.4 (2008).

In his polemic against Presbyterianism²⁰⁰ Richard Hooker tried to justify the courts as meeting the pastoral and moral needs of the nation²⁰¹ and from his viewpoint as an adequate replacement for the sacrament of penance. He argued that the spiritual power of the church is exercised on the foundation of the laws of Christ given in the Gospels. However he went a step further. God works in creation, not only by his word, but also by the rational decisions people make. As times and circumstances change the church will decide on new ways of dealing with new evils. He claims that where Presbyterians have gone wrong is in limiting the church's practice to the words of Scripture and thinking that "no law, constitution or canon can further be made either for the limitation or amplification in the practice of our Saviour's ordinances."²⁰² With the sacrament of penance, the basis of much canon law, having been rejected, the church must replace it with whatever it reasons is right. He noted that "the essence of jurisdiction is the power to command and judge according to law, while spiritual jurisdiction should be understood as doing so according to spiritual law."²⁰³ But how can that be determined? Hooker sees repentance as the starting point. Because the church has responsibility for the cure of souls, it inevitably is involved in discipline, the regulation of morals, and the adjudication of social problems. Pastoral practice means that it is often difficult for a minister to judge certain offences and there is need for an outside neutral forum.²⁰⁴ He also concludes that jurisdiction not only includes pastoral and disciplinary elements but may need also to be coercive.²⁰⁵

The purpose of spiritual jurisdiction, according to Hooker, "is to provide for the health and safety of men's souls, by bringing them to see and repent their grievous offences committed against God, and also to reform all injuries, offered with the breach of Christian love and charity, towards their brethren, in matters of ecclesiastical cognizance."²⁰⁶ If a person sins against God, the way of reconciliation is by "secret repentance of the heart", and this is given by God's grace. In this Hooker was thoroughly reformed. Sin against others requires "the wholesome discipline of God's church" in order to provide "a more exemplary and open satisfaction."²⁰⁷ But how should the church go about this? For Calvin the power of "the keys", based on Matthew 16.19 and John 20.23, was exercised in the ministry of the word.

²⁰⁰ W D J Cargill-Thompson, *Studies in the Reformation* (1980), pp. 131-192.

²⁰¹ Dean Kernan, "Jurisdiction and the Keys", *A Companion to Richard Hooker*, pp. 450-1.

²⁰² Richard Hooker, *Ecclesiastical Polity, selections edited by Arthur Pollard* (Manchester 1990) VI.56, 179.

²⁰³ Kernan, "Jurisdiction and the Keys", p. 450.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 451.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 452.

²⁰⁶ Richard Hooker, *Ecclesiastical Polity, selections*. VI.57, 180.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

For him the model of spiritual jurisdiction is found in Matthew 18.16-19. Where someone is offended he should try to deal with the offender privately. If the offender refuses to listen, the one offended should “tell it to the church.” For Calvin this meant voluntary public disclosure in front of the congregation. Hooker, however, saw the power of “the keys” as being more than preaching. For him it focuses on pastoral responsibility. “Tell it to the church” implies litigation in courts and consistories. Where he mainly differs from Calvin is in believing that the pastoral responsibility of the church means it has coercive powers, whereas for Calvin discipline was when a person repented voluntarily, and only magistrates should have powers of coercion.

Repentance and faith in Christ’s finished work was the way penitence was practised in the reformed Elizabethan church. By preaching and pastoral ministry penitents were assured of forgiveness and cured of guilt and fear. But this left the need for discipline. *Sola Fide* was always open to the criticism that bad works can be forgiven and good works are not necessary. For this reason there was anxiety among reformers over the question of discipline, and the need to reform this area of the church’s life just as its doctrine had been reformed. The ecclesiastical courts had been reformed in legal terms:²⁰⁸ they were generally efficient and effective. But efficiency in the courts was not the same as caring pastoral discipline within a congregation. For conformists the courts provided order and discipline, but for the “godly” they were offensive. Bossy is impressed by their work. He argues that “if anything was lost in the peacemaking process by the absence of a rite of confession, old or new, [it] was made up for by the doings of the church courts.”²⁰⁹ But by depriving Puritan clergy and enforcing recusancy fines on Catholics, the courts were divisive. By using excommunication to deal with contumacy they weakened the church. There was an increasing disinclination to obey the courts.²¹⁰ Discipline, in reformed thinking, was interconnected with pastoral practice but the courts took matters out of the hands of the pastor. The courts were not able to replace the pastoral discipline that was lost by the rejection of the sacrament of penance. Collinson is right when he argues that attempting to coerce people to conformity did not provide a system

²⁰⁸ Helmholz, *Roman Law and Reformation England*, p. 6: “by the time the “official” Reformation arrived, a jurisdictional reformation in the church courts had already happened.”

²⁰⁹ John Bossy, *Peace in the Post-Reformation* (Cambridge 1998), p. 78.

²¹⁰ Outhwaite, *The Rise and Fall of the English Ecclesiastical Courts*, p.71: Points out that 10% of those presented refused to appear under Bishop Hooper in the Gloucester Diocese (1551-3), under Bishop Cheney (1562-79) 66% refused to attend. These figures are exaggerated because Cheney’s Chancellor was notoriously corrupt, but they show the trend was the same in Gloucester as in York.

of pastoral discipline for the church²¹¹ to complement the preachers' work of consolation in bringing them to repentance and faith.

CONCLUSIONS TO PART 1

The theological revolution which we call the Reformation substituted the Word for the Sacrament. This was matched in penitential terms by the Elizabethan church substituting preaching for the sacrament of penance – calling people to repentance. Preaching was aided by catechisms, devotional material, and pastoral counselling. It was also supported by the discipline offered by the church courts, though many longed for reform of the courts and a discipline that was pastoral rather than legal.

There was a general consensus between different branches of the church that preaching was of prime importance in bringing salvation and that the Catholic penitential system could not offer the assurance of forgiveness that comes from the Word of God. Cartwright and Whitgift competed in trying to show themselves as followers of Jewel; Dent and Cooper agreed that preaching was the means of bringing people to repentance; and even Hooker stressed the failures of the Catholic sacrament of penance in terms of assurance. Where penitents lacked assurance of God's forgiveness, it was not only Puritans, like Greenham and Perkins, who engaged in practical means to heal their doubts, but also anti-Calvinists such as Hooker and Overall.

For all of Jewel's commitment to preaching as the replacement for the sacrament of penance and his personal work in this area, in the first half of Elizabeth's reign the majority of clergy were not qualified to preach and this was a major difficulty. It also appeared, during the battle over vestments, that both conformists, including the Queen herself, and Puritans had other priorities than preaching. Failure to reform the church courts was a problem for many, which was aggravated by Cartwright's claim of Biblical authority for his Presbyterian system. Whitgift saw the answer to these difficulties in education and enforcing conformity. Hooker found the eucharist a more secure replacement for the sacrament of penance, and justified the church courts as a right form of church discipline on the basis of reason rather than scripture. Greenham and Perkins not only acted as spiritual physicians to those who were unable to deal with their doubts and their guilt, but tried to help others in this ministry by compiling directories of "cases of conscience".

²¹¹ See n.5.

K J Lualdi has made the point that across Europe churches of all confessions replaced the consolation and discipline of the medieval penitential system in some way. By examining how the Elizabethan church tried to do this it is possible to get a new perspective on how the English Reformation was distinctive and also why it developed in the way it did. But a full understanding of this depends not only on the practical theology of the religious elite but also on the response of the people.

PART 2: THE PROTESTANT APPROACH TO PENITENCE: POPULAR RECEPTION

If Part 1 of this chapter examined the call to repentance “from above”, Part 2 is an attempt to consider how it might have been seen “from below.” According to Bishop Jewel preaching repentance was more than a substitute for the sacrament of penance, it was the key theological rationale for the Church of England. Many church leaders were aware of the need of consolation and discipline left by the absence of the sacrament and tried to meet these by practical divinity and the church courts. Were they successful? Duffy and Collinson consider that they failed.²¹² Part 2 of this chapter aims to show how the liturgy, catechisms and the singing of metrical psalms with their penitential emphasis provided a strong support for the preaching of repentance. Contrary to the views of Haigh and Collinson²¹³ preaching cannot be considered in isolation. Although it is well nigh impossible to know what most ordinary people believed, we know they conformed and experienced Protestant ministry. Religious ballads and broadsheets reflected the message of repentance in popular culture. Those who purchased these in large numbers clearly invested in that culture and this suggests an empathy with the call to repentance. Jewel’s argument that in preaching repentance the Elizabethan church was exercising the doctrine of the keys substantiates Tentler’s claim that “the penitential systems of the Reformation represent, simultaneously and paradoxically, a continuation of medieval mentalities and practices and a revolutionary break with them.”²¹⁴ It was these practical continuities which “account for the basic compliance of the English

²¹² See notes 1 and 2.

²¹³ See notes 8 and 9.

²¹⁴ Thomas Tentler, “Postscript”, *Penitence in the Age of Reformations*, p. 244.

people in the process of the Reformation,”²¹⁵ and the success of the reformers in promoting protestant penitential attitudes by instilling the importance of repentance in the cultural mindset. The attempts of the church courts to exercise discipline (a case of institutional continuity) may not have been popular but they corresponded with the moral standards of those who were ready to participate in tumbrels and rough music. “Ultimately ... the battles of the English Reformation were won and lost not in set piece political and theological confrontations, but parish by parish, soul by soul”²¹⁶ as people responded to the call to repent.

PREACHERS AND PASTORS

Christopher Haigh is sceptical about the impact of the preachers’ message. “Protestants”, he claimed, “had defeated Catholicism but they failed to capture the people.”²¹⁷ Along with pastoral ministry and catechisms it was preaching which conveyed the Protestant faith and the need for self-examination and repentance. It took a while for preaching to be part of the regular worship of each parish church. Even the minimal requirement for “one sermon, every quarter”,²¹⁸ which clergy were commanded to provide in the 1559 injunctions, was often not met.²¹⁹ Where there was no preacher available, a homily was to be read each Sunday, and in 1563 twenty new homilies were provided to supplement those Cranmer published in 1547.²²⁰ ‘Prophesyings’, training classes in preaching, were held in many dioceses to help non-preachers and to help improve those who did preach, until they were stopped in 1576 by Elizabeth. Quietly, ‘exercises’ replaced them, and in 1583 Archbishop Whitgift ordered non-preaching clergy to obtain and study Bullinger’s *Decades*.²²¹ Slowly but surely new ministers were being trained and ordained who could preach. What the reformers had hoped for became a reality. It also became an expectation. There was “a fundamental change in the minister’s duties. With the mass abrogated and mandatory auricular confession abolished,

²¹⁵ Christopher Marsh, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth Century England* (Basingstoke 1998), p. 209.

²¹⁶ Alec Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation. The Tudor and Stewart Realms 1485-1603* (London 2009), p. 276.

²¹⁷ *The Reformation Revised*, ed. Christopher Haigh (Cambridge 1987), p. 215.

²¹⁸ *Documents of the English Reformation*, p. 336.

²¹⁹ Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations. Religion, Politics and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford 1993), p. 268-9: The 1575 visitation of the York diocese revealed that there had been no sermon in the parish of Thorp Arch in twenty years.

²²⁰ Including “An homily on Repentance, and of true reconciliation to God”, *Certain Sermons appointed by the Queen’s Majesty*, ed. G E Corrie (PS. Cambridge 1853), pp. 525-550.

²²¹ The *Decades*: “*Hausbuch* in German, was a collection of 50 sermons, covering all topics of Reformed doctrine and addressed in Latin to the ‘Prophesei’ meetings [from which the English ‘prophesyings’ came] of the pastors and teachers of the Zurich church for mutual edification and instruction.” Jean-Marc Berthoud, “Heinrich Bullinger and the Reformation”, *In Writing*, (Spring 2003), p. 6.

priests became ministers and ministers were preachers above all else”²²² calling the nation to repentance. But how popular was preaching and what sort of impact did it have on those who heard it?

Christopher Haigh argues that there was “consumer resistance”, and that people wanted pastors rather than preachers.²²³ But from the crowds that gathered at Paul’s Cross (and at other open air pulpits in large towns)²²⁴ to hear weekly sermons, clearly preaching was popular with some. Itinerant preachers also gathered crowds just as friars had done on their preaching tours especially during Lent. Preaching was not only the presentation of information but often involved “an intense emotional engagement” with those present.²²⁵ This was in part due to the way audiences were encouraged to learn how to listen and respond emotionally to the sermon.²²⁶ Thomas Wilson in his *Arte of Rhetorique* (editions 1553, 1560, 1562, 1563, 1567, 1580, 1584, and 1585) encouraged preachers to involve hearers: “Except men find delight, they will no longer abide, delight them and win them; weary them and you will lose them forever.”²²⁷ Margo Todd’s survey of Scottish preachers reflects a style that was also to be seen in many preachers south of the border:

What strikes modern readers ... are the repetition of themes, so useful for oral transmission of complex ideas; the frequency of numbered lists of ideas, again a practical device to aid memory; the simplicity and vividness of the language; and the combination of rather dry exposition of text ... purely a transmission of data and doctrine ... with intensely emotional and evocative language in exhortation.²²⁸

The preacher’s aim in all this was to bring his hearers to repentance, and to this end, according to Richard Greenham, it was “necessary that the Minister of God doe very sharply rebuke the people for their sinnes, and that he lay before them God’s grievous judgements against sinners.”²²⁹ For the zealous this was sometimes associated with fasting or feasts of reconciliation. Such events, as well as sermons, involved “public prayers of confession and requests for forgiveness [and] were as much a part of the municipal process of order and

²²² *Preachers and People in the Reformations and the Early Modern Period*, ed. Larissa Taylor (Leiden 2003), p. 255.

²²³ See p. 173, n. 9.

²²⁴ Susan Wabuda, *Preaching during the English Reformation* (Cambridge 2002), p. 40.

²²⁵ Andrew Pettegree, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion* (Cambridge 2005), p. 35.

²²⁶ Arnold Hunt, *The Art of Hearing*, p. 11.

²²⁷ Quoted by Patrick Collinson, “Puritanism and Popular Religious Culture” *The Culture of English Puritanism*, p. 47.

²²⁸ Margo Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* (London 2002), p. 50

²²⁹ RLM. 524 fo.7.

discipline as were the more intimidating and utterly shaming ritual punishments of cuckstool, cart and whipping post.”²³⁰ The town clerk of Barnstable described a fast day in 1586, when there was “a trental of sermons at Pilton, so that divers as well men and women rode and went thither” just as previously he had seen crowds on pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of Pilton.²³¹ Going to hear a sermon was a social event. Those who went possibly journeyed together, ate together, and had a sense of belonging with others of like mind. Afterwards they might meet in conventicles to repeat the sermon and discuss its implications. Such “sermon gadding” and conventicles were frequently criticised as schismatic by Whitgift if it meant people were not attending their parish church.

Penitential preaching could certainly be popular. In 1576 Peter Eckershall, the curate of Measham, was threatened with suspension by the Bishop of Lincoln for not wearing the surplice when taking services. Parishioners successfully pleaded with the bishop on his behalf, claiming that through his preaching over the previous two years they had been turned in true repentance from popery to a “comfortable feeling of their salvation in Christ.”²³² But not all preachers united parishes, and often “the efforts of the ministers were most obvious where they caused trouble.”²³³ In some cases they would gather a group of parishioners who responded to their preaching and who zealously challenged the rest of the community, accusing them of popery for their refusal to respond in like manner, or seeking control of local leisure activities.²³⁴ It is a sign of the effectiveness of preachers that town and city leaders appointed lecturers²³⁵ to preach on Sundays and often also on weekdays, believing such would “strengthen their own authority and create a sense of godly communal solidarity” in their localities,²³⁶ like the antistes of the German or Swiss Reformation cities. In many towns it was the preaching of the lecturer, appointed by civic leaders, which was the dominant influence in establishing Protestantism: Thomas Lever in Coventry, John Cotton in Boston, Ralph Griffin in Warwick.²³⁷

²³⁰ *The Reformation in English Towns*, eds. Patrick Collinson and John Craig (Basingstoke 1998), p. 13: refers to such feasts of reconciliation at “Thetford, Beverley, Colchester and elsewhere.”

²³¹ Patrick Collinson, “Elizabethan and Jacobean Puritanism as forms of Popular Religious Culture”, *The Culture of English Puritanism 1560-1700*, eds. Christopher Durston and Jaqueline Eales (Basingstoke 1996), p.53.

²³² Collinson, *Godly People*, pp. 102-3.

²³³ Haigh, *English Reformations*, p. 279.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 279-280.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

²³⁶ Peter Clark, “Gloucester 1547-1640”, *History of the County of Gloucester Vol. 4* (Oxford 1988), p. 89.

²³⁷ Ironwy Morgan, *The Godly Preachers of the Elizabethan Church* (London 1965), p. 27.

“Sermons have always been closely associated with the life of the soul.”²³⁸ Whereas prior to the Reformation they were often a spur to auricular confession and involved moral instruction, Elizabethan preachers called people to personal repentance. For those who responded, in the oft quoted words of Latimer, preaching was “the true ladder that bringeth a man to heaven.”²³⁹ But others felt the loss of the personal relationship of penitent and confessor. A parishioner in Saffron Waldon pointed out in 1570 that preaching did not necessarily touch the hearts of the congregation like private penance once had: “by reason of Auricular confession then moving their good conscience in those days more then good preaching can doe nowe ... privy tythes ... ys not payd but utterly decayed.”²⁴⁰

While the sacrament of penance, with all its pastoral opportunities had been rejected, parish clergy did continue to exercise other pastoral responsibilities as they always had. In fact many of the clergy were unchanged from the reign of Mary, and in some cases even from the reign of Henry VIII. In addition to preaching, or reading homilies, they ministered at baptisms, weddings, funerals, and exercised charity and hospitality to the needy of the parish. The liturgy for the visitation of the sick included an exhortation to forgive others, make a will, and to make a confession and receive personal absolution.²⁴¹ Christopher Haigh concludes that “There was thus a substantial survival of conservative belief and practice in parishes served by ex-priests.”²⁴² However the evidence from the ministries of William Shepherd and Christopher Trychay, who had served their parishes since the days of Henry, does not suggest this, and Byford considers that “the continuing presence of Marian priests in the parishes under Elizabeth was more likely to have eased the transition from the old world to the new than to have encouraged the persistence of active Catholicism.”²⁴³ Shepherd readily accepted new ways. In his ministry the change to the religion of the word, vernacular liturgy, catechising, sermons, and the exhorting to personal moral reformation, had an increasing impact on the life of the Heyden community.²⁴⁴ Eamon Duffy tells of Christopher Trychay’s conformity in his parish at Morebath and is convinced it “was more than grudging

²³⁸ Wabuda, *Preaching during the English Reformation*, p. 7.

²³⁹ Ibid., p. 13.

²⁴⁰ PRO E 337, deposition of George Nichols in the Court of First Fruits, quoted by Mark Byford in “The Price of Protestantism. Assessing the Impact of Religious Changes on Elizabethan Essex: in cases of Heyden and Colchester 1558-94” (unpublished Oxford D Phil. 1988), p. 86.

²⁴¹ *The Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 166-7: “Our Lorde Jesus Christ who hath left power to hys Church to absolve all sinners, whiche truly repente and believe in him: of hys greate mercie forgeve thyne offences, and by his auctoritie committed to me, I absolve thee from al thy synnes. In the name of the father ...” .

²⁴² Christopher Haigh, “The Church of England, the Catholics and the People”, *The Reign of Elizabeth I* (Basingstoke 1984), p. 200.

²⁴³ Byford, “The Price of Protestantism”, p. 21.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 22.

minimalism”²⁴⁵: “he was not unaffected by the prayers he recited, the sermons he preached, the homilies he read.”²⁴⁶ Increasing concern for moral rectitude, and to bring sinners to repentance is seen at Morebath in the use of the cucking-stool.²⁴⁷ If traditionalist conscientious parish priests adapted to the new ways, there is a strong case for thinking that conformist laity, with such an example, may similarly have not been unaffected.

In the absence of the sacrament of penance “it is clear that strong and consistent attempts were made to teach catechisms, and in the nature of the case they must have left a profound impression on the religious culture of the time.”²⁴⁸ One that was specifically for use in the home (Dering and More’s best-selling catechism *A Briefe and Necessary Instruction for Householdiers*) has clear theological teaching on repentance. Mary Hampson Patterson sees it as “a masterpiece of succinctness ... it synthesises an enormous amount of systematic theology in very little space.”²⁴⁹ Repentance concerns the glory of God; how sin may be known (the Decalogue) and dealt with (not by good works but by faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ); and how faith must be accompanied by a genuine desire to honour God.²⁵⁰ The Pope’s treasure, mass, purgatory, pilgrimage, pardons, penance, satisfaction ... none of these, says the catechumen in prayer following instruction, satisfies for “the least of my wicked thoughts.”²⁵¹ Catechisms were expected to be memorised and the results tested: “they were the most effective teaching device at hand,”²⁵² and bishops frequently asked, in visitation articles, about their use. They were valued for enabling communicants to have a basic knowledge of the faith, and because of the need for rigorous self-examination before each communion.²⁵³ Although he gives examples of clergy who failed to catechize, and the resistance that they sometimes experienced, Haigh acknowledges that “all this evangelical [preaching] and educational [catechisms] effort had its effect. By the middle of Elizabeth’s reign there was mounting evidence from many areas of real Protestant conviction, as well as

²⁴⁵ Eamon Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath* (London 2001), p. 175 .

²⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 180.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 185: “For whatever reasons, Morebath’s cucking-stool, introduced in 1557, repaired in 1569 and remade at the cost of the Young Men in 1570, is a sinister curiosity.”

²⁴⁸ Peter Jensen, “The Life of Faith in the Teaching of Elizabethan Protestants” (unpublished Oxford D Phil. 1979), p. 182.

²⁴⁹ Mary Hampson Patterson, *Domesticating the Reformation: Protestant Best Sellers, Private Devotion and the Revolution of English Piety* (Madison 2007), p. 270.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 271-277.

²⁵¹ *A briefe and necessary catechisme ... with prayer to the same adioyning* (London 1590), sig. C2, RSTC 6680.5.

²⁵² Jensen, “The Life of Faith”, p. 182.

²⁵³ Ian Green, “The Emergence of the English Catechism”, *JEH*, 37.3 (1986), pp. 410-11

Protestant conformity.”²⁵⁴ Where in the 1560s presentments at visitations concerned those guilty of conservatism and neglect, by the 1580s they were more often challenging sermon-gadding, conventicles, and neglect of the sign of the cross at baptisms. Catechisms had become more than merely an educational method; they were a means of evangelism and an aspect of pastoral care.²⁵⁵

The speed with which changes in religious belief and practice spread across the nation during the reign of Elizabeth varied from place to place. But from 1559 the Book of Common Prayer with its penitential strain was in use throughout the land. Religion for many involved the issue of salvation. The call to repent in the liturgy and from the pulpit related to this just as contrition and confession had in the sacrament of penance. John Day was fully aware of the significance of penitence in popular religion when he made “The Complaint of a Sinner” part of the introduction of his *Whole Booke of Psalmes*:

Here righteousness doth say,

Lord to my shamefull part,

In wrath thou shouldst me pay

Vengeance as my desert:

I cannot it deny,

But needs I must confesse,

How that continually,

Thy laws I do transgresse,

Thy laws I do transgresse.²⁵⁶

The fact that preaching could be divisive shows it was effective and powerful. It was not always popular, in the sense of being approved, but it changed communities as well as individuals. Education gave the clergy authority in preaching, though it distinguished them socially from the mass of the uneducated, and they had lost the mystique that the sacraments of the mass and penance gave pre-Reformation priests. Nevertheless, they were able to convey the basics of the Protestant faith from the pulpit and in catechism classes. By the end

²⁵⁴ Haigh, *English Reformations*, p. 278.

²⁵⁵ Jane Freeman, “The Parish Ministry in the Diocese of Durham, c.1570-1640” (University of Durham unpublished Ph.D, 1979), pp. 204-8.

²⁵⁶ *The Whole Booke of Psalmes*, p. 2.

of the century most people knew they were supposed to be Protestants and that this should affect their lives, and for some it did. The call to repentance was a call to change.

PARISH LIFE, LITURGY AND POPULAR RELIGION

The message of repentance was heard in parishes across the country: from the re-introduced Prayer Book with its strong penitential themes; metrical psalms which involved congregations in expressions of penitence; and slowly but surely by an increasing number of trained preaching clergy. Every person in sixteenth-century England lived in a parish, and the parish church, despite changes in decoration, furnishings, and “ritual requirements” remained a constant feature for the community.²⁵⁷ According to the Act of Uniformity “all and every person” was to attend church services on Sundays and holy days.²⁵⁸ Since no statistics were kept we cannot know for certain the effectiveness of this legal obligation, and historians differ substantially in their conclusions. Keith Thomas is confident that not all Tudor Englishmen went to church and that many of those who did go went with considerable reluctance.²⁵⁹ Patrick Collinson, on the other hand, claims that “the ‘multitude’ doubtless conformed in great numbers to the prayer-book religion of the parish church, which became part of the fabric of their lives.”²⁶⁰ They may have conformed because of the general ethos of obedience to authority, or because “participation in church services was ultimately connected with local identity, respectability and status.” Ingram puts it well when he claims that “the aspirations of parishioners locked them into the system of corporate worship.”²⁶¹ For those who had struggled in conscience with the traditional penitential system of earned salvation, which the Royal Injunctions of 1559 saw as “this vice of damnable despair”, the parish church offered a liturgy based on justification by grace, and a pastoral ministry instructed to comfort “all penitent and believing persons with the lively Word of God, which is the only stay of man’s conscience.”²⁶² Responses to the Reformation varied from place to place, often

²⁵⁷ Robert Whiting, *The Reformation of the English Parish Church* (Cambridge 2010).

²⁵⁸ *The Documents of the English Reformation*, p. 332.

²⁵⁹ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the decline of Magic*, p. 159.

²⁶⁰ Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants* (Oxford 1982), p. 191; Peter Clark estimates that one in five of the population of late sixteenth century Kent were regular absentees. *English Provincial Society* (Hassocks 1997), p. 156.

²⁶¹ Martin Ingram, “From Reformation to Toleration: Popular Religious Cultures in England 1540-1690”, *Popular Culture in England c.1500-1800*, ed. Tim Harris (Basingstoke 1995), p. 113.

²⁶² “The Elizabethan Injunctions 1559”, *Documents of the English Reformation*, p. 339.

from “emotional loyalties,”²⁶³ although gradually there was a transformation from “an all-embracing ‘religious culture’ to a more self-conscious ‘religious faith.’”²⁶⁴ Barry Reay argues for a diversity of popular beliefs: “popular Catholicism, popular Puritanism, religious apathy, folk lore Christianity, magical beliefs”, but concludes with the fact that “we know least about popular conformists.”²⁶⁵ What we do know about popular conformists is that they experienced the *Book of Common Prayer* with its penitential emphasis. Judith Maltby has shown that in some cases parishioners found it met their needs to the extent that they were prepared to seek the help of the courts to enforce recalcitrant clergy to conform to it.²⁶⁶

The Elizabethan Prayer Book opens with the Act of Uniformity (1559),²⁶⁷ which makes it clear that this is the 1552 Edwardian book with minimal changes.²⁶⁸ A revised Litany had been published in 1558 along with *The Letanye, used in the Queenes Maiesties Chappel*. In this (latter) the penitential opening is preceded by the Confession from the Holy Communion which has been personalised for the Queen: “I acknowledge and bewail my manifold sins.”²⁶⁹ Indeed there was a strong penitential strain throughout the Prayer Book. Morning and Evening Prayer begin with scriptural sentences calling worshippers to confess their sins. Ramie Targoff stresses the significance of the collective use of plurals in Protestant liturgical worship and that “the most dramatic instance of the liturgical transition from a private and individual to a public and collective emphasis lies in the practice of confession.”²⁷⁰ Confession was no longer a private matter of the individual penitent and the priest, but a matter shared by the church community by means of the liturgy. Strasbourg services always began with confession. It was Bucer who introduced this into Hermann von Wied’s services in Cologne under the rubric “it is agreeable to religion that whenever we appear before the Lord in his church before all things we should acknowledge and confess our sins.”²⁷¹

²⁶³ Robert Whiting, *Local Responses to the English Reformation* (Basingstoke 1998), p. 132.

²⁶⁴ C John Sommerville, *The Secularization of Early Modern England: From Religious Culture to Religious Faith* (Oxford, 1992), p. 1.

²⁶⁵ *Popular Culture in Seventeenth Century England*, ed.. Barry Reay (London 1985), p.117.

²⁶⁶ Judith Maltby, *Prayer Book and People in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Cambridge 1998) , p. 35.

²⁶⁷ *Liturgical Services of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, ed. William Keatinge Clay (PS. Cambridge 1847), p. 27.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 28: “the form of the litany altered and corrected, and two sentences only added to the delivery of the sacrament to the communicants, and none other or otherwise ... [it was] less of a patched up affair from the reformers’ viewpoint than often suggested.” Andrew Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, pp. 135-6.

²⁶⁹ *Liturgical Services*, p. 12.

²⁷⁰ Ramie Targoff, *Common Prayer: The Language of Public Devotion in Early Modern England* (Chicago 2001), p. 30.

²⁷¹ G J Cumming, *A History of Anglican Liturgy* (2nd edition Basingstoke 1982), p. 76.

From the feast of the Nativity of St John the Baptist (24th June 1559) onwards, the new Prayer Book liturgy was used in English parish churches. Its frequent use created “a strong sense of religious tradition,”²⁷² not least in its emphasis on the importance of penitence. Morning Prayer had a strong penitential opening with scriptural calls to repentance, followed by an exhortation “to acknowledge and confesse our manifold sinnes ... to the ende that we may obtaine forgiveness,”²⁷³ and the General Confession based on Romans 7.²⁷⁴ Usually Morning Prayer was followed by the Litany with its opening petition, “have mercy upon us miserable sinners.”²⁷⁵ The Prayer Book was more than text. It was a shared experience as those who participated in its prayers believed that in so doing they were worshipping God. It both expressed the community’s beliefs and shaped them.²⁷⁶ It enabled the penitent to articulate his repentance alongside his neighbours in a common prayer of confession. “Cranmer’s sombrely magnificent prose, read week by week, entered and possessed their minds, and became the fabric of their prayer, the utterance of their most solemn and vulnerable moments.”²⁷⁷ Since attendance at church services was both a legal obligation and a social expectation we may assume a large number of people attended and experienced the liturgy of the prayer book. In it they will not only have shared in a common prayer of confession but also received guidance as to how to seek repentance in their personal devotions.

METRICAL PSALMS

The penitential psalms had long been an aid to pious devotion, and were always included in the laity’s Book of Hours and Primers. In Elizabethan England both consolation and joy in worship were also found by many in singing metrical psalms. Bishop Jewel wrote to Peter Martyr in March 1560:

The people are everywhere exceedingly inclined to the better part. The practice of joining in Church music has very much conduced to this. For as soon as they had once commenced singing in public, in only one little church in London, immediately not only the churches in the neighbourhood, but even the towns far distant, began to vie with each other in the same

²⁷² *Parish Church and People: Local Studies in Lay Religion 1350-1750*, ed. Susan J Wright, p. 146.

²⁷³ *The Book of Common Prayer: the Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662*, ed. Brian Cummings (Oxford 2011), p.103.

²⁷⁴ See page 95.

²⁷⁵ *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 117.

²⁷⁶ Maltby, *Prayer Book and People*, p. 4.

²⁷⁷ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (Yale 1992), p. 593.

practice. You may now sometimes see at Paul's Cross, after the service, six thousand persons, old and young, all singing together and praising God.²⁷⁸

Henry Machyn noted in his diary on 21st September 1559 that at the new Morning Prayer at St Antholin's church, "men and women all do syng, and boys", "after Geneve fassyon." He also notes that after Grindal preached at Paul's Cross on 3rd March 1560 "the pepull dyd syng" – presumably a psalm. After the sermon there, on 17th March 1560, "they songe all, old and yong, a salme in myter, the tune of Genevay ways."²⁷⁹

The first English Protestant translation of the Psalms was by George Joye in 1530, which was based on a new Latin translation by Martin Bucer.²⁸⁰ Miles Coverdale wanted psalms to replace "the comen sort of balettes which now are used in ye world ... [and] what wicked frutes they brynge", so he urged "let us altogether (from the most unto ye least) be glad, reioyce and be mery even from our herte rotes, that we have gotten the knowledge of the Lorde among us."²⁸¹ His translation of the Psalms was part of the Great Bible and taken by Cranmer for the Psalmody of his prayer books. In the 1540s both Sir Thomas Wyatt and Sir Thomas Smith wrote paraphrases of the penitential psalms using them as exemplars of repentance.²⁸² But the work that dominated the market under Edward VI was the metrical version of thirty seven psalms by Thomas Sternhold. Sternhold was a courtier and the psalms were intended to be sung as recreation for the court. They were simple in style, being largely monosyllabic and having a regular metre. After Sternhold's death, a young Oxford graduate, John Hopkins, added a further seven. These were published together and copies taken into Europe by those who went into exile during the reign of Mary. They were added to by William Whittington and others and used for worship by the English church in Geneva. Robin Leaver asks what the great crowds at Paul's Cross sang from in 1560.²⁸³ He suggests broadsheets, though none are extant, and it is unlikely there would have been enough copies of the Edwardian Sternhold-Hopkins editions, or even the Anglo-Genevan psalter. John Day saw a possible market, commissioned Thomas Norton and John Hopkins to complete the psalms in metre, and, in 1562, published *The Whole Booke of Psalmes*. This went through

²⁷⁸ *Zurich Letters*, 1. 91.

²⁷⁹ *The Diary of Henry Machyn, citizen and merchant-taylor of London, 1550-63*, ed. J G Nichols (Camden Society 1848), pp. 212, 226, 228.

²⁸⁰ Rivkah Zim, *English Metrical Psalms. Poetry as Prayer 1535-1601* (Cambridge 1987), p. 2.

²⁸¹ Coverdale's preface to *Goostly Psalmes* (London 1535): quoted by Robin A Leaver, *'Goostly Psalmes and Spirituall Songs'* (Oxford 1991), p. 286.

²⁸² Zim, *English Metrical Psalms. 1601*, pp. 43, 74.

²⁸³ Leaver, *Goostly Psalmes*, p. 241.

about 150 editions during Elizabeth's reign and "rapidly became established in the majority of English parishes and many cathedrals."²⁸⁴

The tone of *The Whole Booke* was penitential. An alternative Venite (Psalm 95), the canticle used as a call to worship, was given a penitential note, which was not in the traditional text:

O let us come before his face,

With inward reverence:

Confessing all our former sinnes,

And that with diligence.²⁸⁵

The psalm itself links the call to worship with giving thanks to God, so the introduction of a penitential theme in this way is particularly noteworthy, and shows Day's determination to bring penitence to the heart of worship. He also added two anonymous penitential songs: "The complaint of a sinner who craveth of Christ, to be kept under his mercy", and, as a concluding lament, "O Lord in thee is all my trust":

Lord in thee is all my trust

Geve care unto my woefull crye:

Refuse me not that am unjust; But bowynge down thy heavenly eye,

Behold how I do still lament my sinnes

Wherein I do offend, O Lord,

For therein shall I repent

Sith thee to please I do intend.²⁸⁶

Day also included two versions of the best known of the penitential psalms, psalm 51. Whittingham's version focuses on the anguish of repentance:

Lord consider my distresse,

And now with speed some pity take:

My sinnes deface, my faults redresse,

²⁸⁴ Beth Quitslund, *The Reformation in Rhyme. Sternhold, Hopkins and the English Metrical Psalter* (Aldershot 2008), p. 240.

²⁸⁵ *The Whole Booke of Psalmes* (London 1590), p. 1.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

good Lord, for thy great mercys sake.

Norton, on the other hand, stresses the confidence a believer can have in God's grace, even against sin and guilt:

Have mercy on me God,

After thy great abundant grace:

After thy mercys multitude,

Do thou my sinnes deface.²⁸⁷

The evidence strongly suggests that singing metrical psalms was popular, and was not limited to the 'godly', despite Machyn linking it with Geneva. Sir Philip Sidney, writing about psalm singing, explained that it "is used with the fruit of comfort by some, when, in sorrowfull pangs of their death-bringing sinnes, they find the consolation of the never-leaving goodnesse."²⁸⁸ This may have been through the psalms being an aid to penitence. Grace Mildmay, for one, declared that she confessed her sins daily in song, using the metrical psalms.²⁸⁹ Many saw the Psalms as a summary of the whole biblical message.²⁹⁰ Participation was in itself a personal response. Day included commentary by Athanasius on the Psalms: "whosoever take this booke [the Psalms] in his hande, he reputeth and thinketh all the words he readeth (except the words of prophesy) to be as his very owne words spoken in his own person."²⁹¹ For Archbishop Matthew Parker this meant that the penitent can find comfort in singing psalms. He put Augustine's words into verse to express this in his own attempt at a metrical psalter:

For who delight'th: them to sing:

his mind shall feel a grace;

of sin both dulled: the cursed sting:

and virtue come in place.²⁹²

²⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 29-30.

²⁸⁸ John King, *English Reformation Literature: The Tudor Origins of the Protestant Tradition* (Princeton 1982), p. 209.

²⁸⁹ Grace Mildmay, *With Faith and Physic: The Life of a Tudor Gentlewoman, Lady Grace Mildmay 1552-1620*, ed. Linda Pollock (1993), p. 35.

²⁹⁰ Thomas Sternhold, *Certayne Psalmes chose[n] out of the Psalter of David* (London 1549), sig. Aii: "by many learned menne, comprehendeth theeffecte of the whole Byble"

²⁹¹ Ibid., p. 233.

²⁹² Quitslund, *The Reformation in Rhyme*, p. 252.

Like ballads, metrical psalms could easily be memorised. Simple tunes could also be learned and sung without the need of special musicians or choirs. They relate to personal emotional and spiritual needs and provide a means of expressing both penitence and praise. Henry Machyn was impressed by their unprecedented inclusiveness: “men, women all do syng, and boys.”²⁹³ Christopher Marsh, moreover, points out that from the sixteenth century onwards, a love of this form of music was particularly associated with “the common people.”²⁹⁴ All this suggests that metrical psalms, and especially Day’s psalter with its penitential emphasis, had a significant influence on popular religion. The singing of metrical psalms was often associated with preaching, as at Paul’s Cross. Where the preachers called for repentance, the psalms gave the words by which penitence might be expressed.

CHEAP PRINT

What impact did the preaching of repentance, supported by liturgy, catechisms, pastoral ministry, and the singing of metrical psalms, make on the “ordinary” people of the Elizabethan world? In trying to assess the faith of the most extra-ordinary person of that age, the Queen herself, Patrick Collinson writes:

We may assume ... that Elizabeth was conventionally religious in the sense that she attended with regularity to her religious duties, and heard in her time many hundreds of sermons. We can say no less, and no more, of the vast majority of her subjects, which is a grave embarrassment to the Elizabethan religious historian. Religious conformity has, if no history, a most elusive history.²⁹⁵

Some historians have seen the purchase of religious ballads, pamphlets, and other cheap print, much of which was written from a Protestant viewpoint, as evidence of the acceptance of Protestant teaching.²⁹⁶ Alexandra Walsham makes it clear that “preaching and cheap print were interactive spheres of discourse in early modern England.”²⁹⁷ Accounts of God’s judgement in Calvinistic sermons might later appear in popular songs or moralistic

²⁹³ *The Diary of Henry Machyn*, p. 212.

²⁹⁴ Marsh, *Music and Society*, p. 435.

²⁹⁵ Patrick Collinson, “Windows in a woman’s soul: questions about the religion of Queen Elizabeth I”, *Elizabethan Essays* (London 1994), pp. 88-8.

²⁹⁶ Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge 1991); Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories. Popular Faith and its Readership in Seventeenth Century England* (Georgia 1981); Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (Oxford 2000); Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford 1999); Peter Lake, *The Anti-Christ’s Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (London 2002).

²⁹⁷ Walsham, *Providence*, p. 327.

journalism “rustled up by unscrupulous stationers and hacks”, which in turn might be immortalised by being included in clerical anthologies and reference books.²⁹⁸ God’s judgement on sin and the need for repentance was basic to the preacher’s message. It was also the keynote of much religious cheap print. This suggests that such ideas had penetrated the culture, and though it is impossible to judge the commitment of the mass of people, the fact that religious cheap print sold shows a certain acceptance of the message.

From a study of the Stationers’ Registers, and assuming 65% registration, based on the known registration of the ballads that have survived, Tessa Watt calculates that about three thousand ballads were published in the second half of the sixteenth century, of which 35% were religious or moralising.²⁹⁹ A strong theme throughout these was the importance of repentance for the spiritual well-being of the individual, for good social relations and for the nation as a whole. This was in keeping with the message of the preachers. In calling the nation to repentance, Edwin Sandys, like many Elizabethan preachers, compared England to Old Testament Israel: “If kingdoms then be translated for wrongful dealing, for covetousness and pride; how can unrighteous, covetous and proud England stand long? ... If God overthrew the mighty people of Israel in the wilderness for their sins, can he wink at our foul and manifold offences?”³⁰⁰ Thomas Nashe’s Ballad of 1593, *Christ’s teares over Jerusalem*, has a similar theme and was in print for over thirty years:

Repent therefore O England,

Repent while thou hast space,

And doe not like Jerusalem,

Despise Gods proffered grace.³⁰¹

Those who bought, and/or sang such ballads, would be aware of the message and, one must imagine, have had a degree of empathy with the Protestant preachers who were calling both individuals and the nation to repentance. At the very least the Protestant message of repentance was having a significant impact on the culture of Elizabethan England.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Watt, *Cheap Print*, pp. 42-48.

³⁰⁰ Edwin Sandys, *The Sermons of Edwin Sandys, D.D., successively bishop of Worcester and London, and Archbishop of York*, ed. John Ayre (PS. Cambridge 1841), p. 259.

³⁰¹ *The Works of Thomas Nashe Edited from the Original Texts*, ed. R B McKerrow (1904), p. ii.

While the writers of such ballads were not all ministers and came from a variety of backgrounds, the call to repentance was the common message as it was with the preachers. Thomas Brice who was a Protestant minister, began to write religious ballads (1561-2) “to clean up ‘filthy writing’ and provide something more edifying for the public.”³⁰² He challenged the collections of courtly love poetry and asked “is Christ or Cupide Lord?” In this he called his readers to turn from “the gods of love”, in repentance, and to serve Christ.

Other ballads had a similar penitential theme. The 1565 ballad, *I might have lived merrily*,³⁰³ stresses the deadliness of sin and the importance of repentance:

I might have lived merrilie

If I had sinned never;

But now, forsooth and verily,

condemp’d I am for ever,

Except I turne right towardlie

To god with hart and glee,

And leave my sinning forwardlie,

and true repentant be!

This direct call to repentance contrasts with fifteenth-century religious ballads which tended to be meditations on the cross, sometimes with Christ as narrator, as in *A gentill Jhesu!*

Uppon the cross nailed I was for the,

Suffyrd deth to pay thi rawnsum;

Forsake thi syn, man, for the love of me;

Be repentant; make playne confession.

To contrite hartes I do remission,³⁰⁴

The call here is to contrition and confession in the sacrament of penance. From the viewpoint of the penitent, pre-Reformation religious ballads reveal a lack of assurance, with the repeated plea “Passio Cristi conforta me.”³⁰⁵

³⁰² Watt, *Cheap Print*, p. 40.

³⁰³ BL Add. Ms.15225 fo.18: Arber, 1.165.

³⁰⁴ John Stevens, *Music and Poetry in the Early Tudor Court* (London 1961), p. 371.

Andrew Clark compares many of the Elizabethan religious ballads to sermons. “They discharged the functions of the ... pulpit.”³⁰⁶ Some are expository, recounting a story or event from a biblical passage; some are devotional such as *Jesus my loving spouse*,³⁰⁷ and others hortatory such as *Awake, awake, oh England*.³⁰⁸ *When fair Jerusalem did stand*³⁰⁹ is based on an actual sermon by John Stockwood, a schoolmaster of Tunbridge. Like many of the religious ballads it sees England as especially blessed but also in danger of God’s judgement, with an emphasis on the need for national repentance. A ballad of 1561-2, *To pass the place where pleasure is*,³¹⁰ stresses the importance of responding to the message of the preachers, by repentance and faith:

v5 If godes true word, by preaching plaine,	v6 Our faith full frendes, the pastors pure,
might anie wise us certiefie,	doe give us counsell certainlie,
We should not, then, so blind remaine,	From wickednesse for to be sure,
but should embrace the veritie;	to leave our foolish fantasie,-
for why? – the word, the word,	which is the springe, the springe
of god our lord	that us doth bring
doth well record,	to eich ill thing:
all remedie gone	all remedie gone
except in Christ alone, alone.	except in Christ alone, alone.

Protestant teaching here is evidenced by the use of “the word” (the Bible), and “in Christ alone” (justification by faith). Repentance is turning in faith from wickedness, “our foolish fantasie”, to Christ who alone offers salvation.

With regard to repentance ballads and other cheap print frequently exploited people’s fears about death. Tessa Watt has shown that some were written in the spirit of the *ars moriendi*. The ballad *Good people all repent* has as its opening line “A warning to worldlings to learne

³⁰⁵ *Medieval English Lyrics*, ed. Theodore Silverstein (London 1971), p. 84.

³⁰⁶ *Shirburn Ballads 1585-1616*, ed. Andrew Clark (Oxford 1907), p. 7.

³⁰⁷ BL. Add. Ms. 15225 fo.7; Arber 1.30.

³⁰⁸ *Shirburn Ballads*, p. 36.

³⁰⁹ *Shirburn Ballads*, p. 32.

³¹⁰ BL Additional Ms 15225 fo.17v-18; *Transcript of the Stationers’ Registers 1554-1640*, ed. E Arber, 3 vols. (London 1875), 1.179.

them to dye.”³¹¹ William Perkins’ ballad *Death’s knell* describes the scene of the reader’s dying moments: “if thou layest panting for shortnesse of breath, sweating a fatal sweat. And tired with struggling against deadly pangs; O how much then wouldst thou give for a days contrition, an hours repentance, or a minutes amendment of life?”³¹² Protestant ideas were absorbed in many ways, though in the main these were aural: through sermons, catechisms, psalm singing and ballads. Andrew Pettegree stresses that “In the early modern world most information was conveyed in public, communal settings: the market place, the church, a proclamation from the town hall steps. And it was conveyed by word of mouth, sometimes subsequently reinforced in print.”³¹³ Funeral sermons were a popular form of cheap print focusing on the faith of the deceased at the point of death. William Harrison’s oration, at the funeral of the young Katherine Brettergh in Childwall in 1601, was for sale as a broadsheet in London within days.³¹⁴ Several ballads, focusing on repentance in the face of death, turn to the aural metaphor of the bellman. “The recurring toll of bells ... formed a background to daily life in every town ... in both the passing bell announcing a death, and the bell of the watchman on his nightly rounds.”³¹⁵ It was a powerful metaphor with its emphasis on the passage of time and the certainty of death and judgement, and may have been seen as a parallel to the persistent call to repentance by the preachers in the face of these immediate threats.

The nightly Bell which I hear sound, as I am laid in bed:

Foreshowes the Bell which me to ground, shall ring when I am dead

And again:

The bellman’s good morrow,

Which in our ears doth ring

How we must be prepared

For Christ our heavenly king.³¹⁶

³¹¹ *Shirburn Ballads*, p. 25.

³¹² Watt, *Cheap Print*, p. 313; Ian Green doubts whether the ballad was written by the famous theologian, *Print and Protestantism*, p. 480.

³¹³ Pettegree, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion*, p. 8.

³¹⁴ *Deaths advantage little regarded and the sowles solace against sorrow: Preached in two funeral sermons in Chilwal in Lancashire at the burial of Mistris Katherine Brettagh* (1602), RSTC 12866.

³¹⁵ Watt, *Cheap Print*, p. 113.

³¹⁶ *The Shirburn Ballads*, p. 182.

Not all religious ballads were clearly Protestant in their teaching after the 1560s.³¹⁷ A possible critique of the argument that religious ballads were presenting the same message of repentance as the preachers is that ballads were weak theologically and that sensationalism was inherent in the genre. But it could be said that not all Protestant preachers presented the message of repentance with theological clarity. They could be orthodox, authoritarian and moralizing, or jingoistic and anti-Catholic.³¹⁸ And if ballads were often sensationalist not infrequently, so were the preachers as they called people to repentance. Alexandra Walsham, writing about Paul's Cross sermons, points out that:

The static, typeset texts in which these fire and brimstone sermons are now constrained efface the fact that they were, above all, dramatic oral and physical performances. Indeed, this dynamic and charismatic brand of pulpit oratory provides compelling evidence that neither preaching nor providentialism was quite as distasteful to the English people as some recent work has sought to persuade us they were.³¹⁹

It might be expected that more sensationalist cheap print would not relate to the message of Protestant preachers yet even here there were common themes. Peter Lake has pointed out that even murder stories, despite descriptions of actions that could be immoral and even pornographic, were “drenched with the language of divine providence and justice.”³²⁰ In God's providence, according to Arthur Golding, a Puritan layman, who wrote pamphlets describing the crimes of those who had been condemned by the courts, “Their faults come into the open theatre and therefore seemed the greater in our eyes ... neither are ours less since they lay hidden in the covert of our heart, God the searcher of all secrets, seeth them and, if he list he can also discover them.”³²¹ The aim of these stories is to reveal spiritual and social disorder. Sin leads to depravity and damnation unless God in his grace intervenes to bring about repentance and salvation.

Stories in the pamphlets were untypical of everyday experience. They were immediate, intended to shock, titillate, and terrify. And so they were saleable. But often the sins that lay behind the crimes described were ordinary: drunkenness, covetousness, lust, adultery. Readers therefore could identify with these, see the possible consequences of their own sins,

³¹⁷ Green, *Print and Protestantism*, p. 469.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. xii.

³¹⁹ Walsham, *Providence*, p. 282.

³²⁰ Peter Lake, *The Anti-Christ's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (London 2002), pp. xx, 27.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 27; Arthur Golding, *A Brief Discourse*, sig.B3v-4r, (1577).

and their need to repent. Peter Lake describes the pamphlets as “popular Manichaeism, the struggle between good and evil”, in his words “the world stretched tight between God and the devil”, rather than Haigh’s description of them as “popular Pelagianism”, or encouragements to do what is right.³²²

Murder led to the scaffold, a scene in which the condemned person either died, as a sign of God’s judgement, or repented as a sign of God’s grace. The latter was a propaganda coup for those who had brought a prisoner to repentance. Great crowds attended executions and would witness a public repentance and confession. This was often followed by a description of the event in a cheap pamphlet. “Repentance was ... the moral hinge whereby a world, turned upside down by the crimes recounted with such relish in the pamphlets, could be righted, and the moral and religious values that supposedly underlay and protected the social order be reaffirmed.”³²³ Dean Nowell visited Ann Sanders the night before her public confession and execution. Arthur Golding subsequently wrote a pamphlet and play, *A Warning for Fair Women*, based on her adultery, murder, repentance and execution. Samuel Clarke records how William Perkins brought a felon to repentance on the scaffold in Cambridge gaol by praying with the man and confessing his own sins in his presence.³²⁴ It was not only Protestants who engaged in prison evangelism. Nearly three hundred seminary priests were held in prisons at some time during Elizabeth’s reign. They said mass, heard confessions, read and wrote. Those who were executed (116) spoke of their faith. Leading churchmen were sent to confer with them, as Marian churchmen had with imprisoned reformers earlier. Robert Crowley wrote in a 1581 tract that “Henrie Tryp and I did ... make our speedy repaire, first to the one prison, and then to the other.”³²⁵ Later the same year he wrote to Sir Nicholas Pointz of a conference he had with Everard Hanse in Newgate.³²⁶ Anthony Anderson preached in the Tower in 1586.³²⁷ Pamphlets and printed sermons about such events not only conveyed news that was of public interest but emphasised the spiritual importance of repentance.

³²² Lake, *The Anti-Christ’s Lewd Hat*, pp. 29, 147.

³²³ Ibid., p. 145.

³²⁴ Samuel Clarke, *The Marrow of Ecclesiastical History* (1654), pp. 416-7.

³²⁵ Robert Crowley, *An Answer to six reasons, that Thomas Pownde, gentleman, and prisoner in the Marshalsey, on the commandment of her Maiesties commissioners for causes ecclesiastical, required to be answered* (London 1581), sig. Aii, STC(2nd ed.) 6075.5.

³²⁶ Robert Crowley, *A breefe discourse concerning those four usuall notes, whereby Christes catholique church is knowne* (London 1581), STC(2nd ed.) 6081.

³²⁷ Lake, *The Anti-Christ’s Lewd Hat*, p. 208.

Newsworthy events became the basic subject matter of cheap print but were often explained with reference to God's judgement and the need to repent. An earthquake in April 1580 "was clearly a godsend to publishers of providential ephemera."³²⁸ Thomas Tryne and Gabriel Harvey wrote tracts explaining it was the result of natural forces, but they also saw it as an act of God. For Puritan Arthur Golding it was "a messenger and summoner of us to the dreadful Judgement-seate."³²⁹ Church authorities called for fasting and prayer.³³⁰ The collapse of a gallery during a bear-baiting event at the Paris Garden on a Sunday afternoon, causing serious death and injury, was seen by pamphleteers as God's judgement more because of the timing than the cruelty of the event.³³¹ In his sermon following this event, John Field blamed the city authorities, but also saw it as God's judgement on a nation that had taken God's blessings for granted: "Our benefits have been greater, than ever were bestowed upon any nation ... and do we walke worthy of them?"³³² Preachers similarly utilised accidents, disasters, and national emergencies to bring congregations to repentance and to urge them to amendment of life.³³³

Notions of human sin and divine providence in repentance or judgement, which were at the heart of the preachers' message, "clearly operated and circulated at a popular level", which is proved by their presence in cheap print, produced for profit and for the popular market.³³⁴ There was an element of continuity in this with the medieval past, when God's providence, sin, and the need for contrition and penance were also deeply embedded within the culture. "Such continuities must have done much to smooth the turbulent passage of the mid-Tudor revolution."³³⁵ It shows, also, the adaptability of Calvinism, that it was able to accommodate to aspects of popular belief. Moreover, by utilising pamphlets and the narrative form, Protestant authors were able to find an entry point into the mental world of "ordinary" people.

Like pamphlets, plays were "cultural constructs" aiming for profit. They also had a framework of sin and providential judgement. In *The lamentable and true tragedie of M.*

³²⁸ Walsham, *Providence*, p. 131.

³²⁹ Ibid., p. 132; Golding, *Discourse upon the Earthquake*, sigs. B3v-4r.

³³⁰ Walsham, *Providence*, p.132; *The order of prayer for Wednesdayes and Frydayes, to avert God's wrath from us, threatened by the late terrible earthquake (1580)*, reprinted in *Liturgical Services: Liturgies and Occasional Forms of Prayer set forth in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, ed. W K Clay (PS. Cambridge 1851), pp. 562-6.

³³¹ Walsham, *Providence*, p. 136.

³³² Ibid., pp. 136, 290; John Field, *A godly exhortation* (London 1583), sig. B1v.

³³³ For example many related the need for repentance in late 1572 and 1573 to the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre; in 1578 Lawrence Chaderton preached at Paul's Cross about "this present plague, wherby the Lorde in mercie hath visited this Citie." Walsham, *Providence*, pp. 146, 164.

³³⁴ Lake, *The Anti-Christ's Lewd Hat*, p. 315.

³³⁵ Walsham, *Providence*, p. 328.

Arden of Faversham,³³⁶ Alice Arden's lust and Mosby's ambition which lead to the murder, are paralleled by Arden's avarice (including the acquisition of abbey lands, and a small plot of land from which Reede's family were evicted), though as head of the household Arden's responsibility, and therefore his sin, is greater. His murder, as a result of Alice's sins, is also providential. His friend, Franklin, makes this clear at the end of the play: "Arden lay murdered in that plot of ground/ Which he by force and violence held from Reede,/ And in the grass his body's print was seen/ Two years and more after the deed was done."³³⁷ In *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, based on John Rous's horrific murder of his children, Calverley sinks into debt through gambling. He has an opportunity to repent but murders his children to prevent them from falling into a life of beggary.³³⁸ The play has four laments (soliloquies) climaxing in Calverley's ultimate speech of lamentation and repentance. Such plays retain a providential framework, but the focus is increasingly on the satisfaction of the audience's desire for thrills, so that the sense of providence is diminished.³³⁹

Using the evidence of the sale of religious cheap print to try to understand popular religion during Elizabeth's reign raises three important questions. To what extent did such publications represent the piety of the elite targeted at a mass audience? How can we know whether the recipients of these publications "internalised" the message?³⁴⁰ And what was their significance for a public that was, in the main, illiterate?

In the early part of the reign leading Protestants did try to utilise the ballad to get their message across. The main concern of the publishers, however, was to make a profit, so religious ballads must have been saleable. Even the most committed Protestant stationer, John Awdeley, published as many secular as religious ballads,³⁴¹ reminding us that basically the stationers were businessmen. By about 1580 the religious elite fell out of love with the ballad's "rude and homely maner" and secular tunes.³⁴² This coincided with a great increase in the use of metrical psalms. The authors of cheap religious pamphlets, or moralising secular pamphlets, are not so well known. They seem to have been an "emerging class of semi-

³³⁶ *The Tragedy of Master Arden of Faversham*, ed. M L Wine (London 1973). This play was based on an historic event of 1551, recorded in Holinshed's *Chronicles* II.1703-8; Arden had been Mayor of Faversham in 1548.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

³³⁸ Lake, *The Anti-Christ's Lewd Hat*, p. 71.

³³⁹ *Three Elizabethan Domestic Tragedies*, ed. Keith Sturgess (London 1969), pp. 181-2.

³⁴⁰ *Popular Culture in England c. 1500-1800*, ed. Tim Harris (Basingstoke 1995), p. 7.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 54; Patrick Collinson, "From iconoclasm to iconophobia: the cultural impact of the Second English Reformation," *The Impact of the English Reformation 1500-1640*, ed. Peter Marshall (London 1997), p. 282.

professional rhymsters and pamphleteers”, who often ended up as unknown hacks.³⁴³ Thomas Nash suspected that many of them put on “a cloake of zeale”, “pretence of puritie” and “glose of godliness.”³⁴⁴ So while Protestant leaders did try to use ballads for a while, it can hardly be said that the piety reflected in cheap print represented that of the elite. Its themes of sin and repentance, of providence and grace, did relate well to Protestant teaching, but they were themes that Richard Whitford might well have used before the Reformation. Tessa Watt speaks of a “consensus and gradual integration” of values:³⁴⁵ the tradition of contrition and the preaching of repentance cohered in religious ballads written to appeal to a mass audience, and sell.

Nicholas Bownde described those who possessed ballads. He wrote in 1595: “You must not onely look into the houses of great personages ... but also in the shops of artificers, and the cottages of poor husbandmen, where you shall sooner see one of these ... ballads.”³⁴⁶ What would it have meant for such people to “internalise” the Protestant message? Christopher Haigh claims that “in Elizabethan conditions, with low levels of literacy ... the English people could not be made Protestants ... they could not be made to understand, accept and respond to the Protestant doctrines offered to them.”³⁴⁷ Rather than having an understanding of Protestant doctrine, might not many have been committed to the values derived from the doctrine? Tessa Watt believes that in religious cheap print, ballads on death and salvation, and in texts on domestic walls “Bible-centred Protestantism and traditional visual piety found common ground.”³⁴⁸ Mark Byford uses the example of iconoclasm to show that it was not necessary to understand Protestant doctrine to live as a Protestant. He argues that iconoclasts did not need to be able to explain the second commandment before they smashed images, and asks if they did not understand can their actions not be described as Protestant?³⁴⁹ The poor, uneducated, and illiterate might have wanted to identify with what they felt was right, even if they could not articulate it.

³⁴³ Walsham, *Providence*, p. 41.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 43; *The Works of Thomas Nash Edited from the Original Texts*, ed. R B McKerrow (5vols; 1904-10), i. 21-2.

³⁴⁵ Watt, *Cheap Print*, p. 325.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 12; Nicholas Bownde, *The doctrine of the Sabbath* (1595), p. 242.

³⁴⁷ Christopher Haigh, *The Reign of Elizabeth I* (London 1994), p. 213.

³⁴⁸ Watt, *Cheap Print*, p. 325.

³⁴⁹ Byford, *The Price of Protestantism*, p. 415.

Because Protestantism has been seen as the religion of the book, it has been assumed that literacy was the *sine qua non* for the success of Protestant evangelism. The evidence suggests that while Protestantism was a great incentive to learning to read, its spread did not depend on people being already literate. Hadleigh was one of the strongest Protestant towns in Essex but was also among the most illiterate.³⁵⁰ Nicholas Bownde recommended giving copies of the Bible to people who were illiterate, so “that when any come that can read they may have it in readiness and not lose the opportunity that is offered.”³⁵¹ Despite Wrightson and Levine’s findings in Terling, that it was the upper levels of that society, and most literate, who tried to impose their “hotter” Protestant beliefs on the poorer classes,³⁵² Margaret Spufford has pointed to the number of agricultural labourers among the Marian martyrs, and stressed that the poor in rural communities, who were illiterate, were often strong in their Protestant faith.³⁵³ In an oral culture people memorised the catechism and sermons, and so would know the basic message and relate it to what they heard from religious ballads and moralising cheap print. Reading in Elizabethan England, whether it was the Bible or popular cheap print, meant reading aloud. Therefore, “to be illiterate did not mean ... that one was beyond the reach of the printed word.”³⁵⁴ Woodcuts and other pictorial art forms were also powerful “means of communicating religious knowledge and arousing moral virtue.”³⁵⁵ John Day knew this when he included woodcuts in the four great editions of Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*, as did the stationers who published cheap print. Because the masses were illiterate it did not mean they would not enjoy learning and singing ballads, hearing the latest news or scandal from a pamphlet, or that they would not understand the message of repentance that these often contained.

Geography and the historical experiences and traditions of a locality were important in how quickly or slowly Protestantism spread around England.³⁵⁶ Ballads and broadsheets with their emphasis on God’s providence, repentance, faith and amendment of life, penetrated many

³⁵⁰ David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order*, (Cambridge 1980), p. 51.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Keith Wrightson and David Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English village: Terling 1525-1700* (London 1979).

³⁵³ Margaret Spufford, “Puritanism and Social Control”, *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England*, eds. A J Fletcher and J Stevenson (Cambridge 1985), pp. 44-47.

³⁵⁴ R W Scribner, “Oral Culture and the Diffusion of Reformation Ideas”, *Popular Culture and Popular Movements in Reformation Germany*, ed. R W Scribner (London 1987), p. 50.

³⁵⁵ Collinson, “From iconoclasm”, p. 294.

³⁵⁶ Claire Cross has shown it was slow in conservative York, and began to take root among lay people after the appointment of a town lecturer in the 1580s. Claire Cross, “Priests into Ministers: the establishment of Protestant practice in the city of York, 1530-1630” *Reformation Principle and Practice*, ed. P N Brooks (London 1980), p. 222.

parts of the kingdom and reinforced the message of the preachers. The impact of singing ballads, and the sensationalism of cheap print, helped to change the culture. By paying for broadsheets, “ordinary” people bought into the culture and for some it was part of the fundamental change taking place in their lives that was brought about by repentance and faith.

CHURCH COURTS AND THE EXPERIENCE OF PUBLIC PENANCE

With the rejection of the sacrament of penance, church discipline was mainly exercised by the Church courts. Uniquely in England, together with episcopacy and the cathedrals, the courts remained unreformed. For some they were identified with papacy and the complaint was made that there was no discipline. Nevertheless, it was the purpose of the courts, as well as the preachers, to bring offenders to repentance and to reconcile them with the community. It was hoped this might be achieved through public penance, in which sins were acknowledged and confessed in public, often in situations of shameful humiliation, and forgiveness and absolution requested. Public penance took place in church during a service when the penitent stood in front of the pulpit facing the congregation, having listened to the sermon, before declaring his/her repentance and the requesting forgiveness and prayer. But were the courts effective? Sheils and Houlbrooke suggest their authority was undermined by the Reformation, while Ingram sees them as essential in implementing protestant change in church worship, and having some success in improving moral standards. This section tries to assess what ordinary churchgoers made of this.

“A sizeable proportion of the population must at some time in their lives have experienced the atmosphere of the ecclesiastical court as suitor, accuser, witness or defendant.”³⁵⁷ If not personally involved, everyone will have known those in their local community who were part of the administration of the courts or who had been disciplined by the courts. Churchwardens, usually substantial householders, were significant figures in the parish church. “It was largely their dutiful collaboration that made possible the effective local implementation of reform.”³⁵⁸ The office had existed and fulfilled communal responsibilities before as well as

³⁵⁷ Martin Ingram, *Church Courts: Sex and Marriage in England. 1570-1642* (Cambridge 1987), p. 2.

³⁵⁸ Whiting, *Local Responses to the English Reformation*, p. 166.

after the Reformation.³⁵⁹ Churchwardens were required to respond to articles of enquiry which were sent to them before a visitation by the bishop or other diocesan official. Questions concerned church fabric and church attendance but also asked who was guilty of moral failings such as “adultery, whoredom, incest, drunkenness, swearing, ribaldry, usury,” and any “uncleanness and wickedness of life,”³⁶⁰ and many such like issues. The wardens’ responses, called presentments, were considered by a notary who wrote citations requiring those named in the presentments to appear before the court. The court messenger, the apparitor, who delivered the citations, was another local person, well known as he went about his duty. In some cases he might add local information to that given in the presentment. It was sometimes thought he did this to increase his fee income. Hence he was not necessarily the most popular person in the community, as he fulfilled a role reminiscent of Chaucer’s summoner. The wife of William Poore of Winchester asked the apparitor “what authority hast thou?”, and called him “knave, and wished pestilence upon him.”³⁶¹ Not infrequently, it appears that resentment rather than repentance was the outcome of a presentment.

In church on Sunday morning the minister would read out the citations. In some cases those accused would attend the court and admit their offence, when they would be admonished or required to perform public penance. Those who refused to attend the court were counted as contumacious and almost always excommunicated. If the charge was denied on oath, the accused was required to purge him/herself by producing a number of people who, themselves on oath, supported the denial. Six days’ notice of such a compurgation was given in church. The church service was also the setting for the naming of those excommunicated and the performance of public penance. Services must have been quite contentious around the time of visitations. “It was the minister and churchwardens who were at the sharp end of ecclesiastical discipline ... and they got most invective.”³⁶² The churchwardens of Allextun in Leicestershire presented Christopher Carrington in 1585 for calling their minister a “scurvy priest and scurvy knave.”³⁶³ The aim of church discipline was to bring about a true repentance, reconciling offenders with God and with the community. The instance cases (party versus party) heard by the consistory courts also aimed at reconciliation. But did the

³⁵⁹ Beat A Kumin, *The Shaping of a Community: The Rise and Reformation of the English Parish Church. c. 1400-1560* (Aldershot 1996), p. 203.

³⁶⁰ E R C Brinkworth, *Shakespeare and the Bawdy Court of Stratford* (London 1972), p. 13.

³⁶¹ Christopher Haigh, *The Plain Man’s Pathways to Heaven* (Oxford 2007), p. 155.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 156.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

man in the pew see things that way and what impact did the system have on popular religion and popular morality?

In the 1560s the church courts responded, in some dioceses, to an increased concern over sexual laxity, by imposing public penance, not only in the parish church but also in the market square, for sexual offences. Market place penance had almost been discontinued by the sixteenth century.³⁶⁴ Public penance meant a public confession of guilt in shaming and humiliating circumstances. The 1566 Act Books of the archdeaconry of Nottingham describe the penance imposed on Giles Raynor and Elizabeth Walton:

“That theie shall goo this present Daie about the Market of Retford he bare headed, bare legged, and bare footed in his shirt onely, and a sheite about his mydle with a white rod in his hand and she bare legged, bare footed, and a kirchiff caste lowse upon her heade in one petycot and a sheit about her mydle with a white rod in her hand after the manner of penytentes.”³⁶⁵

There are more details for a penance in the market place of Nottingham:

“That upon Satourdaie next he shall goo about the market place of Nottingham at xij of the clock the same Daie bare headed, bare footed and bare legged, in his shirt and dublet onely, and a sheite about his mydle with a white Rod in his hande, after the manner of a penitent And John Crane the apparitor shall goo before him, and se him Doo the saide penaunce, and so declare unto the people whye and wherefore the said Ferneley Dothe the saide penaunce.”³⁶⁶

John Goose of Alveley in Essex failed purgation in the archdeacon’s court. He was ordered

“to comme into the Market place of Alvelie there standing with a whyte shete one hower confessing his fallt and the next Sunday after comme into the churche of Alveley In forma predicta confessing as aforesaid.”³⁶⁷

Typical of such “forma predicta” are the words Dorothy Rawston was directed to use in her penance in Selston parish church in 1591:

³⁶⁴ Dave Postles, “Penance and the Market Place”, *JEH*, 54.3 (2003), p. 445: gives evidence for its use in the fifteenth-century in Ramsbury, Lyme and Sherbourne, and spectacularly for Lollards. A notable exception to its omission in the sixteenth-century was the use of market place penance by Bishop Hooper in his consistory court at Gloucester 1551-3. GDR 6.

³⁶⁵ Postles, “Penance and the Market Place”, p. 445; NUL Dept. Manuscripts Archd. Nottingham, A1 unfoliated c. Giles Raynor and Elizabeth Walton of Selston 1566.

³⁶⁶ Ibid, c. Fernleye, 20 July 1566.

³⁶⁷ Postles, p. 456; ERO D/AEA 1 A Fo.14r.

“Bare headed, bare footed, bare legged, with a white sheete about her and a white rod in her hande, [she] shall kneele in the sighte of the congregacion till the gospels be redde, and then standing on some forme or deske before the pulpit shall saie after the minister as followeth, viz.:- “Good people wheras I, not having the feare of God before my eyes nor regarding my soules health, have committed the fylthie synne of fornication with Willm Cooper. To the greates displeasure of Almightye God, the daunger of my soule and evil example of others; I am nowe come hither to acknowledge my faulte and am righte hartly sorie for the same, beseeching God and you all, whome I have thereby offended, not only to forgive mee and to example by my punishment to leade a chaste and godly life, but also to joyne with mee in hartie praier to the throne of the Almightye for the assistance of His Holy Spirit, that I never fall into the like againe, saying as our Saviour Christe hath taught us. OUR FATHER, etc.” And the said Dorothee is to certifie the performance of this penance under the hands of the vicar and churchwardens of Selston aforesaid upon Wednesday next after the Feaste of Sainte Martine the bushoppe in winter nowe next cominge at Newarke upon paine of lawe.”³⁶⁸

The penitent’s attire was in keeping with the longstanding ritual for sexual offences. In earlier days she/he would have processed around the church with a lighted candle, knelt at the altar, said the Lord’s Prayer, handed the candle to the priest and received absolution, almost as a ritual. Dorothy Rawston’s penance had distinctive Protestant features. The candle was replaced with a white rod. She stood in front of the pulpit instead of kneeling at the altar. But the most significant change was the involvement of the congregation. She addressed them, confessed to them, asked their forgiveness and prayers that she might not repeat her offence, and exhorted them to consider the consequences of her failings so that they should “leade a chaste and godly life.” The “forma predicta” varied in detail according to diocese. The set piece in the Ely diocese in 1594 was:

“Good people I acknowledge and confesse yt I have offended Allmightie God and by my evil example you all, for that I have broken his Divine laws and commandments in committinge yt most shamefull and abominable sin of adultrie or fornicacion, for which I am most hartly sorry, and aske God and you

³⁶⁸ A C Wood, “Nottingham Penances (1590-1794)”, *Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire* 48 (1944), p. 54

all most hartily forgivenesse for the same, promising by Godes helpe never to offend hereafter in ye like againe.”³⁶⁹

This also related to the congregation, but stressed that sin involved breaking God’s commandments, which were the touchstone of a good repentance. At the end of this confession the minister was ordered to read the homily against adultery and fornication and also the homily on repentance. The public penance was a visual aid to this teaching. Doubtless the minister and wardens, along with the congregation, would be watching carefully to try to be sure the penance was genuine, which was a requirement of the performance certificate.³⁷⁰

To avoid the shame of public penance some were allowed to commute public humiliation for a payment, despite of the fact that bishops and convocations repeatedly opposed such commutations. After the royal visitation of 1559, Ralph Winnington of Stockport petitioned against doing penance in the parish church and was ordered instead to pay 6/8d in cash and 13/4d in bread for the poor.³⁷¹ Bishops kept up the pressure for penances to be performed. In John Whitgift’s Articles for Worcester in 1577, he asked “whether any minister has used the form of Thanksgiving or Churching of any woman after childbirth being unlawfully begotten with child otherwise than in the form of a penitent person *viz.* in a white sheet.”³⁷² Bishop Barnes’ Injunctions for Durham in 1577 insisted that “no notorious adulterer, fornicator, incestuous person, filthy and common drunkard, horrible swearer or blasphemmer of the name of God, curser or banner or beater of father or mother, or known usurer, or any other notorious open and evil liver, be admitted to Holy Communion before they shall be first reconverted, reconciled or punished.”³⁷³ But how effective was public penance? Certainly those who were cited wanted to avoid it. On the basis of his analysis of court proceedings from Wiltshire, the diocese of Ely and archdeaconries of Leicester and Chichester, Martin Ingram concludes that “Contumacy was most pronounced among defendants charged with major sexual offences. The precise levels varied from area to area, but very commonly well

³⁶⁹ H Hall, “Some Elizabethan Penances in the Diocese of Ely”, *TRHS*, 3rd Series Vol.1 (1906), pp. 268-9.

³⁷⁰ For example GDR B5/1: Thomas Wyte, curate, and Thomas Hale were sureties certifying the penance of Elinore Huchsley at Oddington parish church in the Gloucester diocese on 8th November 1578.

³⁷¹ *The Royal Visitation of 1559: Act Book for the Northern Province*. ed. C J Kitching (Gateshead 1975), p. xxvii.

³⁷² *Elizabethan Episcopal Administration II*, ed. W P M Kennedy (London 1924), p. 55.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

over 50% of individuals detected for adultery, fornication or bastard bearing never appeared in court and were excommunicated.”³⁷⁴

Bishops were aware of the danger of excessive use of excommunication. It was the ultimate sanction and courts used it to try to coerce attendance by those who received citations. This diminished its effectiveness. Ronald Marchant suggests that “large numbers of the contumacious formed a group of what can only be termed ethical dissenters. Rather than conform to the church’s standards of morality, men and women of all classes preferred to accept the disabilities of excommunication as a permanent state of life.”³⁷⁵ He claims that there may have been as many as 50,000 excommunicates at any one time in the dioceses of York, Chester and Norwich. Taking their families into account, there may have been as many as 15% of the population of those dioceses.³⁷⁶ Ingram points out that “lesser excommunication” merely banned the culprit from the church and it is not known whether it was this that was imposed on the contumacious. Even full excommunication, to be effective, depended on the minister “denouncing” the sentence in church, not only initially but every six months.³⁷⁷ In addition to the spiritual and social implications of excommunication, one factor which concerned many families was whether or not excommunicates would be allowed to be buried in consecrated ground. In 1584 Archbishop Whitgift called for excommunication to be used only in cases of heresy, schism, simony, perjury, and usury; and that sentence should only be passed personally by senior clergy.³⁷⁸ Few of those excommunicated repented and sought absolution which is not surprising since they were cut off from the pastoral ministry of the church and the call to repentance by the preachers.

Conformists, Puritans and Catholics were all eager to improve moral discipline. There had been concerns expressed in the 1563 convocation. Concerns as to whether the courts were being effectively used were still being expressed in the provincial visitation to Bath and Wells in 1583, when one of the articles asked: “how many adulteries, incests, and fornications are notoriously known to have been committed in your parish since Easter 1580; how many offenders in any such faults have been put to open penance and openly corrected; and how many have been winked at and borne withal, or have fined or paid money ... to

³⁷⁴ Ingram, *Church Courts*, p. 353.

³⁷⁵ Marchant, *The Church under the Law*, p. 243.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

³⁷⁷ Ingram, *Church Courts*, p. 343.

³⁷⁸ John Strype, *The Life and Acts of John Whitgift* (Oxford 1822), p. 364.

escape open punishment and correction: and what their names and surnames be?”³⁷⁹ There was a Europe wide desire to improve moral discipline: Cardinal Borromeo’s concerns for moral reform in Milan may be compared with the concerns of English Protestants.³⁸⁰ In fact, enforcement of strict but consensual moral codes enjoyed widespread support and “the machinery employed itself amounted to a kind of popular culture, at once traditional and Protestant.”³⁸¹ In Colchester, tumbrels, in which fornicators and adulterers were carted around the town with placards hung around their necks, were “an expression of the sexual mores of the community.”³⁸²

On 22nd March 1560 Henry Machyn watched a female bawd being carted through the streets of London “with a basen tynglyng a-for.”³⁸³ This “rough music” was part of her shameful humiliation. It was often associated with a tumbrel or riding, in which the overturning of the moral order “was broadcast through ... drums, trumpets, pots, pans, basins, spades, animal horns, bells, tongs and shouting.”³⁸⁴ On another occasion Machyn saw a stand-in for a man whose wife had beaten him being carried through the streets at Charing Cross with “a bagpipe, a shame [shawm] and a drum playhyng.”³⁸⁵ Such a husband had not exercised his God given authority over his family, so that his wife had berated him verbally, beaten him physically, or betrayed him sexually. “Disturbances in the hierarchy of a family implied a threat to the whole social order; and it was precisely this which justified communal action.”³⁸⁶ Participation in such activities was “predominantly plebeian”³⁸⁷ but often encouraged by “more substantial members of the community”, like Thomas Upcher, the town preacher in Colchester, who though he did not take part in tumbrels was happy to make use of them.³⁸⁸ Church courts rarely took action against tumbrels, but made occasional exceptions for defamation or breach of charity. When the vicar of Waterbeach took action against those who broadcast the beating he had suffered at the hands of his wife, the alleged “Lord and Capteyne of the disordered Company”, John Knocke, explained to the court “that there is a

³⁷⁹ *Elizabethan Episcopal Administration III*, p. 157.

³⁸⁰ Bruce Lennon, “The Limits of Godly Discipline in the Early Modern Period with particular reference to England and Scotland, *Religion and Society in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Kaspar von Greyerz (Hemel Hemstead 1984), pp. 125-8.

³⁸¹ Collinson, “Elizabethan and Jacobean Puritanism as Forms of Popular Culture”, p. 43.

³⁸² Byford, “The Price of Protestantism”, p. 408.

³⁸³ *The Diary of Henry Machyn*, p. 228

³⁸⁴ Marsh, *Music and Society* p. 46.

³⁸⁵ *The Diary of Henry Machyn*, p. 301.

³⁸⁶ Martin Ingram, “Ridings, Rough Music and Mocking Rhymes”, *Popular Culture in Seventeenth Century England*, ed. Barry Reay (London 1999), p. 177.

³⁸⁷ Tim Harris, *Popular Culture in England c.1500-1850* (Basingstoke 1995), p. 22: “the lower orders had their own ways of dealing with sexual transgressions such as shaming rituals.”

³⁸⁸ Byford, “The Price of Protestantism”, p. 408.

custome in theire towne that if a woman beate her husband, the next neighbour towards the church must ride upon a cowstaffe.”³⁸⁹

Martin Ingram argues that “many of the courts’ activities were in line with the existing attitudes and expectations of honest householders in the parishes (as in the pursuit of notorious sexual offenders), or represented a realistic attempt, normally supported by at least a section of local opinion, to nudge the mass of people towards improving standards of morality and religious observance” and they were effectively used in instance cases.³⁹⁰ But although there was a coherence between the moral strictures of the church courts and the almost instinctive moral concerns of the community, even to the extent of seeking to bring about correction through the shaming of those who were guilty, it does not necessarily mean that the courts were influencing popular morality. It may be, conversely, that because they did not trust the church courts, defaming them as “bawdy courts”, that local people took action into their own hands in expressing their moral concerns and drawing confidence from local customs. People were aware of corruption in church courts, notoriously in the case of Gloucester’s Chancellor Powell,³⁹¹ and though the fees may not have been excessive they built up into becoming a considerable burden. There were charges for the citation, court appearance, details of penance, certificate of performance, and absolution. Even in dioceses where there was no evidence of corruption or of excessive fees, such as Oxford,³⁹² the supervision of the lives of the laity must have been overbearing. William Drew of Newton was made to do penance and confess that “I have suffered Richard Peareson my servant to carrie a sheepracke to the pasture on the Sabbath daie before morning praire.”³⁹³ Whitgift received complaints of too frequent archdeacons’ courts, demanding churchwardens’ continual attendance, which he feared was due to “the greediness of mean inferior Registrars and Apparitors.”³⁹⁴ It is no wonder that Puritans felt it all had little to do with true repentance.

People were aware of the courts, especially as they witnessed public penance. Fear of public shame and readiness to avoid it is seen in the large number who refused to attend court and

³⁸⁹ Christopher Marsh, *Music and Society*, p. 47; CUL EDR B/2/18. Fos. 174v-917r.

³⁹⁰ Ingram, *Church Courts*, p. 323.

³⁹¹ F D Price, “Abuses of Excommunication and the Decline of Ecclesiastical Discipline under Queen Elizabeth”, *English Historical Review* 57 (1942).

³⁹² E R Brinkworth, “The Study and Use of Archdeacons’ Court Records: illustrated from the Oxford Records (1566-1759),” *TRHS*, 4th series, no.25 (1943), p. 107.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 266.

³⁹⁴ Strype, *The Life and Acts of John Whitgift*, II. 446-52.

were counted as contumacious and as a consequence excommunicated, as well as in those who had resources and influence sufficient to enable them to commute the sentence. Ingram claims that despite accusations of corruption and excessive fees by court officials, the visitation system kept a constant pressure for religious observance and moral discipline.³⁹⁵ But the effectiveness of the courts varied from diocese to diocese, according to the enthusiasm of bishops and the abilities of their officials. The Edwardian Bishop Hooper had tried harder than any of the Elizabethan bishops to use the courts as a means of bringing reformation but with little evidence of success. In fact the courts compromised the church since public penances were seen as punishments rather than a sign or means of true repentance. Excommunications were pronounced by legal officials rather than responsible pastors and cut off many from hearing the word of God. The courts played their part in enforcing conformity, though even conformists were critical of their operations, but for many of those who were cited and shamed they produced resentment rather than repentance.

CONCLUSIONS

Protestants did not simply abandon the sacrament of penance but searched for alternatives that would meet their religious and social needs in keeping with their distinctive beliefs concerning sin and salvation, and the nature of the church. John Jewel's *Apology* and his debate with Thomas Harding positioned the Elizabethan church clearly in the Reformed camp. Since the church was established by the word of God, its ministry "standeth in setting forth the mystery of our salvation ... [and] the principal part of this office is to preach repentance; so that we may amend our lives and be converted unto God."³⁹⁶ In seeing preaching as the way to exercise the power of the keys, and the means of binding and loosing, which was Christ's commission to the church, Jewel made it clear that what had been seen as the role of the sacrament of penance was fulfilled in preaching Christ. There were two problems for preaching: the shortage of preachers in the early years of Elizabeth's reign, and the uncertainty of the response to preaching. However the effectiveness of the Elizabethan church was in the routine of the liturgy linked to preaching, the teaching reinforced by catechisms, and the application of that teaching in pastoral counselling. Collinson separates

³⁹⁵ Ingram, *Church Courts*, p. 124.

³⁹⁶ *The Works of John Jewel*, 2. 1131.

pastoral counselling from preaching.³⁹⁷ Haigh claims that one unhelpful doctrine (predestination) dominated the preaching and was resisted by lay hearers.³⁹⁸ But, in fact, preaching, catechisms and pastoral counselling were all inter-related and, with the routine of the liturgy, gradually provided the input that established Protestantism across the nation.

Nevertheless, Keith Thomas rightly sees pastoral counselling by itself as “too informal and uncoordinated to fill up the gap left by the confessional.”³⁹⁹ The reason for this was lack of pastoral discipline. Parishioners would witness public penance in their churches but this was the legal discipline of the courts rather than the ministry of Christian discipleship. Collinson sees this legal discipline as social control rather than pastoral care⁴⁰⁰ and is right since repentance must of its nature be voluntary. Not only returning exiles, but even erstwhile Nicodemites now bishops, felt that the Elizabethan church lacked discipline. After the abandoning of the sacrament of penance, which had had the intent of both healing and disciplining the church, they felt that both needed to be replaced in a true reformation based on justification by faith alone. Discipline was increasingly important in England: increasingly important to the government, and to conformists, as well as to Puritans. The title of Hooker’s magnum opus, *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Politie*, shows how intensely important he thought it was, even as he denounced the Presbyterian system advocated by one wing of Puritanism. With the accession of James I there was still a strong desire for the reformation of ecclesiastical discipline:⁴⁰¹ “That the discipline and excommunication may be administered according to Christ’s own institution; or, at least, the enormities may be redressed: as namely, that excommunication come not forth under the name of lay persons ... that men be not excommunicated for trifles and twelvepenny matters; that none be excommunicated without the consent of his pastor.” And yet, as in parts of Protestant Europe, disciplinary procedures were often resisted;⁴⁰² in the case of England by the increasing unwillingness of laity to attend ecclesiastical courts and accept their decisions.

Part 2 of this chapter has considered how the majority of people would have participated in the liturgy, sung metrical psalms, and been aware of injunctions enforced upon the church

³⁹⁷ See n. 4.

³⁹⁸ See n. 9.

³⁹⁹ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 159.

⁴⁰⁰ See n. 5.

⁴⁰¹ *Constitutional Documents of James I 1603-1625*, ed. J R Tanner (Cambridge 1952), p. 59: The Millenary Petition, IV, *For Church Discipline*.

⁴⁰² Ronald Rittgers, “Private Confession and Religious Authority in Nurnberg”, *Penitence in the Age of Reformations*, pp. 49-70.

and community in the parish. Yet it remains as difficult to know the effect of these experiences on those who conformed to the Elizabethan reforms, and how they felt about their faith, as it is to access the faith of the Queen herself. A poor conformist would have internalised his faith differently from a rich conformist.⁴⁰³ The experience, and the response, of the parishioner in the city were certain to have varied considerably from that of the rural churchgoer. At different times anti-Catholicism and anti-Puritanism were to the fore. If Catholic recusants, sectarians and separatists are taken into account, the Elizabethan age may be seen as a time of “unprecedented diversity.”⁴⁰⁴ Nevertheless the importance of penitence was common ground and all were eager to find a replacement for the sacrament of penance, in that they wanted a route to assured forgiveness. Self-examination was stressed by the liturgy, and even more so by those scathingly called “Puritans”. “It is hard to credit the energy which early Protestants put into examining themselves, and condemning themselves for their innumerable sins.”⁴⁰⁵ They were continually reminded of these both by preachers and the Prayer Book with its exhortation to repent since “there is no health in us.”⁴⁰⁶ Even for Catholics “the sacrament of penance in particular was transformed,”⁴⁰⁷ and a pocket manual was printed to aid them in the examination of conscience.⁴⁰⁸ The call to repentance, so emphasised by the preachers, was reinforced not only in the liturgy but also in religious ballads and other cheap print, as well as conforming with the penitential tradition.

Another of the reasons for the Protestants’ success in getting across their message was a certain degree of continuity with the past. “Continuity” and “change” have provided an important framework for recent historical analysis, but as Peter Burke has shown, they can be “slippery words”.⁴⁰⁹ “Continuity” may refer to an absence of change, or describe a particular kind of change. And “change” may refer to long term trends or a sudden redirection. The religious changes experienced by Elizabethans were largely determined by the ideological and cultural impact of the reformed theology of penitence. But there were many continuities: such as the church buildings in which parishioners worshipped and where they met with their neighbours;⁴¹⁰ the use of liturgy; clergy and their pastoral office⁴¹¹; the role and

⁴⁰³ Tim Harris, *Popular Culture in England 1500-1850* (Basingstoke 1995), p. 18.

⁴⁰⁴ Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation*, p. 283

⁴⁰⁵ Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford 2013), p. 50.

⁴⁰⁶ *The Book of Common Prayer: the Texts*, p. 103.

⁴⁰⁷ Jensen, “The Life of Faith”, p. 136.

⁴⁰⁸ A C Southern, *Elizabethan Recusant Prose* (London 1949), pp. 212-3.

⁴⁰⁹ Peter Burke, “Concepts of Continuity and Change in History”, *New Cambridge Modern History XIII, Companion Volume* (Cambridge 1979), p. 3.

⁴¹⁰ David Palliser, “Introduction: the parish in perspective”, *Parish, Church and People*, ed. S J Wright (London 1988), pp.12f.

responsibilities of churchwardens. The cathedrals, the hierarchy and the courts provided direct institutional continuity. Associated with these, with minor changes but with recognisable continuity, were clergy vestments and the attire of penitents. In some situations there were similarities reminiscent of pre-Reformation penitential practices. Pastors might make use of “cases of conscience” where priests had referred to manuals for confession. Itinerant preachers were popular, as preaching friars had been earlier. Groups of people had travelled together to hear sermons just as earlier they had gone on pilgrimage. Rich women and others had their favourite pastors or preachers, as in days past they had had their favourite confessors. Those with afflicted consciences might meet face to face with a spiritual physician and share deep personal concerns just as had been the case in auricular confession. In the case of Protestant devotional publications, there was a clear line of development from the Primer, and the Penitential Psalms provided a focus for penitential devotion across the Reformation divide.⁴¹² Such continuities and “the retention of sufficient familiar things made change more tolerable as it seemed more gradual.”⁴¹³ The call for change was articulated in the call for repentance by preachers and underlined in liturgy, catechisms, and even religious ballads and pamphlets. Gradual it may have been but allegiance to the change was decisive. “A tectonic shift”, Ryrie calls it.⁴¹⁴ Allegiance came gradually but by the end of the reign the English people were identified as a Protestant people.

This chapter has taken a very broad canvas while keeping a clear focus on penitence – why and how repentance was significant for the church and nation, for communities and individuals. It has taken sides in some of the current historiographic debates. The evidence supports Carlson in stressing that there was no dichotomy between preaching and pastoral ministry for the Elizabethan church. Ingram has a strong case for claiming that the church courts were effective, but constant criticism of the courts and continued requests for a proper pastoral discipline suggest that the courts compromised church reform and ministry, and that Ingram has not sufficiently accounted for this.

If Part 1 of the chapter examined the call to repentance “from above”, Part 2 is an attempt to look at how it might have been seen “from below”. There was certainly a social dimension to

⁴¹¹ Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation* (Oxford 1994), p.192: “Taken all in all, - the element of continuity is probably more important than the element of change so far as the pastoral role of the priest is concerned.”

⁴¹² Clare Costley King’oo, *Misereri Mei: the Penitential Psalms in Late Medieval and Early Modern England* (Notre Dame 2012), p. 24

⁴¹³ Marsh, *Popular Religion*, p. 209.

⁴¹⁴ Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation*, p. 276.

singing metrical psalms and listening to preachers. Those who purchased and sang, or enjoyed listening to religious ballads with their focus on repentance identified in some way with it. The church courts may have been resisted by those who refused to recognise or accept their authority, but those who engaged in rough music or tumbrels showed they had their own moral standards.

The call to repentance proved to have a significant impact not only on the church but on the culture of the Elizabethan nation.

Penitence and the English Reformation

CONCLUSION

In this study of penitential thinking and ministry in England across the sixteenth century several key themes have emerged. The conclusion aims to draw these together from the vantage of the changing nature of pastoral ministry, thus showing what is distinctive in the argument of the thesis. It will consider auricular confession, conscience, preaching, consolation and discipline, and how they relate to pastoral ministry to penitents.

The fact that Elizabethan pastors such as Greenham and Perkins saw the abandoning of obligatory auricular confession as a loss says a great deal. They were not new in seeing confession as important in helping them to minister to needs of their flock. Thomas Watson, in his *Holesome and Catholyke Doctryne concernynge the Seven Sacraments*, expounded the pastoral value of auricular confession in the sacrament of penance and had an affinity in this with Perkins, when he asks how a surgeon can minister wholesome medicine if the sick man will not open his wounds to him,¹ and in giving a format for the examination of conscience. It was because of their pastoral concerns that Fisher and Erasmus had been so concerned about the misuse of confession in the penitential system in the early decades of the century. Cranmer continued to value auricular confession pastorally even after he rejected its sacramental status. Although he introduced general confession into his liturgies, for pastoral reasons he allowed private confession to a priest to enable specific personal problems to be dealt with. Not only were Elizabethan pastors concerned at the loss of confession, some of them were sought out by penitents for personal ministry. Among the reformed community this had its origins during the Marian persecution, when those facing difficult decisions of conscience asked advice of imprisoned church leaders. The pastoral advice in the letters of John Bradford to such, via Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, became a model for many puritan pastors under Elizabeth in dealing with what they called the "afflicted conscience". After auricular confession ceased to be obligatory its use declined considerably, as Bonner pointed out, and this thesis has argued that Marians had problems in trying to re-establish it. Elizabethan preachers, however, were able to make clear the importance of personal repentance. Their message had a considerable impact on how pastoral ministry to penitents was subsequently exercised.

The changes during the sixteenth-century in ministry to penitents had a profound effect on the understanding and significance of conscience. In auricular confession the priest, in seeking to bring the penitent to contrition and to enable him/her to make a full confession, had been the arbiter of what should be believed and how the Christian life should be lived. The 1539 Act Abolishing Diversity of Opinions showed that the state

¹ Thomas Watson, *Holesome and Catholyke Doctryne concernynge the Seven Sacraments* (1558), fo. cxiii. Perkins: "the Physitian must first know the disease, before he can applie the remedie." *William Perkins 1558-1602*, ed. Thomas F Merrill (Nieuwkoop 1966), p. 5; *Holesome* fo. cxxv, Perkins' "Cases of Conscience".

took over this role of controlling individual consciences. But in 1548 when he abandoned obligatory auricular confession Cranmer required penitents to “search and examine [their] own consciences”² before receiving Holy Communion. Thus he placed responsibility for conscience in the hands of each individual. Although for reformers the Bible was their authority in doctrine and ethics, it was interpreted in different ways. During the Marian persecution Nicodemites used the story of Naaman to justify their conformity against the understanding of imprisoned church leaders who warned against conformity. This study supports the conclusions of those who argue that Nicodemism had a major influence on the significance of conscience in the second half of the century.³ Although the “subjectivity of conscience was very rarely acknowledged”⁴ it was being used to justify various beliefs and practices and so was increasingly relative. It was so significant in pastoral matters that Perkins listed “cases of conscience” as a manual for pastoral ministry. This was not only used by Puritans but also by conformists.

A fundamental change in the century was from focusing on the sacrament to focusing on the word, and that was also true of pastoral ministry to penitents. John Fisher, Thomas Watson and Cardinal Pole, among Catholics, had valued preaching as a means of teaching and drawing people to value the sacraments. After the abolition of the sacrament of penance, it was primarily by the ministry of the word that people were called to repentance and were assured of God’s grace. John Jewel claimed the ministry of the word as the spiritual and intellectual rationale for the Church of England, and that as such preaching replaced the sacrament of penance as the key to pastoral ministry. Historians have disagreed as to whether preaching was a success in Elizabethan England. Haigh argues that people wanted pastoral ministry and not preaching about predestination. Collinson claims that preaching depended on a personal response and was therefore too individualistic to be the basis for a national church. But the argument of this thesis is that, after the initial difficulties with non-preaching clergy in the early days of Elizabeth, preaching became a popular culture, and it supports Carlson in claiming that preaching and pastoral ministry went hand in hand. Greenham and Perkins, for instance, believed in the primacy of preaching yet were able, indeed model, pastors. Preaching was a success because it was supplemented by catechisms and devotional works. Some of these involved collections of prayers helping the user to make confession in the primer tradition. The reformed liturgies of 1552 and 1559 brought repentance and faith to the heart of the Holy Communion, and Morning and Evening Prayer began with a call to repentance and a general confession. These prayers and the increasingly popular metrical psalms enabled people to confess their sins together in response to the call to repentance by the preachers. Even religious ballads were in tune with the message of repentance being preached not only in church pulpits but also in the open air at meetings, such as festivals of reconciliation. Evidence of the

² *The Two Liturgies of the Reign of King Edward I*, ed. J Ketley (PS. Cambridge), p. 5.

³ Alexandra Walsham, “Ordeals of Conscience, Casuistry, Conformity and Confessional Identity in Post-Reformation England”, *Contexts of Conscience in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Harald Braun and Edward Vallance (New York 2004), pp. 38-40.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

success of preaching ministry is seen in the number of communities inviting lecturers to preach in their towns. Preaching was effective and the call to repentance was taken seriously especially by the “godly”. “It is hard to credit the energy which early Protestants put into examining, and condemning themselves for their innumerable sins.” This was so much so that for some “repentance almost constituted the Christian Life.”⁵

Canon 21 of the Fourth Lateran Council “omnis utriusque sexis”, included both consolation and discipline among its objectives. A medical metaphor was used then and frequently thereafter to describe the pastoral ministry to penitents during confession. Within the sacrament, for many it was the absolution that reassured them of God’s forgiveness. However, teaching about purgatory, although intended to assure penitents that they were ultimately on track for heaven, caused anxieties as to whether their penance had been sufficient to compensate for their sins. It was because reformers believed that Christ’s death alone was sufficient to deal with sin and the only true comfort to believers, that they denounced purgatory. In *The Castell of Comforte* Thomas Becon stressed that it was the word of God which brought comfort to the troubled conscience. The 1547 injunctions instructed clergy to be ready to “comfort their flock with the lively word of God.” Cranmer inserted the “coumfortable words our saviour Christ sayeth, to all that truely turne to him” into his 1549 liturgy.⁶ The same texts were incorporated into the Marian theologian Leonard Pollard’s sermon on “Confession and purgation or cleansing from sin.” The Marian bishop, Thomas Watson, described absolution as a witness to God’s promise to forgive the penitent. Lucy Wooding saw the influence of the Henrician church, and even the Edwardian reforms, on the Marian church. The evidence in this thesis from the pastoral writings of Marian church leaders confirms her argument. This focus on God’s word as the source of spiritual comfort and healing continued throughout Elizabeth’s reign. John Bradford comforted his hearers by giving twelve examples from Scripture of God’s grace and mercy, ultimately drawing their attention to the passion and death of Christ as “the great seal” assuring them of God’s promises. Bradford’s writings were influential on the pastoral ministry of Elizabethan pastors, not least William Perkins.

Alongside the growing importance of consolation in penitential teaching, there was also an increasing emphasis on discipline in the penitential systems in Reformation Europe; in Luther’s teaching; Calvin and the Reformed tradition; as well as in post-Trent Catholicism in Milan. Martin Bucer saw discipline as a key part of “the true care of souls”, and spelled this out carefully in his *De Regno Christi*, which was the main work that he wrote while in England. The Fourth Lateran Council’s penitential teaching although in pastoral language had a disciplinary emphasis. The priest in the sacrament of penance pronounced judgement on the penitent’s confession as he declared what penance should be performed. This was part of a disciplinary system which included the papacy, the hierarchy and the church courts. Although the English church separated from the papacy, and Cromwell cancelled the teaching of canon law in the universities,

⁵ Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford 2013), p. 50.

⁶ *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559 and 1662*, ed. Brian Cummings (Oxford 2011), p. 33.

the church courts remained unreformed in England. Cranmer planned their reform, and John Hooper tried to use them to discipline his diocese, but reform never took place. This thesis points out that from the middle ages penitence had been conceived in legal as well as pastoral terms. A distinctive contribution it makes is to point out that since Cardinal Pole took a legal view of the importance of penance in absolving the English nation from schism, while the leading bishops and theologians saw penance in pastoral and sacramental terms, there was an unresolved tension between them. Reformers who had seen other disciplinary systems work while in exile in Geneva or Zurich, or who had taken the teaching of Bucer to heart, complained that the church in England, after the Elizabethan settlement, lacked a true pastoral discipline. Martin Ingram has seen the courts as successful in reforming the church and improving moral discipline. However, conformists as well as Puritans remained dissatisfied, since there were many excommunications that cut people off from preaching and pastoral ministry. The evidence in this thesis supports Collinson's claim that the discipline of the courts "was closer to coercive social control than to genuinely pastoral and restorative cure of souls."⁷ The nearest the English church had to a genuine pastoral discipline was the rubric in the opening of the communion service, in the 1549 and subsequent Prayer Books, which told the curate to exclude those who had offended the congregation by their evil lives or by sinning against their neighbours.

If the changes in the penitential system were determined by theology and put into effect in pastoral ministry, when and how they were implemented depended on politics. Purgatory never recovered from the schism as its power rested in dispensations which came ultimately from the papacy. This thesis has argued, against Bernard, that Cranmer was the prime influence in Henry's penitential reforms, distinctively pointing to the statement on penance that was allowed in the King's Book. On the matter of whether auricular confession had divine authority Henry identified himself with Cranmer's position in his fierce letter against Bishop Tunstall.⁸ The change in penitential ministry focusing on the word of God rather than the sacraments was brought about in the Edwardian injunctions and by the acts of Uniformity which introduced the new liturgy. It was these which Gardiner wished to repeal in the restoration of the Marian church while Cardinal Pole saw the need to deal with the schism, and that by the absolution of the nation. Gardiner and other bishops who had served under Henry saw the sacraments as key to the Catholicism of the church, but for Pole without the papacy the church could not be apostolic or truly catholic. By the 1559 act of Uniformity the 1552 Prayer Book was restored, with minimal changes. Yet "Elizabeth deliberately sought to take the spirit out of the Edwardian Church at the same time as she restored its husk."⁹ Despite her clash with Grindal over preaching, and her refusal to allow reform of the church courts since she was content with conformity, preaching, with its focus on

⁷ Patrick Collinson, "Shepherds, Sheepdogs and Hirelings: the Pastoral Ministry in Post-Reformation England", *Studies in Church History* 26 (Oxford 1989), p. 219.

⁸ BL Cleopatra E v fo. 131v: "both by the bishop of Canterbury and me."

⁹ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant* (London 1999), p. 194.

repentance, and pastoral ministry to those aware of their sin and guilt, flourished and Protestantism was established.

There is much in this thesis which supports T N Tentler's claim that "the penitential systems of the Reformation represent, simultaneously and paradoxically, a continuation of medieval mentalities and practices and a revolutionary break with them."¹⁰ He notes how categories of consolation and discipline persisted as aims within penitential practice and how clergy, whether priests or ministers, continued to be those who validated the penitential experience of the laity. In fact the penitential tradition continued in unexpected ways, and "some old devotional patterns of piety which the first generation of Protestants reviled crept back into their children and grandchildren's practice."¹¹ Where pre-Reformation penitents had sought out their favourite confessor, or "ghostly father", Elizabethan penitents looked for help from "spiritual physicians" and also had their favourites. Preaching friars had been popular in Lent as they reminded their listeners of their annual obligation to attend to confession prior to Easter communion, while later preachers gathered crowds at open air pulpits and called them to repentance. Just as people went on pilgrimage later their children journeyed to feasts of reconciliation or went "sermon gadding". Priests questioned penitents about the details of their failings to bring them to a true contrition and full confession; Puritans kept journals and a record of their sins that they might make a true repentance and be able to confess all their sins to God. Manuals were used by priests to help them judge what might be appropriate penances to compensate for sins; protestant pastors used "cases of conscience" to understand how to minister consolation to those who were anxious or doubting. "For most early modern British Protestants ... repentance was more than just accusing yourself. It was judging and even punishing yourself,"¹² just as the priest in confession had judged the penitent and imposed penance. Those made to do public penance by the Elizabethan church courts wore the same attire as had been worn in the fifteenth century, the main difference being that in earlier days the penitents carried a candle and presented it at the altar whereas later they carried a white rod and asked the congregation for forgiveness and prayer. The sacrament of confession had provided an opportunity for teaching the faith; catechisms were a later means of instruction. In both cases the creed and commandments were central to what was taught. Protestant devotional works were often similar to primers and sometimes included prayers that had been used in primers. End of century Protestants were still devoted to Thomas a Kempis's *Imitation of Christ* and the Penitential Psalms that had both been important in Catholic devotion early in the century. Such continuities must have helped in making change more acceptable. They also underline the continuing significance of penitence in Christian thinking and the ongoing need for pastoral ministry to penitents.

¹⁰ T N Tentler, "Postscript", *Penance in the Age of Reformations*, eds. K J Lualdi and A T Thayer (Ashgate 2000), p. 240.

¹¹ Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, p. 469.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 54.

Because pastoral ministry involved the whole church community and not simply care for penitents in isolation, the outcome of the changes to the penitential system in Reformation England was not as individualistic as Bossy expected.¹³ The exercising of a pastoral ministry in helping people to repent and experience God's forgiveness was a major factor in establishing a protestant culture in England which impacted on all religious groups and not merely those known as Puritans.

¹³ John Bossy, *Peace in the Post-Reformation* (Cambridge 1998), pp. 73-100.

Epilogue

Many priests early in the sixteenth century were aware of, if not dependent on, Myrc's *Instructions for Parish Priests*, not least because it mediated the guidance of manuals with regard to ministry in auricular confession and the sacrament of penance. Early in the seventeenth century the poet-priest George Herbert produced *A Priest to the Temple*¹ as a guide to ministry for clergy, especially those in rural areas. This, and his collection of devotional poems, *The Temple*, neatly illustrates the evolution of penitential thinking and practice that took place in sixteenth-century England. A case study of his writings brings out how much had changed but also how there was considerable continuity too.

Herbert's writings bear witness to important strands of pre-Reformation penitential devotion. For T S Eliot the poems show that "Herbert was, assuredly, familiar with the imagery used by the pre-Reformation church."² His poem *The Sacrifice* "is a variation and extension of the Catholic liturgical sequence [in the Sarum Missal] for Good Friday known as the 'Reproaches', in which Christ speaks ... from the cross."³ "The Church Porch", the opening section of *The Temple*, has references to all seven of the deadly sins.⁴ Louis Martz has noted the major influence of the penitential psalms on Herbert's poetry. Indeed they are as important for his understanding of sin and God's forgiveness as they were for John Fisher. In *The Altar*, the opening poem of *The Church*, the broken altar turns out to be the poet's heart, which will be sanctified by the sacrifice of Christ. It is powerfully reminiscent of the key penitential psalm (51) in which David prays for forgiveness for his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah, knowing that "a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (v. 17). A further reference to this psalm comes at the end of his poem *Repentance*. In the psalm David prays "Make me to hear joy and gladness that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice" (v. 8); and Herbert's poem concludes: "But thou wilt sin and grief destroy; / That so the broken bones may joy, / ... Fractures well cur'd make us more strong."⁵ This conclusion, however, expresses a sense of healing and assurance that Fisher did not have.

¹ *The Life and Works of George Herbert*, ed. George H Palmer (3 vols, Boston 1905), 1. 193-328.

² T S Eliot, *George Herbert* (Edinburgh 1962), p. 23.

³ *The English Poems of George Herbert*, ed. Helen Wilcox (Cambridge 2007), p. 94.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 50-62: lines 7, 25, 58, 72, 91, 259, 310.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

This assurance shows how Herbert had embraced the changes in penitential thinking and practice of the previous century. He instructs that preaching is vital in enabling people to find God's forgiveness and peace. The influence of the message of John Jewel and the Elizabethan reformers was fundamental here. The country parson delights, following Herbert's ideal, to preach: "the pulpit is his joy and his throne." Repentance is at the heart of his message "considering that repentance is the great virtue of the Gospel and one of the first steps of pleasing God, having for his owne use examined the nature of it [he] is able to explaine it after to others."⁶ Herbert teaches clergy to apply the sermon personally and directly: "This is for you ... [so that] none is careless before his Judg, and that the word of God shall Judg us ... the character of his Sermon is Holiness."⁷

Herbert was also profoundly influenced by the liturgy of the *Book of Common Prayer*. He famously "sought to make his parish a praying community" inviting parishioners to join him and his family in church each day for Morning and Evening Prayer.⁸ He no doubt had the powerfully penitential opening of the 1559 service in mind when he reminded the country clergyman that when he prays (in public worship) he comes before the majesty of God presenting himself and "the whole Congregation, whose sins he then beares and brings with his own to the heavenly altar to be bathed and washed in the sacred Laver of Christ's blood."⁹

While preaching may inflame or inspire the listener, Herbert is convinced that catechizing "exceeds even Sermons in teaching", since questions require answers, which demand that those being catechized engage with the teaching.¹⁰ While he prefers the Prayer Book catechism, for the sake of authority and uniformity, Herbert, like many other pastors in the tradition of Nowell, and Dering/More, adds and adapts according to the age and ability of those being catechized. He gives examples, as when a parson asked questions about man's misery and what should be done about it. "The answerer could not tell; he asked him again, what he would do if he were in a ditch? ... [the answerer] was even ashamed of his ignorance; for he could not but say he would hast out of it as fast as he could. Then he proceeded to ask whether he could get out of the ditch alone, or whether he needed a helper,

⁶ *The Life and Works*, 1. 308.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1. 223-4.

⁸ Robert Van der Weyer and Pat Saunders, *Lament and Love. The Vision of George Herbert* (London 1989), p. 2.

⁹ *The Life and Works*, 1. 220.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1. 268

and who was that helper?”¹¹ In this way the catechumen learns that Christ is his helper.

Stanley Fish points out that Herbert also uses the catechetical method in his poetry. In *Love-Joy* the letters J C are said to stand for Joy and Charitie, but they also stand for Jesus Christ. The poem is a challenge to learn that to know Jesus Christ is also to know Joy and Charitie.¹² Herbert also uses consideration of *The Church-floore* as an emblematic riddle to teach the importance of patience, humility, confidence and charity, and ultimately “the radical conclusion “that “the individual heart” alone is “the center of Christianity.”¹³

Herbert’s approach to penitence grew out of Reformation thought and practice in a variety of ways. According to Clare Costley King’oo, Herbert sounds exactly like Luther when he argues that repentance “is an act of mind , not of the body”, an act that in essence “consisteth in the detestation of the soul, abhorring and renouncing sin, and turning unto God in truth of heart and newness of life.”¹⁴ His pastoral advice to those ministering to people with afflicted consciences focuses on those points of consolation which are to be considered God’s gracious providence: they are not alone but part of the church; God’s promises; the examples of the saints; it was through sorrow and affliction that Christ won their redemption; deliverance and reward are certain for those who do not give up; affliction is given to be beneficial in softening hard hearts; afflictions now are but for a moment compared with the joys to come.¹⁵ Much of this is in keeping with the ministries of “practical divinity” of the likes of Greenham and Perkins to the “spiritually afflicted”. Like them Herbert instructs the country pastor that “he greatly esteems ... cases of conscience, wherein he is much versed ... to lead his people exactly in the ways of Truth.”¹⁶ He also suggests private confession and receiving Holy Communion as means of comfort and healing to “sinsick souls.”¹⁷ Affliction¹⁸ is the theme of several of his poems but they all end with eventual hope and assurance.¹⁹ Many of his poems are like the psalms of lament but Chana Bloch points out that “Herbert’s complaints, for all their bitterness, are typically not just a grieving but a lifting up of the eyes [to God]. That

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Stanley Fish, *The Living Temple: George Herbert and Catechizing* (London 1978), p. 27.

¹³ *The English Poems*, p. 244; Stanley Fish, *The Living Temple*, p. 36.

¹⁴ Clare Costley King’oo, *Misereri Mei: The Penitential Psalms in Late Medieval and Early Modern England* (Notre Dame 2012), p. 90; *The Life and Works*, 1. 308.

¹⁵ *The Life and Works*, 1. 253.

¹⁶ Ibid., 1. 219.

¹⁷ Ibid., 1. 254.

¹⁸ Five of his poems are titled “Affliction”, more than any other title.

¹⁹ Elizabeth Clarke, *Theory and Theology in George Herbert’s Poetry: ‘Divinitie and Poesie Met’* (Oxford 1997), p. 153.

motion initiates a mood of certainty in which these poems come to rest.”²⁰ It is God who afflicts and it is God who heals: “Ah my deare angrie Lord,/ Since thou dost love, yet strike; / Cast down, yet help afford; / Sure I will do the like ... I will lament and love.”²¹

For all his pastoral sensitivity, Herbert does not neglect discipline. It is noteworthy that he willingly uses the church courts. When somebody is persistently late for the church services, “after divers gentle admonitions, if they persevere, he causes them to be presented.”²² Herbert keeps in mind the purpose of discipline, which is the repentance and restoration of “the delinquent”. Therefore there should be no ill will “in the presenting or punishing of any.” He should not be avoided or treated as an enemy “but as a brother still.”²³ Nevertheless notorious fault should be dealt with by the Law and, Herbert stresses, this is not contrary to gospel charity. Notorious sins concern the community “and Charity to the publick hath the precedence over private charity.”²⁴ However “if the punished delinquent be much troubled for his sins and turne quite another man” his neighbours should accept him and “forbear to speak of that which even God himself hath forgotten.”²⁵

As the sub-title to *A Priest to the Temple or The Countrey Parson his Character, and Rule of Holy Life* implies, ministry involves personal devotion as well as parochial activity. Hence the parson prays for the flock in his charge. He is aware of his own needs and so is sensitive to theirs. Their primary need is to be right with God, and with that in mind he preaches and teaches, especially using catechism. But as a pastor he is aware of the afflictions of his flock and how to minister to a variety of cases of conscience. His thinking is based on Biblical texts and especially how they are used in the *Book of Common Prayer*. His poems have a sense of the indwelling of God rather than dogmatic theology. From the changing attitudes to penitence in the sixteenth century Herbert has learned, as Cranmer did, that repentance means, in Null’s words, “renewing the power to love.”²⁶

In fact we see in Herbert the peculiarly English outcome of sixteenth-century penitential change, which combined liturgy and the church courts in contrast with much continental Protestantism. It had a special emphasis on preaching, which promoted personal repentance

²⁰ Chana Bloch, *Spelling the Word: George Herbert and the Bible* (London 1985), p. 278.

²¹ *The English Poems*, p. 587.

²² *The Life and Works*, 1. 222.

²³ *Ibid.*, 1. 281

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1. 322

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 1. 323.

²⁶ Ashley Null, *Thomas Cranmer’s Doctrine of Repentance: Renewing the Power to Love* (Oxford 2000), pp. 21-22.

and faith, and gave the assurance of God's promise of forgiveness, religious education by catechism, and pastoral ministry with a special concern for the afflicted conscience. Although private confession to a minister remained an option, general confession was the norm in contrast to Lutherans who tried to impose private confession before communion. Those who wanted a Presbyterian/Calvinist discipline failed to achieve this in England, though such a system was effective in Scotland. The English persisted with consistory courts which satisfied Herbert but were a cause of discontent among some Protestants. John Bossy's hypothesis that changes in penitential practice would lead to of a shift from the communal to the individual did not work out in England as he expected. He recognises that Herbert "was an excellent Protestant", and is delighted to find that his exposition of the moral tradition is "concrete and affectionate."²⁷ Herbert prefers common prayer to solitary for "though private prayer be a brave design / Yet public hath more promises, more love."²⁸ He values Rogation processions; instructs the parson to offer hospitality; and advises him to spend Sunday afternoons "In reconciling neighbours that are at variance, or in visiting the sick."²⁹ In fact Bossy is surprised to see elements of the late medieval moral tradition more strongly represented in England in the post-Reformation than in Italy, France and Germany.³⁰ Whereas in Italy "peace-making ... did not instantly recommend [itself] to improvers and reformers", such as activist Jesuits and hard-edged bishops, in France where "communities of belief" were at war, and in Germany where Luther had replaced charity with faith, in England the peace motif was embedded in the text of the Prayer Book and taken seriously by the laity.³¹ This study of sixteenth-century penitence in England strongly reaffirms Bossy's conclusion, against his earlier hypothesis.

Whereas Collinson and Duffy conclude that the Elizabethan church failed in its mission to convert and minister to the English nation,³² Herbert saw the English Church (and thus the English people) as specially favoured by God. Its clergy were pastors and physicians bringing comfort to penitents, reconciliation among neighbours, and discipline with compassion. With the English Bible and the *Book of Common Prayer*, preaching, catechizing and pastoral

²⁷ John Bossy, *Peace in the Post-Reformation* (Cambridge 1998), pp. 80,94. Shuger disagrees and claims that "the failure of the Reformation to renew history ... intensified the privatisation of the sacred, a process narrated in Herbert's *Decay and Church Militant*." *Habits of Thought*, p. 119.

²⁸ *The English Poems*, p. 61; lines 397-8.

²⁹ *The Life and Works*, 1. 229.

³⁰ Bossy, *Peace in the Post-Reformation*, pp. 73-100.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 29, 32, 56, 73: Arnold Hunt, "The Lord's Supper in Early Modern England", *Past and Present* 161 (4.1998), pp. 47-8

³² See p. 172.

counselling, ministers could bring the penitent to repentance and the assurance of God's forgiveness. The changes brought by reform to the penitential system, together with the liturgy, ordained clergy, and other continuities, gave him a sense that the English Church was distinctly blessed: "I joy, deare Mother, when I view / Thy perfect lineaments, and hue / Both sweet and bright ./... Blessed be God, whose love it was / to double-moat thee with his grace / And none but thee."³³

³³ *The English Poems*, pp. 390-1, lines 1-3, 27-30.

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