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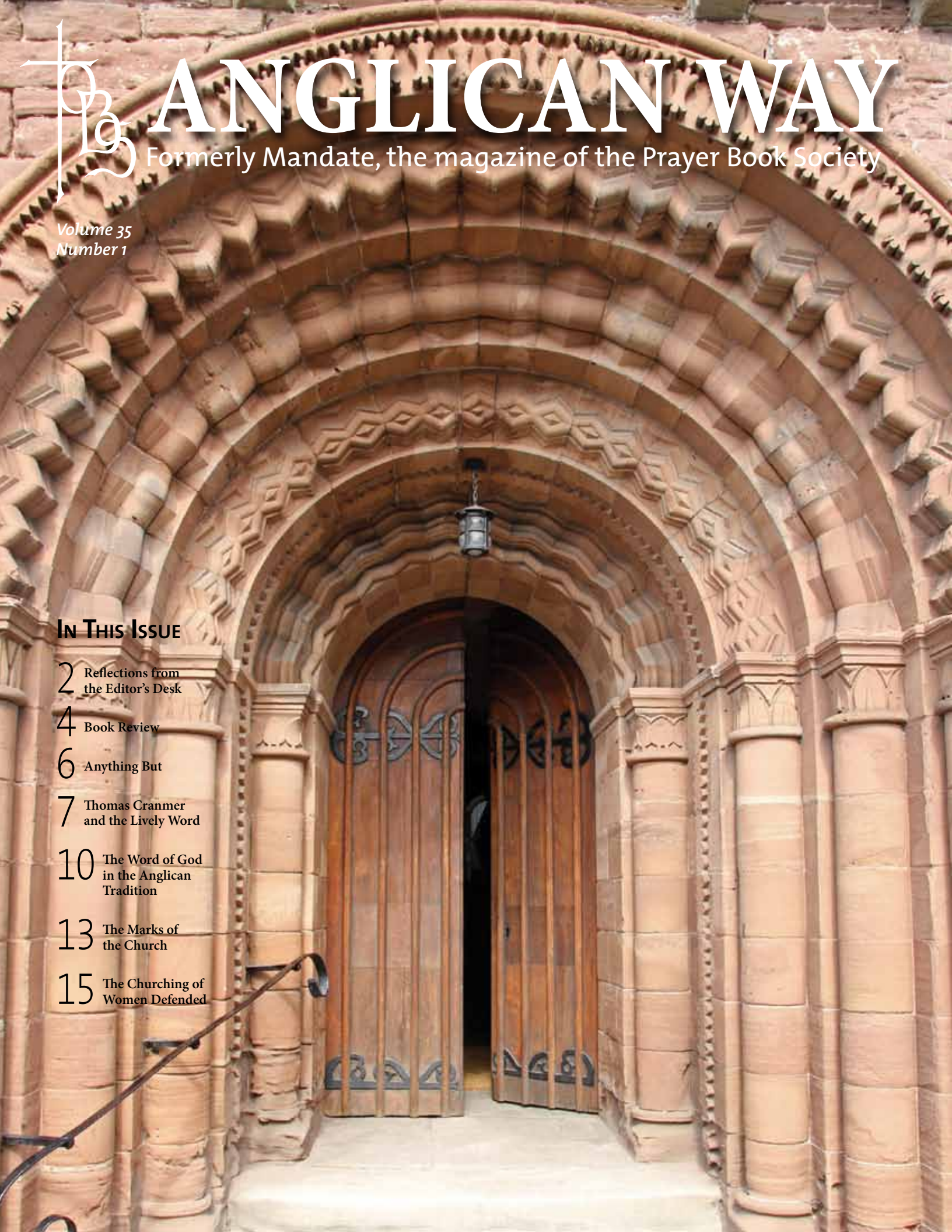

In This Issue

Reflections FROM THE Editor's Desk

Roberta Bayer, Ph.D., *Assistant Professor, Patrick Henry College, Purcellville, Virginia*

The 350th anniversary of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer is an occasion for celebration. At the Mere Anglicanism conference in Charleston, South Carolina this anniversary was marked by a traditional Evensong from the 1662 BCP, Richard Chartres, the Bishop of London preaching. We are very thankful to the organizers of the conference for this wonderful event. A summary of the talks can be found on our website, written by Institute for Religion and Democracy reporter, Barton Gingerich. There is an excellent article on the speech given by the Bishop of London in the Canadian newspaper, The Anglican Planet, online at *anglicanplanet.net/usa*. The talks are all found on Anglican TV. *anglican.tv/category/tags/events/mere-anglicanism-2012*

The Rev. Gavin Dunbar, President of the Prayer Book Society, has made a series of videos on the legacy of Thomas Cranmer and the Book of Common Prayer in conversation with both the Bishop of London and Cranmer scholar, Ashley Null. These will appear on our website in the near future.

Fr William H. Ralston, Jr. was rector of St John's Episcopal, Savannah, Georgia from 1974 until his death a few years ago. The Rev. Gavin Dunbar carries on the liturgical tradition of that church. Fr Ralston was a faculty member in the department of literature at Sewanee, and a founder of the Society for the Preservation of the Book of Common Prayer (the original of the current Prayer Book Society of the USA). His learned and erudite sermons and papers are always a pleasure to read and should be re-published. This issue begins with a paper from the Ralston archives on Lent.

Oxford University Press has produced a book in honor of the 350th anniversary of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, which contains the texts of the 1549, 1559, and 1662 Books of Common Prayer, entitled simply *The Book of Common Prayer.* Ian Robinson, author of *The Survival of English,* and *Cranmer's Sentences,* and editor at Edgeway Books (*edgeways books.com*) offers his reservations about this publication, suggesting that the author, Brian Cummings, has imbibed too much from the common well of misinformation about the Cranmerian prayer books. One hopes that this publication however will assist in returning the historic books of common prayer to the pews through a renewed awareness of their existence, and debate about their continuing importance.

Gillis Harp, our new PBS board member, and professor of history at Grove City College has contributed an article on Article XIX of the Thirty-nine Articles, discussing the marks of the church. Also Fr Geromel from South Carolina has written a defense of the Churching of Women, a service which is ignored or misunderstood. For all these contributions we are extremely thankful.

Thomas Garrett Isham has written a book on Charles McIlvaine, a great defender of the Book of Common Prayer in nineteenth century America. *A Born Again Episcopalian: The Evangelical Witness of Charles Pettit McIlvaine,* is published by Solid Ground Christian Books of Birmingham, Alabama. As Mr Isham has observed, the gifted and dedicated

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McIlvaine (1799-1873), the Victorian evangelical Bishop of Ohio, elevated the evangelical creed to the height of its expression, in both word and deed. A clear-thinking, intellectually rigorous Episcopalian, McIlvaine exemplified the deep emotional currents of revival and rebirth, of the "conviction of sin," of the need to be born again into new life. At a time when there is resurgent evangelical interest among Episcopalians, as well as in much of the worldwide Anglican Communion, thoughtful Christians—both evangelical and otherwise—might wish to learn about McIlvaine and his work and their relevance for today. He raised and answered, in a distinctly evangelical and Anglican way, perennial questions of spiritual and theological moment.

The Reformers and the Bible

Two articles are about how the reformers in England read the Bible. Past issues of this magazine dealt summarily with patristic and medieval modes of reading, the *lectio divina* of the monasteries and its decline after university scholars began reading the Bible outside of the monastic context, and imposed new categories in analyzing and expounding its content. The Anglican reformers, particularly Cranmer, thought that reading it in the context of prayer and worship, the way of the Fathers, as found in the monastic setting, should be central to Anglicanism.

As Rowan Williams, the current Archbishop of Canterbury, has happily pointed out in a speech which I have reproduced in this issue, the Church of England placed exceptional stress on the daily offices of Morning and Evening Prayer, at least until recently, because it is in those offices that the church confronts the Bible as a whole. These offices are absolutely central to the doctrinal and spiritual life of the church. Cranmer's offices are a simplification of the monastic offices, and were to serve the same purpose, to unify a community in thought and prayer. Uniformity of worship and reading begets uniformity of understanding. It is in that encounter with the Word of God twice daily that the spiritual character of the church is sustained through a constant reminder of its duties 'supernatural'. Scripture does teach everything necessary for salvation; the Word in the text impresses upon us, as Archbishop Rowan states, what is needed for eternal life. But the Word also must be taught so that the intellect might understand, and that is why scripture must be read in church, to counter individualism, and eccentricity of interpretation.

Ashley Null, Cranmer scholar, is writing on the biblical scholarship of Thomas Cranmer, who compiled the Book of Common Prayer, and was Archbishop of Canterbury during the reign of King Edward VI, the first monarch in England sympathetic to the views of the Reformation. Null gave a series of talks at Trinity Seminary in Pittsburg (TSM) last year, an excerpt of which appears in this issue. In this article Null discusses Cranmer's revival of an Augustinian method, or hermeneutic of reading scripture, called *loci communes,* to seek out common places.

Cranmer, as Ashley Null points out, advocated a method, or what we would call hermeneutic, in reading the Bible. In the last issue, through the work of the historian Beryl Smalley, I argued that ways and methods of reading the Bible changed significantly throughout the patristic and medieval centuries. When one looks at the sixteenth century in England, one finds that reformers returned to reading the Bible in a way that owed not a little to the early centuries of the church, in reaction against the Biblical scholarship of their own day.

In the centuries which intervened between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries scholastic metaphysical philosophy had created conflicting schools of thought, distinguished by diverse interpretations of being and substance. William Tyndale, translator of The Great Bible, the most important english language bible of the sixteenth century, complained to his fellow doctors of theology about the type of learning divinity students were receiving:

> I would have you to teach them also the properties and manner of speakings of the scripture, and how to expound proverbs and similitudes. And then, if they go abroad and walk by the fields and meadows of all manner doctors and philosophers, they could catch no harm: they should discern the poison from the honey, and bring home nothing but that which is wholesome.
>
> But now do ye clean contrary: ye drive them from God's word, and will let no man come thereto, until he have been two years master of art. First, they nosel them in sophistry, and in *benefundatum.* And there corrupt they their judgments with apparent arguments, and with alleging unto them texts of logic, of natural *philautia,* of metaphysic, and moral philosophy, and of all manner books of Aristotle, and of all manner doctors which they yet never saw. Moreover, one holdeth this, another that; one is a Real, another a Nominal. (*The Obedience of the Christian Man*)

In this passage Tyndale goes on at length identifying rather minute philosophical distinctions which were having a dramatic effect on the church, dividing it into sects, as he puts it! It was in an attempt to bring uniformity and sound doctrine to the teaching of divinity that Tyndale brought the Great Bible into existence, and the reformers rejected entering into debates between realists and nominalists.

It should be noted in passing that these very metaphysical debates led to change within the study of philosophy, in the universities. The sixteenth century

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Mission Statement

The Society is dedicated to the preservation, understanding, and propagation of the Anglican Doctrine as contained in the traditional editions of The Book of Common Prayer.

Book Review

The Book of Common Prayer
The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662

ed. Brian Cummings, Oxford University Press

Ian Robinson, Brynmill Press

This book is, as one expects of Oxford, well designed and handsomely produced. What is less to be taken for granted is that it is also modestly priced. It will be welcomed by anybody who wants these three texts of the English Prayer Book between one set of covers.

I have not done any checking but would be surprised if the texts are not accurate. The textual principles of the editor are sensible. He has not attempted wholly authentic "original spelling" editions. In any case there is no one original spelling of popular English books before the eighteenth century, for different publishers would vary (there were three of the 1549 Prayer Book), and even the same compositor in the same paragraph could spell the same word three different ways. Original punctuation is on the other hand important as an indication of how texts were to be phrased and stressed, and Professor Cummings is right to try to keep as close to the originals as the variations in his source texts and the exigencies of modern grammar permit. The book is as readable as texts going back to 1549 can well be.

It is, however, in some ways a missed opportunity. There are some regrettable omissions. Firstly, the decision to print the Elizabethan 1559 book instead of the second Edwardian book of 1552 is at least challengeable. Much more was changed in 1552, only three years after original publication, than has ever been changed since. Then, the collects, epistles and gospels of the 1549 and 1559 books are not given. They would, of course, have greatly increased the bulk of the volume. But without them the 1549 and 1559 books are incomplete (the 1559 book occupies only just over 80 pages of the 895), and the changes especially to the collects are an interesting as well as an important part of the history of the Book of Common Prayer. The Ordinal of 1662 is printed but not that of 1550 (so we are not given Cranmer's only surviving effort at verse).

A parallel-text edition would have been more useful. If you want to compare books in detail it is not useful to have them bound together in sequence. Parallel texts (a far from new idea: Origen did it for the Bible) would have needed a different page layout and would also, I guess, have taken a great deal more work to typeset, though if only differences were recorded the book perhaps need not have been bulkier. Professor Cummings reports (p. xli) that a parallel-text edition had already been made in the seventeenth century! and F. E. Brightman's *English Rite* did it definitively in 1915.

The Introduction is deplorable. Professor Cummings is out of sympathy with his subject. He thinks that the Prayer Book was written in "the ordinary language of its time" (p. lii), which is not true even of the 1549 Book. (Cummings should have read Toon & Tarsitano on the subject in *Neither Archaic nor Obsolete*.) The Elizabethan church using the 1559 book was, he tells us, "bereft of spiritual comfort". (p. xxxvii) He misunderstands *common* and thinks that the presence of the word in the book's title shows that it is not a "narrowly religious book" because "as well as being a book of 'prayer' this is a book of 'common prayer'." But how does the fact that it was used by everybody make it not religious, even "narrowly"?

The theology is crude. The carefully-thought-out English doctrine of the Real Presence is reduced to "a metaphor is just a metaphor." (p. xxvii) The possibility of real signs is not raised. (Cf. Gordon P. Jeanes, *Signs of God's Promise*.) He reports the Reformation in England as bringing in a "new religion" (p. xxiv) and the 1549 Prayer Book as "causing riots through its perverse assumption of doctrinal oddity and destruction of the old ways of experiencing the divine". (p. xiii) The Prayer Book's enemy was, in this account, simply "Catholicism". Professor Cummings should have told us more about why the doctrine is perverse and odd; and he should have given more consideration to the word *Reformation* ("although even that term is a ragged shorthand for the domino of personal, communal and national transformations which it provoked." (p. xiii)) Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, and the rest of that noble army of martyrs are generally called Reformers not Inventors. Their steady and constant hope was to restore the Church to its primitive state. They constantly cite the Fathers as authorities second only to the Bible. It would not be inaccurate to call them reactionaries. But it is certainly wrong to think of them as founders of a new religion. They kept the historic creeds and recognized the authority of the catholic Councils. The Church of England since the separation from Rome has always seen herself as not new, but the local branch of the one catholic and apostolic church. Cummings has done nothing to overturn this view.

Professor Cummings's lack of historical inwardness is naturally expressed in a recognizable contemporary style in which the academic is so determined to be as lively as if he were writing for the popular press that he sometimes loses all connection with meaning. Already quoted: what does "ragged shorthand for the domino" mean? Or what is an emotional palimpsest? (p. li) or a fundamental aspect? (p. xxxiii)

The second paragraph on p. l is senseless. Cummings supports the view that the text of the Book of Common Prayer could "only be measured to medieval times" [*measured = traced back?*] by saying that "we are at the mercy of the manuscript tradition, and manuscripts . . . decay more quickly than words themselves." If so how do we know? What evidence other than manuscripts and inscriptions is there for the existence of old words?

The culmination of Cummings's history of the Book of Common Prayer is of a piece with the rest. "In 2000, to mark the millennium, *Common Worship* finally marked the real end of 1662, although in many churches diehards and enthusiasts are still allowed their regular dosage of sixteenth-century prose at least once a week." (p. xlviii) Would the members of Prayer Book Societies in four continents class themselves as diehards, or are we enthusiasts? The suggestion of a weekly fix is low-grade journalism, as also the suggestion that all we want is old prose, though it is true that the Prayer Book makes a good antidote to the sort of prose Professor Cummings writes.

The pages taken up by the Introduction would have been much more usefully devoted to more text, for instance the original English Litany.

This book will be useful, but for 1552 you will have to go to the English Prayer Book Society's one-volume edition of the versions of 1549 and 1552 (including the 1550 Ordinal). The 1559 book is available in a very handsome edition by John E. Booty, University of Virginia Press. 1662 is still, thank God, common.

Check out our new and improved website!

www.pbsusa.org

For those who have iPhones, the iPray BCP app is finally up and running after a year of labor. You can also use it on the iPod Touch. Since it was intended to be as universal as possible, it follows the 1662 Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer, with Midday Prayers and Compline from the 1962 Canadian BCP. The lectionary is from the English 1922 revision.

Reflections from the Editor's Desk
(continued from p. 3)

was an era of philosophical skepticism, as witnessed in authors Michel de Montaigne and Machiavelli. In the schools of divinity, now quite separate from the faculties of philosophy, the response however, was to renew the faith through a renewed study of scripture, translating Biblical texts anew from the Hebrew and Greek into the vernacular, studying ancient authors, even re-appropriating certain classical authors such as Plato in a new way, all alongside a study of the works of the early Fathers of the church, Augustine, Basil, Chrysostom, and Ambrose. A glance at the work of English and continental theologians of this period makes apparent their very broad reading in the history of thought. Renewal in the church was so conceived—it was to return to original sources, and this is true of a Cranmer, or a Luther, Calvin, or Melanchthon, as well as others such as, Thomas More and Erasmus, who finally chose to stay within the ecclesial orbit of Rome, to read the early Fathers of the church, and to adopt a different, what Dr Null calls, hermeneutical approach to the Bible (and classical literature and philosophy), than had formerly been the case. Renewal in philosophy eventually led to the work of Descartes and Hobbes, but that is another story which would take one into the separation of reason and faith in modernity.

The Board of the Prayer Book Society would like to offer thanks to all those individuals and churches which have sent in donations over the past year. We could not continue our work without you, nor publish this magazine. Thank you for helping us continue to teach the faith in the anglican way.

Anything But

(From the archives of St John's Church, Savannah, Georgia Parish Papers February 16, 1986)

St. John's Church, Savannah, Georgia

William H. Ralston, Jr.

Conversing the other morning with the members of our small breakfast club brought into focus once again a very simple, indeed almost self-evident idea, the neglect of which seems to me an index of much that is wrong with our Churches and our clergy, both our preoccupations and the kinds of education that foster and produce these preoccupations. The idea is one enunciated by Plato in *The Republic.* It is his definition of justice: "the doing of the thing proper to oneself."

It is indeed "vanity of vanities" for the Church to invade the world with the opinions of her clergy on everything but her proper thing—the publication of the Gospel and the worship of God. The posture of involvement has been widely held to be a legacy from the prophets, as if a high degree of moral indignation at social evils and an impassioned rhetoric of trampled rights qualified a person for a prophetic vocation. . . . But prophets do not attend subsidized meetings of the House of Bishops or live in air-conditioned retirement. They eat locusts and wild honey, or dress figs, or get put in holes or cut up. They also speak in flawless Hebrew poetry. When a Bishop or priest of the Episcopal Church speaks with the purity and passion of an Amos or an Isaiah, then we will listen to a prophet.

Indeed, however, the great prophetic tradition of the Old Testament comes to an end in John Baptist. Jesus both manifests this tradition and subsumes it. From his time on in the Church "prophecy" is a different sort of thing. The prophetic Church can validly offer only a divine perspective on the world's wraths and sorrows. Jesus did not offer a political, or a sociological, or a psychological solution to or for the world. He is certainly clear enough about it: "My Kingdom is not of this world." And the supreme paradox of all is contained within the Gospel of John. One the one hand, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son;" on the other, "he who hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." The only way for a Christian to love the world and serve the world is to attempt life in imitation of the God who was in Christ and learn to love the world His way. This means, in fact, loving God and the ways of God more that the world and the ways of the world. Things like Lent are the Church's proper business in this world.

It has always seemed a scandal to a lot of people that early Christianity did not tackle head-on the great scourge of ancient society—that is, the whole institutional fabric of slavery. Christianity in fact by-passed it, whether because it seemed irrelevant in view of the expected imminent return of Christ (the parousia), or because, since all Christians were slaves of Christ, the temporal and social interrelationships of the world were insignificant. St. Paul's letter to *Philemon* is the critical document in this matter. Whatever the reason, it is plain that slavery, as a social and political issue, was not of paramount concern to the first generations of Christians.

In point of fact, Jesus' counsels of perfection for his disciples are the most radical and revolutionary prescription for life in the world ever articulated. They have nothing at all to do with the "gospel of improved plumbing" or "making the world safe for democracy" or "salvaging human existence from nuclear destruction" or fashionable liturgical introspection or any one of a dozen other ecclesiastical preoccupations of the moment. Any individual Christian may decide where to put his energy and his time—marching in Washington, planting rice in Cambodia, serving soup in Savannah, hitting the Gospel trail; or, on the other hand, none of these things, but rather prayer, fasting, stillness, and quiet work. No one can say which is better, though in one instance at least Jesus did caution Martha not to be irritated with the part chosen by her sister.

What will not do at all is clergy who pretend, with the supposed authority of their offices in the Church of Lord Jesus, to speak of matters social, political, and psychological as if they knew something. They should be busy rather doing the thing proper to clergy—speaking of the eternal Kingdom of God, which measures every earthly city in its divine light; and ministering the grace of Christ. . . . When the world invades the Church, the Church becomes a mirror of the world, and a bad reflection at that. The trouble is then twice compounded. The only way the Church can minister its real grace, and offer its true healing, is "to do the thing proper to itself."

Jeremiah has a word for those who follow "the imaginations of their hearts," however altruistic, to the neglect of their proper vocation: "The prophet who has a dream, let him tell his dream, and the prophet who has my word let him speak my word faithfully."

The clergy should know their Bibles and their theology and not pretend to information and expert knowledge which they *do* not (and *need* not) have. What greater office could anyone be given than to remind the world of its eternal destiny and spiritual end?

Thomas Cranmer and the Lively Word

(From lectures given at the Ancient Wisdom/ Anglican Futures Conference, 2011)

The Rev'd Dr. Ashley Null,
Canon Theologian of Western Kansas

To summarize the discussion so far, we have seen that the Protestant Reformers viewed themselves as Catholic Christians living out the ancient faith according to its most authoritative document, the Bible. Secondly, that the Protestant reformers understood true conversion inspired by God working through Scripture to be both an initial moment of the re-orientation of personal identity and an on-going commitment to a changed way of life. The third key insight we need to bear in mind is that Cranmer's biblical hermeneutic was neither the *sola scriptura* of nineteenth-century American Protestantism nor the Patristic consensus of the Caroline and Oxford Movement Divines.

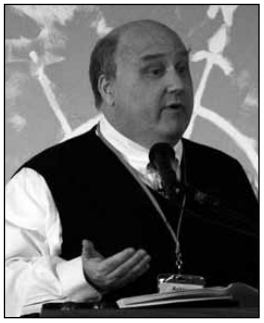
Let's now turn to this last point. Without a doubt, Scripture was the ultimate authority for matters of faith and doctrine for the Edwardian church. Unlike latter Anglican claims, now thoroughly debunked by Jean-Louis Quantin's vociferous *The Church of England and Christian Antiquity,* the sixteenth-century English Divines did not read Scripture through a Patristic consensus. Yet, Anglicanism's *sola scriptura* did not read the Bible apart from the Fathers. In a distinction of great importance overlooked by both Low Church and High Church advocates, Cranmer did not look to a Patristic consensus of interpretation to guide his understanding of the Bible. He did, however, very much look to a Patristic consensus for the hermeneutical principles by which he read the Bible as the ultimate Christian authority. Although Cranmer did not always agree with the Fathers' reading of Scripture (after all, they didn't always agree with themselves), it was the Fathers who taught Cranmer how to read Scripture.

Portrait of Thomas Cranmer by Gerlach Flicke, 1545

In fact, that is the true origin of Richard Hooker's now infamous three-legged stool. For the Anglican triad of Scripture, tradition and reason did not originate with Hooker. Why should it have? Hooker did not claim to be presenting an original construal of theology. He claimed to be defending the accepted principles of the Protestant religion as established in England. The first recorded reference that I can find to this fundamental tenet of Anglican hermeneutics is July 1539:

> [T]he Archbishop collecting both his arguments, authorities of Scriptures, and Doctors together, caused his Secretary to write a fair book thereof for the king, after this order. First the Scriptures were alleged, then the Doctors, thirdly followed the arguments deducted from those authorities.[1]

From the Fathers, Cranmer learned that teaching on salvation must be supported by clear scriptural evidence. In his 1532 edition of Basil writings in Greek, Cranmer made a marginal comment: "Holy Scripture contains all things necessary for salvation."[2] He quotes Chrysostom to the same effect in his 1547 'Homily on Salvation'[3] and, of course, the statement



Rev'd Dr. Ashley Null, Canon Theologian of Western Kansas

1. John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* (London: John Day, 1570), pp. 1355–6.

2. Cranmer commenting in Latin on a letter of Basil to Gregory the Theologian, *Works in Greek* (Basle: H. Froben, 1532), p. 506 [John Rylands Library, Manchester University, Catalogue Number 18173].

3. Ronald B. Bond, *Certain Sermons or Homilies (1547) AND A Homily against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion (1570): A Critical Edition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p. 67

made its way into the Articles of Religion, the confession of faith that was meant to supplement the ancient creeds in giving instruction to Anglicans in how to read their bibles.[4]

Yet, how should one interpret Scripture to establish saving doctrine? By insisting on Scripture as the ultimate interpreter of Scripture, of course. That's why the sixteenth-century Anglican triad began with Scripture. Following both Erasmus and Melanchthon, Cranmer looked to the common-place method of Augustine. According to this hermeneutical approach, one collects all the scriptural passages on a common theme together in one place (hence the name "common-places"). That way more difficult passages can be in read in the light of the clearer passages, thus allowing a broader scriptural context to illuminate their meaning. Cranmer quotes Augustine specifically on this way of reading the Bible in his 'Homily on Salvation' as well.[5]

How should one interpret Scripture to establish saving doctrine? By insisting on Scripture as the ultimate interpreter of Scripture, of course.

Yet, even after employing the common-place method, an individual interpretator could still get it wrong. Hence, the Fathers still needed to be read as guide to ensure the right construal of Scripture. Cranmer was clear that Fathers' authority rested on the quality of their biblical exegesis, not on an inspiration equivalent to the apostles. Therefore, patristic testimony was variable. Yet, sixteenth-century commentators were no more privileged in their exegetical endeavours either. Consequently, even though in Cranmer's view there was no authoritative Patristic consensus beyond what Scripture could clearly support, no sixteenth-century biblical interpretation was valid unless one could should that it was not unique, that there was Patristic precedence that others had come to the same conclusion based on Scripture. On this basis, he condemned Luther's and Melanchthon's lame Scriptural defense of Philip of Hesse's bigamy as a pastoral remedy in keeping with the Gospel. For Cranmer the fact that such a marriage was literally unprecedented in the whole history of the Christian church rendered such an exegesis patently fraudulent.[6] Cranmer would go to great lengths to consult patristic precedent on the matter of the Eucharist in both the 1530s and 1540s, although to opposite conclusions.

Now let's think about what we have said. Anglican biblical commentators are first to compare biblical passages to one another and then their theological conclusions from such activity to the conclusions of earlier generations. That's a lot of comparing. And by the very nature of making a comparison, reason is involved in the process. Hence, as Hooker himself said, the third part of the Anglican triad is not autonomous reason in some post-Enlightenment sense, but rather "theological reasoning," derived from comparing sacred texts to each other and their interpretation by other faithful commentators.[7] Reason was originally part of Anglican theological authority because grace-filled reason was an integral tool in the patristic hermeneutical process.

So we can already see that Anglicanism's commitment to and implementation of *sola scriptura* is in fact based on patristic hermeneutical principles. Yet, there is more. As Article 34 of the Thirty-Nine Articles makes clear, Anglicanism, unlike the Scottish and Continental Reformed traditions, only demands a clear scriptural warrant in matters of faith and doctrine. As far as matters in church life like liturgy and governance, each national church in each generation is free to order their life together to promote the Gospel as they think best, provided that their decisions do not contradict biblical teaching. This distinction is also based on patristic practice.

From the Fathers, Cranmer learned that the purpose of Scripture was personal and societal transformation through redirecting the human heart to truly love God and neighbor.

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4. Article V of Cranmer's Forty-Two Articles; Article VI of the Elizabethan Thirty-Nine Articles

5. Bond, *Homilies,* pp. 65–66.

6. See Null, "Princely Marital Problems and the Reformers' Solutions," in *Sister Reformations: England and the German Empire in the Sixteenth Century,* ed. Dorothea Wendebourg (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), pp. 133–49.

7. See John Keble, ed., *The Works of that Learned and Judicious Divine Mr. Richard Hooker* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888). Vol. 3, pp. 594–5.

love God and neighbor. In another comment on Basil's writings perhaps as early as 1532, Cranmer says that when it is imperative for a person to understand himself, he must devote himself to Scripture.[8] In his private theological notebooks around 1538, Cranmer wrote:

> All Scripture is divinely inspired, etc. This text Saint John Chrysostom, Theophilactus, Thomas, with many other authors, both old and new, do expound plainly as the words be that whatsoever truth is necessary to be taught for our salvation, or the contrary to be reproved, whatsoever is necessary for us to do, and what to forbear and not to do, all is completely contained in the Scripture, so that a man thereby may be perfectly instructed unto all manner of goodness.[9]

For Cranmer, Scripture told how life was to be lived, not how the church or society as institutions were to be organized. Yet Scripture went beyond mere instruction. It was also God's very own divine instrument to bring about that change within us. As Cranmer wrote once again in the "Homily on Scripture":

> The words of Holy Scripture be called words of everlasting life: for they be God's instrument, ordained for the same purpose. They have power to convert through God's promise, and they be effectual through God's assistance; and, being received in a faithful heart, they have ever a heavenly spiritual working in them.[10]

For those who would "ruminate and, as it were, chew the cud" of Scripture, God worked through the regular repetition of biblical truths to engraft in them not only saving faith but also a steadfastness in the pursuit of personal holiness that would gradually transform their character to mirror what they were reading:

> And there is nothing that so much establisheth our faith and trust in God, that so much conserveth innocency and pureness of the heart, and also of outward godly life and conversation, as continual reading and meditation of God's Word. For that thing which by perpetual use of reading of Holy Scripture and diligent searching of the same is deeply printed and engraven in the heart at length turneth almost into nature.[11]

In short, the spiritual effect of God's supernatural agency through Scripture was the on-going reorientation of a believer's heart:

> This Word whosoever is diligent to read and in his heart to print that he readeth, the great affection to the transitory things of this world shall be diminished in him, and the great desire of heavenly things that be therein promised of God shall increase in him.[12]

Hence, "the hearing and keeping of [Scripture] maketh us blessed, sanctifieth us and maketh us holy." Little wonder, then, the "Homily on Scripture" urged that "[t]hese books . . . ought to be much in our hands, in our eyes, in our ears, in our mouths, but most of all, in our hearts."[13] Here's Cranmer understanding of the Lively Word of God.

Let me now close this first talk with one more important patristic biblical hermeneutical principle that has profoundly shaped Anglicanism. The context in which the Bible was to be read. From the Fathers Cranmer did not learn a hermeneutic of suspicion which characterizes so much of the approach of modern biblical criticism (note the very name!). Rather, Scripture was to be read devotionally. As Cranmer noted again in his copy of Basil's works, 'prayer follows from reading.'[14] Naturally, Cranmer thought such should be the case for individual study. However, he recognized the best place for a devotional reading of Scripture was in the midst of the community gathered together for corporate worship. Taking to heart a principle he learned from Basil's *Hexameron,* Cranmer decided to make sacred assemblies the place where the average person could learn his Bible. Surely it is not without significance that Cranmer noted in the margin that it was Basil's practice to give daily bible teaching for common laborers in both morning and evening assemblies.[15]

Taking to heart a principle he learned from Basil's *Hexameron,* Cranmer decided to make sacred assemblies the place where the average person could learn his Bible.

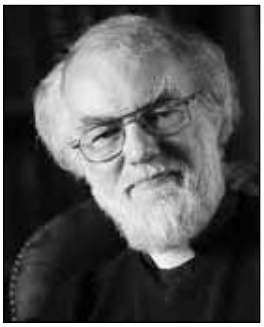
The lecture in its entirety may be heard online at:

http://www.tsm.edu/media_resources/ancient_wisdom_anglican_futures_2011_audio

8. Cranmer commenting in Latin on Basil, *Works in Greek,* p. 79
9. British Library Royal MS 7.B.XI., fol. 32r.
10. Bond, *Homilies,* p. 62.
11. Bond, *Homilies,* p. 63.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.,* p. 62
14. Cranmer commenting on Basil's *Works,* p. 506.
15. *Ibid.,* p. 18.

The Word of God in Anglican Tradition

A presentation given by the Archbishop of Canterbury to the Ecumenical Gathering of Bishops associated with the Focolare Movement, Lambeth Palace, 8 September 2011



Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury

(This speech and other speeches by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams can be found on his website *archbishopofcanterbury.org*)

In the time available today, I can't begin to offer a comprehensive survey of what Anglicans have thought about hearing and meditating on God's word across the centuries; that would need a book at least. But what I'll try to do is to introduce you to a few of the great doctors of the Anglican tradition and to the thoughts they have about what is most important in the discussions of this meeting, the transforming grace that comes in the reading of Scripture.

It's often been observed that the liturgy of the reformed Church of England laid exceptional stress on the daily office. The orders for Morning and Evening Prayer in the English Prayer Books, from 1549 onwards, represented a careful weaving together of elements from the sevenfold monastic office—psalms, canticles, responses and passages from Scripture—into two coherent units which guaranteed that the Psalms would all be said in the course of a month and that substantial portions of the Bible would be read each day in a manner which ensured that most of the text of Scripture would be covered in some sort of order.

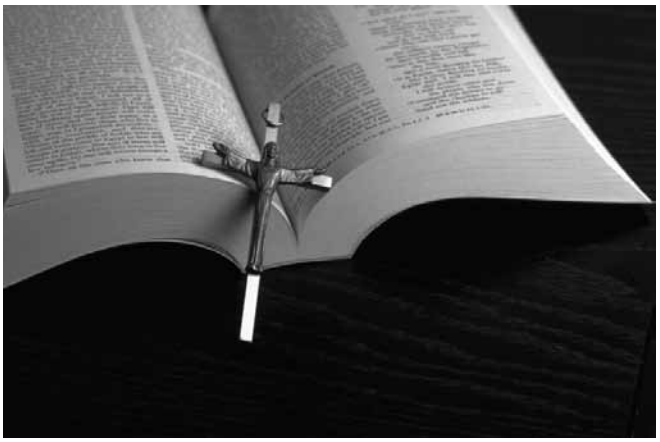
In other words, from the start, the Church of England took it for granted that the encounter with the 'Word of God written' was one that took place within the daily sacrifice of praise offered by the community. Archbishop Cranmer, defending the English Prayer Book, wrote in 1549 that 'in the English service appointed to be read there is nothing else but the eternal Word of God.' And the point of reading Scripture in this context was to provoke the self-awareness that led to repentance and made us fit to receive the sacrament (Folger: *Richard Hooker,* 195). Put another way, the purpose of reading Scripture was that we should receive God's *wisdom:* Scripture is not a book that gives us simply information, it introduces us into the mind of the maker. To the extent that it is a witness to and an effective communication of the eternal word who is Christ, the Wisdom of God (*I Cor. I.24*), it seeks to bring us into harmony with wisdom. The greatest Anglican theologian of the immediate post-Reformation period, Richard Hooker, takes up the phrase from *II. Tim. 3.15* about scripture making us 'wise unto salvation' and sets it alongside the end of John 20, 'These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is Christ the Son of God' (*Laws* I.14.4): Scripture puts before us the way to life and the laws by which we may find ourselves in harmony with God. 'The principal intent of Scripture is to deliver the laws of duties supernatural' (*ibid.* 14.1). And Hooker emphasizes this dimension of wisdom and 'supernatural' law, so as to avoid the narrow perspective of his opponents who are claiming that Scripture is essentially a law-book that will solve all practical issues of discipline and practice in the Church today. Against this, Hooker argues very strongly that Scripture contains 'everything necessary to salvation' in the sense that it provides what we need to know and could not otherwise find out—not that it is an encyclopaedia of all that could possibly be truly said about God (*ibid.*).

Hooker has a very high doctrine indeed of the effect simply of reading the Bible in the liturgy. Once again responding to opponents, who have criticised him and others for not giving enough emphasis to preaching, he insists that only the Bible is to be called God's Word and only the Bible communicates *life* (V.21.3). The text in itself impresses on us what is needed for eternal life, even before any preacher has opened his mouth; indeed just reading Scripture was called 'preaching' in the early Church, says Hooker (*ibid.* 4). 'We need for knowledge but to read and live' (*ibid.* 15): we must not imagine that God's grace, convicting us of sin and opening to us the way of life, has to wait until some human voice has explained how it works. Of course preaching is a gift and charism in the Church, not least because no human intellect can 'sound the bottom of that which may be concluded out of the Scripture' (I.14.2). But we should not confuse the way in which the Bible makes clear the way to life with what we can deduce from it.

It is not that Hooker has some kind of superstitious belief that the words of the Bible answer our questions without any human intermediary. His point is that we have to be careful not to give too much power to the individual interpreter, since the Word of God has to be accessible to all. But that accessibility is something that happens as the Bible is read *in community.* What he has in mind is neither what he thinks of as the tyranny of individual

preachers with enormous axes to grind nor the chaos of lots of individual readers coming up with their own ideas about the Bible: it is a situation where the Bible is the common 'space' where Christians meet, the language they share as they hear the narratives and poems and laws recited to them as a group. It is the Bible as delivered in common worship like that of the English Prayer Book that will change lives. The reading of Scripture in this context will help us see its meanings and internal connections, will help us interpret it *as a Church,* and so will lead us to a shared repentance and renewal—a conversion to each other as well as to God, so that the community of faith is built up.

Hooker looks for a balance between the extreme Protestant position of his times, in which every problem is solved by the Bible and anything not commanded in the Bible is forbidden, and in which also the authority of the properly educated preacher to tell you what is important becomes enormous, and the mediaeval position in which there is no special grace attached to Scripture alone, but it is always presented wrapped up, so to speak, in human memory and custom. He wants it to stand out in its uniqueness—but to stand out where it belongs, in the life of an actual worshipping congregation who are at the same time as hearing it also singing psalms and making their prayers. Beware, he says, of separating Bible-reading from all this, as do some of the European churches admired by his opponents: 'the reading of Scripture in the church is a part of our church liturgy, a special portion of the service we do to God' (V.19.5). Reading the Bible is, we might say on this basis, an aspect of our *self-offering* to God in prayer: we come to hear the Bible read so that we may be open to God's call to repentance and his promise of eternal life.



One of the images Hooker uses for Scripture is that it offers 'many histories to serve as looking-glasses to behold the mercy, the truth, the righteousness of God towards all that faithfully serve, obey and honour him' (I.14.3). And that same image appears again in another of the great writers of classical Anglican devotion a generation later, George Herbert, in the first of his two sonnets on 'The Holy Scriptures'. 'Ladies, look here; this is the thankful glasse, / That mends the lookers eyes: this is the well / That washes what it shows.' Rather mischievously, he pretends to be appealing to female vanity: if any woman wants a mirror in which she will be able to see herself as more attractive, this is what the Bible offers. We look into the Bible and see what our renewed selves might be; or, we see our reflection in the water at the bottom of the well and discover that this water will also wash away our blemishes. And in the second of the sonnets, he spells out a little how this works. Scripture here is like a starry sky; and we have to try and discern the shape of the constellations, 'Seeing not only how each verse doth shine / But all the constellations of the storie'. We see that one bit of Scripture seems to point to another, then another which completes a message, a sense of new possibility for the believer: 'These three make up some Christians destinie,' just as, varying the metaphor, different herbs make up a healing medicine. We come to recognize ourselves in the Bible: our lives become the proof and illustration of what is in the text, and in this process our picture of who we are is revolutionized. 'Such are thy secrets, which my life makes good, / And comments on thee; for in ev'ry thing / Thy words do finde me out, & parallels bring, / And in another make me understood.' We discover who we really are in the 'otherness' of the biblical story, and in that encounter we become a living commentary on the text. As I discover the meaning of who I am in engaging with the Bible, the meaning of the text itself is shown to others.

It is a further development of Cranmer's picture of a scripturally based liturgy in which we are drawn to repentance—to self-knowledge and renewal—leading ultimately to a better and more honest receiving of the sacrament of Communion. The relation between Scripture, repentance and sacrament is taken up also by the other great Anglican poet of the early seventeenth century, John Donne, in an Easter sermon of 1628 (Booty 1990, pp. 143–4), where he draws an unusual distinction between how the Holy Spirit works when we read the Bible privately in the family and when we hear it in church: at home, the Spirit is a 'remembrancer,' bringing to mind what we have learned in other contexts, while 'Here in the Church he is with thee as a Doctor to teach thee.'

It is in the context of the corporate worshipping life that we learn what the Spirit is actually saying—not because the Church is more important than the Scriptures but because it is of more authority than the individual. And having learned the substance of

what Scripture teaches, we must have this evidence of God's purpose 'sealed,' ratified in the sacraments, which are the contemporary embodiment of what Scripture is talking about, and 'delivered' through preaching, made applicable to this moment in our lives: 'sealed and delivered to thee in the presence of competent witnesses, the congregation.' Thus the community has a pivotal position in the reception of the Bible: the shape of the liturgy—to coin a phrase—determines what counts as Scripture and what the unified and coherent sense of Scripture is, making individual stars appear as constellations, in Herbert's wonderful metaphor; it is this that forms the subject of meditation and discussion in a private context (but still, crucially, a corporate one, of course, on a smaller scale); and the pattern of Christlike, renewed life that is opened up in all this is affirmed and secured by preaching and sacrament in the congregational assembly once again. The common life of the worshipping community is what gives an intelligible shape to the biblical revelation, making the connections that show it to be one revelation; and so it becomes possible to see how it can be a coherent source of understanding and self-knowledge for a unified life, a life, in Hooker's terms, embodying something of divine Wisdom. . . .

The assumption is that the reading of Scripture in and by the Church gathered for worship is supposed to be the beginning of a journey of transformation; a discipline of scriptural reading that does not focus on this will leave us with a seriously impoverished view of the Bible. Hooker argues that the Puritan theology he is attacking ends up subordinating the Word of God to human words in the end because it insists upon the need for a reading that is controlled, not by the common life of the Church at worship but by an educated clerical elite, without whose expertise the transforming power of the Bible is absent. The way in which our theologians approach Scripture in the liturgy might well be seen as just an articulation of what the entire tradition of using the Bible in church had assumed across the preceding centuries. But the controversial context of the Reformation means that it is rather more original than this alone would suggest. Given the desire of the Reformers, English as much as others, to witness as clearly as possible to the absolute sovereignty of the Bible in the Church, it is vital that liturgy itself should be woven around the theological reading of the Word—and, as Cranmer implies, woven *out of* the materials of the written Word; all else is distracting, at best decorative at worst misleading. There is a real passion to make sure that nothing but the scriptural text shapes and decides what the common language of Christians worshipping and thinking should be, and all historical traditions are re-evaluated in this light. Yet there is an equal insistence that the act of common worship should be both a celebration of the *whole* meaning of Scripture and a gateway to new life through the retelling and re-hearing of the scriptural narrative. The primacy of the Bible is not to be imagined as something that reduces the worshipping community to a lecture audience, or as somehow competing with the sacramental activity that makes the Church what it is. There is in all this a genuinely fresh attempt to understand that the Word of God is indeed a Word of transfiguring power, without supposing that it is a Word that can be heard and responded to as a text for mental exercise or legal argument.

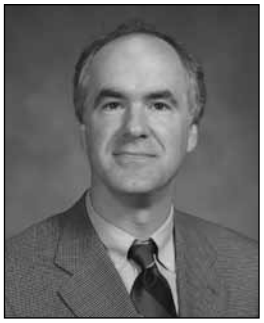
There is a real passion to make sure that nothing but the scriptural text shapes and decides what the common language of Christians worshipping and thinking should be.

Such a tradition has survived in the Anglican world up to more recent times; and I cannot do better than conclude by turning to the greatest Anglican intellect of the last century, the philosopher and theologian Austin Farrer. 'Why do I read the Old Testament? Because it is the spiritual inheritance Christ received, it is what he filled his mind with, . . . it is the body of doctrine which he took over and transformed. So whenever I am reading the Old Testament, I am asking, "What does this mean when it is transformed in Christ?" and whenever I am reading the New Testament I am asking, "How does this set forth Christ to us?"'(LRW 661). Connections: we read and hear with questions in our minds about connections, how this passage may be seen transfigured in the light of Christ, how this passage promises our own transfiguration in Christ. But in all this work, it is the Spirit of communion who is making the connections—within the text, between text and hearer, between hearer and Word, between one hearer and another. And in the divine making of such connections lies the hope of abiding justice and wisdom, the righteousness and wisdom of the eternal Word.

The Marks of the Church

An Anglican Perspective

by Gillis Harp, Grove City College



Dr. Gillis Harp, Grove City College

Confusion about Anglican identity manifests itself these days in, among other things, ignorance of the Thirty-Nine Articles. The neglect or misunderstanding of the Articles is especially unfortunate, since they can help both clergy and laity navigate the rough waters in which North American and global Anglicanism are voyaging. Clear thinking about the nature of the church has never been so badly needed. The nineteenth article of the Thirty-Nine Articles addresses the subject in characteristically succinct terms:

> XIX. *Of the Church.*
>
> *The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure word of God is preached and the sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same. As the Church of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch have erred: so also the Church of Rome hath erred, not only in their living and manner of ceremonies, but also in matters of faith.*

The article begins by focusing on the *visible* church. Here one finds that the *visible* church is implicitly being contrasted with the *invisible* church.

In explicating the Articles, it is usually best to consult their earliest interpreters, those closest to the *original authors.* Alexander Nowell was asked to compose a catechism by Queen Elizabeth I's adviser William Cecil and his work was subsequently published with royal approval in 1570. As *Nowell's Catechism* describes it: "The [invisible] Church is the universal society of all the faithful whom God has predestinated from eternity to everlasting life."[1]

Perhaps the very first commentary on the Thirty-Nine Articles was penned by Thomas Rogers and first published in part during the 1580s. In *The Catholic Doctrine of the Church of England,* Rogers makes the distinction between the invisible and visible church:

> For to man the church of Christ is partly invisible, and visible partly. The invisible are all the elect, who be or shall be either in heaven triumphing; or on earth fighting against the flesh, the world, and the devil. These as members of the church, are said to be invisible; not because the men be not seen, but for that their faith and conscience to Godward is not perfectly known unto us.
>
> The members of the visible church are some of them for God; and some against God; all of them notwithstanding deemed parts of the church, and accounted faithful, so long as they make no manifest and open rebellion against the gospel of Christ."[2]

Continuing in this vein, Richard Hooker, later commented: "For lack of diligent observing the difference between the Church of God mystical and visible, the oversights are neither few not light that have been committed."[3]

In recent years, some have fallen into this error by confusing the body of Christ's elect with the body known legally as the Protestant Episcopal Church (TEC). They have then claimed scripture's promises regarding the invisible church *for a particular denomination* and thereby commit a kind of institutional idolatry. At the turn of the last century, Archbishop of Canterbury E. W. Benson perceptively referred to "the noble, and alas, too fruitful error of arraying the visible Church in the attributes of the Church invisible."[4]

Moreover, in the nineteenth article of the Thirty-Nine Articles there is another crucial teaching, namely that the Word *precedes* the church. Thomas Rogers' commentary on the Articles is again very helpful showing its continuing importance:

> Forasmuch as the visible church of Christ is a congregation of men (either in the eyes of God, or in the judgment of the godly) faithful, it followeth that the word of God must be afore the church for time, as likewise for authority.
>
> For time; because God's word is the seed; the faithful, the corn and the children: God's word is the rock or foundation; the faithful, the house.
>
> For authority also the word is before the church; because the voice of the church is the voice of man, who hath erred and may err from the truth; but the voice of the word is God's voice, who cannot deceive nor be deceived."[5]

In recent decades, those who have sought to conform the Church's teaching to the spirit of the age have often sought to place the church over scripture and thus escape being corrected by the Word. Unfortunately, a high church ecclesiology has sometimes served to facilitate such an approach and allow church bureaucracies to overrule scripture.

1. Alexander Nowell quoted in W. H. Griffith Thomas, *The Principles of Theology: An Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1930), 269.

2. Richard Hooker quoted in Thomas, *Principles of Theology,* 269.

3. Richard Hooker quoted in Thomas, *Principles of Theology,* 269.

4. E.W. Benson quoted in Thomas, *Principles of Theology,* 270.

5. Rogers, *Catholic Doctrine,* 173.

Next, note how Article XIX refers to the visible church as a congregation or corporate entity. This image certainly runs counter to the excessive individualism of our day. As W. H. Griffith Thomas commented: "The visible Church is a community. It is a congregation, not an aggregation, because it has a principle of unity and union with Christ as the centre."[6]

Perhaps most relevant to current controversies, the article then lays out three marks or signs that should distinguish the visible church. Griffith Thomas stresses that the Articles here are "referring to signs, not to essence; to what the Church does rather than what the Church is."[7] In sum, the church is characterized by believers ("faithful men") where the simple apostolic message of the Cross is taught consistently ("the pure Word of God is preached") and the sacraments of the Lord's Supper and Baptism are administered consistent with Christ's instructions. The "duly" here may have referred specifically to the denial of the cup to the laity but also implicit in the due or proper administration of the sacraments is the practice of ecclesiastical discipline. Indeed, the earliest commentators on the Articles stressed that discipline constituted a key third mark of the church.

Again, *Nowell's Catechism* provides a helpful explanation. It refers to the two marks listed in the article but then adds: "These are indeed the chief and the necessary marks of the visible church, such as without the which it cannot be indeed, nor rightly be called, the church of Christ. But yet also in the same church, if it be well ordered, there shall be seen to be observed a certain Border and manner of governance, and such a form of ecclesiastical discipline, that it shall not be free for any that abideth in that flock publicly to speak or do anything wickedly or in heinous sort without punishment, yea, and so that in that congregation of men all offences (so far as is possible) be avoided."[8]

Similarly, in the authoritative *Second Book of Homilies,* the Homily for Whitsunday (probably written by Bishop John Jewel) explains: "The true Church is an universal congregation or fellowship of God's faithful and elect people, built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the head corner stone (Ephesians 2.20). And it hath always three notes or marks whereby it is known. Pure and sound doctrine, the Sacraments ministered according to Christ's holy institution, and the right use of Ecclesiastical discipline. This description of the Church is agreeable both to the Scriptures of God, and also to the doctrine of the ancient fathers, so that none may justly find fault therewith."[9]

Even otherwise theologically conservative congregations today rarely practice appropriate Godly correction. *Nowell's Catechism* suggested back in the sixteenth century one reason for the neglect of discipline and its insight still applies: "But this discipline since long time past by little and little decaying, as the manners of men be corrupt and out of right course, specially of the rich and men of power, which will needs have impunity and most free liberty to sin and do wickedly, this grave manner of looking to them and of chastisement can hardly be maintained in churches. But in whatsoever assembly the word of God, the calling upon him, and his sacraments, are purely and sincerely retained, it is no doubt that there is also the church of Christ."[10] Our culture has definitely witnessed a further corruption of "the manners of men" that Nowell could have scarcely imagined. Clergy naturally find it difficult to rebuke wealthy parishioners who may also be generous contributors. Additionally, some Christians may have experienced harsh and intrusive forms of church discipline within other denominations. Still, such excesses are hardly reasons to tolerate clerical reticence or allow ethical indifference to grow.

The 1928 American BCP is actually quite clear about pastoral duties in this regard. Note, in particular, the general rubrics that follow the service of Holy Communion in the Exhortation:

> *If among those who come to be partakers of the Holy Communion, the Minister shall know any to be an open and notorious evil liver, or to have done any wrong to his neighbours by word or deed, so that the Congregation be thereby offended; he shall advertise him, that he presume not to come to the Lord's Table, until he have openly declared himself to have truly repented and amended his former evil life, that the Congregation may thereby be satisfied; and that he hath recompensed the parties to whom he hath done wrong; or at least declare himself to be in full purpose so to do, as soon as he conveniently may.*

Certainly conservative parishes that seek to teach the doctrine of the 1928 BCP and adhere to its articulation of the Anglican Way, need to recover gracious church discipline.

All faithful Anglicans are called upon in these perilous times to study and apply Article XIX in a careful and consistent way. An objective observer would conclude that many parishes and even many dioceses within the Episcopal Church today do not meet these three essential criteria. But neither should those who have separated from TEC be complacent. Our Anglican formularies have provided us with an invaluable measuring rod to guide our deliberations and reform our practices; they have been neglected far too long.

6. Thomas, *Principles of Theology,* 271.

7. Thomas, *Principles of Theology,* 271.

8. Alexander Nowell, *A Catechism Written in Latin by Alexander Nowell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1853 [1570]), 175.

9. *Sermons or Homilies Appointed to Be Read in Churches* (London: Prayer Book and Homily Society, 1833), 322

10. Nowell, *Catechism,* 175.

The Churching of Women Defended

Fr Peter Geromel

There is an occasional service in the Book of Common Prayer which very few have ever seen. This is the "Churching of Women" or "Thanksgiving of Women after Child-birth." I understand that it was not unusual, before the Second Vatican Council, for Roman Catholic women to be seen being "churched" (not excommunicated—rather the reverse), being reintegrated into the church after their absence during delivery and confinement. They were "churched" before the baptism of the child as a means of giving thanksgiving for that child.

Like the "Purification of Mary," celebrated on February 2, this biblical practice is now mostly ignored, despite long and widespread practice; it was a rite common to Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Anglicans and, even more marginally, Methodists and Lutherans. It is ignored because it has come to be considered a "Purification" rite in the worst sense and, therefore, condemned as overly Jewish, and suspiciously like misogyny. I have even overheard an Eastern Orthodox priest publicly state that he was concerned about performing this rite because of its Jewish origin.

This is nothing new. Richard Hooker had to defend its use in the fifth book of the *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* because the Puritans wanted none of it. He states:

> It is nothing but an overflowing of gall to interpret a woman's absence from church during the time of her pregnancy in such a way as to judge her unholy or excluded from God's House according to some ancient Levitical law. Our canon law does not say this, but the exact opposite (Gratian, 12th cent., *Decretum,* 1.5). A woman is not barred from church for the reason our critics give. She is not forbidden from entering because of any supposed unholiness, although it is sensible for her to stay away from public gatherings and remain in her own abode for a time (Leo VI, *constitutio* 17).[1]

In an era before antibiotics, it was simply safer for women to stay home for a period of time during and after delivery. The Law of Moses and canon law was there for the protection of women and motherhood, not punishing them for any impurity or wickedness. The service of the Churching of Women is, indeed, a purification rite, but not in a negative way. It is a New Testament continuation of Old Testament practice (Leviticus 12).

Perhaps the modern mind that thinks that childbirth makes a woman unclean, spiritually or physically. It is modern culture, keeping childbirth (as well as death) far from the home, which may allow it to become associated with impurity, something unpleasant or unnatural or evil. "One goes to the hospital when one is sick, therefore, pregnancy must be a form of sickness because one goes to the hospital," would be an oversimplified form of this false logic. Two types of prayer are involved, thanksgiving and healing. It is a service of healing because of suffrages similar to the Visitation of the Sick. The thinking is similar to the Blessing of a Pregnant Woman from the Priest's Manual, "O Lord, save this woman thy servant; Who putteth her trust in thee. Be thou to her a strong tower; From the face of her enemy." In a way it serves as spiritual antibiotics. Childbirth is dangerous always, and all of the prayers in this rite are prayers of protection from evil and prayers of thanksgiving. None of them are prayers of "purification" in the modern sense of the word.

After this comes this thanksgiving prayer:

> O Almighty God, we give thee humble thanks for that thou hast been graciously pleased to preserve, through the great pain and peril of child-birth, this woman, thy servant, who desireth now to offer her praises and thanksgivings unto thee. Grant, we beseech thee, most merciful Father, that she, through thy help, may faithfully live according to thy will in this life, and also may be partaker of everlasting glory in the life to come."

Then looking forward to the baptism, "Grant, we beseech thee, O heavenly Father, that the child of this thy servant may daily increase in wisdom and stature, and grow in thy love and service, until *he* come to thy eternal joy." The rubrics then say, "The Woman, that

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1. Philip B. Secor, *Richard Hooker on Anglican Faith and Worship: Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity: Book V, A Modern Edition*. (London: SPCK, 2003), 338.

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cometh to give her Thanks, must offer accustomed offerings, which shall be applied by the Minister and the Churchwardens to the relief of distressed women in child-bed; and if there be a Communion, it is convenient that she receive the Holy Communion." For what reason is she to receive Holy Communion? Is it because she is now purified? Or because until this point she has been confined and has not been able to receive Communion? Or is it because it is the best way to offer thanksgiving? This is a curious thing. This whole service is a curious thing. Yet I think that it is a curious thing more so in our culture because we are curiously clueless about the whole thing, the whole motherhood thing.

The biblical reality is not that nothing about pregnancy and giving birth makes one impure or unclean or is connected to sin, rather there is something about pregnancy and giving birth which purifies and is a means to grace. 1 Timothy 2:15 says, "Yet woman will be saved through bearing children, if she continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty." This text doesn't say that if you are barren, or barren for the kingdom of heaven, you won't be saved. Part of the nature of womanhood that makes her different from a man is that she was created with the potential of bearing children, and it is with our nature, and not against nature, that redemption and salvation occur. A nature can be redeemed even if its potentialities are not fully made actual during a lifetime, but it cannot be redeemed against or in denial of its nature. The woman who has embraced barrenness for the kingdom of heaven has embraced motherhood through identifying herself with the Mother of God , and her fruitful virginity. Insofar as the nature is embraced and recognized it can be redeemed. St. Timothy is saying that a woman cannot be saved apart from that nature.

Furthermore, like much of the Law of Moses, in which the physical becomes a sign of the spiritual, the Purification of a woman after childbirth is a Thanksgiving. This is because if someone does not acknowledge from whence a blessing comes, one does sin. The lack of acknowledgement of God's providence is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual illness, which is "dis-*grace*-ful." The Law of Moses, and the Christian Church's fulfillment of that Law, required (and requires) the woman to acknowledge from whence came the child. This was and is a spiritual safeguard against the woman (and her whole family) becoming spiritually impure by not returning thanks to God.

As Richard Hooker said so long ago, "God forbid that we should cease performing this duty when the public good draws us to it, when it so easily done, and when it has been performed by devout and virtuous people for so many years. God forbid that we should omit this duty that we are drawn in so many ways to perform. . . . We trust that so long as the act itself pleases God, the particular form and manner we use will not justifiably offend anyone."[2]

2. Ibid.

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