# CREDO

## THE THIRTY-NINE ARTICLES, THE CREEDS, AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

*A Guide to an Exhibition held in Chester Cathedral Library to commemorate the 450th Anniversary of the Thirty-Nine Articles and the 400th Anniversary of the Birth of Jeremy Taylor*

**By**

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*Lex orandi lex credendi*

**MMXIII**

## PREFACE

*This exhibition, like its predecessors, would not have happened without the unstinting support of the Dean and Chapter of Chester Cathedral, the Canon Librarian and Chancellor, Jane Brooke, the Librarian Peter Bamford, and the Library volunteers. As with earlier exhibitions our aim has been not only to highlight some of the treasures the Library holds, but, within the constraints of a very limited budget, to integrate the Library more closely into the mission and work of the Cathedral.*

*The theme this year is theological, which makes it difficult to "sell" to a general audience. I am not a theologian. I class myself as a historian of religion, particularly of religious ideas. I have read a lot of classic theology and sought to understand it, but, I repeat, I am not a theologian. I am grateful to others who are, whom I have persuaded to comment on a draft of this work. Particular thanks are due to my wife, Canon Loveday Alexander, my lifelong partner in dialogue, to Dr. Martin Davie, whose large commentary on the Thirty-Nine Articles is about to be published, to Professor Oliver O'Donovan, author of one of the best books on the Articles to appear in a very long time, and to Bishop Robert Atwell of Stockport, who has a particular interest in catechesis. They saved me from factual mistakes and encouraged me to rethink a number of points. Errors of fact and judgement that remain are, however, all my own.*

*Many of the issues raised deserve fuller discussion than I can give them here. This is certainly true of the complex question of subscription and assent. I resisted the temptation to bring the debate about the Anglican Covenant into the story, instructive though it is. I simply hadn't the space to do it justice, but it shows how relevant this exhibition is to the Church today.*

*The exhibition is organized as follows: CASE ONE (the flat case beneath the windows) covers the emergence of the Thirty-Nine Articles as an authoritative symbol of Anglican belief. CASE TWO (the case by the door), top shelf, deals with the roots of the Articles in the ecumenical creeds of the Church, and with rival confessions of faith (especially the Westminster Confession and the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent). CASE TWO, bottom shelf, explores the reception and interpretation of the Thirty-Nine Articles, and the problem of assent. CASE THREE (the case farthest from the door), bottom shelf, surveys two other authoritative statements of Anglican doctrine – the two Books of Homilies and the Catechism of the Book of Common Prayer. CASE THREE, top shelf, reflects on the place of theology in the Christian life by examining the life and thought of Jeremy Taylor, one of the acknowledged doctors of the Church of England, the 400th anniversary of whose birth falls this year*

**Philip Alexander** **20th January 2013**

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## THE THIRTY-NINE ARTICLES, THE CREEDS, AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

This is the fourth exhibition that we have mounted at Chester Cathedral Library, and it is by far the most challenging, because in it we are going to try and convince our visitors that theology matters – that doctrine involves everyone, and has a central role to play in the life of the Church and of the individual. Theology gets a bad press nowadays in both the Christian and the non-Christian media. There is a feeling that there is too much of it about. Dogma is seen as leading to bitterness and dissension, and things would be a lot happier if we had less of it. Many earnest Christians seem puzzled by theology, and fear it will hinder rather than help their spiritual development, hurting their heads without warming their hearts or lifting their spirits. It is not something that *they* can be expected to be interested in, is it? It's something they can leave to bishops, and vicars and teachers of the Church.

It is these widely held notions that we seek to challenge. Our argument in a nutshell is that theology *is* important, and, actually, not an optional extra for *any* Christian. All of us, whether we realise it or not, whether we like it or not, have a "theology" in our heads, in the sense that our actions are governed by a set of deeply held beliefs and narratives about the world and our place in it, and these determine how we act, and can, conversely, be inferred from our actions. The only real question is whether we hold *good* theology or *bad* theology. The problem is not that there is too much theology around, rather that there is too much *bad* theology around. We are being constantly bombarded by it. Take, for example, the heresy that happiness lies in ever greater consumption of material goods – a heresy which festers at the heart of our economic system, and which is preached at us relentlessly and ruthlessly in the media every day. Christians need to

be able to spot such heresies, and to testify against them (that is what preaching the Gospel is about). We all need to attend to our theological education as much as to our public and private devotions, and these should be seen as complementary rather than opposed tasks. And where our theological education should begin is by examining our *own* theology: an unexamined theology is a dangerous theology. We hope this little exhibition, by sketching the role of doctrine in the formation of Anglicanism, by identifying resources that can help us think theologically, and by raising some questions that need to be addressed, will prove a stimulus to self-reflection.

## THE EMERGENCE OF THE THIRTY-NINE ARTICLES (CASE ONE)

The exhibition is inspired by the fact that 2013 is the 450th anniversary since the publication of the Anglican *Articles of Religion*, known commonly as the *Thirty-Nine Articles* (there were only *thirty-eight* in 1563, but we'll come to that in a moment). Though compiled all those years ago these articles remain an authoritative statement of the distinctive theology of the Church of England. Every bishop, priest or deacon today, when being ordained or licensed, has to assent to them. The current *Declaration of Assent* runs as follows:[1]

> **Preface**
> *The Church of England is part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, worshipping the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It professes the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds, which faith the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation.*
> *Led by the Holy Spirit, it has borne witness to Christian truth in its historic formularies, the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, The Book of Common Prayer and the Ordering of Bishops, Priests and Deacons. In the declaration you are about to make, will you affirm your loyalty to this inheritance of faith as your inspiration and guidance under God in*

[1] *Common Worship: Ordination Services* (Church House Publishing: London, 2007), p. 6.

*bringing the grace and truth of Christ to this generation and making Him known to those in your care?*

**Declaration of Assent**

I, *A B*, do so affirm, and accordingly declare my belief in the faith which is revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds and to which the historic formularies of the Church of England bear witness; and in public prayer and administration of the sacraments, I will use only the forms of service which are authorized or allowed by Canon.

The *Thirty-Nine Articles* are, then, one of the three "historic formularies" of the Church of England, the other two being the *Book of Common Prayer* and *The Ordinal*. So it is not the *only* authoritative statement of Anglican doctrine: the other two formularies, though fundamentally practical in function, are full of doctrine, not only in the words of the prayers and in the rubrics, but in the very forms of the liturgy itself, on the famous principle of *lex orandi lex credendi* – "the law of prayer is the law of belief". And there is a recognition that behind the *Articles* stand more ancient, universal and venerable statements of theology – the Holy Scriptures and the catholic creeds. Their relationship to this ancient wisdom is hinted at in subtle ways, and will be explored as one of the themes of the exhibition. But the meaning is clear: if you are an Anglican, then you have to take the *Thirty-Nine Articles* seriously as a description of the distinctively Anglican theological ground on which you stand within the universal church.

How did these *Articles of Religion* come about? The answer lies in the complex history of the English Reformation of the 16th century, which was only an English variant of the Protestant Reformation sweeping across Europe at that time. The Reformation was one of the great upheavals of European history, the effects of which are with us to the present day. It can still engender passionate debate among historians and theologians. To some it is a glorious breaking out of the truth of the Gospel after a time of darkness and decline. To others it marks the

cruel destruction of a spirituality which had sustained for centuries ordinary folk through what was often, materially speaking, a nasty and brutish existence, and given them hope and comfort. Theology lay at the heart of the process: the Reformers were adamant that the great medieval schoolmen, such as Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), the "Angelic Doctor" who became the teacher *par excellence* of the western Church, had erred grievously on some of the cardinal doctrines of the faith, and that by following them people were putting their eternal souls at risk. The Protestant Reformers did not always agree among themselves, and different theological systems rapidly emerged within the Protestant camp. There was Martin Luther (1483-1546) in Wittenberg, in Saxony, who made much of the early running. But Switzerland also became a significant centre of Protestantism, with Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) at Zurich, and above all John Calvin (1509-1564) at Geneva. Martin Bucer (1491-1551) in Strasbourg was also a figure to be reckoned with. And there were many others.

All these great continental doctors and centres of Reform were to influence in different ways the English Reformation. The English Reformation was well networked into events in the wider world. Leading English Reformers corresponded (in Latin) with the continental divines, and read their books (widely disseminated through the new-fangled medium of printing). Many of them (e.g. Thomas Cranmer) visited mainland Europe and studied there, and, major European scholars (e.g. Martin Bucer), came to England for consultations, or even to teach. The leading early English reformers tended to take an eclectic approach to the great debates that were exercising the minds of their brethren abroad. On church order and justification by faith, they were closer to the Lutherans, but on the sacraments they were more in accord with Swiss thinking (Zwingli and Calvin). This eclecticism did not meet with universal approval. In Elizabeth I's reign a strong party emerged within the Church of England (sometimes called Puritans) which favoured the teachings of Calvin (**EXHIBIT 2.5**), and which campaigned tirelessly for the Church to reform itself further along more consistently Calvinist lines. The authorities strove to hold the line, and to steer the Church on a middle

course between Rome and radical Protestantism. Under Elizabeth it achieved a kind of equilibrium, underpinned doctrinally by the *Articles of Religion*. It was really in Queen Elizabeth's reign, not Henry VIII's, that the Church of England as we know it today came into being.

The *Articles* of 1563 were not the first time that the Church had attempted to define its position in relation to the theological controversies that were raging across Europe. Ten years earlier, in 1553, shortly before the death of King Edward VI, the *Forty-Two Articles* had been promulgated, and even these were not the first. There had been a flurry of doctrinal formularies under Henry VIII, in which the king himself sometimes had a hand. He fancied himself as a theologian, and early in his reign, before he began to move in the direction of reform, he had written a defence of the seven sacraments against Luther (*Assertio Septem Sacramentorum*, 1521: **EXHIBIT 1.4**), which earned him the title "Defender of the Faith" (*Fidei Defensor*) from a grateful Pope – a title still proudly claimed by the monarch. The earliest of the Henrician formularies was the *Ten Articles* of 1536 ("to stablyshe Christian quietness & unitie among us, and to avoyde contentious opinions"). These were almost immediately incorporated into, and superseded by, *The Institution of a Christian Man* of 1534 (**EXHIBIT 1.5**), commonly known as the *Bishops' Book*, which was in turn over-ridden by the *Thirteen Articles* of 1538 (never officially promulgated), which were comprehensively contradicted by the so-called Statute of the Six Articles of 1539 (the *Act for Abolishing Diversity in Opinions*: 31 Henry 8 c. 14). This slammed the brakes on reform, but was in turn overridden by *The Necessary Doctrine for any Christian Man* of 1543 (**EXHIBIT 1.6**), the last of the Henrician statements of faith.

Peoples' heads must have been spinning, and it was to clear the air that Archbishop Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556) set about drafting the *Forty-Two Articles*. Cranmer, the towering figure of the early English Reformation, was also responsible for the first versions of the other two historic formularies – the *Book of Common Prayer* (1549, 1552), and the *Ordinal* (1551) (**EXHIBIT 1.2**). The *Articles* were indebted to a great Lutheran statement of doctrine – the *Augsburg Confession* of 1530,

drafted by Philip Melancthon (1497-1560) (**EXHIBIT 2.4**) – probably not directly, but through the *Thirteen Articles* of 1538, which they largely incorporated.

The purpose of the *Articles* was twofold. They were devised fundamentally to provide a means by which bishops could ensure that their clergy were teaching sound doctrine. They were limited in scope: they were not meant as a comprehensive system of theology, but touched mainly on controversial issues of the day, nor were they a definition of "the sum of saving knowledge", that is to say doctrines which the Christian is absolutely obliged to hold. They were aimed first and foremost at the clergy (though there *were* efforts to disseminate them among the laity as well), and they related primarily to their function as *teachers* in the Church. Cranmer and several other bishops had been imposing doctrinal tests on their clergy informally for a number of years. Now, there was to be a uniform "test", imposed by the authority of the King. The Royal Printer, Richard Grafton, issued the *Articles* from his press in London in 1553 as a little booklet in English of around 26 pages. The publication is astonishingly low-key for such a momentous document. There is no preface or formal explanation of its content. The title-page, however, proclaims: *Articles agreed on by the Bishoppes, and other learned men in the Synode of London, in the yere of our Lorde Godde. M.D.LII* [1553 according to our calendar!]. *for the avoiding of controversie in opinions, and the establishment of godlie concorde, in certain matiers of Religion. Published by the Kinges Maiesties commandement*.

The reference to a synod is vital for the authority of the *Articles*. It had long been recognized, going back to the great ecumenical and regional councils of antiquity and the middle ages, that statements of doctrine had no standing unless issued collectively by a representative body of the church. So the *Articles* passed that test (though historians still hotly debate whether they were subscribed to by the full Convocations of Canterbury and York). The synod in question was, to be sure, a very local affair – as its continental Catholic critics were quick to point out – but that would not have troubled the divines who formulated the

*Articles*, because it was a cardinal principle of the English Reformation (one for which good precedent could be alleged) that each region of the universal Church had full authority to manage its own affairs and decide its own doctrine and practice, without reference to the Bishop of Rome – the Pope.

But the moral and religious authority of the bishops and the synod was reinforced by the legal authority of the King, and it was he who had the power to *impose* the *Articles*. Any priest, deacon or clerk refusing to subscribe would ultimately be defying the King, with all the consequences that entailed. The King, of course, had full authority on his own cognizance to impose such *Articles*, because, since the *Act of Supremacy* of 1534 (26 Hen. 8 c. 1), he was recognized in law as the Supreme Governor of the national church. It remains interesting, however, that the legal instrument by which the *Forty-Two Articles* were imposed was different from that by which one of the other great formularies, the *Book of Common Prayer* of 1549, was imposed. That had an Act of Parliament behind it (the *Act of Uniformity* of 1549), to which the monarch gave formal assent. This was right and proper, because the *Book of Common Prayer* was aimed at the whole people, and regulated their everyday religious lives. It was necessary, therefore, that the people's representatives in Parliament should have a chance to have their say on it. The *Articles of Religion*, however, were aimed primarily at the clergy, and could be appropriately issued solely on the authority of the King and Convocation.

The *Articles of Religion* of 1553 were, then, an instrument of ecclesiastical house-keeping, which would, hopefully, minimize debate, discord and confusion within the house. But they had also another function, which comes out in another version of them published in the same year. This is found in the *Short Catechism, or Plain Instruction containing the sum of Christian learning set forth by the King's Majesty's authority, for all Schoolmasters to teach* (**EXHIBIT 4.3**). This work was printed in English (John Day, London) and in Latin (Reginald Wolf, London). It is the Latin which concerns us here, and not the *Catechism* itself, but the *Latin* version of the *Articles of Religion*

appended to it. Suddenly, out of the blue, we have the *Articles* in Latin. Why? There are several answers but the most fundamental of them is that a Latin version of the *Articles* gave them intellectual respectability. It opened up the doctrine of the Church of England to the scrutiny of the continental divines and the continental churches, and positioned it on the map of the religious disputes of day. Latin was the universal language of theology and scholarship at the time, and only those able and prepared to use it could take part in the great international debates. The Latin version was the way in which the Church of England show-cased its doctrine to the wider world. The later *Thirty-Nine Articles*, as we shall see in a moment, also exist in Latin. The result is that two versions of this fundamental statement of Anglican doctrine exist side-by-side – one in English and one in Latin. Which is the more authoritative? The answer, at least if the great classic authorities (e.g., Burnet and Waterland) are to be believed, is, "Neither". Both carry equal weight, and that is why some commentaries on the *Thirty-Nine Articles* print both texts side by side.

The *Articles* of 1553 as well as the *Prayer Book* of 1552 and the *Ordinal* of 1551 were rapidly overwhelmed by the counter-reformation under Queen Mary, who proceeded to take the Church of England back to its former allegiance to Rome. The 1553 *Articles* were, in effect, abolished by the *Statutes of Repeal* of 1553 (1 Mary, st. 2, c. 2) and 1555 (1 & 2 Philip and Mary c. 8), and were comprehensively contradicted by the *Fifteen Articles* which the formidable Chancellor of England, Stephen Gardiner (*c.*1483-1555), formerly Bishop of Winchester (1531-1551), one of the great canon-lawyers of the age, and the leader of the anti-reform party in the reigns of Henry and Edward, imposed on the University of Cambridge in April 1555. The death of Queen Mary in 1558, followed twelve hours later by that of Cardinal Reginald Pole, who had succeeded Cranmer as Archbishop of Canterbury, was seized on by Protestants as a sign from God, and so another chapter in the story of the English Reformation began.

Interest in the 1553 *Articles* revived under Mary's successor Elizabeth, as part of the Elizabethan settlement designed to anchor the Church of

England finally in the harbour of Protestantism. The architect of the Elizabethan settlement was the Queen's new Archbishop of Canterbury (1559-1575), Matthew Parker (**EXHIBIT 1.3**). An able and energetic man, and an impressive scholar, he earned the nickname "Nosey Parker" (and bequeathed the phrase to the English language) from his constant prying into church affairs. A set of *Eleven Articles* were drawn up in 1559. Imposed in England by the Bishops, but not mandated by the Queen, they *were* fully subscribed by the Church of Ireland, and became the official standard of doctrine there till replaced in 1615 by the *Irish Articles of Religion*. Parker set the *Eleven Articles* aside and went back instead to the Latin version of the *Forty-Two Articles* of 1553. Some of these he omitted, others he thoroughly rewrote, and he added a few not in the earlier list. Like their predecessor, Parker's *Articles* show Lutheran influence: there are significant verbal overlaps between his changes and the *Confession of Würtemberg* – a formula submitted by delegates from the Duchy of Würtemberg in Germany to the Council of Trent in 1551. Parker's editing was quite thorough and showed how seriously he took the business in hand. Parker then submitted his draft *Articles* to both Houses of the Convocation of Canterbury in January 1563. They were vigorously debated in Convocation, and further changes introduced. We can follow the process closely, because extensive paper-work relating to it survives in Parker's archive at his old Cambridge College, Corpus Christi. But the picture is confused and just what happened has occasioned debate among the experts. There is some doubt as to whether the draft *Articles* went through the Convocation of York, representing the northern province of the Church of England, though the Archbishop of York and his two suffragans did sign them. Eventually an agreed text was passed on to Her Majesty for approval, but even that was not the end of the matter.

The Queen (and, presumably, her advisers) reviewed the text very carefully, and may have made some further changes. The Bishops' draft had *Thirty-Nine Articles*, but when the text finally saw the light of day, only *Thirty-Eight* were printed: Article 29, "Of the wicked which do not eate the body of Christe in the use of the Lordes Supper", had

vanished. Whether this had been removed during the debates in Convocation, or by the Queen and her advisers, remains a matter of dispute, but there can be little doubt that the royal review was thorough. This is hinted at in the published text issued by the printer Reginald Wolf in London later in 1563. At the end of this is a brief account (in Latin) of how the Articles came into being, which concludes as follows: "To all of which articles, the Most Serene Prince Elizabeth, by the grace of God Queen of England, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, having first herself diligently read and examined them, has given her royal assent." Elizabeth, like her father, was an accomplished scholar. It was this published version, entirely in Latin, that was the official text of the *Articles*, since it was the one that carried the royal affirmation. As under Edward, so under Elizabeth, the *Articles* were imposed by royal command (contrast again the 1559 *Book of Common Prayer* which was sanctioned by an *Act of Uniformity*). In 1566 Parliament attempted to add its approval in a Bill which went through the Lower House, but was stopped by order of the Queen in the House of Lords. The Queen took seriously her role as a "godly prince", and was not going to allow the process of deciding doctrine in the Church over which she ruled to be democratized by the intervention of Parliament.

The 1563 Articles, as just noted, were published only in Latin. If an English version was prepared (there are grounds for thinking it was), it was not issued at this time. However, Parker came back to the matter in 1571. The Convocation of Canterbury in that year reviewed the Latin *Articles* of 1563 (York did not seem to be involved), and with minor amendments, and the restoration of Article 29 (thus bringing the tally up to 39), approved an English version. This was printed by royal command in London by the Queen's printers, Richard Jugge and John Cawood. At the back was the following Ratification: "This Booke of Articles before rehearsed, is agayne approved and allowed to be holden & executed within the Realme, by the assent and consent of our Soveraigne Lady Elizabeth, by the grace of GOD, of England, France and Irelande Queene, defender of the faith, etc. Which Articles were deliberately read, & confirmed again by the subscription of the handes

of the Archbishop and Bishoppes of the upper house, and by subscription of the whole Cleargie in the neather house in theyr Convocation, in the yere of our Lorde GOD. 1571."

Interestingly the *Articles* of 1571 *were* separately approved by an Act of Parliament, to which the Queen gave her assent (the so-called *Subscription Act* of 1571: 13 Elizabeth 1 c. 12). The Queen's assent to the Bill was, by all accounts, reluctantly given, and was forced on her by the growing assertiveness on the part of the laity, and to some extent the Puritans in Parliament, of their right to a say in ecclesiastical matters. The Act required every clergyman below the rank of Bishop, "before the feast of the Nativity of Christ next following … [to] declare his assent, and subscribe to all the articles of religion, which only concern the confession of the true Christian faith and the doctrine of the sacraments, comprised in a book imprinted, intituled: Articles." The wording of the Act introduced confusion (a confusion its framers intended) in that it only required subscription to the *Articles relating to doctrine and sacraments*. It did not specify what these were, and so left the way open to partial subscription to all *Thirty-Nine*. The Queen's original misgivings were vindicated, and although the Act became Statute Law of England it is, significantly, never cited as authorization for the *Articles* in *any* subsequent printings. The only authorization given down to the present day is royal ratification.

This was the final and definitive version of the *Thirty-Nine Articles*. The text has been reprinted essentially without change ever since. The *Articles* were, however, under constant attack almost from the moment they were promulgated. As noted earlier, the Puritans gained strength in the Church of England later in Elizabeth's reign, and they were endlessly agitating to have the *Articles* revised in a more Calvinistic direction (**EXHIBIT 2.5**). The strongly Calvinistic nine *Lambeth Articles* of 1595 claimed the support of the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Whitgift, but they never had any authority beyond his approbation. At the 1604 Hampton Court Conference (famous as the occasion when King James set in motion the events that led to the great 1611 King James Bible) the Puritans asked for the *Thirty-Nine Articles* to be

accommodated to the *Lambeth*, but the demand was swatted aside by both King and Bishops. In 1615 the Church of England's sister church in Ireland adopted a set of very Calvinistic articles, drafted by James Ussher, one of the great scholars of the age, and subsequently Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland (1625-56) – author of the Biblical chronology printed in many editions of the King James Bible, which has the world created on Sunday 23rd October 4004 BC! King James himself stoked the fires of controversy by sponsoring the Dutch Synod of Dort (Dordrecht) which was convened in 1618 to deal with the teachings of Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609), Professor of Theology in the University of Leiden, who had trenchantly attacked some of the key tenets of Calvinism. James got entangled in Dort for complex, political reasons. The Dutch had asked for foreign representatives to be present (though they gave them no voting rights), and James was friendly with the Prince of Orange, and may have wanted to oblige him, while at the same time advancing his own credentials as a godly prince round whom Protestants throughout Europe could unite. He may also have had hopes of exercising a moderating influence on the Synod's deliberations, and the four English delegates he sent were, on the whole, moderates. They returned in 1619, having achieved nothing: the Synod of Dort roundly condemned Arminianism, and its five points have ever since been seen as the touchstone of the ultra-Calvinist position.

King James's flirtation with Dort fanned the flames of the Arminian controversy which had now broken out in England. The debate raged and got so out of hand that his son Charles I felt compelled to try and quell it by a Royal Proclamation of 1626, followed by a reissue of the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, prefaced with an new Royal Declaration, in 1628, reasserting in no uncertain terms their continuing authority, and forbidding anyone to remove or dispute any of them, or take them in any other than their literal, grammatical sense. Issued in London by the Royal Printers, Bonham Norton and John Bill, this little volume, which looks back on its title page to the Convocation of 1562 (i.e. 1563 in our reckoning) as the decisive moment in the history of the *Articles*, formed the basis of all subsequent prints down the present day. The

*Thirty-Nine Articles* are still printed today at the back of the *Book of Common Prayer* with Charles I's *Declaration* at the beginning (**EXHIBIT 1.1**), and Elizabeth I's *Ratification* at the end.

During the English Civil War and the Commonwealth, the Puritans briefly triumphed, and managed to replace the *Articles* with a thoroughly Calvinist Confession of Faith (we will tell that story in a moment), but with the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 the *Thirty-Nine Articles* came back, along with a revised *Book of Common Prayer* (1662). Even at this stage there were passionate calls to revise the *Articles*. A Dr. Cornelius Burges, who had been a member of the Westminster Assembly in the 1640s (see below), put the case for revision. A refutation came from John Pearson, one of the great divines of the day (more on him anon), in a powerfully argued pamphlet, *No Necessity of Reformation of the Publick Doctrine of the Church of England* (1660) (**EXHIBIT 1.7**). The nub of Pearson's case was that Burges had misunderstood the purpose of the *Articles*. "It [i.e. the *Thirty-Nine Articles*]", he observed, "is not, nor is pretended to be, a complete body of divinity, or a comprehension and explication of all Christian doctrines necessary to be taught; but an enumeration of some truths, which upon and since the Reformation have been denied by some persons; who upon their denial are thought unfit to have any cure of souls in this Church or realm." Historically speaking, it is hard to quarrel with Pearson's minimalist assessment of the purpose of the *Articles*. They are not a comprehensive system of theology: they *do* leave a lot out. What they mention are points of doctrine which were *disputed* in the 16th century. The *Articles* are aimed at *denying* certain views, and it is important to note that the views negated are as often those held by radical Protestant groups (groups somewhat confusingly lumped together under the title "Anabaptists"), as those held by Rome.

In 1681 the *Thirty-Nine Articles* were printed at Oxford for the first time at the back of a *Book of Common Prayer*, and there they have lodged ever since (**EXHIBIT 1.1**). Before then, as we saw, they were issued as a separate little book by the royal printers. Printing them with the *Book of Common Prayer* is purely a matter of convenience. They are not integral

to that work, nor do they come under the *Acts of Uniformity* printed at the beginning of it: they constitute a separate and quite distinct formulary of the Church.

## ROOTS AND RIVALS
## (CASE TWO: TOP SHELF)

As we noted earlier, the *Thirty-Nine Articles* are not the only standard of doctrine for Anglicans. Older, more primal standards are freely acknowledged as authoritative within the tradition, among which are "the catholic creeds". These are ancient affirmations of faith accepted by all branches of the Church, at least in the West, and are, therefore, in the precise dictionary sense of the word, catholic, that is to say, universal. Three of these creeds – the *Apostles' Creed*, the *Nicene Creed*, and the *Athanasian Creed* – are given an important place liturgically within the *Book of Common Prayer*: the first is to be recited at morning and evening prayer, the second at the Eucharist, and the third, in place of the *Apostles' Creed*, at Mattins on Christmas Day, Epiphany, Easter Day, Ascension Day, Whitsunday, and Trinity Sunday, as well as on a number of saints' days spread throughout the year. What are these creeds? Where do they come from, and what is their relationship to the *Thirty-Nine Articles*?

The *Apostles' Creed* (**EXHIBIT 2.2**) is so called because there is a very old tradition that it was the Apostles who collectively composed it, each of them contributing one of its articles. That is a legend. In fact the creed is first fully attested only long after the apostolic age. The first time the *name* appears is in a letter of St. Ambrose (*Epistle* 42.5) dated to around 390, and the first time the *current wording* is precisely recorded is in the writings of St. Pirminius in the early 8th century. The creed is known only in Latin, and it circulated only in the Latin-speaking Churches of the West in late antiquity and the middle ages. Its three-fold, trinitarian structure ("I believe in God the Father … and in Jesus Christ his only Son … and in the Holy Spirit") is a clue to its origin as a formula of belief uttered at baptism, in a clear echo of Christ's command in Matthew 28:18-20, "Go … and make disciples of

all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you." It seems to have evolved out of a somewhat shorter creed (the Old Roman Creed) used at baptism in the churches of Rome from at least the end of the 2nd century, but the text as we now have it was probably composed in Gaul or Spain some centuries later. It became universal in the western church only in the time of the Emperor Charlemagne (*c.*742-814), and it was probably at this time that it became part of the daily office, where it still resides.

The *Nicene Creed* is also somewhat misleadingly named, because it is not the creed drawn up by the famous Council of Nicaea in 325, convened by the Emperor Constantine to settle the Trinitarian controversy. What is printed in the *Book of Common Prayer*, and called "the Nicene Creed" in the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, is a slightly later, somewhat longer creed (a development of the *Nicene Creed* proper) known as the *Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed* (**EXHIBIT 2.1**). Whether or not this was actually composed at the Council of Constantinople in 381, it seems to have been adopted and endorsed by that body. Again, it probably began life as a affirmation of belief made at baptism (possibly originally in the churches of Constantinople itself), but it became associated with the Eucharist at Antioch in the time of Peter the Fuller (476-88), and the practice spread gradually throughout the Greek-speaking East and the Latin-speaking West. It was not adopted in Rome, however, till 1014. This is a truly ecumenical creed, in the sense that it embraces both the western Catholic and eastern Orthodox churches, but far from being a force for unity it became the cause of serious division. In the western Latin translations a small clause was added which has provoked abstruse but ferocious controversy ever since. The original Greek form of the creed (and no-one seriously disputes this) stated that the Holy Spirit proceeds "from the Father". In the Latin versions, however, the wording was, "from the Father *and the Son* (*filioque*)". Where this addition originated is a matter of debate: its earliest attestation is at the Third Council of Toledo in 589, but it seems to have spread throughout the western churches in the time of

Charlemagne. It did not go unchallenged in the West: Pope Leo III (d. 816) tried to suppress it, but to no avail.

Eastern theologians strongly objected to the addition, and their objections reached a head under Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople (*c.*810-*c.*895). In 867 Photius issued an encyclical expounding his theological objections to the *Filioque*, and later in the same year he convened a council at Constantinople which deposed the Pope, declaring him anathema and excommunicated. Thus a serious schism was created within the universal Church – a schism deepened in 1054 by the Roman and Orthodox Churches excommunicating each other. Despite attempts at reunion at the Councils of Lyons (1274) and Florence (1439), it has remained essentially unhealed down to the present day, though the mutual nullification in 1965 of the anathemas of 1054 by Pope Paul VI and Athenagoras I, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, did something to improve relations. Anglican opinion, which was well aware of the controversy, has been generally in favour of the *filioque*-clause. It is accepted by the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, and was defended, among others, by such Anglican luminaries as Richard Hooker, John Pearson and E.B. Pusey (in his treatise *On the Clause 'And the Son'*, published in 1876). And it is found in the most recent Anglican versions of the "Nicene" Creed (*Common Worship: Eucharist*). It should, however, be noted that, since Robert Runcie, the form without the *filioque* has been used at the enthronement services of all Archbishops of Canterbury, as a gesture of common faith with the Orthodox. Despite the row over the *filioque*-clause, many see the *Nicene Creed* as the best hope for finding a basis for Christian unity. This idea is implicit in the *Lambeth Quadrilateral* of 1888 – four simple points agreed at the Lambeth Conference of that year as the grounds on which Anglicans could envisage the reunification of the Church.

The origins of the *Athanasian Creed*, like those of the other two creeds, are shrouded in mystery. Once again its title is misleading. The creed bears the name of one of the great doctors of the early Church, St. Athanasius (*c.*296-373), Bishop of Alexandria, who played a leading role in the Trinitarian controversies of the 4th century, and whose ideas

were finally proclaimed Orthodoxy by the Council of Constantinople in 381. Although the *Athanasian Creed* is the most uncompromisingly Trinitarian of the three major creeds recognized in the *Book of Common Prayer*, it was not composed by Athanasius, and, in fact, is not attributed to him in classical Anglican sources. It is printed in the *Book of Common Prayer* before the Litany under the title *Quicunque vult*, which are its opening words in Latin (*Quicunque vult esse salvus*, "Whoever wishes to be saved"). Much energy has been expended trying to discover where it came from. The scholarly consensus at the moment seems to be that it emerged in southern Gaul, probably in the region of Lérins, somewhere between 381 and 428, though a slightly later date is also possible. It originated in Latin, though a version of it, minus the *filioque*-clause, which it took over from the western version of the *Nicene Creed*, has been included in Russian and Greek Orthodox service books since the 17th/18th centuries.

Of the three creeds the *Quicunque vult* is by far the most controversial, even within Anglicanism, and over the years there have been attempts to restrict its use, or to remove it altogether from the liturgy. In the 1867 *Royal Commission on Anglican Ritual* it was strongly criticised, nineteen out of the twenty-seven members expressing reservations about it. The assault on it was led by Dean Stanley (one of the Stanleys of Alderley Edge), who gave no less than sixteen reasons why it should not continue in public use. But E.B. Pusey, an arch-conservative, led the counter-attack, threatening secession, and, in the end, nothing was done about it. But its use seems to have begun to tail off, and interestingly, in contrast to the *Apostles'* and *Nicene Creeds*, it has made it into *Common Worship*, the most recent revision of the Anglican liturgy (2001) only in a substantially revised form. The objectors of 1867 were not opposed to the *Trinitarianism* of the *Quicunque vult* – on the contrary, unlike some of its 18th century opponents who were Unitarians or Deists, all, on this occasion, were orthodox. What they objected to was the fact that this creed attached fearsome anathemas to its professions of faith, and bluntly asserted, at its beginning and end, that anyone not subscribing to its doctrine in precisely the form in which it sets it out, risked eternal damnation. For the objectors, and

they go all the way back to Richard Baxter in the late 17th century, to make salvation depend on grasping and affirming the abstruse, scholastic niceties of the *Quicunque vult* was unwarranted: it raised the bar for admission to the Kingdom of God too high. The objectors also argued that the Latin text which lay behind the *Book of Common Prayer* version was arguably defective, and in some cases had simply been mistranslated.

So there has been something of a sifting out of the ecumenical creeds within Anglicanism. Only two have been received wholeheartedly – the *Apostles'* and the *Nicene*, and of these the *Apostles'* is by far the more influential. This can be seen in the fact that it is the one included in the *Catechism* (see more below), it forms the basis for the Profession of Faith in the rite of Confirmation in *Common Worship*, and it has been regularly chosen by leading Anglican divines as the preferred basis of instruction for the laity.

Among Anglican commentaries on the *Apostle's Creed* pride of place must go to the *Exposition of the Creed* written by John Pearson, Bishop of Chester (1673-1686), whose imposing tomb, raised by American admirers in the 19th century, can be found in the north transept of the Cathedral. While vicar of St. Clement's Eastcheap in London, Pearson held instruction classes for his parishioners, using the *Apostles' Creed* as his base text. It was at their request that he drew his thoughts together and published them in 1659 as his *Exposition of the Creed* (**EXHIBIT 2.3**). The volume was widely welcomed, and underwent several expansions and revisions before his death in 1673. Regularly reprinted over the next two hundred years, it became one of the classic and most widely admired statements of Anglican doctrine. It is surely significant that Pearson took the *Apostles' Creed* as the basis of his great manual of instruction – not even the *Nicene Creed*, still less the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, though he was a doughty supporter of both the latter. The *Apostles' Creed* is the shortest, least detailed, least prescriptive of all the formulae of faith accepted by the Anglican Church – it is the one that leaves the most scope for difference of opinion. The implication appears to be that the fuller formulations in the *Nicene Creed* and the *Thirty-Nine*

*Articles* can be seen as commentaries on the *Apostles' Creed* – attempts to draw out more fully its underlying doctrine, but people cannot be expected to subscribe to these in quite the same way as they can be expected to subscribe to the *Apostles' Creed* itself. It is the *Apostles' Creed* which contains the sum of saving knowledge, which defines orthodoxy, and it is an orthodoxy which can be embraces all the historic Christian Churches.

The Church of England was not the only Church that felt the need to set out its doctrinal stall. All the Protestant Churches were busily issuing declarations of faith. As we have seen, the *Thirty-Nine Articles* borrowed from two Lutheran documents – the *Augsburg* (1530) and the *Würtemberg* (1551) *Confessions*. Reform in Switzerland, specifically in Zurich, also produced two notable statements of doctrine – the *First* (1536) and *Second* (1564) *Helvetic Confessions*. It was an era of passionate theological debate – and the ears of ordinary Christians must have been ringing with claim and counter-claim. The Roman Church itself tried valiantly to put its house in order. Many within that Church, while not accepting the views of Luther, were nonetheless fully persuaded that reform was needed. Protestant historians have called this movement for reform *within* the Catholic Church, the Counter-Reformation, but this can be somewhat misleading, if it suggests that it was simply reactionary. In fact, in the eyes of many, it represented a genuine movement to put things right from within, as well as address the Protestants' legitimate concerns. It started out as an attempt to accommodate the Protestants, and keep them within the fold, but by the 1560s it had become apparent that this was a forlorn hope, and the breach was irreparable.

The instrument chosen to effect reform was an ecumenical council. The council met in some twenty-five sessions between 1543 and 1563, mainly in the little town of Trent in northern Italy, from which it gained its common name, the *Council of Trent*. Sitting under three popes (Pius III, Julius III and Pius IV) it steadily worked its way through an agenda of doctrinal and church-disciplinary questions, issuing decrees and canons as it went along. These were

comprehensively enacted into canon law, and widely subscribed throughout the Catholic world (**EXHIBIT 2.7**). They formed the basis of Catholic teaching and practice down to the *First Vatican Council* of 1870, and remain highly authoritative even today. They resulted in a *Tridentine Creed* (1565, Pius IV), a *Roman Catechism* (1566: **EXHIBIT 4.6**), a new *Breviary* (1568) and *Missal* (1570, all Pius V) – all of which embodied in more immediate and practical forms the abstruse deliberations of the Council. The Council also led eventually to a revised edition of the Latin Vulgate Bible (1592, Clement VIII), which it had reaffirmed as the authoritative, even inspired, translation of the Scriptures. All this was going on in tandem with the formation of the Anglican *Articles*. The Anglican divines were well informed about the deliberations of the Council, and one of their major objectives was to use their *Articles* as a way of staking out the position of Anglicanism over against that propounded at Trent. But, as already hinted, they were looking in another direction as well: the *Articles* were equally intended to define Anglicanism over against the positions adopted by other Protestant and Reformed Churches. As in liturgy, so in doctrine, the Church of England strove for a *via media* – a course that steered it between Rome, on the one hand, and more radical Protestantism, on the other.

All the various confessions and articles of faith were designed to calm controversy, to settle contentious theological issues once and for all. The *Articles* of 1553, according to the title-page of the printed edition, were formulated "for the avoiding of controversie in opinions, and the establishment of godlie concorde, in certaine matiers of religion." Similar wording was used in 1563 and 1571 ("for the avoiding of the diversities of opinions, and for the stablishyng of consent touching true religion"). King Charles I's *Declaration* of 1628 (**EXHIBIT 1.1**) goes even further and tries to put a stop to all further theological speculation: "That therefore in these both curious & unhappy differences, which have for so many hundred yeeres, in different times and places, exercised the Church of Christ: Wee will that all further curious search be layd aside, and these disputes shut up in God's promises, as they be generally set foorth to Us, in the holy scriptures."

But history shows that far from ending debate, articles of faith can inflame it. And the more detailed they are, the more likely they are to provoke dissent. As we have already noted there was almost continuous agitation by the Puritans for revision of the *Articles*. The Puritans saw their chance when they found themselves in the majority in the Long Parliament, which went into session on 3rd November 1640. They were determined to press ahead with further reform of the Church of England, and between June 1642 and May 1643 made several attempts to pass a Bill which would set up an Assembly to do the job. The King, however, steadfastly refused royal assent, and finally the Bill was passed into law as an *ordinance* of Parliament, with the approval of the House of Lords, in June 1643.

The Assembly it constituted was probably the largest of its kind ever gathered in England, and possibly the largest anywhere of the 16th and 17th centuries (Trent included): it comprised 30 laymen (10 lords and 20 commoners), and 121 divines. There was a genuine attempt to make it representative of all shades of opinion. Episcopalians were invited, including James Ussher, and Henry Hammond, one of the King's Chaplains, but they, on the King's orders, refused to take their seats. Parliament replaced them with 21 "superadded" divines, who, of course, were not episcopalians. There were Independents, such as the formidable Thomas Goodwin, who advocated a Congregationalist form of church government. They had the backing of Cromwell and the Army. There were Erastians, such as John Lightfoot, who held the view that within a Christian state, such as England, the civil power should exercise ecclesiastical as well as civil authority. But the majority were of the presbyterian persuasion, and advocated a presbyterian form of church order, such as that followed in the Church of Scotland. The Scottish influence on the Assembly was strengthened after the signing of the Solemn League and Covenant in 1643, when a number of Scottish delegates joined the deliberations (including men of the calibre of Samuel Rutherford). It is astonishing, given this diversity of opinion, and the sharpness (even rancour) of many of the debates, that anything was achieved: but the Assembly applied itself to its tasks with a will, and during 1,163 sessions, held mainly in the Jerusalem

Chamber, Westminster, between 1643 and 1649, attended on average by between sixty to eighty members, it produced a series of documents, collectively known as the *Westminster Standards*, which rewrote the doctrine and practice of the Church of England.

The first task which the Assembly tackled was a revision of the *Thirty-Nine Articles*. It had devoted some time to this when suddenly, after the signing of the Solemn League and Covenant in 1643, it changed tack, and began to produce a *new* set of *Articles* – the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (**EXHIBIT 2.6**). It also produced a *Directory for Public Worship* to replace the *Book of Common Prayer*, the *Form of Presbyterial Church-Government*, which essentially replaced the *Ordinal*, and two *Catechisms* – the *Larger* and the *Shorter* – which replaced the catechisms then in use. These are serious documents, and an impressive achievement. That they have a strong coherence is due to the fact that they fundamentally reflect the views of the presbyterian majority in the Assembly. Though careful reading shows the *Confession of Faith* was influenced at several crucial points by the wording of the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, it was constructed on very different lines. Its articles are longer, there are more of them, and they *do* seem to aim to provide a comprehensive system of divinity in a way that the *Thirty-Nine Articles* do not. And, on the insistence of Parliament, every single claim is backed up by one or more Scriptural proofs. These proof-texts are an integral part of the *Confession*. Parliament, with some amendments (notably the omission of chapters XXX and XXXI) passed the *Westminster Confession* into law, significantly under the title *Articles of Christian Religion*, and they, together with the other *Westminster Standards*, became the official position of the Church of England on doctrine and practice during the Commonwealth and the Protectorate. But, as we have seen, they were comprehensively repealed after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, and the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, the *Book of Common Prayer*, and episcopal church order were fully reinstated. They were also imposed in Scotland but were not repealed there. They became the founding documents of Presbyterianism worldwide.

It is worth noting that even after the Restoration the pressure for revision specifically of the *Thirty-Nine Articles* continued. In 1784 John Wesley rewrote them for the Methodist communities in North America. His aim was to adapt them to the particular political situation that had arisen there, but, still, the result was that fourteen of the thirty-nine had to be dropped, and several others modified. However, Wesley expected Methodists in England to continue to accept the full thirty-nine. And the Episcopal Church in the United States, especially after the American colonies declared their independence from England (4th July, 1776), increasingly went its own way, and this led to it publishing an extensive revision of the *Thirty-Nine Articles* in 1801. Both Wesley's and the Episcopal Church's revisions expose how parochial in many ways the *Thirty-Nine Articles* are, how intimately bound up with English social, political, and historical realities, how inextricably tied to the English crown.

## INTERPRETATION AND ASSENT (CASE TWO BOTTOM SHELF)

As we have already seen, the *Articles of Religion* were more than a general proclamation to the world of what the Church of England believed. They were *guidance* to its clergy, who were obliged to accept them. The current practice, whereby assent is given at the point of ordination or licensing, is commonly seen as going back only to the Canons of 1604. These laid down that every clergyman, clerk or reader had to subscribe formally at ordination or licensing to three articles (originally drawn up by Archbishop Whitgift in 1583): (1) that the sovereign is the supreme Governor of the realm both in matters spiritual and temporal; (2) that the *Book of Common Prayer* and the *Ordinal* contain nothing contrary to Scripture, and that he would use only the *Book of Common Prayer* in public worship; and (3) that the *Thirty-Nine Articles* are agreeable to the word of God. The formula of assent ran: "I *N.N.* do willingly and *ex animo* [from the heart] subscribe to these three articles above mentioned, and to all things that are contained therein." The substance of this Canon was reaffirmed, and in

some ways strengthened, by the *Clerical Subscription Act* of 1865 (27 & 28 Victoria c. 122). But even before 1604 assent had been demanded. The 1604 Canon was anticipated on all material points by the *Subscription Act* of 1571 (13 Elizabeth 1 c. 12): all clergy already in post had by a certain date to declare their assent before the diocesan, and get from him a written testimonial of the same, which they then read out publicly, along with the *Articles*, in church. And in the future "no person shall hereafter be admitted to any benefice with cure, except he … shall first have subscribed the said Articles in presence of the ordinary, and publicly read the same in the parish church of that benefice, with declaration of his unfeigned assent to the same". Assent was imposed before 1571 in a more *ad hoc* way. The Convocations (bishops and clergy), which passed the *Articles*, assented by attaching to them their individual signatures, and this was seen as a representative act, committing all future bishops and clergy to subscription. And anecdotal evidence suggests that bishops when visiting their dioceses regularly asked clergy verbally to give their assent. Assent was at the heart of the process right from the start.

The clergy, then, were asked to subscribe, but what did that act entail: assent to every letter of every article, or only to some of them, or only to their spirit? And anyway what did the *Articles* mean? What exactly were they signing up to? The latter question might, at first sight, seem odd. The *Articles* surely were framed to be clear and unambiguous. That was doubtless the intention of those who composed them, but the simple fact is that it is well-nigh impossible to construct a text of this complexity that is not open to differences of interpretation. An analogy with the law may make this point. Laws are carefully drafted by clever lawyers to be clear, and yet there has never yet been a law passed that hasn't had to be *interpreted* in the courts. Judges, barristers, solicitors, day-in, day-out, disagree with one another as to the meaning of laws which Parliament thought were clear when they passed them. Exactly the same problem affects *Articles of Faith*. The issue becomes important when one is required to subscribe to them. Am I being asked to assent to the words just as they are, leaving me free to interpret them as I, in good conscience, see fit, or am I being asked to assent to a certain

interpretation of them, which is not actually made explicit in the text, but imposed upon it?

This was a ticklish question from early on. It clearly troubled King Charles I, for in his famous *Declaration* of 1628 (**EXHIBIT 1.1**) he stipulated "that no man hereafter shall either print or preach, to draw the Article aside anyway, but shall submit to it in the plaine and full meaning thereof: And he shall not pass his own sense or comment to bee the meaning of the Article, but shal take it in the literal & Grammatical sense." Behind this lies a worry that clergy will twist the meaning of the articles into whatever sense fitted their personal beliefs, or subscribe to them with equivocation, or mental reservation, or in a conditional way. This unquestionably happened. One person subscribed "so far as [the Articles] are in my opinion agreeable to the holy scriptures". That kind of assent raises moral issues. It might be more honest to express dissent and campaign for the *Articles* to be changed, but livelihoods were at stake, and not a few over the years gave assent through gritted teeth. Calvinists in the 16th and 17th centuries, as we saw, found it difficult to reconcile the *Articles* fully with their own brand of theology (**EXHIBIT 2.5**). The problems were even more acute in the 18th century when Unitarianism and Deism began to penetrate the ranks of the clergy under the influence of the European Enlightenment. There was agitation from some clergy to be released from "the fetters of subscription", which culminated in 1772, when a petition calling for the abolition of subscription was introduced into Parliament. It argued that exacting assent to "Articles and Confessions of faith drawn up by fallible men" violated the "the undoubted right of Protestants to interpret Scripture for themselves". The petition was heavily defeated in the House. There were Unitarians in the 18th century who quite openly and unashamedly assented with reservation. It was all a bit of a scandal. They didn't have to be *Anglican* clergymen: they could have joined the ranks of the Dissenters. The *Act of Toleration* of 1689 (1 William and Mary c. 18) had allowed Dissenters to escape some civil disabilities if they subscribed to all the *Articles* except for 34, 35, 36, the affirmative clauses of 20, and a part of 27, but they were exempted even from this test by the *Nonconformist*

*Relief Act* of 1779 (19 George 3 c. 44), provided they took the Scriptures as their rule of faith and practice. Unitarians (like Catholics), however, continued to suffer discrimination till the *Doctrine of the Trinity Act* of 1813 (53 George 3, c. 160). In all this it is important not to lose sight of two points. First, assent is, psychologically speaking, a complex mental act. And, second, there is, in the last analysis, no absolutely final and definitive interpretation of any of the *Articles*: readers, including well informed and authoritative readers, have understood them in quite different ways.

This second point was vividly illustrated only six years after King Charles's *Declaration* in a work dedicated to the King by Christopher Davenport. Born around 1595 in Coventry, Davenport converted to Catholicism as a young man, and went to study at the English College at Douai. He was, by chance, the nephew of John Davenport, a famous Puritan minister of the day, who made a name for himself in the New World in Massachusetts and New Haven – an illustration, by no means unparalleled, of how families at the time could be riven by doctrinal disagreements. Davenport flourished on the Continent, making a name for himself as a theologian, and rising to become Professor of Theology at the College. In October 1617 he entered an order of Franciscans, taking the religious name of Franciscus à Sancta Clara. In the early 1630s he returned to England and lodged near Somerset House with Queen Henrietta Maria's Capuchin priests. He was probably involved in a number of high profile conversions to Rome in the 1630s.

It might seem odd that a Friar could live and proselytize so openly in London at this time, but Davenport had powerful patrons, including the Queen herself, whose "theologian" and "confessor" he claimed to be. Charles's queen, Henrietta Maria of France, remained staunchly faithful to the Catholicism of her upbringing, and continued to practise it in England. Her circle were a source of Catholic influence on English affairs, and was probably behind the King's moves to seek rapprochement with Rome in the mid 1630s. One should also never forget that England did not become uniformly Protestant at the Reformation. There were, particularly in rural areas, many Recusants

who remained clandestinely and stubbornly loyal to the old faith. It was in the context of this Catholic influence at court that Davenport published in 1634 his major theological treatise *Deus, Natura, Gratia*, in an appendix to which (*Paraphrastica Expositio Articulorum Confessionis Anglicanae*) he tried to show that the *Thirty-Nine Articles* could be read in a Catholic way (**EXHIBIT 3.4**). He dedicated the work to the King, who was rumoured to have been well-pleased with it (so much for reading the *Articles* in their literal, grammatical sense!). The work was published abroad (at Lyons), but circulated in England, where it got a hostile reception (it was not welcomed by continental Catholics either – the Jesuits in particular, who were at loggerheads with the Franciscans, attacked it). It was probably direct intervention by the King that prevented it from being banned. Archbishop Laud, at his trial for high treason, which led eventually to his beheading on Tower Hill on 10th January 1645, found that the fact that he had met with Davenport on a number of occasions, quite innocently as it turned out, was used against him (**EXHIBIT 3.3**).

Just over two hundred years later another, more famous, attempt was made to argue that the *Thirty-Nine Articles* could be read in a Catholic way. The treatise was *Tract Ninety*, last of the series "Tracts for the Times", subtitled, *Remarks on Certain Passages in the Thirty-Nine Articles* (first published in 1841: **EXHIBIT 3.2**). The author was John Henry Newman. Newman (1801-1890) was one of the leaders of the Anglo-Catholic or Oxford Movement which from the mid 1830s was gathering force within the Church of England. "This tract", he wrote in his introduction, "was written under the conviction that the Anglican Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, of which it treated, were, when taken in their letter, so loosely worded, so incomplete in statement, and so ambiguous in their meaning, as to need an authoritative interpretation; and that neither those who drew them up, nor those who imposed them were sufficiently agreed among themselves, or clear and consistent in their theological views individually to be able to supply it. There was but one authority to whom recourse could be had for such interpretation—the Church Catholic. She had been taught the revealed truth by Christ and His

Apostles in the beginning, and had in turn taught it in every age to her faithful children, and would teach it on to the end. And what she taught, all her branches taught; and this the Anglican Church *did* teach, *must* teach, if it was a branch of the Church Catholic, otherwise it was not a branch; but a branch it certainly was, for, if it was not a branch, what had we to do with it? And it being a branch, it was the duty of all its members, priests and people, ever to profess what the Universal Church had from the beginning professed, and nothing else, and nothing short of it, that is, what had been held *semper et ubique et ab omnibus* [always, everywhere, and by all]. Accordingly, it was their plain duty to interpret the Thirty-nine Articles in this one distinct Catholic sense, the sense of the Holy Fathers, of Athanasius, Ambrose, Augustine, and of all Doctors and Saints; it being impossible that in any important matters those Articles should diverge from that sense, or resist the interpretation which that sense required, inasmuch as the Divine Lord of the Church watched over all her portions, and would not suffer the Anglican or any portion to commit itself to statements which could not fairly and honestly be made to give forth a Catholic meaning." Newman went on to show, Article by Article, that the *Thirty-Nine Articles* were capable of being read in the Catholic sense he had defined.

The argument was subtle, learned and explosive. *Tract Ninety* caused a furore, and was immediately condemned by the Heads of the Oxford Colleges. At its heart was a massive "fudge", which hugely clouded the debate it engendered. This involved the word "Catholic", which Newman used in a precise sense to denote the doctrinal consensus which he held existed among the ancient doctors of the Church and the great ecumenical Church Councils. The *Thirty-Nine Articles* were in full accord with that consensus. But where Newman said "Catholic" many of his readers heard "*Roman* Catholic" and thought he was arguing that the *Thirty-Nine Articles* were essentially compatible with the teachings of the Church of Rome (embodied, e.g., in the Tridentine formulations).

E.B. Pusey, another luminary of the Oxford Movement, put his finger on this problem in a pamphlet which came out in the same year,

entitled, *The Articles treated on in Tract 90 reconsidered and their interpretation vindicated, in a Letter to the Rev. R.W. Jelf* (Oxford 1841: **EXHIBIT 3.5**). Pusey argued that Newman was certainly right to argue that the framers of the *Thirty-Nine Articles* had intended their formulations to express the ancient consensus of the Catholic Church (it would have been extraordinary if they hadn't), but he then made a move with which Newman would not have been so comfortable: he argued that the Church of Rome was seriously in error and had strayed from that ancient Catholicity. The English Reformers were restoring truths which Rome had tarnished or abandoned.

Four years after the publication of *Tract Ninety* Newman was received into the Roman Catholic Church. This act showed that he regarded Rome to be the better representative of the primitive Catholic consensus than the Church of England. He had failed to convince himself with his own arguments over the Catholicity of the *Thirty-Nine Articles*. The logic of his conversion to Rome was clear: if he stood by the argument of *Tract Ninety*, that the *Thirty-Nine Articles* are in accord with Catholic doctrine, then he could have continued in his allegiance to what, on his own criteria, was an apostolic and catholic church. There were no good grounds for leaving it. But having gone over to Rome, he was, in effect, negating the whole argument of *Tract Ninety*.

The suspicion that *Tract Ninety* fundamentally involved casuistry and equivocation has been hard to shake off. And this was at the back of Charles Kingsley's mind when he claimed many years later that Newman was not interested in truth (**EXHIBIT 3.7**). There ensued a furious exchange between Newman and Kingsley (who was a canon at Chester cathedral from 1870-1873, and helped found the Grosvenor Museum), which resulted in Newman's famous defence of his integrity, the *Apologia pro Vita Sua* (London 1864: **EXHIBIT 3.6**). Newman became one of the most influential churchmen of the nineteenth century, rising to the rank of Cardinal in the Catholic Church. He was beatified on 19th September 2010 by Pope Benedict XVI during a visit to Britain.

Though Newman made some very valid points about the historical meaning of the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, as against more popular and extreme Protestant readings of them, fostered by the Evangelical Revival, which was gathering force in his day within the Church of England, neither his nor Davenport's interpretations can be seen as mainstream. There are a number of widely recognized, mainstream commentaries on the *Articles*. Two may be mentioned here. The first is Gilbert Burnet's *On the Thirty-Nine Articles* (first published 1699: **EXHIBIT 3.1**). This went through several editions, and by 1800 had been reprinted at least eleven times. It became a standard manual of instruction for ordinands, and its life was extended well into the nineteenth century by Thomas Newland's *An Analysis of Bishop Burnet's Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles, with Notes* (Dublin 1829). Burnet (1643-1715), though famously indiscreet, was a man of energy and ability. A Scot by birth, who was ordained into the Scottish Episcopal Church by the Bishop of Edinburgh in 1665, he sought his fortune south of the border. He went into exile during the reign of James II, and entered the circle of William of Orange, for whom he did useful service, which was rewarded after the Glorious Revolution with the bishopric of Salisbury. Burnet, a dyed-in-the wool Whig, offers a broad church, inclusive interpretation of the *Articles*. He was a considerable historian, who wrote a large history of the Reformation in England still worth reading today. His exposition of the *Articles* is particularly well-informed as to their historical context.

The second exposition we will mention is W.H. Griffith Thomas's *The Principles of Theology: An Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles*, first published posthumously in 1930, and reprinted many times since (**EXHIBIT 3.8**). Griffith Thomas (1861-1924) was a noted conservative, evangelical Anglican. He served as Principal of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, from 1905 to 1910. He was then invited to become Professor of Systematic Theology at Wycliffe College, Toronto, though in the event what he actually taught was Old Testament, because, to his dismay, the chair in Systematic Theology had been assigned to someone else before he arrived. He severed his ties with the Toronto College in 1919, and there was a proposal that he should return to England to the

bishopric of Chester, which was vacant at this point, but Lloyd George failed to act on the suggestion. Instead Griffith Thomas settled in Philadelphia, and continued to minister mainly in North America. Just before his death he worked with Lewis Sperry Chafer to found a conservative evangelical seminary in Dallas, Texas, which subsequently became Dallas Theological Seminary – one of the powerhouses of conservative, evangelical Christianity in our times. The commentaries of Burnet and Griffith Thomas are sober and careful expositions of the *Articles*, yet they still differ from one another on many points. Where they differ Burnet may be right and Griffith Thomas wrong, or vice versa, or both may be wrong, and the framers of the *Articles* may have meant something different. But that does not invalidate the point that if such competent, responsible and learned interpreters cannot agree there must be an element of ambiguity in the wording of the *Articles*, and so assent must allow room for honest differences of opinion.

The form of assent to the *Articles* today is carefully crafted to avoid tying the assenter down to any particular interpretation, or even to assent to every last detail. It relativizes the *Articles* by linking them with other standards of doctrine – the Holy Scriptures, the catholic creeds, the *Book of Common Prayer* and the *Ordinal*. It explicitly prioritizes Scripture and the catholic creeds: it is to *their* truth that the other formularies "bear witness". It calls upon assenters to affirm their loyalty to this inheritance of faith as their "*inspiration and guidance*" under God in bringing the grace and truth of Christ to their generation and making him known to those in their care. The blue-print for this formula was drawn up in the report of the Archbishops' Commission on Christian Doctrine, *Subscription and Assent to the Thirty-nine Articles* (1968), which plainly stated that two of a number of conditions any new declaration of assent should meet must be: (a) that "it must not tie down the person using it to acceptance of every one of the Articles of 1571"; and (b) "the possibility of fresh understanding of Christian truth must be explicitly left open". The current *Declaration of Assent* satisfies both points.

## HOMILIES AND CATECHISMS

## (CASE THREE: BOTTOM SHELF)

To complete our sketch of the authoritative statements of doctrine for the Church of England we need to mention also the two *Books of Homilies* and the *Catechism*. The ministry of the word, in the form of a sermon, was a central element of Protestant worship. The *Book of Common Prayer*, right from 1549, envisaged this as taking place at the Communion Service, towards the beginning, after the recitation of the Creed. The rubrics governing it change subtly from Prayer Book to Prayer Book. In 1549 we find: "After the Crede ended, shall folowe the Sermon or Homely, or some porcion of the Homelyes, as thei shalbe herafter divided." The wording is somewhat unclear. Is the Sermon something different from the Homily, or is Homily here a synonym for Sermon? There was a well-established tradition of independent preaching in England by this date, going back to the middle ages, when it was particularly strong among the Lollards, the followers of John Wycliffe, but Cranmer and the other reformers harboured doubts that ordinary parish priests were up to performing acceptably on this front, and with some justification, since levels of basic literacy and Christian knowledge among them, as we shall presently see, were not high. What seems to be envisaged as the norm here is that they should not deliver one of their own compositions but rather read out a sermon, or homily as it is called, from an authorized volume of homilies. As early possibly as 1539 Cranmer was determined to produce a book of *official* homilies. There were contemporary models for this, such as the popular *Postils* of Richard Taverner (published in 1540: **EXHIBIT 4.1**), and precedents, such as John Mirk's *Festial*, a collection of homilies compiled around 1400, copied and recopied in manuscript, and then several times printed in the 16th century. Cranmer's idea was that clergy should work through the official homilies Sunday by Sunday, and then, when they had completed the cycle, begin all over again.

The First *Book of Homilies* duly appeared in July 1547 and was imposed by the authority of the new, young king, Edward VI (Henry VIII had died earlier in the year, in January). There were twelve homilies in all

in the volume. Some were long and were subsequently subdivided into sections, making 31 lections or readings in all. Five were straightforwardly doctrinal (e.g. "Of the misery of all mankind", "Of the salvation of all mankind"), while seven were more practical (e.g. "Against whoredom and adultery", "Against strife and contention"). It remains a matter of debate, despite clever literary detective work, who wrote which homily, but it is likely that Cranmer himself had a hand in some of them, though he was not the sole author of the collection. Numerous copies of the *Book of Homilies* were printed – not surprisingly, given that every parish church should have had one. They are tough going in places, and there is evidence that when first used they were not always met with comprehension. The delivery of some clergy was evidently poor: the words and the meaning got mangled; and even when read well, they must have gone right over the heads of some in the congregation. In 1549 Hugh Latimer, then a Chaplain to the King, complained that "though the priest read [the Homilies] never so well, yet, if the parish like them not, there is much talking and babbling in the church that nothing can be heard; and if the parish be good and the priest naught, he will so hack it and chop it, that it were good for them to be without it for any word that shall be understood." In the following year we find Bishop Nicholas Ridley, during a visitation of his diocese of London, having to insist that "the Homilies be read orderly, without omission of any part."

Cranmer was aware that the number of homilies provided in the *First Book* was meagre, even with the subdivisions, and there was a danger that congregations would get bored by their repetition. At the end of the book he promised further homilies, but was unable to fulfil this promise before his death. Under Elizabeth I, in 1559, a revised version of the *First Book of Homilies* was produced, and a *Second Book of Homilies* added to it, containing twenty items, again both of a doctrinal ("Against the peril of Idolatry"; "Of the Passion of Christ") and of a practical nature ("Of repairing and keeping clean of Churches"; "Against Excess of Apparel"). A twenty-first homily "Against Rebellion" was added in 1571, and in the same year both *Books of Homilies* were sanctioned by Article 35 of the *Thirty-Nine Articles* in the

following terms: "The Second Book of Homilies … doth contain a godly and wholesome Doctrine, and necessary for these times, as doth the former Book of Homilies, which were set out in the time of Edward the Sixth; and therefore we judge them to be read in Churches by the Ministers, diligently and distinctly, that they may be understood of the people." The 34th Article of the *Forty-Two Articles* of 1553 had endorsed the *First Book of Homilies* in similar terms. The authorship of the individual homilies that go to make up the *Second Book* is as contentious as the first, but it is generally agreed that Bishop John Jewel (1522-1571), Bishop of Salisbury, had a substantial hand in them (**EXHIBIT 4.2**). Two of them were lifted from Richard Taverner's *Postils* (**EXHIBIT 4.1**). The texts of the homilies continued to undergo minor revisions at least till the 1623 edition when they were printed together in folio.

The 1559 *Book of Common Prayer*, like its predecessors, envisages the homily being delivered after the *Creed*, at the beginning of the Communion service, but there is a subtle change in the wording of the rubric: "After the Crede yf there be no sermon, shall folowe one of the Homilies alredy set furth, or hereafter to be set furth by commune aucthoritie". Here we get, for the first time, a *clear* distinction between the sermon preached by the minister himself, and the set homily. There is now an implication that some ministers may be capable of delivering a competent sermon. Many of the exiles who had returned from abroad after the death of Mary would certainly have thought they could – men schooled in Geneva and elsewhere, who would have preached their own sermons at the drop of a hat. Indeed this growth of individual preaching under Elizabeth came to alarm the authorities, and lead them to urge that the Homilies should not be neglected. Similar wording is found in the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*: "Then shall follow the Sermon, or one of the Homilies already set forth, or hereafter to be set forth by Authority." But the simple fact seems to be that sermons became more and more the norm, and the Homilies fell

more and more into disuse.[2] They remain, however, an authoritative, historical statement of Anglican doctrine. Some are very fine indeed, but many of them are totally ill-judged for their original purpose of offering popular instruction and edification. Though they contain passages of power and beauty, their generally high style and their learned allusions, backed by a marginal apparatus of abstruse references, leaves one wondering how close their framers ever got to folk in the pew. The Homily *Against Idolatry* is a case in point: it is a mammoth, erudite essay running in one print to 120 pages! One wonders to what extent the scholars who composed these Homilies had, in fact, unconsciously another audience in mind – other scholars like themselves, rather than the farmers, artisans, and tradesmen who were the ostensible audience. It is interesting that Cranmer had the first five homilies of the *First Book* almost immediately translated into Latin and circulated among leading Protestant divines on the continent, and he was, doubtless, gratified when they drew forth praise from Martin Bucer, leader of the reformers in Strasbourg.

The second authoritative statement of Anglican doctrine is the *Catechism*. As we have already seen, the *Book of Common Prayer* is one of the three formularies of the Church of England – the one dedicated to setting out how public worship is to be conducted. Within it, however, is a document which offers a summary of what any Anglican is expected to know and to believe before they can enter into full communion – the worldview, so to speak, behind the worship. This document is the *Catechism*. Unlike the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, which were not printed as part of the *Book of Common Prayer* till 1681, the *Catechism* was integral to it right from the start. It is found in the very first English Prayer Book of 1549 as part of the service of Confirmation ("Confirmacion wherin is conteined a Catechisme for children"). The *Catechism* itself carries the rubric: "A Catechisme, that is to say, an instruction to be learned of every childe, before he be brought to be confirmed of the Bushop".

[2] Despite the fact that the Cathedral has a relatively well-stocked library of classic Anglican resources it does not appear to have a single copy of the *Books of Homilies* – eloquent testimony, surely, as to how little esteemed they became!

The situation envisaged is clear. The child has been baptized as an infant, and certain undertakings have been made on its behalf by its godparents. The child, now having "come to the yeeres of discretion", is undertaking those commitments on his or her own behalf: having "learned what theyr Godfathers and Godmothers promised for them in Baptisme, they may then themselves with their owne mouth and with their own consent, openly before the churche, ratifie and confesse the same, and also promise that by the grace of God, they will evermore endeavour themselves faithfully to observe and keep such thinges, as theyre owne mouth and confession have assented unto". There is a hint that this strong link between catechesis and confirmation is something of an innovation: "It is thought good that none *hereafter* shall be confirmed but such as can say in their mother tong, the articles of faith, the lordes prayer, and the tenne commaundmentes: And can also aunswere to such questions of this shorte Catechisme, as the Busshop (or suche as he shall appoynte) shall by his discretion appose them in."

The rubrics are not precise as to the age at which confirmation is to be administered. They talk vaguely of "yeeres of discrecion", of "them that were of perfecte age", of "that age, that partly by the frayltie of theyre own fleshe, partly by the assautes of the world and the devil, [children] begin to be in danger to fall into sin". It may come as a surprise to today's reader to discover at what a tender age children were deemed by many in the 16th century to fulfil these conditions. Confirmation of children as young as five is documented. Our unshakeable belief in the innocence of young children was not shared by our forebears of that time. Something else that may surprise us is that, although the 1549 *Book of Common Prayer* links confirmation with first communion ("There shal none be admitted to the holye communion: until suche time as he be confirmed"), this stipulation was widely ignored in the 16th century. There was agreement that children should not be admitted to communion unless they had been catechized, but we have good anecdotal evidence that clergy, once satisfied that they had been sufficiently instructed, *did* admit them,

without waiting for the imposition of episcopal hands. *Catechesis* was the crucial rite of passage, not *Confirmation*. Confirmation was not simply the gateway to first communion but a ritual which, though not itself a sacrament, conferred its own benefits: "by imposicion of handes, and praier they [that be Baptised] may receive strength and defence against all temptacions to sin, and the assautes of the worlde, and the devil." It was not really until the 18th century that the modern progression of catechesis → confirmation → first communion, however orderly and logical it may seem, became almost universal practice.

The rubrics of the 1549 *BCP Catechism* also stipulated carefully when and where catechesis was to take place: "The curate of every parish once in six wekes at the least upon warnyng by him geven, shall upon Soonday or holy day, half an houre before evensong openly in the churche instructe and examine so many children of his parish sent unto him, as the time wil serve, and he shall thynke conveniente, in some parte of this Catechisme. And all fathers, mothers, maisters, and dames, shall cause their children, servountes, and prentises (which are not yet confirmed) to come to the churche at the daie appointed, and obediently heare and be ordered by the curate, until suche time as they have learned all that is here appointed for them to learne." The duty imposed on the clergy to catechise, and on those with children in their charge to have them catechized, couldn't be clearer.

The content of the 1549 *BCP Catechism* was very simple: it opens with a reference to baptism, and then proceeds to deal with the *Apostles' Creed* ("the articles of belief"), the *Ten Commandments*, and the *Lord's Prayer*. This was seen as the sum of saving knowledge. As Thomas Cranmer put it, "Doutles in these thre pointes is shortlye and playnlye included the necessarye knowledge of the whole sum of Christes religion, and of all things appertaynyng unto everlasting lyfe" (*Catechismus*, 1558). Catechesis was as old as the Church itself, and some have detected in certain phrases and formulas in the New Testament elements of first century instruction. The *Catechetical Lectures* of St. Cyril of Jerusalem (*c.*313—386), delivered in 347 or 348, are a classic example of early catechesis, and have been often printed in modern times (**EXHIBIT**

**4.5**). Catechesis in the early church was regarded as a necessary preparation for *baptism*, which was then normally administered to adults. We have already seen that the earliest creeds originated as affirmations of faith said by those who were about to be baptised, by which they assented to the fundamental tenets of Christianity. There is evidence of catechesis in the middle ages, but it was combined with, and often subordinate to, other ways of conveying a Christian knowledge to the masses – images in stained glass and statuary, or miracle plays, that told key Bible-stories, or episodes from the lives of the saints. Where formal catechesis did exist it was oral, but it centred on the same three elements as the *Catechism* of 1549, though other texts were often added, such as the *Ave Maria*, the *Seven Works of Mercy*, the *Seven Deadly Sins*, the *Seven Principal Virtues*, and the *Seven Sacraments*. The latter were regarded as Romish by the Protestant Reformers and were commonly omitted from Protestant catechisms.

It was not till the Reformation, however, with its emphasis on the centrality of the Word, that catechesis once again came into its own. The instruction of the young, to ensure the passing on of tradition, was a priority for many Reformers, and large numbers of catechisms were produced to this end. Luther wrote two, the *Small* and the *Large*, both of them appearing in 1528. John Calvin (**EXHIBIT 2.5**) wrote one, which was also widely admired and adapted (it was popular in Scotland): it was composed first in French in 1536, but revised several times and translated into other languages, including English in 1556. And the Council of Trent produced a *Catechism* in 1556 (**EXHIBIT 4.6**).

It is not clear who was responsible for the 1549 *BCP Catechism*. One would assume that Thomas Cranmer would have had a hand in it, as he did in much of the rest of that Prayer Book, but it is nothing like the free-standing *Catechismus* which he produced in 1548. It is true that that work, adapted from a catechism produced in 1533 by the German reformer Andreas Osiander (1498-1562) (whom Cranmer had met in Germany, and whose niece, Margarete, he had married), was also fundamentally based on the *Ten Commandments*, the *Apostles' Creed* and the *Pater Noster*, but there the similarity ends. Cranmer's *Catechism* is

extremely wordy (it runs to 281 pages in one of its prints!) and it is not set out in question-and-answer format, as is the 1549 *BCP Catechism*, in imitation of Luther's *Short Catechism*. And it divides the Commandments differently from the 1549 *BCP Catechism*, taking the prohibition of images as part of the *first* commandment, and then making up the tally to ten by dividing the commandment against covetousness into two (9th: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbours house"; 10th: "Thou shalt not covet thy neyghboures wife, etc."). This was Lutheran practice, following ancient precedent going back at least to Augustine. The odd effect of it is that, because Cranmer gives the commandments only in shortened form, the prohibition of images doesn't appear on his list. The 1549 *BCP Catechism*, however, takes the prohibition of images as a *distinct* commandment, the second, and as a result, although it too abbreviates, it clearly *has* a prohibition against images. Cranmer dedicated his *Catechismus* to the young King, Edward VI, and hoped he would make it mandatory throughout the kingdom, but it was not to be. Though it was, apparently, reprinted several times in 1548, it was totally impractical, and another, much shorter and simpler catechism was, mercifully, composed for the *Book of Common Prayer*. Alexander Nowell (*c.*1516/17-1602), who in 1560 became Dean of St. Pauls, is sometimes claimed as its author in older scholarship, but the grounds for this assertion are very shaky. Dean Nowell was certainly a great catechism-writer, but his catechetical efforts seem confined to the reign of Elizabeth. We'll come back to him in a moment.

The 1549 *BCP Catechism* should be seen as an important step in the implementation of an ambitious educational policy first outlined in the Royal Injunctions of 1536 and reinforced by the Injunctions of 1538, which envisaged a state-sponsored attempt to raise educational standards among the young across the country and across all social classes. This was at the same time an attempt to raise standards of religious knowledge, and in particular to inculcate in the next generation the new Protestant faith. These two aims were not seen as incompatible, since the instruments for raising general education were to be the key documents of the Christian faith – the *Apostles' Creed*, the

*Ten Commandments*, and the *Lord's Prayer*. If children were to be taught to read, then let the texts on which they first practise be these texts. If they were to learn to write, then let them copy out these texts. *ABCs* and *Primers* were produced in numbers with *Catechisms* containing these texts attached. Society as a whole was co-opted into this great enterprise. Clergy were exhorted to catechise the young of their parishes. Heads of households were not only enjoined to make sure that children in their charge (their own children, their young servants, their apprentices) attended such catechesis, but to undertake, if necessary, instruction at home (an injunction which involved, possibly, a rather optimistic view of general levels of literacy). The role of heads of households in catechesis was a point stressed by Luther. Schools were also expected to teach a catechism as part of their curriculum. The 1538 Injunctions encouraged people to buy catechisms and the printers responded enthusiastically to the emerging market. Cathechisms from various hands poured from the presses. There were attempts to get some control of this free-for-all. In 1545 the King himself (Henry VIII) issued a *Primer … to be taught lerned, & read: and none other to be used throughout all his dominions*. In the same year he also sponsored *An abc with the Pater noster, Ave, Credo, and ·x· comaundments in Englysshe newly translated*, but the diversity continued, and drew adverse comment from Cranmer in *Catechismus* in 1548.

The *BCP Catechism* of 1549 is another attempt to impose a standard. The difference to previous attempts was that a way was found of building catechesis securely into the life-cycle of every Christian. It was now indissolubly linked to Confirmation and first communion. It had its own niche, and provided people saw Confirmation and first communion as benefits worth having, then there was a strong incentive for them to have their children instructed. It should be noted that this educational programme was in the vernacular – English (or Cornish in the case of the west country!), and these early catechisms included some of the first renderings of key elements of the liturgy into everyday speech. In the grammar schools, which only a very small proportion of young people attended, Latin was taught, and catechisms in Latin were produced for these privileged pupils (a point

noted above), but the fundamental purpose of the catechetical movement was to raise levels of education in *English*.

The 1549 *BCP Catechism* may seem extremely basic, but the levels of Christian knowledge diffused among the populace at the time were often appallingly low. This comes out from famous *Visitation Articles* of Bishop John Hooper, Bishop of Gloucester and Worcester. In 1551, Hooper set out to assess the state of basic Christian literacy in English possessed by the clergy of his diocese. Of the 311 clergy examined, only 79 were deemed satisfactory. 168 couldn't recite the *Ten Commandments*, and 9 didn't even know how many commandments there were. 10 couldn't recite the creed, and 216 were unable to support its articles with Scriptural proofs. 10 couldn't recite the *Lord's Prayer*, and 34 didn't know who had composed it. One thought it was the work of "My Lord the King", because it was found in the Edwardian Prayer Book of 1549. If this was a measure of the knowledge of the *clergy*, how profound must the ignorance of most ordinary folk have been! The King faced two rebellions in 1549 – Kett's in Norfolk and the Prayer Book Rebellion in the West Country — and in both cases the rebels complained that the Church was not providing them with a good religious education. The people were thirsty for knowledge, but were not being satisfied. The catechetical programme initiated in 1536 was, apparently, falling somewhat short of its objectives.

The 1549 *BCP Catechism* was taken over into the 1552 Prayer Book with only a few minor changes, the most substantial of them being that the *Ten Commandments* are now given in their full biblical wording (probably to eliminate the problem over the prohibition of images noted above) and referenced to the 20th chapter of Exodus. At one point where 1549 has the catechumen addressed as "my good sonne", 1552 has the gender inclusive "my good childe" – a reminder that girls as well as boys went through the rite. The rubric also calls for increase in the frequency of catechising. Where 1549 stipulated "once in sixe wekes at the least", 1552 requires every Sunday and holy day. And, possibly in recognition of this added burden, allows the curate to

appoint someone to do the work in his place. The 1552 *Catechism*, along with the rest of the Edwardian reforms, was abrogated under Mary, but reinstated when Elizabeth came to the throne in 1559. The text is identical to 1552, save for the fact that its final rubric affirms explicitly the link between catechesis, confirmation and first communion ("There shall none be admitted to the holy communion: until such tyme as he can saye the Catechisme and be confirmed") – a hint, perhaps, that the decoupling of confirmation and first communion was still seen as a potential problem.

The next significant development in the text of the *Catechism* occurred in 1604. This was the year of the Hampton Court Conference, best known, as already mentioned, as the occasion when King James initiated the process that finally produced the great King James Bible of 1611. It also led to changes to the *Book of Common Prayer*. The Puritan delegates complained that the *BCP Catechism* said nothing about the sacraments. It was agreed the Bishops should rectify this omission. John Overall, then Dean of St. Paul's, later Bishop of Norwich, composed an addition on Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which, approved by the Bishops, was appended to the existing catechism on the King's authority. It appeared immediately in the 1604 prints of the *Book of Common Prayer*, which was re-imposed on the Church by a new Royal Proclamation. This revised catechism passed into the 1636 *Book of Common Prayer* used by the compilers of the 1662 Prayer Book, who took it over and, apart from a few minor additions and expansions, simply reprinted it (**EXHIBIT 4.7**). Oddly, however, the concluding rubric of the Confirmation service introduced a note of confusion: "There shall none be admitted to the holy Communion, until such time as he be confirmed, *or be ready and desirous to be confirmed*". This apparently allows someone to be admitted to communion, before Confirmation but after catechesis (on whose discretion?), and so somewhat weakens the sequence catechesis-Confirmation-first communion so carefully forged in earlier Prayer Books.

George Herbert gives us a glimpse into catechizing in his day in his famous manual for parsons, *A Priest to the Temple*, completed in 1632,

but not published till 1652, long after his death. "The Country Parson", he writes, "values Catechizing highly. He useth and preferreth the ordinary Church Catechism [i.e. the one in the Prayer Book], partly for obedience to Authority, partly for Uniformity sake, that the same common truths may be everywhere professed, especially since many move from Parish to Parish, who like Christian Soldiers, are to give the word, and to satisfy the Congregation by their Catholic answers." The implication here that a new arrival in a parish might be catechized before being admitted to communion is interesting. It is also evident from Herbert's words that even in his day other catechisms were in use. In fact the *BCP Catechism* never became universal and exclusive. Right down to modern times other catechisms were produced, some by eminent authorities.

As already noted, as early as 1548 Thomas Cranmer had produced a *Catechism*. To the same period belongs the influential *New Catechisme sette forth Dialogue-wise in familiar talke betweene the father and the son* by Thomas Becon, written in King Edward's time, but actually printed under Elizabeth (**EXHIBIT 4.4**). (Becon was the author of the Homily "Against Whoredom and Uncleanness" in the *First Book of Homilies*.) Both these were eclipsed in popularity by the catechisms of Dean Nowell, mentioned earlier. In 1570 Nowell published in *Latin* a catechism, indebted to Calvin's, which was immediately translated into English by Thomas Norton, under the title, *A Catechism, or, First Instruction of Christian Religion* (**EXHIBIT 4.8**). This was a substantial work, and Nowell followed it in 1572 with a condensed version in *English* (known as "the middle catechism"), which, according to its title page, was "to be learned of all youth, next after the little catechisme, appointed in the Booke of Common prayer." Not content with this he produced an even shorter catechism in *Latin* in 1573. Thus the Church had catechisms for beginners', intermediate, and advanced levels of instruction. Nowell's work was highly regarded by the establishment, though it was never given royal consent. Parker personally endorsed the 1570 catechism, and the Canons of 1571 ordered schoolmasters to use it and no other, an injunction reiterated in the Canons of 1604,

which required all schoolmasters to teach either Nowell's larger or shorter catechism in English or Latin.

Nowell had spent some time schoolmastering, and the primary setting for his catechisms was schools, though some bishops advocated their use in parishes as well. The fact that they were all issued in Latin is the obvious indicator of their scholastic function. The shorter and the middle were even done into classical Greek, and used for teaching that language in schools. There were dozens of editions of Nowell's catechisms right down to the 19th century. Though known now only to experts, they are arguably among the most formative volumes in the history of Anglicanism. Some of these catechisms were meant to supplement and explain the *BCP Catechism*, some were designed for older, more knowledgeable students (the *BCP Catechism* was universally regarded as providing only the most rudimentary level of instruction), but others still were intended as alternatives and replacements. The *BCP Catechism* was seen as establishing the principle that children should be taught the faith, and as offering guidance as to what they should be taught, but it did not need to be slavishly followed.

To return to Herbert: the Country Parson, he goes on, "exacts of all the Doctrine of the Catechism; of the younger sort, the very words; of the elder the substance. Those he Catechizeth publicly, these privately, giving age honour, according to the Apostle's rule, I *Tim*. v. 1. He requireth all to be present at catechizing; *First*, for the Authority of the work; *Secondly*, that Parents, and Masters, as they hear the answers prove, may when they come home, either commend or reprove, either reward or punish. *Thirdly*, that those of the elder sort, who are not well grounded, may then by an honourable way take occasion to be better instructed. *Fourthly*, that those who are well grown in the knowledge of Religion, may examine their grounds, renew their vows, and by occasion of both, enlarge their meditations." A vivid picture emerges of Herbert's *modus operandi*, which draws out the spirit of the rubric introduced in 1552 requiring the curate to catechize for a half-hour before evensong on Sundays and holy days. Any self-respecting

parson would have required his parishioners to be present in church on these occasions. It is not much of an imposition for him to demand that they come half an hour earlier, and form an audience while he catechizes their children in the church. Their interest and support is thus engaged, and any deficiencies in their own Christian knowledge indirectly made good. The rubric in the 1662 Prayer Book integrates catechesis even more directly into public worship by stipulating that it shall take place not half an hour *before* Evensong, but *after the second lesson*. This turns catechism into a part of the liturgy: it becomes part of the ministry of the word.

"When all have learned the words of the Catechism", Herbert continues, "he [the Country Parson] thinks it the most useful way that a Pastor can take, to go over the same, but in other words: for many say the Catechism by rote, as Parrots, without ever piercing into the sense of it." Rote learning played a large part in education at this period, but people were well aware of its dangers. Martin Bucer, in his *Censura* of the 1552 *Book of Common Prayer*, commented on the danger of learning off by heart the catechism, and recommended that it should not only be memorized, but *actively* taught.

Between Herbert's *Priest to the Temple* and the Prayer Book of 1662 lay the upheavals of the civil war and the interregnum, when, as we saw, the Prayer Book was banned, and replaced by the *Directory for Public Worship*. The *BCP Catechism* was also replaced by two new catechisms, the *Shorter* and the *Larger Catechism*, produced by the Westminster Assembly of Divines. These, though following the question-and-answer format, were topically and systematically arranged, and, like the *Westminister Confession*, aimed at a comprehensive overview of the body of divinity, though they still incorporated the *Ten Commandments* and the *Lord's Prayer*. The *Apostles' Creed* was ignored, because it was not contained in Scripture. The *Shorter Catechism* was aimed at beginners, the *Larger* at more advanced students. The former had 107 questions, the latter 196. Another noticeable difference from the *BCP Catechism* is that each statement in the Westminster catechisms is backed up by Scriptural proof-texts. These are not a secondary

addition or an optional extra, but integral to the catechisms right from the start. These catechisms are a *tour de force*, and few, whether agreeing with their doctrine or not, could fail to be impressed by their grandeur. Though the Prayer Book *Catechism* was restored in 1662, the Westminster catechisms continued to circulate among Presbyterians, and probably more than any other text were responsible for forming the theology and spirituality of Presbyterianism worldwide. I studied them in primary school in Northern Ireland (a great bastion of Presbyterianism) as a boy in the 1950s, and they made an indelible mark on me.

The story of Prayer Book *Catechism* since 1662 can be more briefly told. The situation changed little. The 1662 *Catechism* remained official, and was not revised. With a few trifling changes, it was left untouched in the so-called "Liturgy of Comprehension" of 1689 – a revision of the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* aimed at accommodating dissenters, which was never ratified. As late as the 1928 revision of the *Book of Common Prayer* the 1662 text remained essentially unchanged, though one little alteration in a rubric closed a loophole introduced in 1662. "And there shall none be admitted to the holy Communion, until such time as he be confirmed, or be ready and desirous to be confirmed", now read, "And there shall none be admitted to the Holy Communion, until such time as he be confirmed, or be found *in the judgement of the Bishop* to be ready and desirous to be confirmed".

In practice, however, perceived deficiencies continued to be made good by supplemental and alternative catechisms, some emanating from highly respected quarters. As we noted earlier, by the end of the 18th century the link between catechesis, Confirmation, and first communion, which we take for granted today, was in practice well established, and in the 19th century the growth in the Church of England of the Sunday school movement and of Evangelicalism, which tended to favour instructing the young thoroughly at home, gave catechizing a boost. The situation in global Anglicanism – the forms of Anglicanism that grew up in the old British colonies – was different. Here there were serious attempts to revise the *official* catechism. One

interesting example is found in the 1928 *US Book of Common Prayer*. This turned the climax of the catechetical process into a ritual – an office, with hymns, prayers and congregational responses interspersed. Two alternative offices were offered, but the Prayer Book also provided a straightforward traditional version of the *Catechism* which was, presumably, to be used in the classes that prepared for the final, climactic service. The *content* of both the offices and the separate *Catechism* remained, however, very traditional. It was the format that was innovative.

A thorough revision of the *substance* of the *Catechism* was, however, presented in the 1979 *US Book of Common Prayer*, under the rubric, "An Outline of the Faith" – still in question-and-answer form, and with the *Ten Commandments*, the *Creed* and the *Lord's Prayer* at its heart, but longer and more topically and systematically structured. However, it was removed to the end of the Prayer Book, and separated from the service of Confirmation. The preface to this catechism, interestingly, does not link it specifically with Confirmation. "This catechism", it states, "is primarily intended for use by parish priests, deacons, and lay catechists, to give an outline for instruction. It is a commentary on the creeds, but is not meant to be a complete statement of belief and practice; rather, it is a point of departure for the teacher, and it is cast in the traditional question and answer form for ease of reference. The second use of this catechism is to provide a brief summary of the Church's teaching for an inquiring stranger who picks up a Prayer Book. It may also be used to form a simple service; since the matter is arranged under headings, it is suitable for selective use, and the leader may introduce prayers and hymns as needed."

It would not be unfair to say that since 1928, the traditional catechism of the *Book of Common Prayer* has rather languished in England. There has been a growing sense that it is not fit for purpose for today's children, who are not used to learning by rote, and many of its ideas, and the way it puts them, are alien to how young people now speak and think. A *Revised Catechism* was drawn up by a *Commission to Revise the Church Catechism*, and approved in 1962 for a period of seven years

by the Convocations of Canterbury and York (**EXHIBIT 4.9**). It was more extensive than the 1662 *Catechism*, more topically and systematically arranged, more comprehensive. It contained 61 questions set out under six headings: I. The Call of God: The Christian Answer; II. Christian Belief (including the *Apostles' Creed*, but also recognizing the *Nicene Creed* as an equally important summary of the faith); III. The Church and Ministry; IV. Christian Obedience (including the *Ten Commandments*); V. The Holy Spirit in the Church: (a) Grace; (b) Worship and Prayer (including the *Lord's Prayer*); (c) The Bible; (d) The Gospel Sacraments and other Ministries of Grace; VI. The Christian Hope. However, neither the *Alternative Service Book* (1980), nor *Common Worship* (2001), the current authorized liturgical manual of the Church of England, includes a *Catechism* — an omission that has arguably left catechesis in limbo, at least as far as official guidance is concerned.

## JEREMY TAYLOR: DOCTRINE AND HOLINESS (CASE THREE: TOP SHELF)

What difference does theology make to the life of the Christian, or, to put this in a way that would have been better understood by the composers of the *Thirty Nine Articles*, what connection is there between doctrine, or "scholastical divinity", and holiness? We have chosen to explore this question through the writings of Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667) – for two reasons. The first is that this year (2013) is – probably – the 400th anniversary of his birth. I say "probably", because we know that he was baptised on the 15th August 1613, and one would therefore assume that he was born earlier in that year, where it not for the fact that when he entered Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge on 18th August 1626, his age was recorded in the admission book as 15, which, if it is correct (and it may not be), would mean he was born in 1612, and his baptism was delayed. The other reason we have chosen Taylor is that he exemplifies, in ways few others do, the tensions between doctrine and holiness.

Taylor was a theologian, and a passionate one at that. He wrote treatises, for example, on transubstantiation (1654), on original sin (1655 and 1656), and a massive, technical work on casuistry called *Ductor Dubitantium* (*Guide of the Perplexed*) (1660). Much of his work aroused strong opposition (particularly his views on original sin), which he met head on. He was throughout his life a controversialist, and he did not pull his punches.

As a young man he caught the eye and won the patronage of Archbishop Laud, who drew him into his circle. He became a royalist, and chaplain to Charles I, who gave him his watch and "a few pearls and rubies" from the ebony case of his Bible, as keepsakes before his execution. Taylor was a staunch episcopalian, and defended episcopacy vehemently against the presbyterians. He suffered for his beliefs, and was imprisoned by Parliament several times during the Civil War and interregnum. He became something of a standard-bearer for beleaguered episcopalians at this time, and his liturgies were clandestinely, but probably quite widely, adopted by those who, having been banned by Parliament from using the *Book of Common Prayer*, could not stomach its replacement, the *Directory for Public Worship* (**EXHIBIT 5.5**). He was suspected in the 1630s of hankering after Catholicism: his friendship with Christopher Davenport, the English convert to Rome whom we mentioned earlier, fuelled suspicion. The friendship seems to have been genuine enough, but a ferociously anti-Catholic sermon he preached in 1638 on the anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot scotched any rumours that he was about to go over to Rome. Davenport claimed that Taylor subsequently regretted some of the language he used on this occasion, but in fact he was consistently and bitterly anti-Catholic all his life, and one of the last substantial works to come from his pen was his *Dissuasive from Popery* (1664). He threw his considerable reputation behind the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, and was rewarded by preferment – not in England but in Ireland, where he became Bishop of Down and Connor, and administrator of Dromore (1661-67). There he got involved in a fight with some presbyterian ministers who held livings in his diocese, and in his dealings with them he was uncompromising.

So far the picture that emerges of Taylor is of a heavy-weight theological pugilist, a "bruiser" constantly involved in verbal fisticuffs, which he seems to have relished. And that picture *does* capture something of the man. But he had another side to him as well. He took very seriously the Christian call to holiness, and he thought long and hard about what that meant, and how it could be achieved. He believed holiness had to be worked at. It involved constant attention to one's actions. There were rules to follow, and spiritual exercises to do, which could school one into holiness. He produced two manuals of these – *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living* (1650) and *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying* (1650), which became classics of spirituality, and have appealed ever since to Christians of all persuasions – Catholics as well as Protestants. Earlier (1649) he had written *The Great Exemplar* – a life of Christ (possibly the first in English), held up as the model for all Christians to follow (**EXHIBIT 5.1**). We might think nowadays of this kind of writing as rather Catholic, and there were great Catholic examples of it, e.g. Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ* (*c.*1418-27), or the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola (1522-24). But in fact the genre was popular among Protestants as well: one thinks of Richard Baxter's, *Christian Directory, or, A Sum of Practical Theology* (1673) (**EXHIBIT 5.6**), or William Law's *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (1728) (**EXHIBIT 5.8**). Curiously, the ultimate models lay back in antiquity in late pagan philosophy, in the writings of philosophers such as the Stoic Epictetus (AD 55-135), who held that philosophy is not just a matter of thinking profound and clever thoughts but of living a good and moral life, and who produced treatises setting out the wisdom they had garnered as to how this was to be done. Epictetus's *Enchiridion* or *Manual* was first done into English by James Sandiford in 1567, and reprinted and retranslated several times over the following century. Taylor would certainly have known it, probably in the Greek (**EXHIBIT 5.7**).

The Taylor of *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying* is irenic, large-hearted and serene. It is hard to think these are by the same author as the polemical works. This discrepancy was remarked upon by some of his

contemporaries. Bishop Brian Duppa, the ejected Bishop of Salisbury, writing to Sir Justinian Isham in 1653 regarding Taylor's theological treatise, *The presence real and spiritual of Christ in the blessed sacrament, proved against the doctrine of transubstantiation* (published in 1654 – Duppa, a friend of Taylor, had received an advanced, manuscript copy) commented: "You will find it to be a discourse occasioned by a conference he had with a Jesuit, against whom he hath argued with so much sharpness as if all his study has been in controversies, and yet [he] hath framed his books of devotion so as if he understood nothing of them [i.e. controversies]."

Most of us are a mass of contradictions, some more than others, but, even allowing for the salty rhetoric of his day, Taylor's case is rather extreme. Did he see *no* connection between doctrine and the Christian life? The answer is that clearly he did. In 1655 he published his popular little work, *The Golden Grove* (an allusion to Lord Carbery's estate, Gelli-aur, in Wales, where he spent some of the happiest days of his life), subtitled *A Manuall of Daily Prayers and Letanies, fitted to the dayes of the week containing a short summary of what is to be believed, practised, desired: Also festival hymns, according to the manner of the ancient church, composed for the use of the devout, especially of younger persons*. Woven into the more obviously devotional items are didactic and doctrinal pieces, which are presented as integral to the devotions: "A Short Catechism for the Institution of Young Persons in the Christian Religion"; "An Exposition of the Apostles' Creed"; "A Form of Prayer, by Way of Paraphrase expounding the Lord's Prayer". But what was the link between doctrine and practice? What contribution did each make to the whole?

We can begin to get some idea of Taylor's thinking on this subject from one of his earliest and most celebrated works, *The Liberty of Prophesying* (1647). This was an astonishing plea for religious toleration in a deeply intolerant age. Taylor argued that people should be left alone to profess and teach their religious views so long as those views do not advocate impiety or disturb the peace. He was prepared to extend this liberty to Catholics and even to Anabaptists (ultra-radical Protestants)

as well. He proposed that the *Apostles' Creed* should be taken as the universal standard of belief, and should serve as the test of communion between those professing to be Christians. All other doctrines should be treated as non-fundamental. Everyone has the right to judge for him or herself, in accordance with their God-given reason and faculties, and honest error should never incur punishment. "It concerns all persons to see that they do the best to find out truth; and if they do, it is certain that, let the error be ever so damnable, they shall escape the error, or the misery of being damned for it". The case is not tightly argued: as Matthew Arnold later wrote in exasperation (November 1836), "I admire Taylor's genius, but yet how little was he capable of handling worthily any great question!" Instead he channels all his molten eloquence into commending prudence, charity, and humility, and denouncing pride, violence, and schism.

The *Liberty of Prophesying* has an honoured place in the annals of free speech, but it is often seen as "uncharacteristic" of Taylor's thought – with some reason, for he can hardly be said to have lived up to his own high ideals. Some have suspected that it was all a political ploy – a clever plea for the persecuted and oppressed *episcopalians*. And he explicitly rowed back from the position taken in the *Liberty of Prophesying*, by adding to the 1657 edition an appendix excluding Anabaptists from toleration. There was even a story that when Bishop of Down and Connor he sent his chaplain over to England to buy up all the copies of his book he could find, and bring them back to Ireland to be burned! But the work stands on its own feet, and it would be a sorry state of affairs if the truth of theology were to be judged *solely* by whether or not its author lived up to it. Theology has to be judged on its own terms, and if sound, then what stands condemned is the author who falls short of it, not the ideas themselves. The intellect is capable of grasping, expressing and acknowledging truths which the will finds difficult to put into practice.

Towards the end of his life Taylor addressed explicitly the question of doctrine and holiness in a remarkable sermon, *Via Intelligentiae* (*The Way of Understanding*), preached in 1662 before Trinity College Dublin,

where he was Pro-chancellor. The setting was apt: his audience was young scholars and their teachers who were supposed to take seriously the life of the mind. He urges them in cultivating the intellect not to neglect the heart, nor the promptings of the Spirit. "The way to judge religion," he argues, "is by doing our duty: and theology is rather a divine life than a divine knowledge. In heaven, indeed, we must first see, and then love; but here on earth, we must first love, and love will open our eyes as well as our hearts; and we shall then see, and perceive, and understand." He ends: "And now to conclude, to you, *fathers* and *brethren*, you who are, or intend to be, of the *clergy*; you see here the best *compendium* of your studies, the best abbreviature of your labours, the truest method of wisdom, and the infallible and only way of judging concerning disputes and questions in *Christendom*. It is not by reading multitudes of books, but by studying the truth of God: it is not by laborious commentaries of the doctors that you can finish your work, but by the expositions of the *Spirit of God*: it is not by the rules of *metaphysics*, but by the proportions of *holiness*: and when all books are read, and all arguments examined, and all authorities alleged, nothing can be found to be true that is unholy. *Give yourselves to reading, to exhortation, and to doctrine*, saith St. *Paul* [1 Timothy 4:13]. Read all the good books you can: but *exhortation* unto good life is the best instrument, and best teacher of true *doctrine*, of that which is *according to godliness*."

*Holiness*, then, is the yardstick of *theology*. We might suppose that understanding comes first, and then action: you first understand how the world works, and then act accordingly. But for Taylor it's the other way round. You act in response to Christ's commandments, and that leads to understanding, and the understanding born of commitment will always trump that born merely of intellect. Holiness also offers a way to discriminate what is fundamental from what is not: the more a doctrine registers on the scale of holiness – the better it makes a person – the more important it is. Doctrine matters, but a doctrine that bears little fruit in life, however correct it may be in theory, is not worth fighting about. Again Taylor does not work his argument out as fully as we might like (Arnold's exasperation comes back to mind), but he

throws down a challenge, and the fact that he challenged, and, in a sense, condemned *himself*, does not lessen the force of it for the rest of us.

Though flawed, Taylor was a genius – a man who can move us with his eloquence and challenge us with his wisdom. His quality is shown by the fact that he won, for very different reasons, the admiration of people as diverse as John Milton, John Wesley, and Edmund Gosse. He is honoured as a doctor of the Church, and commemorated in the Anglican calendar on 13th August. His greatest advocate has been Reginald Heber (1783-1826), best known now as a hymn-writer, author of "Brightest and best of the sons of the morning", "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty!", and "From Greenland's icy mountains" (**EXHIBIT 5.3**). Heber was born at 21st April at Malpas in Cheshire (the Bishop Heber High School in Malpas commemorates his links with the town), and it was while he was Rector of Hodnet in Shropshire that he produced his great edition of Jeremy Taylor's *Whole Works* in fifteen volumes (1820-22) (**EXHIBITS 5.2** and **5.4**). The long introduction to this remains still, probably, the most perceptive and eloquent analysis of Jeremy Taylor's life and thought. In 1823 Heber became Bishop of Calcutta, a diocese which included the whole of India, Ceylon, Australia and parts of South Africa! He held the office for only three years. His exertions as a diocesan, coupled with the harsh climate, were responsible for his premature death in 1826 at the age of forty-two. He will be remembered for two or three hymns, and for his great work on Jeremy Taylor.

## REFLECTIONS

So what do we learn from this small exhibition? Each of you will have your own thoughts, but here are some of mine – thoughts not of a theologian, I hasten to add, but of an historian of religion, who holds no licence to teach in any church.

(1) I am struck by the richness of the resources which Anglicans have at their disposal for thinking theologically. There is a tendency for

people like myself, from a more Reformed, Genevan background, to think that Anglican theology is a bit thin, and a bit woolly, but this exhibition gives the lie to that idea. When one thinks theologically, one needs *resources* – texts with which to think. You create your theology not by learning these texts off by heart, or following them slavishly, but by *entering into dialogue* with them. You ponder them, you probe them, you disagree with them when you think it necessary – but you need somewhere to start. Anglican theology since Richard Hooker has recognized three sources of theology – Scripture, tradition, and reason. Methodists were later to add a fourth, experience, though some Anglican thinkers hold that "experience" is already implicit in "reason". All the texts in this exhibition belong to tradition. There is here a super-abundant resource for theological reflection.

(2) But surely the very *plurality* of that resource is disconcerting. Why not produce one short, cut-and-dried manifesto, as the Reformed Churches have tended to do? Even the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, the nearest, on the face of it, the Church of England gets to a theological manifesto, turns out to be limited in scope, and not intended in any sense as a complete scheme of divinity. But surely there is wisdom in this. The tensions, and, indeed, disagreements, between the numerous authorities builds into the system flexibility, and gives *us* freedom, and scope for judgement and choice. There is safety in numbers. The plurality reminds us that truth is multifaceted, and can seldom be fully captured in short, linear propositions.

(3) The textual resources for Anglican theology fall into three groups. *First* there is *Scripture*: this contains the foundation documents of the faith; but theology in the Bible is diffuse, nowhere laid out systematically. In many cases it takes the form of narrative rather than proposition, which increases ambiguity. Some passages seem to contradict others. Anglican theology insists that when you think theologically you *must* include Scripture in your thinking, because it is the fountainhead of revealed truth. But Scripture on its own is not enough. *Second*, there are the *Creeds*. These are succinct statements of the cardinal doctrines of the faith. The affirmations of the Creeds are

held to be derived from Scripture, but the Creeds are selective, brief and orderly, where Scripture is vast and sprawling. The Creeds are seen as rules of faith (*regulae fidei*) – compasses, so to speak, that help you to find your way through the jungle of Scripture, and to identify the key landmarks. *Thirdly*, there are the *Confessions of Faith*, like the *Thirty-Nine Articles*. These tease out and develop the meaning of the laconic statements of the Creeds. Where Scripture and the Creeds as formulations of faith belong to the Universal, Catholic Church, the Confessions of Faith are statements of the doctrinal positions occupied by specific, historic churches. There are competing Confessions of Faith – the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, the *Westminster Confession*, the *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, and so on – which can flatly contradict each other on certain matters. Indeed, many of them were framed precisely to demarcate *their* position from that set out by others. When these differences became so profound that they could not be held within the same organization or communion, separate churches ensued The differences are sometimes expressed in intolerant, intemperate, and, it must be said, unchristian language, but this should not obscure the fact that they involve, by and large, honest if differing understandings of the universal bases of the faith.

(4) The crucial boundary here is the one between the *Creeds* and the *Confessions*. When we cross this we pass from the universal and catholic to the particular and historical. How we regard this boundary is important. Is it sufficient for me that if a church holds to the Creeds, I can recognize it and respect it, even though the terms of my own Confession may make it difficult for me in practice to unite with it? Or are the Creeds not enough? I must hold any church to be in *fundamental* error that does not subscribe to *my* Confession of Faith? Am I right in thinking that the Anglican tradition tends towards the former view? For all the feisty rhetoric there is a sense that it is the Creeds that express the fundamentals of the faith (and among these the most minimal of the Creeds, the *Apostles' Creed*, takes pride of place), not the *Thirty-Nine Articles*. I have a strong impression that in Anglican tradition, when it is a question of the fundamentals, *less* has been seen as definitely *more*. We saw this in Pearson and Taylor, and in the

simplicity of the *BCP Catechism*. This is not to deny the importance of Confessions, and the more complex levels of theological thinking they explore: there is work to be done there – important, even vital work. But it needs to be kept in perspective. We must to discriminate between first and second order truth.

(5) Theology changes and develops. That in itself is a theological statement which some would contest, but I speak as a historian, looking at simple, historical facts. The *Forty-Two Articles* were rewritten as the *Thirty-Nine*, but even when the *Thirty-Nine* became fixed, they did not command universal assent within the Church of England, and there were endless disputes as to what *precisely* they mean. We saw that although the original framers tried to be clear and definitive, the *Articles* remain open to honest differences of interpretation. This raises the thorny problem of assent. Can one assent to *any* honest and thoughtful reading of the Articles, or can one be held to assent only if one embraces *one* particular interpretation of them? The former view allows a broad church to emerge, the latter opens the possibility of further division and schism. The assenter today is asked to assent to the formularies as an "inheritance of faith" which serves as "inspiration and guidance". That leaves considerable scope for differences of opinion. Moreover implicit in the current declaration of assent seems to be the thought that how "the grace and truth of Christ" – the Gospel – is presented may legitimately differ from generation to generation. Because times change, what *our* generation needs to hear may not be quite the same in emphasis and wording as what our forebears needed to hear in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Can we go further and argue that since all interpretation is influenced by historical and social context (I believe I can prove this as a historian), then it is inevitable that each generation will see different things in the basic propositions of the Christian faith? This may seem alarming, since it appears to relativize the truth of the Gospel: the Gospel becomes almost a blank slate on which *we* inscribe *our* meanings according to when and where we live. But there is another way of looking at it which is more positive. We could argue that the

full depth of meaning latent in the foundational truths of Christianity only becomes clear over time, as the Gospel confronts different, real-life, historical situations. This idea could, probably, be accommodated under "reason" as a source of doctrine, and certainly under "experience." The process could be seen as providential, as guided by the Spirit within the Church, leading the Church into all truth. The final disclosure of the full depths of the Gospel will, on this view, emerge only at the end of history, with the coming of the Kingdom of God. Theology, then, is a pilgrimage – a constant exploration of the truth under the pressure of the times, never quite finally and definitively there, but getting ever closer. Now, this in itself is, theologically speaking, a contentious way of looking at things, but we need to bear in mind the inescapable fact that *theology changes*. All have to find a way of holding on to the past without getting stuck in it, of engaging honestly with a changing world, which presents challenges our ancestors did not face, discerning when those changes mean progress, and when they mean decline, embracing progress and fighting decline. It requires enormous judgement to walk this line.

(6) Finally, there is the question of how all this relates to the Christian life. Christians are called not just to believe certain things but to live good lives, to be a holy people. How does theology relate to practice, doctrine to holiness? There is undoubtedly something of a paradox here. Some, honoured as the greatest saints, have not been markedly learned in theology, while some of the greatest theologians have not been particularly impressive as saints. I doubt if *any* of the great doctors of the church would have been satisfied that they lived up to the truths they grasped and affirmed with their minds. Scholastical divinity and holy living often seem to run on parallel tracks, destined never to converge. They ought to, surely, but how? First, there is the question of truth: there are right and wrong views of the world, and discovering the right views, and acknowledging them, is a duty in and of itself. It is where we have to start. We have intellects, and the way the intellect worships is through discovering and acknowledging the truth. But right from the New Testament itself the message is proclaimed that the truth, once found, should change us, and should

play out in real life. One can rightly question how well someone has grasped a truth if it cannot be seen to make a difference in their lives, if it hasn't moved from their intellects to their wills, to the wellsprings of their action. This was the circle that Jeremy Taylor tried to square – not, in practice, all that successfully. We saw that a view begins to emerge somewhat cloudily in his writings that one way to distinguish between what is fundamental theologically and what, though maybe important in its own way, is not, is the test of holiness. Those views which promote greater holiness are fundamental, those which do not translate so directly into practice, less so. It is one man's view, but a challenging one, and persuasively expressed. The fact remains that none of us can escape doctrine: we all hold doctrine, whether we know it or not. It is important we hold *sound* doctrine and that we should work hard to ensure that it carries over into everyday life, and does not degenerate into arid intellectualism.

## LIST OF EXHIBITS

### Case One: The Emergence of the Thirty-Nine Articles

1.1 *Book of Common Prayer*, London 1760, open at *Thirty-Nine Articles*
1.2 Thomas Cranmer's *Remains*, Oxford 1833, vol. 1
1.3 John Strype's *Life and Acts of Matthew Parker*, London 1711
1.4 Henry VIII, *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum*, Rome 1521
1.5 *The Institution of a Christian Man*, London 1534
1.6. *A Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for Any Christian Man*, London 1543
1.7 John Pearson, *No Necessity of Reformation of the Publick Doctrine of the Church of England*, London 1660

### Case Two, Top Shelf: Roots and Rivals

2.1 *Book of Common Prayer* 1552 (Facsimile), open at the *Nicene Creed*
2.2 *Book of Common Prayer*, London 1662, 1st edn, open at the *Apostle's Creed*

2.3 John Pearson, *Exposition of the Creed*, London 1559, 1st edn
2.4 Fridericus Francke, *Libri Symbolici Ecclesiae Lutheranae*, Leipzig 1847, containing the Latin text of the *Augsburg Confession* of 1530
2.5 John Calvin's *The Institution of Christian Religion*, London 1574
2.6 *Westminster Confession of Faith*, London 1658, 2nd edn
2.7 Philip Labbeus and Gabriel Cossart, *Sacrosancta Concilia*, Paris 1672, containing the *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*

**Case Two, Bottom Shelf: Interpretation and Assent**

3.1 Gilbert Burnet, *Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, London 1705
3.2 J.H. Newman, *Tract 90*, Oxford 1841
3.3 William Laud, *History of the Troubles and Tryal*, London 1695, open at his defence of his relations with Christopher Davenport
3.4 Christopher Davenport, *Paraphrastica Expositio*, London 1865
3.5 E.B. Pusey, *Letter to Jelf*, Oxford 1841
3.6 J.H. Newman, *Appendix to Apologia pro Vita Sua: Answer in detail to Mr. Kingsley's Accusations*, London 1864
3.7 *Charles Kingsley: His Letters and Memories of his Life*, London 1877, vol. 1
3.8 W.H. Griffith Thomas, *Principles of Theology: Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles*, London 1930

**Case Three, Bottom Shelf: Homilies and Catechisms**

4.1 Richard Taverner, *Postils published in 1540*, ed. Cardwell, Oxford 1841
4.2 John Jewel, *Apologia*, Oxford 1639
4.3 *The Two Liturgies AD 1549 and AD 1552, with other Documents set forth in the reign of King Edward VI*, Cambridge 1844 (Parker Society), open at the *King's Catechism*
4.4 Thomas Becon, *The Catechism … written by him in the reign of Edward VI*, Cambridge 1844 (Parker Society), open at the *Newe Catechisme*
4.5 Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, Oxford 1839

4.6 The *Roman Catechism* 1556, in T. Buckley, *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, London 1852
4.7 *Book of Common Prayer* 1636, with the changes of 1662 (Facsimile), open at the *Catechism*
4.8 Alexander Nowell, *Catechism* (1570), repr. Oxford 1835
4.9 *The 1962 Revised Catechism*

## Case Three, Top Shelf: Jeremy Taylor: Doctrine and Holiness

5.1 Jeremy Taylor, *The Great Exemplar*, London 1657
5.2 *The Whole Works of Jeremy Taylor*, London 1839, ed. Reginald Heber, vol. 1
5.3 Reginald Heber, *Poems and Translations*, Manchester 1845
5.4 Reginald Heber, *A Sermon preached in the Cathedral Church of Chester*, Chester 1819
5.5 Jeremy Taylor, *Apology for the Liturgy*, Oxford 1642
5.6 Richard Baxter, *A Christian Directory*, London 1673
5.7 Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, London 1659, in Greek and Latin
5.8 William Law, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, 1728

### FOR FURTHER READING

**Edward Cardwell, *A Collection of Articles of Religion, Canons and Proceedings of Convocation 1547-1717* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1862)**

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

**Charles Hardwick, *A History of the Articles of Religion: To which is added a series of Documents from A.D. 1563 to A.D. 1615* (Herman Hooker: Philadelphia, 1852)**

**E.C.S. Gibson, *The Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England, Explained with an Introduction* (10th edn; Methuen: London, 1928)**

**B.J. Kidd, *The Thirty-Nine Articles, Their history and explanation* (6th edn; Rivingtons: London, 1932)**

**E.J. Bicknell, *A Theological Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles* (3rd edn, by H.J. Carpenter; Longmans: London, 1955)**

**Oliver O'Donovan,** ***On the Thirty-Nine Articles: A Conversation with Tudor Christianity*** **(2nd edn; SCM: London, 2011)**

**The Archbishops' Commission of Christian Doctrine,** ***Subscription and Assent to the Thirty-nine Articles: A Report*** **(SPCK: London, 1968)**

**Colin Podmore,** ***Aspects of Anglican Identity*** **(Church House Publishing: London, 2005). See Chapter 4 on the history of assent to the** ***Articles*****.**

**Charles Hefling and Cynthia Shattuck (eds),** ***The Oxford Guide to the Book of Common Prayer: A Worldwide Survey*** **(Oxford University Press: New York, 2006)**

**J. Pelikan,** ***Credo: Historical Guide to Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*** **(Yale University Press: New Haven, 2006)**

**L.T. Johnson,** ***Credo: What Christian's Believe and Why it Matters*** **(Darton, Longman & Todd: London, 2003)**

**Susan Wabuda,** ***Preaching during the English Reformation*** **(Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2002)**

**Ian Green,** ***The Christian's ABC: Catechisms and Catechizing in England c.1530-1740*** **(Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1996)**

**W.P. Haugaard,** ***Elizabeth and the English Reformation*** **(Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1968)**

**Edmund Gosse,** ***Jeremy Taylor*** **(Macmillan: London, 1904)**

**Reginald Askew,** ***Muskets and Altars: Jeremy Taylor and the Last of the Anglicans*** **(Mowbray: London, 1998)**

**Patrick Collinson,** ***The Birthpangs of Protestant England*** **(Macmillan: London, 1988)**

**Diarmid MacCulloch,** ***Thomas Cranmer: A Life*** **(Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 1998)**

**_____ ,** ***Reformation: Europe's House Divided, 1490-1700*** **(Allen Lane: London, 2003)**

***Many of the above books are only available through specialist libraries, but there is an abundance of valuable material on open access on the web, including the texts of all the primary sources quoted in the guide. Google almost any subject touched on here and be surprised!***

**BISHOP JEREMY TAYLOR**
**1613-1667**

**Text of the Guide**

**MMXIII**