

The Book of Common Prayer – its value and benefits:

The Disruption of the Oxford Movement

There was unbroken usage of the Book of Common Prayer of 1662 in England for some two hundred years – until restlessness arising from alien theological convictions led some clergy in the second half of the nineteenth century to make significant, though illegal, variations from it. Indeed, as the alterations made in 1662 were relatively small and not indicative of any departure from the doctrine established at the Reformation, one may say that – except for the period of the Commonwealth – substantially the same Prayer Book has been in use from 1559, and that for three hundred years its use was unbroken.

Royal Commissioners for the Revision of the Liturgy were appointed in 1689 and they prepared a comprehensive set of detailed alterations.¹ The general tone of these may be gathered from the fact that the word priest was consistently changed to presbyter or minister. No significant changes were proposed for the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion. Convocation, however, would not entertain any revision; so the Book of 1662 has never been altered, and it was not till the rise of the Oxford Movement that there began to be pressure for change in the Liturgy.

Before addressing the liturgical disruption caused by the Oxford Movement, it will be useful to set out the distinctive difference in structure between the 1549 service of Holy Communion on the one hand and the 1552 / 1559 / 1662 service of Holy Communion on the other hand. The 1549 service was the first communion service in English, a signal change. It included many new features – an exhortation to communicants, a rubric requiring non-communicants to depart, communion in both kinds by the people (from 1548), the moving of the Agnus Dei to a position after the communion, and changes in wording which signified a scriptural doctrine of the sacrament, entirely different from the medieval Roman doctrine, such as the words in the prayer of consecration:

who made there (by his one oblacion once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice,
oblacion, and satisfaccyon, for the synnes of the whole worlde, and did institute, and in his holy
Gospell commaund us, to celebrate a perpetuall memory of that his precious death, untyll his
comming again

Yet much was left unchanged and, in particular, much of the structure of the medieval canon of the mass survived, and it was claimed, not least by Bishop Stephen Gardiner of Winchester, that the 1549 service was patient of the medieval teaching. It became essential to revise the service to rule out all mis-taking. Thus it was that there were many radical changes in the 1552 order, the structure of which, and virtually the entire wording of which, are comprised in the 1662 order. So the 1552 Act of Uniformity declared that the 1549 Book had now been “faithfully and godly perused, explained, and made more fully perfect”. In particular, we may note that the prayer of consecration (though it was not given that name) ended immediately after the recitation of the words of institution, and that the service proceeded immediately to participation in the bread and wine.

In the 1549 order an epiclesis (an invocation of the Holy Spirit) had been included before the recitation of the words of institution –

with thy holy spirite and worde, vouchsafe to bl^hesse and sanc^tifie these thy gyftes and

¹ See: *Copy of The Alterations of the Book of Common Prayer, prepared by the Royal Commissioners for the Revision of the Liturgy, in 1689* (1854), 49

creatures of bread and wyne, that they maie be unto us the bodye and bloude of thy moste derely beloued sonne Jesus Christe

– and a great deal occurred between the recitation of the words of institution and the participation, some, though not all, of which derived from the Sarum Missal. After the words of institution in the 1549 order came the anamnesis –

we thy humble seruantes do celebrate, and make here before thy diuine Maiestie, with these thy holy giftes, the memoryall whyche thy sonne hath wylled us to make

– and then the prayer of thanksgiving, which spoke at this point in the service, when consecrated bread and wine were upon what the 1549 Book terms an Altar, of offering a sacrifice of praise: “entirely desiryng thy fatherly goodnes, mercifully to accepte this our Sacrifice of praise and thanks geuing”. There was then much further material before the administration of the bread and wine.

There is a great contrast between the structure of the 1549 service and the structure of the 1552 service. The former included much that was erroneous or inappropriate – calling down the Holy Spirit on the bread and wine and focussing on the elements; whereas the latter implored divine help for the participants – “graunt that wee, receyuing these thy creatures of bread and wyne ... maye be partakers of his most blessed body and bloud”. 1549 had not fully shaken off the shape and the ambience of the service which expressed the Roman doctrine of the Mass; the 1552 service had a radically different structure (maintained without alteration in 1559 and 1662) which expressed a radically different teaching, the Biblical doctrine of the Lord’s Supper.

These are the two classic structures: the one expressing to a greater or lesser extent the Roman doctrine of the transubstantiation of the elements and the sacrifice of the Mass, the other expressing the Biblical doctrine of the Lord’s Supper which focusses on the work of God, not in the bread and wine, but in the heart of the believing recipient.

The Oxford Movement, which was declared by its most famous son to have begun with Keble’s Assize Sermon in 1833, was a Romeward Movement. This soon showed in the thinking of its leaders and in their writings, especially in the *Tracts for the Times*; it became scandalously plain with the publication of Tract 90 early in 1841; and reached its inevitable climax with the secession to Rome of Newman and several others in 1845. The Anglo-Catholic Movement which grew out of the Oxford Movement had the same doctrinal rationale, but it consisted of those who were determined to remain within the Church of England and to act as a leaven, leading, it was hoped, to a wholesale submission to Rome, rather than isolated secessions.

The doctrinal tendency of the Oxford Movement was soon plain; but it was some while before it manifested itself in liturgical matters. Nonetheless, there is early evidence of the way that the alien doctrine of the Movement led to a new attitude to the liturgy of the Church of England. E.B. Pusey, Professor of Hebrew in the University, contributed Tract 81 to *Tracts for the Times*: it was entitled *Testimony of Writers of the Later English Church to the Doctrine of Eucharistic Sacrifice*, and was published on November 1st., 1837. It consisted of a lengthy introduction to a catena of quotations from various writers. Pusey made it clear that he regarded the 1549 Book as the true English Prayer Book. So that he might find some *locus standi* for his own doctrinal views, which were not in harmony with the Articles of Religion, he was driven to suggest that the 1552 Book maintained unreformed doctrine, but implicitly, not explicitly. Thus he wrote:

a doctrine ... which our Church retains, but one of the most withdrawn from sight, lest it should, at one time, perchance have been misapplied or profaned, is the doctrine of a Sacrifice in the Blessed Eucharist. It is not here intended to speak disparagingly of those of the revisers of our Liturgy, who furthered or consented to the suppression of doctrine visible in the 2d book of Edward VI.

Pusey lamented that it was the 1552 Book not the 1549 Book which was restored in 1559: “some idea there was of restoring (as the Queen herself wished) the genuine English service book (Edward VI’s first book): how this was prevented, we know not”.

The argument was that, anxious to remove all occasion of stumbling, the revisers suppressed the doctrine of a sacrifice in the eucharist, although they believed in it:

there was no change of doctrine as to the Christian sacrifice, involved in the alterations and omissions made in Edward the Sixth’s second book, but only a suppression and timidity as to their statement.

Thus, over three years before the publication of Tract 90, Pusey indulged in special pleading, that the 1549 Book was ‘the genuine English service book’; that the revisers of 1552 had been over zealous in their revision and through ‘suppression and timidity’ had hidden a doctrine which, he claimed, they undoubtedly maintained. His argument is untenable: the changes in 1552 marked a detailed determination to remove all that was contrary to the teaching of Scripture and of the 42 Articles; and, as we have seen, the radical alteration in structure reflected a view totally different from the medieval teaching of eucharistic sacrifice. A leader of the Oxford Movement was pointing the way to the doctrines of that Movement being better expressed in the 1549 Book – ‘the genuine English service book’ – and to a desire to retreat from the doctrinal purity and clarity of the 1552 Book, which was “the only effective attempt ever made to give liturgical expression to the doctrine of justification by faith alone”²

The leaven of Anglo-Catholicism began to show itself slowly but surely in the erosion of the liturgy established by law and the rubrical requirements which were part of it. From about 1857 onwards eucharistic vestments began to be used in a few, advanced churches; by 1867 concerns about lawlessness were sufficient for the Royal Commission on Ritual to be appointed. The use of the eastward position by the minister was beginning to become a relatively common occurrence: when the Purchas Judgement of 1870 was reversed by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in 1871, and the Judicial Committee declared vestments, eastward position, the mixed chalice, and wafers illegal, there was a formal protest by 4,700 clergy about this ruling on the eastward position.

Hostility towards the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council began from this time. It was clear, and later explicitly stated, that Anglo-Catholics would not submit to any judgement, from whatever source, that went against their teachings and their goals. There was much talk about the impropriety of what were termed spiritual issues being heard by a civil authority; but this was not germane. Any court which found for them would be heard, and any court which found against them would be ignored. In 1900 the Archbishops formally heard the case for incense and reservation, and ruled unambiguously against both: in Anglo-Catholic terms this could hardly fail to qualify as a spiritual court ruling on spiritual issues, but the ruling was ignored because it was unpalatable.³ This pressure for a supposed ‘spiritual’ freedom was a recurring theme in the years that led up to the Deposited Books of 1927 and 1928.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century Anglo-Catholics adapted the liturgy: prayers from the Roman Mass were added to the liturgy in some churches, often said silently at the part of the service in which they were inserted; the use of the words ‘Behold the Lamb of God’, accompanied by the exhibition or elevation of the host; reservation of the sacrament, leading to its adoration; benediction with the sacrament; administrations of the Holy Communion without communicants; and prayers and devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary and to the Saints.

Bishops were ineffectual in curbing the lawlessness of the ritualists. Though there were difficulties in administering the law – the penalty for an incumbent found guilty of liturgical offences was imprisonment – they failed to use the opportunities which were available to them. It was open to them to refuse to license assistant curates to churches which failed to keep the rules; they could have insisted on assurances from any man who was to be instituted to a living that he would not break the law; they could

² G. Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (1945), 672

³ W. Joynson-Hicks, *The Prayer Book Crisis* (1928), 63-64

have campaigned for the law to be changed so that the much more appropriate penalty, of deprivation, would follow liturgical lawlessness; they could have refused to use their power of veto to stop the prosecution of Romanising clergy. In general it was a case of too little too late. Frederick Temple's episcopate in the diocese of London (1885 – 1897) was a total failure in this area. The Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline stated in its Report: 'a great many of the "advanced" usages described in London churches are said to have been introduced about that time'.⁴ Those bishops who were less effete in their response to difficulties were often effective in curbing lawlessness, though too often they did not sustain that response. Thus the threat of prosecution was known to lead to submission.

The stance of two great evangelical stalwarts, J.C. Ryle (Bishop of Liverpool, 1880-1900) and E.A. Knox (Bishop of Manchester, 1903-1920) may be recorded to their honour. Ryle did not use his veto in the famous Bell-Cox case; and Knox had resolved not to, "for that veto seemed to me to be a denial of justice",⁵ though he never had to take a case of ritual into the courts.

The years around the turn of the century were turbulent. Walter Walsh's *Secret History of the Oxford Movement* was published in 1897. In 1898 Sir William Harcourt, the veteran Liberal politician, wrote a series of letters to *The Times*, calling attention to the state of ritual lawlessness and seeking effective action to curb it. Church Discipline Bills were introduced into the House of Commons in 1899, 1900, 1901, and 1902. Two such bills were introduced in 1903: they proposed to abolish the episcopal veto and substitute deprivation for imprisonment as the penalty for liturgical lawlessness. All these Bills failed to progress.

On February 6th., 1903 Randall Thomas Davidson became Archbishop of Canterbury, an office which he held until November 12th., 1928. He was therefore the chief minister of the Church of England throughout the long and significant period which led up to the presentation of the Deposited Books to Parliament in 1927 and 1928. On March 11th., 1903, the Archbishop's first public function was to receive a deputation which sought to express the "feeling of alarm at the position into which the Church of England had got in the estimation of a very large number of people all over England. ... A ritual, which in many cases was not Anglican, but Roman, was alienating the laity." Davidson's reply was significant:

You want such cases to be decisively and even sternly restrained. That, gentlemen, is a wish which you not only as Churchmen are perfectly justified in bringing forward, but I have no hesitation in saying that it is reasonable and right ...

But, Gentlemen, there is another class. There are a few men defiant of episcopal authority and really reckless of the true Church of England's spirit. ... I say to you deliberately to-day that in my view of such cases, tolerance has reached, and even passed its limits. The sands have run out. Stern and drastic action is in my judgement quite essential. ... speaking for myself, so far as in me lies, I assure you, using my words with a full sense of responsibility, I desire and intend that we should now act, and act sternly.⁶

Action was not visible and unrest continued, so that in 1904 The Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline was appointed, which published its Report in 1906. The members of the Commission were fourteen in number, including some very eminent lawyers. Of clergy there was R.T. Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury; Francis Paget, Bishop of Oxford; E.C.S. Gibson, Vicar of Leeds, who became Bishop of Gloucester in 1905; and T.W. Drury, Principal of Ridley Hall, Cambridge, later Bishop of Sodor and Man, and then of Ripon. The Commission was predominantly lay. Its terms of reference were:

To enquire into the alleged prevalence of breaches or neglect of the Law relating to the conduct of Divine Service in the Church of England and to the ornaments and fittings of Churches; and to

⁴ *The Report of the Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline* (1906), section 342, pages 61 – 62.

⁵ E.A. Knox, *Reminiscences of an Octogenarian* (1935), 303

⁶ G.K.A. Bell, *Randall Thomas Davidson* (1935), i, 399; and Joynson-Hicks, *op.cit.*, 86

consider the existing powers and procedure applicable to such irregularities and to make such recommendations as may be deemed requisite for dealing with the aforesaid matters.

The Archbishop sat throughout on the Chairman's right and took an active part in the examination of witnesses. The Commission had 118 meetings. Its Report was massive: the Report proper was 79 foolscap pages; but that was accompanied by 1,512 foolscap pages of minutes of evidence, recording written submissions and 23,638 questions of witnesses, with their answers; there were also 319 pages of Appendices, Indexes, and Analysis. The Report was unanimous.

The Report enunciated an important principle when it stated:

Not only have all the parishioners a right to complain who might possibly attend if these services were conducted differently, but also the nation has a right to expect that in the national Church the services shall be conducted according to law.⁷

The Commission considered the claim made by some bishops "that a power resides in each Diocesan Bishop to control the public services of the churches in his diocese, and to authorise additions and omissions therein", a right claimed under the name *jus liturgicum*. It declared:

There cannot, in our opinion, be any doubt that the Acts of Uniformity bind Bishops as well as other clergymen; and that the law does not recognise any right in a Bishop to override the provisions as to services, rites, and ceremonies contained in those Acts.⁸

Having heard the evidence, the Commission stated that in many communion services various illegal actions "unite to change the outward character of the service from that of the traditional service of the reformed English Church to that of the traditional service of the Church of Rome".⁹ It declared that "it may well be doubted how far elaborate spectacular ceremonial of this kind can be consistent with the spirit and genius of the Church of England".¹⁰

The failure of the Bishops to enforce or even themselves to obey the Law was noted:

Some Bishops have indeed stated in their evidence that, disagreeing with the judgments in some of the well-known ritual suits, they regard themselves as justified in existing circumstances in allowing the clergy to adopt or continue certain practices which those judgments declared illegal.¹¹

The Commission declared plainly the need for action against lawbreakers:

occasions have arisen more often than has been realised by the Bishops when the interests of the Church and her due administration demanded that discipline should be enforced by action in the Ecclesiastical Courts.¹²

Having listed practices of special gravity and significance, the Report stated:

We desire to express our opinion that these practices should receive no toleration; and that, if Episcopal directions for their prevention or suppression are not complied with, the Bishops should take coercive action in the Church Courts for that purpose.¹³

The Report ended with ten recommendations, among which were:

⁷ *The Report*, section 9, page 2.

⁸ *The Report*, section 43, page 10.

⁹ *The Report*, section 296, page 53

¹⁰ *The Report*, *loc. cit.*

¹¹ *The Report*, section 386, page 72

¹² *The Report*, section 396, page 75.

¹³ *The Report*, section 398, page 75.

1. The practices to which we have referred ... as being plainly significant of teaching repugnant to the doctrine of the Church of England and certainly illegal, should be promptly made to cease by the exercise of the authority belonging to the Bishops and, if necessary, by proceedings in the Ecclesiastical Courts.
2. Letters of Business should be issued to the Convocations with instructions: (a) to consider the preparation of a new rubric regulating the ornaments ... of the ministers of the Church ...; and (b) to frame, with a view to enactment by Parliament, such modifications in the existing law relating to the conduct of Divine Service and to the ornaments and fittings of churches as may tend to secure the greater elasticity which a reasonable recognition of the comprehensiveness of the Church of England and of its present needs seems to demand.
4. Bishops should be invested with power to refuse the institution or admission of a presentee into a benefice who has not previously satisfied the Bishop ... of his willingness to obey the law as to the conduct of Divine Service and as to the ornaments and fittings of churches ...
6. In all cases in which a sentence of an Ecclesiastical Court passed on an incumbent in a suit brought under the Church Discipline Act, 1840, is wilfully disobeyed, power should be given to the Court ... to declare the benefice of such incumbent vacant ...
7. The Episcopal veto in respect of any suit under the Church Discipline Act, 1840, should be abolished

A private memorandum by Davidson, dictated some years later, recorded that the outward unanimity was not necessarily complete.

The phraseology of that Report is the result of some measure of compromise. The legal spirits would have liked it to be much more rigid and less sympathetic, and some of the clerical spirits would have softened some of the criticisms as to ritual extremes. But speaking generally, it is, I think, a fair statement¹⁴

Sir William Joynson-Hicks noted a significant inconsistency:

The Commissioners were unable to avoid seeing that, had the Bishops exercised their administrative powers more firmly and distributed their patronage more wisely, the evils which gave rise to the appointment of the Commission would have been confined within comparatively narrow limits and within those limits could have been more easily dealt with. And yet, with some inconsistency, the Report suggested that the remedy lies in an increase of episcopal power: it is so difficult to get away from the cry "Trust the Bishops."¹⁵

Davidson's biographer recorded that:

While the Report was, in the main, the work of Sir Lewis Dibdin, the principal Recommendations were of Dr. Davidson's shaping. ... The second – which was the fundamental Recommendation, and for which a very special responsibility rested with Archbishop Davidson – was that which set on foot the whole legislative process of Prayer Book Revision.¹⁶

Two facts are to be noted. First, only one of its recommendations was put into effect. Many of the important and significant recommendations were ignored; in particular, the first recommendation, which we might deem to be one of the most important, that required that the practices which were "plainly significant of teaching repugnant to the doctrine of the Church of England and certainly illegal, should be promptly made to cease". Dr. Davidson was a member of the Commission who signed the Report and probably drafted this Recommendation, but nothing was done to fulfil this first recommendation.

¹⁴ Bell, *op.cit.*, ii, 798

¹⁵ Joynson-Hicks, *op.cit.*, 109-110

¹⁶ Bell, *op.cit.*, i, 472

Secondly, the only Recommendation which led to action was the second one. That Recommendation did not call for the revision of the liturgy: it spoke of a new rubric and of modification of the existing law; but it was made the vehicle for the fundamental doctrinal and liturgical changes which were enshrined in the Deposited Books of 1927 and 1928. Did Davidson knowingly frame this Recommendation, which included broad reference to “greater elasticity which a reasonable recognition of the comprehensiveness of the Church of England and of its present needs seems to demand”, so that a change of liturgy intended to comprehend Anglo-Catholics might be brought about?

Bishop Knox commented on this second Recommendation:

A new rubric and a few general relaxations of the strict terms of the Uniformity Act is what the Commission as a body probably intended. What grew out of the Recommendation was a new and alternative Book of Common Prayer.¹⁷

What sort of men were the Archbishops of Canterbury and York in these years? R.T. Davidson was essentially a chairman – it was acknowledged that he was an excellent chairman; he sought to find common ground and harmony among those with whom he had to deal. He was not a leader in the sense that he was a man who had burning convictions which he wished to impart to others; it is quite difficult to discern what his inmost convictions were.

A.C. Benson, son of Archbishop Benson, whose monumental diary recorded comments on his friends and acquaintances which were candid and often rather ungracious, but nonetheless often pungently perceptive, wrote a vignette of Davidson, whom he knew well, when he heard of his appointment:

Randall is *not* a great man: but he is a splendid combination of good sense, good feeling and dutifulness. He is avid of affairs, interesting, stimulating – he is not a mystic or a poet – has no idea that a dreamer of dreams is anything but a fool – and that *he* should be the chief exponent of the religion of Jesus of Nazareth is strange. Randall would have listened to Xt politely, but without interest, and then would have gone back to the Sadducees and arranged a little matter of legislation. He is a Sadducee¹⁸

When Davidson sought to define the first fourteen years of his primacy, he thought his aim might be described as “a desire to assert in practice the thoughtful and deliberate comprehensiveness of the Church of England”,¹⁹ a comprehensiveness in doctrinal belief, denominational differences, and ritual and devotional variety. This comprehensiveness was not the historic comprehensiveness of the Church of England, clearly defined by loyalty to the doctrine of the Articles of Religion and to the liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer; it was, rather, a general inclusivism, the boundaries of which might shift, seeking to include all who were ‘thoughtful’ and not wishing to exclude any who were not ‘extreme’. Thus he wrote: “it has ... been my earnest endeavour to cast the net wide, and to be slow to draw its boundary line very rigidly”.²⁰

Davidson’s desire to seek synthesis and avoid crisis was epitomised by a clerical wit who

once remarked that, were Randall Davidson to be at Lambeth when the last trump sounds, he would be sure to nominate a representative committee to consider and report whether it was the last trump or the last but one.²¹

Cosmo Gordon Lang became Bishop of Stepney in 1901 and Archbishop of York in 1909, when he was forty-four years old. He was sympathetic to Anglo-Catholicism. He was the first to wear cope and

¹⁷ Knox, *op.cit.*, 304

¹⁸ David Newsome, *On the Edge of Paradise* (1980), 113

¹⁹ Bell, *op.cit.*, ii, 795

²⁰ Bell, *op.cit.*, ii, 796

²¹ F.A. Iremonger, *William Temple* (1948), 356-357.

mitre in York Minster, or indeed in the whole Northern Province, since the Reformation.²² The appointment of Lang to York was a surprise – it had been expected that John Percival of Hereford would be translated. Bishop Knox wrote: “The choice of Lang in preference to Percival was a fateful choice, whoever was responsible for it.”²³

Lang’s appointment led to the anomalous situation that the archbishops of both provinces were Scotsmen, and one (Lang) was a son of the manse. Bishop Knox commented:

Both of them were by descent anti-Erastian, suspicious of interference of the State with the Church; both made much of Episcopacy, a natural reaction against the militant Presbyterianism of Scotland; both were critical of the Book of Common Prayer. They had not in their bones the veneration for it, which I, for all my Low Church upbringing, inherited as a tradition of primary importance.

To the devout Englishman of my generation the Prayer Book was almost sacrosanct. The two Scottish Archbishops were quite ready to put it in the melting-pot. Least of all, had they learnt to value it as the embodiment of a great national deliverance from Papal dominion.²⁴

It is illuminating to know that Davidson was not an enthusiast for a revised prayer book. In 1920 he told Canterbury Convocation that he “should prefer to have no alternative Service at all”,²⁵ and he noted in January 1926:

my own instinct would have been for leaving that Office alone and adhering to what has satisfied English people for more than three centuries. And I am certain that such is the view of the overwhelming majority of English Churchmen throughout the country.²⁶

Lang, on the other hand, told the York Diocesan Conference in 1923 that there were some,

amongst whom I must be included, who thought that the changes (in the Order of Holy Communion) were too meagre to be much use to the Church and that we had better wait till a time had come when it might be possible to suggest ... that ... it might be one with associations so venerable and with liturgical beauties so marked as the First Prayer Book of Edward VI.²⁷

During the second decade of the twentieth century discussions focussed chiefly on vestments, reservation, and prayer for the dead, with the Bishops discussing whether or not, or to what extent, to license these things; the first two of these were illegal, and the third (prayer for the dead) without the sanction of Scripture or the Reformed English Church.

Reservation was explicitly forbidden by Article XXVIII, and the position had been confirmed in various judgements, most recently by the Archbishops in 1900. The pressure to allow reservation to communicate the sick was increased by the Anglo-Catholic practice of receiving communion fasting, which meant that Anglo-Catholic clergy did not wish to conduct communion services later in the day; reservation inevitably led to adoration of the supposed presence of Christ in the reserved sacrament. Reservation is a misplaced concept: it derives from a static conception of consecration – that when a certain formula of words has been uttered, there is something intrinsically different about the bread and wine – whereas the bread and wine is set apart for use and used. The concept of consecration was not present in the 1552 service. All the provision which is needed is contained in the 1662 Book, in the Rubric at the end of the Communion of the Sick (“But if a man, either by reason of extremity of sickness, or for want of warning in due time to the Curate ...”).

²² J.G. Lockhart, *Cosmo Gordon Lang* (1949), 194-195

²³ Knox, *op.cit.*, 306

²⁴ *Loc.cit.*

²⁵ Bell, *op.cit.*, ii, 1327

²⁶ Bell, *op.cit.*, ii, 1332

²⁷ Lockhart, *op.cit.*, 299

The Bishops generally were seeking to grant permission for Reservation to communicate the sick, while ruling out adoration of the sacrament, which was a natural concomitant of any belief in transubstantiation. They were seeking to establish a position which was intrinsically unstable. In the Upper House of York Convocation some evangelical bishops sought to allow reservation, while hedging it about with safeguards to prevent adoration. This was naive. Bishop Knox commented:

But as the debates went on, the safeguards perished, the significant alterations in the service remained. These good bishops were like men trying to turn tigers into tame cats by feeding them buns.²⁸

In 1919 the so-called Enabling Act – the Church of England Assembly (Powers) Act 1919 – was approved. This conferred legislative powers on the Church Assembly, which might prepare Measures for presentation to Parliament. It marked, of course, a desire among an element in the Established Church for more freedom. It provided that Parliament might accept or reject measures, but not amend them. Bishop Knox commented:

One at least of its main objects was to go a long way towards a counter-Reformation by means of a new Prayer book. ... the large powers conferred by the measure upon the Church Assembly must mean the unsettlement of the existing relations between Church and State, an unsettlement that might be disastrous for both bodies.²⁹

It was in February 1918 that the question of an Alternative Order of Holy Communion first took a place in the Bishops' proposals for Prayer Book revision. Later that year, however, a memorial was presented to the Archbishops, signed by nine bishops, 3,000 clergy, and 100,000 laymen, protesting against any such changes in the Communion service.³⁰ In April 1920 the Convocation of York, in full synod, resolved that the Communion service, after the Prayer for the Church militant, should not be changed.³¹

It was the Bishops who drafted the final form of the revised prayer book to be submitted to the Convocations, the Church Assembly, and then to Parliament.³²

The character of the alternative Communion office in the 1927 and 1928 Deposited Books marked a radical departure from the 1552 / 1662 doctrine and structure, and a return to that of 1549, reminiscent of the Canon of the Mass. Thus, instead of the recital of the words of institution (in the prayer of consecration) leading immediately to participation in the bread and wine, there was interposed an anamnesis (setting “forth before thy divine Majesty ... the memorial which he hath willed us to make”), an epiclesis (“with thy Holy and Life-giving Spirit vouchsafe to bless and sanctify both us and these thy gifts of Bread and Wine”), and a thanksgiving (“mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving”), and the Lord's Prayer. This was not a full following of 1549, but it was substantial and significant. Mass vestments were authorised in the rubrics; reservation was permitted (with the attempted safeguard that apart from the communion of the sick it “shall be used for no other purpose whatever”); and prayer for the dead was enjoined in the Prayer for the Church and allowed in the Burial of the Dead.

The majorities in favour in the Convocations and in the Church Assembly were very large, though the significance of these majorities was disputed, because of the use of episcopal pressure, and because it was said that those who voted in the Church Assembly represented only 51% of those entitled to vote.

Among the leading protagonists for the revised prayer book were, of course, the two Archbishops; they addressed various gatherings, including ones of members of both Houses of Parliament. Most

²⁸ Knox, *op.cit.*, 311

²⁹ Knox, *op.cit.*, 318

³⁰ Bell, *op.cit.*, ii, 1326

³¹ Knox, *op.cit.*, 318

³² Bell, *op.cit.*, ii, 1332-1336; Joynson-Hicks, *op.cit.*, 122

diocesan bishops were keen supporters, not least the Bishop of Manchester (William Temple) and the Bishop of Durham (H.H. Henson). Henson was an unusual and complex man, whose trenchant wit and acerbic comments attracted wide attention and made good media material. He was a strong supporter of Establishment until the rejection of the 1928 Measure. When addressing Convocation in 1927 he referred to “the Protestant underworld”;³³ this disparaging phrase stuck in people’s minds. Henson contributed an article on the Deposited Book, entitled “The Composite Book”, to *The Edinburgh Review* of April 1927. Towards the end of this article he referred to the Evangelical party:

Neither its arid theology, nor its fierce polemic, makes appeal to the conscience of modern England. The Evangelical party in the Church of England has been described as “*an army of illiterates generalled by octogenarians.*” The description is more unkind than untrue, or rather it is only true when a sharp distinction is drawn between the Evangelical party and the Evangelicals.³⁴

This bitter and unseemly comment was not forgotten. Both references were raised in the debate on the revised book in the House of Lords. Bishop Knox was not actually 80 years of age until December 12th., 1927 (and Davidson was 80 years of age on April 7th., 1928). Knox took a triple first (a double first in *Literae Humaniores* and a first in *Jurisprudence and Modern History*) and was a Fellow of Merton College, Oxford, for fourteen years – hardly an illiterate! Knox entitled his autobiography *Reminiscences of an Octogenarian*.

The campaigning that took place during the 1920s made it clear that there was not a virtual unanimity in support of the revised prayer book. Four diocesan bishops were opposed to the Measure: Bertram Pollock, Bishop of Norwich, who campaigned vigorously as a non-party opponent, addressing many meetings; E.H. Pearce, Bishop of Worcester, who had an evangelical background; Lord William Cecil, Bishop of Exeter, who seems to have been generally conservative; and E.W. Barnes, Bishop of Birmingham, an advanced liberal, who had a particular detestation of the philosophical absurdities of the theory of transubstantiation and the superstitions that surrounded it.

E.A. Knox, a staunch evangelical, who had been Bishop of Manchester until 1920, was a vigorous and influential leader. Sir William Joynson-Hicks, Home Secretary from 1924 to 1929, and Sir Thomas Inskip, who was Solicitor General in 1927 and Attorney General in 1928, were evangelical Parliamentarians who also led the campaign against the revised book. There was also, of course, a mass of churchmen throughout the land who were opposed to the new prayer book, and the doctrines and practices which it would introduce.

One further factor lay in the background during the 1920s and was a cause of anxiety to those who saw in prayer book revision an increasing ascendancy of Anglo-Catholicism and rejection of the Reformation: the Malines Conversations. These were informal conversations between a small group of Anglo-Catholics and some Roman Catholics, which took place at Malines in Belgium. Lord Halifax, President of the English Church Union, instigated these meetings in 1921, and Cardinal Mercier, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Malines, was their president. Though these were not gatherings to which Canterbury and Rome were formally sending representatives, all but the first meetings took place with the cognizance of Dr. Davidson and of the papacy; both seemed to regard them with extreme caution. The revelation that these discussions had been taking place caused consternation: Sir William Joynson-Hicks wrote to Davidson in January and February 1924.³⁵ Lord Hugh Cecil, a leading Anglo-Catholic, tried to persuade Lord Halifax not to continue with them, as he feared they would have an adverse effect on the proposals to revise the Prayer Book. He wrote in May 1924:

the Malines conversations are a dangerous complication while the Prayer Book controversy is going on. ... Unquestionably, if there were a conference at Malines in October, great alarm and dissatisfaction would be caused among the whole Evangelical party at a moment when it is most

³³ Reference at Owen Chadwick, *Hensley Henson* (1983), 194: *Chronicle of Convocation*, March 29th., 1927, 92.

³⁴ *The Edinburgh Review*, Vol. 245 (January – April 1927), 240. The italics are in the original.

³⁵ Joynson-Hicks, *op.cit.*, 161-171; Bell, *op.cit.*, ii, 1284-1286

important that they should be soothed and tranquillized.³⁶

Cardinal Mercier wrote a letter to Dr. Davidson on January 21st., 1926; this was two days before Mercier died. In it he wrote:

[Lord Halifax] has told me of the abiding desire for reunion by which you are animated. I am made happy by that assurance, which fortifies me in this present hour. ‘Ut unum sint’. That is the supreme desire of Christ. It is also the desire of the Sovereign Pontiff. It is my desire. It is also yours. May it be realised in all its fulness.³⁷

This document was published in French, in Paris, later that year.³⁸

Davidson persuaded Halifax to acquiesce in the postponement of the publication of the report on the Conversations until after the prayer book debates of December 1927; it was published in January 1928.

The Debate on the Prayer Book Measure took place over three days in the House of Lords in December 1927. I shall review some of the arguments in some of the speeches, drawing chiefly from opponents of the Measure.

Archbishop Davidson proposed the Measure in the Lords.³⁹ He asserted the right of Parliament to vote on the Measure and he claimed that the Book was not the work of the Bishops, but of the whole Church. He sought to suggest the fundamental change in the order of the service was of no significance:

there is a difference in the introduction of a different prayer of consecration or canon as an alternative which may be adopted where it is desired. It is really a question of temperament.⁴⁰

He assured the House that there was no change of doctrine:

in my deliberate judgment nothing that we have suggested makes any change in the doctrinal position of the Church of England. The balance of emphasis may here and there be somewhat altered, but that mere fact will disquiet no one who remembers what different aspects of the truth have been emphasised by recognised Church leaders during the last four hundred years.⁴¹

Here he expressed not the comprehensiveness of the Articles of Religion, but mere inclusivism – appealing to the views held by leaders, regardless of any absolute standard.

Lord Hanworth, Master of the Rolls, and elder brother of the Bishop of Norwich, was the first speaker against the Measure. The Deposited Book gave the right to the Bishops to make and alter rubrics from time to time: he pointed out how unsatisfactory an arrangement that was: “I think the greatest safety will be found in putting a rubric in the Book itself which will give something like a permanent safeguard”.⁴² He asked how discipline was going to be enforced, pointing out the failure of the bishops over the previous 25 years, and the declaration of 1,400 Anglo-Catholic clergy that they would not obey new orders from the bishops. He spoke of the Bishop of London:

If during this time he has failed – and in no diocese are there greater or more flagrant breaches of the law at the present time – what hope is there that without any new powers the Bishops will be able to enforce discipline?⁴³

³⁶ Bell, *op.cit.*, ii, 1288

³⁷ Bell, *op.cit.*, ii, 1299; R.V.K. Applin, *Across the Seven Seas* (1937), 323

³⁸ I have not yet established when it was first published in English.

³⁹ *The Parliamentary Debates (Fifth Series), House of Lords 69 (1927) (1928) [69 H.L. Deb 5s], 771-793*

⁴⁰ 69 H.L. Deb 5s, 784

⁴¹ 69 H.L. Deb 5s, 787

⁴² 69 H.L. Deb 5s, 795

⁴³ 69 H.L. Deb 5s, 805

The Bishop of Worcester stated plainly: “I am convinced that the changes which it makes in the Communion Service and its adjuncts involve corresponding changes in the doctrine of the Church of England.”⁴⁴

the purpose of the great movement which brought the Church of England into separate and independent existence was that it might “turn the Mass into a Communion.” ... For years past there has been a powerful effort ... to get beneath this basic purpose of the Reformation and to assimilate the Holy Communion once more to the Mass.⁴⁵

The eminent lawyer and statesman, Lord Carson, formerly the Ulster leader Sir Edward Carson, had written a few days before to a clergyman of the Church of Ireland:

I need hardly say with what anxiety I am watching the controversy over the Deposited Prayer Book and the struggle under very difficult circumstances to maintain the principles of the primitive Faith involved in the successful issue of the Reformation.⁴⁶

In the House of Lords Carson pointed out that a bishop had said that there were changes of doctrine, and an Archbishop had said that there was no such change. He asked how in such circumstances discipline could be enforced in the Church.

Do not let us deceive ourselves; it was not the language that was objected to. It was an effort to bring in practices which had grown up in the Church and which brought you not to a change of language but to a change of the settlement that was made at the Reformation.⁴⁷

Why are we here at all? ... We are here to legalise illegalities. We are here to admit the triumph of those who for the past thirty years have refused to obey the rubrics of the Church. ... this is a triumph of the so-called Anglo-Catholics. ... if you have an established Church you must draw lines.⁴⁸

Davidson’s statement in 1903 about the immediate need for discipline was referred to, and, not for the first time, a statement by the Bishop of Gloucester in 1923 that at least 90 per cent of the ordinary members of the Church of England would much prefer that there should be no revision and no change at all in the Prayer Book.⁴⁹

What the proposal lacks is the authority of the masses of the people. Have the people no rights? Have the communicants of the Church no rights?⁵⁰

Lord Carson then touched on vestments.

Why was the sacrificial vestment called, I believe, the chasuble, re-introduced into the Church? It was abolished in 1552. Why is it brought back? Has it a meaning? If so, what is the meaning? Lord Halifax ... would openly and honestly say that ... they bring back or assist in bringing back the Mass.⁵¹

He brought his argument to a conclusion:

do not let us have this chaos in the Church not only of two Prayer Books, which is bad enough, but of two Communion Services, in one of which something is declared [in the Black Rubric] to

⁴⁴ 69 H.L. Deb 5s, 854

⁴⁵ 69 H.L. Deb 5s, 855

⁴⁶ H. Montgomery Hyde, *Carson* (1974), 479

⁴⁷ 69 H.L. Deb 5s, 868

⁴⁸ 69 H.L. Deb 5s, 868-869

⁴⁹ *The Times*, 15/11/1923, 7d

⁵⁰ 69 H.L. Deb 5s, 872-3

⁵¹ 69 H.L. Deb 5s, 875

be absolute idolatry while it is legalised in the other. How can a Church stand in those circumstances?⁵²

Lord Danesfort, in arguing that the laity had had little voice in framing or approving the Measure, noted that the Bishop of Durham had argued strongly in 1924 and 1925 that the representative character of the House of Laity [of the Church Assembly] was “utterly fictional”. “If I may say so with deep respect I most entirely agree with that version of the Bishop of Durham”.⁵³

Bertram Pollock, Bishop of Norwich, was the last speaker against the Measure.

If the National Church touches, as I believe it does, the life of the nation, here is a proper forum in which the devotional character of the Church should be safeguarded. It is not, I say with all emphasis, a question to be decided by episcopal experts.⁵⁴

He argued that it would be entirely possible to make a less contentious Book.

The Measure was agreed by the Lords, the Contents being 241 and the Not Contents 88.⁵⁵

On December 15th, 1927, the House of Commons debated the motion. It was proposed by Mr. Walter Bridgeman. Then Sir William Joynson-Hicks, the Home Secretary, addressed the House. He quoted Davidson’s 1903 statement that the sands had run out and drastic action was ... quite essential.

We are asked to trust the Bishops. Therein lies the difficulty. It is not a question of trust. It is a question how so many of them can possibly deal with these offences when they have connived at their existence for 20 years past, and from time to time, have appointed men who they knew to be guilty of these illegalities to offices in the Church.⁵⁶

Sir William pointed out a significant effect of the Measure:

If this Measure passes, we take out of the hands of Parliament a great deal more than we are passing through Parliament to-day. We are giving the Bishops the power to make rubrics; we are giving the Bishops power to make regulations for new services.⁵⁷ ... They may make rubrics and they may also issue supplementary forms of service.⁵⁸

He declared that Parliament should not be embarrassed to act:

this is not entirely a matter for the Church of England. As long as the Church is established, the final right lies with Parliament.⁵⁹

Churchill wrote:

Joynson-Hicks made not only his finest speech, but a speech which for its substance, its sincerity, its command, ranks among the best specimens of the modern parliamentary art. In a House divided without reference to its party groupings, but none the less fiercely, upon the new Prayer Book, he beat the Protestant drum with what was perhaps decisive effect.⁶⁰

The next speaker against the motion was Mr. Rosslyn Mitchell; he was a member of the Labour Party,

⁵² 69 H.L. Deb 5s, 878

⁵³ 69 H.L. Deb 5s, 896

⁵⁴ 69 H.L. Deb 5s, 959

⁵⁵ 69 H.L. Deb 5s, 986-990

⁵⁶ *The Parliamentary Debates (Fifth Series), House of Commons 211 (1927) (1928) [211 H.C. Deb 5s], 2546*

⁵⁷ 211 H.C. Deb 5s, 2548

⁵⁸ 211 H.C. Deb 5s, 2549

⁵⁹ 211 H.C. Deb 5s, 2549

⁶⁰ Winston Churchill, ‘The Truth about “Jix”’, in *The Sunday Pictorial*, 9/8/1931, page 22

a solicitor educated in the University of Glasgow, who represented Paisley from 1924 to 1929. He too affirmed the right and duty of the House of Commons to make its own decision:

If the Members of this House to-night follow their instincts in deciding against this Book it will not be the first time that the Commons of Britain have proved, in the long run, to be right, even against the opinions of ecclesiastics and others who speak in another place.⁶¹

There was no doubt in his mind what the issue was:

It is a question of doctrine, and why should we hesitate to discuss in this House a question of doctrine? It is not the first time that questions of doctrine have been discussed in this House. It is a question of doctrine, the question of the rightness or the wrongness of the doctrine of Transubstantiation.⁶² Does the Church of England adhere as an organised unit to the position which it took up at the Reformation against the doctrine of Transubstantiation?⁶³

The vesture allowed provided a simple test:

they are now offered an alternative form of Communion. It does not say that it is to enshrine the principle of Transubstantiation. No, but it breathes every concomitant of the principle. Those who founded this Church as a Protestant Reformed Church said, "You shall not wear certain garments, because of their association with certain things." To-day, under the new system, the priest officiating at the Communion is to wear, if he cares, the chasuble, the alb and maniple.⁶⁴

Mr. Mitchell showed how the use of wafers, the vesture, and the provision of a tabernacle all signified transubstantiation, "the dividing principle between the two Churches".⁶⁵ He finished his speech as follows:

Let the Church of England be what it will, but a Church divided against itself cannot stand. I do not believe that the Church of England can permanently endure to be half-Reformist and half-Romanist. Either it will be one thing, or the other. Let the Church choose which it will be, and not throw the obligation upon us. If they do, I for one, confirmed, convinced, and determined in my Protestantism, thanking God from my heart that there were men who formed the Reformation which cleansed the Catholic Church as well as gave birth to the Protestant Church – I myself can do nothing but vote against this Measure. I do not want to do it, but I can do no other, so help me God!⁶⁶

Dr. Davidson noted:

The most effective speech of all as regards votes was, I think, Rosslyn Mitchell's. It was a simply ultra-Protestant harangue, with no real knowledge of the subject, but owing its power to a rhetorical presentment of no-Popery phrases and arguments of the sort which are to be found in *Barnaby Rudge*, when the Lord George Gordon riots set London aflame.⁶⁷

In fact, this speech "was extraordinarily eloquent" and profoundly moved the House; it may have been the single most influential speech in all the Parliamentary debates.

Colonel Applin took up a point made by one member that "there was no possibility of joining with

⁶¹ 211 H.C. Deb 5s, 2560

⁶² 211 H.C. Deb 5s, 2562

⁶³ 211 H.C. Deb 5s, 2563

⁶⁴ 211 H.C. Deb 5s, 2565

⁶⁵ 211 H.C. Deb 5s, 2566

⁶⁶ 211 H.C. Deb 5s, 2567

⁶⁷ Bell, *op.cit.*, ii, 1346

Rome”.⁶⁸ He had received papers in French on the correspondence between Dr. Davidson and Cardinal Mercier, and he read out a translation of part of the final letter from Mercier, quoted above. In his memoirs, Applin recorded:

Lloyd George, who was sitting behind me, asked to see the original ..., and when he had satisfied himself on its authenticity, bent down and told me that he had not intended to vote as it was a matter for the Church of England, but now he should vote against the Measure.⁶⁹

Sir Douglas Hogg, later Viscount Hailsham, spoke: “there is certainly not a majority in this House or in this country which desires the changes which the Prayer Book makes.”⁷⁰ He concluded: “It may be true, it is true, that the rejection of this Measure would be a disaster, but in my judgment its acceptance is a far greater disaster.”⁷¹

In the final speech against the Measure Sir Thomas Inskip pointed out that the supposed significance of the votes cast at Diocesan Conferences was considerably weakened because only about 51% of the members had voted. “There are those in the Church who frankly desire a change in the doctrine of the Church of England and will never be satisfied until it is within the law.”⁷²

When the House divided the Ayes were 205, but the Noes were 230. The campaign to preserve the Protestant liturgy of the Church of England had been successful.⁷³

After the 1927 debate Rosslyn Mitchell wrote to Bishop Knox:

To you more than any other man is due the decision of the House of Commons. The generalship of the octogenarian has resulted in a great victory – and that is the test of generalship. What brings joy to me is the reawakening of the religious spirit among the people. ... The nation will be all the better for the experience through which it has passed.⁷⁴

The Bishops took the condescending view that the Deposited Book had not been rightly understood or explained to best advantage. They decided to make some minimal changes to ameliorate certain difficulties, and to present the Book again to Parliament; but there was no significant change in the great matters which had caused the Book to be rejected. There continued to be intense interest and debate, and Sir William Joynson-Hicks published his excellent *The Prayer Book Crisis* in May 1928. The majorities in the Convocations and Church Assembly in favour of the 1928 Book were appreciably smaller.⁷⁵ The Measure, with the slightly amended Book, was before the House of Commons on June 13th. and 14th., 1928.⁷⁶ It was again rejected. This time the Ayes were 220 and the Noes were 266:⁷⁷ the majority against the measure had increased from 25 to 46.

The Bishops as a body were offended by, as they saw it, this rejection of their spiritual leadership by the State. Henson suddenly became a vociferous disestablishmentarian, but he was at the extreme. His whole position was inconsistent. In 1926 the Shrewsbury Bishopric Measure came before the House of Lords.⁷⁸ This was a Measure which had been approved by the Church Assembly: it would have divided the diocese of Hereford and created a county bishopric for Shropshire. Henson was strongly opposed to this division of his old diocese, and he made a major speech in the House of Lords.⁷⁹ The Measure was

⁶⁸ 211 H.C. Deb 5s, 2613

⁶⁹ Applin, *op.cit.*, 324

⁷⁰ 211 H.C. Deb 5s, 2621

⁷¹ 211 H.C. Deb 5s, 2625

⁷² 211 H.C. Deb 5s, 2645

⁷³ 211 H.C. Deb 5s, 2652-2656

⁷⁴ Knox, *op.cit.*, 323.

⁷⁵ Bell, *op.cit.*, ii, 1350, n. 1

⁷⁶ *The Parliamentary Debates (Fifth Series), House of Commons 218 (1928)* (1928) [218 H.C. Deb 5s], 1003-1139, 1197-1324

⁷⁷ 218 H.C. Deb 5s, 1320-1324

⁷⁸ *The Parliamentary Debates (Fifth Series), House of Lords 63 (1926)* (1926) [63 H.L. Deb 5s], 431-476

⁷⁹ 63 H.L. Deb 5s, 449-456

rejected by 60 votes to 61.⁸⁰ Henson wrote:

It was generally thought at the time, and I know no reason for doubting the truth of the assumed fact, that my speech in defence of my old bishopric had turned the scale in its favour.⁸¹

When a Measure fully approved by the designated Church bodies, but *disapproved* by Henson, came before the House of Lords and was rejected by the Lords, that was a splendid thing; when a Measure fully approved by the designated Church bodies, and *approved* by Henson, came before the House of Commons and was rejected by the Commons, that was a scandalous and intolerable invasion of the inalienable rights of the Church as a spiritual body.

The Bishops adopted a strange and unsatisfactory, indeed an immoral, position: the Upper House of Canterbury Convocation declared in July 1929:

during the present emergency and until further order be taken the Bishops, having in view the fact that the Convocations of Canterbury and York gave their consent to the proposals for deviations from and additions to the Book of 1662, as set forth in the Book of 1928, ... cannot regard as inconsistent with loyalty to the principles of the Church of England the use of such additions or deviations as fall within the limits of these proposals.⁸²

Those Bishops who so thought might have taken a position of courage and argued for disestablishment, if that was what they wanted; or they might have shown grace, acknowledged that the House of Commons had the right to make the decision which it made, and accepted it. Indeed, if they had real discernment, they would have been grateful that they had been saved from a grievous error. Instead of this they promoted lawlessness, assuming a legal authority which the Royal Commission had explicitly rejected; those who had recognised that Anglo-Catholics were breaking the law not only failed to restrain them from such lawlessness, but ultimately joined them in their scorn for the law.

We may be thankful that the Book of Common Prayer was preserved. The action of the House of Commons truly represented the wish of the Nation and of Churchmen; thus it preserved the Book of Common Prayer as a discrete entity for us today. Despite the lawlessness and subversion displayed by the Bishops after June 1928, the Book of Common Prayer has remained the abiding liturgy of the Church of England, and no variants were authorised until 1965.

The House of Commons represented the laity of the English Church in the decisions which it made. The proposed liturgy reflected the wishes of the Bishops and the lawless clergy. The supposedly representative bodies which approved the Measure were not truly representative. It was a cardinal principle of the Oxford Movement to restore to the clergy what it saw as their spiritual authority. Any reduction in the authority of Parliament in the life of the Established Church leads to an imbalance, in which the laity are not fully represented; it leads to a hierarchical structure, with all its attendant dangers, illustrated most potently in the Church of Rome. The supposed freedom sought by the Life and Liberty Movement and the Enabling Act was not a true freedom for the laity.

The débâcle of the 1927 / 1928 Deposited Books marked a further failure of the Church of England, and in particular of its Bishops, to deal with the Oxford Movement. There was an unwillingness to recognise it for it was, and is, an alien movement. Thus, instead of drawing (or rather, again drawing) the boundaries of the true comprehensiveness of the Church of England, that ancient comprehensiveness of all who truly assented to the Articles of Religion and the liturgical embodiment of their doctrine in the Prayer Books of 1552 and 1662, the Bishops abandoned true comprehensiveness for mere inclusiveness, and began the destructive work of seeking to combine doctrinal contradictions within one ecclesiastical body. It is one of the teachings of Scripture, and one of the lessons of Church history, that there must be

⁸⁰ 63 H.L. Deb 5s, 475-476

⁸¹ Herbert Hensley Henson, *Retrospect of an Unimportant Life* (1942), ii, 94

⁸² Bell, *op.cit.*, ii, 1359

doctrinal boundaries and there must be discipline within a Church; but the Bishops sought to avoid this in their dealings with the Oxford Movement.

Finally, we see the essential nature of doctrine. It is doctrine which gives truth and coherence to the life and worship of a Church. Any attempt by a Church to ignore it must end in self-destruction. Bishop Knox's assessment of the Oxford Movement generally is true of the disruption which the Oxford Movement has brought to the liturgy of the Church of England:

It has left behind it a disruption within the Church, making that Church almost a collection of Sects held together by Endowments and by a precarious connexion with the State. Consequently the problem which the Oxford Movement has set the Church of England to solve is that of retaining ecclesiastical unity despite doctrinal divergences which often amount to contradictions. Must not the attempt end in such a minimizing of the value of doctrine as will react injuriously on the whole of religious life? Would not external unity be dearly bought at the cost of shipwreck of Faith? Can a creedless Church be a teacher of a nation and of the world? This is the question which the ... Church has to answer.⁸³

If a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.⁸⁴

⁸³ E.A. Knox, *The Tractarian Movement 1833-1845* (1933), 383

⁸⁴ Mark 3: 25