

Preaching, Homilies, and Prophecyings in Sixteenth Century England

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The Dawn of the Reformation in England found the church with a clergy that was largely untrained, incompetent, and unconcerned about the wellbeing, spiritual or material, of the congregations whose pastors they were supposed to be. Absentee rectors were well content to enjoy the income from the parishes that had been placed under their tender care, while paying a mean pittance to inconsequential substitutes as they themselves sought the distractions of this world or the favours of high society elsewhere. It is hardly surprising that the widespread ignorance of the clergy and with it the dearth of preaching in England had brought about a state of affairs in which the people were, to the extent that they were religious, thoroughly superstitious and theologically (as well as in other respects) illiterate. This was the daunting scene that faced the Reformers who were intent on instilling the doctrines of the Gospel into the minds and hearts of the populace. The famine of preaching especially was a serious obstacle to the achievement of this end, for, as St. Paul had long since dramatically asked, 'how are people to hear without a preacher?' (Rom. 10:14f.). Of course, the Reformers themselves, like St. Paul, were indefatigable preachers. They regarded preaching as a principal means of grace both practised and commanded by Christ, and they were determined that it should be restored to its rightful place in the church. But this was not something that could be done in the short term.

An interim measure, designed to meet this need, if only in part, was the publication of a Book of Homilies which were to be read in the churches for the instruction and edification of the people until such time as ministers capable of preaching and expounding the Scriptures should be available. As early as March 8th, 1539 a letter was sent to Bullinger and other leaders of the Swiss church informing them that Archbishop Cranmer was 'now wholly employed in instructing the people, and in composing some discourses in English, which our clergy are to use instead of these Latin ones which they have hitherto prated in their churches like so many parrots'.¹ Nearly three years later, on January 20th, 1542, the bishops meeting in Convocation resolved that 'certain homilies' should be published 'for stay of such errors as were then by ignorant preachers sparkled among the people';² and on February 16th of the following year (1543) the first Book of Homilies was presented before the same assembly.³ It was not, however, until July 31st, 1547, following the accession of Edward VI, that its publication was achieved.

At the same time royal commissioners were appointed to carry out a visitation of all the English dioceses. They took with them detailed ecclesiastical injunctions which were to be enforced in the realm; and each group of commissioners was accompanied by

one or two godly learned preachers who, at every session, should in their preaching both instruct the people in the true doctrine of the Gospel of Christ and in all love and obedience to the same, and also earnestly dehort them from their old superstition and wonted idolatry.⁴

Incumbents were required to ensure that a sermon should be preached in their churches at least once a quarter

wherein they shall purely and sincerely declare the Word of God, and in the same exhort the hearers to the works of faith, mercy and charity, specially prescribed and commanded in Scripture, and also warn them of the dire consequences of adherence to beliefs and practices contrary to Holy Scripture.⁵

Otherwise the place of the preacher was to be supplied by the hearing of the authorised homilies, as the next injunction makes clear:

Also because, through lack of preachers, in many places of the king's realms and dominions the people continued in ignorance and blindness, all parsons, vicars, and curates shall read in their churches every Sunday one of the homilies which are and shall be set forth, for the same purpose, by the king's authority, in such sort as they shall be appointed to do, in the preface of the same.⁶

The thrust of the Homilies, as their titles indicate (and this applies equally to the Elizabethan collection), is ethical as well as doctrinal; for the Reformers perceived, in line with the plain teaching of the Apostles themselves, that right faith must go hand in hand with right conduct. Bishop Burnet (1643-1715) has explained the intention of the Homilies in the following manner:

The chief design of them was to acquaint the people with the method of salvation according to the Gospel; in which there were two dangerous extremes that had divided the world. The greatest part of the ignorant commons seemed to consider their priest as a sort of people who had such a secret trick of saving their souls, as mountebanks pretend to the curing of diseases; and that there was nothing to be done but to leave themselves in their hands, and the business could not miscarry. This was the chief basis and support of all that superstition which was so prevalent over the nation. The other extreme was, of some corrupt gospellers, who thought, if they magnified Christ much, and depended on his merits and intercession, they could not perish, which way soever they led their lives. In these homilies therefore special care was taken to rectify these errors.⁷

The problem posed by the presence of these two extremes in the land is apparent in a letter issued by the King's Council in the middle of 1548, the year after the publication of the first Book of Homilies, and sent to all preachers who held the royal licence. This letter specifically inhibited all unlicensed preaching, 'as well for the conservation of the quietness and good order of the king's majesty's subjects, as that they should not by evil and unlearned preachers be brought into superstition, error, or evil doctrine'; and, further, in order 'that the devout and godly homilies might the better in the mean while sink into his subjects' hearts'. Any intention of abolishing the office of preaching is expressly disavowed:

Nevertheless it is not his majesty's mind hereby clearly to extinct the lively teaching of the Word of God by sermons after such sort, as for the time the Holy Ghost shall put into the preacher's mind, but that rash, contentious, hot, and indiscreet preachers should be stopped; and that they only which be chosen and elect, be discreet and sober men, should occupy that place, which was made for edification, not for destruction; for the honour of God, and peace and quietness of conscience to be set forward, not for private glory to be advanced.

The preachers thus favoured are encouraged with the following expression of confidence and good hope:

And yet, forasmuch as we have a great confidence and trust in you, that you will not only preach truly and sincerely the Word of God, but also will use circumspection and moderation in your preaching, and such godly wisdom as shall be necessary and most convenient for the time and place, we have sent unto you the king's licence to preach; but yet with this exhortation and admonishment, that in no wise do you stir and provoke the people to any alteration or innovation, other than is already set forth by the king's majesty's injunctions, homilies, and proclamations. . . . These things we have thought good to admonish you of at this time, because we think you will set the same so forward in your preaching, and so instruct the king's majesty's people accordingly, to the most advancement of the glory of God, and the king's majesty's most glorious proceedings, that we do not doubt but that much profit shall ensue thereby.⁸

The Council's hopes were not realised, however, and on September 23rd, a mere four months later, a proclamation was issued inhibiting all preaching in England. Numbers of the licensed preachers had 'abused the said authority of preaching, and behaved themselves irreverently and without good order in the said preachings, contrary to such good instructions and advertisements as were given unto them'. Accordingly, 'although certain and many of the said preachers so before licensed [had] behaved themselves very discreetly and wisely, and to the honour of God, and to his highness' contentation', this general prohibition was imposed. This was proposed as no more than a temporary measure, pending the introduction of 'one uniform order' throughout the realm. The reference is to the first Book of Common Prayer, which was brought into force the following year (1549). Meanwhile the desire was expressed that the king's 'loving subjects' would

occupy themselves to God's honour, with due prayer in the church and patient hearing of the godly homilies set forth by his highness' injunctions unto them; and so endeavour themselves that they may be the more ready, with thankful obedience, to receive a most quiet, godly, and uniform order to be had throughout all this said realm and dominions.⁹

The prohibition was subsequently raised. Thus, for example, among the articles given by John Hooper to 'all and singular deans, parsons, prebends, vicars, curates, and other ecclesiastical ministers' within his diocese of Gloucester in 1551, we find one requiring

that the homilies be read orderly (according unto the king's majesty's injunctions) every Sunday and holy Day, without omission of any part thereof, so that [—provided that] no sermon be made upon any of those days;

and another enjoining

that every one of you (having licence and authority) shall preach every Sunday and festival-day; and that all those who have no licence or authority shall diligently procure some of their neighbours (who are authorised) to preach in their cures four times every quarter in the year at the least.¹⁰

During the years of Mary's reign, of course, a ban was put on evangelical preaching and, with it, the reading of the Cranmerian Homilies. One of Mary's first acts after her accession was the issuing, in August 1553, of a proclamation concerning religion which contained the following injunction:

Her highness therefore straitly chargeth and commandeth all and every one of her said subjects of whatsoever state, condition, or degree they be, that none of them presume from henceforth to preach, or by way of reading in churches and other public and private places, except in schools

of the university, to interpret or teach any scriptures or any manner of points of doctrine concerning religion . . . except they have her grace's special licence in writing for the same, upon pain to incur her highness' indignation and displeasure.¹¹

At the beginning of April 1555 Cardinal Pole published a set of constitutions which, *inter alia*, forbade anyone to exercise the office of preaching who did not hold a licence either from the pope or from his diocesan bishop;¹² and in June of the same year a royal decree prohibited the publication and also the possession and reading of the writings of the Reformers. The index of forbidden authors included Cranmer, Tyndale, Coverdale, Latimer, Barnes, Frith, Hooper, Becon, Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli, Calvin, Bullinger, Bucer, and Peter Martyr, and covered the versions of the writings of these men, and others mentioned, in the Dutch, Italian, and French languages as well as in English.¹³ This literary embargo would itself have sufficed to outlaw most of the homilies of the 1547 book.

The coming of the Elizabethan era saw the restoration of Protestantism in England; but the new ecclesiastical leaders had to make a fresh start with the work of reformation, once more against daunting odds. At first, indeed, Elizabeth placed a ban on preaching by means of a proclamation dated December 27th, 1558. This proclamation, designed 'for the quiet governance of all manner her subjects', was intended as a temporary expedient to tide over the dangerous period of transition

until consultation may be had by parliament, by her majesty, and her three estates of this realm, for the better conciliation and accord of such causes as at this present are moved in matters and ceremonies of religion.¹⁴

The situation that elicited this proclamation is described by Strype:

Now did both the evangelics and the papalins bestir themselves for their parties. The former were afraid the Queen would not set upon the work of reforming religion, or make too much delay in so necessary a work; the latter were very jealous of her, by the little she had already done towards a reformation, that she would in the end throw down the late new-raised structure of their religion. Therefore, on the one hand, many of the gospellers, without authority, abhorring the superstitions and idolatry remaining in the churches, were guilty of great disorder in pulling down images and such other relicts there. The others spared not for lewd words poured out against the Queen, without measure or modesty. And both took their occasions to speak freely their minds in the pulpits.¹⁵

The prohibition of preaching was apparently lifted some three months later, in March 1559.¹⁶ The new regulations were defined in the ecclesiastical injunctions, fifty-three in number, which the Queen issued at this time. The third of these required that the clergy should

preach in their churches, and every other cure they have, one sermon every month of the year at the least, wherein they shall purely and sincerely declare the Word of God, and in the same exhort their hearers to the works of faith, as mercy and charity, especially prescribed and commanded in Scripture.¹⁷

The continuing need for officially authorised homilies is plainly stated in the twenty-seventh of these injunctions, which declares that

because through lack of preachers in many places of the queen's realms and dominions the people continue in ignorance and blindness, all parsons, vicars, and curates shall read in their churches every Sunday one of the homilies, which are and shall be set forth for the same

purpose by the queen's authority, in such sort as they shall be appointed to do in the preface of the same.¹⁸

And the concluding injunction gives the practical admonition that

all ministers and readers of public prayers, chapters, and homilies shall be charged to read leisurely, plainly, and distinctly; and also such as are but mean readers shall peruse over before, once or twice, the chapters and homilies, to the intent they may read to the better understanding of the people, the more encouragement to godliness.¹⁹

The language of the twenty-seventh injunction quoted above, which refers to homilies 'which are and shall be set forth . . . by the queen's authority', may be taken to indicate, firstly, that the Cranmerian homilies had already been reprinted and authorised, and, secondly, that it was intended to publish further homilies. (Cranmer, in fact, had evidently had it in mind to bring out additional homilies.)²⁰ The second or Elizabethan Book of Homilies—with the exception of the one against disobedience and wilful rebellion, which was first published separately in 1570 and saw five reprintings before being incorporated into this book the following year—must have been ready before January 12th, 1563, the first day of the Convocation at which the bishops subscribed the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, the thirty-fifth of which makes specific mention of the second Book of Homilies and lists their titles²¹ (though in fact what is now Article 35 was in 1563 placed as an appendix to the preceding article and was only given the dignity of a separate article in 1571).

The preface attached to the 1562 edition of the first Book of Homilies explains the need for their republication, as the following extract shows:

Considering how necessary it is that the Word of God, which is the only food of the soul, and that most excellent light that we must walk by, in this our most dangerous pilgrimage, should at all convenient times be preached unto the people, that thereby they may both learn their duty towards God, their prince, and their neighbours, according to the mind of the Holy Ghost, expressed in the Scriptures, and also to avoid the manifold enormities which heretofore by false doctrine have crept into the Church of God; and how that all they which are appointed ministers have not the gift of preaching sufficiently to instruct the people which is committed unto them, whereof great inconveniences might rise, and ignorance still be maintained, if some honest remedy be not speedily found and provided: the Queen's most excellent Majesty, tendering the soul's health of her loving subjects, and the quieting of their consciences in the chief and principal points of Christian religion, and willing also by the true setting forth and pure declaring of God's Word, which is the principal guide and leader unto all godliness and virtue, to expel and drive away as well corrupt, vicious, and ungodly living, as also erroneous and poisoned doctrines, tending to superstition and idolatry, hath, by the advice of her most honourable Counsellors, for her discharge in this behalf, caused a Book of Homilies, which heretofore was set forth by her most loving brother, a prince of most worthy memory, Edward the Sixth, to be printed anew, wherein are contained certain wholesome and godly exhortations, to move the people to honour and worship Almighty God, and diligently to serve him, every one according to their degree, state, and vocation.

Appended to Lady Ann Bacon's English translation of John Jewel's *Apology of the Church of England*, published in 1564, there is a short paper explaining, firstly, 'the manner how the Church of England is administered and governed' and, secondly, the functional structure of the universities of Cambridge and Oxford. It has been suggested that this was the work of Archbishop Parker;²² but, be that as it may, it contains two paragraphs which bear interestingly on our subject.

These read as follows:

There is nothing read in our churches but the canonical Scriptures, which is done in such order, as that the psalter is read over every month, the New Testament four times in the year, and the Old Testament once every year. And, if the curate be judged of the bishop to be sufficiently seen in the Holy Scriptures, he doth withal make some exposition and exhortation unto godliness.

And, forasmuch as our churches and universities have been wonderfully marred, and so foully brought out of all fashion in time of papistry, as there cannot be had learned pastors for every parish, there be prescribed unto the curates of meaner understanding certain homilies devised by learned men, which do comprehend the principal points of Christian doctrine; as of original sin, of justification, of faith, of charity, and such like, for to be read by them unto the people.²³

Here, once again, the makeshift character of the Homilies as a measure to tide the church over until such time as the barrenness of the clerical cupboard should have given way to an ample supply of able ministers is apparent. Yet, during these days, there was a real danger lest the Homilies should be so enforced as to supplant preaching, thus defeating the very purpose for which they were introduced. The influx, following Elizabeth's accession to the throne, of considerable numbers of excellent men, who during the Marian years had found refuge in various Reformed circles on the Continent, and the most outstanding of whom were elevated to positions of high responsibility in the Elizabethan church, led at once to an improvement in the situation; for these men came back to England fully dedicated to the Gospel and eager to proclaim its message far and wide. Accordingly, the ban which the Queen almost immediately placed on preaching, though only temporary and imposed in the interests of good government, was frustrating in the extreme for them. Their enthusiasm is well reflected in a letter written to Bullinger by Thomas Lever from London and dated August 8th, 1559, several months after the ban had been lifted.

On returning from you towards England [says Lever], in the course of my journey I saw at Strasbourg a proclamation, that is, an edict published by the authority of Queen Elizabeth, strictly prohibiting all preaching and exposition of Holy Scripture, or any change of religion throughout all England, until the great council, which we call the Parliament, hereafter to be called together, shall have come to a decision respecting religion. When I returned to England, I saw, according to the proclamation above mentioned, or rather I shrunk from seeing, masses and all the follies and abominations of popery, everywhere sanctioned by the authority of the laws, and the Gospel nowhere to be met with, except among some persons at London, who were either admitted to preach before the Queen at court on a few stated days, only in the time of Lent, or else in a congregation that remained in concealment during the whole time of persecution [*sc.* under Mary], and then not venturing forth beyond such private houses as were open to them, on the cessation of the persecution, they were permitted by Queen Elizabeth in open private houses, but in no public churches. . . . Some of us preachers, who had returned to England from Germany, being much affected with these things, and considering that the silence imposed for a long and uncertain period was not agreeable to the command and earnest injunction of Paul, to preach the Word of God in season and out of season, having been requested to do so, forthwith preached the Gospel in certain parish churches, to which a numerous audience eagerly flocked together. And when we solemnly treated of conversion to Christ by true repentance, many tears from many persons bore witness that the preaching of the Gospel is more effective to true repentance and wholesome reformation than anything which the whole world can either imagine or approve. . . . But God will at length give the victory for the little ones of the weak flock of Christ against the powerful tyrants of the world. For all the sanguinary bishops here are deposed; learned, pious, and discreet persons are sent forth to visit

all parts of England. Zealous preachers of the Gospel, who used to preach at first contrary to the Queen's proclamation, have now, by means of letters sealed with the Queen's seal, free licence to preach throughout all England. And I, who have long been preaching the Gospel among the most ignorant persons in the remoter districts, have determined, God willing, to return tomorrow from London to them and others like them, who have seldom or never heard any exposition of the Gospel of Christ.²⁴

Thomas Sampson, an ex-Dominican friar to whom a choice of bishoprics had been offered, displays a distinctive frame of mind in a letter to Peter Martyr (who had urged the advisability of accepting preferment)²⁵ in which, after speaking of the consecration of the new Elizabethan bishops, he says: 'Let others be bishops; as to myself, I will either undertake the office of a preacher, or none at all.' He goes on to describe how crucifix and candles, though abolished elsewhere, were favoured by the Queen and had been retained in the court chapel, and to inquire whether it would not be better to 'quit the ministry of the word and sacraments than that these relics of the Amorites should be admitted'. Despite his concern over the ornaments that were in evidence in the chapel royal, however, he did not hesitate to speak in terms which were both warm and definite of the genuineness of the faith of the Queen herself: 'I can most cordially testify,' he writes, 'what I certainly know to be the fact, and assert most confidently, that she is indeed a child of God.'²⁸

David Whitehead was another able man who refused preferment, in his case to the highest office in the Church of England. He was, says Daniel Neal,

a great scholar and a most excellent professor of divinity. He was educated at Oxford, and was chaplain to Queen Anne Bullen, and one of the four divines nominated by Archbishop Cranmer to bishoprics in Ireland. In the beginning of Queen Mary's reign he went into voluntary exile, and resided at Frankfort. . . . Upon his return into England he was chosen one of the disputants against the popish bishops, and showed himself so profound a divine, that the queen, out of her high esteem for him, offered him the archbishopric of Canterbury; but he refused it from Puritanical principles, and would accept of no preferment in the Church as it then stood: he excused himself to the queen by saying he could live plentifully on the Gospel without any preferment; and accordingly did so: he went up and down like an apostle, preaching the Word where it was wanted.²⁷

Such men, who preferred preaching to preferment, or even to appointment to the cure of souls in a parish, came to be known as the 'godly (or painful) preachers'. Not, however, that their acceptance of an official charge would have meant their being silenced as preachers; far from it, for the many admirable men who did accept office in the Elizabethan church were as preachers no less concerned and diligent than they. There was no disagreement about the urgent need for evangelical preaching throughout the land. But, while they were willing to attend and preach at the statutory services of the Church of England, the 'godly preachers', for whose liking the Elizabethan reform was neither rapid nor drastic enough, felt scruples about officiating at the sacraments and other offices prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer. Their uneasiness was liturgical rather than theological. Indeed, as things turned out, many succeeded in overcoming their scruples. Thomas Sampson, for example, was appointed Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, and Lawrence Humphrey, who like Sampson was a leading figure in the movement, became President of Magdalen College, Oxford, and subsequently Dean of Winchester; Alexander Nowell, after turning down offers of a bishopric, accepted the position of Dean of St. Paul's; and others accepted episcopal office, John Parkhurst going to Norwich, and James Pilkington to Durham, where another of their number, William Whittingham, was dean of the cathedral.²⁸

The resuscitation of the function of ‘lecturer’ in numbers of the parish churches of the cities, and especially London, also provided openings for the ‘godly preachers’ to fulfil their vocation. Early in the sixteenth century John Colet, Dean of St. Paul’s, who had returned to England a changed man after visiting Florence and meeting Pico della Mirandola and Savonarola there, had revived the lectureship in his cathedral; and the Edwardian Reformers had encouraged the practice of giving ‘lectures’ or biblical expositions in parish churches. Under Elizabeth it became customary for a ‘lecturer’ to be attached to a particular parish church, to all intents and purposes as a member of the clerical staff, but freed from the obligation of actually officiating at the statutory services and other parochial activities. By the year 1585 there were as many as thirty parish lectureships in London alone, and it was ‘godly preachers’ who for the most part filled them.²⁹ At Cambridge two new colleges were founded, Emmanuel College in 1584 and Sidney Sussex College in 1596, for the purpose of training men as able exponents of the edifying kind of instruction which the ‘godly preachers’ were intent on promoting.³⁰

The ‘godly preachers’ were also to a large degree responsible for the introduction and development of the practice known as ‘prophesying’. The ‘prophesyings’, or ‘exercises’ as they were also called, were gatherings, at first of clergy, but soon also open virtually to all comers, for the purpose of biblical exposition, discussion, and mutual edification. The term ‘exercises of prophesying’ seems to have originated in Zwingli’s Zurich, and the Marian exiles had brought back the practice as well as the name with them when they returned home from the Continent.³¹ The institution of regular meetings for the giving and hearing of ‘prophesyings’ proved to be a most effective instrument for the spread of the Reformed faith in Elizabethan England. Writing of the year 1571, Strype comments as follows:

Prophesyings or exercises were much used now throughout most of the dioceses. Wherein the incumbents in livings and men in orders were employed in explaining certain passages of Holy Scripture in certain parish churches appointed by the bishop of the diocese for that purpose. Which were very acceptable to those of the people that favoured the Protestant religion; and had also their good use, both for the improving of the clergy in their studies of the Word of God, and for the instruction of the laity in the right knowledge of religion.

Strype goes on to describe the carefully defined discipline by which these ‘exercises’, and indeed the life of the community, were governed in the city of Northampton. Apart from the regulations concerning Sunday worship, every Saturday morning, from nine till eleven, the ministers of both town and country assembled for an ‘exercise’, held ‘openly among the people’, in the interpretation of the Scriptures. After each had in turn expounded a passage, they withdrew to confer privately among themselves ‘as well touching doctrine as good life, manners and other orders, meet for them’. Every Tuesday and Thursday at nine o’clock in the morning ‘a lecture of the Scripture’ was provided in the parish church, and after the Thursday lecture ‘the mayor and his brethren assisted with the preacher, minister, and other gentlemen appointed to them by the bishop’, met together to consider complaints against any persons of blasphemy, immorality, and other kinds of unseemly behaviour, and to administer condign correction.³² These arrangements correspond closely, and no doubt derivatively, with the organisation of the Consistory in the Geneva of John Calvin, as laid down in the Ecclesiastical Ordinances of 1541.³³

During these years it became usual for large crowds of people to assemble at the public ‘prophesyings’, and it is hardly surprising that from time to time there were unfortunate

occurrences, such as unruly behaviour on the part of the audience or, on the part of the speakers, verbal assaults on either church or state and the fostering of disputes and factions. Perhaps the free or nominally priced dinners that were provided for the dignitaries, civic and ecclesiastical, in some places, together with free wine, were conducive to carnal anticipations rather than to seriousness of purpose! Disturbances, though infrequent, inevitably led to criticisms of the ‘exercises’ and to attempts by those who viewed them with disapproval to suppress them as dangerous and subversive gatherings.³⁴ Early in 1576, shortly after his appointment as Archbishop of Canterbury, Edmund Grindal sought to counter antagonism by drafting a set of rules by which all ‘prophesyings’ might be regularised and controlled: places and times of the ‘exercises’ were to be only as authorised by the diocesan bishop; the archdeacon or some other ‘grave learned graduate’ was to preside at the assemblies; a list of approved speakers was to be drawn up; no layman or inhibited clergyman was to be allowed to address the gatherings; the ‘prophesyings’ were not to be abused as occasions for speaking against church or state or against ‘any person public or private’. Two years previously Archbishop Parker had issued orders, on the Queen’s instructions, enjoining discontinuance of the ‘exercises’ in several dioceses; but the prohibition had not been strictly enforced.³⁵

Now, however, matters came to a head. So far from reacting favourably to Grindal’s plan for the regularisation, and thus the retention, of the ‘prophesyings’, Elizabeth gave vent to her displeasure by commanding him to bring about their suppression forthwith. She objected that by attending these gatherings the laity were neglecting their proper affairs and were in danger of having their heads filled with seditious notions. She complained, further, that there were too many preachers, insisting that three or four were sufficient for a county, and that the people needed nothing more than to have the Homilies read to them.³⁶ The Queen, indeed, laboured under an apparent inability to appreciate the value of biblical preaching not only for the progress of sound religion but also in the interests of promoting good and stable citizenship. She herself was accustomed to listen to sermons only in the season of Lent, and on one such occasion had interrupted a sermon of the Dean of St. Paul’s (Nowell), a notable preacher, with the command to desist as the theme was not to her liking. Not surprisingly, the Dean was overwhelmed with confusion. To console him Archbishop Parker took him home to dinner afterwards!³⁷

Elizabeth’s order to the Archbishop of Canterbury ‘to abridge the number of preachers and to put down the religious exercises’, Strype says, ‘did not a little afflict the grave man’, who ‘thought the Queen made some infringement upon his office’.³⁸ Accordingly, with great courage, on December 20th (1576) Grindal wrote the Queen a long letter setting forth with much care his view of the importance of preaching and the benefits to be derived from the encouragement of the ‘exercises’.³⁹ He frankly informed his sovereign that the desire she had expressed to him for ‘abridging the number of preachers and the utter suppression of all learned exercises and conferences among the ministers of the church, allowed by their bishops and ordinaries’, had ‘exceedingly dismayed and discomforted’ him—not so much because her wishes ran counter to his own personal judgment, ‘but most of all for that the same might both tend to the public harm of God’s Church, whereof your Highness ought to be *nutricia*, and also to the heavy burdening of your own conscience before God, if they should be put in execution’. He reminded her of the biblical admonition to ministers of the Church that if they failed to give warning when they saw Christ’s cause in peril for any reason, the blood of those that perish would be required at their hands (Ezek. 33:1ff.). His inability to comply with her command should not be taken to mean that he entertained an evil opinion of her.

I do with all the rest of your good subjects acknowledge [he assured her] that we have received by your government many and most excellent benefits, as, among others, freedom of conscience, suppressing of idolatry, sincere preaching of the Gospel, with public peace and tranquility. I am also persuaded that even in these matters, which you now seem to urge, your zeal and meaning is to the best.

Other godly sovereigns in the past (David, Hezekiah, and Jehoshaphat are cited) had on occasion acted with mistaken zeal, yet did not refuse ‘afterward to be better informed out of God’s word’. Grindal recalled, further, how Ambrose had persuaded the emperor Theodosius ‘to revoke an ungodly edict’. And then, with remarkable boldness, he continues:

But surely I cannot marvel enough how this strange opinion should once enter your mind, that it should be good for the Church to have few preachers. Alas, Madam! is the Scripture more plain in any one thing than that the Gospel of Christ should be plentifully preached, and that plenty of labourers should be sent into the Lord’s harvest, which, being great and large, standeth in need, not of a few, but of many workmen? . . . Public and continual preaching of God’s Word is the ordinary mean and instrument of the salvation of mankind. St. Paul calleth it the *ministry of reconciliation* of man unto God. By preaching of God’s Word the glory of God is enlarged, faith is nourished, and charity increased. By it the ignorant rebuked, the weak conscience comforted, and to all those that sin of malicious wickedness the wrath of God is threatened. By preaching also due obedience to Christian princes and magistrates is planted in the hearts of subjects: for obedience proceedeth of conscience; conscience is grounded upon the Word of God; the Word of God maketh his effect by preaching. So as generally, where preaching wanteth, obedience faileth.

The Archbishop expressed his conviction that the removal of ‘unable preachers’ was ‘very requisite’, pointing out that he for his part was always ‘very careful in allowing such preachers only as be able and sufficient to be preachers, both for their knowledge in the Scriptures and also for testimony of their good life and conversation’. Furthermore, he had charged his episcopal colleagues to exercise a like care.

He himself, during a period of less than six years (while he was archbishop of the northern province) had procured the appointment of more than forty ‘learned preachers and graduates’ within the diocese of York, in addition to those he had found there. As for the reading of homilies, that is of value only where preaching is not available. Homilies can be no permanent substitute for sermons. ‘Now,’ he writes,

where it is thought that the reading of the godly homilies, set forth by public authority, may suffice, I continue of the same mind that I was when I attended last upon your Majesty. The reading of homilies hath his commodity, but is nothing comparable to the office of preaching. The godly preacher is termed in the gospel *fidelis servus et prudens qui novit famulatio Domini cibum demensum dare in tempore*, who can apply his speech according to the diversity of times, places, and hearers, which cannot be done in homilies: exhortations, reprehensions, and persuasions are uttered with more affection, to the moving of the hearers, in sermons than in homilies. Besides, homilies were devised by the godly bishops in your brother’s time only to supply necessity, for want of preachers; and are by the statute not to be preferred, but to give place to sermons, whensoever they may be had; and were never thought in themselves alone to contain sufficient instruction for the Church of England. For it was then found, as it is found now, that this Church of England hath been by appropriations, and that not without sacrilege, spoiled of the livings, which at the first were appointed to the office of preaching and teaching. Which appropriations were first annexed to abbeys; and after came to the crown; and now are dispersed to private men’s possessions, without hope to reduce the same to the original institution. So as at this day, in mine opinion, where one church is able to yield sufficient living

for a learned preacher, there are at least seven churches unable to do the same; and in many parishes of your realm, where there be seven or eight hundred souls (the more is the pity) there are not eight pounds a year reserved for a minister. In such parishes it is not possible to place able preachers, for want of convenient stipend. If every flock might have a preaching pastor, which is rather to be wished than hoped for, then were reading of homilies altogether unnecessary. But to supply that want of preaching of God's Word, which is the food of the soul, growing upon the necessities aforementioned, both in your brother's time and in your time, certain godly homilies have been devised, that the people should not be altogether destitute of instruction: for it is an old and true proverb, 'better half a loaf than no bread'.

No clearer and more perceptive statement than this defining the proper relationship between the reading of homilies and the preaching of sermons, and explaining the superiority of the latter to the former, could be desired. Seen in this light, 'the learned exercise and conference amongst the ministers of the church' was 'a thing profitable to the church, and therefore expedient to be continued'. Moreover, the abuse of 'this good and necessary exercise' was no good reason for its discontinuance.

I am forced [he advised his sovereign], with all humility, and yet plainly, to profess that I cannot with safe conscience, and without the offence of the majesty of God, give my assent to the suppressing of the said exercises: much less can I send out any injunction for the utter and universal subversion of the same. . . . Bear with me, I beseech you, Madam, if I choose rather to offend your earthly majesty than to offend the heavenly majesty of God.

Grindal then, with even greater boldness, requested that the Queen should refer 'all these ecclesiastical matters which touch religion, or the doctrine and discipline of the church', to the bishops and divines of her realm, since these were things to be judged in the church, or by a synod, not in a palace; and, secondly, that,

when you deal in matters of faith and religion, or matters that touch the Church of Christ, which is his spouse, bought with so dear a price, you would not use to pronounce so resolutely and peremptorily, *quasi ex auctoritate*, as you may do in civil and extern matters; but always remember that in God's causes the will of God and not the will of any earthly creature is to take place. . . . In God's matters [he continued] all princes ought to bow their sceptres to the Son of God, and to ask counsel at his mouth, what they ought to do. . . . Remember, Madam, that you are a mortal creature. . . . And although ye are a mighty prince, yet remember that he who dwelleth in heaven is mightier.

Never had the Queen received such a letter! By writing it Grindal placed not only his high position but also his life in jeopardy. As for Elizabeth, she was, as Grindal recognised, sincere but misguided. The outcome of his resoluteness was an order confining him to his house and sequestering him from his functions as Archbishop of Canterbury. Though not actually deprived of his office, he continued under virtual inhibition until late in 1582, when, afflicted with blindness, he tendered his resignation to the Queen. John Whitgift, however, who was nominated as his successor, refused to enter into office while Grindal was still living. In this the Queen acquiesced; and so Grindal continued as *de facto* Archbishop of Canterbury until the day of his death, July 6th, 1583. Meanwhile, following the receipt of Grindal's letter (which, as Fuller has said, shows that 'a lamb in his own can be a lion in God and his church's cause'), Elizabeth had taken action by addressing a letter, dated May 7th, 1577, to all the bishops of the realm in which she ordered them to take immediate action for the suppression of the prophesyings, and required that, where preachers were lacking, the Homilies should be read in church instead of sermons. But the tide of opinion in the church

was against the wish of the Queen and her prohibition of the ‘exercises’ was widely disregarded.⁴⁰

Grindal and his like-minded fellow bishops were plainly not opposed to the Homilies in terms of their content and as fulfilling a worthy function where preachers were not available; nor were they opposed to the control of preaching in such a way as to ensure that only suitably qualified persons were permitted to occupy the pulpits of the English Church. On the contrary, the wholesome doctrine set forth in the Homilies had their full approval, quite apart from the fact that it enjoyed the official imprimatur of the church. But they were unwilling to envisage the Homilies as a permanent alternative to preaching, and accordingly they looked and laboured for the time when the supply of good preachers would be so plentiful that the reading of homilies at public worship would become a thing of the past. The second-best was to be superseded by the best. But, again, it was not the teaching of the Homilies but the method that would become outmoded. It is significant, for example, that Whitgift, in his controversy with Cartwright, was able to offer the rejoinder: ‘Hitherto you are not able to convince any homily set out by common authority of any error.’⁴¹

We see, then, how Elizabeth attempted to manipulate the Homilies in a manner contrary to their intention—namely, as a general substitute for free preaching and an instrument to block the practice of ‘prophesying’. The spontaneity of those who believed that preaching was their vocation, however, was not to be stemmed even by a sovereign’s will.

As an expression of the doctrine of Anglicanism in its classical period the Homilies of the Church of England still merit the attention not only of students but also of all who have a concern for the communication of biblical teaching. The Homilies should not be consigned to the unremembered past, and the anthology of passages which is appended may perhaps help to preserve them from that fate.

An anthology of passages from the Homilies

Holy Scripture

‘Unto a Christian man there can be nothing either more necessary or more profitable than the knowledge of Holy Scripture: for as much as in it is contained God’s true word, setting forth His glory and also man’s duty. And there is no truth nor doctrine necessary for our justification and everlasting salvation, but that is or may be drawn out of that fountain and well of truth.’

‘In reading of God’s Word he most profiteth not always that is most ready in turning of the book, or in saying of it without the book; but he that is most turned into it, that is, most inspired with the Holy Ghost, most in his heart and life altered and changed into that thing which he readeth.’

‘Read it humbly with a meek and lowly heart, to the intent you may glorify God, and not yourself, with the knowledge of it; and read it not without daily praying to God, that He would direct your reading to good effect.’

‘Let us pray to God, the only Author of these heavenly studies, that we may speak, think, believe, live, and depart hence according to the wholesome doctrine and verities of them.’

‘If one could show but the print of Christ’s foot, a great number, I think would fall down and worship it: but to the Holy Scriptures, where we may see daily, if we will, I will not say the print of His feet only, but the whole shape and lively image of Him, alas, we give little reverence, or none at all. If any could let us see Christ’s coat, a sort of us would make hard shift, except we might come nigh to gaze upon it, yea, and kiss it too: and yet all the clothes that ever He did wear can nothing so truly nor so lively express Him unto us as do the Scriptures. Christ’s image, made in wood, stone, or metal, some men, for the love they bear to Christ, do garnish and beautify the same with pearl, gold, and precious stones: and should we not, good brethren, much rather embrace and reverence God’s holy books, the sacred Bible, which do represent Christ unto us more truly than can any image? The image can but express the form or shape of His body, if it can do so much: but the Scripture doth in such sort set forth Christ that we may see Him both God and man; we may see Him, I say, speaking unto us, healing our infirmities, dying for our sins, rising from death for our justification. And, to be short, we may in the Scriptures so perfectly see whole Christ with the eye of faith, as we, lacking faith, could not with these bodily eyes see Him, though He stood now present here before us.’

Salvation

‘Because all men be sinners and offenders against God, and breakers of His law and commandments, therefore can no man by his own acts, works, and deeds, seem they never so good, be justified and made righteous before God; but every man of necessity is constrained to seek for another righteousness or justification, to be received at God’s own hands, that is to say, the remission, pardon, and forgiveness of his sins and trespasses in such things as he hath offended. And this justification or righteousness, which we so receive by God’s mercy and Christ’s merits, embraced by faith, is taken, accepted, and allowed of God for our perfect and full justification.’

‘Whereas it lay not in us that to do, He provided a ransom for us, that was, the most precious body and blood of His own most dear and best beloved Son Jesu Christ; who, besides His ransom, fulfilled the law for us perfectly. And so the justice of God and His mercy did embrace together and fulfilled the mystery of our redemption.’

‘In these foresaid places [Rom. 3:23-25, 10:4, and 8:3f.] the Apostle toucheth specially on three things, which must go together for our justification: upon God’s part, His great mercy and grace; upon Christ’s part, justice, that is, the satisfaction of God’s justice, or the price of our redemption by the offering of His body and shedding of His blood with fulfilling of the law perfectly and thoroughly; and upon our part, true and lively faith in the merits of Jesu Christ, which yet is not ours but by God’s working in us. So that in our justification is not only God’s mercy and grace, but also His justice, which the Apostle calleth *the justice of God*; and it consisteth in paying our ransom and fulfilling of the law. And so the grace of God doth not shut out the justice of God in our justification, but only shutteth out the justice of man, that is to say, the justice of our works, as to be merits of deserving our justification. And therefore St. Paul declareth here nothing upon the behalf of man concerning his justification, but only a true and lively faith; which nevertheless is *the gift of God* [Eph. 2:8], and not man’s only work without God. And yet that faith doth not shut out repentance, hope, love, dread, and the fear of God, to be joined with faith in every man that is justified; but it shutteth them out from the office of justifying.’

‘But this saying, that we be justified by faith only, freely, and without works, is spoken for to take away clearly all merit of our works, as being unable to deserve our justification at God’s hands; and thereby most plainly to express the weakness of man and the goodness of God, the great infirmity of ourselves and the might and power of God, the imperfectness of our own works and the most abundant grace of our Saviour Christ; and thereby wholly for to ascribe the merit and deserving of our justification unto Christ only and His most precious bloodshedding. This faith the Holy Scripture teacheth; thus is the strong rock and foundation of Christian religion; this doctrine all old and ancient authors of Christ’s Church do approve; this doctrine advanceth and setteth forth the true glory of Christ, and beateth down the vain glory of man; this whosoever denieth is not to be counted for a true Christian man nor for a setter forth of Christ’s glory, but for an adversary of Christ and His Gospel, and for a setter forth of men’s vain glory.’

‘Christ hath not so redeemed us from sin that we may safely return thereto again; but He hath redeemed us that we should forsake the motions thereof and live to righteousness. Yea, we be therefore washed in our baptism from the filthiness of sin that we should live afterward in the pureness of life. . . . And this He did for us all that believe in Him. For Himself He was not punished; for He was pure and undefiled of all manner of sin. “He was wounded,” saith Isaiah, “for our wickedness and striped for our sins”: He suffered the penalty of them Himself, to deliver us from danger. “He bare,” saith Isaiah, “all our sores and infirmities upon His own back” (Isa. 53:4f.): no pain did He refuse to suffer in His own body, that He might deliver us from pain everlasting. His pleasure it was thus to do for us: we deserved it not. Wherefore, the more we see ourselves bound unto Him, the more He ought to be thanked of us; yea, and the more hope may we take that we shall receive all other good things of His hand, in that we have received the gift of His only Son through His liberality. . . . No tongue surely is able to express the worthiness of this so precious a death. For in this standeth the continual pardon of our daily offences, in this resteth our justification, in this we be allowed, in this is purchased the everlasting health of all our souls; yea, “there is none other thing that can be named under heaven to save our souls” (Acts 4:12) but this only work of Christ’s precious offering of His body upon the altar of the cross.’

‘O the abundant riches of God’s great mercy! O the unspeakable goodness of His heavenly wisdom! When all hope of righteousness was past on our part, when we had nothing in ourselves whereby we might quench His burning wrath and work the salvation of our own souls and rise out of the miserable estate wherein we lay, then, even then, did Christ the Son of God, by the appointment of His Father, come down from heaven, to be wounded for our sakes, to be “reputed with the wicked” (Isa 53:12), to be condemned unto death, to take upon Him the reward of our sins, and to give His body to be broken on the cross for our offences. . . . Being immortal in heaven, He needed not to become mortal on earth; being “the true bread” of the soul, He needed not to hunger; being the healthful “water of life”, He needed not to thirst; being “life” itself, He needed not to have suffered death. But to these and many other such extremities was He driven by thy sin, which was so manifold and great that God could be only pleased in Him and no other. . . . Call to mind, O sinful creature, and set before thine eyes Christ crucified; think thou seest His body stretched out in length upon the cross, His head crowned with sharp thorn, His hands and His feet pierced with nails, His heart opened with a long spear, His flesh rent and torn with whips, His brow sweating water and blood; think thou hearest Him now crying in an intolerable agony to His Father, and saying, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Couldst thou behold this woeful sight or hear this mournful voice without tears, considering that He suffered all this not for any desert

of His own, but only for the grievousness of thy sins? O that mankind should put the everlasting Son of God to such pains! O that we should be the occasion of His death and the only cause of His condemnation! May we not justly cry, “Woe worth the time that ever we sinned”? O my brethren, let this image of Christ crucified be always printed in our hearts; let it stir us up to the hatred of sin and provoke our minds to the earnest love of Almighty God.’

Faith and works

‘Our office is not to pass the time of this present life unfruitfully and idly after that we are baptised or justified, not caring how few good works we do to the glory of God and profit of our neighbours. . . . For that faith which bringeth forth, without repentance, either evil works or no good works is not a right, pure, and lively faith, but a dead, devilish, counterfeit, and feigned faith. . . . For the right and true Christian faith is not only to believe that Holy Scripture and all the foresaid articles of our faith are true, but also to have a sure trust and confidence in God’s merciful promises to be saved from everlasting damnation by Christ; whereof doth follow a loving heart to obey His commandments. . . . For how can a man have this true faith, this sure trust and confidence in God, that by the merits of Christ his sins be forgiven, and be reconciled to the favour of God, and to be partaker of the kingdom of heaven by Christ, when he liveth ungodly and denieth Christ by his deeds? . . . These great and merciful benefits of God, if they be well considered, do neither minister unto us occasion to be idle and to live without doing any good works, nor yet stir us by any means to do evil things; but contrariwise, if we be not desperate persons, and our hearts harder than stones, they move us to render ourselves unto God wholly with all our will, hearts, might, and power; to serve Him in all good deeds, obeying His commandments during our lives; to seek in all things His glory and honour, not our sensual pleasures and vain glory; evermore dreading willingly to offend such a merciful God and loving Redeemer in word, thought, or deed.’

‘Let us, by such virtues as ought to spring out of faith, show our election to be sure and stable. . . . If these fruits do not follow, we do but mock with God, deceive ourselves, and also other men. . . . Thy deeds and works must be an open testimonial of thy faith. . . . Be sure of your faith: try it by your living.’

‘Faith giveth life to the soul; and they be as much dead to God that lack faith as they be to the world whose bodies lack souls. Without faith all that is done of us is dead before God, although the work seem never so gay and glorious before man. Even as the picture graven or painted is but a dead representation of the thing itself, and is without life or any manner of moving, so be the works of all unfaithful persons before God. They do appear to be lively works, and indeed they be but dead, not availing to the everlasting life. They be but shadows and shows of lively and good things, and not good and lively things indeed. For true faith doth give life to the works; and out of such faith come good works, that be very good works indeed; and without it no work is good before God.’

Loving our fellow men

‘Charity is to love God with all our heart, all our life, and all our powers and strength. With all our heart: that is to say, that our heart’s mind and study be set to believe His Word, to trust in Him, and to love Him above all other things that we love best in heaven or in earth. With all our life: that is to say, that our chief joy and delight be set upon Him and His honour, and

our whole life be given unto the service of Him above all things, with Him to live and die, and to forsake all other things rather than Him. . . . With all our powers: that is to say, with our hands and feet, with our eyes and ears, our mouths and tongues, and with all other parts and powers both of body and soul, we should be given to the keeping and fulfilling of His commandments. This is the first and principal part of charity, but it is not the whole; for charity is also to love every man, good and evil, friend and foe; and, whatsoever cause be given to the contrary, yet nevertheless to bear good will and heart unto every man, to use ourselves well unto them as well in words and countenance as in all our outward acts and deeds. For so Christ Himself taught, and so also He performed in deed.'

'Let us study daily and diligently to show ourselves to be the true honourers and lovers of God by keeping of His commandments, by doing of good deeds unto our needy neighbours, relieving by all means that we can their poverty with our abundance and plenty, their ignorance with our wisdom and learning, and comfort their weakness with our strength and authority, calling all men back from evil-doing by godly counsel and good example, persevering still in well-doing so long as we live.'

'Thy neighbour hath peradventure with a word offended thee: call thou to thy remembrance with how many words and deeds, how grievously, thou hast offended thy Lord God. What was man when Christ died for him? Was he not His enemy, and unworthy to have His favour and mercy? Even so with what gentleness and patience doth He forbear and tolerate and suffer thee, although He is daily offended by thee! Forgive therefore a light trespass to thy neighbour, that Christ may forgive thee many thousands of trespasses, who art every day an offender.'

'Now in the mean season, whilst the dumb and dead idols stand thus decked and clothed, contrary to God's law and commandment, the poor Christian people, the lively images of God, commended to us so tenderly by our Saviour Christ as most dear to Him, stand naked, shivering for cold, and their teeth chattering in their heads, and no man covereth them; are pined with hunger and thirst, and no man giveth them a penny to refresh them; whereas pounds be ready at all times, contrary to God's word and will, to deck and trim dead stocks and stones, which neither feel cold, hunger, nor thirst. . . . No service of God or religion acceptable to Him can be in honouring of dead images, but in succouring of the poor, the lively images of God.'

'Hearken, then, whosoever thou art that fearest lest by giving to the poor thou shouldest bring thyself to beggary. That which thou takest from thyself to bestow upon Christ can never be consumed and wasted away. . . . Men suppose that by hoarding and laying up still they shall at length be rich, and that by distributing and laying out, although it be for most necessary and godly uses, they shall be brought to poverty. But the Holy Ghost, who knoweth all truth, teacheth us another lesson, contrary to this. He teacheth us that there is a kind of dispending that shall never diminish the stock, and a kind of saving that shall bring a man to extreme poverty. For, where He saith that the good almsman shall never have scarcity, He addeth: "But he that turneth away his eyes from such as be in necessity shall suffer great poverty himself" (Prov. 28:27). How far different then is the judgment of man from the judgment of the Holy Ghost! . . . But we, like unbelieving wretches, before we will give one mite we will case a thousand doubts of danger, whether that will stand us in any stead that we give to the poor, whether we should not have need of it at any other time, and whether here it would not have been more profitably bestowed. So that it is not more hard to wrench a strong nail, as the proverb saith, out of a post than to wring a farthing out of our fingers. There is neither the

fear nor the love of God before our eyes; we will more esteem a mite than we either desire God's kingdom or fear the devil's dungeon. . . . "Whilst we are careful for diminishing of our stock, we are altogether careless to diminish ourselves. We love mammon, and lose our souls" (Cyprian). . . . So mightily doth God work to preserve and maintain those whom He loveth; so careful is He also to feed them who in any state or vocation do unfeignedly serve Him. And shall we now think that He will be unmindful of us, if we be obedient to His Word and according to His will have pity upon the poor? He gives us all wealth before we do any service for it; and will He see us to lack necessaries when we do Him true service? Can a man think that he that feedeth Christ can be forsaken of Christ and left without food? or will Christ deny earthly things unto them whom He promiseth heavenly things for His true service?'

Holiness

'If we be the temple of the Holy Ghost, how unfitting then is it to drive that Holy Spirit from us through whoredom, and in His place to set the wicked spirits of uncleanness and fornication, and to be joined and do service to them! . . . And that we should remember to be holy, pure, and free from all uncleanness, the holy apostle calleth us "saints", because we are sanctified and made holy in the blood of Christ through the Holy Ghost. . . . Moreover, to use a temperance and sobriety in eating and drinking, to eschew unclean communication, to avoid all filthy company, to flee idleness, to delight in reading of Holy Scripture, to watch in godly prayers and virtuous meditations, and at all times to exercise some godly travails, shall help greatly unto the eschewing of whoredom.'

'No man can love sin, which God hateth so much, and be in His favour. No man can say that he loveth Christ truly and have His great enemy (sin, I mean, the author of His death) familiar and in friendship with him. So much do we love God and Christ as we hate sin.'

'God give us all grace to follow Christ's example in peace and in charity, in patience and sufferance, that we now may have Him our guest to enter and dwell within us, so as we may be in full surety, having such a pledge of our salvation.'

'The Lord for His mercies' sake grant that we never forget this great benefit of our salvation in Christ Jesu, but that we always show ourselves thankful for it, abhorring all kind of wickedness and sin, and applying our minds wholly to the service of God and the diligent keeping of His commandments.'

'What a shame were it for us, being thus so clearly and freely washed from our sin, to return to the filthiness thereof again! What a folly were it, thus endowed with righteousness, to lose it again! What madness were it to lose the inheritance that we now set in for the vile and transitory pleasure of sin! And what an unkindness should it be, where our Saviour Christ of His mercy is come to us to dwell within us as our guest, to drive Him from us and to banish Him violently out of our souls, and instead of Him, in whom is all grace and virtue, to receive the ungracious spirit of the devil, the founder of all naughtiness and mischief! How can we find in our hearts to show such extreme unkindness to Christ, who hath now so gently called us to mercy and offered Himself unto us, and He now entered within us? Yea, how dare we be so bold to renounce the presence of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost (for, where one is, there is God all whole in Majesty together with all His power, wisdom, and goodness) and fear not. I say, the danger and peril of so traitorous a defiance and departure?'

‘It is He [the Holy Spirit] who giveth eloquence and utterance in the preaching of the Gospel; . . . who openeth the mouth to declare the mighty works of God; . . . who engendereth a burning zeal toward God’s Word, and giveth all men a tongue, yea, a fiery tongue, so that they may boldly and cheerfully profess the truth in the face of the whole world. . . . Where the Holy Ghost worketh there nothing is impossible: as many further also appear by the inward regeneration and sanctification of mankind. . . . As for the works of the Spirit, the fruits of faith, charitable and godly motions, if [a man] have any at all in him, they proceed only of the Holy Ghost, who is the only worker of our sanctification, and maketh us new men in Christ Jesu. Did not God’s Holy Spirit miraculously work in the child David when of a poor shepherd he became a princelike prophet? Did not God’s Holy Spirit miraculously work in Matthew, “sitting at the receipt of custom”, when of a proud publican he became an humble and lowly evangelist? And who can choose but marvel to consider that Peter should become of a simple fisher a chief and mighty apostle, Paul of a cruel and bloody persecutor a faithful disciple of Christ to teach the Gentiles?’

Prayer

‘Whomsoever we are bound by express commandment to love for those also we are bound in conscience to pray; but we are bound by express commandment to love all men as ourselves: therefore we are also bound to pray for all men, even as well as if it were for ourselves, notwithstanding we know them to be our extreme and deadly enemies; for so doth our Saviour Christ plainly teach us in His holy gospel.’

‘It is plain by the infallible Word of truth and life that in all our necessities we must flee unto God, direct our prayers unto Him, call upon His holy name, desire help at His hands, and at no other’s. . . . O that all men would studiously read and “search the Scriptures” (John 5:39)! Then should they not be drowned in ignorance, but should easily perceive the truth. . . . For there doth the Holy Ghost plainly teach us that Christ is our only mediator and intercessor with God, and that we must seek and run to no other. . . . Let us not therefore put our trust or confidence in the saints or martyrs that be dead. Let us not call upon them, nor desire help at their hands; but let us always lift up our hearts to God in the name of His dear Son Christ, for whose sake as God hath promised to hear our prayers, so He will truly perform it. . . . Let us not therefore in anything mistrust His goodness; let us not fear to come before the throne of His mercy; let us not seek the aid and help of saints; but “let us come boldly” ourselves (Heb. 4:16, 10:19-23), nothing doubting but God for Christ’s sake, “in whom He is well pleased” (Matt. 17:5), will hear us without a spokesman and accomplish our desire in all such things as shall be agreeable to His most holy will.’

‘The only purgatory wherein we must trust to be saved is the death and blood of Christ; which if we apprehend with a true and steadfast faith, it purgeth and cleanseth us from all our sins, even as well as if He were now hanging upon the cross. “The blood of Christ,” saith St. John, “hath cleansed us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). “The blood of Christ,” saith St. Paul, “hath purged our consciences from dead works to serve the living God” (Heb. 9:14). Also in another place he saith, “We be sanctified and made holy by the offering up of the body of Jesus Christ, done once for all”. Yea, he addeth more, saying, “With the one oblation of His blessed body and precious blood He hath made perfect for ever and ever all them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:10,14). This then is that purgatory wherein all Christian men must put their whole trust and confidence, nothing doubting but, if they truly repent them of their sins

and die in perfect faith, that then they shall forthwith pass from death to life. If this kind of purgation will not serve them, let them never hope to be released by other men's prayers, though they should continue therein unto the world's end. He that cannot be saved by faith in Christ's blood, how shall he look to be delivered by man's intercessions? Hath God more respect to man on earth than He hath to Christ in heaven? "If any man sin," saith St. John, "we have an advocate for our sins" (1 John 1:1f.). But we must take heed that we call upon this Advocate while we have space given us in this life, lest, when we are once dead, there be no hope of salvation left unto us. For as every man sleepeth with his own cause, so every man shall rise again with his own cause. And look, in what state he dieth in the same state he shall also be judged, whether it be to salvation or damnation. Let us not therefore dream either of purgatory or of prayer for these souls of them that be dead; but let us earnestly and diligently pray for them who are expressly commanded in Holy Scripture, namely, for kings and rulers, for ministers of God's holy Word and sacraments, for the saints of this world, otherwise called the faithful, to be short, for all men living, be they never so great enemies to God and His people.'

'Paul to the Corinthians saith, "Let all things be done to edifying" (1 Cor. 14:26); which cannot be, unless common prayers and administration of sacraments be in a tongue known to the people. For where the prayers spoken by the minister and the words in the administration of the sacraments be not understood of them that be present, they cannot thereby be edified. . . . And therefore, whiles our minister is in rehearsing the prayer that is made in the name of us all, we must give diligent ear to the words spoken by him, and in heart beg at God's hand those things that he beggeth in words. And, to signify that we do so, we say Amen at the end of the prayer that he maketh in the name of us all. And this thing can we not do for edification unless we understand what is spoken. Therefore it is required of necessity that the common prayer be had in a tongue that the hearers do understand. . . . If we therefore will that our prayers be not abominable before God, let us so prepare our hearts before we pray, and so understand the things that we ask when we pray, that both our hearts and voices may together sound in the ears of God's Majesty, and then we shall not fail to receive at His hand the things that we ask.'

The Sacrament

' . . . the common description of a sacrament, which is, that it is a visible sign of an invisible grace, that is to say, that setteth out to the eyes and other outward senses the inward working of God's free mercy, and doth, as it were, seal in our hearts the promises of God.'

'The great love of our Saviour Christ towards mankind, good Christian people, doth not only appear in that dear bought benefit of our redemption and salvation by His death and passion, but also in that He so kindly provided that the same most merciful work might be had in continual remembrance, to take some place in us, and not be frustrate of its end and purpose. . . . And as of old time God decreed His wondrous benefits of the deliverance of His people to be kept in memory by the eating of the passover with its rites and ceremonies, so our loving Saviour hath ordained and established the remembrance of His great mercy expressed in His passion in the institution of His heavenly supper: where every one of us must be guests and not gazers, eaters and not lookers, feeding ourselves and not hiring others to feed for us. . . . But, before all other things, this we must be sure of specially, that this supper be in such wise done and ministered as our Lord and Saviour did and commanded to be done. . . . At the King of kings' table thou must carefully search and know what dainties are provided for thy soul:

whither thou art come, not to feed thy senses and belly to corruption, but thy inward man to immortality and life; not to consider the earthly creatures which thou seest, but the heavenly graces which thy faith beholdeth. . . . Let us therefore so travail to understand the Lord's supper that we be no cause of the decay of God's worship, of no idolatry, of no dumb massing, of no hate and malice: so may we the boldier have access thither to our comfort. Neither need we think that such exact knowledge is required of every man that he be able to discuss all high points in the doctrine thereof. But thus much he must be sure to hold, that in the supper of the Lord there is no vain ceremony, no bare sign, no untrue figure of a thing absent. . . . Thus much more the faithful see, hear, and know the favourable mercies of God sealed, the satisfaction by Christ towards us confirmed, the remission of sin stablished. Here they may feel wrought the tranquillity of conscience, the increase of faith, the strengthening of hope, the large spreading abroad of brotherly kindness, with many other sundry graces of God. . . . Now it followeth to have with this knowledge a sure and constant faith, not only that the death of Christ is available for the redemption of all the world, for the remission of sins, and reconciliation with God the Father, but also that He hath made upon His cross a full and sufficient sacrifice for thee, a perfect cleansing of thy sins; so that thou acknowledges! no other Saviour, Redeemer, Mediator, Advocate, Intercessor, but Christ only, and that thou mayest say with the apostle that He "loved thee and gave Himself for thee" (Gal. 2:20). For this is to stick fast to Christ's promise made in His institution, to make Christ thine own, and to apply His merits unto thyself. Herein thou needest no other man's help, no other sacrifice or oblation, no sacrificing priest, no mass, no means established by man's invention. . . . Faith is a necessary instrument in all these holy ceremonies. . . . And truly, as the bodily meat cannot feed the outward man unless it be let into a stomach to be digested which is healthsome and sound, no more can the inward man be fed except his meat be received into his soul and heart, sound and whole in faith. . . . The meat we seek for in this supper is spiritual food, the nourishment of our soul, a heavenly refection and not earthly, an invisible meat and not bodily, a ghostly [i.e. spiritual] sustenance and not carnal. . . . Thus we see, beloved, that, resorting to this table, we must pluck up all the roots of infidelity, all distrust in God's promises; we must make ourselves living members of Christ's body. For the unbelievers and faithless cannot feed upon that precious body; whereas the faithful have their life, their abiding in Him, their union and, as it were, their incorporation with Him.'

Thanksgiving

'So then we must show outward testimony in following the signification of Christ's death: amongst the which this is not esteemed least, to render thanks to Almighty God for all His benefits briefly comprised in the death, passion, and resurrection of His dearly beloved Son. The which thing because we ought chiefly at this table to solemnise, the godly fathers named it Eucharistia, that is, Thanksgiving: as if they should have said, Now above all other times ye ought to laud and praise God; now may ye behold the matter, the cause, the beginning, and the end of all thanksgiving; now if ye slack, ye show yourselves most unthankful, and that no other benefit can ever stir you to thank God, who so little regard here so many, so wonderful, and so profitable benefits.'

'How many thanks and praises do we owe unto Him for this our salvation, wrought by His dear and only Son Christ: who became a pilgrim in earth to make us citizens in heaven; who became the Son of man to make us the sons of God; who became obedient to the law to "deliver us from the curse of the law" (Gal. 3:13); who "became poor to make us rich" (2 Cor. 8:9), vile to make us precious, subject to death to make us live for ever. What greater

love could we silly creatures desire or wish to have at God's hands? Therefore, dearly beloved, let us not forget this exceeding love of our Lord and Saviour; let us not show ourselves unmindful or unthankful towards Him; but let us love Him, fear Him, obey Him, and serve Him. Let us confess Him with our mouths, praise Him with our tongues, believe on Him with our hearts, and glorify Him with our good works. . . . Let us receive Christ, not for a time, but for ever; let us believe His Word, not for a time, but for ever; let us become His servants, not for a time, but for ever; in consideration that He hath redeemed and saved us, not for a time, but for ever; and will receive us into His heavenly kingdom there to reign with Him, not for a time, but for ever. To Him therefore with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all honour, praise, and glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

*For the quotations given in this anthology see *Certain Sermons or Homilies appointed to be read in churches* (London, 1899), pp. 1, 2, 7, 9, 391f., 20, 21, 22f., 25f., 440ff., 451ff., 29ff., 44f., 47f., 63f., 106f., 147f., 279f., 419ff., 129f., 139, 439f., 446, 456, 467, 486ff., 354, 342ff., 356f., 379ff., 374, 472ff., 479f., 480, 436f. respectively.

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Endnotes:

- 1) Letter from John Butler, Nicolas Eliot, and Bartholomew Traheron: *Original Letters relative to the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 1847), p. 626.
- 2) John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, 1563, Vol. V (New York, 1965), p. 127.
- 3) See J. T. Tomlinson, *The Prayer Book, Articles, and Homilies* (London, 1897), p. 230.
- 4) Foxe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 706.
- 5) Foxe, *ibid.*, p. 707.
- 6) Foxe, *ibid.*, p. 712.
- 7) Gilbert Burnet, *The History of the Reformation in the Church of England 1679-1714* (Oxford, 1865, new edition revised by N. Pocock), Vol. II, p. 73.
- 8) The text is given in Thomas Cranmer, *Works*, Vol. II (Cambridge, 1846), pp. 512f.
- 9) Cranmer, *loc. cit.*, pp. 513f. The text is also given in Edward Cardwell, *Documentary Annals of the Reformed Church of England*, Vol. I (Oxford, 1839), pp. 58ff.
- 10) John Hooper, *Later Writings* (Cambridge, 1852), p. 16.
- 11) Foxe, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 391; Cardwell, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 105.
- 12) Cardwell. *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 151: 'Nullus autem praedicandi munus exercere praesumat, nisi vel ab apostolica sede, vel ab ordinario, licentiam habeat.'
- 13) Cardwell, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 166.

- 14) John Strype, *Annals of the Reformation and Establishment of Religion* (3rd edn., London, 1735), Vol. I, Appendix III; Cardwell, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 176f.
- 15) Strype, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 41.
- 16) Strype, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 42.
- 17) Cardwell, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 180.
- 18) Cardwell, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 191.
- 19) Cardwell, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 199.
- 20) See quotation from Foxe (Vol. V, p. 712) on p. 3 above.
- 21) See Strype, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 315ff., 445.
- 22) See J. E. Booty (editor), *An Apology of the Church of England by John Jewel* (New York, 1963), p. xlvi.
- 23) John Jewel, *Works* (Cambridge, 1848), Vol. III, p. 110.
- 24) *Zürich Letters*, second series (Cambridge, 1845), pp. 28ff.
- 25) Peter Martyr had written (February 1st, 1560): 'I exhort you, by reason of the great want to ministers in your country, not to withdraw yourself from the function offered you: for if you, who are as it were pillars, shall decline taking upon yourselves the performance of ecclesiastical offices, not only will the churches be destitute of pastors, but you will give place to wolves and anti-christs'; *Zürich Letters*, second series, p. 38.
- 26) *Zürich Letters*, first series (Cambridge, 1842), pp. 62ff.
- 27) Daniel Neal, *The History of the Puritans and Protestant Nonconformists*, Vol. I (New York, 1843), p. 119. Cf. Samuel Hopkins, *The Puritans*, Vol. I (Boston, 1859), pp. 174ff.; also Strype, *The Life and Acts of Matthew Parker* (London, 1711), p. 35.
- 28) Whittingham's orders were Presbyterian, received on the Continent when he was a refugee from the Marian persecution. It is said that he was offered the Archbishopric of York.
- 29) See Irvonwy Morgan, *The Godly Preachers of the Elizabethan Church* (London, 1965), p. 8.
- 30) See Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
- 31) See Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), pp. 127, 169. Apparently the designation 'prophesying' was derived from an erroneous understanding of Paul's words in 1 Cor. 14:29ff.: 'Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. . . . For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged.'
- 32) Strype, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 90ff.
- 33) See my edition and translation of *The Register of the Company of Pastors of Geneva in the Time of Calvin* (Grand Rapids, 1966), pp. 35ff.

- 34) Strype, *Edmund Grindal* (London, 1710), pp. 219f., Edmund Grindal, *Remains* (Cambridge, 1843), pp. 372f.
- 35) Strype, *Annals*, Vol. II, pp. 318ff., where some indication is given of the favour with which many diocesan bishops regarded the 'prophesyings'.
- 36) Strype, *Edmund Grindal*, p. 221; Edmund Grindal, *Remains*, pp. 372ff.
- 37) Matthew Parker, *Correspondence* (Cambridge, 1853), pp. 235, 254. Strype, *Parker*, pp. 201f.
- 38) Strype, *Grindal*, p. 221; Grindal, *Remains*, p. 375.
- 39) The text of the letter is given in full in Grindal, *Remains*, pp. 376-390.
- 40) Cardwell, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 374, offers the following comment: 'It appears that the exercise instead of being suppressed, was encouraged, in the province of York; for archbishop Sandys in his visitation of the province in the following year gave directions for additional preaching, and enjoined the archdeacons to hold quarterly synods of the clergy for the discussion of religious questions.'
- 41) John Whitgift, *Works*, Vol. III (Cambridge, 1853), p. 338.