England's Anglican Reformation
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The Reformation began as a theological dispute, but it very quickly morphed into a political, territorial and even a military one: and so, it's seemed obvious for a long time that one way to describe it is using a map. Textbooks and online resources are full of maps like this one, and very useful they are too. But for today, I want you to notice an oddity. Normally we tell students that there were two main variants of Protestant Christianity, Lutheranism and Calvinism – the word 'Calvinist' is itself a little problematic, but let's not go there today. This map, you will see, shows England as something else entirely. It also says that England was Anglican in 1555, a date when England had just been fully reconciled to Rome and to Catholicism, but again let's not be picky. This is in fact a fairly detailed map with several minority variants represented, but if we look at broader-brush depictions we see that this category, 'Anglican', is one of only four that makes the cut. And the choice of colour for it does not suggest it is a minor subvariant but something genuinely distinct: in this one, the purple is almost imperial, England leaps off the page. Nor is this categorisation a nationalistic peculiarity of maps produced for the English market. The Italians, one might think, do not have a stake in these intra-Protestant definitional quarrels, and England's colour here is more subtly different – but the key plainly indicates that in 1598, a date I want you to remember, it is 'majority Anglican'. Even the Russians, who are mere spectators in this drama, mark England out as special, and describe its people as *Anglicanistva*.

So, let's be clear: this sort of thing is simply wrong. The English Reformation was not from the beginning something different from its European brethren, and to use the word 'Anglican' to describe it, at least until we get past the era of the English Civil War and the Cromwellian Republic, is not just anachronistic, it is actively misleading. Mapmakers tend to be conservative, but some of them are catching up with this: to nail my own colours to the mast, so to speak, in my own recently-published historical atlas to Christianity, the picture looks like this, with late sixteenth-century England in Calvinist blue slightly mottled with Catholic pink, and no Anglicans in sight. Given that that's my view, you might think that this lecture on England's Anglican Reformation is going to be a short one. But actually, I think it's the fact we're dealing with a phenomenon that can't neatly be depicted on a map that makes it interesting.

In 1991 an up-and-coming English church historian named Diarmaid MacCulloch – who, in the interests of full disclosure, I should say was my own doctoral supervisor, a few years afterwards – anyway, in 1991 he published an article under the teasing title 'The Myth of the English Reformation'. Teasing because the title seems to suggest that the English Reformation was a myth, but the first line makes it plain: 'The myth of the English Reformation is that it did not happen, or that it happened by accident rather than design, or that it was half- hearted and sought a middle way between Catholicism and Protestantism.' This myth, as Diarmaid's article points out, is not an abstract historical proposition, but a claim about the identity and nature of the institution that we call the Church of England: a claim that from the beginning of the English Reformation, the established reformed church in England had a distinctively English quality which set it apart from its continental counterparts, characterised by moderation, dignity and a desire to find a middle way between competing extremes. It was, in a word, Anglican. To be clear, this is indeed a myth. But

like many myths it has some foundation in fact; and it also has a stubborn persistence which almost conjures the myth into reality. How this turned into this: that is our story for today.

Some ground-clearing first. The word ‘Anglican’ was not widely used to describe the distinctive Christianity of the Church of England until after the Restoration of 1660, at the very earliest. The first recorded use of the word was in, as our Italian map coincidentally guessed, 1598: by, of all people, King James VI of Scots, when he was reassuring his suspicious Presbyterian subjects that although he did favour bishops in the Scottish church, that need not mean ‘Papistical or Anglican bishopping’. Over the next few decades most of the few recorded uses of the word are, again, by Scots, who use it to refer specifically to England’s bishops, with the implication that England’s religion is a sort of decaffeinated version of Catholicism. So this is an outsiders’ word for the phenomenon, and it did not really catch on. We could compare it to the way another set of outsiders spoke about the subject, that is, English Catholics, who of course wanted to deny that the religion by law established in post-Reformation England truly was the Church of England. In 1616, the English Catholic exile Thomas Harrab, trying to argue that Protestants were hopelessly divided amongst themselves, reached for a term to distinguish England’s variant, and came up with ‘Anglianism’. He explained the neologism thus: ‘I call the religion of England Anglianism, because it among the rest hath no one especial Author, but is set forth by the Prince, and Parliament.’ But his whole point was to argue that Protestantism was a kaleidoscope of quarreling variety, and so to proliferate subdivisions as best he could. For whatever reason, ‘Anglian’ didn’t catch on. ‘Anglican’ didn’t fare much better, a few Scots aside. Only during and after the Civil War of the 1640s was the word ‘Anglican’ picked up south of the Border, as a means of describing the distinctive religion that the Church of England had practiced before the war but which it did no longer. Before that religion was assertively restored in 1660, and especially before it was assaulted in 1640, it is simply anachronistic to refer to ‘Anglicanism’. There was no such thing.

What there was was a Church of England: the *ecclesia Anglicana*. But those terms are deceptively simple. Before the Reformation, ‘the church of England’ was a geographical expression, the referring to a portion of the universal Church Catholic which happened to be found in one kingdom, not to any distinctive entity. It was also an expression which did not need to be used very often. The Venerable Bede, my neighbour in Durham, had spoken of the English people as having an ecclesiastical history, but he did not invoke *ecclesia Anglicana*; the term only came into regular use from the twelfth century. In later medieval England, substantial uses of the Latin phrase and its English counterpart were commonest in two revealing contexts. The first is in Magna Carta, whose first clause, in all its variant versions, opens with the stirring promise ‘in perpetuum quod Anglicana ecclesia libera sit’, or, as the English edition of 1503 put it, ‘perpetually yt ye chirch of England be free’, with all its rights and liberties. The second is in relation to the cult of St Thomas Becket, who was on occasion described as a martyr for the rights and liberties of the church of England. One of the best-known accounts of Becket in the late Middle Ages had him tell Henry II that ‘I am heed of the chyrche of englond, and am to you, sir kyng, your ghoostly fader’. What distinguishes these two cases, Magna Carta and Becket, is that they were about the church’s relationship with the king. For he was one of the few things that, in practice, tied the two provinces of Canterbury and York together. For most purposes, despite the archbishop of Canterbury’s nebulous title of primate of all England, the two provinces ran their own affairs. There was no such institution as ‘the Church of England’.

It was, therefore, of necessity a king who conjured it into a more tangible existence. At the same time as Henry VIII began to revile the pope merely as ‘the bishop of Rome’, he and his agents also began talking constantly of ‘the Church of England’. It was a little-noticed stroke of rhetorical genius. The category was traditional and hard to dispute, but it immediately freighted religious questions with nationalism and politics. The pope’s denial of Henry VIII’s claims was not, on this reading, a dispute between the successor of St Peter and a grasping, tyrannical and adulterous layman, but between a scheming Italian and an honest Englishman. If faced with a choice

between loyalty to the church of England or to the church of Rome, what faithful subject would even hesitate? Traditionalists arrested during the 1530s might be asked who they believed was the head, under Christ, of the Church of England: to give any answer other than the king of England sounded not like the universal faith, but like treason. Henry VIII's regime was insisting that preachers should conform to 'the consent and laudable custom of the Church of England', and how could anyone oppose that cocktail of bland truism spiked with heresy? By the time you have pointed out that 'the church of England' is a geographical expression, not an entity with the capacity to consent to anything, your audience are deciding whether you are a hairsplitting pedant or a traitor. The most famous and perhaps the most dangerous of all of Henry VIII's English opponents, the Yorkist prince and cardinal Reginald Pole, who would later become the last Catholic archbishop of Canterbury, understood the terms that had been set for the debate and embraced them, claiming boldly that if it came to making a choice, *Roma est mihi patria*, Rome is my country: a commendably straightforward claim, but one which was a propaganda gift to his enemies. Meanwhile, Henry VIII's Act of Supremacy, the legal cornerstone of his Reformation, asserted that he was supreme head – or at least, supreme head *in earth*, a perfunctory nod to the safely distant authority of Christ – supreme head of an entity described, awkwardly, as 'the Church of England called *Anglicana Ecclesia*'. The awkwardness is a sign that the ink was not yet dry on this new terminology. But already 'the Church of England' was becoming what it would remain: an institution whose name asserted that it comprised the entire nation, even though it did not do so then and never has since.

Was there anything 'Anglican' in the modern sense about these Henrician beginnings? Anglicans, understandably sensitive to the jibe that their church is an accidental by-product of a king's lusts, have generally not wanted to play up their debt to Henry VIII, but it is there. The link is not so much to the doctrinal and ceremonial hotchpotch of Henry's church as to the rhetoric that he wove about his incoherent religious settlement, a rhetoric that many of his subjects found deeply compelling, remaining loyal to it long after his death. Henry VIII was the true begetter of that most Anglican of ideas: the *via media*, the middle way. He consistently claimed to be finding a moderate path between the extremists who beset England on every side, calling each other 'papist' and 'heretic' while he, their divinely-anointed king, was simply trying to unite them around God's truth. In 1545, at the end of an abrasive parliamentary session, the ageing king addressed both Houses in these terms, begging them to be united in brotherly love: he wept as he made the appeal, and so, according to our witnesses, did most of his audience. Say what you like about Henry VIII, he understood that monarchy is largely about theatre, and in that sense if not in any other he was very good at his job.

In fact Henry's ill-defined 'middle way' was not what we would nowadays call 'moderate'. It is not just that anyone can make themselves look moderate by choosing the right extremists to position themselves between; it is that we do not expect normally moderation to be quite so ferocious. If Henry's speech to parliament in 1545 was one face of his 'moderation', he had shown another five years earlier, on 30 June 1540, when he had arranged for three papal loyalists to be hanged, drawn and quartered for treason alongside these three evangelicals who were being burned for heresy. The example reminds us that 'moderation' is a word whose meaning has shifted over the centuries. In the Tudor age it referred to an active process, done forcefully by one person to another, meaning something like 'disciplining' or 'bridling': a sense which now survives chiefly in the title 'moderator' given to certain officials.

For another clue to this kind of moderation, look at the official English Bible published in the same year. The first ever full English Bible, a few years earlier, was adorned with a splendid title page whose series of Biblical scenes laid out the reformers' theological message: in pride of place, there centred in the sun, is the Hebrew name of God, the closest that Protestants would allow themselves to get to depicting the indescribable deity. And there at the bottom, amidst all these divine and biblical images, flanked by King David and Saint Paul as if he belonged in their

company, was the king of England, with his official seal in case you had any doubt. You might think that was jawdropping enough. But look at the first official version, published in 1539. Now the drama is all about the king: and in Holbein's woodcut, this is not a generic king but unmistakably a specific potato-faced individual, handing out *verbum Dei*, the word of God, to his people. And down below, the people gratefully receive it, with cries of *Vivat Rex* and, from one solitary unlearned person in the crowd, *God save the King*. And in case you missed it – you are almost supposed to miss it – notice the most jawdropping element of all: there, squeezed in at the top, scarcely able to get a word in edgeways, is Christ himself. That is what Henry VIII meant by the moderate middle way. In the second edition of this Bible, in 1540, the year of that gruesome mass execution, Archbishop Cranmer added a preface that made the point in more decorous terms, describing two parallel dangers for England's incipient Reformation: that foot-dragging papists would hold it back, and that overeager zealots would race too far ahead and lose their way. Keeping the country together, preferably in lockstep, was his priority. The same principle informed the Book of Common Prayer, a text suffused with talk of national unity, spurring laggards and bridling enthusiasts.

In other words, I am pretty wary of all this moderation-talk. The person who claims to be moderate is all too often the person telling you to calm down and be reasonable while they are up to their elbows in your own blood. Henry VIII and, even more, Edward VI's regimes exuded quiet reasonableness in order to distract attention from the revolutionary change their commissars were enforcing. But, despite my wariness, I do have to admit that it was not merely smokescreen. The Reformation genuinely was pregnant with radical possibilities which Archbishop Cranmer and his allies were determined to abort. Edward VI's regime executed no Catholics for loyalty to the papacy (actual rebels were another matter), but it did burn two Protestant radicals for heresy, and virtually all of its leading propagandists wrote works against Protestant radicalism of one kind or another. The zealots straining at the leash were sometimes useful outriders for the regime, but those who ventured too far ahead were liable to be brought back firmly into line. John Hooper, who had spent the early 1540s in exile in Zurich, become one of the Edwardian Reformation's most forceful defenders, and was given the strategic twin bishoprics of Worcester and Gloucester. But when he refused to wear traditional vestments for his consecration as a bishop, seeing them as popish rags redolent of superstition, he was thrown in prison until he agreed, reluctantly, to conform. Hooper would later be burned as a heretic by Queen Mary, and his Victorian evangelical admirers erected a statue to him in the grounds of his old cathedral at Gloucester: a statue in which, rather unfortunately, he is depicted dressed in the vestments which he so loathed. The point of this spat over vestments was not that Cranmer and his allies placed any particular value in the vestments themselves. What they valued was discipline and unity; they were wary of idealists who listened to their individual consciences above the collective voice of the English church.

This much was simple pragmatism. But there was also a more principled side to the story. By the mid-sixteenth century Europe was well on the way to this point, to being divided into polarised, sharply defined Protestant and Catholic camps, but the process was not yet complete and plenty of earnest and conscientious Christians deeply regretted it. Many still hoped to find a genuine middle way: to assimilate Luther and his evangelical followers into Catholic Christendom like so many reformers before them. The theological hero of these efforts was Martin Bucer, a Protestant reformer from Strassburg, John Calvin's mentor, but also the great conciliator, always a believer in the power of talking. It never quite worked, but it came close. Reginald Pole was interested. In the 1540s, the prince-archbishop of Cologne, Hermann von Wied, became a hero for these idealistic centrists, drawing on Bucer and other eirenic Protestants in a doomed attempt to walk the knife-edge of evangelical Catholic reform in his strategically pivotal diocese. In the early 1550s, John Hamilton, the archbishop of St Andrews, drew on von Wied's work and some of these other efforts to attempt a Catholic Reformation of this kind in Scotland. There were parallel efforts in Sweden, in Hungary and even in France.

Cranmer was very drawn by this way of thinking. He admired von Wied, and even, in one of his greatest theological coups, managed to persuade Martin Bucer himself to come to England and take up a professorship at Cambridge after war had forced him into exile. In the event, the climate in the Fens ruined Bucer's health and he died after less than two years in England, but it was a kindly thought. And the notion that England's Reformation might be muted and inclusive in nature did not die with him. Under Edward VI, cautious voices can be heard yearning to return, not to Rome, but to what loyal nostalgia came to see as the 'moderate' Reformation of Henry VIII. Such people had swallowed the old king's anti-papalism and his fastidious dislike of 'superstition'. You may remember in the second lecture of this series meeting the Kentish schoolmaster John Proctor, who coined the word 'Deformation' and openly opposed Edward VI's Reformation. But he also opposed what he called the Pope's 'false forged power'. He deplored how England had, in former generations, been 'trained in worshipping stocks and stones', and celebrated the advent of the English Bible, 'that comfortable treasure of God's sweet word'. Or again, the distinguished Cambridge theologian John Redman likewise lambasted 'popish superstitions' while seeing the Edwardian reformers themselves as 'worse than pagans and infidels'. Doctrinally incoherent as Henry VIII's Reformation might have been, some at least of his subjects found it appealing.

Under Edward VI, these latter-day Henricians were a curiosity. Whether they were a significant voice in Mary I's Catholic restoration remains unclear. They accepted reconciliation with Rome, but in some cases, apparently, with a pang of regret that the moderate Reformation they had dreamed of was now impossible. Or so they thought. It was in 1558-9 that the moment arrived for these reluctant reformers. Now they had a queen who was at least partly on their side. Elizabeth I was a Protestant, but of a distinct, rather old-fashioned kind. Idiosyncrasies on her father's scale were impossible by this time, since the religious battle-lines were by now much more sharply drawn, but she did her best. It was most unusual for a Protestant queen to dislike married clergy, cherish choral music and keep a crucifix in her private chapel. Her adamantine refusal to allow any further changes to her religious 'settlement' after 1558-9 was a political decision: she was painfully conscious of the risks of alienating her more conservative subjects, she was equally aware that her 'puritan' subjects would take a mile if they were given an inch, and the more she was pressed to give ground, the less inclined she was to do so. But it was also a matter of personal taste. A dignified, ceremonial form of Protestantism, which liturgically celebrated the nation's unity rather than preaching up a storm of discordant opinions, was to her personal taste. And because she was queen, she could and did impose her personal taste on the nation.

Most of her subjects conformed to this 'settlement', some contentedly, some chafing at it in some way or other. But a few began to be positive enthusiasts for it. This emerging movement, the first beginnings of what would eventually become Anglicanism, had three strands. There was a ritual, devotional and aesthetic strand, which had a sometimes playful, sometimes daring tendency to draw on the ceremonial resources of medieval Catholicism. Puritans were wary of embracing any rites or practices that were reminiscent of the old ways, even if there was nothing inherently offensive about them. These ceremonialists, whom one historian calls 'avant-garde conformists', were instead eager to rescue and repurpose as much of their Catholic heritage as they could: and if upsetting the Puritans wasn't exactly the point of this effort, it was certainly an added bonus. This ceremonial strand of our movement was incubated, not in England's thousands of parish churches, where the Protestant Reformation had generally taken root, where organs had been dismantled, choirs disbanded and walls whitewashed: but in the cathedrals and a handful of other unusual churches, places which by some quirk of their funding or patronage had held onto some of the old furnishings and patterns. Above all, this meant the weirdest church in England, Westminster Abbey, which was not an abbey any more, but, very appropriately, a Royal Peculiar: essentially a cathedral with no bishop, a church with no parish, a free-floating ecclesiastical entity answerable only to the crown. These churches served as reservoirs in which this textured, arch, ceremonial form of Protestantism could persist even as it was drained out of most of the rest of England. They were places where choral music flourished, and if that music was being written by

crypto-Catholics like Thomas Tallis or even open Catholics like William Byrd, well, so what? The queen's insistence on the legitimacy of these practices, and her stout defence of the Prayer Book's ceremonial in particular, gave courage to those who cherished them. By the end of the century a new generation of preachers, many of whom had come up through Westminster or at the Chapel Royal, were defending these practices not only as legitimate but as pious, enriching and edifying, certainly more so than the austerity of Calvinism in which public worship seemed to consist of little more than interminable preaching. The prince amongst these was Lancelot Andrewes, dean of Westminster from 1601 and later bishop of Winchester. For all the disdain for too much preaching, Andrewes was by all accounts one of the finest preachers of his generation, with a gift for finding rich layers of spiritual nourishment in traditional practice.

A second strand centred on the perennially explosive issues of jurisdiction and polity. Puritans had never liked bishops, and not only on account of their vestments: the whole office smelled to them of popish lordliness rather than Christlike humility, and the repeated experience of Elizabethan bishops cracking down on puritan dissent did not soften their views. By the 1570s the puritans' naive hopes that bishops might evolve into something more acceptable, perhaps rebranding them as superintendants, were giving way to blunt demands that the whole office be swept away. In its place they wanted to put a conciliar structure. The Scottish church began doing this in the early 1580s, replacing bishops with elected synods of ministers called presbyteries. For English puritans this became the great ideal to be cherished. In response, the establishment's defence of the status quo hardened. To begin with the regime merely argued that episcopacy (that is, government by bishops) was legitimate in God's eyes. But that felt like a feeble position, and soon they began to advance positive arguments in its favour. Some even began to argue – as Richard Bancroft, a future archbishop of Canterbury, did in 1589 – that episcopacy was not merely the best structure of church government, but was actually mandated by God's law. Christians not governed by bishops – that is, most of the Protestant world – were on this view missing a vital part of God's will for his Church.

In later centuries this would become an Anglican orthodoxy, but for now it was an outlier. Richard Hooker, the most enduringly influential thinker in this tradition, had a more modest view. Hooker spent the decade before his death in 1600 writing his vast *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, the closest thing 'Anglicanism' now has to a theological foundation text. It is characteristic of what Anglicanism would become that it focus was, as its title suggests, law and structure rather than systematic theology. Amongst many other things, Hooker argued that episcopacy was the best possible system of church government – but not, he was careful to add, the only legitimate one. He was not willing to anathematise his bishopless brethren elsewhere the Protestant world, though he was certainly willing to tell them that his church was better governed than theirs were. For Hooker, unlike many of his later admirers, was still self-consciously a Reformed Protestant: if he was not exactly a Calvinist – his extravagant compliments for Calvin are laced with not-very-sly barbs – he was very much an admirer of the Reformed church of Zurich. He insisted that Elizabeth's Church stood squarely in that tradition, a tradition that the puritans were wrongly claiming exclusively for themselves: Protestant, hierarchical and proud of it.

The third strand of this proto-Anglicanism was more explicitly theological, and centred on Reformed Protestantism's great doctrinal shibboleth: Calvinist predestination. As I mentioned in the last lecture, predestination, the doctrine that all human beings had our eternal fate, salvation or damnation, heaven or hell, decided irrevocably for us before the creation of the world, was more or less the doctrinal consensus of the English Church in the years around 1600. But the consensus was never either universal or stable. The doctrine was much more appealing to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Christians than it instinctively seems to us in our own age, incorrigible egotists and individualists that we are, but it has never been universally popular. Plenty of those who supported predestination disagreed over its finer points, and those disagreements kept the issue bubbling. Theologians such as the great William Perkins, the first English Protestant writer to

find a truly international readership, devoted enormous effort to resolving the pastoral problems that the doctrine produced, and no matter how subtle and humane Perkins' solutions might be, his efforts testify to a persistent problem. In every country where Calvinist predestination became an orthodoxy, it also provoked opposition from within the Calvinist fold. England was, in this respect, at one with its sister Reformed churches.

What brought English anti-predestinarians out into the open was, ironically enough, the Synod of Dordt, the international Calvinist synod of 1618-19 which – with explicit English backing – reaffirmed a stiff doctrine of predestination and stamped down a formidable Dutch anti-predestinarian movement. It should have been a moment of Calvinist triumph. Instead, the publicity it gave to the dispute awakened English anti-predestinarians from a 'dead sleep', and made the Synod's hardline doctrines look like a contentious (and foreign) partisan position rather than a settled orthodoxy. The doctrine had always felt ethically counter-intuitive, for all its formidable theological rationale. That feeling now became the glue which brought ceremonialism and episcopalianism together into a newly energised movement to celebrate the distinctive heritage of the Church of England. The fiercest partisan of the new unorthodoxy was the future bishop Richard Montague, who in an anti-predestinarian tract in 1624 did something no English Protestant had dared to before: to use the notion of the English Church as 'moderate' to position it halfway between Geneva and Rome. To most of his contemporaries it was as shocking as claiming to position yourself halfway between good and evil. And the shock was of course part of the point. Like modern cultural conservatives mischievously tweaking the nose of the politically-correct establishment in the hope of the priceless endorsement of being 'cancelled', these proto-Anglicans were masters of plausible deniability and of dog-whistle politics, never quite saying what the puritans were certain they meant, enjoying nothing more than making their opponents' earnest seriousness look humourless, choosing their challenges and innovations so as to split and wrong-foot the opposition.

Challenges such as: when was the Church of England founded? Staunch Protestants were queasy about asserting any continuity between their Church and the medieval past, believing that the pre-Reformation Church was a 'synagogue of Satan' and that the flame of true Christianity in that era had been kept burning by a motley band of persecuted heretics and dissidents. But it was a tricky argument to make. Even if you managed to trace an unbroken chain of medieval heretics, you were left claiming some pretty iffy characters as part of the true church and excluding some otherwise bona fide saints simply because of their loyalty to Rome. Even if that could be done, there was a more serious problem: the evident institutional continuity between the pre- and post-Reformation Churches. The English Church's finances, structures, laws and even buildings had been updated piecemeal and partially rather than having been dismantled and refounded. The Reformation was not a revolution, a year zero: Queen Elizabeth's first archbishop of Canterbury, Matthew Parker, a staunch Protestant but one of the queen's own stamp, celebrated the fact that he was the seventieth holder of his office rather than seeing himself as the pioneer of a newly-founded church. And if the church's own institutions could not let go of their medieval pedigrees and privileges, that of course was doubly true for the families of Welsh adventurers and Scottish princes who had declared themselves to be that church's supreme heads and governors. Monarchy is, by its very nature, deeply and unavoidably invested in the notion of unbroken, centuries-long precedent. If all those kings and queens had been mere dupes or co-conspirators of Antichrist, what became of the ancient majesty of the English crown? Better by far to take Richard Hooker's line: that the medieval Church was a true Christian Church that had stumbled into error, but one which merely needed to be reformed, not overthrown. In which case, surely parts of its heritage could and should be reclaimed and celebrated. Why should Rome have all the best tunes?

Which is to say: it is no surprise that this pattern of thinking was particularly appealing to kings, queens and their most ardent supporters. The ceremonial revival was predominantly a movement

by clergymen, for clergymen: we have been looking at a lot of glowering portraits of men in frocks. But it did win over some prominent laypeople. By far the most important of them was James I's surviving son, who in 1625 became King Charles I. James had been intrigued by the ceremonialists and made Lancelot Andrewes a bishop, but he was canny enough to keep the parties balanced in his church, and no-one could take his support for granted. Charles was entranced by the ceremonialists and was untroubled by notions of politic pragmatism. He became a true believer, and packed the ceremonialists steadily onto the bishops' bench. In particular, he made the committed, combative ceremonialist William Laud bishop of London and then, from 1633, archbishop of Canterbury. The 1630s are known to historians as the era of 'Laudianism'.

What that era meant depended on who you were. For Laud's allies, it was a flowering of theological and liturgical creativity after the arid years of Calvinist dominance. Rich spiritual explorations within traditionalism were undertaken by figures as diverse as John Cosin, the future bishop of Durham; George Herbert, the priest-poet of Wiltshire; and Nicholas Ferrar, the founder of a religious community at Little Gidding, Cambridgeshire, which had a tang of monasticism about it. The legacy of these so-called 'Caroline divines' has been treasured within Anglicanism ever since, and rightly so. Laud's other side is not now so widely celebrated. He demanded and enforced strict conformity to his new ritual norms. In particular, he overruled the common pattern whereby communion tables were brought down into the nave for communion, so that the people might gather around the Lord's table to share in the Lord's supper. Instead, Laud insisted that they should be returned to the eastern end of church buildings, like Catholic altars, and that they should be set about with rails, cutting them off from the people: as in this surviving 1630s example from Merton in Norfolk. This kind of pattern is now normal in most Anglican churches worldwide, but in its time, to place tables 'altarwise' felt as if the Reformation itself was being undone. It was a deeply divisive symbol: to its supporters, a sign of reverence, good order, decency and what they called the 'beauty of holiness'; to its opponents, a symbol of clerical exclusivity and superiority, a turn towards superstition which once again shut the common people out of what had briefly been in danger of becoming 'their' church. Plenty of ministers as well as lay people bridled at the new rules, dragged their feet or actively opposed them. But neither Laud nor the king would brook resistance. The era of Laudian 'persecution' in the 1630s should not be overdone – the anti-Laudians' careers were ended, not their lives, although there were certainly imprisonments, and in one notorious case in 1637 three outspoken critics had their ears cut off. Even so, if this was 'moderation', it was of Henry VIII's kind, not of the modern sort.

And it might have succeeded. A great many of the English disliked these innovations, but others supported them, and there was a decades-long habit of obedience. The resources of both soft and hard power standing behind the English church were formidable. Scotland was another matter. Charles' northern kingdom was in principle a completely separate realm which merely happened to share a king with its southern neighbour. And Scotland was home both to a much more purist Calvinist Church and also to a much less tame political culture. Charles' father James VI and I had had enough experience in the rodeo of Scottish politics to have some sense of when a king could push his luck and when he ought simply to try to hang on. Charles himself may never have lost his Scottish accent, but like many long-term expats, he never understood his native country as well as he thought he did, and in any case shrewdly picking his battles was not in his nature. Tidiness and good order was, and in this case that meant imposing a version of the Church of England's structures, bishops, Book of Common Prayer and all, onto Scotland. He ignored pointed warnings and ominous rumbles about the consequences of this until the Prayer Book service was actually attempted in Edinburgh in 1637, with, famously, this result. Scotland erupted into open revolt. That set in motion a chain of events which saw Ireland rising in revolt, England descending into civil war, and the victorious parliamentarians abolishing bishops and banning the Book of Common Prayer on both side of the Border; and of course ultimately the parliamentary army put the Church of England's Supreme Governor on trial and cut off his head.

This catastrophe was, in fact, the making of Anglicanism. The civil war had, in the nature of things, forced people to choose sides, and those who stood by the king needed to clarify what the religion they were defending was. They began to reach for that half-century-old Scots coinage, dating back to King Charles' father and now revived by the king himself: Charles was, he declared, fighting for 'this most holy religion of the *Anglican* church'. One of the reasons why Charles, having been almost entirely politically isolated at the end of 1640, was able to muster enough support to fight a civil war only eighteen months later, was that a great many English people shared this view. They may not have identified with Laud's full slate of changes, but they did at least value the Book of Common Prayer that puritans so reviled. The book was banned by parliament in 1645, but the law, like many others from this chaotic period, was scarcely enforced. The bishops were deprived of office, and those who were seen as a political threat were hunted down or driven into exile: Laud himself was beheaded. But the parliamentary and republican regimes were remarkably relaxed about bishops who chose to stay out of politics. Several of them remained in England and at large throughout the 1640s and 1650s, operating more or less freely and ordaining enormous numbers of priests.

Make no mistake, this era of disestablishment was certainly hard for these traditionalist Prayer Book Protestants and their sufferings and deprivations were real, but the period did give them two gifts. First, freedom: no longer subject to suspicious episcopal discipline and to the straitjacket of national 'common prayer', they could truly indulge their playfulness and tendency for liturgical experiment like never before. Jeremy Taylor was a protégé of Archbishop Laud's and a chaplain to Charles I, but the experience of defeat converted him to the cause of religious toleration and his devotional works became hugely influential, with works like this drawing on the liturgy and the deeper Catholic tradition while remaining firmly within the Protestant camp. And alongside the freedom that came from being cast out came the gift of identity. This kind of religion had up till then not had a name. Historians have coined various awkward terms to describe it, but the point is that not many people at the time felt the need: it was simply the religion of those who conformed to the Church of England. With the Church of England having been taken over by presbyterians and radicals under the parliamentary and Cromwellian regimes, these folks were forced to work out who they really were. They began to use the word *Anglican*, and not just because of its royal and nationalistic pedigree. It was a route into the kind of piety which Jeremy Taylor was signalling on this title page, claiming that his prayers were 'according to the manner of the Ancient Church'. The *Anglican* church conjured up images of the original, ancient church of the Anglo-Saxons, before the popes started making overweening claims and imposing hairsplitting doctrinal tests. It was an answer to one of the most unsettling Roman Catholic arguments against Protestantism, the charge of *innovation* – the question, 'where was your Church before Luther?' To claim to be defending what the royalist preacher Henry Hammond called 'this Anglican, or rather ancient British church', a church which did not need to look to Rome for its foundation but could claim ancient dignity in its own right: it was a very appealing manoeuvre.

So the seeds of this Anglicanism had been sown in the English Reformation from the beginning, and had germinated periodically through the sixteenth and early seventeenth century; but always in the shade of larger and better-established growths. It was the ceremonialist revival of the 1620s and 1630s, immediately followed by the years of exclusion and exile in the 1640s and 1650s, that brought it out into the open. In that sense, we need to recognise that the Anglicans are like the Quakers and the Baptists and the Presbyterians and many others: they are simply one of the sects to emerge out the religious crucible of the English Civil War and its aftermath. And likely that is that what they would have remained had it not been for the bizarre ending of this tale: quite suddenly and very unexpectedly, between 1658 and 1660, England's republican governments collapsed and the exiled King Charles II was restored. And the king then restored an entity which still claimed the name of 'the Church of England'. But it wasn't. Not a unifying national church, a middle way holding the whole nation together with muscular moderation. It was instead a denomination, the Anglican Church, in something like the modern sense of the world. And that,

despite or even because of its belief that it could trace an unbroken history back to Augustine of Canterbury in the sixth century, was something new.