

**Father Koller: The History and Development of the BCP and Anglican Thought**  
-A Synopsis-  
**Clericus, Alfred, Maine, June 16, 2011**

The Reformation produced four main divisions: the Anabaptists, Anglicans, Reformed Church, and Lutherans. These groups differed in their attitude of church/state relations: the Anabaptists opposed the idea of a State-church. Anglicans and Lutherans perceived of the Church as a “department of State”, whereas the Reformed Church saw the Church as presiding over the State.

Modern Anglicanism has had many influences, not the least being Vatican II, which affected belief and practice in all denominations. Anglican theology can be viewed from various perspectives. It is a mistake to look at Anglicanism solely through the lens of the Tractarians. We must look at historical theology from a more complete perspective.

Romanticism in English literature, for instance, strongly affected the Tractarian or Oxford Movement. It was an intense reaction against the rationalism of its day. The emphasis was on feeling and experience. Architecture was affected, leading to a “Gothic revival”. Pulpits were moved away from the center in many Protestant churches, and lecterns added, to allow the altar prominence in the sanctuary.

Much further back in English history, one might view Elizabethan Anglicanism as “Calvin in Pope’s clothing”. Abp. Cranmer had been influenced by Lutheranism, having married the niece of the reformer Andreas Osiander. This led to the BCP 1549. But between 1549 and 1552, Martin Bucer, an ecumenist, arrived in England. Bucer tried to successfully unite the Swiss and German Reformations. There had been frequent contact between English and Swiss theologians. Bucer felt that the BCP needed to go further in the direction of Swiss Reform thinking.

**BCP’s of 1549 and 1552 Compared:**

(Here Fr. Koller introduced hand-outs: copies of selected pages from the two BCP’s [1549, and 1552].) A careful comparison of the texts will show the obvious influences of Swiss thinking upon Cranmer. The later version is considerably edited. Some of the differences include the following:

**Baptism:** baptismal regeneration as such is missing in 1552 (compare also with its inclusion in the BCP 1928, p. 274). Note: the later Reformed Episcopal Church stated: “the church rejects

that regeneration is inseparably connected with baptism”. On the topic of “emergency baptism”, Richard Hooker stated that the Church is “enjoined to baptize”, but unbaptized children are not in danger. Does one believe in the “absolute necessity” of baptism? Hooker emphasizes the requirement of the Church, rather than the legal necessity. The 1549 version reflects Luther’s idea that children have faith *de facto* by having the interrogatories directed toward the child, whereas the later edition (as does the 1928) directs pre-baptismal questions to the godparents. [Fr. Hiles questioned the origin of the practice of signing the Cross over children at baptism, asking, “Is this sign effectual?”. Fr. Koller replied, “We are not memorialists. Such signs are effectual.”]

**Confirmation:** Signing the children in the early version, included as if it were itself a sacrament, is missing in the later. Note that during the interregnum period, in the 1662 version, bishops had been eliminated, so no confirmations occurred. During America’s colonial period, there were no bishops, either. So the phrase “intention to be confirmed” was considered sufficient, where Confirmation was required.

**Eucharist:** A comparison of the two versions indicates a difference in the use of terms: “altar” is replaced with “table”. The idea of Christ’s “presence” was downplayed in favor of the concept of a “memorial”, as was the concept of the Eucharist as a “sacrifice”. The term “Mass” is eliminated. The “Black Rubric” was also mentioned, added in the 1552 BCP to discourage any possible adoration of the Sacrament. Our current prayer book combines the two versions in the manner that the elements are presented for consumption: i.e. 1549: “The body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life”; 1552: “Take and eat this, in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith, with thanksgiving”. Cranmer’s “receptionism” is reflected in the choice of the latter text.

[In closing discussions of this session, it was noted that there is no mystery in worship if all is completely explained, as might be implied by the Puritan/Reformed approach. Anglicanism has always appreciated the Eastern Orthodox emphasis on the mysteries of the faith. Although Anglicanism frequently refers to the “three-legged stool” of Scripture, Reason, and Tradition, John Wesley rightfully added “Experience”, our encounter with God in worship, as another critical element to faith. Fr. Koller continued his comparison of the two versions in a second session, noted below:]

**Prayer for The Whole State of Christ’s Church:** The 1552 reveals that the Puritans rejected the idea of “praying for dead Christians” by stating it as the Prayer for the Whole State of

Christ's Church Militant." Note the considerable difference in length of this prayer in the two versions, and the absence of the phrase, "And chiefly..." in 1552. Our BCP allows on p. 74 for the "continual growth" of departed believers, an implication of "Purgatory" rejected by Puritans. Eastern Orthodox churches do not define Purgatory as a "place", but as a "process".

**Communion:** "Buzz words" provide pause for discussion. For instance, our BCP on p. 74 speaks of "one oblation", an assertion against the Catholic concept of a sacrifice re-offered at the Mass. P. 75 refers to Christ as "our only Mediator and Advocate", an implicit rejection of Mary's role as "Mediatix". On p. 81, note in the Invocation the *epiklesis*: "...may be partakers of his most blessed Body and Blood". Compare the *epiklesis*/oblation portions of both versions. Cranmer was "under pressure from both sides" in his composition of the two books.

**Articles of Religion:** Copies of the earliest versions (1552, 1562, 1571) of the BCP's "Articles" were provided. The texts are in Latin with English translations (using the archaic spelling of the day). Fr. Koller closely compared specific doctrinal issues, as they are reflected in the two versions:

On pages 278-279 of the handout, note Article XXI. The 1552 BCP is distinctly "Puritan and conservative". With respect to Holy Scripture, and to rites, Luther himself had maintained that "you can do anything that doesn't conflict with Scripture", vs. the Reform attitude: "You can *only* do those things that are grounded [specifically delineated] in Scripture". The Puritans condemned religious ceremonies as "popish". Note also pps. 294-95, Article XXXIII: The Church of England differed in practice from Protestant Europe. The Puritans wanted a presbyterian form of church government, without bishops. Clergy arriving from Europe came and participated in English services without being episcopally ordained. In the Elizabethan church, attention to apostolic succession was "indifferent". But the theologian Richard Hooker felt that the episcopacy was scriptural. This position was not maintained as a defensive posture against the Puritans, but as a positive assertion of scriptural authority for the episcopacy. Significantly, during the later Methodist revival, Charles Wesley doubted his brother John's extra-episcopal ordinations.

Fr. Koller recommended two relevant works: "The Stripping of the Altars", by Eamon Duffy, and "The Last Divine Office" by British historian Moorhouse.