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IN MEMORIAM

The Rev’d Canon Peter Chase
(1921-2011)

THE REVEREND CANON PETER CHASE, former editor of The Anglican, died in November 9, 2011 at the age of 90, in Providence, Rhode Island, where he lived with his wife Virginia since retirement in 1986.

Born in Boston, Massachusetts, on January 22, 1921, Peter was the adopted son of Helen G. Chase. Enlisting in the Coast Guard in 1942, he was commissioned an officer in 1943. He participated in the Normandy invasion on D-Day with Allied Forces on Juno Beach. When the USS Turner exploded off New York Harbor in 1944 he rescued 45 Navy sailors and was awarded the Navy Commendation Medal. He remained in the US Coast Guard Reserves, retiring as a captain in 1981.

Canon Chase graduated from Deerfield Academy, Brown University, and the General Theological Seminary. Ordained in 1951, he served as curate and then priest-in-charge of Trinity Church, Newport, Rhode Island, until 1954. He attended St Augustine’s College in Canterbury, England, for a year, and in 1955 became chaplain at South Kent School in Connecticut From 1960 to 1973 he served at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City. He then became rector of St. James’ Church, Greenfield, Massachusetts, where he served until retirement.

Requiescat in pace
et resurgat in gloriam. Amen.
“When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy; and going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh” (Matthew 2:10-11).

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Biblical and probably non-historical. They did begin to appear early in post-Biblical writings, however, attesting to truths that were deep within the church’s faith, and they provide an example of the historical development of the church’s belief in the catholicity or universality or inclusivity of Christ’s vocation of Lordship for all the races and peoples of the world.

Adoration of the Magi,
Wall Fresco in the Catacomb of Priscilla, Rome, early third century.

Each King was seen to represent one of the three great races and colors of Gentile humanity—black and yellow and white. The visit of the three Kings, therefore, has been seen as a strong affirmation, with powerful visual application, of the Christian belief that the church is meant to be inclusive not exclusive, that the diversities of humankind are essentially one in their worship of the same Christ as Lord. Distinctions of race, color, and national origin certainly exist in the world by nature, but by grace these distinctions are counted as nothing in the Epiphany of Our Lord Jesus Christ. This truth, the church came to believe early in its history, is what the Epistle to the Ephesians is talking about when it says that “the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of God’s promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel.” This is also why Psalm 72, verses 10 and 11, came to be applied liturgically to the Epiphany feast: “The Kings of Tarshish and of the Isles shall bring presents; the Kings of Arabia and Saba shall offer gifts. All Kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him.” And this, likewise, is the reason for the association with Isaiah 60, verse 3: “The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and Kings to the brightness of thy rising.” The visit of the three Kings, therefore, is a vivid picture, even iconic in nature, of the catholicity, universality, inclusivity of the church.

An even stronger doctrinal association was given very early at the beginning of the second Christian century by Saint Ignatius of Antioch, as he expanded and commented directly on the Epiphany narrative from St. Matthew’s Gospel in his “Epistle to the Ephesians” (ch. 19): “A star shone forth in the heaven brighter than all other stars, and its light was ineffable, and its novelty caused amazement; and all the rest of the constellations with the sun and the moon formed themselves into a chorus around that star, which far outshone all the rest of them, and there was perplexity to know whence came this strange appearance which was so unlike the rest of them. And from that time onward, every sorcery and every spell was dissolved. The ignorance of evil was abolished and the ancient kingdom was destroyed, since God was becoming manifest in human form to bring newness of eternal life. That which had been prepared by God was having its beginning. Hence everything was shaken, for the destruction of death was under way.” This, Ignatius tells us, was the meaning of the Magi at the Great Epiphany.

The significance of this story for Ignatius (and also for Saint John Chrysostom nearly 300 years later) was that magicians, who were also astrologers, were being led by that star to One whose power was greater than theirs, and greater than the other stars. Magic was being destroyed by the Incarnation, and the visit of the Magi symbolized its surrender. They presented the gifts that they could offer: the gold which represented their wealth, and the materials of their trade, frankincense and myrrh, in submission to the One who was about to bring an end to magic and make such things redundant. The child whom Herod would soon seek to destroy, and who would eventually be put to death and rise again, is more powerful than they because His power is neither human nor magical. His authority came from God’s love that was to be exercised wholly for the sake of others, the Gospel of which God’s church would serve as custodian, unlike magic which was an attempt to deny the humanity of others and to rule by force of one’s own selfish will. For good reason the Magi brought gifts and fell down and worshipped Jesus, and so do we.
HOLY WOMEN, HOLY MEN: Celebrating the Saints

HOLY WOMEN, HOLY MEN: Celebrating the Saints (henceforth HWHM) is a major expansion of The Episcopal Church’s publication Lesser Feasts and Fasts (LFF), which contains the propers and brief biographies of all saints and commemorations in The Episcopal Church’s liturgical calendar. The 2009 General Convention authorized trial use of HWHM and invited feedback from users as input (presumably) to a decision at the 2012 Convention in Indianapolis. The Standing Committee on Liturgy and Music has set up a blog to collect input and discussion and is in the process (as of this writing, June 2011) of reviewing every commemoration in HWHM day by day. HWHM contains over one hundred new commemorations, raising the number of total commemorations, if approved, to 228 and leaving 78 ferial or open days on the calendar, up from 130 commemorations and 202 ferial days as listed in the current calendar of the Book of Common Prayer.

It seems as if the assumption of the SCLM is that a daily celebration of the Eucharist in every parish is normative. Given the large increase in the number of entries in the calendar suggested by HWHM, and that all the propers are intended for use in the Eucharist, it seems useful to inquire about actual patterns of Eucharistic observance within The Episcopal Church. Data from the Officer for Congregational Research indicates that most Episcopal churches celebrate the Eucharist on weekdays currently less than 52 times a year or less than once a week, as illustrated in Figure 1 on the following page. Another way to view weekday Eucharist offerings is by month, as visualized in Figure 2. The average for all Episcopal churches is about 3 Eucharists per month, with the very largest parishes offering an average of more than 12, or three per week.

How does this relate to HWHM’s expansion of the number of commemorations? To fully utilize HWHM, the average number of total weekday Eucharists per year would need to approach the 228 total yearly commemorations on the proposed calendar. And even now, only a few parishes (those with Average Sunday Attendance [ASA] of 401+, currently ~3% of all parishes) offer enough weekday Eucharists to fully explore even the existing 130 commemorations listed in the calendar.

So although the intent of the call by the 2003 General Convention to revise LFF to “reflect our increasing awareness of the ministry of all the people of God and of the cultural diversity of the Episcopal Church, of the wider Anglican Communion, of our ecumenical partners, and of our lively experience of sainthood in our local communities” may well be fulfilled in the suggested commemorations of HWHM, the fact remains that most Episcopal churches simply don’t even observe very many of the existing commemorations. It may be that Eucharistic commemorations of those we deem worthy are not the best way to in fact remember them, since currently there isn’t actually the opportunity for most Episcopal parishes to do so.

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Perhaps turning to the Daily Office is a way to encourage wider use and observance of not only the new commemorations of HWHM, but also the existing ones of LFF and even the Holy Days appointed by the calendar. Far more people observe the Office privately than presumably attend a weekday Eucharist, and so encouraging commemoration in the Office may be a better way to reach Convention’s intention. Cranmer’s revision of both the Eucharistic lectionary and especially the Daily Office lectionary

Figure 1

The vertical axis indicates the total average number of weekday Eucharists offered by each size category of parish. For example, the average total number of weekday Eucharists offered by parishes of 50 average Sunday attendance (ASA) is 14.8 for the entire year, or a little more than one a month. (Note that weekday Eucharists can include the Principal Feasts of Christmas, Epiphany, All Saints, and the Triduum services of Maundy Thursday and [depending on how it is reported] Good Friday.)

Figure 2

Perhaps turning to the Daily Office is a way to encourage wider use and observance of not only the new commemorations of HWHM, but also the existing ones of LFF and even the Holy Days appointed by the calendar. Far more people observe the Office privately than presumably attend a weekday Eucharist, and so encouraging commemoration in the Office may be a better way to reach Convention’s intention. Cranmer’s revision of both the Eucharistic lectionary and especially the Daily Office lectionary
was intended at least in part to re-acquire a more in-course (i.e., sequential or nearly so) reading of Scripture, rather than the disjointed readings which occurred as the number of saints multiplied in the calendar of his day. His goal was that the majority of the Bible would be publically read and heard on an annual basis. That principle has been carried forth from the first Prayer Books through the American Books and down to the Daily Office lectionary of the current Book of Common Prayer, which offers in-course readings from the Old Testament, New Testament, and the Gospels for every day of the year. The only interruptions are for the Principal and Major Feasts of the year, which have special readings assigned, with the rubrical permission to combine readings on other days if desired to make up for the readings missed during the observance of a higher-ranking Feast.

If Cranmer’s pedagogical principle is still deemed worthy, then other ways must be found to appropriately commemorate the saints of the Calendar. HWHM adds extensively to the options available for a weekday Eucharist, which already include the Various Occasions and the Common of Saints from the BCP, a 2-year daily lectionary, and a six-week thematic lectionary cycle that explores various aspects of Christian life and spirituality (printed in LFF and reprinted in HWHM.) Given The Episcopal Church’s current pattern of Eucharistic observance, which requires a priest or bishop and which is offered frequently only in a small number of parishes, perhaps the Daily Office is a better place to focus the exploration of the lives of the saints.

One option which seems to be permitted by the existing rubrics would be to use the biographical entry from HWHM as the second reading at Evening Prayer, along with the Collect for the commemoration as one of the Collects at the Prayers. In this way, the saint of the day is commemorated and the in-course reading of Scripture and Psalmody is preserved, all without a Eucharist, meaning the observance can be accomplished privately for those who do so. More drastically, (and requiring amendment to the Book of Common Prayer itself) it may even be desired to withdraw the general permission to observe commemorations in the calendar with a Eucharist, unless the saint in question is the patron of a parish or for some other locally appropriate reason. Doing so would focus attention on the Office itself, rather than the Eucharist, as the place for regular commemorations of saints.

Attention might even be given to re-examining the list of Major Feasts, dominated now by the Apostles and Evangelists, nearly all men. These occasions are considered of high importance by the Church, and the lessons at the Eucharist are presumed to be of greater importance and value than the supporting readings in the Daily Office. Most individuals may rarely if ever have an opportunity to attend a Eucharist on a Major Feast anyway, because they are by their nature offered during the week and may only in certain circumstances be transferred to a Sunday. Perhaps rubrically reiterating that a Eucharistic proper of a Major Feast may be observed in the Daily Office, in lieu of the existing readings, would still preserve the spiritual value of those readings. The Psalm, first reading and second reading from the Eucharistic proper could be read at Morning Prayer, and the Gospel and saint’s biography at Evening Prayer, with Psalmody selected from the existing MP and EP lectionaries. In this way, individuals may enter more deeply into the worship of the Church at the Eucharist even if they cannot actually attend one.

The publication of HWHM calls into question the entire raison d’être of both our Eucharistic and Daily Office lectionaries, as well as the actual purpose of why and how we honor those we believe to be particular examples of Christian faith and life. In light of the patterns of worship our Church actually offers, perhaps extending the trial use of HWHM for another triennium, coupled with a sustained study of worship practice, and the implicit and explicit intentions of worship contained in the Book of Common Prayer, would be appropriate next steps to take.

NOTES

1 Holy Women, Holy Men, Celebrating the Saints (New York: Church Publishing, 2010).
3 See HWHM, 7-21.
4 Dr. Kirk Hadaway, Officer for Congregational Research, email to author, March 25, 2011.

Notes for this article continue below, on page 13.
MY RECENT ARTICLE on Julian Victor Langmead Casserley (1909-1978) in The Anglican, Vol. 40 (No.2) 2011, asks the “burning question of how to do what the Incarnation requires in our seemingly hopeless age.” It concludes with Casserley’s assertion from possibly 1950, “Nothing remains except to endure the absurdities with heroic defiance to the end.” The present article,¹ is an interpretation based partly on continental philosophical perspectives (as suggested below). I recast my question by asking what kinds of heroic endurance might have produced Casserley’s strange hope for 2050 in the mid-1960s, almost a century ahead of time:

It is safe to say that by 2050 the world in which we have grown up and with which we are familiar, our type of civilization, culture and society, will have been entirely swept away. No doubt some old landmarks will survive but many will have disappeared altogether. Yet, of course there will be a real continuity. That new technological and social world will be inhabited by our grandchildren or great-grandchildren, and they will be aware of us as part of their history. No doubt many of them will tend to laugh at us, or even to dismiss us as representatives of an odd or immoral phase of their development which will by then will have been condemned out of hand almost universally. Nevertheless the wisest historians of the time will no doubt find in us something to admire as well as much to censure. But perhaps the most familiar landmark that will still be surviving in undiminished vigor will be the Christian Church. It has sometimes been observed that in a world of total change nothing whatever has come to stay but the gospel. But the Church and the gospel will survive, if they do survive, not because they have refused to change but because they will have been humble enough to accept the inevitable change and wise enough to confine themselves to the modes of change that conduce to survival. In this mutable world, immutability is in a subtle process of change.

Casserley had taught at the General Theological Seminary from 1952 to 1959, but probably wrote those predictions during his professorship at Seabury-Western Theological Seminary in Evanston, IL, from 1960 until he retired in 1975. He died in 1978. I visited Mrs. Casserley’s home in Kittery, Maine, in August of 1982 to see his unpublished manuscripts, one of which was his incomplete “Theology of Man” containing the excerpts quoted above and below (without citations). At that time I was in despair, but his defense of human transcendence in the same unfinished essay provoked me to hope in a new way: “To transcend is to be there… and yet to preserve an inner impenetrability which not only is not pierced but could not be pierced.” Transcendence means to climb over, surpass, or go beyond. Human transcendence surmounts, instead of being enslaved by, the spirit of the times, especially when the popular culture has enshrined cynicism, boredom, and apathy as final. Casserley’s way of climbing over these spiritual vices is not naïve, for he takes the grimness of human existence well into account:

In Tewkesbury Abbey in Gloucestershire in England there stands the 15th century tomb of Archbishop Wakeman. The monument consists of two tiers. At the top, we see the dead Archbishop carved in stone lying in state in the splendor and dignity of his Arch-

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episcopal robes. On the lower tier, beneath him, a rat and a worm are gnawing at a handful of bones which are all that remains of this once powerful and dreaded prelate. This is the theme that Pascal in the 17th century was to call ‘the grandeur and misery of man.’ Even Teilhard de Chardin, almost drunk as he sometimes seems with the thought of man’s advancing technological mastery of this world, writes also of each man’s diminishment as he approaches death with the sensitive mastery and acuteness of perception which reveal him as by no means unaware of the paradox and tragedy of the morality of the hero. Yet, of the two, the misery of man is perhaps the more typical 20th century theme. Book after book seems to debunk man in almost masochistic fashion, by dwelling on the dethronement of man as knowledge progresses.

Casserley also knows how forcefully the absurdities of today’s cynicism can destroy hope by debunking all that has value, as he continues to say:

There are, of course, many human beings today, as always who hide from life so successfully, who are so stupefying diverted, rather than stimulated by their experience, that they know no peak moments at all. For them, both irreligion and religion are alike impossible. For many modern writers ours is a time in human history in which such a bleak apathy and mediocrity has wrapped itself around the consciousness of man more successfully, perhaps, than ever before. For them modern or contemporary man is ‘come of age,’ blasé, unresponsive to the beauties, subtleties and surprises of life, blighted and blasted with an icy, aged maturity. How should man, who has lost all consciousness of his own transcendence, understand the transcendence of God? Knowing neither what it is to transcend, nor to be transcended, he can neither affirm nor deny God. He is incapable of both theism and atheism alike. For the word of God, meaning absolute and ultimate personality, no longer conveys anything to him. Not knowing what the word of “God” means he finds himself forgetting what the word man means.

Human transcendence and divine transcendence are not opposites that exclude each other, according to Casserley. Nor does he believe, as some do today, that theism and humanism are incompatible. Forgetfulness of one is forgetfulness of the other. Similarly recovery of the consciousness of either kind of transcendence facilitates recovery of the other. Human transcendence can be attained by either defiance or affirmation. Casserley’s hope is the result of the capacity to transcend, or by believing that one is already transcending.

**Four Moments of Human Transcendence**

*First, hope affirms the future.* It transcends dread because it has a purpose. That is true for individual persons as well as groups, both large and small. Casserley teaches that modern technology does not have to destroy us. It may do so, but this is not inevitable, for there are multiple possibilities, and it is conceivable that we could put our technology to good use. Teilhard de Chardin, who reminds us that the truths of science and religion do not contradict one another, believes that evolution might continue to improve the human species. He inspired Casserley and others to synthesize evolution and eschatology, with the result that history has a purpose that justifies our sacrifice and challenges our despair. Many people fear the kind of historical change he predicts for 2050. Casserley, however, characterizes that crisis as supreme adventure. He writes, “When the Christian tradition is truest to itself, Christian existence is conceived in eschatological fashion. It is life lived on the edge of the world, life in which all is perpetually energizing and stimulating crisis. It is an absorbing drama without intermission. Perhaps another way of expressing what I mean by the edge of the world would be on the eve of the next great evolutionary transformation.”

*Second, hope recollects the past.* It transcends remorse because it is rooted in a spiritual heritage that preserves what is best and noblest. Casserley could affirm the future and face the present as adventure, because his resources were not limited to the present, and he did not bow to the trends of the times and the fads of the present age. He could see through them, and they did not capture him. His faith was simply the
universal Christian revelation, not limited to any particular historical period and not tied to any specific political system, economic status, or class-consciousness. Casserley’s position defies all such distinctions and can be reduced to none of them. In matters of culture, his mind has the kind of magnanimity that the ancient Roman Stoic philosopher Seneca says belongs in its nobility to the vast expanse of all epochs. Casserley’s rooting in the Western spiritual heritage is an instance of what he calls “cultural conservatism.” We can be culturally conservative without accepting political and economic conservatism. He writes, “More and more, the conservatives will have to be of the cultural type, because the political and economic types will tend inevitably to disappear as it becomes more and more lucidly clear that radical institutional changes are inevitable, and will indeed shortly have taken place quite irreversibly.”

Casserley’s traditionalism is not conventional, but partakes of the noösphere (Teilhard’s term that includes science, religion, the arts, and so forth). Casserley believes in preserving what ought to be stable in a changing world. In his book, No Faith of My Own, he writes that the Judeo-Christian heritage “is to society as the spirit is to the body, as the intellect is to the instincts, as the memory of the past and the preservation of the future are to the mind absorbed in the existing joys of the moment.” As a result, the Church has a responsibility to safeguard the cultural heritage. He argues that “in our modern, increasingly non-Christian world the traditionally reverence ideals of historical, scientific and rational integrity, and the essential truths and values of humanism, are gravely challenged as Christianity itself, and . . . as the present situation develops, the task of defending them will tend more and more to be undertaken by Christian thinkers and the Christian Church.” Cultural conservatism of Casserley’s type is not hidebound to past folklore, but a springboard, not a straitjacket, but a launch pad into the future.

Third, hope is rational. It transcends conventional and ideological stupidities by rising into the light of reason. Casserley follows Richard Hooker, archetypal Anglican theologian and thereby the mainstream of the Western spiritual heritage. This includes the Catholic belief that grace perfects nature and does not destroy it, that the best in paganism is not annihilated by revelation, but rather preserved and elevated by biblical faith. As a result, Casserley rejects the view that the fall of man is total and that human nature is completely depraved. The fall of man has affected every aspect of human existence, but it has not totally destroyed all that is of value in humankind. What would happen if we believe that the fall of Adam man deprived us in all respects? We might start acting accordingly.

Indeed, would the tragedy of man be so tragic if his Fall were total? Surely, the tragedy of human existence as we know it lies precisely in the way in which it brings conflict and deformation into the very length and breadth and depth of our human beings. A total Fall, a complete corruption might at least have spared us that, for it is not our experience that the conflict is known only in the mind of the converted man who still belongs to a fallen world, who is still tempted and still sins. We find, on the contrary, crowding in upon us every day, evidence of the immense destructive scale and scope of the conflict in every man, whatever he may be. In other words, a picture of man deeply and gravely wounded by the Fall, desperately ill as a consequence of the Fall, and yet still in some sense man, fits the actual situation of being a fallen human being and our existential experience of that predicament, very much better than any doctrine of total fall.

As Casserley sees the situation, therefore, the fall permeated all aspects of life and made them ambiguous, but it did not completely destroy the image of God in us or utterly put out the light of reason, which Hooker believes leads us to knowledge of what is supersensible.

Casserley rejects the kind of English Puritanism that says we can use reason only on worldly things, but has nothing to do with our knowledge of God. According to him, reason is more than calculative thinking. He believes that the debunking of reason devalues human existence. The spirit of our times today is prejudiced against anything except the calculative use of reason. He affirms the majesty of reason, which includes uplifting feelings.
and beneficial emotions. For example, Plato’s reason is the means by which our minds are able to apprehend eternal ideas such as the just and the fair. Aristotle’s rational contemplation is the most divine activity in which human beings can engage. St. Thomas Aquinas’ beatific vision of God is an intellectual act.

Casserley believes the “perennial philosophy,” which includes modern and contemporary sources. Among other things, this means recognizing that no one system or historical period has all the truth; that despite the very great disagreements among philosophers, there is nevertheless an underlying unity. We must be open to truth wherever it is found, as Casserley says, “The important thing in Catholic Christianity is not the extent of our basic agreement but the way in which we agree about the importance of our disagreements.” Casserley is a both-and thinker. I had studied philosophy with Gustav Emil Mueller, a thinker in Hegelian tradition, at the University of Oklahoma. When I asked Casserley his impression of Hegel’s method, he said that he believed there was value in it. He understood perfectly how I could be Anglo-Catholic and, in matters of philosophy, Hegelian. So I wondered if there might be some Hegelian element in his thought, too, as there seems to be in his Graceful Reason. The intent of the following quotation is less to characterize Hegelianism than to describe Anglicanism’s interest in trying to grasp both sides of a position.

In some respects it does seem to me that the whole mind and bent of Anglicanism is rather synthetic or Hegelian. Many so-called dialectical theologians seem to delight in multiplying “either-or” situations, by impaling the reader on the horns of one dilemma after another. But the Anglican mind always dislikes arbitrary “either A or B” situations and tends to say, “surely, we can have both A1 and B1.” I say both A1 and B1 and not both A and B because a true synthesis does more than merely lump together its two terms in a bare paradox. Instead, it transforms and enriches the meaning of each term in the very process of reconciling it to the other. A true synthesis is neither a compromise nor a self-contradiction, but a more profound apprehension.5

Neither Casserley nor I followed Hegel’s tendency to glorify the state in his later writings. Certainly, one can repudiate that and many other kinds of Hegelianism, and still keep his method in the Phenomenology of Spirit and Science of Logic, which preserves both sides of conflicting truth claims through going up to higher positions that allow both of them to exist. Similarly Casserley’s theological message is capable of seeing the truth of both sides of an issue and surmounting the conflict; it is not either-or, but both-and.

Fourth, hope triumphs aesthetically. It transcends banal taste by feeding upon the beauty and sublimity that heal the wounds of life. These aesthetic feelings transfigure our existence. Consequently, Casserley’s aesthetic sense of faith, which resonates with Kant’s Critique of Judgment, is the heart of his theology of hope, the lifeblood that sustains endurance of the world’s absurdities. Casserley claims that lack of faith comes partly from the inability to look at theological concepts aesthetically. His resistance to debunking the sublime and beautiful, so popular in the 1960s and 1970s, heroically defied the absurdities of those times.

The three foregoing moments of human transcendence are essentially aesthetic in their constant appropriation of beauty and sublimity. The light of reason that guides faith uses analogical, as opposed to scientifically literal, thinking. All our knowledge of God is symbolic (as Kant shows), and (following Ricoeur) so are myths that narrate symbols, rituals that enact them, and theological theories that explain them. Casserley’s theology of hope draws from the aesthetic character of nature and the fine arts, as well awe-provoking biblical events and urgent messages from the heights and depths of theological symbols. It recollects what is noblest and best from the past through taste that affirms life and puts spiritually dead elements to flight. And (borrowing terms suggested by Vaihinger and Kierkegaard) it acts as if possibilities that quicken the spirit were alive in such a way that they turn them into reality in the future. The event that comes from the future is the present.

Primordial Authority

Authoritarian authority coerces. It requires submission to external power. It turns doctrines into dry bones, a set of alien laws imposed upon individuals from the outside. By contrast, primordial authority persuades. It dwells on the edge of revelation, repeats the event of the inception of the

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truth of doctrines, and displays the birth certificate (Heidegger’s term) of the inception. Primordial authority chooses freely because it aesthetically appropriates the symbols of the spiritual heritage and events that gave rise to them. Instead of acquiescing, it rejoices in the symbols of faith as one does in a loved work of art. Primordial authority is undetermined obedience to rules esteemed because they constitute the essence of the beauty and sublimity of what the believer repeats. The Definition of Chalcedon does not have primordial authority because the institutional church decreed that it is true, but mainly because it theoretically repeats the origin of the mighty events of God’s action in Christ and also because of the elegance of the dialectical perfection of the concept that Christ is truly divine and perfectly human, and these two natures are inseparable, yet not confused. Believing a religious symbol aesthetically means that it has life and death importance. The aesthetic authority of liturgy is a model for other types of authority. As Casserley writes, “It is the function of the liturgy to repeat and perpetuate the patterns of the divine redemption which we proclaim in the gospel and expound in our theology. In this sense the liturgy is obviously the most authoritative element in Christian practice and provides us with the touchstone of authority.”

Casserley believes that the authority of traditional Anglicanism is based on its synthetic as well as symbolic character. Continuing his statement quoted earlier from Graceful Reason that “the whole mind and bent of Anglicanism is rather synthetic or Hegelian,” he writes, “A true synthesis is neither a compromise nor a self-contradiction, but a profounder apprehension.” Casserley’s later book, Christian Community, claims that, in essence, Anglicanism synthesizes Catholic tradition with evangelical faith, since “Catholicism and the Reformation protest are theologically compatible; more than that indeed, each logically necessitates the other.” The fulfillment of this kind of synthesis appeals to the meaning of what it synthesizes rather than conforming to external rules that stand at a distance from the process:

It is not only possible to accept and proclaim the catholic faith in its integrity apart from the Roman magisterium, this is also very much the easiest and best way of doing it. Of course we must admit, and again very thankfully, that many of the best contemporary Roman theologians in fact put all their concentration and emphasis on the catholic elements in their inheritance while quietly allowing the purely Romanist elements to fall into the background.

The traditionalism of The Book of Common Prayer, the tendency to preserve archaic liturgical expressions, and the search for Patristic theological grounding are not reactionary, but are culturally conservative in Casserley’s sense of the term. This kind of traditionalism does not submit, but springs from aesthetic urgency. Casserley writes, “The Book of Common Prayer is an essentially conservative institution. In theory at all events it surrenders no part of the liturgical heritage of Western Christendom, except in order to remove unworthy innovations and manifest corruptions.”

Casserley’s hope that the Christian Church will survive with “undiminished vigor” is based on the provision that Christians will be “humble enough to accept the inevitable change and wise enough to confine themselves to the modes of change that conduce to survival.” That vigor would not be diminished even if Christians were to become a minority. As defiance, that means the various traditions of faith would have to resist fads ready to reduce their truths to the absurdities of the times. As affirmation, that would require them to recollect and heroically hold fast to the primordial events of faith as such, the Life, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, and Second Coming of the Incarnate Christ.

Epilogue

Just as Casserley resisted the aesthetic absurdities of the 1960s and 1970s, he had also resisted the English government’s compromise with Hitler in the 1930s. His sense of the non-authoritarian character of primordial authority, whose heart was the belief that the touchstone of the authority of liturgy is aesthetic, might have made him especially suited to detect the characteristics of tyranny. He acted like one of Plato’s guardians whose musical education trained them first and foremost to recognize what is foul even in non-aesthetic areas of life. John Poulos, a General Theological Seminary alumnus, told me about how
Casserley’s parishioners criticized him for preaching against England's compromise with Hitler in 1938.

He apparently took a horrified view upon Chamberlain's (and England's) 1938 treachery in regard to Czechoslovakia, a view he took to the pulpit as well as elsewhere, much to the consternation of church people as well as other people, even being threatened with punitive actions during the following two years. When Casserley told his story in our theology class, 30 years ago, he was illustrating his version of “prophetic preaching” and the eternal Word of God. He made the point that by 1939, flocks of people were re-rallying to him with sentiments of embarrassed admissions that he'd been right as well as suffered for being so. Casserley then said, “The point is that I could count on Hitler to show others where I was right.”

I argue that his heroic defiance of Hitler was a transcendentally inspired act of hope, and would have remained so even if nobody subsequently conceded that he was right.

NOTES

1 The present essay is based on articles by the author published in St. Luke’s Journal of Theology (SLTJ) in 1984 and 1988. Its original source is a speech I gave to the clergy of the Diocese of New York in the fall of 1983. An edited version of it first appeared as the Introduction to my edition of Casserley’s No Faith of My Own and Graceful Reason by the University Press of America in 1984, which I then published as “Human Transcendence: Clue to Julian Casserley’s Hope for the Twenty-first Century” SLJT, March 1984, Volume XXVII Number 2. I recast the episode about Casserley’s 1938 denunciation of Hitler and “Primordial Authority” from my “Casserley’s Critique of Power,” SLJT, Volume XXXII Number 1 (1988). The present article is published by kind permission of Sewanee Theological Review, successor publication to SLTJ. I thank Katherine Weber, who gave editorial assistance during the earlier stage of its preparation, and Richard Hall during the later.


3 Julian Langmead Casserley, No Faith of My Own (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1950), 159.


5 Ibid., 22.


7 Casserley, Graceful Reason, 23.

8 Casserley, Christian Community, 135.

9 Ibid., 141.

10 Ibid., 154.

11 Casserley quotes Ibsen’s Dr. Stockman: “Minorities are sometimes right but majorities never, and a wise majority will cherish its minorities as a man in the dark will value his torch.” Casserley, No Faith of My Own, 139.

NOTES, continued from page 7 above.


6 HWHM, x.

7 For example, at the time of this writing, the website dailyoffice.org has recorded more than 1,000,000 unique visits in its online service. Clearly people are using the Office, even if they are not doing so publicly.


9 Although not a given, parishes and institutions that offer a daily Eucharist frequently offer the Daily Office as well, permitting such locales to still observe the commemorations of the Calendar. Alternatively, a commemoration may always be observed at the Prayers of the People in a Eucharist, even if the occasion of the day is of some other saint or theme.

10 Page 935 of the 1979 BCP, referring to the Daily Office Lectionary, notes that “on Special Occasions, the officiant may select suitable Psalms and Readings.” This would seem to permit substitution of the Eucharistic readings into the Office when pastorally desirable.
“Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body” (1 Corinthians 11:27-31, AV).

An enormous amount of anxiety and consternation has occurred in the minds of Christians and a tremendous amount of ink spilled by scholars and theologians about these verses from the Apostle Paul’s first letter to the church in Corinth. What exactly does “unworthily” mean? What constitutes “worthiness”? And what is involved in the self-examination which Paul suggests? This fear of unworthiness led, in part, to the practice of Confession before Mass and to reception of the Holy Communion at Mass only once a year, by presumably well-prepared communicants. It also led to the development of devotional manuals and commentaries, which were designed to teach and assist the worshiper in his or her preparation for Mass and provide additional material for prayer and meditation. These devotional commentaries began to appear in the late Middle Ages, but with the invention of the printing press in the middle of the 15th century, they became more and more available to the laity. After the Reformation there was an explosion of devotional manuals, especially among the continental Protestant churches and, after the Restoration in 1662, in the Church of England. They remained popular well into the 19th century, and there were dozens, if not hundreds, of titles and printings. In 1827, William Goodhugh in the theology section of his The English Gentleman’s Library Manual recommended a list of nineteen devotional manuals which should grace the shelves of every good English gentleman’s library.¹

There is precious little scholarship on this genre of Christian literature. Information on the early history, i.e., the late Middle Ages, of devotional manuals may be found in Gary Macy’s article “Commentaries on the Mass during the early Scholastic Period,”² and in Eamon Duffy’s Marking the Hours: English People and the Prayers 1240-1570.³ Charles Bodington’s work, Devotional Books, published in 1903, nobly attempted to provide a survey of devotional manuals and commentaries from antiquity through the nineteenth century, and his work remains the best source of scholarship for devotional manuals after the Reformation.⁴ One segment of this tradition, however, has received virtually no scholarly attention: those devotional manuals which either entitle themselves “Companion to the Altar” or which include Companions within them. The purpose of this essay, then, is to examine for the first time this particular subset of devotional manuals. An historical survey of Companions will be provided with short analyses of the contents of the more important examples.

Companions to the Altar were published as individual volumes and also bound into The Book of Common Prayer for the convenience of the worshiper. Most were published without author attribution, and although it is often possible to identify the author by


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comparing the text to Companions for which the author is known, many Companions are truly anonymous. This makes it impossible to determine with absolute certainty how many Companions were actually published. One would have to examine every Companion extant and every Book of Common Prayer which contains a Companion in every book collection and library all over the world in order to provide a comprehensive survey. This is beyond the scope of any study. Because of this, much of the present study is limited to the information available through online library catalogues and bibliographic resources. While these resources are invaluable, they are not without error. Additionally, the analysis of the contents of some Companions was limited to those which were physically available to the author.

Four different Companions, by anonymous authors, were identified by J. Robert Wright in his book *Prayer Book Spirituality: A Devotional Companion to the Book of Common Prayer from Classical Anglican Sources*. Wright provides excerpts from each, but offers no other scholarship or commentary. Christopher Webber, in *Give us Grace: An Anthology of Anglican Prayers*, provides an excerpt from one Companion, but, again, provides no scholarly information other than very short introductory paragraphs. Charles Bodington’s *Devotional Books*, despite the comprehensive nature of its coverage, only references one Companion; however Bodington does provide some information on that particular Companion as well as a survey of its contents.

A second difficulty in a survey of Companions to the Altar are the titles given to such volumes. The number of different Companions, combined with the numerous reprints, led to the use of many different titles, sometimes applied to the same work as publishers added materials, such as theological essays and expositions, and sought to distinguish their editions from those of other publishers. Table I provides a list of the various short titles, both authored and anonymous, discovered in the course of this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Various Short Titles of Companions</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>A Christian’s Companion to the Closet and Altar</em></td>
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<td><em>A Companion for the Altar</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>A Companion to the Altar</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>A New Companion to the Alter [sic]</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>A New Week’s Preparation . . . with A Companion for the Altar . . .</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Companion to the Altar</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>The Best Companion to the Altar</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>The Companion, or Spiritual Guide, at the Altar</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>The Companion to the Altar</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>The Communion-Service . . . the Best Companion to the Altar</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Sacrament Book . . . A Companion, or Spiritual Guide, at the Altar</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some Companions simply provide materials for this preparation but leave the timing of it to the user; others suggest a somewhat regimented schedule over the course of a week or at least the Sunday morning before attending church. The authors of Companions take two basic approaches to their work. Some seem to perceive the Companion as a collection of additional prayers and meditations for personal use both before, during, and after Communion; others take a more didactic approach and include a devotional commentary on the rubrics and the actions of the minister, both of which are often included in the text of the Companion, with instructions and recommendations to the communicants as to their own actions and piety. This second type is like a spiritually-annotated tour guide of a service, with appropriate prayers and thoughts for meditation. Many also contained additional devotions to be read after the service or when arriving home.

As mentioned previously, Companions, especially the shorter ones, were often bound into the Book of Common Prayer for the sake of convenience so that the communicant did not have to balance two books (or three with a hymnal). For this reason also, Companions sometimes duplicated the rubrics from the Prayer Book, so that the communicant could simply use the Companion. The Companion which were bound with the Prayer Book appeared in various places: at the very beginning, just after the

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Communion Service; just before the metrical psalter, and at the very end. The Companion normally had its own title page and did not appear in the Table of Contents of the Prayer Book itself.

It is difficult to know how popular these Companions were with the laity. The sheer number of titles, editions, and reprintings suggests that they were very popular indeed. Publishers did not necessarily keep records on how many books were printed and how many sold, and simply because publishers found a market for their books does not necessarily mean that the laity used them regularly or that it had any profound effect on their spiritual lives. In Volume Five of The Church of England Quarterly Review of the late 19th century, one finds the following comment: “In no department of Divinity has so little been affected as in the publication of Companions to the Altar; the New Companion, as it is called, being considerably more than a century old; and the new editions being only reprinted with new title pages. On this subject complaints have frequently and justly been made.”

In the course of the present inquiry, sixteen Companions were discovered — nine for which the author, or at least an attribution to an author, is known; seven produced by anonymous authors. Several of these will now be considered chronologically in the order in which they were first published.

The earliest known Companion is by Thomas Comber (1645-1699), who was Dean of Durham from 1689 to 1699. Comber was the author of several works, the most famous of which was A Companion to the Temple: or, A Help to the Devotion of the Book of Common Prayer, which was originally issued in four parts between 1676 and 1679. Second to this, Comber was well-known for his A Companion to the Altar. Or, an Help To the worthy receiving of the Lord’s Supper; by Discourse and Meditation upon the whole Communion Office. To which is added, an Essay Upon the Offices of Baptism and Confirmation, which was first published in 1675. It went through six editions by 1721, the third of which was reprinted in 1802. The Essay upon the Offices of Baptism and Confirmation mentioned in the title was originally published as part of Part III of his A Companion to the Temple. Given this fact and the original dates of publication for A Companion to the Temple and A Companion to the Altar, it is likely that there is considerable overlap between the two. A side-by-side comparison is warranted.

Comber’s Companion was sufficiently famous as to be quoted by E. B. Pusey in a letter addressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury and published under the title Habitual Confessions Not Discouraged by the Resolution Accepted by
Dean Comber says, “We direct some to confess their faults and reveal their doubts to the priest, especially in these three cases [unclear reference].” The second is, “when we cannot conquer some lust or passion.” He adds, “I do most heartily wish we were more frequent in these applications to our Ministers; it would argue that we were more concerned for a pardon and more sensible of our guilt; “we wish, that our people, even in the time of health (when their conscience is troubled for some great sin, or their souls are assaulted with a violent temptation), would come and make their case known to their spiritual Physician,” “if this were constantly practised in our health, we should not only be rarely assisted in order to the continual regulation of our lives; but when sickness and death comes, the holy man would be better able to assist us, as being no stranger to the state of our souls, and we ourselves should have less work to do, when our last conflict comes” [emphasis as in original].

Thomas Brownell, in his famous The Family Prayer Books, quotes extensively from Comber’s works in the running commentary. Unfortunately, Brownell only gives the attribution “Dean Comber” and does not indicate in the commentary or in the introduction which work by Comber he is quoting. No doubt there are many passages from A Companion to the Altar, especially in the commentary on Holy Communion. A detailed analysis of Brownell’s sources would need to be undertaken to make an exact determination.

As far as can be determined, Comber’s Companion was never bound into a prayer book. It is quite a long work and makes for a sturdy volume of 496 pages by itself. It is an highly academic and intellectual work with extensive side notes in Greek and Latin, and references to patristic writers and church councils. Comber also provides numerous many tables and diagrams which break down for analysis the various parts of the service. Given its scholarly nature, it seems unlikely that it was used extensively by the average church-goer. Not only does Comber provide prayers and thoughts for meditations at the various points in the service, he also provides a detailed theological and spiritual commentary and various learned discourses. It is an extensive work and deserving of further study.

In 1700, William Vickers (fl. 1700-1719) published A Companion to the Altar, Shewing the Nature and Necessity of a Sacramental Preparation in order to our receiving Holy Communion Wherein those Fears and Scruples about Eating and Drinking Unworthily and of incurring our own Damnation thereby are proved groundless and unwarrantable, unto Which has been added Prayers and Meditation Preparative to a Sacramental Preparation according to what the Church of England requires of her Communicants. Nothing is known about Vickers himself, but if the number of editions and reprints of a work is an indication of popularity, then his Companion was extremely popular, going through twenty-two editions and 111 printings over the course 130 years between 1700 and 1830. Most of these were printed anonymously. There is some confusion in the title. Sometimes it was published under the title The Companion to the Altar . . . and sometimes A Companion to the Altar .... This is such an easy error to make that it has crept into library catalogues as well, making editions at times difficult to identify accurately. It was also published under the short title A Companion to the Altar: Shewing the Nature and Necessity of Sacramental Preparation, in Order to the Worthy Receiving of The Holy Communion.

Vickers is well-known today by scholars of Jane Austen (1775-1817). One of the few books owned by Austen was Vickers’ Companion. She wrote about it in her diary, and Austen’s great niece referred to Vickers as “a book of devotions always used by Jane Austen.” Vickers’ Companion was translated into Welsh, the only Companion encountered in this study to be translated into another language, and it was also edited by William D. Hassell for use in the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. Only one copy of that work survives in the U.S., at the library of the of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; it was not possible, therefore, to provide a comparison for this study to see what, if anything, had been changed from Vickers’ original.
Vickers’ Companion is very different from that of Thomas Comber. Depending on the printing of a given edition, Vickers’ work runs between forty to fifty pages, being mostly a collection of prayers with references to Scripture after each. There is no commentary except the Preface, which is half the length of the work. Although the Preface does not specify as much, the prayers are arranged in order for use on a Sunday or any day on which a person attends Holy Communion. It begins with “A Prayer to God for His gracious Assistance and Direction in our Sacramental Preparation”; then several prayers accompanying self-examination, including a set of meditations on each of the Ten Commandments; through the service of Holy Communion itself; to prayers after the service to be said at home. The Companion ends with prayers for Morning and Evening Prayer and before going to bed.

In 1738 and 1739, there were published anonymously Part I and Part II, respectively, of The New Week’s Preparation for a Worthy Receiving of the Lord’s Supper. It reached at least thirty-seven editions by 1782 and was reprinted until the middle of the 19th century. There is a tremendous amount of confusion and contradiction in the bibliographic record about this Companion. The problem is that the two Parts were originally published with different titles, and although the two Parts were published together in one volume as early as 1739, each part continued to be published individually. Part I is entitled The New Week’s Preparation for a Worthy Receiving of the Lord’s Supper, as recommended and appointed by the Church of England, Consisting of Suitable Meditations and Some Necessary Forms, with A Companion for the Altar; Also, Meditations and Morning and Evening Prayer, for the Closet or Family, &c, Together With Instructions how we should conduct ourselves after partaking of the Lord’s Supper; and a Scriptural Explanation of It. Part II is entitled The New Week’s Preparation for the Worthy Receiving of the Lord’s Supper, As Appointed and Practised by the Church of England: Consisting of Meditations, Prayers, and Hymns, suitable for the Sunday-Evening on Sacrament Day, and for the Morning and Evening of Every Day in that Week, with A Form of Self-Examination: And in the Course these Meditations, those Doubts and Scruples, which are apt to disturb and render the Minds of devout Communicants uneasy, are clearly and finally removed. Adding to the confusion is that in the combined editions, sometimes the title of Part I served

as the overall title, and sometimes the title of Part II was used as the overall title; and as additional materials, such as theological essays and sermons were added, the title pages changed even further.

*The New Week's Preparation* was published in a deliberate attempt to supplant the older *A Week's Preparation towards a Worthy Receiving of the Lords Supper*, published originally in 1679 by Samuel Keble. The older *Week's Preparation* was also published anonymously, but it came to be known as *Keble's Old Week's Preparation* after the publisher and reached its 52nd edition in 1757. It, too, was reprinted well into the 19th century, indicating that perhaps the efforts of *The New Week's Preparation* were not entirely successful. The “old” *Week's Preparation* was not included in this study because it does not claim to be a Companion to the Altar.

*The New Week's Preparation* is the most documented of the Companions examined for this present study. Both Wright and Webber include short excerpts from it; Bodington devotes provides a summary and excerpts; and in his commentary on a collection of John Henry Hobart’s letters, Arthur Lowndes devotes several pages to a short summary of its history and extensive excerpts from the Preface.

In the Preface of *The New Week's Preparation*, the author explains why he has published this volume, and he does not attempt to hide his disdain for the old *Week's Preparation*:

I am persuaded also that the present proprietor of Keble's “Old Week's Preparation,” cannot desire the continuance of a book which has already been found so injurious to christianity [sic], for it abounds with rapturous and wanton expressions, and warmth of constitution. Not reason much less religion has the chief and sovereign influence . . . Here the true spirit of devotion which is in its own nature a liberal and reasonable service, is made wholly to evaporate in unnatural heats, and ecstatic fervours such as are a disgrace and reproach to the dignity of a rational nature. And instead of speaking the languages of serious, rational, and unaffected piety, they abound wholly with rapturous flights of unhallowed love and strains of mystical dissoluteness, or as an ingenious author terms it, spiritualized concupiscence, invented by

The editor of an 1855 publication of *The Old Week’s Preparation* labeled the language of *The New Week’s Preparation* as being of a “drier, colder spirit, and in a lower tone,” but this is hardly an adequate rejoinder given the rhetoric above.

The content and structure of *The New Week’s Preparation* assumes that a person is going to take the Holy Communion only once a week and that the rest of the week should be spent in meditation, prayer, and self-examination in preparation for Sunday. Monday morning serves as a model for the rest of the week. It begins with a prayer to be said upon arising from bed, which can be used each day, followed by a form for self-examination to be used each day, followed by meditations and prayers for morning and night. Each day of the week follows the same pattern with different morning and evening meditations. Each day also has additional prayers and verses of scripture for meditation and at least one prayer “for our Sanctification, preparatory to a worthy receiving of the Holy Sacrament.” Sunday contains the morning meditation, prayers before going to church, followed by the Companion to the Altar. This Companion presents the rubrics from the Book of Common Prayer followed by parallel columns with the minister’s words and actions on one side and “Directions” for the communicant on the other. Personal prayers are also included at the various salient points in the service, but the “directions” are not prayers but instructions as
to how one should act, what one should be thinking and concentrating on, and how one should appropriately engage in acts of piety. Part I ends with an essay entitled “How to live well after a worthy receiving of the Holy Sacrament,” which is followed by a collection of general prayers for various occasions.

Part II is best categorized as “additional materials.” There are numerous additional prayers which can be substituted for those in Part I, a catechism, additional meditations for each day, including hymn texts for meditation and/or singing. The “Companion for the Altar” section along with the Sunday meditations and the essay “How to live well after a worthy receiving of the Sacrament” from Part I were excerpted and published separately under two different titles (with “Prince Eugene’s Prayer” added) several times during the first half of the 19th century. These editions are interesting because they are very small, 5⅜ inches by 3⅝ inches, and less than ¾ of an inch thick. These were clearly designed for the convenience of the communicant and could be carried inconspicuously in one’s pocket.

Before moving to the last major Companion to be treated in this study, several less famous Companions should be noted. Samuel’s Colby’s *The Communion-Service of the Church In the Book of Common Prayer, The Best Companion to the Altar*, published in Dublin in 1701, was typical in that it contained the rubrics with commentary and additional prayers, and, like The New Week’s Preparation, although nearly forty years earlier, was set in parallel columns. *A New Companion to the Alter [sic] for the Holy Communion of our Lord’s Supper*, published anonymously in 1755, was simply an unstructured collection of various prayers and meditations to be used at the discretion of the worshipper. Neither this work, nor that of Colby, became particularly popular. More popular, however, was *The Companion, or Spiritual Guide, at the Altar; containing Prayers, Ejaculations, Meditations, and the Order for the Administration of the Lord’s Supper*.

The author of this work was simply identified as “A Clergyman of the Church of England.” This Companion went through three printings on its own and then became associated with and included in James Cookson’s *The Family Prayer Book*, published several times between 1783 and 1789.21

The last Companion to be considered is that by John Henry Hobart (1775-1830), the influential and powerful third bishop of New York in the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States of America. It was first published in 1804 under the title *A Companion for the Altar or Week’s Preparation for the Holy Communion: Consisting of a Short Explanation of the Lord’s Supper and Meditation and Prayer proper to be used before and during the*
receiving of the Holy Communion, according to the form prescribed by the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. Like the other popular Companions encountered in this study, it was republished several times, reaching its 24th edition by 1857. It was also published in England in 1849, edited by John Collingwood. This edition, which was itself a reprint of the 21st American edition with an added preface by Collingwood, was recently reprinted, making Hobart’s Companion the only one available in a modern reprint.

Hobart’s Companion was apparently quite popular with Episcopalians. Daniel Nash, a priest with whom Hobart corresponded for many years, wrote to him on May 12, 1810: “Your Companion to [sic] the Altar is read by the people of the best information and highly esteemed.”

In a letter of February 16, 1809 Joseph Jackson informed the bishop: “I have sent to Baltimore more than once for your Companion to [sic] the Altar, & I have understood that hardly a copy was to be had. Is there not a call for a new Edition?”

William Berrian in The Posthumous Works of the Late Right Reverend John Henry Hobart notes that Hobart’s Companion “has, in great measure, superseded every other work of this kind in this section of the Church” and that “thousands upon thousands have found it a help to their meditations, and a guide to their devotions; and have risen from a perusal of it with a kindling soul, and an elevation of sentiment, which have prepared them to receive the supper of the Lord with the greatest advantage, comfort, and delight.”

Despite its popularity among Episcopalians, Hobart’s Companion was vehemently attacked in other circles, particularly by the Presbyterians, for its high views on the nature of the priesthood. William Berrian notes something of this controversy:

In the spring of 1804 he [Hobart] published his Companion for the Altar, a work which, though humble in its pretensions, was raised to an unexpected degree of importance by the notice which it attracted among the Clergy of other denominations, and by the obloquy which it brought upon him for the fearless expression of his sentiments. It was written with the purest and holiest intentions, and with an especial view to the spiritual advantage of the members of our own communion [The Protestant Episcopal Church]. . . . [Hobart] considers it essential to the efficacy of the sacrament, that it should be administered by those who are invested with lawful authority to administer it, and that this authority is only derived, by an outward commission, from the Bishops of the Church. For this opinion . . . [he] was attacked in the public press, charged with bigotry, intolerance, and pride, and reviled with the utmost bitterness and scorn. He repelled these attacks in a better spirit, and was also vindicated by others, with no less dignity and calmness, than ability and force.

Webber states that Hobart’s Companion is an American version of The New Week’s Preparation, but this is not entirely accurate. Hobart’s Companion is certainly structured like the old Week’s Preparation and The New Week’s Preparation in that it provides daily meditations and prayers for the week prior to attendance at Holy Communion on Sunday morning, but the section on Holy Communion is more or less just a recreation of the service from the American Book of Common with additional prayers provided at various points, and it does not come close to the detail of The New Week’s Preparation. Hobart’s work was indeed more of a compilation of material, which Hobart fully acknowledges in his Preface:

In the explanation of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper prefixed to this work, the author has endeavoured to use, as much as possible, the words of the Church in her Catechism and Office for the Communion. In this introductory treatise he has also made free use of an excellent Tract on Holy Communion by Bishop Gibson, and of Sermon of the late Bishop Seabury, on the same subject . . . . It is necessary also to remark, that the devotions to be used at the administration of the Holy Communion, are not all of them entirely original. But for the rest of the work, the meditations and prayers to be used in the week before he receiving of the Communion, the author is solely responsible [emphasis as in original].
The “explanation of the sacrament” to which Hobart refers is an introductory essay entitled “Short Introduction to the Lord’s Supper, Stating the Nature of the Ordinance, and the Necessary Preparation for it.” This is an edited version of the essay “A Familiar and Comprehensive Explanation of that Part of the Church-Catechism, which Relates to the Sacraments, especially of the Lord’s Supper, as warranted and supported by Scripture” from Part II of The New Week’s Preparation. Hobart has updated the language, shortened some sections, and rearranged and combined others. In a few places he has written his own material (without notice), and he added his own footnotes and Scriptural references. Hobart’s Companion was compiled and written in about four weeks, perhaps in response to some perceived pressing pastoral need, and this hastiness led to critiques of its literary style. Berrian, despite his defense of Hobart generally and his belief that Hobart’s Companion was to be highly commended as an aid to meditation and prayer and for its correct exposition of the Holy Sacrament, nevertheless notes that:

if it be regarded merely in a literary view, and examined with the severity which is commonly applied to other works, it might undoubtedly be shown, that it abounds in violations of correctness and taste. It was written in great haste, amidst the pressure of parochial engagements, and with all the exuberance of youthful feeling. The style is, therefore, too loose and diffusive . . . and the passionate expressions of devotion lose much of their force and effect by frequent repetition. There is not only a want of condensation in the matter, but also of simplicity in the language; so that, while it is not as fit as it might before the illiterate, it is also apt to offend the taste of the fastidious and refined.

Companions to the Altar are a vital and rich area of scholarly inquiry, not deserving to be left ignored by history. There are some very lovely and moving prayers in these volumes, and since Companions to the Altar are very much a phenomenon of the Church of England and its daughter churches, it is tragic that at least some of these prayers have not found their way into the various modern sources for prayers used by churches in the Anglican tradition. There is also tremendous amount of scholarship to be done. Even in the course of this short survey one of anonymous Companions excerpted by Wright remains unidentified, which simultaneously demonstrates something of the bibliographic work in this area and the need for more serious and sustained study. Future scholarship should include a thorough analysis of the contents of the several Companions to determine to what extent material is original and to what extent is it borrowed and what sources were used; some attempt to determine the authors of those Companions published anonymously and more information on the authors who are known; a theological analysis, especially of the commentaries on Holy Communion; and an evaluation of where Companions fit into the overall genre of devotional manuals. Even the few Companions examined here contain enough material to warrant an extended essay on each. It is hoped that this first attempt at scholarship will serve, in some way, as a beginning to a greater appreciation of these interesting and deserving works.

NOTES


5. Primarily PINTARD, the catalogue of the General Theological Seminary; the catalogue of the New York Public Library, and, most importantly, WorldCat, which accesses academic library catalogues from all over the world.

Classical Anglican Sources (New York: Church Hymnal Corporation, 1989).


8 The titles of many devotional manuals are quite long, so foreshortened titles will be used in the table and throughout this essay for the sake of convenience.


13 WorldCat indicates the existence of a Companion by the exact same long title, but notes that the work is not by Vickers and that the preface is dated to 1732 and signed by “I.B.” This may be some edited version of Vickers’ work with a new preface, but it was unavailable for the current study: [Long title], Birmingham: T. Warren, Jr., 1765, issued with Warren’s edition of the Book of Common Prayer; reprint, Derby: T. Timer, 1778.

14 One of the excerpts listed as “Anonymous” in Wright (no. 79, 340ff) is actually taken from the Preface of Vickers’ Companion.


16 A Weeks [sic] Preparation towards a Worthy Receiving of the Lords Supper, after the warning of the Church for the Celebration of the Holy Communion; in Meditations and Prayers for Morning and Evening for every day of the week; also Some Meditations to live well after receiving the Holy Sacrament (London: Samuel Keble, 1679). Webber includes two prayers from this devotional book. See Webber, 128.

17 Wright, 339ff; Webber, 182; Bodington, 256-261.


19 The New Week’s Preparation for a Worthy Receiving of the Lord’s Supper (London: Hodgson and Co., 1823), i-ii.

20 William Fraser, ed., The Old Week’s Preparation Toward a Worthy Receiving of the Holy Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper (London: J. H. and James Parker, 1855), xi.

21 An extended excerpt may be found in Wright, 318ff.

22 New York: Peter A. Mesier, 1804.


25 Ibid., 168.


27 Ibid., I:90-91.

28 Webber, 181.

29 John Henry Hobart, A Companion for the Altar or Week’s Preparation for Holy Communion (New York: Peter A. Mesier, 1804), i-ii.

30 Berrian, I:96.

31 Ibid.