

**St Mary and All Saints, Walsingham  
Assumptiontide Lecture 2014**

**Blessed Virgin:  
Mary and the Anglican Tradition**

**Dr Colin Podmore  
Director of Forward in Faith**

**Introduction**

The invitation to give this Assumptiontide Lecture is a great honour, but a daunting one: being invited to speak on this subject in Walsingham feels a little like being asked to carry coals to Newcastle. However, I am glad to make the attempt – not least because it enables me to pay tribute to Roger Greenacre, whose work on this subject I was privileged to publish last year in the volume *Maiden, Mother and Queen: Mary in the Anglican Tradition* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2013). Roger was a priest associate of the Holy House from 1957 until his death three years ago. In this lecture I am standing on his shoulders, so to speak; had he lived, it would doubtless have been him standing here, not me.

Our beloved Anglican tradition is back in fashion, and it is Pope Benedict, that great restorer of things that seemed almost lost, whom we have to thank. One of the purposes of his Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus* (2009) was ‘to maintain the liturgical, spiritual and pastoral traditions of the Anglican Communion within the Catholic Church, as a precious gift... and as a treasure to be shared’. That a pope should speak so positively about traditions developed in separation from the Roman Church, and wish to receive them into its life, was a remarkable ecumenical development. That he should envisage them being ‘maintained’, not extinguished, was one of the ways in which his pontificate revealed him to be not merely a conservative but a true radical – one who began to reverse the ever-increasing uniformity that had characterized the Roman Church since the sixteenth century in favour of renewed diversity. Those of us who have chosen to remain faithful to the English Church and to the vision of *corporate* reunion (the unity of churches, not just individuals or groups) are now surely under an even greater obligation to celebrate our tradition, of which Pope Benedict has spoken so highly.

This lecture will recall some of the ways in which Our Lady has been honoured in the Anglican tradition, and in doing so it will offer some reflections on the Anglican tradition more generally.

**Mediaeval Roots**

One of our key claims is that the Church of England is not a new church invented in the sixteenth century but the English Church founded by St Augustine of Canterbury, so we can and should claim pre-Reformation English Marian devotion and theology as our inheritance.

One important element of that inheritance is the celebration of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which appears in both the Prayer Book and Common Worship calendars on 8 December. It was not an English invention – it was celebrated in the Eastern Church from about 600 onwards – but it was from England that it was introduced into the Western

Calendar. First celebrated in Winchester in about 1030, it spread from there to Canterbury and Exeter. The Normans treated it as an English eccentricity and stamped it out. As St Anselm's Saxon biographer Eadmer put it, the Conception was celebrated by those of 'purer simplicity and quite humble devotion' and suppressed by those having 'greater learning and spurning the simplicity of the poor' – an attitude with which Anglo-Catholic parishes have become quite familiar. Eadmer's campaign resulted in the Conception being restored to the Canterbury Province's Calendar by 1129, and it was eventually adopted more generally. Then, it was simply the Conception: the doctrine of 'immaculate conception' came later. But clearly there was thought to be something special and important about Our Lady's conception – otherwise it would not have been celebrated at all.<sup>1</sup>

Celebration of Mary's conception and of her purity are both ancient, but the formal link between them was only made in the high middle ages. Again, it was in England that the key developments occurred. That great Archbishop of Canterbury St Anselm held that Mary was 'among those who were cleansed through [Christ] of their sins before his birth'. Eadmer went beyond this, arguing that she was freed from slavery to all sin at her conception. It was in the Oxford Schools, almost two hundred years later, in the early fourteenth century, that the Franciscan Duns Scotus gave the immaculate conception the seal of academic approval.<sup>2</sup>

Scholastic theology is, almost by definition, a matter of disputation (one thinks of the twin – rival – lecterns in the Divinity School at Oxford.) Perhaps more enduring, and in the long run more deeply influential, is the language of devotion. From the eleventh century onwards there was a great change in Christian devotion, and therefore also in devotion to Our Lady. Again St Anselm was at the forefront: Sir Richard Southern wrote that Anselm 'created a new kind of poetry, the poetry of intimate, personal devotion'. The focus now was on Jesus' humanity. To quote Southern again, 'the homage to the Virgin for which new and more intense forms of expression were found... was one symptom of the concentration on the humanity of Christ'.<sup>3</sup> Roger Greenacre described the effect on Marian devotion as:

'the... development of a warm, tender and subjective devotion to Mary, no longer so much the majestic *Theotokos* as the very human Virgin Mother, to whom the monk came to render the same romantic allegiance that the knight or the troubadour of mediaeval chivalry gave to the lady of his devotion.'<sup>4</sup>

As Robin Ward pointed out in his 2009 Assumptiontide Lecture, 'The emergence of the shrine and cult at Walsingham reflects precisely this Anselmian change of sensibility in all its principal characteristics.' The shrine began in about the period in which Anselm was active, and it was inspired by the devotional life of Richeldis de Faverches. As Dr Ward puts it:

'Here is a woman living in the world who has the time and the resources to develop a genuine interior life, one which then expresses itself through a visionary experience to construct a sophisticated and resonant monument to the new piety in tangible form, the Holy House.'<sup>5</sup>

We see this new-style devotion in the Final Anthems of Our Lady, which date from this period – for example the *Salve Regina*, in which the Blessed Virgin is hailed as 'our life, our sweetness and our hope'. We see it too in art – notably in the roundel in the chapel of the Bishop's Palace at Chichester, probably dating from the episcopate of St Richard, of which a digitally-restored image appears on the cover of *Maiden, Mother and Queen*. And we see it in poetry: Roger Greenacre suggested that English Marian devotion has 'a particular colour... warmth and tenderness but without sentimentality or exaggeration, and a sense of reticence

and discretion that exactly matches Our Lady's own refusal to take centre stage or to dramatize her person or her role'. Roger saw this reflected in the fifteenth-century poem 'I sing of a maiden', which emphasizes the stillness of Our Lord's conception ('He came all so stillè') – a stillness that in turn emphasises Mary's virginity.<sup>6</sup>

Increased devotion to Our Lady resulted in the inception of a daily mass of Our Lady, which in turn caused the addition to greater churches and cathedrals of lady chapels where that mass could be celebrated – often at the east end, as in Westminster Abbey, but sometimes elsewhere, as in Ely, where the monks built a new chapel on the north side of the Cathedral in the mid-fourteenth century. Lady Chapels weren't unique to England – French cathedrals have them too – but they were a notable feature of English church life.<sup>7</sup>

## **The Prayer Book**

We come now to the Reformation, in respect of which Anglo-Catholics suffer from two opposite temptations. One temptation is to stress the continuity of the English Church too much: reading some Anglo-Catholic historical writing one could be forgiven for wondering whether the Reformation actually happened at all! The other temptation is to stress the discontinuity of the Reformation, and the Protestantism of the church life that flowed from it, to such an extent that it is hard to see what claim we as Anglo-Catholics could have to a legitimate place within the Church of England. Here in Walsingham the ruins of the Priory and the Friary stand as stark reminders of what was lost, but we must remain faithful to the Tractarians' central claim – what the Anglican Newman called 'the catholicity of the Anglican Church'<sup>8</sup> – and adopt the hermeneutic of continuity, albeit combined with clear-sighted realism and historical accuracy. So in what follows I am going to emphasize those things that indicate that, for all the losses and discontinuities, the Anglican tradition is much more catholic than many imagine – though of course not as catholic as we would wish.

1549 saw a radical pruning of Marian devotion in the liturgy of the English Church, but vestiges of honour to Our Lady remained which could, and in time did, give rise to new growth. Indeed it was not merely a case of vestiges – remnants that a more thorough reform might have removed. Both the Collect and the Proper Preface of Christmas Day were new compositions, and both of them mention the Blessed Virgin whereas the Sarum texts that they replaced (like the equivalent texts in the modern Roman liturgy) did not. The Collect of Christmas Day begins thus:

‘Almighty God, who hast given us thy only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and as at this time to be born of a pure Virgin’.

The Preface reads:

‘Because thou didst give Jesus Christ thine only Son to be born as at this time for us; who, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, was made very man of the substance of the Virgin Mary his mother; and that without spot of sin, to make us clean from all sin.’

Both texts naturally emphasise the virginity of Mary, but they both also, in different ways, stress her purity. In the Collect she is not just 'a Virgin' but 'a pure Virgin'. The Preface stresses that Christ was conceived without sin. 'Without spot of sin' refers to the circumstances of his conception, but are we wrong to view it also as implying the sinlessness of his Mother? Does not the phrase 'without spot of sin' immediately make us think of the word 'immaculate' ('spotless')? The doctrine of Mary's immaculate conception was a high mediaeval way of explaining how and when Mary *came to be* sinless, but the underlying

belief that Mary *was* sinless is very ancient. Augustine of Hippo had written, ‘On account of the honour due to the Lord, I do not want to raise any questions here about her when we are dealing with sins’ – a passage quoted repeatedly over the centuries in support of the doctrine of Mary’s sinlessness.<sup>9</sup> Augustine, of course, had great influence on the magisterial reformers, and the report of the Anglican – Roman Catholic International Commission, *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* (2005), notes that, following Augustine, ‘the English Reformers... showed a reticence about affirming that Mary was a sinner’.<sup>10</sup>

The 1549 Prayer Book’s Calendar was very limited indeed – all the non-biblical saints were excluded, as were what we now regard as the Marian feasts – but 2 February and 25 March were treated as feasts of Our Lady, called ‘The Purification of St Mary the Virgin’ and ‘The Annunciation of the Virgin Mary’. It is interesting to note that Mary is always described as ‘the Virgin’. In 1559 a table of Proper Lessons at Morning and Evening Prayer on Sundays and holy days was added, and in it, 25 March is called ‘Annunciation of our Lady’. As a quarter day it retained its popular name ‘Lady Day’, just as Lady Chapels continued to be so called. So Mary was always referred to as ‘the Virgin’, the liturgy emphasized her purity, and she continued to be called ‘Our Lady’. This is not much, but it meant that the Church of England continued to be a church in which Our Lady was honoured, not one in which she was treated as if she had never existed. That provided the basis for a future growth of devotion.

Perhaps in some ways the most important feature of the Prayer Book, as far as the Church of England’s honouring of Our Lady is concerned, is Cranmer’s composition, from Vespers and Compline, of the office of Evening Prayer (or ‘Evensong’, as the Prayer Book sometimes calls it). The climax of that office is Mary’s song, the Magnificat. As Roger Greenacre wrote, ‘It was a stroke of genius on the part of Archbishop Cranmer to make the Magnificat the point of transition, the bridge, between the Old and New Testaments at Evening Prayer.’<sup>11</sup> Since 1552 Psalm 98 has been a permitted alternative, and what Cranmer may or may not have intended is, in any case, not the point. What matters is that over the centuries since 1549 many Anglican clergy and indeed laypeople have said or sung the Magnificat every day, and in doing so they have been reminded every day of Our Lady’s words, ‘For behold, from henceforth: all generations shall call me blessed.’

I have referred to the Prayer Books of 1549, 1552 and 1559, but arguably one of the most important dates for the identity of the Church of England was another year – 1561. I mentioned that in 1549 the holy days had been reduced to a minimum – the ‘red letter days’ that have their own propers. That there were still propers for Holy Communion on eighteen biblical saints’ days was not insignificant. The Church of England’s celebration of the Christian Year, with a collect not only for each Sunday but also for the red-letter saints’ days, marked it out from most of Continental Protestantism and, as we shall see, became a defining feature of the Anglican tradition. But 1549 made no mention of non-biblical saints, and 1552 included only George, Lawrence and Clement (along with Lammas) as black-letter days without propers. In 1561, however, 59 non-biblical saints were restored to the Calendar. For four years, from 1549 to 1553, and – after the interval of Queen Mary’s reign – for a further two years, from 1559 to 1561, most of the saints had been out of sight, but now they were brought back into view. ‘O Sapientia’ came back too, marking the first day of the Advent Antiphons – one day earlier than in the Roman Calendar, because England had an additional Marian antiphon at the end of the series: ‘O Virgin of Virgins’. By the restoration of these black-letter saints’ days to the Calendar the Church of England’s liturgy was re-connected with the life of local communities and especially those in the countryside. Whatever

motivated it, this was an important re-establishment of continuity with the pre-Reformation church. The dedication of churches to the saints, including St Mary the Virgin, had been retained of course, but now the calendar recognized many of the parishes' feast days too. The pendulum had begun to swing back in 1559, but it swung significantly further in 1561.

For our theme the Calendar of 1561 is of crucial importance because it saw the return, after those brief breaks that I mentioned, of three of the Marian feasts. From 1561 onwards the Church of England again marked Our Lady's Conception on 8 December, her Nativity on 8 September, and the Visitation on 2 July. Only the Assumption remained excluded. And that daily saying of the Magnificat was beginning to have its effect. In the list of holy days the Purification and the Annunciation were now 'of the *Blessed* Virgin Mary'. In 1662 'Blessed' was inserted into the title of the Propers for 25 March as well.

## **Methodology**

At this point, I am going to pause and make some points about our method in assessing Anglican identity.

In talking about the contents of the Book of Common Prayer I have spanned more than a century, from 1549 to 1662. If we date the English Reformation as beginning with the summoning of the Reformation Parliament in 1529, then it took over 130 years to get to the definitive settlement of 1662, marked by the introduction of the Prayer Book that is still in use and the expulsion of clergy who refused to be ordained by a bishop or to use the new book. When we consider the Reformation, we need to think of that whole period, what one might call 'the long Reformation'. We speak of the 'Elizabethan settlement', but in 1650, during the Interregnum, when there were no bishops and no Prayer Book, that 'settlement' would not have seemed definitive. Only in 1662, at the end of those 130 years, did the pendulum finally stop swinging so violently; only then did things settle into a form that – as it turned out – lasted into the nineteenth century and beyond. So my first methodological point is that in looking at Anglican identity we need to look at the whole of this formative period and not pick out one particular year, decade or reign. The authoritative texts are the historic formularies mentioned in the Declaration of Assent (the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, the 1662 Ordinal, and the Thirty-Nine Articles, finalized in 1571). When we try to interpret those texts in the light of what people believed, the views of bishops and theologians in the 1630s are at least as worthy of consideration as the views of bishops and theologians in the 1550s.

A second point about methodology is that, because the Church of England claims to be part of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church, her formularies need to be interpreted not in isolation but in the light of what the Church has believed through the ages and, in particular, what was taught by the fathers and councils of the early Church. That is expressed in Canon A5, which affirms that

'The doctrine of the Church of England is grounded in the Holy Scriptures, and in such teachings of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church as are agreeable to the said Scriptures'.

It then adds:

'In particular such doctrine is to be found in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, *The Book of Common Prayer*, and the Ordinal.'

That means that we interpret the historic formularies in the light of the teachings of the Fathers and the Councils, not the other way round.

Thirdly, it is sometimes suggested that the Church of England accepts the authority only of the first four Ecumenical Councils (Nicaea, Constantinople I, Ephesus and Chalcedon), but that is not correct. The first four Councils have always been regarded as pre-eminent (for example, in the 1559 Act of Supremacy), but respect was also accorded to the fifth and sixth Councils (Constantinople II and III).<sup>12</sup> The homily ‘against Peril of Idolatry’ in the *Second Book of Homilies* spoke of ‘those sixe councels which were allowed and receiued of all men’.<sup>13</sup>

### **Belief and Devotion in the Seventeenth Century**

How is this relevant to our consideration of the Blessed Virgin Mary? The fourth Ecumenical Council (Ephesus, 431), affirmed that Mary is *Theotokos* (the Mother of God), while the fifth (Constantinople II, 553), spoke of Mary as ‘Ever-Virgin’. Both of these doctrines were accepted by Luther and Calvin.<sup>14</sup> We have already noted Augustine’s unwillingness to ascribe sinfulness to Mary, and the Anglican Reformers’ similar avoidance of doing so. So it was entirely in accordance with Anglican doctrine that Lancelot Andrewes (who died in 1626 as Bishop of Winchester) included in his *Preces Privatae* (first published in 1648), a phrase borrowed from the Orthodox Liturgy: ‘Commemorating the allholy, immaculate, more than blessed mother of God and ever-virgin Mary...’.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Jeremy Taylor (who died in 1667 as Bishop of Down and Connor) defended both the appellation ‘Mother of God’ and Mary’s perpetual virginity in his *Ductor Dubitantium* (1660). Of the latter he wrote:

‘The scripture nowhere says that the blessed Virgin was a virgin perpetually to the day of her death: but as therefore it cannot be obruded as an article of faith, yet there are a great many decencies and probabilities of the thing, besides the great consent of almost all the church of God, which makes it very fit to be entertained.’<sup>16</sup>

Taylor consistently refers to Mary reverently as ‘the blessed virgin’, which I think is the most typical Anglican appellation for her.

But theology will only take us so far: devotion is also important, and in the seventeenth century we see a renewed warmth towards Our Lady. Roger Greenacre writes:

‘This change of mood is heralded by John Donne, who... died as Dean of St Paul’s in 1631... A poem of his on the Virgin Mary, entitled ‘A Litanie’ shows a tender love for Our Lady and a very firm belief in the efficacy of her prayers.’<sup>17</sup>

Lines 37-45 of ‘A Litanie’ read:

‘For that faire blessed Mother-maid,  
Whose flesh redeem’d us; that she-Cherubin,  
Which unlock’d Paradise, and made  
One claime for innocence, and disseiz’d sinne.  
Whose wombe was a strange heav’n for there  
God cloath’d himselfe, and grew,  
Our zealous thanks wee poure. As her deeds were  
Our helps, so are her prayers; nor can she sue  
In vaine, who hath such titles unto you.’

In his book *The Joy of All Creation* Donald Allchin drew attention to ‘the theological quality of much seventeenth-century poetry and... the poetic quality of much of the Anglican preaching of the period’.<sup>18</sup> Some quotations from the sermons of Mark Frank, in which he speaks of Our Lady with warm devotion, will bear that out. Frank was born in 1613 and became a fellow of his Cambridge college, Pembroke, in 1634 but he was deprived of his fellowship in 1644. Re-instated in 1660, he became Master in 1662 but died in 1664. Though his sermons were published in the Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology in 1849, little attention was paid to them until Donald Allchin quoted them extensively in a book published in 1963, his attention having been drawn to them by Roger Greenacre, whose own paper about Mark Frank forms one of the chapters in *Maiden, Mother and Queen*.

This is how Frank’s Second Sermon on Christmas Day begins:

*‘And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.*

‘I shall not need to tell you who this “she,” or who this “him.” The day rises with it in its wings. This day wrote it with the first ray of the morning sun upon the posts of the world. The angels sung it in their choirs, the morning stars together in their courses. The Virgin Mother, the Eternal Son. The most blessed among women, the fairest of the sons of men. The woman clothed with the sun: the son compassed with a woman. She the gate of heaven: he the King of Glory that came forth. She the mother of the everlasting God: he God without a mother; God blessed for evermore. Great persons as ever met upon a day.’<sup>19</sup>

Frank ponders Mary’s lowliness, but only in order to honour her as Queen of Heaven:

‘But, if he would be born of a woman, could he not have chosen an other gates than “she,” than a poor carpenter’s wife? Some great queen or lady had been fitter far to have made as it were the Queen of Heaven, and mother to the heir of all the world.’<sup>20</sup>

Preaching on the Annunciation, Frank honours Our Lady as ‘Star of the Sea’:

*‘Maria is maris stella,* says St Bede: “the star of the sea,” a fit name for the mother of the bright Morning Star that rises out of the vast sea of God’s infinite and endless love.’<sup>21</sup>

And at Epiphany Frank describes the arrival of the Magi at the house at Bethlehem thus:

‘Hither they come to worship, hither they come to pay their offerings and their vows; here is the shrine and altar, the glorious Virgin’s lap, where the Saviour of the world is laid to be adored and worshipped; here stands the star for tapers to give it light; and here the wise men this day become priests – worship and offer, present prayers and praises, for themselves and the whole world besides; all people of the world, high and low, learned and ignorant, represented by them.’<sup>22</sup>

What Donne did in poetry and Frank in preaching, Archbishop Laud, or at least his chaplain, did in stone. In 1637 a remarkable new porch with twisted barley-sugar columns was added to the University Church of St Mary the Virgin in Oxford, and in a shell-headed niche above the arch was a statue of the Virgin and Child – probably the first such statue erected since the Reformation. It was the gift of Laud’s chaplain, Dr Morgan Owen, and its erection was used in evidence against Laud at his trial. It was shot to pieces by Parliamentary troops during the Civil War, and the present statue is a Victorian replacement.<sup>23</sup>

The most developed piece of seventeenth-century Marian devotion that I have seen comes from the pen of Thomas Traherne, who was ordained as a minister during the Commonwealth, ordained priest in 1660, and died, in his later thirties, in 1674. It comes from 'The Church's Year Book' (note the importance of the Christian year for Anglican piety). This manuscript book of meditations on the festivals from Easter to All Saints remained unpublished until the twentieth century. The meditation for All Saints begins by honouring Our Lady:

‘And first O Lord I praise and magnify thy Name  
For the Most Holy Virgin-Mother of God, who is the Highest of thy Saints.  
The most Glorious of all thy Creatures.  
The most Perfect of all thy Works.  
The nearest unto Thee, in the Throne of God.  
Whom Thou didst please to make  
Daughter of the Eternal Father.  
Mother of the Eternal Son.  
Spouse of the Eternal Spirit.  
Tabernacle of the most Glorious Trinity.’

Traherne praises Mary as a model of Christian virtues:

‘Mirror of Humility and Obedience.  
Mirror of Wisdom and Devotion.  
Mirror of Modesty and Chastity.  
Mirror of Sweetness and Resignation.  
Mirror of Sanctity.  
Mirror of all virtues.  
The most Illustrious Light in the Church, Wearing over all her  
Beauties the veil of Humility to shine the more resplendently  
in thy Eternal Glory.’<sup>24</sup>

So then, we have prominent Anglican divines of the seventeenth century for whom Mary is ‘the allholy, immaculate, more than blessed mother of God and ever-virgin Mary’, the Queen of Heaven and Star of the Sea, ‘the Tabernacle of the most Glorious Trinity’ and ‘Mirror of All Virtues’.

What we have not found so far is the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception or that of the Assumption. Mary was sinless, pure, immaculate, spotless, but how did she come to be so? Answering that question perhaps involves a degree of theological speculation to which Anglicans are often somewhat resistant, preferring the poetical or the practical to the scholastic or philosophical. Significantly, it is not in a dogmatic work but in the poetry of Thomas Ken that we at last find the immaculate conception. Ken was born in 1637 and became Bishop of Bath and Wells in 1685. In 1691 he was deprived of his see at the age of just 53 because, as Roger Greenacre put it, ‘he paid the Cost of Conscience and refused to accept the received wisdom of the day and the pressure to conform to the politic and the expedient’.<sup>25</sup> Thereafter he lived in retirement, mainly at Longleat as the guest of Thomas Thynne, the first Viscount Weymouth. He died in 1711. His works, published in 1721, include an extended poem entitled ‘Sion: or, *Philothea*’, some lines from which were included in the *English Hymnal* as the hymn ‘Her Virgin Eyes saw God incarnate born’ (*New English Hymnal*, 182).



The relevant part of the poem begins by making it clear that Mary was pre-destined to become the Mother of Our Lord. Of Joachim and Anna, Ken writes:

‘Great God, to a religious married Pair,  
United by chaste Love and mutual Pray’r,  
When on the Womb he lays a long Restraint  
Oft gives the blessing of an Infant Saint...

‘The Favour God on other Saints bestow’d,  
In *Joachim* and *Anna* overflow’d,  
God with a Daughter their devotion bless’d,  
In whose pure Womb Incarnate-God should rest.’<sup>26</sup>

Here is what the poem says about Mary’s sinlessness:

‘The Holy Ghost his Temple in her built,  
Cleans’d from congenial, kept from mortal Guilt;  
And from the Moment that her Blood was fired  
Into her Heart celestial Love inspir’d.’<sup>27</sup>

This is poetry, not prose, but surely we have here the doctrine that at the moment of her conception – ‘the Moment that her Blood was fired’ – Mary was cleansed from original sin in order that she might become the mother of Our Lord.

In lines we know from the familiar hymn, Mary is contrasted with Eve:

‘As Eve, when she her fontal Sin review’d,  
Wept for herself and all she should include;  
Bless’d Mary, with Man’s Saviour in Embrace,  
Joy’d for Herself, and for all Human Race.’<sup>28</sup>

The poem does not enter into the question of whether Mary was assumed *bodily* into heaven, but it does make clear that on earth ‘She liv’d as if already glorify’d’ and on her death she entered immediately into heaven: ‘Hast’ning to her Restorative above’.<sup>29</sup> Then comes the familiar climax, which celebrates Mary as Queen of Heaven:

‘Heav’n with transcendent Joys her Entrance grac’d,  
Next to his Throne her Son his Mother placed;  
And here below, now she’s of Heav’n possess’d,  
All Generations are to call her bless’d.’<sup>30</sup>

## **The Eighteenth Century**

In quoting verses published in 1721 we have already entered the eighteenth century. One of the few points at which, as Editor, I ventured to gloss Roger Greenacre’s work was when he commented that after the Nonjurors separated from the Established Church ‘this stream of devotion almost disappeared; the Church of England came to be dominated by a more purely protestant atmosphere and a cold, rationalist theology’. In fact, as I point out in a footnote, in the quarter century since Roger wrote those words, scholarship has underlined the persistence of high churchmanship within the Hanoverian Established Church.<sup>31</sup> Interestingly, it was in the Oxford Almanack for 1721 that the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary was first added to the Oxford University Calendar (which is otherwise largely the Prayer Book Calendar). It has remained there ever since.<sup>32</sup>

Generations of lay Anglicans, especially perhaps children and young people, sat in the pews studying their Prayer Books in the less scintillating moments of the lengthy sermons. There they found the Christian Year laid out in the Calendar, the Marian feasts, the honouring of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the designation ‘Our Lady’, the Christmas Collect and Preface, and the Magnificat. One of the most damaging developments in my lifetime has been the disappearance of the Prayer Book from the pew, supplanted by local booklets that contain only those extracts from the liturgy that have been chosen for that church or even that day. The new technology that has made that possible brings huge advantages, and we cannot uninvent it, but this development does involve an unprecedented loss of context, whereby the people in the pew are no longer inducted, almost by osmosis, into the tradition.

Central to the whole logic of the Prayer Book, as we have seen, is the Christian Year, and that therefore provided the framework for devotional writing for lay Anglicans. Probably the most important example of this was *A Companion for the Feasts and Fasts of the Church of England: with collects and prayers for each solemnity*, by the layman Robert Nelson (1656-1715), first published in 1704. Nelson was a Nonjuror when he wrote it. Though he later returned to the worship of the Established Church, he never resiled from his Nonjuring views. None the less, the book was distributed by the SPCK and read very widely throughout the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth (my copy, published in 1795, is the 27th edition; the 36th was published in 1826). This demonstrates the influence of the Nonjurors on the large number of high-church Anglicans who stayed within the Established Church.

In his section on the Annunciation, Nelson first answers the question ‘Why is the blessed Virgin styled the Mother of God?’<sup>33</sup> Then he goes on to say this of her perpetual virginity:

‘The peculiar Eminency, and unparalleled Privilege of that Mother; the special Honour and Reverence due unto that Son, and ever paid by her; the Regard of that *Holy Ghost* that came upon her; the singular Goodness and Piety of Joseph, to whom she was espoused; have persuaded the Church of God in all Ages to believe that she still continued in the same Virginity, and therefore is to be acknowledged *The Ever Virgin Mary*.’<sup>34</sup>

That is what lay Anglicans were taught about Our Lady in this most popular eighteenth-century Anglican devotional work. Those words were in fact a quotation from *An Exposition of the Creed*, published in 1659 by John Pearson (1613-1686), later Bishop of Chester – a standard guide to the doctrines of the Creed that was republished, in full or in an abridgement, right through to the end of the nineteenth century. Pearson summarized the Anglican doctrine on this point thus: ‘We believe the mother of our Lord to have been not only before and after his nativity, but also for ever, the most immaculate and blessed virgin’.<sup>35</sup> Behind that formulation we can hear Andrewes’ translation from the Orthodox Liturgy: ‘the allholy, immaculate, more than blessed mother of God and ever-virgin Mary’. These, I suggest, are the classical themes of Anglican Marian devotion: purity, motherhood, and above all blessedness and perpetual virginity, summed up in the most typical Anglican designation: ‘the Blessed Virgin Mary’.

Blessedness and virginity come together in the beautiful hymn (*NEH* 187) by Reginald Heber, who was born in 1783 and died as Bishop of Calcutta in 1826, not yet 43 years old. It appeared in his ground-breaking Anglican collection of hymns for the Christian Year (the importance of which for Anglican piety we note once again), which was published posthumously in 1827.<sup>36</sup>

Virgin-born, we bow before thee:

Blessed was the womb that bore thee;  
 Mary, Mother meek and mild,  
 Blessed was she in her Child.  
 Blessed was the breast that fed thee;  
 Blessed was the hand that led thee;  
 Blessed was the parent's eye  
 That watched thy slumbering infancy.

Blessed she by all creation,  
 Who brought forth the world's salvation,  
 And blessed they, for ever blest,  
 Who love thee most and serve thee best.

Virgin-born..., we bow before thee...'

Heber was a middle-of-the-road Anglican who if anything inclined towards evangelicalism, so his hymn tells us something about mainstream Anglican attitudes to Our Lady at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The hymn is very cleverly written: it is addressed to Christ, but its subject is Mary and its first word is 'Virgin'. In sixteen lines the word 'blessed' or 'blest' occurs ten times. No one reading this hymn could doubt that before the Oxford Movement Anglicans honoured the Blessed Virgin.

### **John Keble**

The Tractarians did not introduce into the Church of England a body of catholic doctrine and practice that was wholly alien to it. Rather, they built on the existing high-church tradition. Indeed John Keble's friend and first biographer Sir John Taylor Coleridge tells us, 'When he meant to accord strongly with some statement of doctrine, he would say, "That seems to me just what my father taught me."' <sup>37</sup> However, in re-invigorating the high-church tradition the Oxford Movement also transformed it.

We see this in the work of John Keble. What could be more Anglican than his best-selling book of devotional poems for the Sundays and red-letter days of the Prayer Book Calendar, published in 1827, entitled *The Christian Year*? But because he was writing poetry (rather than liturgy, prayer or even the new genre of Anglican hymnody represented by the publication of Heber's hymns in the same year), Keble was able to address the Blessed Virgin, something that – other than in poetry – was absolutely taboo. The poem for Candlemas ('The Purification'), beginning 'Blest are the pure in heart', includes this verse:

'His throne, thy bosom blest,  
 O Mother undefil'd –  
 That throne, if aught beneath the skies,  
 Beseems the sinless child.'<sup>38</sup>

The Annunciation poem includes four verses addressed to Our Lady, three of them beginning with the salutation 'Ave Maria!'. Devotional poetry is but a short step from hymnody. Two verses from 'Blest are the pure in heart' were published as part of the familiar four-verse hymn (*NEH* 341) as early as 1836,<sup>39</sup> and five from the Annunciation poem were eventually included in the *English Hymnal* as the hymn 'Ave Maria! blessed Maid!' (*EH* 216).

Addressing the saints in prayer (rather than poetry) was the one Reformation taboo that was in no way shaken before the Oxford Movement. George Herbert made clear his longing to address Mary in prayer in a poem published in *The Temple* in 1633 (the year of his death):

‘... I would address  
My vows to thee most gladly, blessed Maid,  
and Mother of my God, in my distress.  
Thou art the holy mine: whence came the gold,  
The great restorative for all decay in young and old;  
Thou art the cabinet where the jewell lay:  
Chiefly to thee would I my soul unfold.’<sup>40</sup>

But he could not:

‘But now (alas!) I dare not; for our King,  
Whom we do all jointly adore and praise  
Bids no such thing.’<sup>41</sup>

Bishop William Forbes of Edinburgh, who died in 1634, condemned ‘invocation’ of the saints (by which he meant praying to them as if they were deities) but he called for tolerance of ‘the very ancient custom received in the universal Church’ of what he called ‘advocation’ (asking the saints to pray to God for us). In this he was a lone voice, however. Herbert Thorndike discussed the possibility without coming to a conclusion, and Roger Greenacre could find no other seventeenth-century Anglican who commended it.<sup>42</sup> Even Newman, apparently, in the twilight of his Anglican years, felt that addressing the saints to request their prayers was a step too far. The one change to the Roman Breviary on which he insisted when his little community recited it at Littlemore was to substitute ‘*Oret pro nobis*’ (may he or she pray for us) for ‘*Ora pro nobis*’.<sup>43</sup>

It was John Keble, that radical conservative steeped (as Newman was not) in the high Anglican tradition, who first pushed the boundaries. As we have seen, he did so in 1827 with poems that were easily adapted into hymns, and then later with a poem called ‘Mother out of Sight’ which, for the first time, explicitly commended the practice of addressing Our Lady and inviting the saints to pray for us:

‘So unforbidden may we speak  
An Ave to Christ’s Mother meek:  
...  
Inviting so the saintly host above  
With our unworthiness to pray in love.’

Keble’s friend John Coleridge persuaded him that this poem was too controversial to be included in his *Lyra Innocentium*, published in 1846. It was the objections of the wife and daughter of another friend, Charles Dyson, that clinched the matter. Keble wrote:

‘I did not expect that Mrs and Miss Dyson would have objected on their own account; and it makes me even sadder than I was before, as shewing how very far even the purest specimens of the English Church are from the *Whole Church* everywhere else.’<sup>44</sup>

By 1869, when Coleridge published his biography three years after Keble’s death, printing the poem seemed unproblematic, and that is a mark of the depth of the change wrought by the Tractarians in the quarter century after Newman abandoned the Movement.

## The Twentieth Century: the Influence of the Catholic Movement

The development of devotion to Our Lady in the Catholic Movement in the century and a half since Keble's death is a subject in itself, and not one on which I can embark so close to the end of my allotted time. There is much to explore. I would love to know, for example, when and where the quintessentially Anglo-Catholic practice of singing the Angelus to Anglican chant began, or even just the earliest date at which anyone still alive can remember it being done (*I invite any readers of this lecture who have memories of it before the 1950s to get in touch with me*). What I do want to do in this final section of my Lecture is to look at four ways in which devotion to Our Lady within the Catholic Movement has influenced the wider Church of England and indeed become part of the general Anglican tradition.

The first means whereby this happened was the *English Hymnal*, published in 1906. It contained all of the hymns that have already been mentioned, including Ken's 'Her Virgin eyes', Heber's 'Virgin born', and Keble's 'Ave Maria! blessed Maid!', together with four translations of Latin office hymns of Our Lady, and 'Ye who own the faith of Jesus' by the Principal of Pusey House, Stuckey Coles. Of these eight hymns, only Heber's and one of the office hymns ('The God whom earth and sea and sky') had previously appeared in *Hymns Ancient and Modern*. (That hymn book, itself originally a catholic publication, had also included Sir Henry Baker's 'Shall we not love thee, Mother dear' – which, admittedly, is not among Anglo-Catholicism's greatest contributions to the canon of hymnody, its first verse at least struggling to rise above the level of Victorian sentimentality). Two of the office hymns in the *English Hymnal* were addressed to Our Lady. One of them, 'Hail, O Star that pointest', translated by Athelstan Riley, asked for her supplication and aid; and the refrain of 'Ye who own the faith of Jesus' is, of course, 'Hail Mary, full of grace'. These and some other hymns prompted a storm of protest from a number of bishops, including Archbishop Davidson. The committee cleverly appeased them by publishing an abridged edition omitting some hymns and verses and altering others. The abridged edition sank without trace and the *English Hymnal* was very widely used.<sup>45</sup> Through it, hymns to Our Lady became a standard part of the Anglican tradition. In 1986 the *New English Hymnal* added to the repertoire 'For Mary, Mother of the Lord' and 'Sing we of the blessed Mother', each with a splendid final verse.

A second way in which Anglo-Catholicism has re-introduced the Church of England to Our Lady is by making statues of the Blessed Virgin, often in association with a Lady Chapel, a normal feature of our parish churches. A small statue of Our Lady was, of course, introduced into this church in the time of Father Patten's immediate predecessor.<sup>46</sup>

Thirdly, and equally briefly, I must mention the restoration of the Shrine here in Walsingham in 1931, and the influence that it has had over the last eighty years – an influence that has increasingly been felt well beyond the bounds of the Catholic Movement.

And fourthly, Anglo-Catholics have been able to ensure that Our Lady is once again fully present in the Calendar and liturgy of our church. The 1928 Prayer Book included a collect, first reading and gospel for the Visitation and collects for the Nativity and Conception. *The Alternative Service Book 1980* made 8 September a red-letter day as the Festival of the Blessed Virgin Mary, gave the Visitation a set of three readings as a Lesser Festival, made Our Lady the subject of the Collect of Advent 4 and gave her a Proper Preface. Then finally, the Common Worship Calendar made the Purification and the Annunciation (now, of course, understood as feasts of Our Lord) Principal Feasts, restored 15 August as the Festival of the Blessed Virgin Mary, raised the Visit to the status of a second Festival, and made both the

Birth and the Conception Lesser Festivals. In the Common Worship *Festivals* volume (which, as Secretary of the Liturgical Commission, I had the privilege of editing) the Annunciation and the Visit have full sets of propers, and there is another full set for use on 15 August, on the two Lesser Festivals, and on other occasions when Our Lady is commemorated. This huge extension and enrichment of the official provision for liturgical celebration of the Blessed Virgin in the Church of England, which is now widely used far beyond the bounds of Anglo-Catholicism, would have been impossible without the revival of devotion to Our Lady that the Catholic Movement has fostered – and also without the engagement of successive generations of Anglo-Catholics in the discussions that shaped the 1928 Prayer Book and in the Liturgical Commissions that produced what became the ASB and Common Worship.

All of this – hymns in the *New English Hymnal*, statues of in parish churches and lady chapels, pilgrimage to the Shrine here in Walsingham, the high profile of commemoration of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Common Worship Calendar, and a wealth of liturgical provision for such commemoration in the Common Worship *Festivals* volume – all of this is no longer something exotic and marginal but firmly part of the mainstream of the Anglican tradition. It is sad that the exclusion of Anglo-Catholics from the work of ARCIC resulted in the Commission completely ignoring all of these aspects of the Anglican tradition as it is today when it published its report on Mary and the associated study volumes.

On this eve of the Assumption it seems fitting to conclude with this verse from the *New English Hymnal* by Archdeacon George Timms, who chaired the editorial committee. It brings together many of the themes of which I have been speaking and exemplifies the richness of the Anglican tradition of devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary:

‘Sing the chiefest joy of Mary  
When on earth her work was done,  
And the Lord of all creation  
Brought her to his heavenly home:  
Virgin Mother, Mary blessed,  
Raised on high and crowned with grace,  
May your Son, the world’s redeemer,  
Grant us all to see his face.’

Amen

- 
- <sup>1</sup> R. Elder, 'Mary in the common Latin tradition: agreement, disagreements and divergence' in A. Denaux and N. Sagovsky (eds), *Studying Mary: Reflections on the Virgin Mary in Anglican and Roman Catholic Theology and Devotion* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 73-109 at pp. 80-81, 83-4, 94.
- <sup>2</sup> Elder, 'Mary in the common Latin tradition: agreement, disagreements and divergence', pp. 83-4, 94.
- <sup>3</sup> Greenacre, *Maiden, Mother and Queen*, p. 109; R. W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (1953; reprinted London: The Cresset Library, 1988), p. 221.
- <sup>4</sup> Greenacre, *Maiden, Mother and Queen*, p. 110.
- <sup>5</sup> R. Ward, *The Mariology of St Anselm: The Walsingham Assumptiontide Lecture 2009*, p. [3].
- <sup>6</sup> Greenacre, *Maiden, Mother and Queen*, p. 66.
- <sup>7</sup> S. Thurley, *The Building of England: How the History of England has Shaped our Buildings* (London: William Collins, 2013), pp. 122, 137-8.
- <sup>8</sup> J. H. Newman, *Essays Critical and Historical*, vol. 2 (London: Basil Montagu Pickering, 1872), p. 1 (title of an article published in January 1840).
- <sup>9</sup> Elder, 'Mary in the common Latin tradition: agreement, disagreements and divergence', p. 76.
- <sup>10</sup> D. Bolen and G. Cameron (eds), *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ. The Seattle Statement of the Anglican – Roman Catholic International Commission: The Text with Commentaries and Study Guide* (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 48, para. 45.
- <sup>11</sup> Greenacre, *Maiden, Mother and Queen*, p. 69, n. 9.
- <sup>12</sup> The abortive *Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum*, completed in 1553 as a replacement for the mediaeval canon law but never promulgated, said '... we freely grant great honour to the councils, and especially to the ecumenical ones' but 'even among the councils themselves we make a huge distinction': of the first four, from Nicaea to Chalcedon, it said 'we embrace and accept them with great reverence' (1.14) [*Tudor Church Reform. The Henrician Canons of 1535 and the Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum*, ed. G. Bray (Church of England Record Society, vol. 8, 2000), pp. 180-183]. The 1559 Act of Supremacy made a similar distinction, allowing the decisions of the first four ecumenical councils to be used as proof that something was heresy on their own authority, but decisions of later councils only when 'the same was declared heresy by the express and plain words of the... canonical Scriptures' [G. R. Elton (ed.), *The Tudor Constitution: Documents and Commentary* (Cambridge, 1960), p. 368].
- <sup>13</sup> *Sermons, or Homilies, appointed to be read in churches* (London, 1833; facsimile: Lewes, 1986), p. 138. See also H. Chadwick, 'The Status of Ecumenical Councils in Anglican Thought' in H. Chadwick, *Tradition and Exploration: Collected papers on Theology and the Church* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1994), pp. 258-269.
- <sup>14</sup> M. Nazir-Ali and N. Sagovsky, 'The Virgin Mary in the Anglican tradition of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries' in Denaux and Sagovsky (eds), *Studying Mary*, pp. 131-46 at p. 133.
- <sup>15</sup> L. Andrewes, *The Preces Privatae of Lancelot Andrewes, Bishop of Winchester*, tr. F. E. Brightman (London: Methuen, 1903), p. 85.
- <sup>16</sup> Quoted by Nazir-Ali and Sagovsky, 'The Virgin Mary in the Anglican tradition of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', p. 142.
- <sup>17</sup> Greenacre, *Maiden, Mother and Queen*, p. 124.
- <sup>18</sup> A. M. Allchin, *The Joy of All Creation: An Anglican Meditation on the Place of Mary* (2nd end, London: New City, 1993), p. 37.
- <sup>19</sup> M. Frank, *Sermons of Mark Frank, D.D.* (Oxford, 1849), vol. 1, p. 77.
- <sup>20</sup> Frank, *Sermons*, vol. 1, pp. 79-80.
- <sup>21</sup> Frank, *Sermons*, vol. 2, pp. 39-40.
- <sup>22</sup> Frank, *Sermons*, vol. 1, p. 280.
- <sup>23</sup> G. Parry, *Glory, Laud and Honour: The Arts of the Anglican Counter-Reformation* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2006), pp. 75-6.
- <sup>24</sup> Quoted by Allchin, *The Joy of All Creation*, pp. 117-8.
- <sup>25</sup> Greenacre, *Maiden, Mother and Queen*, p. 79.
- <sup>26</sup> [W. Hawkins (ed.),] *The Works of the Right Reverend, Learned and Pious Thomas Ken D.D., Late Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells*, vol. 4 (London, 1721), p. 366.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 367.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 370.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 372.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 373.
- <sup>31</sup> Greenacre, *Maiden, Mother and Queen*, pp. 97-8.
- <sup>32</sup> *The Oxford Almanack for the Year of our Lord God MDCCXXI*. The calendars in the first three Almanacks, published in the 1670s, had a saint for each day, but in the 1678 Almanack the calendar was reduced more or

---

less to that of the Prayer Book: H. M. Petter, *The Oxford Almanacks* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), pp. 24-25.

<sup>33</sup> R. Nelson, *A Companion for the Feasts and Fasts of the Church of England: with collects and prayers for each solemnity* (27th edn: London, 1795), p. 147.

<sup>34</sup> Nelson, *A Companion for the Feasts and Fasts of the Church of England*, pp. 148-9.

<sup>35</sup> Quoted by Nazir-Ali and Sagovsky, 'The Virgin Mary in the Anglican tradition of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', p. 142.

<sup>36</sup> R. Heber [ed. A. Heber], *Hymns, written and adapted to the Weekly Church Service of the Year* (London: John Murray, 1827).

<sup>37</sup> J. T. Coleridge, *A Memoir of the Rev. John Keble, M.A., Late Vicar of Hursley* (London: Mowbray, 1909), vol. 2 (2nd edn, Oxford and London: James Parker, 1869), p. 564.

<sup>38</sup> J. Keble, *The Christian Year: Thoughts in Verse for the Sundays and Holydays throughout the Year* (new edn: London: Church Literature Association, 1976), p. 157.

<sup>39</sup> M. Frost (ed.), *Historical Companion to Hymns Ancient & Modern* (London: William Clowes & Sons, 1962), p. 321.

<sup>40</sup> From *The Temple* (1633), quoted by Greenacre, *Maiden, Mother and Queen*, p. 125.

<sup>41</sup> Quoted by Greenacre, *Maiden, Mother and Queen*, p. 125.

<sup>42</sup> Greenacre, *Maiden, Mother and Queen*, pp. 125-8.

<sup>43</sup> Greenacre, *Maiden, Mother and Queen*, p. 129.

<sup>44</sup> Coleridge, *A Memoir of the Rev. John Keble*, p. 290.

<sup>45</sup> A. Luff (ed.), *Strengthen for Service: 100 Years of the English Hymnal, 1906-2006* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2005), pp. 14-23.

<sup>46</sup> M. Rear, *Walsingham: Pilgrims and Pilgrimage* (London: St Pauls, 2005), p. 207.