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Peter Iver Kaufman

University of Richmond, pkaufman@richmond.edu

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Fasting in England in the 1560s: “A Thinge of Nought”?*

By Peter Iver Kaufman

We continue to learn about the unsettled condition of the Elizabethan religious settlement in the early 1560s. “Perceived deficiencies” associated with a woman’s sovereignty and supreme governance of the realm’s reformed church dictated that counsel be “insistently proposed to and, at points, imposed upon” Elizabeth I “by her godly male subjects.” We now appreciate, however, that the queen was not drawn or driven to the left by puritans, as John Neale influentially suspected in the 1950s. And we may conclude from David Crankshaw’s recent study of the Canterbury provincial convocation of 1563 that the bishops her government appointed were not “as obstructive and even backsliding” as historians once supposed.¹

Officials now appear to have been feeling their way cautiously rather than steering decisively toward or away from further reform of the church. The queen’s new bishops quickly came to understand that adapting inveterate patterns of parish piety to Protestantism would be hard indeed. “So many withstand the manifest truth,” James Pilkington lamented shortly after becoming bishop of Durham.² In his diocese and elsewhere in the north of England,

* I am grateful to Professors John Headley, Norman Jones, and Carolyn Wood for their remarks on earlier drafts of “Fasting.” Abbreviations: CCCC: Cambridge, Parker Library, Corpus Christi College – CR: *Corpus Reformatorum* – PL: *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne.

1. David Crankshaw, “Preparations for the Canterbury Provincial Convocation of 1562–63: A Question of Attribution,” in: Susan Wabuda and Caroline Litzenberger (eds.): *Belief and Practice in Reformation England*, Aldershot 1998, pp. 60–93. Nor were the bishops or others exiled with many of them during Mary’s reign subversive upon their return. See N.M. Sutherland, “The Marian Exiles and the Establishment of the Elizabethan Regime,” *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 78 (1987), pp. 253–286. For purportedly influential puritans in parliament, compare John E. Neale, “The Elizabethan Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity,” *English Historical Review* 65 (1950), p. 324, with Norman L. Jones, *Faith By Statute: Parliament and the Settlement of Religion, 1559*, London 1982, especially pp. 61–64, 169–85; and Winthrop Hudson, *The Cambridge Connection and the Elizabethan Settlement of 1559*, Durham, NC 1980, pp. 93–99, 143–154. For “perceived deficiencies” and the importance of “counsel,” see Anne N. McLaren, *Political Culture in the Reign of Elizabeth I: Queen and Commonwealth, 1558–1585*, Cambridge 1999, pp. 43–46, 99–103.

2. *Answer to Popish Questions*, in: James Scholefield (ed.): *The Works of James Pilkington*, Cambridge 1842, p. 633.

Catholic practices seem to have lingered longest, although Christopher Haigh now suggests that priests and leading laymen “in most places sustain[ed] an attenuated Catholicism” well into the 1560s. Haigh might well be overestimating the tenacity and survival of “survivalist Catholicism,” but reformers responsible for policy did undertake what David Hickman calls a “reevaluation,” something of a reappraisal, in order to allow for continuities in religious practice and to “negotiate between traditional popular culture” and an emerging Elizabethan Protestantism. The purpose of this essay is to illustrate that “reevaluation” by introducing one of its forgotten casualties, John Sanderson or Saunderson of Lancashire and Trinity College, Cambridge.³

Sanderson (1530s-1602) surfaces in Archbishop Parker’s papers, unheralded, injudicious, and in peril. He had been heard to hold “a superstitious doctrine of fasting.” In early September 1562, some months after elected a fellow at Trinity, he lectured in the college chapel on fasting. His choice of topic and his timing were terrible, as College officials informed him promptly, “privatelie, and familiarlie.” Their explanations and Sanderson’s replies are largely lost to us. We know that he agreed to reconsider, but “seniors” at the college and the vice-chancellor of the university were dissatisfied with his “recantation.” Believing that he had trivialized their objections to his original re-

3. David Hickman, “Religious Belief and Pious Practice among London’s Elizabethan Elite,” *The Historical Journal* 42 (1999), pp. 942, 949; Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors*, Oxford 1993, p. 252; Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580*, New Haven 1992, p. 584. Also, for the strength of residual Catholicism, review Christopher Haigh, “The Continuity of Catholicism,” in: Christopher Haigh (ed.): *The English Reformation Revised*, Cambridge 1987, pp. 176-208; J.J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People*, Oxford 1984; Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation in England, 1547-1603*, London 1990, pp. 27-37, who argues that “the political nation,” those who mattered, exhibited a religiously conservative streak well into the 1560s. But popular resistance to the emerging Protestant reform looks, in some studies, rather more like indifference to confessional commitments; see Robert Whiting, *Blind Devotion of the People: Popular Religion and the English Reformation*, Cambridge 1989; Whiting, *Local Responses to the English Reformation*, New York 1998; Christopher Marsh, *Popular Religion and the English Reformation*, Cambridge 1998. See also the relevant remarks on the integration of evangelical or reformed ideas with prevailing religious practices in Nicholas Tyacke, *England’s Long Reformation, 1500-1800*, Oxford 1998, pp. 1-32; Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, Oxford 1999. In *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year, 1400-1700*, Oxford 1996, Ronald Hutton makes more of the irreconcilability and of discontinuities between the reformed leadership and the laity.

marks, they expelled him.⁴ Authorities in church and government had discussed fasting for decades. Although Thomas Cranmer denounced fasts as “papistical superstitions,” reformers under King Edward VI were only partly successful in legislating them away, and Queen Mary had her first parliament repeal their prohibitions.⁵ But then, on the threshold of the new reign, John Sanderson, his critics, and the “custom” they debated showed how touchy reformed officials had become, well aware that their “negotiations” and “settlement” settled for something that seemed nearly Catholic.

I. FASTING AND REFORM

Huldrych Zwingli was dining with friends in Zürich when they broke the lenten fast in 1522. Although he did not join them, he later defended their freedom to choose foods during Lent, to eat meat instead of fish. Christ set Christians free, he said; to observe Catholic prohibitions against eating meat was “to submit again” to bondage. The prohibitions were unscriptural as well as inconsistent with the emancipation effected by Christ’s death on the cross and accepted by faith.⁶

The same conclusion could have been drawn from what Martin Luther had earlier argued and preached about the cross and Christian liberty. Only in the late 1520s, however, did he and his associates make it explicit when they told “visitors” of reformed churches to specify that observing fasts made no one pious.⁷ A short article composed for the Augsburg Confession of 1530 repeated that specification, but Philipp Melanchthon cut it. Revising the statement of faith, he apparently found that fasting was not worth a fuss. Zwingli, too, was unconcerned, silent after 1522. Deletions and indifference have not gone unnoticed. Diet was “of minor importance,” says Wilhelm Maurer, speaking of Melanchthon; “a minor matter,” “one of the most adiaphorous of

4. CCCC, MS 106, pp. 538–539.

5. The repeal is printed in Henry Gee and William John Hardy (eds.): *Documents Illustrative of English Church History*, London 1910, pp. 378–379. For Cranmer’s opposition, consult Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England: From Cranmer to Hooker*, Princeton 1970, pp. 23–36, 230.

6. See Zwingli, *Von Erkiesen und Freiheit der Speisen*, in: Emil Egli and Georg Finsler (eds.): *Huldreich Zwinglis sämtliche Werke*, CR 88, pp. 99, 125, 135, citing Galatians 5:1.

7. The *Unterricht der Visitatoren* is printed in *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, 26, Weimar 1909, p. 228: “Da ist von noten zu wissen das solche ordenung halten hilfft nicht frumlichkeit fur Gott zuerlangen.”

the adiaphora,” George Potter remarks in reference to Zwingli’s silence.⁸ Decades later, when Sanderson claimed that fasting was “a thinge of nought,” he was shocked that his view of the matter drew such fire from the heirs of Zwingli and Luther.⁹

Yet by then, in the last Latin edition of his *Institutes* (1561), John Calvin had told the second and subsequent generations of reformers that fasting deserved careful analysis and rehabilitation. It was no “thinge of nought.” It must not be taken up uncritically from the Catholics, to be sure, but neither should it be discredited and discontinued as if it were obsolete. For fasting prepared the mind for prayer, Calvin acknowledged; it enabled Christians to break the tyranny of the flesh and at least temporarily to get the better of their basest desires. Fasts also prompted humility, self-deprecation, the sincerest confessions of guilt, and gratitude for God’s grace (*ut testimonium sit nostrae coram Deo humilitationis*).¹⁰

Calvin’s endorsement followed his blistering attack on Catholic practice. He complained that Rome attached “false and pernicious opinions” to fasting: popes kept piling prohibitions on prescriptions, giving Catholics cause to think that menu and diet were worship. Calvin argued that fasting fared better when principles replaced rules. Instead of declaring precisely when and what Christians must not eat, he urged them to eat sparingly. Above all, the faithful must not exaggerate the nobility of fasting and the rewards associated with it in Catholic doctrine and practice. Commenting on 1 Corinthians 7:5, Calvin inferred that fasting might be adapted to the new Protestant penitential practice. Fasts were excellent preparations for prayer, he explained. Presumably God would approve the fasts that prompted prayer and developed or deepened experiences of remorse, of “authentic humility and sorrow.”¹¹

In England Hugh Latimer was more reserved. He thought meatless Fridays a farce. “God gave mankind liberty to eat all manner of clean beasts.” Christians were no less heirs to that “liberty” because Roman Catholic officials managed to mark up a calendar. But they had managed to mark it up quite extensively. John Bossy calculates that Catholics fasted – taking one meal a day – or abstained from meat over one third of the year. Friday fasts were commonly observed, as was fasting during all the weekdays of Lent. All were

8. Wilhelm Maurer, *Historical Commentary on the Augsburg Confession*, trans. H. George Anderson, Philadelphia 1986, p.19; George R. Potter, *Zwingli*, Cambridge 1976, p.74.

9. CCCC, MS 106, p. 539.

10. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.12.15, CR 30, p.914.

11. *Institutes*, 4.12.19, CR 30, p.917.

told to abstain from meat on Saturdays and to fast during the twelve annual ember days (three each after the first Sunday in Lent, at Pentecost, before the Feast of the Holy Cross, and before St. Lucy's day). Into the 1530s, the St. John's fast on Wednesdays was observed or not according to local custom. Latimer was having none of all this, yet he admitted there were limits to Christian freedom – “hedges,” he called them. Cannibalism was forbidden, as was gluttony. Moreover, Christians should not scandalize their neighbors. “In the north country” where the dietary restrictions died hard, Christians who learned how absurd it was to abstain on orders nonetheless should “offend no man's conscience” and avoid “destroy[ing anyone] with thy meat.” Others encouraged the faithful to offend, that is, to instruct “backward brethren,” as Huldrych Zwingli said; Latimer, however, counseled patience. Preaching about his “hedges” in Lincolnshire, he warned reformed Christians against giving offense. They must observe the regulations for fasting and teach the contrary until the superstitious came around or proved absolutely intractable. The final limit to a Christian's liberty – the final “hedge,” that is – was set (or planted) “by the king's majesty and his most honorable council.” The government ordered fasts and restricted citizens' liberties. Thus, “although scripture commandeth me not to abstain from flesh upon Fridays and Saturdays, yet for all that, seeing there is civil law and ordinance, we ought to obey.” The king's ruling was not “against God,” Latimer conceded, obviously without liking it.¹²

This last hedge troubled Latimer. Perhaps he thought that his archbishop, Thomas Cranmer, and the government were making too great a concession to “traditionalist feeling” when they ordered subjects to observe lenten fasts. After all, Cranmer had caused something of a sensation years earlier in Canterbury by eating meat on the feast of St. Thomas Becket. Latimer may have expected livelier opposition from his fellow reformer. Other reformed preachers did not or, if they did, kept quiet. By the early 1550s, they might well have heard of the connections Calvin was drawing between fasting and self-discipline, penitence, and prayer. Perhaps without any prodding, then, they asked the faithful to fast often. And if reformed preachers were inclined to serve the reformed regime from their pulpits, “also for worldly and civil policy,” they told parishioners “to spare flesh and use fish” on Wednesdays, Fridays, and

12. George Elwes Corrie (ed.): *Sermons and Remains of Hugh Latimer*, 2, Cambridge 1845, pp. 14–17. For Zwingli's remarks on “backward brethren” (*bloder schwacher*), see *Erkiesen*, CR 88, p. 116. On fast days and abstinence, see Duffy, *Altars*, pp. 319–320; John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community*, London 1975, p. 110.

Saturdays. In 1548 King Edward VI's proclamation explained why: consumer restraint or abstinence permitted the herds to recover. There was abundant, inexpensive meat on the market, but fishing had declined and, with it, mariners' competence. A switch to fish would provide the incentive to rebuild the fleets and train crews to defend "this realm on every part environed with the seas."¹³

Martin Bucer, one of Cranmer's distinguished guests from the continent, regretted the king's and council's intervention. He was especially saddened that prescribed times for fasting "for civil policy" coincided with those on which Catholics fasted "superstitiously." "We ought to avoid the appearance of agreeing with the antichrists," he advised – agreeing, that is, on the selection of fast days (*dierum discrimine*) and on diet (*in delectu ciborum*). Bucer countenanced fasts yet recommended that observances and schedules be left to individuals.¹⁴ Reviewing Cranmer's liturgical reforms, he registered what should be done and what must be shunned on holy days. He put prayer among the *facienda*, but not required fasting. Nor did he include fasting among the *vitanda*. He decided against designating precisely what carnal preoccupations (*negotia carnis*) the reformed Christian ought to forgo.¹⁵

Bucer sometimes seems evasive. Latimer was reserved ("although scripture commandeth me not to abstain"). But Archbishop Cranmer's chaplain, Thomas Becon, devoted an entire treatise to the proper use of fasting. Claiming that it was the first such work "in our English tongue," he dedicated it to Cranmer, applauding him for his commitment to sift tares from the wheat that England inherited from Roman Catholicism. Becon then promised to advance that work, to weed out errors that prevented fasting from being "rightly used."¹⁶

13. The king's proclamation "for the abstaining from flesh in lent time" may be found in: John Edmund Cox (ed.): *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters of Thomas Cranmer*, Cambridge 1846, pp. 507–508. For Cranmer's sensation and concession, see Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life*, New Haven 1996, pp. 198, 447, respectively; Duffy, *Altars*, p. 430.

14. Bucer, *De regno Christi*, in: François Wendel (ed.): *Martini Bucer opera Latina*, 15, Paris 1955, pp. 85–86.

15. Bucer's *Censura* is reprinted with an English translation in: E. C. Whitaker (ed.): *Martin Bucer and the Book of Common Prayer*, Great Wakering 1974, pp. 142–143.

16. Becon, *A Treatise of Fasting* (1551), in: John Ayre (ed.): *The Catechism of Thomas Becon with other pieces written by him in the reign of King Edward VI*, Cambridge 1844, pp. 526–527. Becon had previously commented in a similar way on the "proper use" of fasting in his *Potation for Lent* (1543), in: John Ayre (ed.): *The Early Works of*

Catholics were the culprits in Becon's tale. Custom and fear rather than contrition made Catholic laymen abstain when and how they were told. Adulterers forsake meat sooner than they give up their lovers; usurers master their appetites while still mastered by their greed. They were not fasting, Becon decided. There could be no fast unless sins were sincerely, effectively renounced. Yet Becon was not altogether unimpressed by the spectacle of sinners abstaining from something other than their sins. That was something of a tribute to Catholic officials who had, after all, frightened those sinners into fasting, he allowed; evidently Catholic clergy made impenitent gluttons believe they were damned if, at certain hours of the day or on certain days of the year, they so much as swallowed their spit.¹⁷ Because abstinence increases self-awareness and self-discipline, prompts humility, and strengthens faith, Becon concluded, "fasting is necessary": "For as a man in a filthy glass seeth not himself such one as he is indeed; so likewise if he be overladen with too much eating and drinking, thinketh himself to be another manner of man than he is. Yea, then is he provoked into sensuality. But if the body be kept in order, accustomed of fasting, then doth the soul know the better with what devotion she ought to serve her redeemer."¹⁸

Lent – a season "not for the mouth but for the mind," not for the belly but for the soul and spirit – was a perfect time to fast to devotion. Penitents gave up their pleasures. Theirs was not a "delicate warfare," Becon asserted, but a discipline that did away with provocations "unto sensuality."¹⁹ Roman Catholics, conceivably with Zwingli, Luther, and Melancthon in their sights, claimed that Protestantism was all faith and no fasting. Becon countered that Catholics were all fasting and no faith. He accused them of so inflating the importance of the rules and rewards for fasting that they forgot "the fruits and merits of Christ's passion." In effect, they forgot that faith justified the faithful.²⁰ Agreeing with Bucer, Becon mentioned that "the true and Christian fast is done freely and willingly [whereas] the popish and superstitious fast serveth the custom only and is done at the commandment of men with a grudging and unwilling mind." Yet as Cranmer's chaplain, and as the Lord Protector's chaplain as well, Becon could hardly scold the government for ordering abstinence; therefore, he distinguished between his retainers'

Thomas Becon, being the treatises published by him in the reign of King Henry VIII, Cambridge 1843, pp. 103–110.

17. Becon, *Fasting*, pp. 535–536, 542, 548; Becon, *Potation*, pp. 106–107.

18. Becon, *Fasting*, p. 544.

19. Becon, *Potation*, p. 91.

20. Becon, *Fasting*, pp. 542, 551.

regulations for fasting and those of Rome. Catholicism, he remarked, forced fasting for superstitious custom and to make the laity's fears serve Rome's tyranny. But "urgent cause" moved England to transform Catholic practice into "worldly and civil policy."²¹

Transforming Catholic practice into "civil policy" was risky business, however. Catholics might be encouraged by what seemed to be concessions to the old church. Whatever the "urgent cause[s]," ardent reformers would likely oppose backward glances written into policy. In England by the early 1560s, the situation was still more complicated. Before then, the realm had returned to Roman Catholicism. Reformers took it as a return to "superstitious custom," and many of them fled to the continent. Becon left, but others remained, objecting irreverently to the Catholic menu. Cranmer and Latimer were executed, as was John Philpot, who had a parting word about fasting by the calendar. Christians, he declared, were "bound unto these [prescribed fasts] by no laws."²²

II. DAYS, DIETS, AND "DISCIPLINES OF OBEDIENCE"

From 1558 and into the 1560s, the government of Queen Elizabeth I formulated and enforced laws to bind subjects to the still fragile order. Queen and council were partial to religious reform, yet wary of factions among reformers that might divide the realm and eventually destroy the new regime. Reformers advocating rapid and thorough change were encouraged to exercise restraint. They trusted the new archbishop of Canterbury, Matthew Parker, whose welcome to returning refugees from the continent like Becon was said to have been "warmer than all the rest."²³ A few reformers likely grumbled about fasting by the Catholic calendar, but most must have admitted that restrictions had what Henry Barrow later called a "shew of probabilitie." They accepted that their fellow Elizabethans fasted on a familiar schedule to prepare for prayer and sermons. For progress had been made in clearing the Catholic "customs" that most offended reformers. Cranmer's prayerbook was revised and back in circulation. The papacy was again repudiated. Even the more im-

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 530–533.

22. "The Examination of the Constant Martyr of Christ, John Philpot (1559)," in: Robert Eden (ed.): *The Examination and Writings of John Philpot*, Cambridge 1842, p. 405.

23. See Edwin Sandys' letter to Archbishop Parker, London, Lambeth Palace Library MS 959.2, unfoliated.

patient reformers might be kept on the leash into the early 1560s, straining, nonetheless, when council, queen, and bishops appeared to them overly cautious.²⁴

Inadvertently, the government's caution and the queen's disinclination to persecute kept England's Catholics relatively calm during the early 1560s. Without occasion to stir opposition, indigenous Catholic leadership seemed resigned to the "slow, easy erosion of their commitment." Parish officials were also cautious and sometimes slow to dispose of mass utensils and rood-lofts when ordered to do so. "Catholic loyalty or common prudence?" One must avoid generalizing, but we do well to recall that, in 1558, every thirty-year-old had experienced three changes in regime and religion.²⁵

When bishops and other diocesan authorities showed greater initiative, urging enforcement of legislation intended to achieve conformity, a number of the local justices of the peace apparently were slow to cooperate. Their "gentle dealing" aggravated some influential members of the queen's council, who instructed bishops to report any dereliction of duty.²⁶ But the bishops also acted independently. Shortly after Elizabeth's accession, Grindal of London directed parish authorities to cancel processions during Rogation Week. They calculated the price of obedience, decided to accommodate local custom, permitted perambulations to mark parish boundaries, but prohibited "banners ... and other like monuments of superstition." At ground level, the purpose was to reform yet to avoid resentments and rebellion. In Chester, parishioners perambulating "with crosse and banners" were not prosecuted "because it fall-eth out that they committed the fault upon ignoraunce."²⁷ Grindal explained, however, that he and his episcopal colleagues were intent on eliminating "superstitious behavior." Other reformers had already told the queen at the start of her reign that they were similarly disposed, emphatically so in one

24. For progress, caution, and response, see Norman L. Jones, *The Birth of the Elizabethan Age*, Oxford 1993, pp. 17–30, but also note William P. Haugaard, *Elizabeth and the English Reformation: The Struggle for a Stable Settlement of Religion*, Cambridge 1968, pp. 79–80, 89–91. For "more shew," see Leland H. Carlson (ed.): *The Writings of Henry Barrowe, 1587–1590*, London 1962, p. 396.

25. Jones, *Birth*, pp. 66–67, for "erosion"; Haigh, *Reformations* (see n. 3), p. 247, for "loyalty or prudence."

26. Consult Edward Fleetwood's recollections, London, British Library, Additional MS 48064, fol. 68v; and results of the survey: Mary Bateson (ed.): *A Collection of Original Letters from the Bishops to the Privy Council, 1564*, London 1893.

27. Chester Record Office, EDA 12/2/39v, for the parishioners' "ignoraunce" in 1563. For Grindal's decree, see William Nicholson (ed.): *The Remains of Archbishop Grindal*, Cambridge 1843, pp. 240–241.

particular: namely, to end “hypocritical fasting and superstitious choise of daies and meates.”²⁸ The dossier of papers related to John Sanderson’s dismissal from Cambridge shows how serious they were but also demonstrates how difficult they found it to recommend days and diets while “reevaluating” the old church’s “customs.”

Sanderson argued that fasting on prescribed days and in prescribed ways was neither hypocritical nor superstitious. Dietary restrictions, he said, originated in Christian antiquity, and if the church’s “fathers, being of so ripe and perfect judgment did erre, ye must give me leave if I erre.”²⁹ Yet Sanderson’s critics might have discovered a way around his “if-they-then-I.” Several passages he cited, in fact, seemed to undermine rather than support his position, particularly the passages from Augustine. In his *Contra Faustum*, for example, Augustine acknowledges that Christians of the time observed the same days and times for fasting but did so “more or less as they wished or were able.”³⁰ And in the same vein, in a letter on dietary restrictions to which Sanderson also referred, Augustine claimed that there was no biblical warrant (*nihil certi statuit*) for prescribed days and diets.³¹

How, then, did Sanderson turn Augustine to advantage? Only the citations survive – too few of them to help us make sense of Sanderson’s overtures to antiquity. The question, therefore, is unanswerable, but thanks to incriminating evidence his accusers uncovered, some speculation is admissible. University authorities interrogated two of Sanderson’s associates, Messrs. West and Green, who reported he had purchased copies of an unnamed volume by Johannes Hoffmeister. They had heard him commend it as “very fytt and worthye ... to be translated into English for the edefiing of the people.”³²

Hoffmeister, a respected Augustinian provincial and Catholic apologist, had been asked to attend the Council of Trent but declined and died soon after the decision was made to move the deliberations to Bologna in 1547. Nonetheless, Hoffmeister corresponded with colleagues at the council, showing special interest in the discussion of justification. He seems to have been looking for premises to which a Protestant reformer might consent. Hoffmeister conceded that justification was unmerited, *per fidem et gratis*, but he insisted that the faithful be prepared – that the ground be worked. Otherwise

28. CCCC, MS 121, fols. 150–151.

29. CCCC, MS 106, fol. 538.

30. Augustine, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*, 30.5, *PL* 42, pp. 493–494: “quanto magis quisque vel minus seu voluerit, seu poterit.”

31. *PL* 33, p. 136.

32. For the depositions: CCCC, MS 106, fol. 538.

the seeds planted *gratis* would not take root. Fasting was one of the “disciplines of obedience” that prepared the soil.³³ In his digest of doctrine, *Loci Communes*, Hoffmeister discusses fasts at some length and features Augustine’s letter, which conceded that the Christians’ scriptures did not pronounce definitively on days and diets. Augustine, Hoffmeister explained, was simply indicting overscrupulous Manichaeans, heretics who tyrannically regulated eating; he had no objection to Christians’ fasting by the calendar. Possibly Sanderson learned from the *Loci* (and repeated in his lectures and appeal to the queen’s commissioners) that Augustine trusted custom when the scriptures fell silent. The scriptures’ silence was no challenge to the churches’ customs because the Bible, Hoffmeister argued elsewhere, was not an exhaustive program for Christian conduct.³⁴

But that argument did not deter Sanderson from combing the Hebrew scriptures for passages “to prove difference of tymes and meats.” He drew Numbers 11:18 into his “proof”: God promised there to supply “flesh” the next day to those praying for provisions (*cras comedetis carnes*). Sanderson appears to have stressed the *cras*, making it something of a precedent for designating days and diet. Officials objected, and later, under duress, he repented his tendentious take on “tomorrow.”³⁵

Sanderson also came to regret another philological sally: “alleging a place out of the tenth chapter of Ecclesiastes, I brought in Plato to shew that by *Rex* in that place [Ecclesiastes 10:17] is ment reason.” Subsequently he admitted that exchanging reason for *rex* was “altogether abomynable.” He was sorry, he said, to have invited Plato into an interpretation of sacred texts. Unfortunately, nothing in his papers shows how Greek philosophy or Ecclesiastes could have documented the “difference of tymes and meates.” Not long after his ordeal, English Catholic translators at Douai rendered that same passage, yet without suggesting how a partisan of fixed days for fasting might use it: “blessed is the land whose king is noble and whose princes eat in due season for refreshment not for riotousness.”

33. On justification and “disciplines of obedience,” see Nikolaus Paulus, *Der Augustinermönch Johannes Hoffmeister*, Freiburg 1891, pp. 279–280; on Hoffmeister and Trent, see Remigius Baumer, “Johannes Hoffmeister,” in: Erwin Iserloh (ed.): *Katholische Theologen der Reformationszeit*, 4, Münster 1987, pp. 51–52.

34. Consult Paulus, *Hoffmeister*, pp. 335–338, for that argument. On Hoffmeister’s *jejunii laudes*, see his *Loci communes rerum theologiarum*, Antwerp 1552, pp. 220v–228v, particularly pp. 225v–226v, for the analysis of Augustine’s remarks. For Augustine’s comments on custom (*mos populi Dei*), see *PL* 33, pp. 136–137, 151.

35. CCCC, MS 106, fols. 537, 539.

It is easier to see what Sanderson may have made of Saul's curse in 1 Samuel 14:24, where the king ordered the Israelites to abstain from food and drink until evening, *usque ad vesperam*, and to await the completion of his vengeance against the Philistines. Forget the context, and the passage seems a likely precedent for proscribing food. But Sanderson's critics did not see how the *ad vesperam* "betokened differences of tymes." Careful with contexts that served their side of the controversy, the critics were contemptuous of Sanderson's exegesis and "reprehended" him for the "licentyouse usage of allegories ... and for saynge tymes are to be observed in fastinge." Their harassment had what appeared to be the desired result: Sanderson surrendered. Allegories, he said, were "lawfull" only if "they be sparynglie used." His excesses, he admitted, had led him to see more in scripture than was there. "Whereas I said I had thought that observances of dayes and differences of tymes had been imported by the three places of scripture, Numbers 11, 1 Samuel 14, and Ecclesiates 10 ... I thinke nowe and willinglie confesse that neither this nor any other place of the whole scriptures to my knowledge doth import an [unreadable words] necessarie abstynencie from any kind of meat and drynke of any one especial day more than any other."³⁶

Sanderson characterized all thinking to the contrary "superstitious error," but his reversal did not save his position. His dismissal pleased Alexander Nowell, the dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, who stated that Sanderson had exhibited "the obstinacie of the papists" and should never again take to the lectern. The Cambridge critics also referred to Rome, complaining of "cloked papistrie" when they mentioned Sanderson's "unsufferable contumacie," "manifest contempts of authoritie," and "want of reverence never sene before in Trynite Colledge."³⁷ The defendant tried to rally support with a disclaimer. Save for his regrettably "superstitious doctryne" of fasting, he said, "I am ... and I have always been (no man is able to prove the contrarie) conformable in all poyntes of religion."³⁸

Strategically deployed in his appeal to the queen's commissioners, Sanderson's statement probably exaggerated his accommodation to the new religious settlement. Nonetheless, his critics' nearly exclusive concentration on "tymes and meats" suggests his conformity on other issues, and his retraction suggests conformability. Hence, Sanderson's removal is rather baffling, particu-

36. *Ibid.*, fol. 539.

37. *Ibid.*, fols. 529 ("papistrie"), 534 (Nowell's intervention), 539 ("never sene before").

38. *Ibid.*, fol. 535.

larly so because there was sentiment in favor of scholars' "be[ing] tolerated for a time" when slow to conform. Privy councillor John Mason, who urged indulgence in 1562, mentioned that he was "not alone in that opinion."³⁹ Yet Sanderson was soon gone and safely on the continent, dismissed, perhaps principally, for having been dismissive. College authorities, the vice-chancellor of the university, Dean Nowell, and some of the queen's commissioners for ecclesiastical causes were hardly disposed to overlook the accusation that "he speakes slanderouslie ageynst the seniors." Sanderson slandered seniors and scolds at Trinity College, that is, by insisting he was "troubled by them for a thinge of nought."⁴⁰

Was Sanderson disingenuous as well as dismissive? His concession that magistrates might name fast days and diets "for a civil and politike order onely" suggests that he well knew that fasting was no "thinge of nought" in the early 1560s. Conceivably he was referring then to King Edward's proclamation fifteen years before, but it is possible that he was alluding to discussions that led to the legislation "for the maintenance of the navye" in 1563. He understood, in other words, that "civil and politike" as well as religious fasts were controversial.

Apparently without consulting convocation, parliament that year promoted meatless Wednesdays as part of an omnibus bill to stimulate fishing and improve naval preparedness. William Cecil worried that the realm was defenseless. There were too few ships and not enough sailors to put even them to sea. Fishing "brede[s] marinors," but market forces kept able-bodied men on shore and at other professions. Far fewer subjects were eating fish during the early 1560s than the early 1530s, before the reformation; diminished demand diminished supply; and those still abstaining from meat "for superstition" had difficulty finding fish.⁴¹ Opponents of the bill – Sanderson's critics were likely among them – saw it as the return of Roman Catholicism. Nowell, we know, busied himself in convocation trying to muster support for the abrogation of feasts and fasts that marked "holydays bearing the name of a creature."⁴² Mindful of the opposition, advocates thought to appease godly colleagues who seemed ceaselessly on the scent of superstition. A provision was added to the bill "because no maner of person shall misjudge thintent of this Estatute,

39. CCCC, MS 114B, fol. 597.

40. CCCC, MS 106, fol. 539.

41. T.E. Hartley (ed.): *Proceedings in Parliament*, Leicester 1981, pp. 104, 107.

42. John Strype, *Annals of the Reformation*, 1.1, Oxford 1829, p. 501. For better documented opposition to the bill, see Jones, *Birth*, pp. 242–243.

limiting orders to eat fyshe and to forbear eating of fleshe but that the same ys purposely ... ment politikely for thincrase of fishermen and mariners and repairing of porte townes and navigacion, and not for any suspicion to by maynteyned in the choyce of meates; Bee yt enacted that whosoever shall by preaching, teaching, writing, or open speeche, notefie that any eating of fishe [and] forbearing of fleshe mentyoned in this statute ys of any necessitee for the saving of the soule of man, or that yt ys the service of God or otherwise then as other politike lawes arre and bee, that then such person[s] shalbee punished as spreaders of fause newes arr or ought to bee."⁴³

The statute with its provision needed explaining to assure that there would be few "spreaders of fause newes." To that end, a homily on fasting was added to those "of good workes" in 1563 and circulated with the government's imprimatur. Readers and auditors should thereafter easily distinguish between Catholic rules that "bynde the conscience of Christian men to a perpetuall observation" and government regulations that respond to some needs of the moment. The former were despotic, inflexible, and contrary to freedoms Christ gave the faithful. The latter – government regulations – were pragmatic and provisional, plainly not "perpetuall." The homily on fasting approved measures maintaining "fishertownes bordering upon the seas," for the legislation was likely to result in an "increase of fyshermen of whom do spryng maryners" for the navy. The church "politikely" sanctioned "for-bearing of fleshe."⁴⁴

The homily's assumption was that fasts were "merely indifferent," that they were neither evil nor good, but "made better or worse by thende [they] serveth unto." If wed to the lie that abstinence makes us just or "brynge[s] us to heaven," the fasts were tantamount to blasphemy. They were "altogether derogatorie to the merites of Christ's death." And the "great derogation to the bloud shedyng of oure savioure," according to the homilist, was a "devillishe plot or perswasion."⁴⁵ If he and his colleagues heard John Sanderson defending days and diets, they would doubtless have seen sinister, if not diabolical, intent. They must have agreed, though, that fasting, when wed to a creditable purpose, was itself creditable. The homily allowed and even advised Christians to fast "politikely." It could hardly have done otherwise, coming hard

43. *Statutes of the Realm*, 4.1, London 1819, p. 427.

44. *The seconde tome of homelyes*, London 1563, fols. Ccc3v-Ccc4r.

45. *Homelyes*, fols. Aaa 4r, Bbb 4v. Edwin Sandys, who may have composed this homily on fasting, elsewhere attributed "the shew of religious holiness" associated with fasts to Satan, who was only too pleased "to noozle the deceived in their blindness." John Ayre (ed.): *The Sermons of Edwin Sandys*, Cambridge 1846, p. 104.

on the heels of the 1563 legislation for meatless Wednesdays. But the homily also, and more enthusiastically, related fasts to repentance. When private or public afflictions signaled God's vengeance and showed how grievously the faithful sinned, they were encouraged "to humble them selves by fasting and bewayle theyr sinneful lyvyng before God." Repentance was the supremely good "end" that made reformed fasts good, better than fasts and diets prescribed by the Catholic church.⁴⁶

Churches of the realm were to learn the differences between Catholic and reformed fasting; they were to change from Catholic to reformed churches. Soon after Sanderson left Trinity, churchwardens at Great St. Mary's, a short walk from the college, hired several carpenters to tear down the rood loft. The next year, the parish paid slightly more "for a homilie booke" that almost certainly contained the then new, reformed explanation of fasting.⁴⁷

But as one Catholic critic claimed, the "new preachers and protestants" did not observe their fasts. In 1563 Bishop Grindal of London grudgingly admitted that Catholics had an advantage "in the matter of fast[s], which we utterly neglect."⁴⁸ Reformers suggested that the advantage was due to intimidation and deceit. Roman Catholics pretended that fasting "buy[s] forgiveness of sins and righteousness"; Bishop Pilkington of Durham wrote in 1563, "They be superstitious that put holiness in meats, days, times." Their fasts and "abstinence on golden Fridays," along with pilgrimages and masses, had been devised by popes, Pilkington argued, "to build [their] house and authority." The result was that their "house" – a single church "overwhelmed by superstitions" – appointed days and diets for all others, contrary to the practice of the first Christians.⁴⁹

Pilkington, Grindal, the homilist, the statute on fasting, and Sanderson's accusers tell us, in effect, that the reformed church's authorities were especially prickly in 1562 and 1563. Perhaps they imagined their fasts "for policie" looked to some like "gross poperie" and to others like heresy. Maybe they just wanted to fix in their own minds (and in those of the faithful) the difference between fasts to be spurned as superstitious and civic fasting, the fasts "for

46. *Homelyes*, fols. Ccc 7v-Ccc 8r.

47. J.E. Foster (ed.): *The Churchwardens' Accounts of Great St. Mary's, Cambridge, 1504-1635*, Cambridge 1905, pp. 151, 155 (1563-64).

48. Nicholson (ed.): *The Remains of Archbishop Grindal*, p. 265. For "new preachers," see the anonymous *Addicion with an apologie to the causes of brinnyng of Paul's Church* (n.d.), reprinted in *Works of Pilkington* (see n. 2), p. 484.

49. *Exposition on the Prophets Haggai and Obadiah* (1562), in: *Works of Pilkington*, pp. 79-80; *Confutation of an Addition* (1563), in: *ibid*, pp. 556-563.

politicie." Fasting by the Catholic calendar made a Christian superstitious, "but holy, it cannot," Bishop Jewel of Salisbury declared. Sanderson may have been as "conformable" in 1562 as he maintained, but to college officials, and to the Jewels, Pilkingtons, and Grindals of the reformed church, his "superstitious choise of daies and meates" was "cloked papistrie" and past bearing.⁵⁰

One of Thomas More's descendants was apprehended for nonconformity in 1582. Articles of faith confiscated from his home get to the point from which John Sanderson's critics recoiled twenty years earlier: "it semeth to be a tradition directlye groundened upon scripture to observe prescribed dayes by the church for fastinges."⁵¹ By the 1580s, that might have seemed so to many reformed as well as recusant English Christians. For fasts were parts of what Leigh Schmidt now calls "the rhythms" of reformed piety. Patrick Collinson says that public fasts were just then becoming "a powerful engine of puritan religion." Rediscovering biblical warrants for fasting, puritans alleged precedents for collective expressions of penitence, precedents in the New Testament as well as the Old, for prayer and fasting to attest sorrow, to show concern for calamities on the continent, and to prepare the heart and mind for deliberations on matters of great consequence.⁵²

50. For later criticism of "gross poperie," see Carlson, *Barrow* (see n. 24), p. 400. For replies to the charges of heresy, see John Ayre (ed.): *The Works of John Jewel*, Cambridge 1846, 3, pp. 169-170; 4, pp. 1141-1142. Jewel, Grindal, and Pilkington belonged to what David Crankshaw now identifies as an "episcopal working party" (Parker's circle) that equated opposition to "prescribed days" with opposition to "papistrie." Crankshaw, "Preparations," pp. 88-93. The alternative, in fashion from the 1950s, was to ascribe such antagonism to an organized band of dissenters who reportedly came close to carrying the day in the Lower House of the Canterbury Convocation of 1563. See Haugaard, *Elizabeth*, p. 53; Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, London 1967, pp. 65-66; A.J. Carlson, "The Puritans and the Convocation, 1563," in: Theodore Rabb and Jerrold Seigel (eds.): *Action and Conviction in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Memory of E.H. Harbison*, Princeton 1969, pp. 13-53. On this count, Crankshaw, who questions whether precisionists in Convocation or parliament were as coherent, precisionist, or influential as Haugaard and Carlson suspected, is correct. "Preparations," p. 65.

51. Cambridge, Emmanuel College, MS 76, fol. 28v.

52. Davies, *Worship and Theology* (see n. 5), pp. 260, 288-289. Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants*, Oxford 1982, pp. 260-262; idem, "Elizabethan and Jacobean Puritanism as Forms of Popular Religious Culture," in: Jacqueline Eales and Christopher Durston (eds.): *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560-1700*, New York 1996, pp. 51-53; Leigh Schmidt, *Holy Fairs: Scottish Communion and American Revi-*

Fasts seemed to be marvelous preparation for private devotion as well. Nicholas Bownde in Suffolk counseled parishioners to fast before hearing his sermons. Fasting would enable them to experience the genuine humility that should make them more alert recipients of the Word. Fasts before prayer would make them more sincere supplicants. Bownde thought it possible that fasting and general self-abasement could be understood as efforts to please God. But, more properly, they ought to signal the inadequacy of one's striving to appease or please.⁵³

Fasting helped the indefatigable Essex preacher Richard Rogers to focus. He confided that fasts were prods "to greater godlines" and mentioned that he and fellow pastors often fasted to renew their dedication. Colleague Robert Linaker also made a connection between deprivation and dedication. "Affliction" was an aid to introspection, he explained, and introspection afforded cleric and layman alike a much more comprehensive appreciation of God's mercy.⁵⁴ Nicholas Bownde called it "spiritual discernment." It was largely independent of human faculties; indeed, the conceits of reason had to be overcome, he specified, if one were to possess the truths of faith.⁵⁵

Fasts became marks of earnestness or sincerity, and sincerity was very much an issue during the 1580s and 1590s. "We fall to our old fashions," evangelical reformer John Chardon preached, berating parishioners in Exeter for ingratitude in 1594. Fifty years before, Exeter had been saved from local troops ready to recatholicize the southwest. Yet the citizens then were "unthankfull" and disobedient. Elizabeth had "delivered" England from *Mariana tempora*, but "we forget God, his rodde, our dutie." Fasts fought forgetfulness. They showed that reformed Christians were possessed of what Dudley Fenner, the reform's celebrated young theologian in the 1580s, called a "reverent decencie." Fasting displayed that "decencie," much as kneeling dis-

vals in the Early Modern Period, Princeton 1989, pp. 153–154; Richard Greaves, *Society and Religion in Elizabethan England*, Minneapolis 1981, pp. 493–494.

53. Bownde, *Medicines for the Plague*, London 1604, pp. 134–135.

54. Robert Linaker, *A Comfortable Treatise for the Reliefe of such as are Afflicted in Conscience*, London 1590, pp. 13–14. For Rogers' remarks, see Marshall Mason Knappen (ed.): *Two Elizabethan Puritan Diaries*, ed., Chicago 1933, p. 89. See also Peter Iver Kaufman, *Prayer, Despair, and Drama: Elizabethan Introspection*, Urbana 1996, pp. 43–71, for "therapeutic" anguish and affliction.

55. Bownde, *The Unbeleefe of S. Thomas the Apostle*, Cambridge 1608, pp. 60–62, 68–72.

played devotion, he said, referring to fasts as “testimonies to our sincerity” and “helpes of our infirmitie.”⁵⁶

But Fenner and, for that matter, Bownde, Rogers, Charldon, and Linaker as well, would have agreed that such “testimonies” could not and should not be timed to coincide with “prescribed dayes by the [Catholic] church.” Distinguishing days and diet, “superstitiously ... account[ing] one meat holier than another ... one time better than another” distressed Robert Crowley in London and his fellow reformer in Essex, George Gifford. But the issue was less pressing in the 1580s than it had been during the early 1560s when reformers renegotiating the relationship between fasts and faith found themselves fasting “politikely,” or for policy, while assailing “papistrie.”⁵⁷

Peter Iver Kaufman

Department of Religious Studies

101 Saunders Hall

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3225

USA

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Untersucht wird eine Kontroverse um das Fasten, die in England im Herbst 1562 ausgetragen wurde und die den Klerikern der englischen Staatskirche deutlich werden ließ, wie stark das elisabethanische „church settlement“ Elemente katholischer Frömmigkeit aufrechterhielt. Daher bemühten sich die calvinistisch Denkenden unter den Kleriker der Church of England in der Kontroverse mit John Sanderson einerseits, die Wichtigkeit des Fastens hervorzuheben, andererseits, sich von der katholischen Praxis mit ihren Vorschriften und Verboten zu distanzieren.

56. Fenner, *Certain Godly and Learned Treatises*, Edinburgh 1592, pp. 97–98; John Charldon, *A Sermon Preached at Exeter*, London 1595, fols. D8r–E1r.

57. Crowley, *Deliberate Answer made to a Rash Offer*, London 1588, pp. 26r–27r; Gifford, *A Dialogue Between a Papist and a Protestant*, London 1582, pp. 43v–44r.