**The Chapels Royal and the Reformation Era.**

**A Lecture to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the consecration of the Chapel of St Peter ad Vincula in August 1520.**

The Quincentenary of the consecration of this Chapel, probably on August 1st 1520, the feast of St Peter ad Vincula, Peter in Chains, offers us an opportunity to survey the part played by the English Chapels Royal, both as they reflected and indeed influenced the events of the Reformation Era.

The breach with Rome which occurred in the reign of Henry VIII was only the beginning of a lengthy period in which the liturgical and musical style of worship in the Chapels Royal was repeatedly changed in response to external political events. It was also however a period in which the Chapels played a decisive part in preserving elements of traditional worship which contributed to the very distinctive way in which the Church of England developed as a Church both Catholic and Reformed.

The successive religious “settlements” in the period 1520 – 1662 were matters of high politics. The Chapels Royal offered the principal actors in the political drama, the monarch and the political elite an opportunity to demonstrate their religious and liturgical preferences whilst also being exposed to challenge from the pulpit and the altar. There were of course other even more significant places where the direction of religious policy was debated, notably in Parliament, but given the centrality of the monarch and the Court in the process of change it is strange that so little attention has been paid to the personnel and arrangements of the Chapels Royal in the early modern period. David Baldwin, the learned former Sergeant of the Vestry published his ground breaking book “The Chapel Royal Ancient and Modern” in 1990 and Peter McCullough’s excellent study, “Sermons at Court” came out in 1998. Since then there have been a number of interesting specialist studies but we still lack a satisfactory and comprehensive re-assessment of the functioning of the Chapels Royal in the political and cultural life of the court and nation in the 16th and 17th centuries.

This chapel was rebuilt after the fire of 1512 destroyed its mediaeval predecessor. The monument to Sir Richard Cholmondeley, sometime Lieutenant of the Tower, although empty, serves as a memorial to the Superintendent of the works which permitted the first services to be held here in 1520.

It was a very significant year in other ways. We can imagine the chapel then freighted with all the colour and appurtenances of traditional religion. Few would have been alert to the explosive potential of contemporary events in Germany.

Conspicuous piety had been for many centuries one of the ways in which monarchical power had been legitimated. The surviving structures of two of Henry VIII’s royal chapels, Hampton Court and St James’s Palace, looked back to the ancestor of them all the Chapel Royal of the Emperor Charlemagne, consecrated in 805. It still exists as part of Aachen Cathedral. Charlemagne himself sat on an elevated balcony at the West end of the chapel to observe the liturgy unfolding below. Both Hampton Court and St James’s preserve this arrangement in their elevated royal closets.

They are still used, for example at Epiphany when the Queen’s gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh are presented at the altar of the chapel in St James’s Palace by specially chosen high ranking military officers. There is a charming ceremony which concludes the Epiphany service. The senior royal representative is challenged by the youngest choir boy who observes the “wearing of spurs” in contravention of an order of James I that such military accoutrements should not be worn in the Chapel Royal. The boy demands “the customary forfeit”. The General replies “Boy, before I accede to your request I require you to sing the gamut”. If the lad reaches the top in reasonable order he is rewarded with a ten pound note. The money is usually spent on pop and shared with the rest of the “children of the chapel royal”. I was, however, amused during the year of the financial crisis 2008 that when the General asked, “what are you going to do with the money?” the lad replied firmly “I am going to save it”.

The Royal Closet at Hampton Court refurbished for Queen Anne is especially magnificent. Here at the Tower there are of course two chapels royal, this one and the Chapel of St John in the White Tower, built for William the Conqueror by Gundulf Bishop of Rochester. In 1520 St John’s was probably already an archive store for treaties and suchlike which may reflect the Dean of the Chapel Royal’s role in the ratification of treaties by administering the customary oaths. This chapel was the one which served the Tower community as it still does.

Mediaeval monarchy was peripatetic and the principal chapel royal before the reign of Henry VIII was portable with a retinue of clerks and choristers and the impedimenta carried by sumpter mules, vital members of the establishment . Virginia Davis of Queen Mary College has recently published some reflections on the role of Henry V’s Chapel Royal at the battle of Agincourt. My predecessor as Dean, Esmond Lacey was on the field of battle although unlike the Archbishop of Sens on the French side he did not actually participate in the fighting. One of the Chaplains who composed our most valuable source for the battle, the *Gesta Henrici Quinti* was as he says “sitting on a horse among the baggage at the rear”. I can imagine how he must have trembled as the French charged. But his presence and that of the other members of the Chapel Royal is an indication as Dr Davis says of the importance the King attached to their role. In the rapid march from Harfleur to Calais everything non-essential was left behind but not the portable Chapel Royal. Henry was at mass at dawn on the day of the battle.

The Chapel Royal in the traditional manner was present in June of 1520 when Henry VIII and Francis I met at the Field of the Cloth of Gold. The English King’s Chapel was adorned with “a very beautiful silver organ with gold ornaments”. This was however one of the last overseas outings of the full complement of Chapel Royal clerks and choir. The Eltham Palace Ordinances of 1526 directed that only a quota of the Chapel Royal should accompany the monarch on his progresses. The rest would form a permanent establishment in London and this paved the way for the present staffing of the various Chapels in occupied Royal Palaces.

The Field of the Cloth of Gold was just one, albeit spectacular, incident in June 1520, a year of high diplomatic drama. Also in June the Pope issued his bull “Exsurge Domine” threatening Luther with excommunication if he did not recant the opinions published in his Ninety Five Theses. Luther riposted by composing an address to “The Christian Nobility of the German Nation” and by burning in public not only the Pope’s Bull but the Book of Canon Law as well

1520 was also the year in which some of the great protagonists in the ensuing religious and political turbulence came onto the stage. William Cecil the great minister of Elizabeth I was born on September 13th. Charles V was crowned Holy Roman Emperor and Sulieman the Magnificent succeeded his father as Ottoman Sultan.

For the moment Lutheran influence on England was modest. In 1520 Lutheran books were confiscated and burnt in Cambridge where a group sympathetic to Martin Luther’s ideas had been meeting in the White Horse in King’s Parade, a pub popularly known as “Little Germany”. Meanwhile King Henry himself probably assisted by the young Thomas More was composing his refutation of Luther’s Doctrines in the Assertio Septem Sacramentorum. The publication of this book in the following year caused Pope Leo X to confer on the King the long-coveted title of “Defender of the Faith”. Understandably Pope Clement VII rescinded the honour after the breach with Rome in the early 1530’s whereupon the title was re-conferred by Act of Parliament with the result that Fid. Def. still appears on our coins.

In the tumult surrounding the breach with Rome and the Dissolution of the Monasteries the pulpit of the Chapel Royal was a crucial battlefield. On Passion Sunday, April 2nd 1536 at the height of the Parliamentary campaign to secularise the lesser religious houses, the preacher in the Chapel Royal, Whitehall was Queen Anne Boleyn’s Almoner, John Skip. He was a known evangelical but his sermon seemed to be aimed at members of the Privy Council for mounting a barrage of attacks on the Church hierarchy. Imagine the scene on this important holy day - the King above in the Royal Closet but closer to the preacher, members of the Council sitting under his gaze in the body of the Chapel. Any doubts about the particular object of his attack were dispelled by Skip’s use of a well-known story from the book of Esther. The central characters were the “gentle king of Persia” Ahasuerus, his virtuous wife Esther and the wicked counsellor Haman who was plotting the destruction of the Jews.

It may not be clear to us living in a more symbolically obtuse age that Bible stories in the early modern period could be heard on three levels at once. There was the straightforward historical narrative but Bible passages were interpreted in the eternal light of the divine “maker’s instructions” while they could also be applied to matters of contemporary political concern. Queen Anne was locked in a struggle with Thomas Cromwell over the application of the spoils of the dissolution of the lesser monasteries. The Queen wanted to apply them to educational and charitable purposes. Cromwell glimpsed a heaven-sent opportunity to repair the chaotic royal finances and aid in the defence of the realm. The sermon suggested that Cromwell, clearly identified with Haman, had no such high minded objective but was simply out to enrich himself and his friends. This was made clear in the way Skip changed the story. In the original Haman offered the King a large sum to finance the massacre of the Jews whereas in the sermon Haman assures the King that a fortune would be raised as a result of the sequestrations - intending to end up with the money himself.

It must have been a moment of high drama. We know so much about it because Skip was interrogated in the weeks following. He survived to become Bishop of Hereford but Anne lost her battle with King’s minister and very soon after on May 15th she lost her head and is buried in this Chapel.

Marriage to Jane Seymour followed and the birth of Prince Edward. Henry may have broken with Rome but his Chapels Royal continued to reflect his attachment to traditional rites and they were indeed enhanced with a magnificence appropriate to the King’s new status as Supreme Head of the Church in England. Work began on the Chapel at Hampton Court the year after the Act of Supremacy and the sumptuous redecoration was ready for Edward’s baptism in October 1537. An elevated font, of which we have a contemporary drawing, was set up. Archbishop Cranmer officiated and the Princess Mary acted as a godmother. You can still conjure up the magnificent ceremony and its accompanying processions under the glorious Tudor ceiling from which gilded angels playing a variety of instruments appear to be floating gently to earth.

I was there not so long ago when the Companions of Honour were given the Chapel as their spiritual home. A surpliced choir sang the office of Evensong in the presence of the Queen while the clergy processed in richly embroidered copes. It would have delighted Henry but it was not the vision of reformed worship which John Knox, a priest of the Chapel Royal under Edward VI, worked hard to realise.

Edward’s brief reign launched a virtual Cultural Revolution and much of the treasury of mediaeval English art was destroyed in a campaign of iconoclasm. The Chapel Royal was designated as a model for other churches to follow. In September 1548 even while the Committee preparing the new English Prayer Book was in session, Protector Somerset wrote to Cambridge University and almost certainly to other institutions urging that in the interests of uniformity they should follow Chapel Royal liturgical practice - which by that stage clearly included draft versions of the new vernacular eucharist, matins and evensong. Diarmaid MacCulloch in his book “Tudor Church Militant” observes that St George’s Chapel Windsor was one of the first major churches to silence its organs. The organists were given other duties by the autumn of 1550 and “the instruments themselves may already have been destroyed by then”. One of the organists was John Merbecke whose setting of the liturgy is still widely used. He was one of the few musicians whose support for the Reformed faith was explicit.

Choral services continued however at the Chapel Royal in Whitehall. The establishment by 1552 consisted of forty gentlemen and children. They not only led worship but took part in court masques and plays. They also provided an impressive backcloth to diplomatic encounters. Nevertheless it was a time of challenge for church musicians and composers. Thomas Tallis was a gentleman of the Chapel Royal in Edward’s reign and he produced a Te Deum for the 1549 Eucharistic rite and a number of anthems including the still popular “If ye love me”. It was sung at the Evensong attended by Pope Benedict at Westminster Abbey. Tallis unlike Merbecke had limited sympathy with the liturgical changes and continued to serve in the Chapel Royal in the reign of Queen Mary.

There was afresh emphasis on preaching. The outdoor preaching place in Whitehall Palace established in the reign of Henry VIII came into its own in the reign of his son. Preachers like Latimer and Ridley could address literally thousands of people while the young King sat at the window of the Council Chamber overlooking both the preacher and the congregation studiously taking notes of the sermon. The congregation was not always so attentive. Bishop Latimer preaching in Lent 1549 complained about the “huzzing and buzzing in the preacher’s ear that it makes him oftentimes to forget his matter”.

The neighbouring community of Westminster briefly became a Diocese from 1540-50 and the Abbey was turned into a Cathedral. Royal Injunctions in September 1547 only months after the death of Henry VIII ordered that Sunday services throughout the new Diocese should end by 9 am to permit priests and lay folk to attend the sermon in the Cathedral.

Bishop Nicholas Ridley of Rochester and then London was a favourite preacher in the Chapel Royal and it was one of his sermons on the theme of the evangelical duty of serving the poor that prompted King Edward to grant Bridewell Palace, the Savoy and various other rents to found three new and surviving institutions – Bridewell Hospital [now King Edward’s School, Witley], St Thomas’s Hospital and Christ’s Hospital for the education of poor children.

Plans were being laid for further reformation and the general confiscation of parochial valuables when the king died in July 1553. Nicholas Ridley, Bishop of London, admitted at the close of the Edwardian campaign that the evangelical cause had made only limited headway – “For the most part they were never persuaded in their hearts, but from the teeth forward and for the King’s sake, in the truth of God’s word.”

Despite efforts to prevent the accession of the devoutly catholic Mary, daughter of Henry’s discarded Queen Katherine, the Princess came to the throne amid general rejoicing and set about reversing the legislation of her brother’s reign and reconciling England to the Roman obedience.

The Dean of the Chapel Royal was Thomas Thirlby, briefly Henrician Bishop of Westminster and recently elevated Bishop of Ely who had served as Dean since at least 1536. He was present at Prince Edward’s christening in Hampton Court and weathered the Edwardian regime spending much of his time as a diplomat in Brussels. He was in high favour with Queen Mary and the new regime and assisted, albeit unwillingly, at the degradation of his erstwhile colleague Archbishop Cranmer.

The Royal Foundation in Westminster was reconverted from being a second Cathedral for the Diocese of London to functioning once again as a Benedictine Abbey.

Mary’s counter-revolution, however, was not given sufficient time to embed itself and after she died in 1558 her sister Elizabeth presided over a cautious and defensive reversion to the Edwardian Prayer Book tradition. Recent research suggests that she may have attempted to revert to the 1549 Book of Common Prayer for use in her own Chapel Royal but realised that something closer to the 1552 radical version was inescapable.

She was under great pressure from returning evangelical exiles. John Jewell former Regius Professor of Divinity in Oxford returned from Zurich in March 1559. He was impatient for further reform and complained to the Italian born reformer Peter Martyr, who had exercised a decisive influence on the communion rite in the Prayer Book of 1552, that the Queen had not banished the mass from her private chapel. He wrote “If the Queen herself would but banish it from her private chapel, the whole thing might easily be got rid of. Of such importance among us are the examples of princes. For whatever is done after the example of the sovereign, the people, as you well know, suppose to be done rightly”.

This was a disappointment to the growing puritan party reinforced by exiles like John Jewell. The “settlement” of 1559 was for them a compromise which had come too soon but by the accident of the Queen’s long reign it was given the chance to consolidate itself.

In January 1560, Thomas Sampson a celebrated preacher during Edward’s reign and another Marian exile, wrote despondently to his mentor Peter Martyr asking how he could serve in the English Church while a crucifix and candles adorned the Chapel Royal, while the holy table was turned altar wise and draped with cloth of gold and where, worse, the eucharist was celebrated “without any sermon”. “Oh my father, what can I hope for when the Ministry of the Word is banished from Court?”

Bishop Thirlby was immediately dismissed as Dean of the Chapel Royal and ended his days as an involuntary guest of Matthew Parker at Lambeth. In his place the Queen installed a docile pluralist n the person of George Carew and when he died in 1583 she dispensed with the post and saved the emoluments.

The herald and historian William Camden is a contemporary witness to Queen Elizabeth’s liturgical and prayer centred piety which may reflect the tradition into which she was initiated at the Court of Katherine Parr, her father’s final Queen. In addition to private prayers in her closet “the first thing after she rose” Elizabeth always attended the public service in the Chapel Royal on Sundays and Holydays. Camden says that she used to attend the “Lent sermons dressed in mourning as the gravest and most primitive habit” but he adds that “she would often mention what she had read of her predecessor Henry III – that he would much rather put up an humble devout Petition to God himself than hear the finest harangues about him from the lips of others”.

Her general attitude to preaching can be gauged by the clash between the Queen and her second Archbishop of Canterbury Edmund Grindal on the subject of prophesyings, - training sessions for less well-educated clergy in the art of preaching. She feared that they would turn into nurseries for critics of episcopacy and the royal supremacy. She suppressed both them and the Archbishop.

But because of the significance of preaching in the Chapel Royal for gaining the Queen’s ear and in forming elite opinion there was constant conflict between Archbishops and leading councillors over the choice of preachers especially for the traditional Lenten series. In 1579 the Queen was on the brink of marriage to the Catholic Duc d’Alençon, The Lord Chamberlain, the Earl of Sussex supported the match but the royal favourite Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester was against it and his influence overbore that of the Lord Chamberlain. On the first Sunday in Lent an unnamed preacher inveighed against marriages with foreigners and according to the Spanish Ambassador pointed to the example of Queen Mary “how she had married a foreigner and caused the martyrdom of so many persons who were burnt all over the country”. Elizabeth stormed out before the end of the sermon.

Matthew Parker, Elizabeth’s first Archbishop of Canterbury in writing to her minister William Cecil [whose 500th birthday we are also marking this year] insisted that Court Preachers should possess “pronunciationem aulicam” and “ingenium aulicam” – courtly delivery and courtly wit. The Queen found both in the sermons of one of her favourite preachers Thomas Dove who specialised in “tropes and figures”. When she first heard him, according to Sir John Harington her godson, the Queen thought that “the Holy Ghost was discended again in this Dove”.

Preaching before the Queen must have been something of an ordeal. In 1565 with the Queen seated at the window of the Council Chamber, the Dean of St Paul’s Alexander Nowell preached from the pulpit of the outdoor preaching place in Whitehall. He denounced religious images and the cult of the saints but was interrupted by the Queen who said from the window above his head “Do not talk about that”. Nowell did not appear to have heard so the Queen raised her voice and said emphatically “Leave that, it has nothing to do with your subject and the matter is now threadbare”.

During the Queen’s reign the Sunday and holyday processions to and from the Chapel Royal continued as major ceremonial events which dazzled foreign visitors. We have detailed descriptions of the Queen emerging from her private apartments and her guard forming an aisle in the midst of a great concourse of bishops, counsellors and officers of the court. Immediately before the Queen walked the Lord Chancellor flanked by two Earls one bearing the sceptre and the other the sword of state. As the Queen moved down the Presence Chamber “she spoke very graciously” and received petitions and letters from suitors and ambassadors, who all “fell on their knees” as the royal person passed. *[Lupold von Wedel – Journey through England]* The splendour of the court and the Queen’s own magnificence and magnanimity were on weekly display as they were during her stately summer progresses.

Once arrived at the Chapel the congregation experienced one of the most noteworthy things about Elizabeth’s interim arrangements, fine music. Uniquely in Reformed Europe the Chapel Royal together with Cathedrals and especially Westminster Abbey survived with their choral establishments intact. They continued to produce and perform church music of the most ravishing quality.

Of the three great Royal Foundations of the Anglo-Saxon period, Wilton, Waltham and Westminster only the latter survived the Dissolutions of the 16th century. At Westminster as in the Chapel Royal the Prayer Book became, in a way which would most certainly have been censured by Cranmer, the vehicle for a dignified and musical liturgical tradition.

When Elizabeth came to the throne, Westminster Abbey was converted yet again but into a Collegiate Church and Royal Peculiar outside the jurisdiction of the Bishop of London. The Edwardine Dean Richard Cox was not restored and the Queen chose first her almoner William Bill and when he died after barely a year Gabriel Goodman, Chaplain to William Cecil and formerly a schoolmaster in his household. He was a good deal more conservative than his patron although Cecil, Burghley as he became, moved in the same direction in his latter years.

Dean Goodman ensured that the Abbey kept a large store of vestments inherited from the monastic community and unlike other prominent churchman he was not a pluralist and devoted all his attention to preserving the choral and ceremonial heritage of Westminster. Protected by Cecil and the Queen, the Dean had the time to establish a ritually splendid version of Reformation Protestantism which was also echoed in the Chapel Royal. It was not considered wise to let the Dean loose on the wider Church of England as a bishop so at Westminster he remained for forty years from 1561-1601 to be succeeded by Launcelot Andrewes.

Music was one of Queen Elizabeth’s great enthusiasms and the Chapels Royal preserved a number of pipe organs when they were being dismantled in much of the rest of the country where the musical diet was largely restricted to the congregational singing of metrical Psalms.

William Byrd became a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal in 1572 where he remained until his death in the reign of James I. He was protected even when his Catholic convictions became obvious and he continued to compose both for his Catholic co-religionists and for the Protestant Establishment. Late in his career Byrd composed his “Great Service” which was only re-discovered in a Durham Cathedral cupboard in 1922. He provided music for Prayer Book Mattins, Evensong and Communion in the Chapel Royal to be performed by two choirs of five voices.

It was Westminster which shaped the piety of Lancelot Andrewes who succeeded Goodman in 1601 as Dean thanks to the influence of Robert Cecil.

After the death of the Queen, her successor James I reinstated the office of Dean of the Chapel Royal and appointed a courtly Calvinist, James Montague, Master of Sidney Sussex College Cambridge. When Montague died in 1618 he was succeeded by Launcelot Andrewes.

Andrewes successor at Westminster was Richard Neile who as Bishop of Rochester brought the young Oxford scholar William Laud to prominence as his Chaplain and eventually Dean of the Chapel Royal.

The accession of King James who had spent his early years in Presbyterian Scotland excited hopes or fears of further changes in religious policy. James advertised himself as the bringer of union and peace, the Rex Pacificus. With such an ambition, the widest possible unity in religion was clearly vital.

The King was assailed demands for further Reformation to bring the Church of England into line with the “best reformed” churches of Continental Europe. For Puritans, the Word in the mind and the mouth was the way to engage with the rational God. Bodily observances and everything else was a muddying of the waters.

There was another, minority but more musical voice within the Jacobean Church with a different vision of what God required. Launcelot Andrewes as Dean of Westminster, was a largely silent but influential participant in the Hampton Court Conference summoned in January 1604 to resolve the future direction of the Church and its worship.

Like the theologians of the Primitive Church, Andrewes and his school believed that God was a mystery to be approached not so much with the word in the mind and the mouth but with the mind in the spiritual heart. One of Andrewes’ friends, John Buckeridge warned that “true religion is no way a gargleism only, to wash the tongue and mouth, to speak words; it must root in the heart and then fructify in the hand, else it will not cleanse the whole man”.

The Andrewes school went further. Stripping the altars was simple arrogance. God had always been approached with ceremony and bodily reverence. Those who rejected this spiritual tradition were simply “novelists”.

There were misgivings about the wisdom of summoning a Conference in which the King himself was to be involved. Bishops had disputed with Puritans on numerous occasions in the previous reign but the Queen herself had never given the opponents of the Church Establishment the countenance of a personal hearing. James had a different style. He loved talking theological and constitutional shop. He was familiar with Continental academic practices, relished disputations and saw himself as a latter day Solomon or rather Constantine, presiding as the Emperor had done at the Council of Nicaea and bringing peace and unity to the Church.

Vesture as always was a matter of controversy. One of the Puritan delegation, Mr Knewstub made the astonishing charge that the surplice had been the “kind of garment which the priests of Isis used to wear”. The King made it clear that he saw no reason why such vesture should not continue to be worn in Divine Service, “for comeliness and for order sake”.

The King did agree as a result of the Conference to commission a new version of the English Bible shorn of the offensive marginalia of the so-called Geneva version. This was almost the only fruit of the Hampton Court encounter. The liturgy and polity of the Elizabethan Church remained virtually intact. This gave a vital breathing space for the development of the tradition in the Church of England so closely associated with Launcelot Andrewes and his spiritual heirs, a tradition concerned with mystery, manners and the golden mean.

In supporting James’s efforts to call for a General Christian Council to bring peace to the Church, Andrewes later outlined his view of the position of the Church of England with regard to the conflict between Catholic and Protestant. “Our appeal is to antiquity yea even to the most extreme antiquity. We do not innovate; it may be we renovate what was customary with some ancients but with you has disappeared in novelties.” In limiting what the Church believed to the creeds and the first four Councils, Andrewes asserted that whatever was clouded by controversy was not part of fundamental truth for God had made plain whatever was necessary for salvation. The name Protestant was a temporary convenience, intended to last only as long as Roman abuses persisted.

The King’s behaviour at the Hampton Court Conference may have been startling or even coarse at times but his desire not be trapped into a polemical over definition of mysteries and to devise an ecclesiastical regime which was inclusive enough to serve the unity and peace not only of the realm but of Europe, was not an ignoble ambition. St Augustine described the true Church as one in which there was “in certis unitas; in dubiis libertas et in omnibus caritas”. *[‘Unity in things which are certain; freedom in things which are doubtful; and charity in all things’]* It is a definition with which King James would have applauded. The responsibility for the Civil War which broke out under his more rigid and unbending son cannot be laid at his door. After the Conference, only the most extreme puritans were compelled to leave the ministry of the Church of England and the realm faced the threat of religious terrorism which surfaced in the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, relatively united and able to include and rely on the loyalty of moderate Catholics as well as a wide spectrum of Protestant conformists.

But the critics were not silenced and with the attempts of Archbishop Laud abetted by Charles I to enforce a ceremonious uniformity the puritan onslaught became even more intense.

In 1641, as the royal government and the apparatus of censorship broke down, John Milton published his blistering “*Of Reformation in England and the causes that hitherto have hindered it.”* He identified two main obstacles, which “have still hindered our uniform consent to the rest of the churches abroad” - the retention of vestiges of the old world in symbols and ceremonies – “gewgaws fetcht from Aaron’s old wardrobe and the flamin’s vestry” and above all episcopacy.

By 1645 Archbishop Laud had been beheaded on Tower Hill, Bishops abolished, the Chapel Royal dissolved and the Book of Common Prayer proscribed. I preached the text of Laud’s last sermon here in the Tower in 1995 on the 350th anniversary of his decapitation. Among the learned Yeoman Warders was one called Strafford and his comrades urged him to reprise the last farewell between the two friends as Laud from the window of his cell blessed Strafford as he made his way to the block.

The passions of the Civil War, however, in which a greater proportion of the male population of England perished than were killed in World War I, created martyrs and most significantly a royal martyr. The Church of England could no longer be dismissed as a mere creature of time-servers and sycophants.

Music in Church also suffered in the Commonwealth period. The organs of the Chapel Royal and Westminster Abbey and in some Cathedrals had survived the Reformation but many of them were smashed in the Civil War and choirs were disbanded. It was the longest hiatus we have suffered to date in English Church Music. At the Restoration of Charles II there was not a chorister in the whole country equipped to lead a treble section and the settings of some early restoration anthems in the Chapel Royal bears witness to the fact.

In 1660 the surviving bishops of the Church of England could not agree among themselves what part they ought to take in the impending Restoration. There were no bishops present when the King landed at Dover on the 25th of May but as he travelled to London on the following day he stopped for the night in Canterbury where under the cover of darkness Gilbert Sheldon, the ejected Warden of All Souls College Oxford and former Chaplain to Charles I was admitted to a private audience. There is no record of what they discussed but it would be surprising if the former royal chaplain did not take the opportunity to relay some of the content of his last private meeting with the imprisoned Charles I as they walked in the garden of Carisbrooke Castle in the Isle of Wight, talking until midnight on December 26th 1647.

Whatever precisely transpired in his private meeting it soon became clear that Sheldon was in high favour with the new king and he was immediately appointed Dean of the Chapel Royal. In June he presided at a solemn service in Whitehall to celebrate “the happy return of his Majesty” but it was also in June that the Presbyterian leaders Baxter and Calamy were made royal chaplains by a King anxious to keep his options open.

The atmosphere however continued to be tense and there were fears of a resumption of violence. On January 7th 1661 Pepys wrote “this morning news was brought to me to my bedside that there hath been a great stirr in the City this night by the Fanatiques who have been up and killed six or seven men, but all are fled. My Lord Mayor and the whole city have been in armes.” That night on his way home, Pepys and his party “were in many places strictly examined more than in the worst of times there being great fear of these fanatiques rising again. For the present I do not hear that any of them are taken”.

This was the rising of the Fifth Monarchy Men led by Thomas Venner who had come out of a service at their chapel in Coleman Street to conquer the world for Christ the King. They were to terrify the city for 3 days, taking refuge by night in the woods at Kenwood near Highgate. On the 9th Pepys found many fellow citizens in arms so he returned home “[though with no good courage at all, but that I might not seem to be afeared] and got my sword and pistol, which however I have no powder to charge”.

When the new Parliament convened on May 8th 1661 one of its first acts was to insist that every member should receive the sacrament according to the rite of the Church of England. Sheldon and the bishops were now in a position to restore the old church without compromise with the Presbyterians. There was a drive for uniformity understandable at a time when memories of the Civil War were still so raw.

The Chapel Royal with music supplied by Henry Purcell and others revived and Pepys in his Diary records his delight in the musical developments in the restored Chapel Royal.

In his Ode in honour of St Cecilia the Patron Saint of Music Pepys’s contemporary, the poet Dryden asserted:-

From harmony, from heavenly harmony

This universal frame began:

From harmony to harmony

Through all the compass of the notes it ran,

The diapason closing full in Man.

Dryden wrote this poem in 1687 during the heyday of restoration organ building and towards the end of King James’s attempt to re-Catholicise England. But it was also a time when there were [as there are today] people who despised music and sought to confine it to the margins of life, to the leisure sector, as a mere divertissement from serious business.

Today however we live at a time when there is a more holistic view of the world and our part in it. There is increasing recognition of the inadequacy of the kind of knowledge which is based solely on measuring, weighing and mapping; on numbers divorced from harmonic sequences.

Reducing the science of nature to pure quantity may yield some successes in dominating the globe but the consequences of the denial of an intimate harmonic relationship between human beings and the creation of which they are a part is becoming daily more and more visible. Pepys believed passionately that no education should be without music.

Music and the quality of singing provide an index of the culture and spiritual temperature of an age. Pepys had tired of the torrent of words streaming from the pulpit and the heart of his spiritual life was in a different key. We must search for his spirituality in music.

The Chapel Royal played a vital part in preserving the musical tradition in worship. It helped to shape the modern identity of the Church of England. The Chapels and not least this Chapel of St Peter ad Vincula are still places where the treasury of Church music is opened to us by glorious choirs whose quality is the equal to anything which existed in the past. This is also a place where free from the liturgical fidgeting and corybantic ecstasy which has characterised much of the modern period we can still experience the unique inheritance of the Church of England in the Biblically rooted stately ceremoniousness of her worship – a surprising legacy from the convulsions of the Reformation Era.

**Bishop Lord Chartres, quondam Dean of HM Chapels Royal. 4-ii-2020**