

**IS THE CHURCH OF  
ENGLAND  
PROTESTANT?**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649281916

Is the Church of England Protestant? by Homersham Cox

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**HOMERSHAM COX**

**IS THE CHURCH OF  
ENGLAND  
PROTESTANT?**



IS THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
PROTESTANT ?

IS THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
PROTESTANT ?

*A HISTORICAL ESSAY.*

BY

HOMERSHAM COX, M.A.

A JUDGE OF COUNTY COURTS.



LONDON:  
LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.  
1874.

*All rights reserved.*  
11A 16 6.1.11.

## PREFACE

---

SOME PARTS of the following Essay appeared, in July last, in letters which I published under the same title, in the *Daily Telegraph*. These letters produced a great multitude of replies, addressed, some to the Editor, some to me personally. Many of them were acrimonious and minatory. Others were argumentative; and these I have carefully considered before writing this paper. Others strongly urged me to republish my letters in a separate form. This suggestion was made by persons of such eminence and authority, that it seemed a sufficient encouragement for putting together the following observations. They give a most imperfect and inadequate view of the subject. In the compass of a few pages it was not possible to contain a theme to which the great masters of English theology have devoted vast stores of learning and research.

HOMERSHAM COX.

INNER TEMPLE:

Oct. 1874.

## IS THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND PROTESTANT ?

---

MUCH DEPENDS at the present time on the answer to this question. If the Church of England is correctly designated Protestant, the Evangelical party has an almost unassailable position. Their argument stands simply thus : The Church is Protestant—*ergo*, we are justified in upholding the thing called Protestantism, and in using our utmost endeavours to repress opposition to it by vigorous legislation.

But the first step in the argument is based on an unproved assumption. Search the Prayer Book through, and you will not find the word 'Protestant' once used. Nowhere in the Articles, Liturgy, or Homilies does it occur. If there were one instance—only one solitary instance—in which the designation had been adopted by our Church ; if on any single occasion, from the period of the Reformation until the present time, she had so designated herself ; the Evangelicals would have some justification for their persistent endeavours to assimilate the English Church to the Kirk of Scotland and the Lutheran and Calvinistic congregations of the Continent.

Mere reiteration, however frequent or vehement, will not supply the place of proof. If the Church be Protestant, how easy must it be to point to the passage or passages in her authentic records in which the title is assumed ! As I said, much depends on this preliminary proof. Show that the title is correct, and it only remains to give a definition of Protestantism sufficiently wide in order to build on this basis a structure of any desired height. All that is wanting is the foundation of the edifice.

The object of the following pages is to show that not only has the Church never assumed the name 'Protestant,' but—what is more important—that she has never in *fact* been Protestant, either in her doctrines or her ecclesiastical relations.



§ 1. *The Reformation was independent of Lutheranism and Calvinism.*

The term Protestant originated in Germany. The Diet at Speyer in 1526 passed decrees favourable to Lutheranism; but at another Diet held at the same place in 1529, Charles V. promulgated an Imperial brief annulling those decrees. Thereupon the Lutherans and Zuinglians offered to the Diet a *protest* against the Emperor's brief. The princes and cities favourable to the Reformation joined in this protest, and thence arose the title of Protestants.

Efforts were made by Henry VIII. from motives of policy to promote some communication between the German reformers and the English Church. But those efforts resulted in utter failure. In 1535 Henry made overtures of this kind to the Protestant princes of Germany, but they refused to accept his proposals unless he subscribed the Confession of Augsburg, and that he declined to do. Another similar attempt was made in 1538 when certain Lutheran ministers held conferences in London with a commission appointed by Henry, and consisting of Archbishop Cranmer, two other bishops, and four doctors. But the attempt to unite the Lutherans in one common doctrine with the Church of England altogether failed as soon as the Sacraments came under consideration—(Blunt's 'Reformation,' p. 472; Jenkyns's 'Remains of Cranmer,' p. 22). Cranmer in a letter (August 28, 1538) to Cromwell attributes the failure of the negotiations to the bishops who were associated with him. He says, 'They have required me to entreat now of the Sacraments, of Matrimony, Orders, Confirmation, and Extreme Unction; wherein they know certainly that the Germans will not agree with us, except it be in matrimony only. So that I perceive that the bishops seek only an occasion to break the concord'—(Jenkyns, vol. I., p. 264).

Nowhere throughout this correspondence does Cranmer use the word 'Protestants.'

After the accession of Edward VI. Cranmer renewed the attempt to arrange a general Confession of Faith for all the Reformed Churches, and invited several continental celebrities to hold a meeting in England for the purpose. In a Latin letter, addressed to Melancthon, in 1549, he states that many pious and learned men, partly from Italy and partly from Germany, have assembled with him, and that others are

expected daily, and entreats him to adorn this assembly with his presence. To Calvin, in 1552, he writes (in Latin), 'Our adversaries are now holding their councils at Trent, that they may establish errors, and shall we neglect to assemble our pious synod that we may refute errors and reform and propagate doctrines?'—(Jenkyns, vol. I., p. 337, 346). But this project of drawing up a joint Confession of Faith completely failed, and shortly afterwards it was determined to settle a separate Confession for the Church of England.

These transactions are important, because they show distinctly that our Church was never in communion with the Protestants of the Continent during the lives of our principal Reformers. Not only was not such a communion established, but the chief promoter abandoned the attempt to establish it as impracticable. We see from the letters of Cranmer, already quoted, how much he laid the matter to heart. In the letter to Crumwell he reproaches the other bishops as the cause of the failure. His earnest invitations to Melancthon, Calvin, and others, show that he felt deeply on the subject. It does not appear that Cranmer's enterprise received any official sanction either from the Church or the State. It was exclusively his own; and he discovered for himself that the difficulties were insuperable. Calvin answered him with fair words, but begged to be excused from attending. Melancthon also declined to be present. Cranmer recognising the hopelessness of the cherished project of a joint confession, addressed himself to the composition of a separate formulary—the Forty-two Articles of Religion—which received the sanction of Edward VI. in 1552. Thus the Church retained her ecclesiastical independence of German Lutheranism and French Calvinism.

Heylyn's account of Calvin's connection with the English Reformation appears somewhat inconsistent with Cranmer's letters just quoted. Referring to the directions of Edward VI., in 1548, for the compilation of a Liturgy, Heylyn says in his 'History of the Reformation,' p. 65, 'Those who had the chief directing of this weighty business were beforehand resolved that none but English heads or hands should be used therein; lest otherwise it might be thought, and perhaps objected, that they rather followed the example of other churches, or were swayed by the authority of those foreign assistants, than by the Word of God and the most uncorrupted practice of the primitive times. Certain it is that upon the very first reports of a Reformation here intended, Calvin had offered his

assistance to Archbishop Cranmer, as himself confesseth. But the archbishop knew the man and refused the offer.' The only mode of reconciling this account of Calvin's interference in 1548 with Cranmer's invitation to him in 1552 is by supposing that in the interval the archbishop's policy had undergone a change. Certain it is that Calvin officiously attempted to improve our Church. In a letter to Edward VI. he urged the need of further reformation, and to Cranmer he was good enough to state that 'in the service of this Church as then it stood there remained a whole mass of Popery which did not only darken but destroyed God's worship'—(Heylyn, p. 107). Our Reformed Church had also the misfortune of incurring the disapproval of Calvin's intimate friend, John Knox: 'Of England then he had no pleasur, he reasons that the Paipes name being suppressed, his lawes and corruptionis remaned in full vigour.'

This was immediately after Knox had avowed his approval of the murder of Cardinal Beaton, and openly allied himself with the murderers. Their bloody deed he called a 'godly fact'—(Hardwick, 'History of the Church of England,' 4th ed. p. 135). The Church of England was not good enough for this aider and abettor of assassins.

An illustration of the earliest use of the word 'Protestant' in England occurs in the 'Brief Declaration of the Lord's Supper,' written by Bishop Ridley during his imprisonment at Oxford. 'My tongue and pen,' he says, 'as long as I may shall freely set forth that which undoubtedly I am persuaded to be the truth of God's Word. And yet I will do it under this protestation, call me Protestant who listeth, I pass not thereof. My protestation shall be thus; that my mind is and ever shall be (God willing) to set forth sincerely the true sense and meaning, to the best of my understanding, of God's most Holy Word'—('Works of Ridley,' ed. for Parker Society, p. 14). It is obvious from this passage that 'Protestant' was then esteemed a word of reproach. Ridley says, 'Call me a Protestant who listeth, I pass not thereof,' i.e., I care not for it. He speaks of the appellation as one not chosen by himself, but forced upon him by adversaries.

Ridley to the end of his life considered the Lutherans and our Reformed Church opposed on points of fundamental importance. In the conference with Secretary Bourn and Mr. Fecknam in the Tower, Fecknam having quoted a sentence from the writings of Melancthon, Ridley replies, 'as for Melancthon whom Mr. Fecknam spoke of, I marvel that