

Sovereign and Pope in English Bidding Prayers before and after 1534

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Introduction

In 1534 King Henry VIII decreed that he was not only sovereign -- the ruler -- of the country but also supreme head of the church in England. In other words, he now took the place of the pope, who had no further role to play in England. Henry's claim to supremacy was made both legally and politically, but also liturgically.

At the legal and political level Henry acted by promulgating the Act of Supremacy (1534). His daughter Elizabeth I likewise passed such an Act, though Mary I rejected this claim.

To reinforce his claim to supremacy over the church as well as sovereignty over the nation, Henry VIII in 1534 also enacted a "Decree on the form of bidding prayer." This enabled him to embed his views in a prayer that was used -- in the English language -- every Sunday in every parish church. He thus put royal supremacy in the ears and on the lips of all the inhabitants of the land.

It is clear that Henry appreciated that the traditional bidding prayer was inconsistent with the idea of royal supremacy over the church inasmuch as it named both pope and king, and in that order. From the perspective of his new views on supremacy, this prayer either had to be revised, or be omitted from the Sunday liturgy. The king also saw that an appropriately reworded prayer would provide powerful support for his position.

Here I tell the story of how Henry VIII revised the traditional bidding prayer to make it an instrument for promoting royal supremacy over the church in England for him and his successors. As shown in accompanying studies, however, Henry's actions had several other consequences as well – mostly likely, unintended ones. See the separate documents on this site: *Queens, Nuns, Pregnant Women and Mothers in English Bidding Prayers before and after 1534*; *Clergy, Nobility, Commoners and the Dead in English Bidding Prayers before and after 1534*; and *Henry VIII's 1534 Decree on Bidding Prayers: Unintended Consequences*

(The term “sovereign” is used here to denote both male and female rulers. Though “king” always refers to a male ruler, “queen” is ambiguous, referring both to a female ruler and to the wife of a male ruler. Only female sovereigns are considered here.)

First, the traditional parish bidding prayer needs to be described.

Medieval Bidding Prayers

The more universal term for the type of prayer under consideration here is “general intercession.” In England they were commonly referred to as “bidding prayers” or “bidding of bedes/beades” or “the bidding of the bedes/beads”. As bid/ bedes/beades basically means “prayer” and “bidding” basically means “praying”, these formulations really mean simply “praying the prayers”, which is not particularly informative. However, because the term “bidding prayers” has been used in the historical documents discussed here and in histories of the subject, I shall use it here.

Bidding prayers, then, were regular parts of Sunday worship in the middle ages (and were used on some other occasions as well). They were generally prayed in English rather than in Latin. They were a special form of prayer, with distinct roles for the priest and the congregation. The former read the list of prayer intentions, but the prayer addressed to God uttered in response to the intentions, was said by the people. They generally began with “you shall pray for ...” and sections concluded by inviting the people to say the Pater Noster and Ave Maria that were the customary responses.

Bidding prayers were wide-ranging in scope: church and society at large were prayed for, as were all ranks of clergy from pope to local pastors; members and leaders of religious orders; royalty and various ranks of nobility; cities and city officials, as well as local community life. They constituted a kind of mirror of church and society.

In the context of the Sunday parish mass, a large part of the prayer was directed to naming members of the local parish community: those present and those absent, travelers, pilgrims, farmers and merchants, the sick and poor, pregnant women, benefactors, those that lived good lives and those that did not, and others. Most of the intentions named people. A few were made for other needs, including peace (political and spiritual), fine weather and good crops. Deceased relatives, friends, parishioners and others were prayed for at some length as well.

The bidding prayers were intended to be relevant to each time and place, hence they were composed locally and varied in content, wording and order; each surviving text is distinct. At the same time, they are similar in that they followed the same general pattern. They were never written or printed in place in the missal but might be found on end pages, in margins, at the end of sermons, or simply on separate sheets.

Though standards were established and models given by bishops and synods, no church authority attempted to control these prayers by specifying their exact content, wording or order. When changes were made – as they could be as often as each Sunday, though usually less frequently – they came from below. The local priest might recognize a new king or the birth of a royal child and the need for fair weather might be more important at certain times. The priest might also simply be inspired to compose a new text or to borrow something from the next parish.

Medieval general intercessions from across Europe are identified in my *Medieval General Intercessions: Bibliography of Texts and Sources*. Ways in which individual local church communities adapted the contents of these intercessions are considered in my *Women and Medieval General Intercessions: Introduction*.

Here and below, excerpts from parochial bidding prayers will be quoted. The source of each excerpt is identified and linked to the *Bibliography* through the use of a unique designator: full bibliographic information is therefore given only in the *Bibliography*. These designators have four elements: (1) a code for the country of origin or equivalent, in this case always EN= England for prayers composed before 1534. (2) Within each of these groups the general intercessions are numbered consecutively, in approximate chronological order; (3) the name of a place or person with whom each text is associated as given next; (4) finally, the approximate date of composition is provided.

Basic sources and references:

H. O. Coxe, *Forms of Bidding Prayer*. Oxford: John Henry Parker 1840

David Wilkins, *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae, ab anno MCCCL ad Annum MDXLV*. Lundini: R Gosling et al MDCCXXXVII. Reprint: Bruxelles: Culture et Civilisation, 1964

F. E. Brightman, *The English Rite*, 2 vol. London: Rivingtons, 1921

Edgar Hoskins, *Horae Beatae Mariae Virginis or Sarum and York Primers with Kindred Books and Primers of the Reformed roman Use*. London: Longmans Green 1901

Prayers for Pope and Sovereign before 1534

In order to make clear what changes Henry VIII made in the bidding prayer, two examples of pre-1534 texts are presented. Only the first parts of these prayers are given here, including the sections for the pope and for the king; the position of intentions for bishops and clergy is simply indicated.

Ye shulle stonde up and bydde your bedys in the worshepe of our Lord Jhesu Christ, and His moder Saint Marye, and of all the holy company of heaven; ye shulle also bydde for the stat of Holy Cherche,

for the pope of Rome and his cardinales; for the patriarch of Jerusalem, for the Holy Lond, and for the holy Croys, that Jhesu Chist sendeth it out of hedne mennys honde into Cristenmennys hond.

[for archbishops, bishops, religious, other clergy]

Ye shulle bydde for the pees of the lond, that Jhesu Crist holdit that it is, and send it there it nys.

Ye shulle bydde for the king of Engeland, for the quene, and for all here childryne, for the prince

for dukes, for yerles, for baronnis, and for the knychts of this lond, and for all her good consaile and her true servantis. Ye shulle bydde for tham that the stat of holy Cherche and of this lond well mentanid. [more]

EN-5. Worchester 1349.

We shall make a specyall prayer unto god almyghty, and to the gloryous virgyn his moder our Lady saynt mary, and to all the gloryous company of heuen. For the state of all holy chirche and for the peas of the royalme. And for all that are Trewe to the Kynge and to the crowne.

Specially for our holy Fader the pope of Rome and all his trewe Cardynals. And specially for the holy cross that god was done upon, that god for his merci bringe it out of the hethen mennes handes into chrysten mennes keypynge.

[for archbishops, bishops, religious, other clergy]

We shall pray specyally for the kynge and the quene,

and the peers and lords and all the good commeners of this londe; and specyally for all those that hathe the good counsayle of the londe to gouerne; that God gyue them grace such counsayle to take and ordeyne and so for to worke therafter that it may be louinge to god almighty and profite and welfare to the royalme, and gaynstandinge and refrayinge of our enmyes power and malice

EN-42. York 1509

The 1534 Decree on Bidding Prayers

Henry VIII's decree is as follows. Division into sections, and numbering, are mine.

1. The order, for a form of bidding prayers set out by the King's authority:
2. This is an order taken for preaching and bidding of beads in all sermons to be made within this realm.
3. First, whosoever shall preach in the presence of the King's highness and the Queen's grace shall in the bidding of beads
 - a) pray for the whole Catholick church of Christ, as well quick as dead, and especially for the Catholick Church of this realm,
 - b) and first as we be most bounded, for our Sovereign Lord King Henry the Eighth being immediately next under God the only supreme head of this Catholick church of England,
 - c) and for the most gracious Lady Queen Anne his wife, and for the Lady Elizabeth, daughter and heir to them both,
 - d) and no further.
4. Item, the preachers in all places of this realm, not in the presence of the King's said highness, and the Queen's grace, shall in the bidding of the beads,
 - a) pray first in manner and form and word for word as is above ordained and limited,
 - b) adding thereunto in the second part for all archbishops and bishops and for the whole Clergy of this realm,

and specially such as the preacher shall name of his devotion,

c) and thirdly for all dukes, earls, marquesses
and for all the whole temporality of this realm,
and specially for such as the preacher shall name for devotion.

d) And finally for the souls of all them that be dead,
and specially for such as it shall please the pracher to name.

H.O. Coxe, *The Form of Bidding Prayer*.1840, p 55-56

David Wilkins, *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae*, ab anno MCCCL ad
Annum MDXLV, volume tertium. London: R. Gosling et al. 1737. Reprint
Bruxelles: Culture et Civilisation 1964, vol 3, 783.

“This is an order taken for preaching, and bidding of the beads of all sermons to
be made within this realm,” p 460 in *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters of
Thomas Cranmer*, edited for The Parker Society by John Edmund Cox.
Cambridge: University Press 1846

The main point of Henry VIII’s changes in the bidding prayer was to name himself -- the
sovereign -- as the head of the church in England rather than the pope. This was accomplished in
several ways:

1. By omitting any reference to the pope at all (and cardinals and patriarchs)
2. By changing the order of intentions, so that the king was first, preceding bishops and
clergy
3. By stating that the king was the head of the church in England
4. By naming the king and royal family at greater length than had been the custom, both
by using personal names and by using titles

The prayer set forth in the 1534 Decree differed from traditional parish bidding prayers in
other ways as well. Thus Henry’s prayer also omitted intentions for members of religious orders,
thereby supporting the dissolution of the monasteries (1532 and 1538) and suppression of the
religious orders.

Finally, Henry’s prayer omitted references to cities and city government, as well as to
parishes and parishioners. Traditionally these parts of the Sunday prayer had received a good
deal of attention.

One point of interest is that two forms of the bidding prayer were specified in this decree:
one was to be used in the personal presence of the king and queen (and it seems to be presumed
that both would always be present at Sunday worship together). The second is when the royal

couple is not actually present, hence the common situation in parishes and cathedrals throughout the realm. The part of the prayer having to do with the king is the same in both cases, however; and its wording is tightly specified. In contrast the wording of other sections (for bishops and clergy; for the nobility; for the dead) is not specified but left to the devotion of the priest; this responsibility and opportunity was not exercised, however.

Language of Sovereignty and Supremacy

The 1534 decree names Henry as “our Sovereign Lord King Henry the Eighth [being] immediately under God the only supreme Lord of this Catholick church of England” and states that this is the only language permitted. It is interesting that this is different than the language used in the closely related document, the Act of Supremacy (1534); the latter says that “albeit the King’s Majesty justly and rightfully is and ought to be the supreme head of the Church of England...” and “Be it enacted by authority of this present Parliament that the King, our sovereign lord, his heirs and successors, kings of this realm, shall be taken, accepted and reputed the only supreme head in earth of the Church of England, called *Anglicana Ecclesia*...” (From www.humnarium.org/encyclopedia/actsupremacy.htm, taken from William I. Sachse, ed., *English History in the Making*, 1967, vol I, pp 187-188.) In fact, the language of the 1534 decree with respect to supremacy is closer to that used in Henry’s will: “in earth immediately under God the supreme head of the Church of England and Ireland” (www.constitution.org/sech/sech_076.htm).

To study the background for this language, and the range of variations acceptable in its time, I collected 48 similar expressions from Wilkin’s *Concilia*. These date from between 1519 and 1545; 38 are in Latin and 10 in English. These are listed in chronological order in the *Appendix*. They show not only an expected growth in titles used by or given to Henry, but also considerable variation in content and extensive variation in grammatical construction. Here I distinguish the different elements that might be present and ways in which they are expressed.

1. Henry was first and foremost “king” – of England and France in expressions used between 1519 and 1543, and of England, France and Ireland in 1544 and 1545.
2. Before 1544 he was mainly “lord” of Ireland.
3. As just considered, the political entities over which Henry had jurisdiction were England, France and Ireland. So far as the prayer is concerned, however, he is mentioned as head of the church only of England. His successors expanded the boundaries of royal supremacy, however; see below.
4. In addition to being named king and/or lord in terms of political jurisdiction, Henry was frequently named “our prince and lord” as a way of speaking of people’s personal relationship to the sovereign. Occasionally this is shortened to only “our prince” or “our lord”. This type of expression precedes the naming of Henry as king.

5. “Our prince and lord” might in turn be preceded by one or several honorific terms or expressions. In Latin, these include: augustissimus, excellentissimus, illustrissimus, invictissimus, summae, illustrissimus, metuentissimus, potentissimus, and serenissimus / serenissimus. In English these might include our sovereign lord, the excellent prince, and the most high and excellent prince [and] our most gracious and redoubted sovereign lord.
6. The political and personal titles just named were modified by several kinds of religious or theological language. First, “king/ lord” was usually used in association with “by the grace of God / Dei gratia”.
7. Prince and lord were sometimes preceded by “in Christ” / in Christo; this followed the honorifics.
8. In 1542, the pope bestowed on Henry the title of defender of the faith, and this was used in frequently from then on.
9. The title “supreme head of the church of England” was used regularly from 1534 on. As shown here, however, this could take a wide variety of forms.

In English:

and in earth of the church of England supreme head
 and in earth supreme head of the church of England
 and in yearth supreme head of the church of England and Ireland
 the only supreme head of this catholick church of England
 and suprememe head in earth of the church of England
 supreme head here on earth of the church of England and Ireland
 and of the church of Egnland and also of Ireland in yearth the supreme head

In Latin:

ac in terris Anglicanae caput supremum
 ecclesiasque Anglicanae caput supremum
 ac supremo in terris ecclesiae Anglicanae capito
 necnon ecclesiae Anglicanae et in terris capiti supremo
 supremum ecclesiae Anglicanae capitis
 atque/ac in terris ecclesiae Anglicanae supremo capitit
 ac in terra ecclesiae Anglicanae et Hibernae supreme capitis
 et in terra supremum caput Anglicanae ecclesiae
 ac in terris supremum ecclesiae Anglicanae caput
 ac in terra supremo capitis ecclesiae Anglicanae
 ac in terris supremum totius ecclesiae Anglicanae caput
 ac in terris suis supremum ecclesiae Anglicanae caput

10. The phrase of the decree that places the king “immediately under God” is particularly interesting for several reasons. First, it sometimes names God and sometimes names Christ. In addition, “immediately” may or may not be present. It is omitted 5 times in English texts and 18 times in Latin texts. Finally, “under God/ Christ” (in English or in Latin) is found in only 23 out of 32 expressions from 1534 to 1545. Variant expressions are listed here:

In English:

under Christ
immediately under Christ
next under God
immediately next under God

In Latin:

sub Christo
(sub Deo) [parentheses in the original]
sub Deo
immediate sub Christo
immediate post Christum

11. Finally, the relationship between “supreme head” and “under God” varies widely. A few examples are given here:

In English

in the construction “and in earth supreme head of the church of England, the “under God” or equivalent could be found wherever [...] are found

and in earth [...] supreme head [...] of the church of England [...]

or

[...] supreme head here in earth [...] of the church of England

In Latin.

Ac in terris [...] ecclesiae Anglicanae [...] supremo [...] caput

or:

ac [...] in terris supremum ecclesiae Anglicanae [...] caput

These variations in the language of supremacy might simply be the result of preferences and styles of individual scribes in the royal chancellery; alternatively they might be attempts to convey nuances in content.

Prayers for Henry VIII as Sovereign 1534-1547

To show how the 1534 decree on bidding prayers was implemented during the final years

of Henry VIII's reign, the "royal" sections of a number of these prayers are presented here.

Though each of the following texts contains elements that indicate that it was to be used in the absence of the King and Queen, the following sections are those by themselves to be used if in the presence of the King and Queen alone.

1536 [Henry VIII]

Ye shall pray for the whole congregation of Christ's Church, and specially for the Church of England, wherein I first recommend to your devout prayers the King's most excellent Majesty, supreme head immediately under God of the spirituality and temporality of the same Church [more]

Coxe, 57-59

1539 [Henry VIII]

Ye shall praye for the whole congregation of Christes Church, and espeically for this Church of England, wherin first I commende to your devout prayers the kynges most excellent Majesty, supreme head immediately under God of the spirituality and temoprte of the same Church [more]

Coxe 63

1541 [Henry VIII]

Ye shall pray for the whole congregation of Christ's church and specially for this church of England wherein first, I commend to your devout prayers the King's most excellent majesty, supreme head immediately under God of the spirituality and temporality of the same church. [more]

Hoskins 155

1544 [Henry VIII]

Ye shall pray for the whole congregation of Christ's church and specially for this church of England wherein first I commend unto your devout prayers the King'd most excellent majesty, supreme head immediately under God of the spirituality and temporality of the same church. [more]

Hoskins 156

1546 [Henry VIII]

You shall pay for the whole congregation of Christ's Church, and specially for this Church of England and Ireland, wherein first I commend to your devout prayers, the King's most excellent Majesty, supreme head, immediately under God, of the spirituality and temporality of the same Church [more]

Coxe, 71-72

Bidding prayers for the period 1536-1546 were in substantial agreement with the 1534 decree, though there were numerous variants. The term "Catholic" of the decree was not used

thereafter, however.

The decree's "Pray for the whole Catholick church of Christ, as well quick as dead, and especially for the church of this realm" became "pray for the whole congregation of Christ's Church and specially for the/this Church of England." 1536-1546; Ireland was added in the text of 1546.

The decree's "for our Sovereign head Henry the Eighth" became "the king's most excellent Majesty."

The decree's "being immediately next under God the only supreme head of this Catholick church of England" became "supreme head immediately under God of the spirituality and temporality of the same Church."

Neither the decree nor any of these prayers included the phrases "by the grace of God" or "defender of the faith."

Prayers for Edward VI

The following prayers show how Henry VIII's decree was both adhered to and developed during the short reign of Edward VI (1547-1553).

1547 [Edward VI]

First you shall pray for the whole congregatyon of the true Chysten and Catholyke Church of Chyste; and specyally for thys Church of Englande and Irelande; wheryn firste I commende to your devoute prayers our most Soveraigne Lord the Kyng, supreme heade yn earthe, ymmediately onder God of the spirituality and temporalty of the same Church of England and Ireland, that God ofor his greate mercy send hym grace so to governe and to rule this realme that God be pleasyd and worshyppyd, and to the profytt and salvacyon of thys londe [more]

Coxe 75-76

1550 [Edward VI]

In the which prayer, &c for the universal Church of Christ through the whole world, &c for the preservation of our Soveraigne Lord King Edward the VI, sole, supreme Head, under God and Christ, of the Churches of England and Ireland, &c; [more]

Coxe 80

1550 [Edward VI]

In which prayer I commend unto Almighty God your most excellent Majesty our Sovereign Lord, King of England, France and Ireland, and of the Church of England and Ireland next and immediately under God here on earth supream head [more]

Coxe 82-83

temp Edward VI

First of all I commend unto your devotion the universal Church of Christ dispersed thorowout the whole world, and as it now falleth out in many places, miserably afflicted, and namely this our Church of England and Ireland, and in the same for our noble King Edward his Majesty

Coxe 85

Small variants in language are found in the bidding prayers from the reign of Edward VI. As king he is referred to as “our most Sovereign Lord the King” and “most excellent Majesty our sovereign lord.”

There are also small variants in the language of supremacy, as follows: “supreme head in earth...”, so, supreme head, under and God and Christ,” and “next and immediately under God here on earth supreme head...” The term Catholic” returns in the first text, and the equivalent, “universal” in the second.

Prayers for the Elizabeth I

As shown by the following texts, the basic themes and approaches set forth by Henry VIII were continued by Elizabeth I, though with development.

1559 [Elizabeth I]

Ye shall praye for Christ’s holy catholic church, that is, for the whole congregation of Christian people dispersed throughout the whole world, and especially for the church of England and Yreland; and herein I requyre yow most specially to pray for the Quenes most excellent Majestie our Sovereign Ladie Elizabeth, Queen of England, France, and Yreland, defender of the fayth, and supreme governor of this realme, as well as in causes ecclesiasticall as well as temporall. [more]

Coxe 93-94

1581 [Elizabeth I]

Let us not forget Christ’s universal Church, this particular Church of England and Ireland, the Queen’s most excellent Majesty, our sovereigne Ladie and chiefe Governour, that God, remembring us in his mercy, may grant her Majesty a long happy life, with the increase of all godly honour and felicity to the great praise of his name, and great good of his Church. [more]

Coxe 95-96

1584 [Elizabeth I]

...wherein let us not forget Christ’s universall church, this particular church of England and Ireland, the Queen’s most excellent Majestie our Sovereigne Ladie and chiefe Governour... [more]

1594 [Elizabeth I]

...we humbly and hartily pray and beseeche thee to blesse and preserve thy chosen servaunt our dread soveraigne Elisabeth, by thy grace of England, France, and Ireland, Queene, defendresse of the true, auncient and apostolique faith, and in all causes and over all persons within these hir Majesties dominions, next and immediately on earth under thee, supream Governesse. [more]

Coxe 124

temp Elizabeth I

I desire you to call upon our gracious God with your earnest and hartie prayer; and here I comend unto you the good estate of God's holy and catholique Church, and therein the Quenes most excellent Majestie, by the especial grace of God, Quene of England, France and Ireland, defender of the true, ancient and apostolique faith and the highest governour next under God of this Church of England... [more]

Coxe 128

temp Elizabeth I

And, as by especiall dutie we all stand bound, let us commend unto his Majestie, his chosen servant Elizabeth, our Sovereigne, by his grace, of England, France, and Ireland, Queene, defendresse of the Faith, and over all estates and persons within these her dominions, next and immediatlie under God, supream Governesse [more]

Coxe 135

The six prayers from the reign of Elizabeth I show several significant shifts in language. As sovereign, she is called “the Queen’s most excellent Majesty our Sovereign Ladie Elizabeth, Queen...” or “our dread sovereign” and related expressions.

The language of supremacy changes significantly. As is well known, it was considered inappropriate on biblical grounds for a woman to be “head” of the church. The term “governor” was therefore used instead. This is used in several ways: “supreme governor,” “chief governor” and “highest governor” In two texts, which are verbally identical at this point, a feminine form is used: “supreme governess.”

The now traditional “under God” is omitted in several texts. Other prayers speak of “next and immediately on earth under thee [God],“ ”next under God” and “next and immediately under God”.

The prayers of Henry VIII’s reign spoke of “of the spirituality and temporality of the church” following “supreme head immediately under God.” This was modified under Elizabeth I to read “supreme governor...as well ecclesiastical as in causes temporall. and “in all causes and over all persons” and “over all estates and persons”.

Another significant change has to do with language signifying the jurisdiction over which Elizabeth was supreme governess. Whereas the prayers of Henry VIII and Edward VI specified the church of England (and later, of England and Ireland), Elizabeth I, after being named queen of England, France and Ireland, is described as “supreme governour of these realms” or “supreme governor within these her Majesties dominions”. Thus either “supreme governor” is being applied to countries as well as to church, or she is claiming to be head of the church in France as well as in England and Ireland. One text returns to the older usage, however: “church of England”.

Finally, the title “defender of the faith” is used in four text, and in two of these it is feminized: “defendress”. In two texts it is expanded: defender/defendress of the true, ancient and apostolic faith.” In addition, “by the grace of God” or some equivalent phrase, returns in several prayers.

Prayers for Sovereigns after Elizabeth

Further developments are shown by the following texts.

1603 [James I]

Ye shall pray for Christs holy Catholick Church, that is for the whole congregation of Christian people dispersed throughout the whole world, and especially for the churches of England, Scotland, and Ireland. And herein I require you most especially to pray for the Kings most excellent majesty our sovereign Lord James, King of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, defender of the Faith and supreme Governour in these his realms...[more]

Coxe 140-141

1615 [James I]

quas una cum iis offerimus pro Catholica Ecclesia in totum terrarum orbem diffusa et propagata; presertim florestissima illius parte magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae pomeriis conclusa sub umbra serenissimi Jacobi leta germinum propagine reviviscente;

Coxe 146ff [here 148]

1633 [Charles I]

And in prayer not for ourselves alone, but for the whole estate of his catholicke church, militant here on earth;
for those particular Churches, in which we live, under the government of a religious King Charles, the first of that name, King of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, defender of the faith, in all causes, and over all persons, ecclesiasticall or civill within these his dominions, supreme head and governour,

Coxe 161

temp Car II

To this end I am to require you most especially to pray for the King's most excellent Majesty our sovereign Lord Charles, by the grace of God, King of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, defender of the Faith and supreme Governour in these his realms, and in all other his dominions and countries, over all persons, in all causes, as well ecclesiastical as temporal, that God would establish his throne in righteousness, and his seed to all generations;

Coxe 172-173

1662 [Charles]

sed insuper nobis orandum est pro catholica Christi ecclesia per varia regna resque publicas quaquaversum disseminata; nominatim vero pro Anglicana hac nostra, atque in ibi prae aliis, pro ejusdem ecclesiae nutricio Carolo, peculiari Dei gratia Magnae Britanniae, Franciae, et Hiberiae Rege, Fidei defensore, in omnibus causis omniumque personarum, sive sacrorum, sive civilium, immediate secundum Deum supremo in terris moderatore,

Coxe 175-6

1688 [James II]

And that we of this nation may live quiet & peaceable lives in all Godliness & honesty, Let us pray for the king's most excellent majesty, James the Second by the Grace of God of England, Scotland, France & Ireland King, Defender of the faith, & in all Causes & over all persons within these his majesty's realms & dominions supreme moderator & governour

Brightman 1051-2

1840 [Victoria]

Let us pray for Christ's Holy Catholic Church; especially for that pure and apostolical branch of it established in these kingdoms; and herein, for our gracious Sovereign Lady Victoria, by the grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Queen, defender of the faith, in all causes and over all persons ecclesiastical and civil, within these her dominions supreme [-more]

Coxe 179-180

The seven texts show the trajectory of language of bidding prayers from 1603-1840. The precedents established during the reign of Henry VIII, Edward VI and Elizabeth I are followed to a considerable degree. "Supreme governor" is retained, for men and well as women, as is "defender of the faith". From 1662 on, "by the grace of God" reappears.

Such supreme governance continues to apply not just to the church of England, Ireland (and Scotland), but also to the sovereign's "realms," "dominions" "his/this realm, as well in all other his dominions and countries" and "realms and dominions".

The Language of Prayer

How is the fact that these texts are prayers, and not (just) political-religious statements or declarations, expressed?

Many of the texts begin simply “you shall pray”. Others say “we...pray and beseech thee [God], or “I commend unto Almighty God” or “I do commend unto your great devotion to pray for” or “let us commend unto [God].” Others state “I desire you [to pray]” or “I require you most expediently to pray for” or “let us not forget”.

A few texts use more expansive language of prayer, for example:

that God for his greate mercy send him [Edward VI] grace so to governe and to rule this realme that God be pleasyd and worshyppyd, and to the profytt and salvacyon of thys londe...”

That God, remembring us in his mercy, may grant her Majesty [Elizabeth I] a long happy life, with the increase of all godly honour and felicity to the great praise of his name, and great good of his Church

we humbly and hartely pray and beseeche thee to bless and preserve thy chosen servant {Elizabeth I}, that God would establish his trone in righteouness, and his seed to all generations. And that we of this nation may live quiet & peaceable lives in all Godliness & honesty...

Discussion

Henry VIII was astute in appreciating the relevance of the bidding prayer used in Sunday worship to his claim to be supreme head of the church in England. Thus this prayer speaks of church, pope and bishops, king and queen, nobility, and ordinary people of the parish and of the realm. It is used every Sunday, and prayed in English. The traditional wording contradicted Henry’s claim to supremacy: pope and bishops are prior to the king in the text. This prayer therefore either had to be omitted from Sunday worship or had to be suitably revised. Henry saw that, if suitably revised, the bidding prayer could serve as a fine vehicle for his claim to supremacy. He could use it as an instrument to communicate, support and promote his view and indeed, to put them on the lips of all of England every Sunday.

Henry then omitted the pope, placed the king first in the prayer, coupled with other members of the royal family; bishops and nobility followed, and the people of the parish – who traditionally had occupied a major part of this prayer, simply disappeared. The revision was smoothly done and it read well; someone unfamiliar with pre-1534 prayers would never know the extent – linguistic and theological – of the change that had occurred.

So far as I am aware, Henry VIII was the first king to change the text of the Sunday bidding prayer, and thereby to promote a particular theological-political position, and to impose it on the people of his realm as the only permitted text.

A range of language was generated in and after 1534 to express the claim of royal supremacy over the church in England. It is interesting in this regard that the language used in the 1534 Act of Uniformity is not quite the same as that used in the decree on bidding prayers of the same year.

Henry must be proud of the influence he had on his successors. The 1534 bidding prayer represents the beginning of a long trajectory of bidding prayer that developed with time but also remained faithful to Henry's initial claim and text. Some shifts in language occurred along the way, particularly the introduction of the term "governor", but there is also a remarkable consistency.

Appendix: Titles of Henry VIII

David Wilkins, *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae*, vol 3. London 1737

1-1519, 683

serrenissimum et potentissimum principem et dominum nostrum Henricum, Dei gratia Angliae et Franciae regem, ac dominum Hiberniae, universumque ejus Angliae regnum...

2 - 1521, 690

illustrissimum et potentissimum principem et dominum nostrum Henricum, Dei gratia Angliae et Franciae regem, et dominum Hiberniae, universumque ejus Angliae regnum...

[1521, p 693

charissimo in Christo filio Henrico Angliae regi, fidei defensori...

[pro titulo Defensoris fidei]

3 - 1521, p 697

Invictissimo Angliae et Franciae regi, domino Hiberniae, catholicae fidei defensori, Henrico ejus nominis octavo

4 - 1521, p 698

Henry the eighth, by the grace of God king of England and of France, lord of Ireland, defender of the faith

5 - 1523, p 699

illustrissimus et potentissimus dominus noster rex Angliae et Franciae, defensor fidei, et dominus Hiberniae

6 - 1523, p 700

serentissimum et potentissimum in Christo principem et dominum nostrum Henricum VIII Dei gratia Angliae et Franciae regem, fidei defensorem, et dominum Hiberniae, universumque ejus Angliae regnum

7 - 1530, p 726

nuperrime ex parte serenissimi principis et domini nostri, domini Henrici VIII Dei gratia Angliae et Franciae regis, fidei defensoris, et domini Hiberniae illustrissimi

8 - 1530, p 742

Excellenstissimo et illustrissimo principi et domino nostro, domini Henrico octavo, Dei gratia Angliae et Franciae regi, fidei defensori, et domino Hiberniae, invictissimo et potentissimo

9 - 1531,, p 745

Summae illustrissimo domino nostro Henrico VIII Dei gratia Angliae et Franciae regi, fidei defensori, et domino Hiberniae

10 - 1532, p 754

excellentissimi et invictissimi principis et domini nostri, domini Henrici VIII Dei gratia Angliae et Franciae regis, fidei defensoris, et domini Hiberniae illustrissimi

11 - 1533, p 757

invictissimo, metuendissimo, ac potentissimo principi et domino nostro supremo, Henrico octavo, Dei gratia Angliae et Franciae regi, fidei defensori, et domino Hiberniae illustrissimo

12 - 1533, p 759

illustrissimum et potentissimum principem et dominum nostrum Henricum octavum, Dei gratia Angliae et Franciae regem, fidei defensorum, et dominum Hiberniae, ac serenissimam dominum

13 - 1533, p 766

invictissimi et potentissimi principis domini nostri Henrici octavi, Dei gratia Angliae et Franciae regum, fidei defensorum, et dominum Hiberniae

14 - 1533, p 766

Henricus octavus, Dei gratia Angliae et Franciae rex, fidei defensor, et dominus Hiberniae

15 - 1534, p 775

illustrissimus simul ac potentissimus princeps et dominus noster Henricus octavus, Dei gratia Angliae et Franciae rex, fidei defensor, et dominum Hiberniae

16 - 1534, p 776

illustrissimum in Christo principem et dominum nostrum, dominum Henricum, Dei gratia Angliae et Franciae regem, fidei defensorem, et dominum Hiberinaie, ecclesiaeque Anglicanae (sub Deo) caput supremum

17 - 1534, p 779

Henricus octavus Dei gratia Angliae et Franciae rex, fidei defensor, et dominum Hiberniae, ac in terris Anglicanis, sub Deo, caput supremum

18 - 1534, p 780

Henry the eighth, by the grace of God king of England and of France, defender of the faith, lord of Ireland, and in earth of the church of England supream head immediately under Christ

19 - 1534, p 781

Henrico, Dei gratia Angliae et Franciae regi, fidei defensori, domino Hiberniae, atque in terris ecclesiae Anglicanae supremo immediate sub Christi capiti

20 - 1534, p 782

Illustrissimo et excellentissimo principi et domino, domino Henrico VIII Dei gratia Angliae et Franciae regi, fidei defensori, et domino Hiberniae

21 - 1534, p 783

Henricus octavus, Dei gratia Angliae et Franciae rex, fidei defensor, dominus Hiberniae, et in terra supremum caput Anglicanae ecclesiae

22 - 1534, p 783 [form of bidding prayer]

our sovereign lord king Henry the VIII th, being immediately next under God the only supreme head of this catholick church of England

23 - 1535, p 784

Henricus octavus, Dei gratia Angliae et Franciae rex, fidei defensor, dominum Hiberfniae, ac in terris supremum totius ecclesiae Anglicanae sub Christo caput

24 - 1534, p 797

Henricus octavus, Dei gratia Angliae et Franciae rex, fidei defensor, dominum Hiberniae, ac in terris supremum ecclesiae Anglicanae sub Christo caput

25 - 1535, p 797

serenissimi domini nostri regis Henrici octavi, Dei gratia Angliae et Franciae regis, fidei defensoris, dominisque Hiberniae, ac in terris supremi ecclesiae Anglicanae sub Christo capitis

26 - 1535, p 797

Henricus octavus, Dei gratia Angliae et Franciae rex, fidei defensor, dominus Hiberniae, ac in terris supremum ecclesiae Anglicanae sub Christo caput

27 - 1536, p 811

Augustissimo principi Henrico, ejus nominis octavo, Angliae et Franciae regi, fideique

defensori, ac supremo in terris ecclesiae Anglicanae capiti

28 - 1536, p 815

the excellent prince Henrie, by the grace of God king of England and of France, defensour of the faithe, lord of Ireland, and in earthe supreme hed under Christ of the church of England

29 - 1536, p 817

Henry the eighth, by the grace of God king of England and of France, defender of the faith, and lord of Ireland, and in earth supreme head of the church of England

30 - 1537, p 828

Excellentissimo et potentissimo in Christo principi et domino nostro, domino Henrico octavo Dei gratia Angliae et Franciae regi, fidei defensori, et domino Hiberniae, ac in terris supremo ecclesiae Anglicanae capiti

31 - 1537, p 828

excellentissimi principis, et domini nostri, domini Henrici octavi, Dei gratia Angliae et Franciae regis, fidei defensoris, et domini Hiberniae, ac in terris sub Christo ecclesiae Anglicanae capituli supremi

32 - 1537, p 829

Henricus VIII Dei gratia, Angliae et Franciae rex, fidei defensor, dominus Hiberniae, ac in terris suis supremum ecclesiae Anglicanae sub Christo caput

33 - 1537, p 830

the most high and most excellent prince, our most gracious and most redoubted soverayne lord and king, Henry the VIII th, by the grace of God kinge of England and of Fraunce, defendour of the fayth, lorde of Ireland, and supreme head in erth, immediately under Christ, of the church of Englande

34 - 1538, p 835

Henricus VIII Dei gratia Angliae et Franciae rex, fidei defensor, dominus Hiberniae, ac in terris supremum ecclesiae Anglicanae sub Christo caput

35 - 1538, p 836

Henricus octavus, Dei gratia Angliae, Franciae, et Hiberniae rex, supremum ecclesiae Anglicanae caput, etc.

36 - 1538, p 836

Henricus octavus, Dei gratia Angliae et Franciae rex, fidei defensor, dominus Hiberniae, et in terris supremum ecclesiae Anglicanae sub Christo caput

37 - 1538, p 837

illustrissimi in Christo principis et domini nostri, domini Henrici octavi Dei gratia Angliae et

Franciae regis, fidei defensoris, domini Hiberniae, et in terra ecclesiae Anglicanae immediate sub Christo capitis supremi

38 - 1538, p 839

Serenissimo principi Henrico, ejus nominis VIII Anglicae et Franciae regi, domino Hibernae, fidei defensori, necnon ecclesiae Anglicanae immediate post Christum in terris capiti supremo

39 - 1538, p 840

Henry the eighth, by the grace of God king of England and of France, defender of the faith, lord of Ireland, and in earth immediately under Christ supreme head of the church of England

40 - 1540, p 851

illustrissimi principis et domini nostri Henrici octavi, Dei gratia Angliae et Franciae regis, fidei defensoris, et domini Hiberniae, ac in terris immediate sub Christo ecclesiae Anglicanae supremi capitis

41 - 1540, p 853

Excellentissimo, illustrissimo, et potentissimo in Christo principi et domini nostro Henrico octavo, Dei gratia Angliae et Franciae regi, fidei defensori, et domino Hiberniae, ac in terra immediate sub Christo supremo capiti ecclesiae Anglicanae

42 - 1541, p 857

Henricus octavus, Dei gratia Angliae et Franciae rex, fidei defensor, dominus Hiberniae, ac in terra supremum caput Anglicanae ecclesiae

43 - 1541, p 857

illustrissimum in Christo principem et dominum nostrum, dominum Henricum octavum, Dei gratia Angliae et Franciae regem, fidei defensorem, et dominum Hiberniae, ac in terra supremum ecclesiae Anglicanae sub Christo caput

44 - 1541, p 858

illustrissimi et potentissimi in Christo principis et domini nostri Henrici VIII Dei gratia Angliae et Franciae regis, fidei defensoris, et domini Hiberniae, ac sub Christo in terra supremi capitis ecclesiae Anglicanae

45 - 1542, p 864

our sovereign lord king Henry the VIII th, by the grace of God king of England, France, and Ireland, defender of the faith, and supreme head here in earth, next under God of the church of England and Ireland

46 - 1544, p 969

illustrissimi in Christo principis et domini nostri, domini Henrici octavi, Dei gratia Angliae, Franciae et Hiberniae regis, fidei defensoris, ac in terra ecclesiae Anglicanae et Hiberniae

supremi capitis

47 - 1545, p 873

Henry the VIII th, by the grace of God kyng of Englande, Fraunce, and Irelande, defender of the faith, and in yearth supreme hedde of the church of Englande and Ireland

48 - 1545, p 875

Henry the eight[h], by the grace of God , kyng of England, Fraunce, and Ireland, defendour of the faithe, and of the church of England and also of Irelande in yearth the supreme heade,