

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_churchman\\_os.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php)

# ‘Lay Administration’ and the Sixteenth Century

Robert C Doyle

Some of the discussion on the propriety of lay administration of Holy Communion does not appear to have been sensitive to the radical change that occurred in ‘what the 16th century Reformers did and believed’, nor to their methodology: that is, not sensitive to how they understood God works in the world. The result of this is that the evidence from the sixteenth century Reformers tends to be misread. Thus, we have tended to view what the Reformers did *not* change from the medieval and patristic periods as having exactly the same significance for them as for the earlier church.

What is not always fully appreciated is the markedly different metaphysical and theological framework or ontology that the Reformers brought to their understanding and practice of church and ministry.

The metaphysical assumptions, both tacit and explicit, in Archbishop Robinson’s paper are most important to his tying of ministry to office, and the consequences he wishes to draw for the propriety of lay people administering Holy Communion. Permit me an illustration. If we were to tie the driving of cars to highways such that it was actually *immoral* ever to drive them in car-parks or paddocks, then the link we posit between cars and highways would be more than utilitarian, but would be a link of a most metaphysical kind, such that to break it by taking a car to a paddock could be deemed to cut at the very heart of the moral nature of the universe. However, take the law regarding cars and highways and place it in another framework, a utilitarian one to do with public safety, then the driving of cars in paddocks and car-parks may be seen as legitimate so long as certain considerations were observed.

Sixteenth-century studies consistently show that there were two main and rival ontologies in Christian Europe governing the practice and theory of church and ministry.

The first and dominant view which carried over from the Middle Ages, was the firm belief in an ineluctably sacramental universe. The roots of this lie in Augustine, and the explicit neo-platonic foundations on which Thomas Aquinas erects his otherwise

Aristotelian theology.<sup>1</sup> On this view, God works downward through his creation to reveal himself and to redeem through a hierarchy of sacraments. The world is seen as a place in which created things become vehicles of God's blessing, and humanity itself is defined as a sacramental being. The sacramental potential of all nature is realized through the consecration of some elements of it in explicitly sacramental rites. Within this theological and metaphysical understanding, grace flows down from God, through Christ to the earthly church via the priestly performance of sacramental rites. That is, the foundational ontology here, within which church and ministry are understood, is a sacramental and hierarchical one. This view, still important in much contemporary thinking, was arguably also the ontology of most of the Church Fathers (although I have doubts about Irenaeus, and possibly Athanasius), the medieval Latin Church, and the nineteenth-century re-formulation of Anglicanism by the Tractarians.

The second, and minor view, was the ontology of the Word. Here it is affirmed that fundamentally God does not work in the world by way of sacraments or signs, but that he works *directly*, by *his word*. That is, it is affirmed that Christ himself and not any human person or persons rules his church, and he does it directly through his word of the gospel. The Reformers grasped (along with Irenaeus and Athanasius) from the New Testament's teaching on Word and Spirit that the word is the personal mode of God's being, and thus Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, is personal in all his acts as 'the Spirit preaches the gospel', to pick up the terminology of 1 Thessalonians and 1 Peter.

1 For Thomas, theology is the theology of the First Principle upon which everything else in creation depends. These determinative parameters are evident in his early career as he lectured on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard (1100-1160):

'Since sacred doctrine intends to deal with divine things, since also a thing is understood to be divine inasmuch as it is related to God as its principle or its end [*ut principium vel ut finem*] ..., this doctrine will consider things as coming forth from God as from their principle, and as being brought back to God as to their end. Hence, in the first part, he [Peter Lombard] determines about divine things in their proceeding [*exitum*] from their principle, in the second in their returning [*reditum*] to their end ... The theologian ... looks at creatures as they come forth from their first principle [*a primo principio*], and as they return to their end, which is God. Hence, the knowledge of the theologian is rightly called divine wisdom, because it considers the highest of all, which is God' (1 *Sent*, d 2, div textus, cited from M-D Chenu *Toward Understanding St Thomas* (Chicago: Henry Regnery 1964) p 306).

This is no small order or hesitant faith on Thomas' part: every being, every event, every nature becomes an object of theology because everything is and can be understood with reference to God. How do all these things relate to God *ut ad principium et finem*? Thomas has already given us his first metaphysical paradigm which, like Augustine, he has taken from Neoplatonism and will use to give intelligibility to theology: they all relate to God (maintaining of course the ontological separation between God and the universe by the characteristic Christian doctrine of creation 'out of nothing') as *exitus et reditus* (progression from God and conversion back to God).

By way of response to the Archbishop's paper I want to outline three reasons why the sixteenth-century English Reformers, in their doctrines of church and ministry, consistently rejected the view that God's work in the world is fundamentally sacramental and hierarchical, and embraced instead the view that God works directly in the world by his word of the gospel, and therefore, first, the Reformers' theory and practice of sacraments ought be understood in that context, and secondly, it gives a licence for lay administration of the Lord's Supper.

## 1 The Appeal to a Word Ontology

It is not difficult to demonstrate that in matters of church and ministry the Reformers publicly and openly advanced a word ontology in opposition to a sacramental and hierarchical ontology.

A good example, and apposite to the question in front of us, is in Luther's letter to the lay people in Leisnig whose desire to reform their church was being thwarted by the local catholic ascendancy which wanted to deny the theological legitimacy of their actions. Luther's reply was typical of his theology and that of the Reformation more widely. The basis of ministry is the word. Since the congregation shares in the authority of the word on the basis of baptism, it may call its own preachers. Everyone who is baptized may exercise the office of the word, which belongs to the individual Christian as well as to the Christian community:

The sure mark by which the Christian congregation can be recognized is that the pure gospel is preached there. For just as the banner of an army is the sure sign by which one can know what kind of lord and army have taken to the field, so, too, the gospel is the sure sign by which one knows where Christ and his army are encamped. We have the sure promise of this from God in Isaiah 55 [vv 10-11], 'My word' (God says) 'that goes forth from my mouth shall not return to me; rather, as the rain falls from heaven to earth, making it fruitful, so shall my word also accomplish everything for which I sent it' ...<sup>2</sup> in this matter of judging teachings and appointing or dismissing teachers or pastors, one should not care at all about human statutes, law, old precedent, usage, custom, etc even if they were instituted by pope or emperor, prince or bishop, if one half of the whole world accepted them, or if they lasted one year or a thousand years. For the soul of man is something eternal, and more important than every temporal thing. That is why it must be ruled and seized only by the

2 'That a Christian Assembly or Congregation has the right and power to judge all teaching and to call, appoint and dismiss teachers, established and proven by Scripture', in *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress 1970) vol 39 p 305.

eternal word; for ... Human words and teaching instituted and decreed that only bishops, scholars, and councils should be allowed to judge doctrine ... The ordinary Christian is supposed to await their judgment and obey it ... Christ institutes the very opposite. He takes both the right and power to judge teaching from the bishops, scholars, and councils and gives them to everyone and to all Christians equally when he says, John 10 [v 10], 'My sheep know my voice'. Again, 'My sheep do not follow strangers, but flee from them, for they do not know the voice of strangers'.<sup>3</sup>

Luther then spends the bulk of the remainder of the letter urging these lay people to teach the Bible themselves, and to facilitate its teaching by appointing several of their own number to have special responsibilities in this area. In his conclusion, by way almost of afterthought, he addresses the question of the sacraments:

Therefore, whoever has the office of preaching imposed on him has the highest office in Christendom imposed on them. Afterward he may also baptize, celebrate mass, and exercise all pastoral care; or, if he does not wish to do so, he may confine himself to preaching and leave baptizing and other lower offices to others – as Christ and all his apostles did, Acts 4 [6:4].<sup>4</sup>

Luther had consistently maintained the supremacy of the word in God's salvific actions since his famous Reformation trilogy of 1520: 'There is no way by which a man can commune with God, or treat with Him except by faith; that is to say, no man by his works, but God by His promises, is the author of our salvation. All things depend on His authoritative word, and are upheld and maintained by it. He begot us by it that we might be, as it were, the first-fruits of His creative work.'<sup>5</sup>

In the second generation of Reformers, John Calvin also bases his understanding of ministry on an ontology of the word. When he turns in his *Institutes* to consider the Christian ministry he affirms that Christ rules his church directly by his word, and that ministers are only the instruments of that rule. That is, they do not stand between the people and Christ as mediators of the word and sacrament, but as the temporary instruments of the Spirit. Ministers are not signifiers of Christ, they do not stand as Christ to their people, but are merely the utensils or vessels of Christ's direct relationship and work by his word and Spirit. Calvin clearly and consistently conceives of church and ministry in the framework provided

3 *Luther's Work* vol 39 p 305

4 *Luther's Work* vol 39 p 314

5 'Pagan Servitude of the Church', in J Dillenberger (ed) *Martin Luther: Selections from his Writings* (New York: Doubleday 1961) p 274

by the ontology of the word, while repudiating the alternate ontology of a hierarchically arranged sacramental universe:

Now we must speak of the order by which the Lord willed his church to be governed. He alone should rule and reign in the church as well as have authority or pre-eminence in it, and this authority should be exercised and administered by his Word alone. Nevertheless, because he does not dwell among us in visible presence (Matt 26:11), we have said that he uses the ministry of men to declare openly his will to us by mouth, as a sort of delegated work, not by transferring to them his right and honor, but only that through their mouths he may do his own work – just as a workman uses a tool to do his work. (*Ins* 4.3.1)<sup>6</sup>

Elsewhere, Calvin highlights the utilitarian and temporary nature of public ministry by pointing out that there are no ministers in heaven!

It is this understanding, and especially from the Lutheran axis, that is taken over by Article 19, ‘Of the Church’, as Oliver O’Donovan has emphasized.<sup>7</sup> Thus in wording and content it directly mirrors the writings of Luther, the Confession of Augsburg, and the 13 Articles of 1538 agreed on by Anglican and Lutheran theologians at a conference in London, amongst other sources. But more than that, its debt to the Reformed ontology of the word stands out in the article’s very starkness, for, unlike even Luther, it makes no mention of either ‘the catholic’ or ‘the invisible’ church. O’Donovan comments:

a contributory reason for the silence of the Articles about the church might be that Cranmer, like other Reformers, wished to replace a great deal of what had been said about the church by Christology. He wished to exclude the church from the doctrine of salvation, in which it had so often played a usurper’s role, and to focus attention upon Christ alone ... If the gospel is not about the church, but about Christ, then so should theology, which is beholden to the gospel, make Christ and not the church the object of its attention.<sup>8</sup>

That is, such is the nature of God’s direct work in the world that, although not exhausting all that may legitimately be said about the church, it is *sufficient* to say: ‘The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments [which are conceived of as signs of evangelical promises] duly administered.’

6 Calvin: *Institutes of the Christian Religion* trans Ford Lewis Battles (London: SCM 1961) vol 2 p 1053

7 Oliver O’Donovan *On the Thirty Nine Articles: a conversation with Tudor Christianity* (Exeter: Paternoster 1986) pp 88-96

8 *On the Thirty-Nine Articles* p 92

Thought and wording parallels, some of them quite exact, show that the English Reformers had the same conversation partners for Article 23, *Of Ministering in the Congregation*: Article 14 and ancillary material of the Augsburg Confession of 1530, Articles 15 to 19 of the first Helvetic Confession of 1536, Article 10 from the Lutheran-Anglican dialogue in London of 1538, Article 20 of the Confession of Wirtemberg of 1552, Articles 5 to 7 of the *Confession of England* attached to Jewel's *Apologia of the Church of England* of 1562, Chapter 18 of the second Helvetic Confession of 1566. Our Article 23 is almost exactly that of the two early confessions which come from the Lutheran axis, Augsburg and the London dialogue of 1538. Several points need to be made regarding the arguments put forward for restricting public ministry to those 'lawfully called' – the complete rejection of the Roman Catholic notion of mediatorial ministry and their claimed hegemony on what we nowadays term 'apostolic succession'; the very great fear they had of disorder due to the unrestricted ministries of the Anabaptists, which were regarded as anarchic in the extreme; the insistence again that God teaches directly and that ordained ministry is but a vessel, although divinely sanctioned; thus the power of the office of the ministry is derived solely from the gospel, with its dependence on ecclesiastical structures or the local congregation only secondary; the number and titles of such offices is discretionary.

In the last 25 years there has been an enormous amount of work done on the influence of the continental Reformation on the leaders and theologians of the Elizabethan period by Patrick Collinson, George Elton, Claire Cross, Paul Christianson, Dan G Danner, Walter Phillips, Mark Vanderschaff, and others. Thus Archbishops Parker and Grindal were much influenced by Martin Bucer and Peter Martyr from the Reformed axis of South Germany and Switzerland. Of particular importance is the influence of Bullinger of Zurich, not only on Elizabeth's third Archbishop, Whitgift, but through him on the majority of Elizabethan clergy. In order to raise the level of understanding amongst the majority of his clergy, who were not graduates from the universities nor licensed to preach, Whitgift made Bullinger's major work on systematic theology, *The Decades*, the standard textbook for theological education. Thus, every minister having a cure without a Master of Arts or Bachelor of Laws had to provide for himself a copy of the Bible, Bullinger's *Decades*, and an exercise book, and every week read and summarize one section of the *Decades*, and show his notes once a quarter to a designated tutor.<sup>9</sup> You perhaps will not be surprised to learn that Bullinger shared the same ontology of the word as Luther and Calvin in structuring his understanding of church and ministry. Bullinger spends the first three sermons of his first decade laying down a theology of the word of God. When he turns to specific matters of ministry in Decade 5, he states:

<sup>9</sup> *The Decades of Henry Bullinger, Minister of the Church of Zurich*, trans H I Parker Society (Cambridge: CUP 1849) The First and Second Decades [ie vol 1] viii

For I said, the church of God is builded and preserved by the word of God; and that, through ministers appointed for that purpose by the Lord: so that now it followeth to speak of the ministers of the church, and of their ministry ... first it is expedient to view, wherefore God in instructing men useth the aid or ministry of men; and what men perfect or work in the ministry itself, and what God. He verily, for his exceeding goodness and mercy toward us, coveteth to pour himself wholly into us.<sup>10</sup>

How does God, 'pour himself wholly into us'? Not by the secret illumination of his Spirit, without man's ministry, but 'God himself speaketh unto us by men, of whom he would have us to learn religion'. Bucer continues: 'For this cause ministers are called saviours: they are said to convert men: their word is called, not the word of man, but the word of God.' However, Bucer warns, the places where Scripture speaks in such exalted terms about ministry should not be construed to 'give the ministers an equal power in a manner with Christ'.<sup>11</sup> In line with what by now is Reformed orthodoxy, Bullinger insists at length that Christ alone is the ruler of the congregation, 'the only teacher and master in the church'. Clergy are 'but instruments, exalted yes, but neither giving the Holy Spirit or drawing men's hearts, nor regenerating souls', etc.<sup>12</sup> The means of Christ's rule is the gospel, the word of God, the teaching of the Scriptures. Recurrent in Bullinger's thought is the notion that: 'Christ our priest is the only and everlasting teacher and master of his universal church.'<sup>13</sup> With Luther, he affirms that all Christians share in this priestly office of Christ by mutual admonition and instruction.<sup>14</sup> But only duly called and ordained men may do so in public.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, and most obviously, when the Reformers, as in Article 31, rejected any notion of the Lord's Supper as a sacrifice, an unbloody reimmolation of Christ in order to gain the benefits of Golgotha, they were also repudiating the sacramental and hierarchical ontology upon which it was dependent. Cyprian (d 258) is an early exponent of this view of ministry and mimesis which is conformed to those Greek thought forms which saw the relationship between earth and heaven in metaphysical terms of image and reality. The priest 'fulfils the role of Christ when he imitates what he did, and only then does he offer a true, complete sacrifice in the Church to the Father when he begins to offer it after the pattern of Christ's offering'.<sup>16</sup>

10 Bullinger *Decades* 5.3 p 93

11 Bullinger *Decades* 5.3 p 94-6

12 Bullinger *Decades* 5.3 p 96-7

13 Bullinger *Decades* 4.7 p 275-6, 283-4

14 Bullinger *Decades* 4.7 p 289-91

15 Bullinger *Decades* 4.7 p 289-91; 5.4 128-34

16 Eph 63, cited by J N D Kelly *Early Christian Doctrines* (London: A&C Black 1965) p 215.



Cranmer repudiates this outlook in a number of ways. First, by repeatedly asserting that the Lord's Supper was ordained for nothing but that we should remember Christ's once for all sacrifice, ie that it should trigger in us a memory event of the most profound importance.<sup>17</sup> Secondly, that the only means of participation in the benefits is faith in the evangelical promises of God.<sup>18</sup> Thirdly, that in the celebration of the Supper the Priest is nothing more than a common household servant, not a sacrificer or mediator.<sup>19</sup> Fourthly, and consequently, that in the celebration of the Supper there is no ontological difference, in the sense necessary to the prevailing sacramental and hierarchical outlook on Christian worship, between priest and layperson:

Therefore Christ made no such difference between the priest and the layman, that the priest should make oblation and sacrifice of Christ for the layman, and eat the Lord's Supper from him all alone, and distribute and apply it as him liketh. Christ made no such difference; but the difference that is between the priest and the layman in this matter is only in the ministration; that the priest, as a common minister of the Church, doth minister and distribute the Lord's Supper unto other, and other receive it at his hands. But the very Supper itself was by Christ instituted and given to the whole Church, not to be offered and eaten of the priest for other men, but by him to be delivered to all that would duly ask it.

As in a prince's house the officers and ministers prepare the table, and yet other, as well as they, eat the meat and drink the drink; so do the priests and ministers prepare the Lord's Supper, read the Gospel, and rehearse Christ's words; but all the people say thereto, Amen; all remember Christ's death, all give thanks to God, all repent and offer themselves an oblation to Christ, all take him for their Lord and Saviour, and spiritually feed upon him; and in token thereof, they eateth the bread and drink the wine his mystical supper.<sup>20</sup>

## 2 Dismissive of Other Components of Sacramental Ontology

The Reformers were also dismissive of other definitive components of that ontology. Two such markers stand out: indelibility of orders, and monastic vows.

17 *Cranmer on the Lord's Supper* (East Sussex: Focus Christian Ministries Trust 1987) book 5 ch 13; and *passim*

18 '...and that by his own faith every man may apply the some unto himself, and not take it at the appointment of popish priests, by the merit of their sacrifices and oblations'; *Cranmer on the Lord's Supper* 5.8 *passim*.

19 *Cranmer on the Lord's Supper* 5.11

20 *Cranmer on the Lord's Supper* 5.11

Martin Luther and John Calvin repudiated the notion of indelibility of orders as fantastic. At its seventh session, the Council of Trent reaffirmed that in Baptism, Confirmation and Orders, there is 'impressed on the soul a character, ie some spiritual and indelible sign'. In his 'Antidote to Trent', Calvin dismisses it as a 'fable ... altogether unknown to the Primitive Church, and is more suited to magical charms than to the sound doctrine of the gospel!'<sup>21</sup> In advice given in 1538 to Thomas Cromwell concerning a scholar who had renounced the catholic priesthood on the grounds of conscience, Cranmer unreservedly supports the resignation and commends him for continuance in a teaching post.<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, the breaking of monastic vows was enjoined by the Reformers, and arguments against forcefully rejected. Cranmer characterized monastic vows as 'a renunciation of ... due obedience' to family, neighbours and the government.<sup>23</sup>

The import of these attitudes needs to be appreciated. A sacramental and hierarchical ontology dominated church life. If we ask for a justification from the New Testament for the hierarchical structure of sub-deacons, deacons, priests, bishops, cardinals and the like, where is it? None can be found of course. However, we do see one of the greatest theologians of the Middle Ages, Thomas Aquinas, giving a justification by drawing down on the writing of the Greek mystical theologian of about AD 500, Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite. Two of Dionysius' four major works are entitled *Celestial Hierarchy* and *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. Thus, Thomas Aquinas advances the idea that there is in the Church an ontological grading of persons modelled on that of heaven:

The distinction of hierarchies and orders among the angels apparently does not derive from their natures. A hierarchy is a sacred rule and in its definition Dionysius states that it consists as much as possible in a likening to God ... Further, the hierarchy in the Church is modelled on that in heaven.<sup>24</sup>

Yet, as they repudiated indelibility and moved monks and nuns back into secular life, the evangelical Reformers show no fear of having engaged in a Promethean attack on heaven, indeed, they see the re-deployment of former priests and religious as farmers and merchants as more truly serving the Kingdom of God.

21 'Acts of the Council of Trent, Antidote to the Seventh Session' in *John Calvin's Tracts and Treatises* vol 3 pp 176-7

22 *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters of Thomas Cranmer* Parker Society (Cambridge: CUP 1846) p 380

23 *Miscellaneous* p 147

24 *Summa Theologiae* 1a.108, 4; cf 1a.108, 2

### 3 Lay People Administering the Sacraments

The evangelical Reformers were not unsupportive of lay people administering the sacraments. Their objections, such as they were, were not on the grounds of any sacramental principle, but on grounds of good public order.

Martin Luther's stance we have already noted. It has been advanced by some that Calvin's insistence that ordination occur before public ministry be engaged in shows that he would oppose lay administration of the Holy Communion on principle. But that is to read the word 'ordination' as it is used by the Reformers as if it had the same content as that of the medieval church. For Calvin and others, 'ordination' did not point to incorporation of a person into a supersensible sacramental reality, but 'good order'. That is, ordination was a means of guarding public ministry from the perceived ignorance and chaos caused by irregular ministries, especially those of the Anabaptists. At that level, I doubt that the Sydney ordinance governing lay administration can be accused of not being unconcerned for doing things in an orderly manner!

Grindal,<sup>25</sup> Horn,<sup>26</sup> and Sandys<sup>27</sup> all opposed the baptism of infants by women, even in emergencies, for the same reasons, it would appear, as Calvin, Beza<sup>28</sup> and Bullinger<sup>29</sup>: Scripture denied public ministry to women, and superstition. That is, in the end baptism was unnecessary for salvation, and pointedly unnecessary for dying infants: 'The salvation of an infant does not depend on, but is only sealed by baptism', wrote Calvin to an inquirer.<sup>30</sup> But the majority of English Reformers allowed lay people to baptize in emergencies, even though it was normally a public office and thus confined to the ordained – Tyndale<sup>31</sup>, Cranmer<sup>32</sup>, Rogers<sup>33</sup> and Whitgift. Tyndale also explicitly allows the same for the Lord's Supper: 'They will haply demand where it is written, that women should baptize? Verily, in this commandment, "Love thy neighbour as thyself", it is written

25 *The Zurich Letters* Parker Society (Cambridge: CUP 1842) vol 1 p 178 cf p 358

26 Op cit

27 *Sermons and Miscellaneous Pieces of Archbishop Sandys* Parker Society (Cambridge: CUP 1841) p 433, 448

28 *The Zurich Letters* Parker Society (Cambridge: CUP 1842) vol 2 p 130

29 *Decades* 5.8, pp 370-5

30 *Letters of John Calvin* ed Jules Bonnet (Grand Rapids: Baker Book 1983) 3.283

31 'The Obedience of a Christian Man', in *Doctrinal Treatises and Introductions to Different Portions of the Holy Scriptures by William Tyndale* Parker Society (Cambridge: CUP 1848) p 256; *Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue* Parker Society (Cambridge: CUP 1850) 18, 29-30, 98

32 *Miscellaneous Writings* p 58

33 *The Catholic Doctrine of the Church of England, an Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles by Thomas Rogers*, Parker Society (Cambridge: CUP 1854) pp 234-6.

that they may and ought to minister not only baptism, but all other sacraments also in time of need, if they be so necessary as they preach them.’<sup>34</sup> Later in the century, the exchange over the issue between Cartwright and Archbishop Whitgift is of prime importance, for Cartwright advanced what amounted to a metaphysical link between the baptizer and the sacrament. Whitgift pointedly denies this nexus. The exchange is worth reading in full. Here are a few extracts:

Cartwright:

Another reason he hath, which is that the dignity of the sacrament doth not depend upon man, whether he be minister or no minister, good or evil.

Indeed, upon this point, whether he be good or an evil minister, it dependeth not: but on this point, whether he be a minister or no, dependeth not only the dignity, but also the being of the sacrament; so that I take the baptism of women to be no more the holy sacrament of baptism, than I take any other daily or ordinary washing of the child ... And, as for the baptizing by laymen, considering that it is not only against the word of God, but also founded upon a false ground, and upon an imaginary necessity (which is none indeed), it moveth me nothing at all, although it be very ancient; forso much as the substance of the sacrament dependeth chiefly of the institution and word of God, which is the form, and, so it were, the life of the sacrament, of which institution this is one, and of the chief parts, that it should be celebrated by a minister.

Whitgift:

If this be true and sound doctrine, then is there many that go under the name of Christians which were never baptized; for, besides divers that have been baptized by women, some there are, and not a few, that have been baptized by such as have taken upon them the ministry, not being hereunto either ordinarily or extraordinarily called; and it may so be that T C hath hereby proved himself to be no Christian.

And surely, if you peruse all the writings of the ancient fathers, and of the late writers in like manner, I believe that you shall not find the like proposition affirmed; for, although divers, both old and new, do not allow that laymen should be suffered to baptize, yet is there none of them (such only excepted as err in re-baptization) that think ‘the being of the sacrament so to depend upon the minister, that is no sacrament if it be not celebrated by a minister’. Tertull, in his book *De Baptismo*, saith that ‘laymen may baptize [Tertull *Op Franek Lib*

*De Bapt* 17 p 225]'. Ambrose, in the fourth *ad Ephes* 1, saith that 'in the beginning it was lawful for all men to baptize'. Hierome, *ad Luciferianos*, affirmeth that 'it is lawful for laymen to baptize, if necessity do require'. And hereunto also doth St Augustine agree, in his second book against the epistle of Parmenian, the xiii chapter. M Zuinglius, in the place before by me alleged, writeth that 'the second error in the circumstances of baptism is about the person, because they think that baptism cannot be given of any but of a priest only, whereas, if necessity do require, any man may do it'. And a little after he saith that 'this and such like circumstances are not *de ipsa baptismi essentia* not of the being of the sacrament [H Zvingl *Op Tigur* 1581. *De Bapt Lib Pars II* fol 96.2.]'. Which is directly contrary to your assertion...<sup>35</sup>

In one sense, this concession was allowed in medieval theology, but that was in the face of the firm belief that heaven was shut to unbaptized infants, a belief widely condemned by the Reformers. They declined to give sacraments, or the lack of them, that sort of power, which belonged to the word of the gospel alone.

In closing, please permit me to make three pleas to the doctrine commission.

1 That in our discussions, we seek to understand the practices and writings of the English Reformers against their radical shift on the question of how God works in the world, and against their immediate conversation partners, the continental Reformers, both Lutheran and Swiss.

2 That the doctrine commission allow that the ordinance of Sydney Synod, whilst probably not in keeping with the sacramental world view of the general run of the Church Fathers, the medieval period and the nineteenth-century Tractarians, nevertheless, is in keeping with the evangelical theology of the sixteenth-century Reformers.

3 For our mutual edification, we explore the real basis of the differences between us, which are competing views of spiritual reality.

**ROBERT C DOYLE** is Lecturer in Doctrine and Church History at Moore College, Sydney.

<sup>35</sup> *The Works of John Whitgift, The Second Portion* Parker Society (Cambridge: CUP 1852) pp 525-6. See also Rodgers *Catholic Doctrine* 234-6.