

The sudden downfall of Puritanism on the accession of Charles II. was entirely unexpected. Its power had grown out of the exigencies of the struggle for political freedom. The replacing of the national Church by a Presbyterian establishment was a price paid to Scotland for military aid at a critical moment in the parliamentary campaign; but all these necessities had long passed away.

England had found that Cromwell as well as Charles could rule without parliaments. Thus the political support of Puritanism had fallen with the collapse of the Commonwealth. Whatever religious power it had once possessed was largely gone also. The vigorous persecution of the Commonwealth had defeated itself—men were no longer content to see the Book of Common Prayer suppressed, the cathedrals of England profaned, and the clergy begging their bread. The dissatisfaction was intensified by the religious anarchy everywhere rife. The jarring factions of Presbyterians and Independents were found a poor substitute for the unity of the old National Church.

Accordingly, when Sharp was sent to England to represent the Scotch Presbyterians, he reports that their cause was everywhere lost and given up. The Convention Parliament rejected the Bill for legalising diversity of religious practice in England. The next year the House of Commons clamoured for the enforcement of the Book of Common Prayer, and only the good sense of the House of the Lords prevented it from imposing on the Church the unrevised Book in previous use. As it was, Convocation had but one month from November 21st to December 20th, 1661 for the work of necessary revision, which was as thorough and complete as that short time would allow. Over 600 changes, mainly for greater clearness and adaptation to existing needs, were made. Amongst the most important were the clear rubrical directions, including those for the Manual Acts in the Holy Communion, which the break of Church tradition during the Commonwealth rendered necessary. An Office for the Baptism of Adults was inserted, and additional Prayers for use in the daily services, like the Prayer for all sorts and conditions of men, and the General Thanksgiving, the latter the work of the Puritan Dr. Reynolds who conformed and became Bishop of Norwich.

The Savoy conference between the Bishops and the Puritan representatives had produced no useful result. Too much distrust was felt on both sides, and the Puritans had taken up an extreme position. Several useful measures which they advocated have been carried out in our own time, such as the appointment of Bishops suffragan in large dioceses, the more careful preparation of candidates for confirmation, and the better organizing of the clergy in rural deaneries.

The new Book of Common Prayer was ordered under the Act of Uniformity passed in 1662 to be used in all churches on and after St. Bartholomew's Day, August 24th, 1662, and the clergy then in possession, most of whom were Presbyterian or Independent ministers, were allowed to retain their benefices on condition of being episcopally ordained and duly using the Book of Common Prayer. The only exception was in the case of those who held benefices of which the lawful incumbents deprived during the Commonwealth were still living; in which case the rights of the original incumbents were preserved. Under this provision about 1,000 dispossessed clergy had returned to their former cures. It is hard to see how, if the National Church was to be restored, and its worship given back to the English people, a fairer arrangement could have been made. It is probable that of the 6,000 clergy who were thus continued in their benefices three-fourths had been Presbyterian or Independent ministers. A number of ministers, variously estimated from 1,200 or 1,400 to 1,800 or 2,000, refused these conditions, and so lost their benefices.

The difficulties in the way of the reorganization of the Church were immense. Never, perhaps, did the Church of England possess a more brilliant or devoted episcopate than the bishops of the Restoration; but, nevertheless, they were for the most part, old men, veterans who had seen many years of storm and trial, and for whom in the course of nature but a short time remained in which to work. Nine bishops survived to take their accustomed places once more. Amongst those who had died just before were the pious Hall of Norwich, the great Archbishop Usher of Armagh, and the gallant Brownrigge, of Exeter, who, with Bishops Duppa, Skinner and others, had not feared to ordain candidates for the sacred ministry in the darkest times of the Commonwealth. Of the survivors Juxon, who as Bishop of London had attended Charles I. on the scaffold, became Archbishop of Canterbury till 1662; Frewen, Archbishop of York, till his death in 1664. Matthew Wren, Bishop of Ely, restored to his See after nearly twenty years imprisonment in the Tower, died in 1667. But few of the new bishops overlived the decade. The most prominent were Walton, the great Biblical and Oriental scholar, author of the still famous Polyglot Bible; Robert Sanderson, of Lincoln, one of the few great casuists of the English Church; Sheldon, who succeeded Juxon in the Primacy, a man of unbounded liberality, who is reputed to have given £70,000 to the work of the Church; Cosin, the great liturgiologist and successful ruler of the Church of Durham; Morley, famous as the patron of the saintly Ken; and Gunning, one of the leaders in the Savoy conference. There was, indeed, much to be done. The cathedrals were defaced and