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In order to review a book which was published in 1992, and has already been extensively discussed, some preliminary remarks are required. Two reasons readily present themselves: first, that Duffy's book has become the representative text of the revisionist school of the English Reformation studies, and secondly, that it, above all, gives indispensable insights to grasp the picture of the religion of pre-Reformation days. It still commends itself to readers who are influenced by the one-sided view of the Reformation which has been largely formed by the Protestant historians. The book provides a good thesis to take into account.

It is impossible to overestimate the importance of the Reformation, for it is through this revolutionary process that the Middle Ages came to an end and the modern age began. This view might sound too obvious and needless to repeat, but it is often overlooked, at least here in Japan. It may safely be said that the religious perspective is alien to the mind-set of Japanese intellectuals, and therefore they tend to neglect the pivotal roles which the Christian religion performed in Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Religion changed drastically in the sense that it turned private in nature. It had been public or communal and centered on the parish church, and now it became individualistic. The new type of faith drove the believers to belong in spirit to their own congregation rather than to the local parish church. From this transition they got freedom from hierarchical authority, and eventually from the
bonds of place especially in the case of the Puritans. The emigration of “Pilgrim Fathers” on the Mayflower was a typical case. On the other hand, from the Catholic point of view, the Reformation was not such a bright, promising thing. It involved the complete break with Christendom, which was the federation of national and regional churches by one universal faith, and with the medieval past of England which continued to hang in memory as “merry”.

My chief interest in the English Reformation, beyond the obvious reason of its being certainly one of the most dramatic periods of English Church history, lies in the question of why the Reformation was after all successful. There is no denying that England has been a Protestant country since the reign of Henry VIII. But what is it that caused the Reformation? Were there any internal reasons which made it inevitable? To Protestants probably this question seems too simple to answer. And only Catholics feel challenged to submit some convincing answers, at least to themselves. However, according to Stephen Neill, “The Reformation of the English Church in the sixteenth century is something about which everyone living in an English-speaking country, and particularly in Britain, has to make up his mind. The evidences of it, and of its remoter consequences, shout at him from almost every street, in the presence of Churches calling themselves each as the true and legitimate heir of the Christianity of the New Testament.”¹ So, it seems the question is a reasonable one, and not limited to Catholics alone.

These reflections lead us to investigate scientifically the situation of the medieval church and the processes of the English Reformation. Here Duffy’s book serves as a good guide. The book comprises two parts: “The Structures of Traditional Religion and “The Stripping of the Altars, 1530 - 1580”. What does he intend to do? He explains in the “Introduction” that “In the first part I have sought to explore the character and range of late medieval English Catholicism, indicating something of the richness and complexity of the religious sys-
tem by which men and women structured their experience of the world, and their hopes and aspirations within and beyond it. In the second part I have tried to tell the story of the dismantling and destruction of that symbolic world, from Henry VIII’s break with the Papacy in the early 1530s to the Elizabethan “Settlement” of religion, which I take to have been more or less secure, or at least in the ascendant, by about 1580.” So if these double purposes have been faithfully fulfilled, the book proves to be the standard work of the Reformation studies. I think Duffy is quite successful, notably in the first part, and provides us with many vivid pictures of the medieval Church. This is indeed one of the strong merits of the whole book. Everyone who sincerely wants to know about the reality of the pre-Reformation Church should turn to this work. Duffy also writes that “a central plank of the argument of the first part of this book”, is his conviction “that no substantial gulf [existed] between the religion of the clergy and the educated elite on the one hand and that of the people at large on the other”. This reflects his careful decision to choose the term “traditional” in giving the title rather than “popular”, which implies and presupposes that there existed “non-popular” religion.

So we must understand the nature of traditional piety and devotions in the late middle ages, and the religious landscape in general. Unlike the present age, Christianity was effectively the only religion in late medieval England, and it permeated every aspect of life. Thinking of parish churches, we are reminded of the fact that those churches were rebuilt out of popular piety between the 14th and the early 16th century. And inside the church, in addition to services and sacraments, there were beautiful statues, wall paintings, and stained-glass windows which not only adorned the place of worship, but also performed efficacious roles of religious edification. It cannot be emphasized that it was especially an age of lay piety. The flourishing of mystery plays, the observation of feast days for a variety of saints, pilgrimages to holy shrines and temples, are all
valid testimonies. And most importantly, we must not forget the chantries for saying or "chanting" Masses and other prayers for various people, especially souls in Purgatory.

But what is the typical description of pre-Reformation Christianity which has been dominant? Glanmore Williams, an authority on Welsh church history, maintains that "The overwhelming majority of its population remained collective Christians, content to leave it to the priesthood, many of whose members were no better than the laity, to minister the sacraments and perform the practices and assumptions, unquestioningly accepted but dimly apprehended. Habit, not conviction, was the strongest element in their faith, as it had been down the centuries."² This is a much too grim picture and, perhaps we should note the author's evangelical bias. This view naturally contradicts the sympathetic view of the nature of the faith of medieval people shared by Catholics. Norman Tanner, a specialist of medieval church history, for instance, says that "For medieval people there was far less of a distinction between the outer and the inner aspects of religion than for us today. This was partly because people were largely unlettered and therefore did not think conceptually", and as an important distinction of the faith, he directs our attention to the fact that "Medieval people thought and expressed themselves largely by what they did, and therefore their external activities were the key to, indeed for the most part were, their inner piety".³

Duffy contends that "late medieval Catholicism exerted an enormously strong, diverse, and vigorous hold over the imagination and the loyalty of the people up to the very moment of Reformation. Traditional religion had about it no particular marks of exhaustion or decay, and indeed in a whole host of ways, from the multiplication of vernacular religious books to adaptations within the national and regional cult of the saints, was showing itself well able to meet new needs and new conditions. Nor does it seem to me that tendencies towards the
"privatizing" of religion, or growing lay religious sophistication and literacy, or growing lay activism and power in gild and parish, had in them that drive towards Protestantism which some historians have discerned." He then presents to himself a hard question, saying "That contention, if true, obviously raises a series of major problems for the historian of the Reformation. If medieval religion was decadent, unpopular, exhausted, the success of the Reformation hardly requires explanation. If, on the contrary, it was vigorous, adaptable, widely understood, and popular, then we have much yet to discover about the processes and the pace of the reform." This he tries to do in the second part of the book.

Let me quote one moving passage which well illustrates the revolutionary change caused by the introduction of the Second Book of Common Prayer in 1552. Duffy speaks about the rite of the dying, and says that

in the world of the 1552 book the dead were no longer with us. They could not neither be spoken to nor even about, in any way that affected their well-being. The dead had gone beyond the reach of human contact, even of human prayer. There was nothing which could even be mistaken for a prayer for the dead in the 1552 funeral rite. The service was no longer a rite of intercession on behalf of the dead, but an exhortation to faith on the part of living. Indeed, it is not too much to say that the oddest feature of the 1552 burial rite is the disappearance of the corpse from it. So, at the moment of committal in 1552, the minister turns not towards the corpse, but away from it, to the living congregation around the grave...Here the dead person is spoken not to, but about, as one no longer here, but precisely as departed: the boundaries of human community have been redrawn. (p.475)

This drastic change is certainly one of the most important changes in traditional
faith created by the Reformation.

Now, to have a clear understanding of what happened in the Reformation, it is useful to cite the neatly written passage by another Reformation scholar, W.J. Sheils:

The theological innovations during the reign of Edward VI were accompanied by sweeping changes in the outward forms of worship. Three of these must have caused even the least learned of the laity to take note: the dissolution of the chantries and the religious fraternities altered the appearance of church interiors as the chapels, altars, statues, and other ornaments associated with them were removed; the change in the language of worship to English must have increased the accessibility of the liturgy to the laity, if not necessarily their understanding of it; and the administration of the Communion in both kinds to the laity, together with the removal of the requirement for clerical celibacy, reduced the sense of separateness which the priestly life had acquired in the medieval Church. For the more thoughtful, these changes would have signified more substantial theological shifts expressing, first, the abolition of the notion of purgatory and denial of the efficacy of pious practices in mediating between the Church Militant on earth and the Church Triumphant in heaven; second, the stress on the scriptural basis of religion by putting biblical texts in the vernacular; and third, a change in the idea of ministry to one less sacramental and less distinct from a laity who had some share in the priesthood of all believers.¹

There can be several models of explaining the Reformation, but the most obvious and familiar one is the model of the Reformation as a natural reaction against the late medieval Church, which is thoroughly refuted as not workable. That it doesn't work at all is born out by Duffy's book, for the presupposition
of this model is that the late medieval Church was decadent and unpopular, and could not serve the faith of people. Incidentally, I may draw attention to the fact that this picture of the late medieval Church is still being taught in Japanese high school history class, and accepted as an accurate view.

Duffy seems to maintain that "the imposition of central government policies and unpredictable decisions of a few great men" is the true cause of the success of the English Reformation. His understanding of the people of Tudor England refers us to this view. According to Duffy, they were, "by and large, pragmatists. Grumbling, they sold off as much of their Catholic past as they could not hide or keep...Used to obedience, many of them accepted the changes, however unwelcome, as unavoidable." He wisely differentiates outward conformity and inner conviction. He warns us, for example, not to mistake the disappearance of the names of the saints in will preambles as the conviction of Protestant faith. It is prudence, Duffy declares, not ideology, that dictated reticence. So the secret of the success of the English Reformation seems to be the compliance of the people with the religious policies of the central government, and the gradual process of erosion of memories of the traditional religion. Duffy observes, "As the memories of Catholic cultus faded,...the chances of a reversion to the old ways faded". And during this process "New pieties were forming, and something of the old sense of the sacred was transferring itself from the sacramentals to the scriptures."

But still, I feel something important is lacking from the whole picture. Besides the obvious fact that not everyone can dare to suffer martyrdom for his faith, there should be some inherent and positive element in the new religion that helps general people's decision-making, and that makes new influences to be fully accepted. Otherwise it is impossible for the new faith to take root. Here Tanner's observation gives us an insight. He narrates that "support for masses and prayers for the dead and for devotions to the saints seem to point against the
Reformation; but on the other hand there is little evidence of enthusiasm for the papacy or of opposition to vernacular Bibles, which points in favour of the Reformation. We must admit that the Reformation had some good points in it which attracted the support of lay people. The lack of enthusiastic allegiance to the Pope contributed to the initial success of Henry's break with Rome.

In addition, I suspect a feature of late medieval religion itself nurtured people's attitude, which made the acceptance of Protestantism comparatively easy. This can be named "a willingness to be led by others", which derives from the nature of the late medieval religion itself, namely its being "communitarian rather than individualistic". This is not difficult for the Japanese to understand, when they remind themselves of how the Buddhist denomination of "Jodo Shin-shu" has been working in a community. I myself was raised up in a "Shin'shu" community. This was founded by Shin'ran (1173-1262) who was originally a monk at the Hieizan temple located in the mountain border between Kyoto and Ohtsu. But unsatisfied with a monastic life there, he went down to the city. He started to live among general people and teach that if one prays a very simple prayer, "Namu-Amidabutsu", his soul would be saved. This religion depends to a great extent upon a system similar to parish. Each village has its own local temple. It has the same kind of lay institution as a religious gild. The community does not allow its members to live outside it. They are bound by a village temple. A community which professes the same religion, naturally trains its members to be submissive to the authority. Do as the others do sounds much too pragmatic, but it is at least a safe principle of life. In this climate, people do not look to the head temple in Kyoto but to community temples, as Catholics in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries had looked, not to Rome, but to parish churches. So can we say that the lack of very strong, authoritarian central power within the Church, namely the weakness of the papacy as the religious institution, at least its weak presence in England, had made it easier for the re-
formers to plant the new faith among the people?

I read Duffy’s book with great interest and now feel very much enlightened. I think his humble hope, that if it puts “a question mark against some common assumptions about the character and progress of the Reformation up to the middle years of Elizabeth’s reign, it will have served its purpose”, is undoubtedly accomplished. And I conclude this review essay expressing my own sincere hope that the book will soon be translated into Japanese, since we have a translation of Keith Thomas’s *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, which Duffy assesses as “seriously incomplete and one-sided” in the sense that the work has “virtually no sustained discussion of the liturgy and its effect on the religious world-view of ordinary men and women”. We should have Duffy’s book in more easily accessible form.

Notes