

Language and the Manx Reformation, 1570–1698

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This article explores how the language barrier reinforced the Manx church's peripheral position by its effect on the course of Protestant reform on the Isle of Man. It considers the nature of this barrier, focusing on the lack of published Manx translations of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer, and outlines how this affected the course taken by reform. Lack of access to Manx texts and education militated against the emergence of a body of theologically aware laity, while the necessity for parish clergy to be bilingual restricted the pool of potential candidates, hindering the infusion of new personnel and ideas from elsewhere. Educational and economic factors combined with language to exacerbate these problems and retard the impact of new patterns of clergy recruitment and training. The consequence was to limit the Manx church's participation in developments shaping the Church of England, and to complicate attempts by later seventeenth-century bishops to overcome this.

According to James Sharpe, the Isle of Man in the seventeenth century was 'geographically marginal, culturally isolated, and economically backward',¹ amply justifying for many the perception of it as a periphery. To a significant extent, this was due to the language barrier: for the majority of people, their first language was Manx rather than English. In spite of recent scholarly interest in the way Protestant reform deployed Celtic languages,² Manx has attracted relatively little comment, probably because of its limited geographical range;

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¹ James Sharpe, 'Towards a Legal Anthropology of the Early Modern Isle of Man', in Richard McMahon, ed., *Crime, Law and Popular Culture in Europe, 1500–1900* (Abingdon, 2013), 118–37, at 120.

² See, for example, Toby C. Barnard, 'Protestants and the Irish Language, c.1675–1725', *JEH* 44 (1993), 243–72; Glanmor Williams, 'Unity of Religion or Unity of Language? Protestants and Catholics and the Welsh Language 1536–1660', in Geraint Jenkins, ed., *The Welsh Language before the Industrial Revolution* (Cardiff, 1997), 207–33; Karl S. Bottigheimer and Ute Lotz-Heumann, 'The Irish Reformation in European Perspective',

thus, the language has also been peripheral in terms of scholarly attention.³

This article draws on research for my forthcoming book on the course of Protestant reform on the Isle of Man. It argues that the language barrier did much to shape that course by limiting the Manx church's participation in developments which defined the reforming Church of England, and hindering attempts by later seventeenth-century bishops, especially Isaac Barrow (1663–71), to foster such participation.⁴ Language difference thus ensured the Manx church's continuing peripheral status within the Church of England. This worked in three ways. First, the lack of printed editions of the Bible and the Prayer Book in Manx hindered the formation on the island of Christian laity from whom might be drawn candidates for ordination. Second, the need for Manx-speakers, coupled with the poverty of almost all the seventeen parish livings,⁵ severely limited the possibility of attracting parochial clergy from elsewhere, or, if non-Manx speakers took up positions on the island, rendered their ministry less effective. Third, the limited education available to local ordinands and the consequent persistence of traditional localized patterns of recruitment meant that they were insufficiently equipped to engage with wider ecclesiastical issues and trends.

ARG 89 (1998), 268–308, esp. 284–5; David N. Griffiths, *The Bibliography of the Book of Common Prayer 1549–1999* (London, 2002), 498, 510, 575; Felicity Heal, 'Mediating the Word: Language and Dialects in the British and Irish Reformations', *JEH* 56 (2005), 261–86; J. Robert Wright, 'Early Translations', in Charles Hefling and Cynthia Shattuck, eds, *The Oxford Guide to the Book of Common Prayer: A Worldwide Survey* (Oxford, 2006), 56–60. These offer comments on the case of Manx but no sustained consideration.

³ For a rare example of an article devoted to this topic, see David Craine, 'The Bible in Manx', *Proceedings of the Isle of Man Natural History & Antiquarian Society* [hereafter: *PIMNHAS*] 5/5 (1954–6), 540–54.

⁴ The most recent overviews are all dated: A. W. Moore, *Diocesan Histories: Sodor and Man* (London, 1893), 97–185; idem, *A History of the Isle of Man*, 2 vols (Douglas, 1900), 1: 341–72; W. S. Dempsey, *A History of the Catholic Church in the Isle of Man* (Billinge, 1958), 117–36 (ch. 12, 'The So-Called Reformation'). The fourth volume of the *New History of the Isle of Man* will offer somewhat more up-to-date coverage, although it has been some years in preparation.

⁵ J. Roger Dickinson, *The Lordship of Man under the Stanleys: Government and Economy in the Isle of Man, 1580–1704*, Chetham Society 3rd series 41 (Manchester, 1996), 345–6.

THE ISLAND'S POLITICAL AND ECCLESIASTICAL STATUS

By way of background, some comment on the Isle of Man's distinctive political and ecclesiastical status will be helpful. Since 1406, it had been ruled by the Stanley family of Lancashire. Whilst they owed allegiance to the English crown, and had found it politic to gradually abandon the title 'King of Man' in favour of 'Lord of Man', the change made no practical difference and for the most part they continued to rule autonomously.⁶ Many civil appointments were made from Lancashire families in the service of the Stanleys, including most of the governors, who effectively ruled the island in the absence of the lord.

The island tended to be of interest to London only when strategic defence considerations (or later, economic ones) were in view. This explains why, when a succession dispute broke out within the Stanley family after the death of the fifth earl in 1594, Elizabeth I took the charge of the island into her own hands, lest there be no chain of command to deal with enemy threats.⁷ Indeed, there had been fears in the 1570s that it could serve as a staging post to spirit away Mary Queen of Scots and, in the 1580s and 1590s, that it could be used either to get priests away from Lancashire or into England, or by Spaniards against England, or as a base for 'piracy'. The island was seen as 'infected' with papists, and there was a recurrent fear of its invasion from Ireland or the Western Isles of Scotland.⁸ Direct rule

⁶ See *ibid.* 15–18.

⁷ See *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Elizabeth, 1595–97*, ed. Mary Anne Everett Green (London, 1869), 82 (Elizabeth to the bailiffs of the Isle of Man, 1 August 1595), *British History Online* [hereafter: *BHO*], at: <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/domestic/edw-eliz/1595-7/pp82-98>>, accessed 1 November 2018.

⁸ See, for example, *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Elizabeth, Addenda, 1566–79*, ed. Mary Anne Everett Green (London, 1871), 362 (examination of Henry Simpson, 8 October 1571), *BHO*, at: <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/domestic/edw-eliz/addenda/1566-79/>>, accessed 5 April 2018; *Calendar of State Papers, Scotland, 5: 1574–81*, ed. William K Boyd (London, 1907), 70–1 (Advertisements to the Earl of Leicester, 1574), *BHO*, at: <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/scotland/vol5/pp68-83>>, accessed 1 November 2018; *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Elizabeth, 1581–90*, ed. Robert Lemon (London, 1865), 633 (information from John Waren, 11 December 1589), *BHO*, at: <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/domestic/edw-eliz/1581-90/pp631-637>>, accessed 1 November 2018; *Calendar of State Papers, Scotland, 10: 1589–1593*, ed. William K. Boyd and Henry W. Meikle (Edinburgh, 1936), 688–93, at 690 (no. 694), *BHO*, at: <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/scotland/vol10/pp681-711>>, accessed 6 April 2018; *ibid.* 828–9 (no. 783, Robert Bowes to [Burghley], 1 January 1593), *BHO*, at: <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state->

therefore lasted until the resolution of the succession dispute in 1609.

Political peripherality was reflected in ecclesiastical matters. In the twelfth century, the diocese of Sodor had included most of the Western Isles of Scotland,⁹ but by the sixteenth, the Western Isles had come under Scottish jurisdiction and the diocese had shrunk to comprise only the Isle of Man. It had been neglected by a succession of jurisdictions, partly because of its remoteness. The diocese appears to have been placed under York in 1458, but the lack of clarity in official sources regarding who occupied the see during the first half of the sixteenth century indicates how tenuous the link with the wider church actually was. The see was formally incorporated into the province of Canterbury in 1541, as an afterthought in the act incorporating the diocese of Chester, before being returned the following year to the jurisdiction of York.¹⁰ But successive archbishops took very little interest, and 'any attempt to treat Sodor and Man as comprised in the province of York for any effective purpose other than the consecration of the bishops seems quickly to have lapsed'.¹¹ The diocese appears only in one or two references in provincial act books and intermittent records of attendance at convocation (when Manx delegates were usually represented by proctors). York's jurisdiction in appeals from the Manx church courts was acknowledged only vaguely, and such appeals were very rare indeed, in part because they were discouraged by the Stanleys.¹²

papers/scotland/vol10/pp820-833>, accessed 6 April 2018; *Calendar of State Papers, Scotland*, 11: 1593–1595, ed. Annie I. Cameron (Edinburgh, 1936), 116–18, at 117 (no. 85, Robert Bowes to Burghley, 7 July 1593), *BHO*, at: <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/scotland/vol11/pp114-136>>, accessed 6 April 2018; *Calendar of State Papers, Ireland, 1592–1596*, ed. Hans Claude Hamilton (London, 1890), 126, *BHO*, at: <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/ireland/1592-6/pp120-136>>, accessed 1 November 2018.

⁹ On the later medieval diocese, see Alex Woolf, 'The Early History of the Diocese of Sodor', and P. J. Davey, 'Medieval Monasticism and the Isle of Man c.1130–1540', in Seán Duffy and Harold Mytum, eds, *A New History of the Isle of Man, 3: The Medieval Period, 1000–1406* (Liverpool, 2015), 329–48 and 349–76, respectively.

¹⁰ 'An Act for dis severing the Bishoprick of Chester and of the Isle of Man from the Jurisdiction of Canterbury to the Jurisdiction of York', 1541 (33 Henry VIII, c. 31).

¹¹ Anne Ashley, 'The Spiritual Courts of the Isle of Man, especially in the 17th and 18th Centuries', *EHR* 72 (1957), 31–59, at 36. The name of the diocese changed gradually during the seventeenth century.

¹² J. A. Sharpe and J. R. Dickinson, 'Courts, Crime and Litigation in the Isle of Man, 1580–1700', *HR* 72 (1999), 140–59, at 145, 146 n. 17. For historical surveys of the status

In effect, the Manx church was ruled by the lord of Man. A ruling of 1541 had confirmed his status as ‘Metropolitan and & Chiefe of holy church’.¹³ This was directed against the bishop and clergy, who were seen as infringing on the lord’s ecclesiastical prerogatives, but it may also have had in view any potential claim from Henry VIII. The ruling was confirmed in 1610.¹⁴ Except during the period of direct rule by the English crown (which saw one significant appointment in 1605, of John Phillips as bishop), the Stanleys as lords of Man possessed the power of nominating candidates for the episcopal see, and thirteen of the island’s seventeen livings were also in their gift. Reflecting the situation with civil appointments, the body of domestic chaplains and incumbents of livings in the family’s gift provided a number of personnel for higher clergy appointments, including at least five of the nine archdeacons appointed during this period and five of the eleven bishops.

As governors of the Manx church, the Stanleys walked a tightrope, needing to keep on the right side of the English monarchy, but (mostly) being reluctant to adopt new religious opinions. The third earl, Edward (r. 1521–72) went no further in reform than acceding to the dissolution of the island’s monastic establishments in 1540. In 1549, he voted against the Act of Uniformity which enforced the use in England of the new Book of Common Prayer. By 1559, he was willing to accept the Elizabethan revision and to assist in its enforcement in the diocese of Chester, although he turned a blind eye to many traditional practices, and, in 1570, as well as sheltering two Roman Catholic priests, he forbade his chaplains in Lancashire to use the English book.¹⁵

of the Manx church, see Augur Pearce, ‘The Offshore Establishment of Religion: Church and Nation on the Isle of Man’, *Ecclesiastical Law Journal* 7 (2003), 62–74; Peter W. Edge and C. Augur Pearce, ‘The Development of the Lord Bishop’s Role in the Manx Tynwald’, *JEH* 57 (2006), 494–514.

¹³ Douglas, Manx National Heritage Library [hereafter: MNHL], MS 00510C, John Quayle, ‘A Collection of several Law-Cases or Precedents taken out of the Antient and Modern Records of the Isle of Mann, setting forth the Constitution and Course of Proceedings used in the several Courts of Judicature within the said Isle, and the nature of our antient Customary Laws’ (mid-eighteenth century), 31.

¹⁴ A. W. Moore, ed., *Notes and Documents from the Records of the Isle of Man* (Douglas, n. d.), 26 (citing the *Liber Scaccarii* for 1610, but reference not traced); K. F. W. Gumbley, ‘Church Legislation in the Isle of Man’, *Ecclesiastical Law Journal* 3 (1994), 240–6, online at: <<http://www.gumbley.net/article.htm#return6>>, accessed 1 December 2021.

¹⁵ J. J. Bagley, *The Earls of Derby 1485–1985* (London, 1985), 42, 46–7, 48.

The last bishop to appear in Catholic succession lists was Thomas Stanley, who belonged to another branch of the family. He had been appointed in 1555 (that is, under Mary I, when the English church once again came under Roman jurisdiction) and held office until his death in 1569.¹⁶ Only from the 1570s do the first parish clergy with Protestant sympathies appear; this may be due to the lack of extant records before that point, but it is worth noting that one John Stephenson, vicar of Maughold for a few years after the death of his father (also John) in 1576, was said to have been the last Roman Catholic priest in the parish.¹⁷

THE LACK OF PRINTED MANX TEXTS

The importance of the preached and written word to Protestant thinking, reflecting belief in the supreme authority of Scripture in matters of faith and practice, makes it appropriate to consider the absence of printed Manx texts and its impact on the course of reform. According to Erkki Kouri, writing on Protestant reform in Scandinavia, ‘The principle that the Word of God had to be preached to people in their mother tongue, and that they should be given the opportunity to read it in the vernacular, helped to create and nourish new written languages in remote and obscure parts of Europe.’¹⁸ Moreover, the easiest way of making vernacular texts widely available was through printing. Even where the majority of the population could not read, Bob Scribner has suggested, printing was able to create a group of opinion-formers who could spread new ideas by oral means, notably through preaching and the discussion of what was preached or of texts read aloud in group settings.¹⁹

However, Felicity Heal argues that the Isle of Man offers a counter-example to the theory that print culture was central in disseminating

¹⁶ Conrad Eubel, ed., *Hierarchia catholica medii aevi sive summorum pontificum, S. R. E. cardinalium, ecclesiarum antistitum series*, 3: *Saeculum XVI ab anno 1503 complectens* (Regensburg, 1910), 302, 321.

¹⁷ J. W. and C. K. Radcliffe, *A History of Kirk Maughold* (Douglas, 1979), 88.

¹⁸ E. I. Kouri, ‘The Early Reformation in Sweden and Finland, c. 1520–1560’, in Ole Peter Grell, ed., *The Scandinavian Reformation: From Evangelical Movement to Institutionalisation of Reform* (Cambridge, 1995), 42–69, at 57. Kouri demonstrates this with reference to Swedish and Finnish, although the impact was less significant for Icelandic and Norwegian.

¹⁹ R. W. Scribner, ‘Oral Culture and the Diffusion of Reformation Ideas’, *History of European Ideas* 5 (1984), 237–56, at 241–4; idem, *The German Reformation* (Basingstoke, 1986), 20.

Protestantism: here, she writes, change was achieved entirely orally.²⁰ This needs nuancing, as we shall see, but holds true in terms of the lack of printed texts. Reform on the Isle of Man was carried out in the absence of published vernacular religious material and did not result in the production of such material until the eighteenth century. Only then did agencies exist with the funds to sponsor the publication of works for which the market was extremely limited; only then, too, had education resulted in a growth in popular literacy. It has been estimated that the island's population in 1600 was about 7,000,²¹ and, on the basis of surviving parish registers, Dickinson calculates the figure during the decade 1665–74 at 10,464.²² Most had Manx as their first language, and many outside the commercial centres were monoglot. Until the Prayer Book was translated in 1610, there were no documents of any kind in Manx; all we have are brief quotations in the proceedings of church courts, often of insults or slanders for which the speakers had been presented. The earliest oral composition is the 'Manx Traditionary Ballad', which may have been composed early in the sixteenth century, although no manuscripts of it are known before the eighteenth.²³ Unlike Irish and Scots Gaelic (to which Manx is closely related), there was thus no literary form of the language; in consequence, Manx did not share in the common literary register of the other two languages.²⁴

By 1570, the English Bible and the Book of Common Prayer had become fixtures in the worship of the established church in England, but the lack of records for preceding decades means that we do not know whether they had been introduced on the Isle of Man. The legislation mandating them applied to the island, but the royal

²⁰ Felicity Heal, *Reformation in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2003), 283 n. 124; compare eadem, 'Mediating the Word', 280.

²¹ Sharpe and Dickinson, 'Courts, Crime and Litigation', 158.

²² Dickinson, *Lordship of Man*, 10. In the 1690s, William Sacheverell calculated it at about 16,000, which was probably an over-estimate: Preston, Lancashire Archives, Kenyon of Peel Hall Papers, DDKE/Box 84/79, 'Mr Sacheverell's Computation about the Isle of Man'.

²³ R. L. Thomson, 'The Manx Traditionary Ballad', 2 parts, *Études celtiques* 9 (1961), 521–48; 10 (1962), 60–87, part 1 at 522.

²⁴ Christopher Lewin, e-mail to the author, 7 August 2023. A variation of this argument is offered by Steven G. Ellis, 'A View of the Irish Language: Language and History in Ireland from the Middle Ages to the Present', in Ann K. Isaacs, ed., *Languages and Identities in Historical Perspective* (Pisa, 2005), 67–78, at 70–1, who asserts that the Protestant Reformation contributed to a decline in the mutual comprehensibility of Scottish, Irish and Manx Gaelic. Welsh was related most closely to Cornish and Breton; there were thus two 'families' of Celtic languages.

visitation of 1559 which imposed use of the English Prayer Book does not appear to have extended to the Isle of Man,²⁵ perhaps because it was ruled by the earls of Derby. In any case, it would have been characteristic of Earl Edward to stall on, or even attempt to obstruct, its application. Given his religious outlook, along with the fact that the last bishop whose appointment was recognized by Rome remained in office until 1569, it may be surmised that worship had continued to be conducted according to traditional Latin rites. Clergy, who were mostly Manx-speakers, presumably offered extempore translation of appropriate parts of the liturgy into Manx and, in a few locations, English – primarily those connected with island government: the parish church of Malew and the garrison chapels at Castle Rushen in Castletown, and Peel. This was certainly the practice by the middle third of the seventeenth century, but we lack evidence to confirm what happened before then. It is possible that, as sometimes happened in Ireland, individual clergy might continue to celebrate Catholic rites alongside occasional use of the Book of Common Prayer in English or Latin, with translation into Manx.²⁶

When translation was undertaken, it was of the Prayer Book rather than, as in Wales and Scotland, the Bible.²⁷ The 1604 edition of the Prayer Book was translated by Bishop Phillips in 1610, with the help of Hugh Cannell (d. 1670), vicar of Kirk Michael. Phillips had been appointed by James VI/I in 1605, and was the third successive Welsh bishop in the diocese after John Meyrick (1576–99) and George Lloyd (1600–5). These three bishops would have brought with them an approach which stressed the importance of vernacular religious provision: the leaders of the Elizabethan church in Wales were convinced that if reform was to take root and the nation be united in religious matters, it was necessary to use Welsh, even if the crown's long-term aim might be its replacement by English.²⁸ Phillips is said to have

²⁵ Glanmor Williams, *Renewal and Reformation: Wales, c.1415–1642* (Oxford, 1993), 305; compare C. J. Kitching, ed., *The Royal Visitation of 1559: Act Book for the Northern Province*, Surtees Society 187 (Woodbridge, 1972).

²⁶ Steven G. Ellis, 'The Irish Reformation Debate in Retrospect', in Mark Empey, Alan Ford and Miriam Moffitt, eds, *The Church of Ireland and its Past: History, Interpretation, and Identity* (Dublin, 2017), 255–65, at 262.

²⁷ Heal, *Reformation*, 282.

²⁸ Geraint Jenkins, 'From Reformation to Methodism 1536–c.1750', in Prys Morgan, ed., *Wales: An Illustrated History* (Stroud, 2001), 167–209, at 193; W. Ian P. Hazlett, *The Reformation in Britain and Ireland* (London, 2003), 79–80.

learned Manx sufficiently well to preach in it, and the records portray him as a bishop who was strongly committed to fulfilling his ministry, if not always as diplomatic or as thick-skinned as the post called for.²⁹ Nevertheless, his translation was not too well received. One of the two vicars-general, William Norris, could only read the odd word; his colleague William Crowe could read part of it, but thought that few other clergy would be able to do so because it was ‘spelled with vowels wherewith none of them are acquainted’. They also denied having been consulted about the possibility of printing it, which Phillips said had been his intention, although the limited market would have made it an unattractive economic proposition to any printer.³⁰

Why did the translation meet such a cool reception? The Manx historian A. W. Moore (1853–1909) suggested that it was due to jealousy of Phillips as an incomer,³¹ but jealousy does not appear to have been a characteristic reaction of locally born clergy to the appointment of outsiders to higher office during this period. Another possibility might have been clerical reluctance to change the way they conducted worship.³² However, clergy were unlikely to be rejecting the principle of translation, since they already practised this extempore. Neither is it likely that Manx-born clergy were basing their opposition on a belief that Manx was not a fitting language for divine worship. Moreover, since much of the content of the Prayer Book would have been familiar, it is unlikely that lack of familiarity with Protestant understandings of key theological concepts was a major issue. Part of the problem may have been that, naturally enough in an oral culture, clergy were used to a verbal approach rather than a written one: traditional Catholic practice involved providing basic instruction in the vernacular, including the Lord’s Prayer, the Ten

²⁹ The lack of any study of Phillips is a significant lacuna in the historiography of the Manx church.

³⁰ Phillips to the Earl of Salisbury, 1 February 1611, in MNHL, MS 00559C, ‘A Booke containing the Answers of the Officers, Deemsters, Vicars General and 24 Keys to certaine Articles objected by John now Bishop of this Isle against John Ireland Esquire Lieutenant and Captain of the Isle of Man’, 1610 (early eighteenth-century copy); quoted in A. W. Moore, assisted by John Rhÿs, eds, *The Book of Common Prayer in Manx Gaelic: Being Translations made by Bishop Phillips in 1610, and by the Manx Clergy in 1765*, 2 vols, Manx Society 32, 33 (Douglas, 1893), 1: xii.

³¹ Moore, *Sodor and Man*, 136.

³² Michael John Hoy, *Isaac Barrow: Builder of Foundations for a Modern Nation: The Church, Education and Society in the Isle of Man, 1660–1800* (PhD thesis, University of Liverpool, 2015), 76.

Commandments and the Creed, as well as translating the epistles and gospels of the liturgy.³³ On this reading, they may have seen little need for the constraint imposed by a written translation. More recently, and more cogently, it has been argued that the problem was the orthography, as implied by the comments of the vicars-general above. Since Manx did not yet have a systematized orthography, Phillips appears to have devised his own orthographical system; for those who had learnt to read and write through the medium of English (as local clergy would have done), rather than his native Welsh, the result may have been too different for them to recognize.³⁴ For a partial parallel, we may cite the Salesbury translation of the New Testament into Welsh (1567), which was criticized by contemporaries for its idiosyncratic orthography (closer to English and French) that made it impossible for the great majority of readers to understand it.³⁵ This said, whilst it is usually considered that Phillips's orthography was influenced by Welsh, it should be noted that he had held appointments in Yorkshire from 1579 onwards, and so it is possible that other linguistic influences were at work.³⁶

In spite of the cool reception accorded to the translated Prayer Book, copies appear to have been made and used in worship. The Manx National Heritage Library has a well-used manuscript dating to the late 1620s, with subsequent emendations, possibly from the parish of Malew, in which the seat of government at Castle Rushen was located.³⁷ I have also discovered a fragment from the rubric for the visitation of the sick, which survived because someone had used it to record a debt; the rubric does not appear in the extant copy of the whole Prayer Book, and this fragment may have come from a different document or possibly a different copy of the book.³⁸ Regular use of the

³³ Heal, 'Mediating the Word', 280; compare Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation* (Oxford, 1994), 29–30.

³⁴ Robert Leith Thomson, 'Early Manx: A Contribution to the Historical Study of Manx Gaelic Arranged as a Supplementary Volume to the Moore-Rhys Edition of the Phillips Prayer Book (1610)' (BLitt dissertation, University of Glasgow, 1953), 9–10.

³⁵ Williams, 'Unity of Religion or Unity of Language?', 215–16; Heal, 'Mediating the Word', 274. Hazlett describes it as Latinized: Hazlett, *Reformation in Britain and Ireland*, 81.

³⁶ Joseph Foster, ed., *Alumni Oxonienses 1500–1714* (Oxford, 1891), s.n. 'Phillips, John', BHO, at: <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/alumni-oxon/1500-1714>>, accessed 7 February 2018. I owe this suggestion to Professor Max Wheeler.

³⁷ MNHL, MSS 00003, 00004 (2 vols). For the dating, see Thomson, 'Early Manx', 4.

³⁸ Another fragment, from the *Benedicite*, was at one time in Moore's possession: Paul Rogers, 'Padjer Moghrey' (2023), unpublished document, in private hands.

Prayer Book would have ceased after regime change late in 1651 brought the island more into line with English policies. Nevertheless, clandestine use appears to have continued: according to Moore, one clergyman, John Cosnahan (1580–1656) at Santan, had people coming ‘from all parts of the Island to have their children baptised during the period 1650–6 as he is said to have been the only clergyman who dared to baptise in accordance with the rites of the Established Church’.³⁹ If nothing else, this indicates that there was widespread conformity to Church of England rites by this period, although whether Protestant teaching had been internalized cannot be determined.

By 1663, the newly installed Bishop Barrow displayed no awareness of the translation’s existence; he did, however, express disapproval of the practice of translating the liturgy extempore on the grounds that the clergy understood neither the English language nor the text of Scripture.⁴⁰ This would seem to confirm that the Phillips translation had fallen out of regular use and not been restored after 1660; after a new edition of the Prayer Book appeared in 1662, it was also out of date. By the end of the seventeenth century, William Sacheverell, governor of the island from 1693 to 1696, described the Phillips translation as ‘scarce intelligible by the Clergy themselves, who Translate it off of hand more to the Understanding of the People’, an apparent instance of a translation itself needing to be translated.⁴¹ All the same, parts of it would appear in print subsequently. Bishop Wilson may have drawn on Phillips’s translation of the catechism in his bilingual *Coyrle Sodjey* (literally, ‘Further Instruction’; English title, *Principles and Duties of Christianity*), which was the first book to be published in Manx, in 1707. Phillips’s translation of the Psalms, lightly revised, was incorporated into the Manx translation of the Bible published between 1767 and 1772.⁴²

³⁹ MNHL, MS 00220A, A. W. Moore, ‘Old Manx Families’ (1889), 41. The parish’s register of baptisms from this period has not survived.

⁴⁰ MNHL, MS 09782, Castle Rushen Papers, Ecclesiastical Courts, Box 2, Bishop Barrow, report on the condition of the diocese (1663). See also Craine, ‘Bible in Manx’, 542.

⁴¹ William Sacheverell, *An Account of the Isle of Man, its Inhabitants, Language, Soil, remarkable Curiosities, the Succession of its Kings and Bishops, down to the present Time* (London, 1702), 8.

⁴² MNHL, MS 13047, Robert Leith Thomson, ‘The Clergy and their Writings in Manx’ (typescript, n.d.), 3.

It has been asserted that Phillips also translated the Bible into Manx with Cannell's help. The first to claim this was James Chaloner, writing in 1653, although his work was not published until 1656. Chaloner also stated that the translation was not printed because of Phillips's death.⁴³ In an order increasing the now elderly Cannell's stipend in 1658, Chaloner (by then the island's governor) referred to him as one of the island's first preachers, who had taught the Manx to read the Scriptures in their own tongue, and who assisted Phillips in translating the Bible.⁴⁴ Yet in spite of these contemporary references, such a translation has never come to light. The portions of Scripture appointed to be read in worship – that is, the Sunday Epistles and Gospels, and those biblical verses that were integrated into the liturgy – were translated as part of the Prayer Book, as was the Psalter,⁴⁵ and it is possible that this was what was being referred to. In the absence of further evidence, the possibility that the claim is true cannot be ruled out, but there are no references to such a work's existence in extant diocesan records.

Publication of both texts came much later. The Manx Prayer Book was not published until 1765, in a new translation reflecting the 1662 Book of Common Prayer; this was two centuries later than the appearance of the Book of Common Order in Scottish Gaelic (1567)⁴⁶ or the Book of Common Prayer in Welsh (1567),⁴⁷ and over 150 years later than for the Book of Common Prayer in Irish (by 1608).⁴⁸ The complete Manx Bible was only published as one volume in 1775.⁴⁹

⁴³ James Chaloner, *A Short Treatise of the Isle of Man*, ed. and intro. J. G. Cumming, Manx Society 10 (Douglas, 1864), 9. For the date of Chaloner's work, see John Callow, "In so shifting a Scene": Thomas Fairfax as Lord of the Isle of Man, 1651–60', in Andrew Hopper and Philip Major, eds, *England's Fortress: New Perspectives on Thomas, 3rd Lord Fairfax* (Abingdon and New York, 2016), 21–52, at 31.

⁴⁴ MNHL, MS 10071/3/9, Liber Scaccarii, 1658, fol. 101^v (28 August 1658).

⁴⁵ The readings appointed for morning and evening prayer, however, were not translated; this would have entailed an almost complete translation of the Bible.

⁴⁶ The Book of Common Order was the first book published in Gaelic: Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided, 1490–1700* (London, 2004), 381. However, the Book of Common Prayer did not appear until 1794: Griffiths, *Bibliography*, 498.

⁴⁷ Alec Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation: The Tudor and Stewart Realms 1485–1603*, 2nd edn (Abingdon, 2017; first publ. 2009), 278.

⁴⁸ Wright, 'Early Translations', 58; 'Leabhar na hUrnai Coitinne: The Book of Common Prayer in Irish Gaelic', online at: <<http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/Ireland/Gaelic.htm>>, accessed 9 August 2023. An Irish translation had been authorized as early as 1550 but not produced: Ryrie, *Age of Reformation*, 275.

⁴⁹ The New Testament in Irish appeared in 1603: Heal, 'Mediating the Word', 263.

The timeline was similar in Scotland: although a version in classical Scottish Gaelic had appeared as early as 1603, the New Testament in a more popular register of the language was not published until 1767, with the whole Bible following in 1801.⁵⁰ This contrasts with the appearance in English during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of several editions of the Prayer Book, as well as various translations of the Bible and a number of authoritative doctrinal statements.⁵¹ Clearly, the English authorities in church and state did not see a Manx Bible and Prayer Book as priorities, although since the island's strategic military position was recognized, and there were recurring fears that it could be used as a staging post by Catholic missionaries, one would have expected encouragement for anything which might contribute to making the populace more tractable.

Other factors retarding translation and publication may have included belief in the superiority of English. Archbishop Neile, reporting on the state of the diocese in 1634, commented that 'the late Bp [Phillips] translated our Comon Prayer Booke; but how faithfully, I know not', and opined that it would be better for the local populace to learn English.⁵² Bishop Barrow, who in the 1660s did much to shape the development of the island's religious and educational institutions, expressed the same view.⁵³ Soon after becoming bishop, he produced a report on the state of his diocese, concluding that the people were loose living because they were 'without any true sense of religion'. Their ministers were 'very ignorant, and wholly illiterate'. Believing that the state of the people was down to the lack of means for Christian instruction, and the clergy ill-equipped, Barrow concluded that the problems could only be resolved through education, in English rather than Manx, so that the laity could be fortified against ungodliness and sectarianism by reading the Bible, the Prayer Book and other devotional works. However, to educate the people, it was necessary to begin with the clergy. As there was nothing printed or written in Manx, the clergy officiated 'by an extempor[ar]y translation of the English Liturgie into the Manks language, and soe allsoe of the holy Scriptures'. Barrow

⁵⁰ Bottigheimer and Lotz-Heumann, 'Irish Reformation', 284.

⁵¹ Anthony Milton, 'Introduction', to idem, ed., *The Oxford History of Anglicanism*, 1: *Reformation and Identity*, c. 1520–1662 (Oxford, 2017), 1–27, at 2–3.

⁵² Kew, TNA, SP16/259/78e, Archbishop Neile's report on the state of his jurisdiction, January 1634.

⁵³ Moore, *Sodor and Man*, 158; Michael Hoy, 'Political or Pastoral: Isaac Barrow's English Schools', *PIMNHAS* 12/4 (2011–13), 762–8, at 762, 765; Hoy, 'Barrow', 81.

disapproved of this practice, as we have seen.⁵⁴ All this would have fitted with the eighth earl's conviction that Manx was the language of rebellion, which needed to be replaced through re-education.⁵⁵ Barrow worked to establish a system of English-medium petty schools in the parishes, supplemented by restoring the grammar schools in the towns. He also laid much of the groundwork for the establishment of an academic institution in the Isle of Man for the training of clergy.⁵⁶

Where clergy did not use the Phillips translation (and there is very little evidence regarding the extent of its dissemination or use), their practice of extempore translation meant that oral transmission remained primary. There is some limited evidence of the importation of English Bibles, Testaments and primers from the late seventeenth century,⁵⁷ but their readership must have been limited, perhaps being found primarily among the merchant community and the growing number of schools. In the parish of Malew (which included the island's capital, Castletown), merchants were bequeathing copies of the (English) Bible and Prayer Book in their wills from the beginning of the seventeenth century; this may indicate that they were among the early adopters of reform, but there is no evidence that they engaged in any kind of propagation of these ideas.

For the majority who were unable to understand English, then, Scripture continued to be accessible only as clergy offered extempore translations of the service and the Scripture readings, or preached in Manx. In most parishes, sermons were probably infrequent, certainly before the changes which ensued from 1651 onwards, since only a minority of clergy were considered sufficiently educated to be licensed to preach. Non-preaching clergy in the Church of England were supposed to read one of the sermons in the two *Books of Homilies*, but it is not clear how widely this rule was observed on the island: Moore asserts that these were not introduced until the time of Bishop

⁵⁴ MNHL, MS 09782, Castle Rushen Papers, Ecclesiastical Courts, Box 2, Barrow's report. See also Moore, *Sodor and Man*, 158; Craine, 'Bible in Manx', 542; Hoy, 'Political or Pastoral', 762, 765; idem, 'Barrow', 81.

⁵⁵ Hoy, 'Political or Pastoral', 764, following Peter G. Clamp, 'English Schooling in the Isle of Man, 1660–1700: The Barrovian Design', *Journal of Educational Administration and History* 20 (1988), 10–21, at 11.

⁵⁶ For Barrow's educational achievements, see Hinton Bird, *An Island that Led: The History of Manx Education*, 2 vols (Port St Mary, [c.1990]), 1: 9–15.

⁵⁷ See the records of imports in MNHL, MS 10058, Ingates, Outgates, Licences etc., Ramsey, 4 April 1648, 13 January 1693, 8 March 1694, 7 March 1695, 11 October 1695.

Parr (1635–44), and none appeared in printed translation until after 1820.⁵⁸ Even where clergy were licensed to preach, there were a fair number of complaints that they did not.⁵⁹ The Reformation expectation of being able to profit by hearing the word penetrated local minds,⁶⁰ but often went unfulfilled until the end of the seventeenth century. The earliest extant documents in Manx apart from the Prayer Book are sermons from 1696 onwards,⁶¹ but the limited number and range of items published in Manx during the following half-century (which were all religious in nature) contrasts with the volume of liturgical texts, sermons, and works of theology and church practice available in English by that point.⁶²

For many, English was in any case no substitute for Manx in worship. Growing antagonism was shown towards the use of English, and some laity refused to attend English services, especially when these began to increase in frequency from the late seventeenth century. William Gill, presented in 1678 for non-attendance in Lezayre, asserted that ‘he would not stay in the church whilst Mr ffox read in English, for he would as soon sitt upon ye side of Skyhill as be in ye church when he did not und’stand w[ha]t was spoken’.⁶³ A number of people were presented in the adjoining parishes of German and Patrick in 1685 for creating a disturbance while Samuel Wattleworth was preaching in English, even though he ‘also did preach in Manks & read both lessons yt day in Manks besides ye prayers of ye Church with ye

⁵⁸ Moore, *History*, 1: 361.

⁵⁹ For example, MNHL, MS 10194, Diocesan presentments, Arbory, 13 April 1673 and 7 June 1674 (Samuel Robinson for only reading an English homily); *ibid.*, Ballaugh, 18 November 1685 (Henry Lowcay for not preaching in either Manx or English).

⁶⁰ See, for example, MNHL, MS 09756, ‘Bishop Foster’s Visitation 1634’, response from the parish of German; and the presentments of Samuel Robinson in the 1670s (see previous note).

⁶¹ Christopher Lewin, ‘A Manx Sermon from 1696’, *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 62 (2015), 45–96, online at: <<https://doi.org/10.1515/zcph.2015.004>>, accessed 5 November 2024. There is a considerable corpus of early Manx manuscript sermons, mostly held by MNHL.

⁶² Such published (and some unpublished) material as there was, can be found online at: <<http://corpus.gaelg.im>>, accessed 5 November 2024.

⁶³ MNHL, MS 10194, Diocesan Presentments 1678. It would be incautious to read developed Protestant sentiments into this utterance: more probably it was expressing opposition to the increasing use of English as the language of incomers. The case was recorded in English, but we do not know the extent to which Manx was used in proceedings.

Epistle & Gospell’ and ‘every other Sunday preacheth in Manks with much satisfaction’.⁶⁴

The lack of written and preached vernacular material must also have hindered the formation of a critical mass of laity who could share in creating a climate in which religious change received informed consideration. This is similar to Wales, for which Glanmor Williams has contended that ‘[t]he Reformation as a body of doctrine and belief could not come of age for most people until the eighteenth century had made many of them literate’.⁶⁵ Whilst the educated middling merchant classes in urban areas formed the demographic group which in many parts of Europe was usually first to accept and spread the new Protestant convictions, it is likely that such a class only began to appear on the island during the late seventeenth century, and its emergence may well be connected with the growing use of English as well as the beginnings of a degree of urbanization. An increase from the 1670s in bequests of personal copies of the Bible may be related to Barrow’s efforts to extend educational provision.⁶⁶

The slowness of the seventeenth-century church to produce standard editions of the Bible and the Prayer Book in Manx may have weakened the church’s position in the minds of the populace. Baptist Levinz, bishop from 1684 to 1693, was apprehensive about the impact of one Roman Catholic missionary who was Manx and spoke the language:

one of ye Jesuits yt is to come heer is a native of this place, of a good family & interest heer, tho hee has been out of his country ever since his youth & bred up in one of ye Jesuits Colleges abroad, this person having our language is ye man I most fear.⁶⁷

We do not know who this was, but whether Levinz’s fears were justified or not, he recognized that language was an issue which affected the church’s hold on the people. Had there been a mission by Manx-speaking Roman Catholics, they might have seen

⁶⁴ MNHL, MS 14425, Archidiaconal Wills 1684–8 (transcription by Joyce M. Oates, 2017), 70.

⁶⁵ Williams, *Renewal and Reformation*, iv.

⁶⁶ For the similar case of Orkney and Shetland, see Charlotte Methuen, ‘Orkney, Shetland and the Networks of the Northern Reformation’, *Nordlit* 43 (2019), 25–53, at 46, online at: <<https://septentrio.uit.no/index.php/nordlit/issue/view/398>>, accessed 8 February 2024.

⁶⁷ Oxford, Bodl., MS Tanner 28, fol. 175, Levinz to Archbishop Sancroft, 12 September 1688.

considerable success, given the attachment of many local people to traditional customs and practices.⁶⁸

THE LANGUAGE BARRIER AND CLERICAL RECRUITMENT

It was not only the case that the lack of material in Manx impoverished the formation of local candidates for ordination. The need for Manx-speakers, coupled with the poverty of local livings, hindered clerical recruitment from off the island. Incumbents were expected to be bilingual and, as we have seen, there were complaints when they did not preach or conduct worship in Manx. Yet it was rare for incoming clergy to learn Manx well enough to preach in it; Phillips was an exception, and unusual among the bishops of this period in recognizing the importance of using Manx.

The difficulty of attracting educated clergy from elsewhere meant that during the period under review, up to three-quarters of clergy may have been born on the island, and about a sixth were sons of clergy serving there.⁶⁹ Formal training for ministry, however, was largely unknown on the island until after the Restoration. From 1580, clergy in England were expected to be graduates of one of the universities, and by 1640, three-quarters of clergy in most areas of England met this requirement.⁷⁰ In contrast, on the Isle of Man, the proportion was about a tenth: the bishops and archdeacons, as well as a few other clergy from elsewhere, some of whom had held previous appointments in the gift of the Stanleys. None of the island's university-educated clergy during this period was Manx-born.

Clerical education was restricted by the lack of local provision and by the lack of fluency of many in English. Manx candidates for ordination could not afford to go to England or Ireland for education,

⁶⁸ On the continued popularity of practices which may represent an attempt to fill the gap left by the loss of the supernatural in worship, see Ronald Hutton, 'The English Reformation and the Evidence of Folklore', *P&P* 148 (1995), 89–116; idem, 'The Changing Faces of Manx Witchcraft', *Cultural & Social History* 7 (2010), 153–69; Jim Sharpe, 'Witchcraft in the Early Modern Isle of Man', *Cultural & Social History* 4 (2007), 11–28.

⁶⁹ These figures are based on my research, which includes the compilation of a prosopography of all those known to have ministered on the island between 1540 and 1698; approximately one hundred and seventy individuals have been identified. This has now been deposited as MNHL, MS 15879, 'Clergy on the Isle of Man, 1540–1698', typescript, 2024.

⁷⁰ I. M. Green, 'Teaching the Reformation: The Clergy as Preachers, Catechists, Authors and Teachers', in C. Scott Dixon and Luise Schorn-Schütte, eds, *The Protestant Clergy of Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke, 2003), 156–75, at 160.

and no real attempt was made to give them access to theological reading matter until Thomas Fairfax as lord of Man had a library sent over in 1659.⁷¹ By and large, new priests learned on the job, as they had done for centuries. As noted above, around a sixth were sons of priests; others had been parish clerks or schoolmasters. My research has identified at least eleven who appear to have served as parish clerks before ordination, all between 1577 and 1665; between 1593 and 1685, about fourteen served as schoolmasters prior to ordination; two of these held both offices.

There is a further dimension to be taken into account: whilst it was rare for parochial clergy to be appointed from outside the diocese, it was even rarer for bishops or archdeacons to be appointed from within it, arguably because the Stanleys were looking elsewhere for appointees. There had been no Manx-born bishop since William Russell in the mid-fourteenth century, and in 1703 Samuel Wattleworth became the first Manx archdeacon since the fifteenth century.⁷² Moreover, the poverty of the diocese forced bishops to hold it in conjunction with other church offices, and they and the archdeacons were frequently non-resident, for geographical and economic as well as cultural reasons. Indeed, Tynwald concerns led to attempts to legislate against non-residence (not restricted to clergy) in 1541 and 1696.⁷³ Non-residence was the subject of complaint at other points also. The result was a lack of strong bonds between the local, non-graduate parochial clergy, unable for economic reasons to benefit from the training and publications available in English, and non-local, often non-resident, graduate higher officials (although local clergy were appointed to middle-ranking ecclesiastical offices, such as registrar or vicar-general).

There appear to have been two consequences of this division. First was the lack of stable mechanisms for making and communicating decisions and ensuring that due action was taken, because key figures were absent. Decisions were often put off until the bishop or archdeacon should visit the island, or were made conditional upon the

⁷¹ For the catalogue, which ran to over two hundred titles, see MNHL, MS 09782, Castle Rushen Papers, Castle Accounts I, Box 7, 'A Catalogue of ye books sent from my lord ffayrefax for ye library in ye Isle of Mann' (1659).

⁷² Ashley, 'Spiritual Courts', 42.

⁷³ For 1541, see Quayle, 'Precedent Book', 32 (regarding the archdeacon and the other two rectors). For 1696, see MNHL, MS 09864, GR1/21, Statute book, reproduced in Gerald Bray, ed., *Records of Convocation, 1: Sodor and Man 1229–1877* (Woodbridge, 2005), 114; Dickinson, *Lordship of Man*, 345.

ordinary's pleasure.⁷⁴ Second was arguably a tension between the new ideals voiced by higher clergy from elsewhere, especially after 1660, which advocated a measure of distancing between the priest and his flock as a professional set apart by education and calling,⁷⁵ and the realities of a body of parochial clergy who were drawn from the local populace and still mostly formed in the traditional mould. Change in this respect was some decades behind England and Wales.

The impact of new English patterns of recruitment and training was thus unavoidably hindered.⁷⁶ Few of the parochial clergy were able exponents of Protestant doctrine. The earliest clergy to do that in England were usually well educated, and we have seen that there were very few of those on the island. Clergy probably did hold increasingly 'Protestant' views, but the great majority lacked the ability or the intellectual training to do much beyond rehash what they had received, and they had no printed Manx texts to which they could direct the attention of their hearers. We saw earlier that it was Barrow who, in the late 1660s, first made a systematic attempt to improve clerical education, as part of a package which addressed the problems of clerical poverty, ignorance and contemptibility in the eyes of the populace, and lay ignorance. Apart from sending a few promising students to Trinity College, Dublin, he engaged in financial dealing and political lobbying to secure funding for an academic institution on the island, which by the end of the century had begun to feed ordinands into the church.⁷⁷

CONCLUSION

We have seen how the language barrier meant that there could be only a limited amount of the cross-fertilization provided in the Church of England more generally by the spread of new ideas and new

⁷⁴ For example, in a dispute about the fruits of Michael vicarage, see MNHL, MS 10071/5/2, Liber Cancellarii, 1604–5. For the case of a cleric accused of conducting a marriage in Malew without banns or licence, see MNHL, MS 10194, Diocesan Presentments, 1690.

⁷⁵ Most notably by Barrow: see MNHL, MS 09782, Castle Rushen Papers, Ecclesiastical Courts, Box 2, Barrow's report.

⁷⁶ For these patterns, see Rosemary O'Day, *The Clerical Profession: The Emergence and Consolidation of a Profession 1558–1642* (Leicester, 1979), 6, 159–60.

⁷⁷ By this period, Trinity's early puritan orientation had given way to a more high-church outlook, which would have been congenial to Barrow: see John Victor Luce, *Trinity College Dublin: The First 400 Years* (Dublin, 1992), 28.

approaches to the conduct of worship. This was exacerbated by the non-residence of key drivers of change, notably most of the bishops. Again, the failure of new approaches to make headway was compounded by poverty. Even when parishes wanted to introduce the latest ‘ornaments’ in worship, they could not afford to do so; out of thousands of wills from this period, I have found no bequests for such purposes.

This article demonstrates that the use of Manx combined with poverty, political status and remoteness reinforced the island’s peripheral status by hindering its participation in the intellectual life of the Church of England and the mediation of the fruits of that life to the local populace. It also places the history of the island’s church during this period into the wider setting of the history of the Church of England as a whole, but also relates it to developments in the life of the churches of the other surrounding nations. Further research might usefully continue tracing into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the use of Manx in religious life, and compare what happened on the Isle of Man with the course of Protestant reform in other island communities, especially other societies whose first language was not that of their rulers in church and state.