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# Domestic Devotion and the Georgian Church

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the development of domestic devotion in the Georgian Church of England through an examination of the manuals of prayer produced and circulated for both personal and family use throughout the eighteenth century. Alongside more well-known works, including Edmund Gibson's *Family Devotion* and Robert Nelson's *Companion for the Festivals and Fasts*, it pays attention to the diverse material provided for private and household devotion and its relationship to *The Book of Common Prayer*. The article highlights the key themes that were expressed through this literature, the spirituality that it fostered, and the sources on which it drew. It reveals how greater awareness of this material can deepen our understanding of how Georgian Anglicans prayed and what they were encouraged to pray for.

KEYWORDS: Baptism, Book of Common Prayer, domestic religion, Georgian era, Edmund Gibson, Holy Communion, manuals of devotion, Robert Nelson, prayer, Thomas Seaton

## *Introduction*

Domestic devotion played a significant role in the construction of Georgian Anglicanism.[2] Embraced by all strands of churchmanship, it

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2. W. Jacob, *Lay People and Religion in the Early Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 95; W. Jacob, '"Conscientious Attention to Publick and Family Worship of God": Religious Practice in Eighteenth-Century English Households', in John Doran, Charlotte Methuen and Alexandra Walsham (eds.), *Religion and the Household* (Studies in Church History 50; Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2014), pp. 307-17; C. Smyth, *Simeon and Church Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), pp. 14-32; N. Sykes, *Church and*

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included both the gathered prayers of a household and the devotions offered by individuals in the privacy of 'the closet'. Sarah More's tract, *The Good Mother's Legacy*, first published in 1795 to encourage the practice of family prayers, provided a description of what such devotion might involve. In the tract, Mrs Adams (the eponymous 'good mother') would gather her family every evening and ask her eldest son, George, to read a chapter from the New Testament. After this, she would read part of a sermon. It would be one 'such as the curate recommended, one that was more religious than learned, such as people could understand who had but a little education; after which she read a good family prayer; and then they all went cheerfully to bed, blessing and praising God for his mercies'.[3] It was a model of Georgian household devotion.

As indicated by More's description, Georgian devotion encompassed a variety of practices. Alongside prayer itself, it included singing, catechesis, Bible reading, fasting, reading devotional material, and spiritual self-examination. These different expressions of piety were encouraged across all social classes. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Thomas Seaton, chaplain to the earl of Nottingham, could write of his master that 'Your Lordship's conversation is so strictly sober, and virtuous and just; your attendance upon the devotions of your family so punctual … that you are very justly to be esteemed'.[4] At the other end of the social spectrum, the Evangelical Hannah More's *Cheap Repository Tracts* provided forms of devotion intended to enable domestic prayer amongst the lowest social classes. A selection issued in 1796 included prayers to be used by children, by 'a young person', in a Sunday School, and by the master or mistress of a family.[5]

The significance of domestic devotion throughout the Georgian period was reflected in what John Walsh and Stephen Taylor have

*(F'note continued)*

*State in England in the XVIIIth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), pp. 275-83; J. Wickham Legg, *English Church Life from the Restoration to the Tractarian Movement Considered in Some of its Neglected or Forgotten Features* (London: Longmans and Co., 1914), pp. 338-41; W.K. Lowther Clarke, *Eighteenth-Century Piety* (London: SPCK, 1944), pp. 3-15.

3. S. More, *The Good Mother's Legacy* (London, 1795), pp. 9-10.

4. T. Seaton, *The Conduct of Servants in Great Families* (London, 1720), p. iii; W. Gibson, *A Social History of the Domestic Chaplain 1530–1840* (London: Leicester University Press, 1997), pp. 70-71.

5. M.G. Jones, *Hannah More* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), pp. 140-42.

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described as an 'astonishing market for devotional literature'.[6] Scholars, including Ian Green, Charles Wallace, Jessica Martin and Eric Ryrie, have described the patterns of seventeenth-century prayer from which Georgian devotional material emerged.[7] Others, including William Jacob and Geraint Jenkins, building on the earlier work of historians such as J. Wickham Legg, Norman Sykes and Charles Smyth, have demonstrated how diverse this material was.[8] It included biblical commentaries, sermons, devotional works and theological treatises, as well as guides to prayer. Popular works, such as Allestree's *The Whole Duty of Man* and the collected sermons of Archbishop Tillotson, were frequently reissued. Edmund Gibson's *Family Devotion* went through 28 editions between 1705 and 1771 and was so influential that an adapted version of it was included in the first American Prayer Book of 1789.[9] The audience for this material was also diverse. Jenkins' work has shown how subscribers to devotional works in both urban and rural settings not only included clergy and gentry, but also weavers, shoemakers, butchers and grocers. Chapbooks, providing literature accessible to the lower social classes, also included religious works, often focusing on the practical application of Christianity to daily life.[10]

6. J. Walsh and S. Taylor, 'The Church and Anglicanism in the 'Long' Eighteenth Century', in J. Walsh, C. Haydon and S. Taylor, *The Church of England c. 1689–c. 1833 From Toleration to Tractarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 1-64 (25).

7. C. Wallace, 'The Prayer Closet as a "Room of One's Own": Two Anglican Women Devotional Writers at the Turn of the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of Women's History* 9. 2 (1997), pp. 108-21; Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Jessica Martin and Alec Ryrie (eds.), *Private and Domestic Devotion in Early Modern Britain* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).

8. G. Jenkins, *Literature, Religion and Society in Wales 1660–1730* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press,1978), pp. 271-74; Jacob, *Lay People and Religion*, pp. 93-123.

9. Marion J. Hatchett, 'The Colonies and States of America', in C. Hefling and C. Shattuck (eds.), *The Oxford Guide to the Book of Common Prayer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 176-93, (182); N. Sykes, *Edmund Gibson, Bishop of London 1669–1748, A Study in Politics and Religion in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1926), p. 55. E. Gibson, *Family Devotions; or, an Exhortation to Morning and Evening Prayer in Families* (London, 22nd edn, 1754); see also R. Nelson, *A Companion for the Festivals and Fasts of the Church of England: with Collects and Prayers for each Solemnity* (London, 29th edn, 1805).

10. M. Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories. Popular Fiction and its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Methuen, 1981), pp. 201-202, 211; Jenkins, *Literature, Religion and Society*, p. 271.

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Yet, despite this scholarly interest in both seventeenth and eighteenth-century piety, domestic devotion remains an area of Anglican history that, as Martin and Ryrie acknowledge, is 'remarkably under-explored'.[11] This is, in part, because so much of the experience of this kind of prayer lies beyond the historical record. We catch glimpses in diary entries and correspondence. Booksellers' lists and the records of bodies such as the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) reveal what kind of material was being sold. Tracts and sermons can tell us what the clergy taught about the importance of domestic prayer. But its practice remains more hidden. As William Jacob has noted, while there is relatively good evidence for the patterns of domestic devotion in clerical and gentry households, there is 'little obvious evidence' of how lower social classes actually used the devotional material being provided for them.[12] Consequently, while existing studies provide a good overview of Georgian piety, or focus in more detail on the better-known devotional writers like William Law and Susannah Hopton, we lack a more detailed analysis of the content and spirituality of Georgian domestic devotion as a whole.

One way into examining the world of Georgian devotion more closely is provided by the manuals of prayer regularly produced and circulated for family and personal use throughout the eighteenth century. At one remove from the actual experience of prayer, they nonetheless tell us much about how Georgians were being encouraged to pray, and what they were being encouraged to pray for. Some are well known, such as Nelson's *Companion for the Festivals and Fasts,* and Gibson's *Family Devotion*. Many others, often written by local clergy and lay Anglicans such as Thomas Backhouse, James Bean and Thomas Stevenson, have received far less attention. Taken together, they open a window on to the world of Georgian spirituality. This article sets out to explore the character and development of this material. It focuses on two areas: the influences and sources that shaped the composition of domestic prayer manuals, and what the manuals themselves have to tell us about the spirituality and content of Georgian devotion.

## *Influences on the Composition of Domestic Prayer Manuals*

Early Georgian prayer manuals emerged from what Ian Green has described as an 'Indian summer of sales of devotional works' lasting

11. Martin and Ryrie, *Private and Domestic Devotion*, p. 3.
12. Jacob, '"Conscientious Attention to Publick and Family Worship"', p. 315.

from the 1680s to the 1720s.[13] The experience of the civil war had encouraged an association to be made between extemporary prayer and political radicalism. With the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 and authorization of a revised Prayer Book in 1662, there was a new emphasis on the value of set forms of prayer in guiding personal as well as public worship.[14] Consequently, *The Book of Common Prayer* itself had a significant influence on the development of domestic devotion. Not only was it looked to as a model for the value of set prayers, but it was also a key source, informing both the shape and content of domestic prayer manuals.

The Prayer Book's provision for daily worship provided an obvious starting point. *The Whole Duty of Man*, first published in 1657, assumed that household prayers would be drawn directly from its pages using the provision for morning and evening prayer, with additional forms of prayer reserved for private devotion.[15] William Howells made the same point in his *The Common-Prayer-Book the best companion in the house and closet as well as in the temple*, a work that went through 21 editions between 1686 and 1758.[16] The appearance of cheaper editions of the Prayer Book helped to make it more accessible for domestic use and its availability expanded throughout the eighteenth century. The work of the SPCK made an important contribution to this process, enabling members to buy tracts and other material for distribution in parishes at half the cost of publication. Clergy like Stephen Hales, perpetual curate of Teddington and rector of Farringdon in Hampshire in the 1720s, regularly bought Prayer Books from the society as well as Bibles, catechisms and other edifying works.[17]

At the end of the Georgian period, the domestic use of the Prayer Book received fresh impetus from the work of the Evangelical Prayer Book and Homily Society. Founded in May 1812, the society distributed cheap editions of the liturgy for personal use. In the first ten months of its activity, the society's London agents could report that some 3,500 copies of the Prayer Book had been sold. This work was also a response

13. Ian Green, 'Varieties of Domestic Devotion in Early Modern English Protestantism', in Martin and Ryrie (eds.), *Private and Domestic Devotion*, p. 31.

14. Ian Green, 'New for Old? Clerical and Lay Attitudes to Domestic Prayer in Early Modern England', *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 10.2 (2008), pp. 195-222 (195).

15. Smyth, *Simeon and Church Order*, p. 32.

16. Ian Green, 'Varieties of Domestic Devotion', in Martin and Ryrie (eds.), *Private and Domestic Devotion*, p. 20.

17. W. Jacob, *The Clerical Profession in the Long Eighteenth Century, 1680–1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 253.

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to High Church criticism that Evangelicals failed to value the Prayer Book because they joined with nonconformists in supporting the work of the British and Foreign Bible Society which, unlike SPCK, distributed Bibles without the Prayer Book or any other theological guide as to how the Scriptures should be interpreted. The Evangelical promotion of the domestic use of *The Book of Common Prayer* was therefore intended to be a rebuke to High Church animosity as well as an objective in its own right.[18]

Yet for many Georgian Anglicans, including High Church writers, loyalty to the Prayer Book was balanced by a recognition that its repetitious nature, especially in the material provided for morning and evening prayer, could dampen its spiritual impact. Consequently, a growing number of prayer manuals, while still drawing on the Prayer Book, preferred to adapt and re-present its prayers within their own schemes of daily devotion. The Prayer Book's 'Prayer of General Thanksgiving' was often used in this way. Thomas Seaton's prayers for servants, written in 1720, drew on it directly in asking that servants might 'not only express our thankfulness with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to thy service'.[19] Similarly Robert Nelson's family prayers drew on the liturgy of the Prayer Book, blending collects, confessions and thanksgivings together to create new forms of prayer which remained full of resonances and turns of phrase familiar to anyone who used *The Book of Common Prayer* itself.[20]

In the later part of the Georgian period, authors including Robert Raikes, Thomas Stevenson and Thomas Backhouse, continued this tradition. Robert Raikes' morning and evening prayers, published in 1788, and Thomas Stevenson's *Manual of Family Devotion* of 1825, both provided prayers largely selected from the Prayer Book but presented according to their compliers' own schemes. In Raikes' case, this took the form of much shorter orders for morning and evening prayer, with simplified responses and including just one Bible reading rather than two.[21] Similarly, *Family Devotions,* by Thomas Backhouse, drew freely from Prayer Book texts, including parts of the Communion liturgy

18. A. Braddock, *The Role of the Book of Common Prayer in the Formation of Modern Anglican Church Identity: A Study in English Parochial Worship 1750–1850* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010), pp. 79-83.

19. Seaton, *The Conduct of Servants*, pp. 287-88.

20. Nelson, *A Companion for the Festivals and Fasts*, pp. 513-20.

21. R. Raikes, *Morning and Evening Prayer* (Gloucester, 1788); T. Stevenson, *A Manual of Family Devotions, containing a form of prayer for every morning and evening in the week, selected chiefly from the Book of Common Prayer* (London, 1825).

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usually said by the priest alone.[22] The use of the Prayer Book as a source for domestic devotion was also encouraged by *Morning and Evening Prayer for Families and Private Persons.* Reissued by a variety of printers and booksellers throughout the eighteenth century, it included a thematic list of Prayer Book collects that recommended particular prayers for individual needs and occasions. For example, someone seeking prayers for comfort, was pointed towards the collect for the Sunday after Ascension Day, while prayer for the Church's ministers was linked to the collect for the feast of St Matthew.[23] Such material reveals that the Prayer Book was not slavishly followed by Georgian Anglicans. Instead it was turned to as a treasury of devotion that could be drawn on in free and creative ways.

For High Churchmen in particular, the Prayer Book also provided inspiration in its provision for observing the cycle of the Christian year with its various fasts, festivals and seasons. The most widely used resource in this regard was Robert Nelson's *Companion for the Festivals and Fasts of the Church of England*. First published in 1703, it had reached a 29th edition by 1805.[24] Others followed Nelson's lead. *The Christian's New Year's Gift*, published in 1764, also provided 'a companion' for the feasts and fasts of the Church of England, while *The Family Chaplain* of 1775, contained sermons for the Christian year selected from the works of Archbishop Tillotson, Archbishop Secker and others.[25] At the end of the Georgian period, John Keble's *The Christian Year*, first published in 1827, offered a poetic companion to the Prayer Book calendar, with verses that invited spiritual contemplation.[26]

The Prayer Book was not the only source used in producing manuals of domestic devotion. The devotional works of seventeenth-century divines, including Thomas Ken, Lancelot Andrewes, Jeremy Taylor, and Simon Patrick, were readily adapted by later authors and made available throughout the Georgian period. The devotions contained in Jeremy Taylor's spiritual classic *Holy Living* were particularly

22. T. Backhouse, *Family Devotions for every day in the week selected from the liturgy of the Church of England* (Blackburn, 1825), p. 14.

23. Anon., *Morning and Evening Prayer for Families and Private Persons as Masters, Mistresses, Children and Servants* (London, 18th edn, 1815), p. 33.

24. Nelson, *Companion for the Festivals and Fasts.*

25. Anon., *The Christian's New Year's Gift: containing a companion for the feasts and fasts of the Church of England* (London, 1764); Anon., *The Family Chaplain* (London, 1775).

26. J. Keble, *The Christian Year: Thoughts in Verse for the Sundays and Holydays Throughout the Year* (London, 1827).

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influential and helped establish the pattern for later manuals. Alongside forms for morning and evening prayer, it provided aids to self-reflection, prayers for various occasions and 'ejaculations' or brief petitions to be used during the day.[27]

Other writers looked beyond the confines of Anglican literature. Hannah More included a copy of *Divine Songs for Children* by the dissenter Isaac Watts in the devotional material published in the *Cheap Repository Tracts*.[28] Those writing from a Nonjuring perspective, including Susannah Hopton and Theophilus Dorrington, drew on Roman Catholic authors, notably John Austin, whose *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices* of 1668 was adapted for an Anglican audience by Dorrington in 1686. Appearing under the title *Reform'd Devotions*, Dorrington's version went through nine editions between 1686 and 1727, while Susanna Hopton's adaptation of Austin's *Devotions* appeared in eight editions between 1700 and 1765.[29] Hopton, who had for a time converted to Catholicism but then returned to the Church of England, also drew on the Jesuit Luis de la Puente's *Meditations Upon the Mysteries of our Holie Faith* in writing her own meditations on the theme of creation and the life of Christ.[30]

The more formal and liturgical feel of these Nonjuring works was reflected in the way Hopton constructed her family devotions. Her *Prayer at Night for a Family* interspersed petitions with responses drawn from *The Book of Common Prayer*, echoing the rhythm of the Litany. She also drew on the pattern of prayers offered at the third, sixth and ninth hour within Roman Catholic manuals, arguing that such a practice was 'after the manner of the ancient Christians, in the best, most pure, Primitive Times'. In this she followed the work of other Nonjurors, notably Thomas Deacon, who found the Prayer Book lacking and drew on their knowledge of ancient liturgies to enrich the provision available for public worship as well as private prayer.[31] The work of Nonjuring

27. See, for example, J. Taylor, *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living* (London, 1719); Anon., *A Complete Manual of Family and Private Devotions suited to a great variety of cases: collected from the writing of Bishop Taylor, Bishop Kenn, Bishop Patrick* (Wigan, 1782); S. Corbett, *A Few Forms of Morning and Evening Prayer, adapted for private and family devotion* (London, 1827); S. Clapham (ed.), *Prayers Selected from the Writings of Jeremy Taylor* (London, 1816).

28. E. Green, *Bibliotheca Somersetensis* (Taunton: Barnicott & Pearce, 1902), p. 69.

29. Jacob, *Lay People and Religion*, pp. 105-106.

30. B. Travitsky and A. Prescott (eds.), *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works* (Farnham: Ashgate, Series 2, Part 4, Volume 7, 2010), pp. xiii-xvii.

31. B. Spinks, *Liturgy in the Age of Reason: Worship and Sacraments in England and Scotland 1662–c.1800* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008), p. 123.

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authors was mediated to a wider Anglican audience through the work of the Trustees for Erecting Public Libraries which, like SPCK, owed much to the energy of Thomas Bray. Between 1710 and 1729 they established 64 parochial libraries. Their 72-volume collection of books was sent to 32 churches and included *Reform'd Devotions* alongside Dorrington's *Family Devotions for Sunday Evenings*, as well as Charles Wheatly's guide to *The Book of Common Prayer* and Nelson's *Companion for the Festivals and Fasts*.[32]

By contrast, other writers produced manuals of prayer which, while acknowledging the Christian year, were influenced by a more thematic and contextual approach. The revised Prayer Book of 1662 helped encourage this by providing a series of prayers and thanksgivings for different occasions, including for fair weather, for rain and in time of war. Typical of this thematic approach was Benjamin Jenks' *Prayers and Offices of Devotion for Families*, first issued in 1697. In the preface, Jenks appeared to distance himself from the more structured and liturgically based writings of the Nonjurors, arguing that the prayers he provided for Monday and Tuesday were 'good and proper for any other day of the week' and encouraging people to use their own words alongside those provided in devotional manuals. Instead, his main concern was to provide prayers fitted to 'qualities of persons, and states of the souls, and scenes of the life'.[33] Thus, while Jenks did include prayers suited to the different seasons of the Christian year as set out in *The Book of Common Prayer*, the majority were written for personal needs and family situations. These included prayers in time of danger, on the death of a neighbour, on marriage and on chastity.[34]

This thematic approach would be adopted by subsequent writers and become a hallmark of Georgian devotional material. Edmund Gibson's *Family Devotion*, originally written for his Lambeth parishioners, not only included daily prayers for the whole household, but made special provision for children and servants, providing prayers that were simpler in language and character.[35] The need to simplify the language of family prayer to make its practice more

32. M. Perkin (ed.), *A Dictionary of the Parochial Libraries of the Church of England and the Church in Wales* (London, 2004), pp. 33, 38-39, 48-50, 446.

33. B. Jenks, *Prayers and Offices of Devotions for Families, and for Particular Persons, upon most occasions* (London, 29th edn, 1816), p. xiii.

34. Jenks, *Prayers and Offices of Devotions*, pp. 117, 122-33, 146, 174; Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 273.

35. Gibson, *Family Devotion*, pp. 6, 9.

accessible was recognized by others. Towards the end of the Georgian period, Charles Simeon paid tribute to the enduring value and spiritual warmth of Jenks' prayers but lamented their long sentences and complex construction. To remedy this, he issued his own simplified version of Jenks' prayers in 1808.[36] Other authors, such as Thomas Seaton, produced prayers specifically for the use of servants, while James Bean, Thomas Jones and Lord Radstock all provided material written for 'cottagers', that class of agricultural labourers who also had their own land.[37]

The provision of such material gained fresh momentum from the 1790s as part of the Church's wider response to the rise of political radicalism and religious dissent, and as a way of helping maintain the Church's influence in the new industrial towns and cities. An SPCK tract, *The Necessary Duty of Family Prayer*, summed up the views of many church leaders in arguing that domestic devotion was a remedy for immorality, the foundation of a virtuous and prosperous nation, and an essential counterpart to public worship. To this end, John Bird Sumner, on becoming bishop of Chester in 1828, supported the introduction of district visitors whose task was to encourage household prayers. By 1832 he could report that 120 out of 1250 families in Lancaster were under the supervision of the Visiting Society and that 300 manuals of family prayers had been sold during 1831 alone.[38] The need to adapt and offer simpler forms of prayers for different social groups was seen as an essential part of this work. Welcoming Bean's *The Cottager's Prayer Book* of 1834, the *Gentlemen's Magazine* commented 'we hope such treatises, written with such genuine and simple piety, will be found on the table of every cottager from John of Groat's house to the Land's End'.[39]

There were therefore a variety of practical, devotional and theological influences that shaped the composition of Georgian prayer manuals. Where High Church and Nonjuring authors drew on the work of seventeenth-century and Roman Catholic writers, and valued a liturgically based approach, Evangelicals were open to the use of dissenting authors

36. Smyth, *Simeon and Church Order*, p. 23.

37. J. Bean, *The Cottager's Prayer Book* (London, 1833); T. Jones, *Family prayers; designed chiefly for the use of pious cottagers* (Northampton, 1830); W.W. Radstock, *The Cotttager's Friend, or, a word in season to him is so fortunate as to possess a Bible or New Testament, and a Book of Common Prayer: in two parts, being, principally, a selection of texts from Bishop Gastrell's Christian institutes* (London, 28th edn, 1824); Seaton, *The Conduct of Servants*, pp. 218, 282.

38. Braddock, *The Role of the Book of Common Prayer*, p. 82.

39. *Gentleman's Magazine* (London, January, 1834), p. 84.

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and, with Latitudinarian clergy, leaned towards the more thematic aspects of domestic prayer. But it would be wrong to let these broad tendencies overshadow the common ground and the extent to which there was cross-fertilization. For the leading Evangelical Charles Simeon, it was reading the High Church Bishop Thomas Wilson's devotional work on the service of Holy Communion that triggered his own spiritual awakening.[40] The SPCK published works by Nonjuring writers and by Isaac Watts.[41] And for churchmen of all parties and none the Prayer Book itself continued to be a unifying influence, both as a source and pattern for domestic prayer and as the book that set the standard for Anglican devotion.

### *The Content and Spirituality of Domestic Devotion*

While the composition of prayer manuals reflected a variety of influences and drew on a range of sources, their content was built around a number of core concerns. Prayers of thanksgiving and intercession were to be found in most manuals, but the most dominant themes concerned self-examination, repentance and ethical formation. This pattern echoed that to be found in the Prayer Book itself. Its general confession, appointed for the beginning of morning and evening prayer each day, expressed both penitence for past failings and prayed for grace to live 'a godly, righteous and sober life'. Awareness of sin was to lead to repentance and a commitment to moral and spiritual renewal. It was a pattern that was widely followed, and captured in a set of evening prayers written by Jane Austen which included the petition, 'Look with Mercy on the Sins we have this day committed, and in Mercy make us feel them deeply, that our Repentance may be sincere, and our resolutions steadfast of endeavouring against the commission of such in future'.[42]

Shaped by seventeenth-century practice, this spirituality expressed a 'moral-ascetic theology' in which personal prayer and the pursuit of virtue in daily life were seen as a unity.[43] It was for this that William Law argued in the opening section of *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy*

40. William Carus, *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. Charles Simeon, M.A.* (London, 1847), p. 9.

41. Anon., *An Index to the Religious Tracts Dispersed by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge* (London, 1815).

42. Stovel, '"A nation improving in religion"', available at: http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/printed/number16/stovel.htm (accessed March 2018).

43. Geoffrey Rowell, Kenneth Stevenson and Rowan Williams (eds.), *Love's Redeeming Work: The Anglican Quest for Holiness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 192.

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*Life*, first published at the end of 1728. Law wrote: 'Devotion is neither *private* or *public* Prayer, but Prayers whether private or public, are particular parts or instances of Devotion. Devotion signifies a life given, or devoted, to God'. For Law, the devout Christian was one who 'considers God in everything, who serves God in everything, who makes all parts of his common life parts of piety, by doing everything in the Name of God'.[44] It was a spirituality deeply embedded in the Prayer Book, and especially the Catechism which, having described the duties of a life lived in the service of God and neighbour, advised 'thou art not able to do these things of thyself, nor to walk in the Commandments of God, and to serve him without his special Grace; which thou must learn at all times to call for by diligent Prayer'.

Such prayer was built, not on attendance at public worship, but on the daily discipline of domestic and personal devotion. Foundational to this approach was the practice of spiritual self-examination. Some manuals recommended that this should be done every evening as a way of reflecting on the day drawing to a close, noting sins and omissions, seeking God's forgiveness, and praying for grace to follow in the way of Christ. Jane Austen wrote of the need 'on each return of night' to 'consider how the past day has been spent by us, and what have been our prevailing Thoughts, Words, and Actions during it'.[45] To this end, *Morning and Evening Prayers for Companion for the Families* included a form of personal examination to be used in the evening as a way of reviewing moral and religious conduct during the day. Robert Nelson also provided 'heads of self-examination' in *Companion for the Festivals and Fasts*. These listed at length sins against God, neighbour, church, family and self, challenging readers to identify and remedy those practices and attitudes that fell short of Christian virtue.[46]

Following the pattern exemplified by the general confession, self-examination was to lead to prayer for grace to pursue what the Prayer Book collect for All Saints' Day described as 'all virtuous and godly living'. Nelson's order for morning prayer asked God that he might 'Grant us the grace of thy holy spirit to become every day better; to reform and amend whatever is amiss in the frame and temper of our minds, or in the course and action of our lives; to enable us to mortify our lusts; to govern our passions, and to order our whole conversation

44. W. Law, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life Adapted to the State and Condition of all Orders of Christians* (Edinburgh, 1888), p. 13.

45. Stovel, '"A Nation Improving in Religion"'.

46. Anon., *Morning and Evening Prayers for Families*, p. 16; Nelson, *Companion for the Festivals and Fasts*, pp. 510-13.

aright'.[47] More specifically, Nelson's prayers for children, drawing directly on the language of the Catechism, included the petition 'make me obedient to my parents, and all my governors in church and state' and went on to pray 'keep my hands from picking and stealing, and my tongue from evil-speaking, lying and slandering'.[48] In similar vein Thomas Seaton's prayers for servants, sensitive to their influence within a household, included the petition 'preserve me from talkativeness and impertinence, from base contrivances and betraying his children into improper engagement'.[49]

The concern with morality and virtue was linked to a recollection of the promises made at baptism and mindfulness of God's judgement. Gibson's form for morning prayer quoted from the Prayer Book's liturgy of baptism, as individuals pledged themselves afresh to 'renounce the devil and all his works, the vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh'. The next section invoked the Holy Spirit and prayed for grace, but also recalled God's judgement 'in which we must give a strict account of our thoughts, words and actions'.[50] Similarly Edward Pearson's *Prayers for Families* of 1800 prayed 'Make us duly mindful, that thou art present everywhere, and knowest our most secret thoughts; so that we may never dare to do any thing, but what thou approvest, and of which we may not fear to give account at the day of judgement.'[51] Put more positively, it was a spirituality that nurtured not simply a recollection of God's presence throughout each day, but the pursuit of both God's guidance and God's glory. As a prayer in John Stonhouse's collection put it, 'May thy blessing attend all my lawful business and enjoyments. May a sense of thy Presence, and a Regard to thy Glory, fill my Heart; and may I be in the fear of the Lord all the Day long.'[52]

Related to the theme of judgement was the need to prepare for death. This was often associated with evening prayer in which falling asleep was an analogy for dying. Nelson's evening prayers expressed the hope 'that having led holy lives, we may be happy in our death'.[53] Similarly,

47. R. Nelson, *An Earnest Exhortation to Housekeepers, to Maintain Family Instruction and Devotion* (London, 15th edn, 1776), p. 7.

48. Nelson, *An Earnest Exhortation to Housekeepers*, p. 12.

49. Seaton, *The Conduct of Servants*, p. 285.

50. Gibson, *Family Devotion*, pp. 19-24.

51. E. Pearson, *Prayers for Families: consisting of a form, short but comprehensive, for the morning & evening of every day in the week* (Loughborough, 1800), p. 27.

52. J. Stonhouse, *Prayers for the Use of Private Persons, Families, Children and Servants* (London, 8th edn, 1774), p. 6.

53. Nelson, *An Earnest Exhortation to Housekeepers*, p. 11.

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Thomas Wilson's *Form of Family Prayer* included the petition that God might 'fit us for the hour of death'.[54] To assist such reflection Thomas Greene, successively bishop of Norwich and Ely in the first decades of the eighteenth century, published a series of meditations on death, judgement, heaven and hell which were still being issued at the start of the nineteenth century.[55] This focus on mortality was, unsurprisingly, central in prayers and meditations written for the elderly, such as Richard Peer's *A Companion for the Aged,* but children were also encouraged to face the fragility of life. Radstock's *The Cottager's Friend* included a prayer for young children with the petition that they might 'be fit at length to be made happy with thee in heaven for evermore'.[56]

The concern with ethical formation in much Georgian devotion also reflected a clear emphasis on the corporate dimension of the religious life. Personal morality and the formation of a virtuous and godly character mattered because it shaped how the whole of society operated. It was a vision captured in the novels of Jane Austen and for which she prayed in her own domestic devotions: 'Incline us Oh God! to think humbly of ourselves, to be severe only in the examination of our own conduct, to consider our fellow-creatures with kindness, and to judge of all they say and do with that charity which we would desire from them ourselves.'[57] The recognition of common duties and obligations was reflected in patterns of intercession which, in Gibson's evening prayer, included prayers for the monarch and for neighbours, and were followed by thanksgiving 'for our health, friends, food and raiment…' and above all for Christ as Saviour.[58]

This concern to link devotion and daily life was reflected in the provision of prayers fitted to everyday needs and experiences. Bean's *The Cottagers' Prayer Book* included a prayer to be used when a father was unemployed which included the telling petition 'O Lord, dispose my creditors to have patience with me.' Another prayer for a sick father acknowledged the financial hardship that could beset the whole family

54. T. Wilson, *A Form of Family Prayer, from the Works of Thomas Wilson DD, late Bishop of Sodor and Man* (London, new edn, 1815), p. 15.

55. Anon., *An Essay on the Happiness and Advantages of a Well-ordered Family Respecting the Present and Future Welfare of its Members* (London, 3rd edn, 1808), p. 109.

56. Radstock, *The Cottager's Friend*, p. 23; R. Peers, *A Companion for the Aged: consisting of meditations, devotions, and proper instructions, for the use of those, who ... are disabled from attending upon the public service of God* (London, 1809).

57. Stovel, '"A Nation Improving in Religion"'; P. Hollingsworth, *The Spirituality of Jane Austen* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2017), pp. 73-75.

58. Gibson, *Family Devotion*, pp. 25-30.

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as a result. There were prayers for a child about to go into domestic service, and others on the death of a family member. Bean also provided prayers to be used as a woman went into labour which included the petition, 'be pleased, O Lord, to ease her pain, and bring her safely through her difficulty. Enable her with a truly Christian faith to commit her soul to Christ, and to resign herself to thy will, whether to live or die.' Such prayers reflected the horrors and dangers of labour, echoing the provision in the Prayer Book for thanksgiving after a safe childbirth in the service for the Churching of Women. In similar vein Bean also included a prayer of thanksgiving for 'a wife safely delivered in childbirth' which also prayed that the mercy thus granted might strengthen the union of husband and wife.[59]

Another way of linking prayer and daily life was through the use of 'ejaculations' or brief petitions to be used during the day as a way of seeking God's guidance, God's protection, or simply remembering God's presence. Thomas Ken's *Directions for Prayer*, first issued in 1686, and circulated by SPCK throughout the eighteenth century, provided a variety of such petitions. They included one to be used when leaving home: 'Lord, bless my going out and coming in, from this time forth for evermore'. Another petition, it was suggested, could be used at meal-times or at work: 'Lord, give me grace to use this world so as not to abuse it.'[60] Stonhouse's 1773 *Prayers* also included 'sudden petitions', and recommended that each phrase in the Lord's Prayer could be used in this way, not least to overcome temptations.[61]

These down-to-earth prayers were balanced by using the rhythms of daily life to point back to the Gospel, and especially the life of Christ. Gibson's order for morning prayer began with a thanksgiving for preservation through the hours of the night and remembrance of how Jesus had been laid in the grave at sunset and raised at dawn on Easter day. The rhythm of day and night, rest and waking, was to be a daily reminder of Jesus' death and resurrection. In this scheme, every Friday was to evoke remembrance of the crucifixion, just as every Sunday was a celebration of Easter. For this reason, Thomas Backhouse's *Family Devotions* included a penitential form of prayer to be used on Fridays which drew on Psalm 51 and the form of confession in the service of Holy Communion.[62]

The themes of self-examination, repentance, thanksgiving and the pursuit of virtue were heightened in the interplay between personal

59. Bean, *The Cottager's Prayer Book*, p. 30.
60. T. Ken, *Directions for Prayer* (London, 1811), p. 16.
61. Stonhouse, *Prayers for the Use of Private Persons*, p. 17.
62. Braddock, *The Role of the Book of Common Prayer*, p. 145.

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prayer and participation in Holy Communion. William Vickers' *The Companion to the Altar* was one of the most widely circulated manuals written to complement the Communion service and was often bound into Georgian Prayer Books. Like other texts, notably *The New Week's Preparation for a Worthy Receiving of the Lord's Supper*, first published in 1749, it began by offering forms of self-examination to be used at home in the period leading up to participation in the sacrament. Intended to remedy Georgian concerns about receiving the sacrament 'unworthily', the *Companion* promoted reflections on past life and character, on present 'resolutions, state and temper', on faith in Christ and the Gospel, on personal understanding of the sacrament, and a desire to nurture such 'graces which must actually qualify' an individual to share in Holy Communion. 'Heads of self-examination' were provided to guide the penitent through a comprehensive system of spiritual reflection and preparation based on the Ten Commandments, the rehearsal of which formed the first part of the Communion service itself.[63]

The use of the Commandment as a framework for self-examination was commonly followed, including in works by Susannah Hopton, Robert Nelson and John Venn, and followed the practice of seventeenth-century manuals, notably Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living*. Not only did this echo the liturgical use of the Commandments at the beginning of the Communion service, it also responded to the guidance contained in the service's first exhortation that communicants should prepare to participate in the sacrament by examining their 'lives and conversations by the rule of God's commandments'. It was a further reflection of the way the Prayer Book itself shaped and influenced patterns of personal devotion. Theologically, such examination was also linked to baptism and the need to remain faithful to the baptismal commission to fight against sin, the world, and the devil. To this end, Thomas Wilson provided a private reaffirmation of baptismal promises to be used before receiving Communion.[64]

This concern for worthy reception was shared across different church traditions. Yet there could also be differences of emphasis. The Latitudinarian Benjamin Hoadly, who argued that Holy Communion was a purely commemorative act, described its reception as a duty similar to

63. W. Vickers, *The Companion to the Altar: shewing the nature of the preparation required, in order to a worthy and comfortable receiving of that holy sacrament* (Birmingham, 1776), pp. 7-13.

64. W.K. Lowther Clark, *Eighteenth-Century Piety* (London: SPCK, 1944), p. 13; Rowell *et al*. (eds.), *Love's Redeeming Work*, p. 188.

any other Christian duty. In keeping with this, the household prayers appended to Hoadly's tract on the sacrament differed from other such publications by the absence of any devotional material written specifically to aid preparation for receiving Communion.[65] By contrast, Thomas Haweis' *Communicant's Spiritual Companion* of 1763, reflecting Evangelical concerns, emphasized the cross itself, not the sacrament, as the source of sanctifying grace.[66]

A revision of Vickers' *Companion* made in the decades after 1800 also moved it in a more Evangelical direction with an increased emphasis on the need to avoid post-Communion sin as well as undertaking preparation for worthy reception.[67] Other late-Georgian manuals began to adopt a different tone, placing greater emphasis on the benefits of receiving Communion and less on the dangers of receiving unworthily. Charles Stocker's *Conversation on the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper* of 1834 sought to allay communicants' fears by advising that 'if we wish that we were fit and worthy, and try, with God's help and with all our might, to make ourselves less unfit and less unworthy, that is all that God expects of us'. He went on to urge reception of the sacrament because by it 'souls are wonderfully strengthened and refreshed'. Communion was to be received as a means of grace whereby God strengthened the faithful communicant to resist temptation and to pursue a godly life.[68]

Having prepared spiritually at home, there was an expectation that personal prayer would be offered at various points during the Communion service itself. Francis Fox, in his widely circulated tract, *The Duty of Public Worship Proved*, noted that at morning worship 'after the sermon, before the Communion Service begins, the time may be well employed in such private devotions as everyone shall judge meet, and likewise the time while others are receiving'.[69] To meet this need, manuals of devotion often included prayers for use before, during and after receiving Communion. This was the pattern used by Joseph Potts, the archdeacon of St Albans, in a series of prayers written for the newly confirmed at the very end of the

65. B. Hoadly, *A Plain Account of the Nature and End of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper* (London, 1735).

66. Rowell *et al*. (eds.), *Love's Redeeming Work*, p. 187.

67. F. Knight, *The Nineteenth-Century Church and English Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 54-58.

68. C. Stocker, *Conversation on the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, Between a Minister of the Church of England and some of his Parishioners* (London, 1834).

69. F. Fox, *The Duty of Public Worship Proved* (London, 14th edn, 1799), p. 49.

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eighteenth century.[70] *The Companion to the Altar* provided a prayer to be said at the approach to the chancel or Communion table which included the petition, 'let my bended knee and contrite heart show that I durst not have adventured hither, had not thy mercy held out the golden sceptre and said, "come unto me, all ye that labour and are weary and heavy laden, and I will refresh you"'.[71]

There followed a series of short petitions to be used at the giving of alms, at the consecration of the elements, and before and after receiving the bread and the cup. A series of longer prayers expressed gratitude to God for the gift of Holy Communion and expressed a longing to be spiritually united with Christ. One prayer included the thanksgiving 'Good Jesus, my hope and my refuge, I here render thee hearty thanks for all thy sufferings, and I beg that I may find shelter in thy wounds against all enemies, ghostly and bodily'. It went on to pray, 'O that I could ever remember thee, think of thee, and delight in thee alone, and love thee only, who hast loved us…'. This intense expression of personal devotion and longing for spiritual union was reflected in other petitions, including the prayer, 'O blessed Jesu, life eternal, by whom I live, and without whom I die, grant that I may now be united to thee, and that in the embraces of thy holy love and divine will, I may rest for ever.'[72]

This spiritual intensity and desire to be united with Christ was found in other Georgian manuals. *The New Week's Preparation* prayed 'dispose my heart to be thy guest at thy holy table, that I may feel all the sweet influences of love crucified, the strengthening and refreshing of my soul by thy body and blood'.[73] The SPCK's *A Friendly Call to the Holy Communion* of 1746 prayed 'O let that heavenly food which thou has so lately fed me with, transfuse new life and new vigour into my soul.'[74] In prayers prepared by John Hume, bishop of Oxford and then Salisbury in the second half of the eighteenth century, this longing was combined with a recommitment to living faithfully and dutifully: 'Grant that by this Sacrament, there may be conveyed to my soul new spiritual life and strength and such a measure of Thy grace and assistance as may enable me to a greater care of my duty

70. J. Potts, *Elementary Discourses, Designed for the Use of a Young Person after Confirmation. With devotions, selected chiefly from the Book of Common Prayer, to be used before and after Holy Communion* (London, 1804), pp. 83-89.
71. Vickers, *The Companion to the Altar*, p. 43.
72. Vickers, *The Companion to the Altar*, pp. 44-45, 46.
73. Quoted in Rowell *et al*. (eds.), *Love's Redeeming Work*, p. 268.
74. Quoted in Clarke, *Eighteenth-Century Piety*, p. 14.

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for the future'.[75] This desire to continue in holiness was a common theme of prayers written for use after receiving Communion. Susannah Hopton's *Meditations and Devotions*, issued in 1717, asked that, as God had 'vouchsafed to feed me with the Bread of Life' so he would now 'guide me with thy Power, enlighten me with thy Word, quicken me with thy Spirit, elevate my Senses, compose my Memory, and order my Conversation aright'.[76] In this way, individual prayer was presented as an essential part of appropriating all the spiritual graces promised through participation in Holy Communion and expressed that strand in Georgian spirituality that longed for personal union with Christ.

## *Conclusion*

The now well-established revisionist understanding of the Georgian church has done much to rescue the provision and performance of public worship from the criticisms levelled at them by Victorian detractors. Greater awareness of the world of domestic prayer builds on this, demonstrating that Georgian spirituality was capable of a breadth and depth that can be obscured by focusing on the practice of public worship alone. This vitality was expressed in the range of devotional material produced throughout the Georgian age, the variety of sources on which it drew, and the range of spiritual experiences for which it provided, not least in relation to Holy Communion. Rooted in the tradition of the Prayer Book itself, it was a spirituality that sought personal transformation, desired deeper union with Christ and recognized the need for this to be lived out through the pursuit of piety and virtue in all aspects of daily life. Manuals of domestic devotion gave expression to this vision, and in giving it expression helped to bring it to effect. They were a defining feature of Georgian Anglicanism.

75. J. Hume, 'Paper of devotions for the Holy Communion' in Sykes, *Church and State*, pp. 438-39.

76. Quoted in Rowell *et al*. (eds.), *Love's Redeeming Work*, p. 229.

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