

INJUNCTIONS TO THE CLERGY

Thomas Cromwell (1485–1540), Chief minister of Henry VIII (1532–1540)

Thomas Cromwell served as Henry VIII's chief minister during the early years of the English Reformation, simultaneously holding office as Lord Privy Seal (1536–1540), Secretary of State (1534–1540), Chancellor of the Exchequer (1533–1540), and Vicar-General (1536–1540). As the principle organizer of the English Reformation, Cromwell sought to ensure clerical acceptance of Protestant ideals and practices, and therefore issued these instructions for England's ministers.

1538

First: That you shall truly observe and keep all and singular the King's Highness' injunctions given unto you heretofore in my name, by his Grace's authority; not only upon the pains therein expressed, but also in your default after this second monition continued, upon further punishment to be straitly extended towards you by the King's Highness' arbitrement, or his Vice-Regent aforesaid.

That you shall provide on this side the feast of next coming, one book of the whole Bible of the largest volume in English, and the same set up in some convenient place within the said church that you have use of, whereas your parishioners may most commodiously resort to the same and read it; the charge of which book shall be ratably born between you, the parson, and the parishioners aforesaid, that is to say the one half by you, and the other half by them.

That you shall discourage no man privily or apertly from the reading or hearing of the said Bible, but shall expressly provoke, stir, and exhort every person to read the same as that which is the very lively word of God, that every Christian man is bound to embrace, believe, and follow, if he look to be saved. Admonishing them nevertheless to avoid all contention and altercation therein, and to use an honest sobriety in the inquisition of the true sense of the same, and refer the explication of the obscure places to men of higher judgment in Scripture.

That you shall every Sunday and holy day through the year openly and plainly recite to your parishioners, twice or thrice together, or oftener if need require, one particle or sentence of the *Pater Noster*, or creed in English, to the intent that they may learn the same by heart. And so from day to day, to give them one little lesson or sentence of the same, till they have learned the whole *Pater Noster* and creed in English by rote. And as they be taught every sentence of the same by rote, you shall expound and declare the understanding of the same unto them, exhorting all parents and householders to teach their children and servants the same, as they are bound in conscience to do. And that done, you shall declare unto them the Ten Commandments, one by one, every Sunday and holy day, till they be likewise perfect in the same.

That you shall in confessions every Lent examine every person that comes to confession unto you whether they can recite the articles of our faith, and the *Pater Noster* in English, and hear them say the same particularly; wherein if they be not perfect, you shall declare to the same that every Christian person ought to know the same before they should receive the blessed sacrament of the altar; and admonish them to learn the same more perfectly by the next year following, or else, like as they ought not to presume to come to God's board without perfect knowledge of the same, and if they do, it is to the great peril of their souls; so you shall declare unto them, that you look for other injunctions from the King's Highness by that time to stay and repel all such from God's board as shall be found ignorant in the premises; whereof you do thus admonish them, to the intent they should both eschew the peril of their souls, and also the worldly rebuke that they might incur after by the same.

That you shall make, or cause to be made, in the said church, and any other cure you have, one sermon every quarter of the year at least, wherein you shall purely and sincerely declare the very gospel of Christ, and in the same exhort your hearers to the works of charity, mercy, and faith especially prescribed and commanded in Scripture, and not to repose their trust or affiance in any other works devised by men's fantasies besides Scripture; as in wandering to pilgrimages, offering of money, candles, or tapers to images or relics, or kissing or licking the

same over, saying over a number of beads, not understood or minded on, or in such like superstition. For the doing whereof, you not only have no promise or reward in Scripture, but contrariwise great threats and maledictions of God as things tending to idolatry and superstition, which of all other offences God Almighty does most detest and abhor, for that same diminishes most of His honour and glory.

That such feigned images as you know in any of cures to be so abused with pilgrimages or offerings of anything made thereunto, you shall, for avoiding the most detestable offence of idolatry, forthwith take down, and without delay; and shall suffer from henceforth no candles, tapers, or images of wax to be set afore any image or picture, but only the light that commonly goes across the church by the rood loft, the light before the sacrament of the altar, and the light about the sepulcher; which, for the adorning of the church and divine service, you shall suffer to remain. Still admonishing your parishioners that images serve for none other purpose but as to be books of unlearned men that ken no letters, whereby they might be otherwise admonished of the lives and conversation of them that the said images do represent. Which images if they abuse for any other intent than for such remembrances, they commit idolatry in the same, to the great danger of their souls. And therefore the King's Highness graciously tendering the weal of his subjects' souls has in part already and more will hereafter, travail for the abolishing of such images as might be an occasion of so great an offence to God, and so great a danger to the souls of his loving subjects.

That you, and every parson, vicar, or curate within this diocese shall for every church keep one book or register, wherein he shall write the day and year of every wedding, christening, and burying made within your parish for your time, and so every man succeeding you likewise; and also there insert every person's name that shall be so wedded, christened, and buried; and for the safe keeping of the same book the parish shall be bound to provide, of their common charges, one sure coffer with two locks and keys, whereof the one to remain with you and the other with the wardens of every such parish wherein the said book shall be laid up. Which book you shall every Sunday take forth, and in the presence of the said wardens or one of them write a record in the same all the weddings, christenings, and buryings made the whole week afore; and that done to lay up the book in the said coffer as afore. And for every time that the same be omitted, the party that shall be in the fault thereof shall forfeit to the said church 3s 4d to be employed on the reparation of the said church.

That no person shall from henceforth alter or change the order and manner of any fasting day that is commanded and indicted by the Church, nor of any prayer or of divine service, otherwise than is specified in the said injunctions, until such time as the same shall be so ordered and transported by the King's Highness' authority. The eves of such saints whose holy days be abrogated be only excepted, which shall be declared henceforth to be no fasting days; excepted also the commemoration of Thomas Becket, sometime Archbishop of Canterbury, which shall be clean omitted, and in the stead thereof the ferial service used.

Where in times past men have used in divers places in their processions to sing *Ora pro nobis* to so many saints that they had no time to sing the good suffrages following, as *Pace nobis Domine* and *Libera nos Domine*, it must be taught and preached that better it were to omit *Ora pro nobis* and to sing the other suffrages.

All which and singular injunctions I minister unto you and your successors, by the King's Highness' authority to be committed in this part, which I charge and command you by the same authority to observe and keep upon pain of deprivations, sequestration of your fruits, or such other coercion as to the King's Highness, or his Vice Regent for the time being shall seem convenient.