Hymns books, Handel, and the harmony of the spheres

Christ Church has always been a musical place, and this is reflected by the holdings of the College Library. One room in the building, high up near the roof, is half-filled with rare old music, variously manuscript or printed, much of which is unique and extremely valuable. Because of its national and international importance, the collection is being comprehensively re-catalogued in a manner fit for modern times – which is to say electronically, as a public website, in which both data and digital images are instantly and freely accessible around the world. When plans were made for the new Music Catalogue, there were long discussions about what it should include. Clearly the contents of the Music Room had to be given priority, but scattered around the Library are all manner of other music-related items that are also relevant to musicians and music historians. Some of these books are shelved in specific places because they were donated by specific people. Others straddle the boundaries between music and other subjects – for instance, music and religion, music and science, music and foreign travel. In addition, interesting scraps of music sometimes turn up in bindings, having been used by bookbinders to line the insides of covers or strengthen spines.

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Fresh ideas about MS 92 and the education of a King

In 1706 Christ Church library came into possession of a sumptuously illustrated fourteenth century treatise on kingship produced for the young Edward III. Entitled De Nobilitatibus, Sapientiis et Prudentiis Regum, it was composed by king’s clerk Walter de Milemete and contains six full-page miniatures; most pages contain glorious heraldic shields and curious grotesques in the borders. It survives in its original red velvet chemise binding. Rather surprisingly, the contents of this work have remained almost entirely unused by historians of Edward’s reign, and this in spite of a recent historical vogue for contemporary political theory.

In spite of the sporadic attention that Walter's work has received, no definitive dating for the commissioning, writing or presentation of the treatise has yet been advanced. The treatise is addressed to ‘the illustrious Lord Edward, King of England by the grace of God, beginning his rule in A.D. 1326’ with the new year at this period beginning on the 25th March. In seventeen of the nineteen occasions in the text where Edward is titled, he is clearly styled king.

continued on page 2
Edward III was king from the moment of his acclamation in parliament on the afternoon of 13 January 1327, but he was only openly styled so from 24 January when the new king’s peace was proclaimed in London, the terminus a quo for the presentation of Walter’s work. It seems likely that the treatise was intended for presentation at or near to the coronation on 1 February but this was a mere 17 days after the dramatic deposition of his father Edward II, the first such deposition of an English king.

This question of dating is complicated further by the fact that the manuscript is unfinished, some 13 illustrations at the end being only in pencil sketches. The incompleteness is, I think, highly suggestive of an intended date of presentation. The coronation of 1 February would have been just such a suitable occasion and the speed with which it followed the deposition also renders more readily comprehensible both the measures taken to accelerate production and the unfinished condition of the manuscript. But, even in its surviving condition, the manuscript could not simply have been produced between the deposition and coronation. Rather, it seems likely that the work was commissioned in late 1326 by the young prince’s mother, Queen Isabella, whose arms adorn the treatise and who is depicted alongside her son in a full-page miniature.

Until now the historical consensus has been that the decision to depose Edward II was taken at a meeting at Wallingford over Christmas 1326, but entries in the royal wardrobe accounts indicate that plans were already being made for the young Edward’s coronation as early as November, when cloth was being purchased for the ceremony. This raises the striking possibility that the work was being written whilst Edward III was still prince, but styling him king, the title he would bear when it was presented.

M. A. Michael supposed that the text was altered after the death of Edward II to reflect Edward III’s status as king, but this is open to serious challenge.¹ There is no evidence to support the notion that the manuscript was systematically altered after the death of Edward II, as the consistent and uncorrected references to the young Prince as king demonstrate. Michael sets great store by the addition of the word ‘nuper’ to a sentence in order to describe Edward II as ‘our recent (or former) king of England’, and argued that it had to imply that Edward II was dead. Not so. The latter was, in fact, ‘recently’ or ‘formerly’ king from the moment of Edward III’s acclamation. Such alterations in the text are perhaps better thought of as corrections prior to presentation; it would certainly have been easy, indeed in some ways natural for Walter to confuse in the process of writing the current king, Edward II, with the future king and intended recipient, Edward III.

What then of Walter’s instruction? Walter conceived of the role of the king in Aristotelian terms as that of a steward or administrator: the king’s virtues and their application through his royal will were the principal determinant of the realm’s welfare. He stressed the practical applicability of the four cardinal virtues and wrote that Edward should ‘possess virtue far above other people in the world.’ These were largely conventional expectations, but Walter’s emphasis on Edward’s own practical hand in government points to the very much more ambitious task he had set himself. Rather than an effort merely to fashion the ideals upon which Edward’s kingship would be founded, Walter’s was an attempt to shape the very manner in which Edward would act: the very practice of his kingship. At several points in the text, Walter sets out the exact words that Edward might use in response to requests for favour. He advised that the king should propose matters for discussion in council and that he should be able to write letters in his own hand. Nowhere is Milemete’s concern for the practice of kingship clearer, however, than in the highly uncharacteristic inclusion of a discussion of the battles and military actions of the king, with which the treatise ends.

Perhaps even more striking is the influence that Edward II’s particular failings appear to have had on this treatise. One effect of the proliferation between c.1200 and c.1300 of works in the Speculum, or Mirror for Princes genre, was that there came to exist a readily applicable framework within which kings might be judged. In Walter’s case, rather than theory informing practice, this process appears to have been reversed with the experience of failed action influencing the very tenor of the advice that he proffered.

In its most obvious incarnation, and where Edward II stood accused of ‘se ad done toux jours as aarraignes & occupations’,² Milemete exclaims: ‘Heaven forbid that the king should take delight in or become accustomed to vicious and vile activities


incompatible with his dignity.' The strength of his cautionary remark is highly suggestive of a specific reference to contemporary criticisms of Edward II. Indeed, the Lanercost Chronicle noted that it ‘was commonly reported that he [Edward II] had devoted himself... to digging pits and roofing houses.’ Less explicit, but of greater importance for Edward III’s future kingship, was Milemete’s treatment of king-magnate relations and the central issue of counsel which together comprised the two most significant and condemned aspects of Edward II’s failings.

In 1325 the author of the Vita Edwardi Secundi wrote in a tone of despair of ‘the nobles of the realm, terrified by threats and the penalties inflicted on others.’ It is no wonder, then, that Milemete urges upon Edward a studied deference to magnate opinion and close attention to his relationship with the nobility. Walter instructs Edward that the peace of the kingdom depends on the harmony of the great men of the realm and Edward is starkly told that he must act to nip magnate conflict in the bud. This advice, entirely in keeping with the tenor of the work, goes on to receive a more practical slant: Edward should ‘kindly acquiesce to the petitions of great men and nobles’ and he is to take ‘regular note’ to manage their affairs. More strikingly, and in a vein that could not have been read without calling to mind recent events, Walter advises that the king should act magnanimously and moderately towards his nobles should they transgress the law, although he does note that treason is not to be condoned! In declaring that Edward must not take the part of one noble man against another, it is difficult to look beyond the experience of his father’s reign and the dominance about the king of first Gaveston, and then the Despensers, as a guide to the origins of such developed and specific advice.

Much the same influence seems to have weighed on Walter’s treatment of the matter of counsel, a staple aspect of late medieval works of advice. Beginning by setting forth a model for the king taking counsel that was entirely in keeping with other works of advice, he goes on to advise that very rarely are virtuous men of ‘resplendent character’ to be found in royal service and that there are many matters on which the king must act without counsel. The culmination of Walter’s treatment of this matter was his suggestion of a test to determine a counsellor’s intentions. The positing by advice writers of such tests was not unique, but these were usually simple tests for avarice. Walter’s is far more elaborate. He advises that the prospective counsellor should be quizzed about the counsels and private plans of a friend whom the king should be clandestinely praising. Should the counsellor reveal some of his friend’s secrets the king must resolve not to trust him, but ‘if from the start he refuses to say anything about his absent friend, nevertheless try him many times – hungry, fed, drunk, and in various states – alleging that he does not love you unless he discloses to you every secret he knows.’ Even in this case, Milemete urges the king to press further until the counsellor outright refuses to divulge his friend’s secrets. The disproportionate attention that the issue of counsel receives must be considered in very significant measure a response to what was the greatest failing of Edward II: the inability to discern good from bad counsel and his unwillingness to consult those who considered themselves the king’s natural advisors.

The influence recent events might have on such works was not, it might be added, unique, but the effect on the contents of Milemete’s treatise was at once more subtle and profound. There is much work still to be done on uncovering the complexities of Walter’s composition, but it has been a privilege to work with this unique treatise. In this regard I would like to thank Cristina Neagu for being so accommodating and Dr. Rowena Archer for her unstinting guidance and enthusiasm at every stage of my work on this fabulous manuscript.

Harry Southcott

Early Printed Books Cataloguing
Progress report

In early March 2005, Elizabeth Mathew took up the mammoth task of cataloguing Christ Church’s enormous collection of early printed books as a new phase of cataloguing work got underway. Taking advantage of the latest technology, these detailed electronic records are alerting readers not only in Oxford but across the world to the extraordinary wealth of material held in Christ Church Library.

Dr. Francesca Galligan joined the cataloguing team in December 2005 and until both she and Elizabeth left for pastures new towards the end of 2006 they
catalogued almost 3000 volumes between them to the very highest standards. All of these records are available via the online catalogue at: http://www.lib.ox.ac.uk/olis/.

In anticipation of a major overhaul of the electronic cataloguing system which would entail some significant disruption, the replacement team of cataloguers did not begin until January 2007. They are Owen Massey and Maria Franchini.

Owen is a professional librarian with a first class degree in mathematics from St. Catherine’s College who began his library career at Christ Church in 1998 as a library trainee. Since leaving Oxford in 1999 he has worked, amongst other places, in several specialist medical libraries in the UK and has developed his interest in the field of the history of science. He has recently returned to Oxford and is now working his way through Christ Church’s remarkable early science collection given in the 18th Century by Charles Boyle, fourth Earl of Orrery. Maria, also a professional librarian, has a first class degree in political science from Università Statale degli Studi di Milano and has a background in early English bibliography. She has recently joined us from the Britain in Print Project, where she was most recently based at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust cataloguing their pre-1800 imprints. Maria’s language skills and experience with English printing are being put to excellent use by continuing the cataloguing of Archbishop Wake’s library, which runs into many thousands of volumes. With the new team in place things are moving along swiftly. Since Christmas, Owen and Maria have catalogued 902 volumes, including books from the libraries of John Locke, Queen Elizabeth I and the Earls of Dorset. Titles to be added to the English Short Title Catalogue (http://estc.bl.uk/) are being found on a weekly basis, making Christ Church the current only known location of an increasing number of texts and editions. For the first time since this current phase of work began in 2005, the library has two full-time cataloguers and by the end of this year it is anticipated that at least 4000 titles will have been catalogued, allowing library users access to information on each book’s binding, provenance, manuscript annotations and additions, full title and imprint transcriptions, and Library of Congress subject access.

By working methodically along every shelf and through every book we are creating an accurate record of the complete contents of the library for the first time. During previous centuries Oxford library catalogues tended to be briefer and a proportion of items were not listed in the catalogues or handlists at all. In every library the Early Printed Books Project has worked in since 1995 there have been at least 10% more books than originally anticipated and Christ Church is no exception. We now think that the library may hold as many as 50,000 pre-1800 imprints, making it one of the largest antiquarian libraries in Britain. Of those 50,000 items about 20,000 should be fully catalogued by the end of this year.

To paraphrase Winston Churchill, this isn’t the beginning of the end but we are within sight of end of the beginning.

Sarah Wheale
Early Printed Books Project Manager

Locke stock

The collections in Christ Church’s Upper Library are built around a series of great donations, commemorated above the shelves by the names of the benefactors: Nicholson, Aldrich, Stratford, Morris, Wake and Orrery. Since January 2007 I have been cataloguing the early printed books in the Orrery collection.

Charles Boyle, 4th Earl of Orrery, bequeathed his books and scientific instruments to Christ Church on his death in 1731, believing his son to lack the ‘Inclination either for Entertainment or Knowledge which study and Learning afford’ (Oxford Dictionary of National Biography). At the time of the bequest, the current Library building was still unfinished. It was not until 1763, over thirty years later, that work began on moving the books into place in the gallery of the south wall, above those of Archbishop Wake. However, Orrery’s collection is far outnumbered by Wake’s, so other books have been added to fill the
gallery: of the estimated 7,300 volumes there today, perhaps 2,500 came from Orrery. One book which probably did not belong to the Earl is *The retired mans meditations*, or The mysterie and power of godlines shining forth in the living Word by Sir Henry Vane the younger (London, 1655). We do know the original source of this volume: it is one of seven books now in the Library which belonged to the philosopher John Locke. (The remainder of this article is indebted to Harrison and Laslett’s study *The library of John Locke*, 2nd ed., Oxford, 1971.)

Locke matriculated at Christ Church in 1652 and stayed at the House until 1667. On moving to London, he kept his rooms, first in Tom Quad, then in Canterbury Quad, and part of his library stayed in Oxford during his subsequent years in France. In the turbulent summer of 1681 Locke visited Oxford ‘and soothed himself, as we all do, by going over those possessions he most valued’ (Harrison and Laslett, p. 14). The result was a manuscript list, now in the Bodleian, of those books he kept in Christ Church; *The retired mans meditations* is present.

By 1692 Locke had moved his library of nearly 2,000 books to the manor house of Otes (or Oates) in Essex, where he was to spend the rest of his life. He ‘set about the most pleasurable of all the collector’s tasks, arranging, marking, cataloguing with extraordinary care and complication’ (Harrison and Laslett, p. 18). Locke made a record of his books on blank sheets interleaved in the 1674 printed catalogue of the Bodleian Library. He used a careful and minute set of practices to mark the books themselves: as well as writing his name inside the front board, he underlined the last figures of the year on the title-page and overlined the final page number, thus identifying the book as his even without its covers.

The meaning of other marks on Locke’s books is less apparent. *The retired mans meditations*, for example, bears the inscriptions ‘9 3’ and ‘bc’ inside the front board. It would be hard, if not impossible, to deduce from a single example that these represent respectively the book’s position in his shelving scheme (the 9 representing the book’s height in inches) and a record of the book having been checked against the Bodleian catalogue, but this is exactly what Harrison and Laslett found by examining many survivals from Locke’s library. Examples such as these justify the painstaking work of the Early Printed Books Project in recording apparently minor details, with a view to illuminating the life of both historic collections and the individual books within them.

On Locke’s death his library, now numbering 4,000 volumes, was divided: half went to his cousin and executor Peter King, half to Francis Masham of Otes. The majority of King’s books remained in the possession of his descendants, with the exception of a sale in the 1840s, and have now found a permanent home in the Bodleian. *The retired mans meditations* was one of the volumes which went to Masham, whose books were to undergo a series of sales and losses in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries; the fate of most has not been traced.

The journey of *The retired mans meditations* between its bequest to Masham in 1704 and its return to Christ Church in 1913 is unknown. Dr John Willcock acquired it ‘from a bookseller in Newcastle’ for his biography of Sir Henry Vane, then sent it as a gift to the college ‘at the direction of Prof. Stewart’ (J.A. Stewart, then White’s professor of moral philosophy). It has unfortunately been rebacked with the loss of Locke’s handwritten shelfmark on the spine.

There is one final complication. The Earl of Orrery did, in fact, own a copy of *The retired mans meditations*: it is listed in the handwritten catalogue of his 1731 bequest. Since Masham died in the same year as Orrery, this could not have been Locke’s book. But on its return in 1913, Locke’s copy was shelved with the Orrery books in the gallery of the Upper Library and is the only one recorded in the ledger catalogues; did a memento of one distinguished alumnus displace another?

*Owen Massey*  
Early Printed Books Project

**Online catalogues & the music collection**

The on-line Music Catalogue developed from an earlier database hosted on the OUCS Vax computer. The Vax database was designed when it was envisaged that the music catalogue would be published as a printed book. There were only two tables in the database, called *pr* and *ms*, intended to produce contents lists of each printed and manuscript item in the music collection. Alongside these were a growing collection of wordprocessed descriptions of the items giving information on their history, provenance, and bindings. Work on
converting the existing databases into a web-based system started in December 2001. With some assistance from Malcolm McCulloch (and the loan of a book) I loaded the data onto the college web-server using the MySQL database engine and the scripting language PHP. Some tidying up prior to loading was achieved using Perl.

I then began the hard work of getting the data into shape. The difficulty of designing a database should not be underestimated, and the structure of the data left a lot to be desired. The project started many years before the invention of the world wide web and the original database design was not intended to support an on-line catalogue. Moreover as the project progressed there had been little opportunity to review and revise the structure. I had to take many difficult decisions: should I sort the problem out ‘properly’ according to my professional instincts or just work round it? In most cases the arguments in favour of the ideal design became compelling, because of the features it enabled us to introduce.

To take one example, the title field of the printed music table often contained notes in square brackets: The symphonys or instrumental parts in the opera call’d Clotilda as they are perform’d at the Queens Theatre. [Mus. 869a: First treble. Mus. 869b: Tenor. Mus. 869c: Second treble.] [Ballad on the life and death of Sir Andrew Barron.] a pyrate and rover on the seas. The tune is, Come follow my love. [Words only. Top of page guillotined off.] Viaggi di Pietro della Valle il pellegrino ... divisi in tre parti: la Turchia, la Persia, et l'India: co il ritorno in patri, e la vita dell'autore ... [Includes description of music in Constantinople (pp.65–6); description of musical instruments (p.163).]

The first example details the names and shelfmarks of a set of partbooks, the second points out the deficiencies of a particular copy, while the third explains the musical interest present in a work of travel literature. In the end, each of these pieces of information was moved into its own particular field, largely automatically by carefully tested scripts. This enables us to do more with the data, for example displaying clear tables showing the distribution of parts (search for ‘Monteverdi 1615’ for some good examples).

The other major restructuring was to split the printed music table into two related tables. The Library has, in some cases, more than one copy of certain printed works. The works and the copies are now recorded in different tables, and when there is more than one copy of a work, two or more copy records can be attached. This restructuring entailed a lot of manual editing and checking of the originals to identify those works held in multiple copies. Many other corrections were made during this work. We were particularly pleased to rediscover a set of partbooks which had become separated, and which is now reunited ‘virtually’ if not on the shelves (see Mus. 533–7 and Mus. 283).

Matthew Phillips

Looking out over the Dean's garden during my tea break, with the late spring sunshine streaming onto the oak paneling of Arch. Inf., it seems a very melancholy reflection that this term will be my last working at Christ Church. To have access to this sequestered corner of Oxford; to work with one of the finest collections of books in the country; to draw on the expertise of a dedicated team of colleagues; this is the happy lot of the trainee at Christ Church, and it is with reluctance that I give them up.

During my time here I have been introduced to the processes of running an academic library. I also had the opportunity to work with the special collections. In addition to my routine tasks, like shelving, photocopying and book processing, I have been engaged in a number of projects. I particularly enjoyed cataloguing the letters of Lady Smith, Alice Liddell's great-aunt, and the rehousing of the Library's glass plate negatives. I have been helping with the transferral of records from Heritage to OLIS, and copying some of the handwritten handlists of the basement holdings on to the computer. I have created a new list of our journal holdings, and have been attempting to locate and reshelve those journals currently in the basement – though I have been hampered in recent months by the seriousness of the mould problem, and by the work of the electricians! All these tasks are ongoing, and I will have many projects to hand over to my successor.

I begin my new position as Project Librarian at the Huguenot Society in London on the 21st of May. The collection consists of around 1500 rare books, mostly French and 18th century, together with family papers
and periodicals relating to the history of the Huguenots in Britain. I will be running the library on a
day-to-day basis, dealing with enquiries and visiting
readers, and correcting their catalogue and doing
conservation work. The library is housed with the
Special Collections Library at UCL, on Hampstead
Road, in considerably less romantic surroundings
than those of Christ Church!

I have enjoyed my time at Christ Church enormously,
and feel very privileged to have had such a good
start to my career as a librarian. I am extremely
grateful to Janet and Cristina for their support and
insight, to Judith, John Milsom and the EPB
cataloguers for their expertise and good company,
and to Chris Pelling and the Library Committee. I will
be in and around Oxford for some time to come, and
I am sure you have not seen the last of me!

Lucy Gwynn

Job hunting in the 18th century

Life was not necessarily easy for the members of the
clergy in 18th century England. After being ordained,
they had to obtain a living or preferment in the
Church and slowly work their way up the ladder. To
achieve this, the customary way was to try and
ingratiate the persons holding rights of advowson
over parishes and ecclesiastical benefices. Preferment was sought for in any possible way, very
often by direct application, or through a chain of
acquaintances. It was also common practice to use
one’s own publications and dedicate them to the
person sought to grant a favour. The volume would
then be sent accompanied by a letter more direct in
its scope.

Archbishop William Wake was known to be a good
provider of preferment. He would receive several
letters of this sort, probably on a daily basis. Some
were kept with his papers and correspondence,
others were tipped in the binding of the works which
they accompanied, and therefore kept in their original
setting, highlighting their link with the printed work.

While continuing the cataloguing of the Wake
Collection in the Upper Library for the Early Printed
Books Project, I have had the fortune of finding three
specimens of letters asking for preferment.

The first of these letters was written by William
Reading (1674-1744) to accompany a copy of his
Fifty two sermons for every Sunday of the year M
DCC XXVII, in two volumes, printed in London, at his
own expense, in 1728 (shelfmark WP.5.6-7).

Reading was library keeper at Sion College, London,
and had been in that position for about twenty years
at the time of the publication of this work. Four years
earlier he had dedicated a previous collection of
sermons, Twenty three sermons of mortification,
holiness, and of the fear and love of God, to the
Archbishop. A copy of this work can be found in the
Bodleian. In the printed dedicatory letter to this first
volume, he addresses Wake with the words:

‘My Lord, I presume to acquaint You, that I have preached these
and many more sermons in such Churches in London as belong
to Your Grace’s peculiar jurisdiction. ... [T]hough the exercise of
my ministry hath been with much hardship and great obscurity,
always destitute of any Ecclesiastical Dignity or Revenue, yet I
hope my Superiors ... will testifie, that I have endeavoured to
perform all sacred Offices in the most effectual and becoming
manner that I was able. ... though I may confess without
reprouch, that one motive of my diligence was the hope of
getting at last above a poor, dependent, and uncertain station, ...
My Lord, I trouble You and the world with an account of my
circumstances for two reasons. I have a family of children by
honest marriage ... I have exerted all my industry to make
provision for them, but without success. ...’ (Reading, 1724,
pp. [iii].-vii).

His appeal did not receive the answer he might have
wished for, as in the printed dedicatory letter to the
Fifty two sermons, four years later, he mentions that:

‘... your Grace was pleased to shew me an instance of generous
Respect. For though I could never deserve any Ecclesiastical
Preferment at your hands, yet you congratulated me very
heartily, in the presence of many Persons of good Quality.’
(Reading, 1728, p. ii).

But certainly he had not lost hope. In the manuscript
letter now to be found bound together with the Fifty
two sermons, dated 21st of October, 1728, Reading
insists on the hardships he is going through,
particularly as regards to his wife, at the time
seriously ill:

‘My Lord, My poor wife would gladly have waited on your Grace
with this Book, but that she is a Cripple, and has been so ever
since last Christmass, when she had a grievous Rheumatism.'
And indeed she is otherwise so weak, that both she & her Family are often very doubtfull of her Life. She has six small Children whom she loves very tenderly, but is much troubled that we have not money to educate them and place them to any advantage in the World. She was very desirous of the publication of this Book, for which she begs your Grace's favour, & joyns in Duly with your Grace's obedient humble servt Wm Reading'.

Wake answered this second appeal in a more substantial manner. I have not been able to trace a manuscript copy of this answer, as not all of Wake's correspondence after 1726 is kept with his papers at Christ Church. However, Reading had Wake's answer printed, and inserted in his volumes of sermons, certainly in the hope of inspiring regard towards his person, if not reward. According to the English Short Title Catalogue, the only known copy of this printed letter to have survived is held at St. Paul's College, University of Sydney, NSW, Australia. It reads:

'My Lord Arch-bishop of Canterbury's letter to me upon the account of these sermons. Reverend Sir, I return you my thanks for your sermons, which I have begun to read with pleasure and satisfaction. I am very sorry for Mrs Reading's long and dangerous illness: I hope she will yet live many more years to see her numerous family disposed of to her content. I wish I could better assist her in that good work; what I can do, I have sent by the bearer, and desire her acceptance of it. I am, reverend sir, your loving friend, W. Cant. Nov. 8. 1728. With this his Grace was pleased to send a twenty pound bank note.'

Wake's gift would have helped for a while, but not for long, and two years later, in 1730, Reading published a third collection of sermons, intended as a continuation of the previous two. The volume was entitled Fifty eight sermons preached out of the first lessons of every Sunday in the year, at evening prayer (shelfmark: WP.5.8-9). Once more, he dedicated it to Wake and sent it to him with yet another letter, now inserted in front of the copy in the Wake Collection. The letter, dated 4th of September 1730, is written in a somehow less careful hand, as if in a hurry or distress, and it is much longer and sombre. Reading's situation is even less pleasant.

'My Lord, It having pleased God to take my poor wife out of this world the 22 of last month, after some years of great Infirmity, very painfull to her self, and very afflicting and chargeable to her whole Family, I am now left a widower with six children, all unprovided for. ... The correcting of good Books from the Press, was once a considerable branch of my livelyhood; but of late years, Pamphlets, Plays, & such light matters, have so filled the Presses where I was concern'd, that they are become almost useless to me. This obliges me to go on to print my Sermons ... and to dispose of the Books my self, for the Booksellers would hardly thank me for my Copy. Nor can I hope to safe myself this way, except my Lords the Bishops (to whom I must address) will please to consider me: as I humbly hope they will upon this melancholy occas[j]on, to help me to defray the expences of my wife's sickness & Funeral, that I may with the more courage take care of my poor children. I am yo[ur] Grace's most obedient humble servt Wm Reading'.

It has not been possible to trace an answer to this second letter. However, Reading remained at Sion College till his death, 14 years after his appeal, so it is fair to assume that, although Wake might have offered him some further pecuniary assistance, he did not provide him with a preferment, after all.

A very different approach, and a more modern one, can be found in the third manuscript letter discovered in the Wake Collection. It is almost a Curriculum Vitae, a rather short, very business-like, brisk request for a test in sermon composition. It was written in 1722, 6 years earlier than the first letter by Reading, by a young man called Brian Hunt and sent to Archbishop Wake together with his Parochial pasturage: or, the Church of England clergyman's thoughts and resolutions respecting his pastoral duty (shelfmark WO.6.27). Hunt, born in Kent, admitted at Corpus Christi, Cambridge, in 1704, was ordained deacon in London on the 5th of March, 1717, and was awarded his B.A. in 1722. He probably did not know Wake personally and was not so interested in his particular patronage, as the book is dedicated more generally

'to the Archbishops, Bishops, and all the English clergy; and humbly offer'd to their perusal and correction: as also to the three great religious societies in this city; that of Propagating Christianity into foreign parts, of Promoting Christian knowledge, and of Reformation of manners: and to the candid consideration of all pious Christians.' (Hunt, 1722, t.p.).

His letter is less formal and humble than Reading's.
‘To his Grace of Canterbury. May it please your Grace! Brian Hunt educated at Corps. Xti Col. Camb. now Vicar of Quadring in Lincolnshire (but has no profit of ye said Vicarage) has been Chaplain at Sea to 3 Admirals & was lately two years Curate of ye Savoy under Dr Pratt Dean of Rochester, has a large family, & no preferment most humbly begs your Grace’s favor: offers this trial of his ability of serving in the Church to your Grace, or any other Bishop, that shall please to permit, or command the same - viz of preaching before your Grace on a subject out of ye new Testament proposed by your Grace, & the composition to be made in such a manner & place as your Grace shall appoint, so that it may appear his Sermon is his own. He has a testimonial of 3 years behavior.

Lodges at Mr Brownings in Dutchy Lane in the Savoy, opposite to Katherine Street End in the Strand’ (ms. letter from the author, bound in at end of “Parochial pasturage: or, the Church of England clergyman’s thoughts and resolutions respecting his pastoral duty.’).

The fleeting mention to his large family does not detract from the strength of the offer. This man is conscious of his own value and is almost challenging the Archbishop to test his knowledge.

Was he more successful in his search of employment than Reading? Apparently no, as the year following this application, and for the subsequent three years, he is recorded in the registers of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts as a missionary at St. John’s, South Carolina.

Whatever the result of these letters, their survival is extremely interesting as it sheds some light on the lives of simple men and their families in the 18th century in their dealing with the authority. Thanks to the thorough cataloguing of the Collection allowed by such a project as the Early Printed Books, they are now saved from oblivion and ready to add their little snippet of information to the general picture.

Maria Franchini
Early Printed Books Project

Exhibitions in the Upper Library

On display this time are some of the most significant volumes in the world-renowned Christ Church collections of early printed and manuscript music.

This exhibition is an invitation to a journey exploring aspects related to uses of music in various ritual ceremonies. It highlights various little-known rites of initiation, seasonal, royal and funerary rites in some of most visually attractive illuminated manuscripts and early printed books.

Some very exciting and visually striking pieces to see! Among these you can have a glance at a fine pair of treble cornets purchased by Christ Church in 1605 in readiness for a visit by King James I. Also, perhaps surprisingly, the ‘Te Deum patrem colimus’ composed in 1685 by Benjamin Rogers, organist of Magdalen. The hymn is best known today for its annual performance on May Morning, sung from the tower of Magdalen College by the college choir. There is also a rare example of the song-sheets of the Easter psalm sung in 1689 by the Children of Christ’s Hospital, the charitable school founded in 1552. On display as well is a manuscript of the ‘Water Music’, originally assembled by Handel for a royal barge party on the River Thames in 1717. The manuscript dates from the same year. There is also a large 15th century folio containing part of the ‘St Matthew Passion’, as chanted annually during Mass on Palm Sunday in pre-Reformation England.

The exhibition is open during Trinity term 2007, from Monday 30 April. Visiting hours 9.00 am - 1.00 pm; 2.00 pm - 5.00 pm. We look forward to your visits.

Next in line, at the end of June, is an exhibition celebrating W.H. Auden’s many connections to Christ Church.

Cristina Neagu
Hymn books, Handel and the harmony of the spheres

Needless to say, the task of locating everything relevant to the Music Catalogue has been long and complex; but at last it is nearly complete.

Some categories were fairly easy to find. For instance, Christ Church has important holdings of liturgical books containing plainsong (or ‘Gregorian chant’) and hymnody, and existing catalogues pointed straight to the relevant shelves. Also easily located were the books of music theory – which is to say, literature dealing with acoustics, tunings, the rudiments of music notation, and techniques of composition. Older books in this category tend to move into the world of speculative science – which is to say, the relationship between music and mathematics, physics, astronomy, and beliefs about the nature of the universe. Thus the Online Catalogue now ventures far beyond mere mundane music, and touches on the Harmony of the Spheres.

The travel books posed a particular problem. Early European expeditions into Africa, Asia and the Americas often gave rise to published accounts describing foreign lands, and Christ Church has a large collection of such books. Those with important sections on music were quickly found, but a browse along the shelves brought much else to light. Thus the Online Catalogue now has entries for many travel books in which music receives only a passing mention, or is depicted in a woodcut or engraved illustration.

Even the most careful pre-planning, however, failed to anticipate some of the musical items that have turned up by simply searching the shelves. Among the Hebrew books, for example, there’s one that includes four-voice music for reciting the Torah – inevitably with its notation printed back-to-front, as the Hebrew text demands.

1689 to raise funds for Christ’s Hospital, a charitable school. And who would have expected Christ Church Library to house a book of constitutions of the Freemasons, replete with music for ceremonial use at Lodges?

The list of curiosities is endless. For instance, there are books in the Library that tell you what music to use should you be bitten by a tarantula; how to communicate covertly with one another in musical cryptography; how to sing psalms in Icelandic; what ritual you should follow when you cross the equator for the first time (accompanied by the ship’s musicians); and much else besides. A selection of these curiosities is on display in the Upper Library during Trinity Term, in a special exhibition called ‘Musical Rites’. Collectively they give a cross-section not only of the Library’s musical holdings, but also of the Music Catalogue’s breadth and diversity.

The Library goes WiFi!

At long last wireless connectivity has been extended to the Library, in addition to other prime locations around the college campus. Students and staff members can now use their own laptops (and other wireless clients) in the Library without the need to plug into a network socket and trail cables all over the floor.

Ironically, it may not be possible to use power sockets in the Library, and so wireless users should ensure that their batteries are fully charged prior to connecting.

For more information about this service please visit: http://computing.chch.ox.ac.uk/wireless

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Newsletter

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