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FRANCIS HENRY MURRAY, RECTOR OF CHISLEHURST

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The Oxford Movement, the 150th anniversary of which is being kept in 1983, both rejuvenated traditional Anglican 'high churchmanship' in the 1830s and 1840s, and led, in the 1850s and 1860s, to the creation of a new school of aggressive 'high churchmanship' which had relatively little in common with traditional 'high churchmanship'. A number of Anglican clergymen to some extent acted as a bridge between the two 'high church' schools, and one who did so both locally and nationally was Francis Henry Murray, rector of Chislehurst from 1846 until his death in 1902.

Francis Henry Murray was born in 1820 at Bishops court in the Isle of Man.¹ His family had been connected with the island since 1736, when his great-great-grandfather, the second Duke of Atholl, succeeded to the lordship of Man on the death of his kinsman, the tenth Earl of Derby. Murray's grandfather, Lord George Murray, became Archdeacon of Man in 1787 and Bishop of St. David's in 1800; his father, George Murray, also became Archdeacon of Man in 1808 and was consecrated Bishop of Sodor and Man in 1814, being translated to Rochester in 1827, which diocese he held until his death in 1860. George Murray was an old-fashioned 'high churchman', the last member of the Anglican episcopate to wear his wig on all public occasions. Whilst Bishop of Sodor and Man he rebuilt the chapel at Bishops court, which served as the diocese's

¹ Information on Murray and his family from obituary notices in *The Bromley Record*, November 1902, and *District Times*, 17 October 1902; S. Lewis *Topographical Dictionary of England*, London 1831, iii, 215, 231-2; pedigree of Murray and Pratt families in *History of Chislehurst*, ed. E.A. Webb and others, London 1899, 76-7; entries for both Lord George Murray and George Murray, Bishop of Sodor and Man and Rochester in *DNB*.



Francis Henry Murray (1820–1902), Rector of Chislehurst, taken towards the end of his life, and published in the *History of Chislehurst* (1899).

pro-cathedral after the eventual abandonment of St. German's cathedral at Peel in the late eighteenth century. He was, however, forced to flee from the island in 1825 as a result of opposition to his family after his uncle, the fourth Duke of Atholl, had sold out his remaining interests in the island to the British crown for £400,000. These interests included the patronage of the bishopric. As Bishop of Rochester, George Murray was a moderate reformer who presided over a major reorganisation of the diocese in 1845, when he took over pastoral responsibility for the whole of Essex and Hertfordshire.

Of George Murray's five sons, three followed him into the Anglican ministry. The eldest, George Edward Murray (1818–54), was vicar of Southfleet from 1843 until his early death, and the youngest, Frederick William Murray (1831–1913), was rector of Stone-next-Dartford from 1859 until his retirement in 1906, a canon of Rochester and one of the most respected ecclesiastics in the diocese. Of the other brothers, Robert Hay Murray (1826–1908) was a distinguished barrister and and Herbert Harley Murray (1829–1904) was governor of Newfoundland in 1894–98. The bishop also had six daughters, of which the eldest married the second Marquess Camden. Both Francis Henry Murray and Frederick William Murray were disciples of the Oxford Movement, though the latter was less strident in his support than the former. Nevertheless, at Stone-next-Dartford he employed the distinguished Tractarian architect, George Edmund Street, to carry out a meticulous restoration of the parish church in 1859–60,² and Stone was by the end of the century one of a group of churches in north-west Kent, which included Northfleet, Shorne and Swanscombe, in which the altar candles were lighted, vestments worn, the chalice mixed and the eastward position taken at the Eucharist.³

Francis Henry Murray, after 1827, spent part of his childhood at Bromley Palace, then the official residence of the bishops of Rochester, and part at Worcester deanery, since by custom the bishops of Rochester had been permitted to hold another appropriate benefice *in commendam* because of the poverty of the see. In George Murray's case this was the deanery of Worcester. In 1832 Francis Henry Murray was sent to Harrow, but only remained there until 1835, after which he was privately tutored until he went up to

² See G.E. Street, 'Some Account of the Church of St. Mary, Stone', *Arch. Cant.*, iii (1860), 97–134.

³ Statistics from *Ritualistic Clergy List*, London 1903.

Christ Church, Oxford, in 1838. By this date the Tractarians had divided the University theologically and Murray can scarcely have failed to have become involved in the controversies. His matriculation coincided with the publication of Froude's *Remains*, his graduation in 1841 with that of Newman's *Tract XC*. After graduation he remained at Christ Church as private tutor to the Marquess of Chandos until his ordination to the diaconate by Bishop Bagot of Oxford in 1843. He served for a year as curate to the future Bishop Claughton of Rochester and St. Alban's, then vicar of Kidderminster, and then for two years as curate of Northfield, now part of Birmingham. In 1846, he was presented by his father to the rectory of Chislehurst, his only preferment. His long service in the parish, and to the wider church, was however eventually recognised with his appointment as rural dean of West Dartford in 1887 and as an honorary canon of Canterbury Cathedral in 1890. In 1892 and 1895, he was elected by his fellow clergy to serve as one of their proctors in the lower house of Convocation.

Although Murray was clearly an advanced 'high churchman', he was one of those who believed that it was necessary to proceed slowly and with great caution in order to achieve the changes he desired to bring about. His long incumbency at Chislehurst is, therefore, marked by only a gradual development in liturgical and ritual changes, all of which are well documented. Despite this they provoked considerable local conflict and even some hostility which is likewise well documented. Murray, however, was not just important as a parish priest. From the mid-1850s he was deeply involved with most of the societies established to further ritualist principles in the Church of England, and a significant record of these aspects of his career also survives. Murray has also left an interesting personal testament to his achievements as a parish priest in the pages of the *History of Chislehurst*, which he commissioned and which was published in 1899, three years before his death.

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On his appointment to the rectory of Chislehurst in 1846, Murray's first important action was to undertake the restoration of the parish church to a condition in which he could introduce liturgical changes. An illustration of the interior at this time shows the usual high box-pews and dominant pulpit, though the medieval screens had survived. These last were retained as part of a thorough but conservative restoration. The first moves in this direction were made at a vestry meeting held on 9 May, 1848. There were two main resolutions; firstly, that the church should be re-seated, secondly, that it

should be enlarged by the addition of a south aisle in which at least two-thirds of the seats should be free and unappropriated. The re-seating was to be paid for out of the church rate, the new aisle by voluntary subscriptions. The balance between reformist and traditionalist elements in the vestry was to be noted in the specification that though the new seats should provide 'proper accommodation for kneeling', the 're-seating should be carried out as far as possible without disturbing the position at present occupied by the different families in the church'.⁴ At a subsequent meeting of the vestry on 4 July the plans drawn up by the architect, Benjamin Ferrey, one of those approved of by the ecclesiologists of the 1840s, were referred to a special committee.⁵ The architect's plans and specifications were duly approved by this committee and recommended to the full vestry on 26 August, which decided to apply for a faculty for the alterations. Of the various galleries in the church the committee recommended the removal of the upper western or singers' gallery as being 'an obstruction to the light and proper ventilation of the church, both of which would be materially improved by its removal'. The estimated cost of the works was £1275 and it appeared that this and a little more had already been promised in subscriptions.⁶ By the vestry meeting held on 11 July, 1849, the sum of £858 10s. had already been received, with a further £429 promised. Although the committee had to report that the faculty had not yet been granted, they felt that 'no impediment [was] likely to arise' and recommended that the work be put out to tender.⁷ Whilst the work was in progress, Ferrey recommended the removal of the gallery in the north aisle, and this was approved at a vestry meeting on 14 May, providing that the necessary consent was obtained from the owner of a faculty pew occupying part of the gallery.⁸ On 8 June, the vestry further agreed to the removal of the lower western gallery, 'on account of its present dilapidated state and its unsuitability to the altered character of the church', though it was subsequently resolved on 6 July to ask Ferrey to submit designs for a replacement.⁹ The faculty for all the alterations was granted in due course, though it made provision for certain seats in the church to be allocated to those, including the lord of the manor, John

⁴ K[ent] A[rchives] O[ffice], P92/8/4, pp. 61-2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 63-4.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 65-8.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 70-1.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 77-80.



John Robert Townsend, Earl Sydney (1805–90), Murray's leading opponent at Chislehurst, as painted by George Richmond, R.A., and published in the *History of Chislehurst* (1899).

Robert Townshend, Earl Sydney (1805–90), who had been able to establish a prescriptive right to former pews.¹⁰ Sydney, who had supported the restoration of the church initially but who had withdrawn from the restoration committee before the end of 1848, was later to lead the opposition to Murray's theological opinions and liturgical innovations.

The official report of the alterations made to Chislehurst church was not entirely comprehensive. Murray and a few friends put up the £500 necessary to entirely rebuild the chancel. The old screens were repaired and among the new furnishings was a brass eagle lectern. The church was reconsecrated by Archbishop Sumner on 23 October, 1849.¹¹ Ecclesiological comment on the restoration was moderately favourable: 'the pews, which were as bad as could be, will give way to uniform benches. Most unhappily, it had been thought impossible to dispense with doors to the seats. They will be the greatest blemish in the whole undertaking. We trust that the existing prejudices in their favour will soon be overcome . . . The chancel will be raised one step, the sanctuary two more, and the altar will stand on a footpace . . . Two out of three offensive galleries are to be demolished; the third will, we hope, soon follow. The tablets and monuments with which the chancel is encumbered, will be removed. The roofs will be cleared from their plaister ceilings. The new aisle will have a pretty open porch of wood. The work is not, it will be seen, free from grave faults; but to those who know anything of the parish, it will be a wonder that so much has been done, and in so short a space of time.'¹²

The caution shown by Murray with respect to church restoration was paralleled by his careful approach to liturgical reform. When he went to Chislehurst in 1846 he inherited a pattern of two Sunday services, but with a sermon in the morning only, and celebrations of Holy Communion only six times a year. He immediately began to preach on Sunday afternoons as well, to celebrate Holy Communion monthly and to have services in church on Wednesdays and Fridays. This was consistent with moderate Tractarian, and indeed even Evangelical, practice in the 1840s. Late in 1846, the proper observance of the lesser festivals began, and there was a daily service in Holy Week 1847.¹³ From the beginning of Lent 1853 a third Sunday service was held in the evening to meet the needs of those who

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 83–5.

¹¹ *History of Chislehurst*, 80–4.

¹² *The Ecclesiologist*, x (1850), 74.

¹³ *History of Chislehurst*, 91–2.



The exterior and interior of Chislehurst Church before the restoration of 1849, showing the usual high pews and three-decker pulpit, from contemporary illustrations published in the *History of Chislehurst* (1899).

found difficulty in attending the earlier services, a phrase in the printed announcement suggesting that this may occasionally have been a communion service.¹⁴ If so, it would not have been entirely inconsistent with current 'high church' practice, since similar services were held by W.F. Hook at Leeds parish church at about the same time,¹⁵ though later on evening communions, which militated against fasting, were strongly deprecated by most 'high churchmen'. By 1864, when daily public services in church and the weekly offertory were introduced, it appears that there was an early celebration of Holy Communion every Sunday and a later one after Morning Prayer twice a month. It was after a visit to the Passion Play at Oberammergau in 1871 that Murray 'was guided to the thought that the offering of the daily Eucharist should be and might be resumed . . . On returning home, I preached four sermons on the subject, bringing it clearly and definitely before the congregation. I did not at once propose to commence such an important change, but I asked them to make it the subject of prayer and guidance, and, if that was given, I suggested that the offering should commence at the following Easter. That was done by the grace of God, and has been continued ever since'.¹⁶ Although from the beginning Murray strove for decency in the performance of the church's liturgy, Chislehurst was not one of those parishes noted for its elaborate ceremonial. Even in the 1870s, though the eastward position was taken at the Eucharist, it appears that the altar candles were not lighted.¹⁷ Coloured altar frontals, and perhaps also coloured stoles, had been in use since 1849, but the full eucharistic vestments were not introduced until 1890.¹⁸

In view of Murray's scrupulous efforts to introduce changes so gradually, it is perhaps surprising that he should have encountered opposition in his parish, but his ministry was not entirely free from conflict. On 9 February, 1867, Lord Sydney wrote to Archbishop Longley, enclosing a formal petition against Murray's doctrine together with a copy of Murray's *General Rules for the Guidance of Christian Life*, and alleged that many other parishioners objected to

¹⁴ Leaflet pasted into parish scrapbook, KAO, P92/28/2.

¹⁵ W.N. Yates, 'Leeds and the Oxford Movement', *Thoresby Society Publications*, lv (1975), 16.

¹⁶ *History of Chislehurst*, 92-5.

¹⁷ *Tourists' Church Guide*, ed. J.C. Waram, London 1874-7.

¹⁸ *History of Chislehurst*, 43, 46. A full list of vestments and ornaments in use in 1898 is printed on pp. 44-7. An earlier MS. inventory, begun in 1887, is in KAO, P92/6/1.



The interior of Chislehurst Church as it appeared in 1896, showing the extent of the restoration and the dignified Tractarian fittings, from a contemporary photograph published in the *History of Chislehurst* (1899).

such opinions.¹⁹ The pamphlet was not particularly extreme. It recommended daily prayer and Bible reading, regular churchgoing and the manifestation of one's Christianity in one's private and public life. The three sections which probably gave most offence to Sydney were those on Holy Communion, fasting and confession. The reader was recommended to 'be regular in receiving the Blessed Sacrament' and to remain for the communion service even if he did not wish to communicate on every occasion; he was if possible to 'communicate early in the morning . . . and before you have taken any food'. The reader was recommended to keep all the fast days in the Prayer Book, and on such occasions 'not join in any party of pleasure, take less food than you are inclined to take, either by leaving off before you have satisfied your hunger, or, if there are two kinds of food before you, by taking that which you like the least'. Those who 'desire the special forgiveness of any sins, or require comfort and counsel, go to a priest of God, that you may receive the benefit of absolution and such spiritual advice as may be needful for you. This may save you years of misery'. In the resulting correspondence²⁰ Murray received strong support from his churchwardens and other prominent parishioners, who wrote to the archbishop to inform him that no major changes had taken place in public worship at Chislehurst in recent years, and that the chief framers of the petition were motivated largely by 'personal animosity roused by wounded pride and disappointed love of domination . . . Lord Sydney bears a strong personal grudge against Mr. Murray. In the time of the late Rector, Lord Sydney's word was law and he has never been able to reconcile himself to a different state of things'. Murray himself informed the archbishop that most of the petitioners did not actually attend Chislehurst parish church, and that he had deliberately tried to take a moderate line in ritual so that the congregation would not be offended. Communicant figures for 1865-66 submitted by Murray showed a moderate increase over the two years, with a Sunday average of 48 on all except the first in the month when it rose to 91. There were usually between five and eight communicants at the early celebrations on Thursdays. Over the two years the average for the major festivals was Christmas 160, Easter 235 and Whitsun 140. These were good figures for a still substantially rural parish at a time when only a minority of communicants would have communicated as often as monthly. The corres-

¹⁹ L[ambeth] P[alace] L[ibrary], Longley Papers, vol. 5, ff. 120-5, 144-5; see also Tait Papers, vol. 207, ff. 53-60.

²⁰ LPL, Longley Papers, vol. 5, ff. 146-91.

pondence eventually developed into an argument between Murray and Longley over the doctrine of the Eucharist, one of the points on which Sydney had complained. Indeed, as Murray pointed out, the petitioners' complaints related almost entirely to his doctrine rather than his liturgical practice. Murray informed the archbishop that he had taught the view that Christ was sacramentally present in the Eucharist for twenty years, though he admitted he might have expressed it a little more forcefully in recent years, and he enclosed a copy of his pamphlet on the subject in the series *Tracts on Church Principles*. Longley replied that although he, too, subscribed to a view of the 'real presence', it was not that defined by Murray which he identified with the Lutheran doctrine of consubstantiation. In Longley's view Christ was only spiritually and not corporeally present in the sacrament; the 'real presence' was to be found in the effect upon the individual communicant and was totally separate from the actual substance of the bread and wine.²¹ Murray, however, disagreed. He regarded his position as being closer to that of 'the Doctrine of the Real Presence, as it is plainly and distinctly taught by the Church of England . . . and I should be false to my position in the church if I did not teach it'. Eventually, Longley wrote to Sydney stating that he did not think the parish of Chislehurst was generally dissatisfied with Murray or that there was any evidence of the use of extreme ritual at the parish church. Sydney, who had earlier withheld his annual subscription towards Murray's schools, responded by becoming involved with the erection of a new church in Chislehurst free from Tractarian error, of which he laid the foundation stone in 1871. The new Christ Church, in which the teaching and services were strongly Evangelical, was consecrated by Archbishop Tait in 1872.²²

The attacks on Murray, however, continued. In 1875, Sydney organised a petition against the creation of the new ecclesiastical district of the Annunciation, the new parish church replacing the former Prickend mission, begun by Murray in 1853. A permanent church had been begun in 1868 and opened in 1870. The patronage of the new district was to remain with Murray until his death after which it was to pass to Keble College, Oxford, who could be relied

²¹ For a useful discussion of the issues surrounding the general debate about the doctrine of the Eucharist in the 1850s and 1860s see A. Hardelin, *The Tractarian Understanding of the Eucharist*, Uppsala 1965, and P. Toon, *Evangelical Theology 1833-56: A Response to Tractarianism*, London 1979, 195-202, and the sources cited on pp. 229-30.

²² *History of Chislehurst*, 238.

upon to present Anglo-Catholic incumbents.²³ Once again the main complaint of the petitioners was Murray's doctrine rather than his liturgical practice. However, they were concerned about the question of patronage. In 1848 that of the parish church had been transferred from the bishopric of Rochester to that of Worcester, as part of a general programme of trying to equalise episcopal patronage, and there was no guarantee that Murray would be succeeded by another Anglo-Catholic. By securing the patronage of the new district in Anglo-Catholic hands Murray had carefully ensured that at least one church in Chislehurst could maintain the doctrines he had preached for thirty years, and his opponents were only too aware of the fact that he had outmanoeuvred them. In commenting on the petition Murray was able to inform the archbishop that, of the 34 signatories, six were Wesleyan Methodists and twenty were worshippers at Christ Church.²⁴ In 1876, further complaints emanated from Christ Church concerning a mission at the parish church during which fairly strong emphasis had been placed on sacramental confession. Murray denied that the missionary had advocated obligatory confession, but had merely stated that it was desirable as a means of grace.²⁵ In 1881, there was a complaint to the archbishop about the, apparently recent, lighting of candles at the Eucharist. Murray told Tait that he had received only one objection, and Tait told the complainant that if he did not like Murray's ritualism he might prefer to worship at Christ Church.²⁶ Clearly also during the 1880s there was a vigorous pamphlet war between Murray and his Evangelical opponents at Christ Church.²⁷ Yet, after Murray's death in 1902, the then incumbent of Christ Church was generous enough to comment that 'though many of us cannot, perhaps, agree with the school of thought which he so staunchly and ably advocated, and while we may dislike his theological opinions and church practices, yet we frankly acknowledge the conscientious devotion to duty, the steadfast assertion of high principle, the deep personal piety, the generous courtesy of bearing, the kindness of disposition, the unceasing activity, the able administration of his parish and deanery . . . we can ill afford to lose such men anywhere, or at any time'.²⁸

²³ *Ibid.*, 95-6.

²⁴ LPL, Tait Papers, vol. 207, ff. 61-4, 68-80, 90; see also *The Bromley Record*, April and June 1875.

²⁵ LPL, Tait Papers, vol. 216, ff. 259-77.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 275, ff. 81-2, 87-90.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 275, ff. 93-140.

²⁸ *District Times*, 17 October, 1902.

It is perhaps not without significance that the attacks on Murray appear to have moderated after Lord Sydney's death in 1890. Like many other Victorian incumbents he exercised a profound social as well as spiritual impact on his parish. In 1855, he founded St. Michael's Orphanage which eventually provided accommodation for up to fifty boys from a wide variety of backgrounds.²⁹ During his long incumbency the population of Chislehurst more than trebled, from 2088 in 1851 to 7429 in 1901, and the number of its Anglican churches rose from one to four, with the opening of St. John's mission in 1886. In 1894, Murray was one of the fifteen original members of the new parish council, which became an urban district council in 1900. In 1896, to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Murray's appointment to the rectory, a special committee was formed to carry out various alterations to the church as a permanent memorial of the event. The chancel was lengthened by some 7 ft., a new high altar, reredos and east window installed, and the whole of the chancel redecorated, under the direction of the distinguished 'high church' architect, G.F. Bodley, at a total cost of £1700 raised by public subscription.³⁰ After his death in 1902 the annual vestry placed on record its indebtedness to 'the earnestness and sincerity of his teaching, his intense interest in all that concerned the welfare of this parish, his generous and loving sympathy with all in sorrow or in want, and his blameless and consistent life'. As a result 'he won the love and respect of all his people, by whom he will ever be held in grateful and affectionate remembrance'. Despite the references to his social concerns, it has to be admitted that the opportunities to exercise these were not considerable in Chislehurst, and the parish took an active interest in mission work in the London slums. In 1856, Murray and his curate, George Cosby White, later incumbent of the ritualist parish of St. Barnabas', Pimlico, were heavily involved in the setting up of the mission district in the parish of St. George's-in-the-East, which later became the ecclesiastical district of St. Peter's, London Docks. Its first missionary and later incumbent, Charles Fuge Lowder, was a personal friend of Murray's, who put his Chislehurst rectory at the former's disposal when he went on holiday so that Lowder could recuperate from the damage caused to his health by the appalling social conditions in London. Lowder was buried at Chislehurst after his death in 1880, with Murray's agreement, and an annual pilgrimage was made to his grave on the

²⁹ *History of Chislehurst*, 221-2.

³⁰ KAO, P92/8/4, 432-4.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 469.

anniversary of his death by many of his former dockland parishioners.³² In 1881, the parish of Chislehurst became even more closely involved in another London mission, St. Katherine's, Rotherhithe, raising considerable funds towards the building of the new church, vicarage and parish halls.³³

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So far Murray's career has been considered solely in the context of his work at Chislehurst, where it was a good example of the type of work undertaken by many other long-serving Tractarian incumbents in other parts of England. But Murray was also one of the most influential and respected older leaders of the ritualist clergy in the Church of England and frequently consulted on matters of ecclesiastical policy at a time when ritualism was causing deep divisions within the established church. He was a founder member of both the English Church Union and the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, and he was also one of those who stood guarantor for the publication of *Hymns Ancient and Modern* in 1861. Perhaps his most significant role, however, was in the Society of the Holy Cross, an exclusive and secret group of ritualist priests, to which he was admitted a few weeks after its foundation in 1855.³⁴ It was largely on Murray's initiative that the society developed its particular interest in the promotion of retreats, the first of those for priests being held at Chislehurst in 1856. Further retreats were held at Chislehurst in 1859 and 1860.³⁵ Murray served as one of the four vicars of the society from 1856 until 1863, for part of the time with E.B. Pusey, the unofficial 'leader' of the Tractarian party since 1845. Thereafter, he became the society's retreat organiser and secretary of its standing committee on retreats. Murray was one of those who was most anxious to widen the membership of the society and to prevent it from being primarily London-based. In 1859, he successfully moved that regional groups should be formed where appropriate, and in 1865 he was responsible for securing a decision to permit the formation of local branches in any area with more than five

³² L.E. Ellsworth, *Charles Lowder and the Ritualist Movement*, London 1982, 22, 70, 146–7, 168.

³³ *History of Chislehurst*, 99–100.

³⁴ For a hostile account of this society, see W. Walsh, *Secret History of the Oxford Movement*, London 1897, 46–146. The official history is J. Embry, *The Catholic Movement and the Society of the Holy Cross*, London 1931.

³⁵ S[ocietas] S[anctae] C[rucis], Minutes 1855–60, pp. 93–7, 322–5; Minutes 1860–5, 7.

members resident within easy travelling distance of each other.³⁶ He was also active in encouraging the society to promote the better observance of Good Friday and Ascension Day, and thought that it should even promote retreats for non-members in any dioceses in which the bishop might be considered sympathetic.³⁷ It was clearly a severe blow to the society, therefore, when Murray became one of its first prominent members to resign over the scandal caused by the attack on *The Priest in Absolution* in 1877.³⁸ This manual for confessors, or at least the controversial second part, had been circulated privately within the society or to known ritualist priests, but a copy came into the hands of the conservative, extremely moderate 'high churchman', Lord Redesdale who exposed it in the House of Lords. The manual had been produced specifically to meet the needs of Anglican confessors, and incorporated much material which had formed the substance of several discussions within the society. In particular, it dealt very frankly with ways in which sexual lapses were to be dealt with in the confessional, and the publication of such passages out of context inevitably produced a highly hysterical response from an outraged Victorian public. With all the bishops and many, even 'high church', clergy ranged against it, the society was in turmoil and imminent danger of extinction. Murray was forced into resigning by hostile reaction among his, otherwise loyal, parishioners, which he judged it would be imprudent to ignore. On 5 July, 1877, a memorial was presented to Murray expressing his parishioners' relief that he had dissociated himself from *The Priest in Absolution*, and the hope that he would never advocate the practice of habitual confession at Chislehurst.³⁹ Six days later one of the churchwardens wrote to Archbishop Tait to inform him that Murray had withdrawn from the Society of the Holy Cross.⁴⁰ The resignation had been announced the previous day to the society's July chapter: 'Brother F.H. Murray stated the reasons for which he then tendered his resignation to the Master. Vicar Brother Lowder and Brothers Newton Smith, Mackonochie, E.G. Wood, Shipley and Hoskins urged him to reconsider his determination. The Master said he should withhold his acceptance of Brother Murray's resignation until the following Thursday, in order

³⁶ SSC, Minutes 1855-60, 301; Minutes 1860-5, 215.

³⁷ SSC, Minutes 1860-6, 232; Minutes 1870-6, 123.

³⁸ There is a sympathetic summary of this crisis in the affairs of the society in L.E. Ellsworth, *op. cit.*, 138-46.

³⁹ LPL, Tait Papers, vol. 233, ff. 327-8.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, ff. 329-30.

to give him time to reconsider the matter.⁴¹ But Murray was adamant. Writing to Tait on 16 July he said that he had resigned 'in order to promote peace and quietness in my own parish'.⁴² To some extent Murray's decision may have had something to do with his growing estrangement from the younger and more extremist members of the society. At the September Synod in 1874 he had rather sarcastically expressed the view that the debate within the society over whether to approve Roman or Sarum ritual was irrelevant; in view of the Public Worship Regulation Act,⁴³ the question was whether any ritual at all would be possible. At the May Synod in 1876, he found himself in a minority position in two significant debates. The Synod defeated by 49 votes to 7 his proposal that the rule of life imposed by the society on its members was too severe and should be relaxed as a necessary preliminary towards increasing membership, and it also rejected a proposal to delete the word 'Mass' from the statutes.⁴⁴ Later Murray wrote to Archbishop Tait, 'I wish to say to your Grace, and any Bishop, that I should never myself use the terms "Sacramental Confession" or the word "Mass", as I have always objected to them . . . I should never use those words nor allow others to do as far as I had any influence'.⁴⁵ The events of 1877 to a large extent resulted in Murray's retirement from national ecclesiastical politics to concentrate even more on the affairs of his own parish, though he was to return to the national stage briefly after 1892 with his election to the lower house of Convocation.

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Francis Henry Murray was one of the earliest clergymen in Kent to endeavour to implement the teachings of the Oxford Movement in his own parish. He was a typical and effective priest of the Tractarian school. He was also for many years one of the leading lights in the inner councils of the ritualist clergy, though his role there has been overshadowed by others who gained greater publicity. It is right that the record of his activities both locally and

⁴¹ SSC, Minutes 1876-9, 143.

⁴² LPL, Tait Papers, vol. 233, ff. 337-8.

⁴³ For the act and its consequences, see P.T. Marsh, *The Victorian Church in Decline*, London 1969, 158-92, 218-41; J. Bentley, *Ritualism and Politics in Victorian Britain*, Oxford 1978, 46-142.

⁴⁴ SSC, Minutes 1870-6, 181, 317, 322.

⁴⁵ LPL, Tait Papers, vol. 233, ff. 313-14.

nationally should be remembered in the year which marks the 150th anniversary of the revival with which he was so closely connected.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ I must acknowledge with gratitude the assistance of Melanie Barber and Elizabeth Silverthorne who provided access to or photocopies of material in their custody, and to the present Master of the Society of the Holy Cross, Fr. Michael Shields, for permission to quote from the records of the Society temporarily in the custody of the Kent Archives Office.