George Anthony Denison (1805-1896): A Georgian high churchman in Victorian times


Abstract
Archdeacon George Anthony Denison was one of the most egregious High Church clergy of the nineteenth-century Church of England. During a life spanning much of that century, his working life included a period as a Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford (1828-38) linked with the Curacy of Cuddesdon (1832-1838); and then, for fifty-eight years, the incumbency of two country parishes: Broad Windsor in Dorset (1838-1845), and the village of East Brent in Somerset (1845-1896). He was Archdeacon of Taunton from 1851 to 1896. Beyond his parish, Denison was a leading figure in the revival of Convocation, as he was a significant figure involved in many of the controversies that assailed the nineteenth-century Church of England.

Joyce Coombs’ George Anthony Denison: The Firebrand 1805-1896 (1984) is the only biography of Denison. Other historians have noticed Denison as an adjunct to other figures and events. There has been a tendency to explain Denison with recourse to a range of loose and ill-defined categories, premised on the notion that he is to be identified with the Oxford Movement and later Ritualists. Coombs also made similar assumptions which this thesis question. Moreover her object was to provide an account of Denison’s life rather than an analysis of his doctrine and social and political theology, the purpose of this thesis.

The work of the revisionist historian, Peter Nockles, has redefined the historiographical and theological place of the Oxford Movement within the wider context of the history of the nineteenth-century Church of England. One of the fruits of Nockles’ The Oxford Movement in context: Anglican High Churchmanship 1760-1857 has been to identify more clearly a continuing strand of orthodox High Churchmanship. His analysis of the High Church tradition and of the Oxford Movement has demonstrated significant points of divergence. Notwithstanding the recasting of the historiographical landscape, there has been no new assessment of George Anthony Denison. He has remained a prisoner of an older historiography both in the field of the history of nineteenth-century education and that of ecclesiastical history.

This study sits within Nockles’ revisionist historiographical framework. Its object is to demonstrate that Denison was an example of one holding an orthodox world-view that endured beyond the divide of 1828-32; that he held a vision of the world ordered and governed by divine providence; that his notoriety as a controversialist is to be explained as a defence of this view with its concomitant doctrines. Denison has left a large body of polemical writings, providing the sources to examine this premise. Arguably Denison has been too easily dismissed as a mere controversialist, yet his polemical writings usually sold in the many thousands (often 5,000-7,000 copies) suggesting that his views were considered to be of some account by his contemporaries.
George Denison may refer to: *George Denison (1790–1831), United States Representative from Pennsylvania *George Anthony Denison (1805–1896), English Churchman *George Denison (Canadian politician) See also *George Dennison, American author. Inupiaq Ingush Icelandic Italian Japanese Lojban Georgian Kabyle Karachay Circassian Kazakh Khmer Korean Kumyk Kurdish Komi Kyrgyz Latin Luxembourgish Ladino Lingala Lithuanian Latvian Manchu Mycenaean Moksha Māori Marl Communicant Komi Books by Denison, George Anthony, 1805-1896: The Schools of Christendom: I. the Decay of Greek and Latin: the Fruit of Pretence of Teaching, Long Employed in Private and Public Schools: the True Method of Teaching Language, Ancient and Modern: the Imposture of Smatterings of Many Sorts of Knowledge. The Schools of Christendom: II. the Decay About George Anthony Denison, Archdeacon of Taunton. Wikipedia Biographical Summary. George Anthony Denison (11 December 1805 - 21 March 1896) was a Church of England priest. Life. Brother of politician John Evelyn Denison, 1st Viscount Ossington, he was born at Ossington, Nottinghamshire, and educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford. For many years Archdeacon Denison represented the extreme High Tory party not only in politics but in the Church, regarding all progressive movements in education or theology as abomination, and vehemently repudiating the higher criticism from the days of Essays and Reviews (1860) to those of Lux Mundi (1890).