Act of Uniformity 1662

The Act of Uniformity was an Act of the English Parliament, passed, in the time of Charles II, in 1662. It required the use of all the rites and ceremonies in the Book of Common Prayer in Church of England services. It also required episcopal ordination for all for all ministers (ie by recognised bishops). As a result, nearly 2,000 clergymen left the established church in what became known as the Great Ejection.

The Test and Corporation Acts, which lasted until 1828, excluded all nonconformists from holding civil or military office. They were also prevented from being awarded degrees by the universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

The Act of Uniformity was an act of Parliament, prescribing the form of public prayers, administration of sacraments and other rites of the Established Church of England. Its provisions were modified by the Act of Uniformity Amendment Act of 1872.

The 1662 act re-introduced episcopal rule back into the Church of England after the Puritans had abolished many features of the Church during the Civil Wars. The Act of Uniformity itself is only one of four crucial pieces of legislation, known as the Clarendon Code, after the Earl of Clarendon.

1662 and all that...

The end of the civil war in England saw the Puritan cause in power, and culminated in the execution of Charles I in 1649. From 1649 to 1660 England was without a king, and during this period, known as the Commonwealth, many puritan clergy were instituted as vicars to various parishes. As puritans they had not been ordained by a bishop so that when the monarchy was again restored in 1660 under Charles II, and when the church again required episcopal ordination, the non-ordained clergy presented a problem.

Matters were brought to a head in 1662 upon the introduction of a new prayer book containing a clause requiring such ordination, and to which all the clergy were required to consent in writing, with the alternative of resignation. As the ordination issue was a matter of principle to the puritans, most of them, estimated variously between 800 and 2,000, chose resignation. Many of them continued to hold services in private, a practice which was then illegal, and these private meetings in 1662 mark the beginning of Congregational Churches.