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Editorial: ‘As at this Time’

This is written during Epiphanytide, when the Advent and Christmas collects are still fresh in our minds, but when we are already beginning to turn towards Septuagesima, the Sundays before Lent, Lent itself and all that follows. Advent, in other words, begins that most intensely representational part of the Church’s year described by Richard Hooker:

We begin therefore our ecclesiastical year with the glorious annunciation of his birth by angelical embassy. There being hereunto added his blessed nativity itself, the mystery of his legal circumcision, the testification of his true incarnation by the purification of her which brought him into the world, his resurrection, his ascension into heaven, the admirable sending down of his Spirit upon his chosen, and (which consequently ensued) the notice of that incomprehensible Trinity thereby given to the Church of God . . . ¹

It was an objection to the Prayer Book by some sixteenth- and seventeenth-century critics that by concentrating the worshipper’s attention on particular events at particular times and seasons it ‘causeth us to rest in that near consideration of our duties, for the space of a few days, which should be extended to all our life’. Hooker’s general reply to this was that ‘the very law of nature itself which all men confess to be God’s law requireth in general no less the sanctification of times, than of places, persons and things unto God’s honour’.² More particularly he argues that just as virtues are dispositional in the sense that they do not cease to exist when they are not being exercised (for if they did ‘there should be nothing more pernicious to virtue than sleep’), and just as all virtues cannot be exercised simultaneously (so that we are ‘tied to iterate and resume them when need is, howbeit not to continue them without any intermission’), so the feasts of the Church ‘neither can nor ought to be continued otherwise than only by iteration’.

1 Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book V. LXX. 8.

2 Ibid. Book V. LXX. 9.

The days of solemnity which are but few cannot choose but soon finish that outward exercise of godliness which properly appertaineth to such times, howbeit man's inward disposition to virtue they both augment for the present, and by their often returns bring also the same at the length unto that perfection which we most desire. So that although by their necessary short continuance they abridge the present exercise of piety in some kind, yet because by repetition they enlarge, strengthen and confirm the habits of all virtue, it remaineth that we honour, observe and keep them as ordinances many ways singularly profitable in God's Church.³

It is an old difference: should not our sense of the sacred suffuse all times and places? Or do we need places and times to be set especially aside to kindle our piety and virtue? Dr Johnson's reply to a Quaker who objected to 'the observance of days, and months, and years' (echoing St Paul to the Galatians) expresses the classic Anglican position, and catches the essential drift of Hooker's argument:

The Church does not superstitiously observe days, merely as days, but as memorials of important facts. Christmas might be kept as well upon one day of the year as another; but there should be a stated day for commemorating the birth of our Saviour, because there is danger that what may be done on any day, will be neglected.⁴

There is a hint of the old distrust of calendars and seasons in some of the Puritan 'Exceptions' presented at the Savoy Conference in 1661: the use of 'this day' in the Christmas ('and this day to be born of a pure virgin') and Whitsun ('God which upon this day . . .') Collects, as also in the corresponding Propers, was objected to as being 'according to vulgar acceptance a contradiction'; and since both Collects and Propers had to be recited on successive days, they further objected that 'it seems incongruous to affirm the Birth of Christ and the descending of the Holy Ghost to be on this day for seven or eight days together'. I think that Bishop Buchanan is right to say that 'festival days, apart from sabbaths, were very suspect to Puritans anyway, even without further

3 The argument is in Book V, LXXI. 1&2.

4 James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (191), Vol.II, p.41.

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problems'⁵, but in this instance the objection was accepted and the 1662 book replaces 'this day' with 'as at this time' in all four cases, as in the Christmas Collect:

Almighty God, who hast given us thy only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and as at this time to be born of a pure Virgin: Grant that we being regenerate, and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end. *Amen.*

Presumably the bishops had taken the point about saying *this day* 'for seven or eight days together', and produced something less definite—'vagueing it up', as I believe it is known in the Civil service. But actually it seems to capture perfectly that sense of 'as if' which attaches liturgical time to our ordinary secular round, giving us a kind of double time which infuses the biblical narrative into our own present continuing life. As Hooker says, the essence of this is repetition or 'iteration' year by year, but we are always entering a different river as a different person. The liturgy is unvarying in its shape, but as it sinks into us and shapes us so we experience it differently even as we come to know much of it by heart.

The Lent and Advent Collects especially, if daily repeated as the Prayer Book requires, become well-known parts of ourselves. And the Advent Collect perhaps supremely exemplifies that sense of 'double time' in a season which already has a double focus:

Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious Majesty, to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. *Amen.*

This collect, composed for the 1549 Book of Common Prayer, presumably by Archbishop Cranmer, survived unchanged through all

5 Colin Buchanan, *The Savoy Conference Revisited*, *Joint liturgical Studies* 54 (2002), p.41.

the successive revisions and, slightly modernised, into *The Alternative Service Book* and *Common Worship*.

It is a collect of contrasts—‘cast away’ and ‘put upon’; ‘darkness’ and ‘light’; ‘mortal’ and ‘immortal’; ‘came’ and ‘shall come’; ‘great humility’ and ‘glorious majesty’; ‘the quick and the dead’; ‘now and ever’. The differing states of aliveness and deadness, of mortality and immortality, of past, present and future are convened for us in a continuing present bounded only by the ‘last day’. A central energy is provided by the urgency of now—‘now in the time of this mortal life’. This is our mortal life, now when we read the prayer, but is the same mortal life in which he ‘came to visit us’ in an earlier ‘now’: the effect is to make ever-present and visitant what could be thought of as only belonging to a remote past. The ‘we’ of human solidarity and continuity is seen, as it were, as always ‘now’ and always standing under ‘the last day’ and judgment. And this is only a particularly striking example of what the Church Calendar always does for us, aligning the great events of Our Lord’s life, death and resurrection with our current needs and aspirations, as for example in the collects for Lent 1, the Sunday Next Before Easter, Easter Even, Ascension Day and Whit Sunday.

One must rather regret that the Church of England now has alternative calendars as it has alternative everything else, but it is a great gift of the Church nonetheless, and if many parish churches can only partially reflect it in the provision of public worship, one can only be grateful that its full use is maintained in our cathedrals. And of course one can follow it oneself at home.

John Scrivener

Pray for the Monarch: The Surprising Contribution of Queen Katherine Parr and Queen Elizabeth I to the Book of Common Prayer

MICHELINE WHITE

In the summer of 1559, a new prayer for the monarch appeared in the Book of Common Prayer. The piece, ‘A Prayer for the Queen’s Majesty,’ was found in the Litany, a short rite in which the congregation asks God to bless and defend it against spiritual and temporal ills. The appearance of a new liturgical state prayer so early in Elizabeth’s reign commands attention. State prayers are a unique political-devotional genre: they praise specific monarchical ideals, define the precise relations between God and the monarch, and seek to unite subjects in political loyalty and obedience. This new Elizabethan state prayer has proved to be remarkably long-lived—it remained in the Litany until the English civil war, and in 1662 it became part of Morning and Evening Prayer. In America, it survived the revolutionary war and was recited (until 1979) as ‘A Prayer for the President of the United States and all in Civil Authority.’ Over the centuries, it has been translated into at least two hundred languages and has been recited in Anglican communities around the world, from Japan to India, from Canada to South Africa. In the United Kingdom, it is still frequently used to pray for Queen Elizabeth II in Chapels Royal at St. James’s Palace, Hampton Court Palace, and the Tower of London, as well as in other Royal Peculiars, including St. George’s Chapel at Windsor Castle. It is occasionally used in Cathedrals and parish churches.

But where did this state prayer come from? Like other books of worship, the 1559 Book of Common Prayer does not identify individual translators, editors, or authors, but historians agree that Archbishop Thomas Cranmer (d. 1556) and other senior clergymen were responsible for the content of the book as it evolved from 1549, to 1552, to 1559. ‘A Prayer for the Queen’s Majesty,’ however, has a rather different history. Originating in Germany in the 1540s, its circulation in England and its

appearance in the Book of Common Prayer involved the efforts of two queens—Katherine Parr and Elizabeth Tudor.

To understand the origins of this prayer, we must return to the spring of 1544, a time when Henry VIII was pursuing a dream of renewed military glory. He was at war with the Scots, the French, and the Turks; he was concluding a military alliance with the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V; and he was preparing to lay siege to Boulogne in person, in spite of serious health problems. God's help was needed, and the crown produced several books for the people to use to appeal for assistance. The best known of these is Archbishop Cranmer's *Litany*, a vernacular revision of the Latin rite that had been used during times of crisis for centuries and that was printed for widespread use on 27 May, 1544. But two other publications were also important. On 18 April, the day the English fleet left to raze Edinburgh and coerce the marriage of Mary Stuart to Prince Edward, Henry VIII's printer issued *Psalmi seu Precationes*, a volume of penitential and bellicose Latin prayers by Bishop John Fisher that concluded with a new prayer for Henry, 'Precatio Pro Rege.' One week later, as the English fleet waited in Newcastle for good weather, the king's printer issued a translation of the same book, *Psalms or Prayers Taken out of Holy Scripture*; it included 'A Prayer for the King' and 'A Prayer for Men to say Entering into Battle.' Scholars now agree with Susan James's claim that the English translation was completed by Katherine Parr, Henry's last wife. Parr ordered deluxe gift-copies of the book in May 1544 and in 1545, 1546, and 1547, and she was praised by a contemporary for her 'godly Psalms.' Copies of the first edition are beautifully illuminated, and as Janel Mueller has discovered, one contains a charming inscription from Henry to Parr. 'A Prayer for the King' and the prayer for soldiers appeared under Parr's name in June 1545 in her second printed book, *Prayers or Meditations*. Although nineteenth and early twentieth-century liturgical historians (Henry Blunt, F.E. Brightman, and F. Procter and W.H. Frere) noted the connection between the 1559 BCP 'Prayer for the Queen's Majesty' and the 'Prayer for the King' at the back of various editions of the *Psalms or Prayers* and Parr's 1545 *Prayers or Meditations*, they were unsure of the prayer's origins and they assumed that Parr had nothing to do with its production. Parr is often remembered as the pious bluestocking who nursed Henry in his old age, but as we shall see, she was his wartime queen and one of his most influential royal image-makers.

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The 'Precatio Pro Rege' and 'A Prayer for the King' are worth considering in detail, for they were innovative. That is, they appear to have been the first crown-sponsored, non-liturgical prayers for a monarch to be printed in England. Cranmer was simultaneously preparing new petitions for Henry for the *Litany*, and it thus appears that the stress of the wars prompted Henry, Parr, and Cranmer to produce new texts for people to use to pray for the King in public and in private. The origins of the 'Precatio Pro Rege' have long been unknown, but as Professor Scott C. Lucas has helped me determine, it is a shortened version of a prayer for the Holy Roman Emperor produced by the German Catholic reformer, Georg Witzel. Witzel's prayer can be seen today at the British Library in a small prayer book printed at Mainz in 1541. Witzel became a Lutheran in 1525, but he reconverted to Catholicism in 1533 and worked on projects that attempted to heal the Christian schism. Witzel was at the Diet of Speyer when Charles V secured the support of the German Princes for his alliance with Henry, and it seems likely that the English crown adapted Witzel's prayer in order to unite English and Imperial subjects in supplication for their rulers and to strengthen the fragile Anglo-Imperial alliance.

We do not know who shortened Witzel's prayer into a Latin prayer for Henry, but Parr translated and adapted another one of Witzel's prayers so she may have been involved. The prayer asks Christ to grant Henry obedience, prudence, and fear of God and to bless him with military glory. It draws on the Book of Proverbs, Psalm 2 and Psalm 20 (Vulgate numbering) and thus associates Henry with King Solomon and King David. Henry's subjects were familiar with this kind of royal iconography, for in the wake of the Act of Supremacy (1534) Henry had often been depicted as David or Solomon in engravings, texts, and tapestries. Here Henry is again identified with these biblical kings, but now in an attempt to secure God's gifts and military help:

O Lord Jesu Christ, most high, most mighty, king of kings, lord of lords, the only ruler of princes, the very son of God, on whose right hand sitting, dost from thy throne behold all the dwellers upon earth: with most lowly hearts we beseech thee, vouchsafe with favourable regard to behold our most gracious sovereign lord, King Henry the eighth, and so replenish him with the grace of thy holy spirit, that he always incline to thy will and walk in thy way. Keep him far off from ignorance, but through thy gift, let prudence and knowledge always

abound in his royal heart. So instruct him (O LORD JESU) reigning upon us in earth, that his human majesty always obey thy divine majesty in fear and dread. Indue him plentifully with heavenly gifts. Grant him in health and wealth long to live. Heap glory and honor upon him. Glad him with the joy of thy countenance. So strength him, that he may vanquish and overcome all his and our foes, and be dread and feared of all the enemies of his realm. Amen.

Importantly, Parr made small changes as she translated the Latin prayer into English, changes that display her awareness that every word matters in representations of the monarch. For example, she alters the Latin description of Christ in ways that stress that he alone has authority over Henry, a subtle nod towards the Royal Supremacy. So where the Latin prayer describes Christ as 'king of kings, lord of lords, monarch of monarchs,' Parr describes him as 'king of kings, lord of lords, *the only ruler of princes*' (my emphasis). Parr also completely rewrites one of the petitions so that Henry's obedience to God's will is framed in active rather than in passive terms and so that it echoes the Book of Proverbs: where the Latin asks Christ to 'fill [Henry] with the breath of thy holy spirit so that by its virtue he may be borne to that place where your will calls him,' Parr asks Christ to 'replenish [Henry] with the grace of thy holy spirit, that he always incline to thy will and walk in thy way' (my emphasis). Parr also tinkered with the petitions that ask for military glory, changes that Janel Mueller notes heighten Henry's masculine regality. These petitions are drawn from Psalm 20, yet Parr apparently felt that the biblical verses did not quite capture what Henry needed at this historical juncture. Where the Latin prayer asks Christ to 'Bless [Henry] with the blessings of thy sweetness. Bestow on him length of days. Set glory and great comeliness upon him,' Parr's asks 'Indue him plentifully with heavenly gifts. Grant him in health and wealth long to live. Heap glory and honor upon him' (my emphasis). And where the Latin asks that Henry may 'triumph over' and be of 'terror' to his enemies, Parr asks that he 'vanquish and overcome' them and 'be dread and feared.' In Parr's prayer, then, Henry was indeed a new David, but in the prayers of his people in 1544 he needed to be less sweet, more glorious, healthier, and more dreadful. Henry was victorious in Boulogne, and Parr (as Regent) ordered processions for his victory on 19 September. The wars, however, did not end, and Parr's prayer was reprinted at least eight times before the signing of the Treaty of Camp (June 1546). Parr paid for four velvet-covered copies of her

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book on the day that the Peace was celebrated at court; she undoubtedly felt that her prayers had been efficacious.

Henry died in January 1547, and by June, Parr had married her old flame, Thomas Seymour, the handsome but impetuous brother of Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, Protector of the Realm. Importantly, Parr's prayer did not fade from sight after Henry's death. On the contrary, Somerset led the English into renewed military conflict, and Parr's books—with their wartime prayers—were reprinted at least nine times during Edward's reign. In addition, in 1548, a year that saw official and grassroots liturgical innovations, Parr's 'A Prayer for the King' appeared in a version of the Litany printed in July along with an English Psalter and some liturgical prayers. Although this book was likely used primarily in private homes, a few London churches bought new English Psalters in 1548, and it is possible that some congregations used Parr's prayer in public worship while she was still alive.

Parr died in September 1548, and her prayer was not included by Cranmer in either the 1549 or 1552 Book of Common Prayer; it was, however, included in the 1553 crown-sponsored private prayer book (or Primer). This innovative Primer encouraged the laity to abandon their traditional 'books of hours' and use the services from the Book of Common Prayer in their homes. However, while the Primer's set of prayers for Sunday morning followed the Book of Common Prayer very closely, it also included Parr's prayer, a sign that the compilers wished to promote political loyalty and that they viewed Parr's prayer as an important means of doing so. The compilers made one important change by adding a concluding petition drawn from a traditional Latin prayer for the king: 'And finally after this life that he may attain everlasting joy and felicity.' It is unclear why Parr's prayer appeared in the Primer but not in the Book of Common Prayer, but her status as a laywoman may have been a factor.

Parr's prayer appeared only four times during the reign of Mary Tudor, but it made a striking reappearance in the first month of Elizabeth's reign—this time as an official part of the liturgy in the Chapel Royal. Many eyes were focused on the Chapel Royal after 17 November, 1558, as foreign and domestic observers looked for signs of the new Queen's religious intentions. On 25 November, the Spanish ambassador reported that Elizabeth had dismissed the Catholic Dean of the Chapel and replaced him with George Carew, a moderate Protestant. Norman Jones

has noted that sometime before 6 December, Elizabeth and William Cecil (her secretary) solicited legal advice about religious worship. They were advised that although the services of the 1552 Book of Common Prayer were still illegal, the Henrician Litany was legal and could be used while a new service book was being authorized by Parliament. It is thus not surprising that on 17 December, a Venetian observer reported that an English Litany was being used at court and hoped ‘that worse may not happen.’ The Queen had different views and was keen to promote this English Litany beyond the court. She authorized it for voluntary use in parishes on 27 December, 1558, and it was printed as *The Litany, Used in the Queen’s Majesty’s Chapel*. It was adopted immediately by some parishes and was employed in prominent political spaces: it was used on 13 January at a ceremony creating Knights of the Bath; on 25 January at the opening of Parliament; and on 11 February in the House of Commons. A close reading of the Chapel Royal Litany reveals that it was, as the lawyer had recommended, based on a Henrician Litany, but it also included something unexpected—a shortened version of Parr’s prayer, now retitled ‘A Prayer for the Queen’s Majesty.’

O Lord our heavenly father, high and mighty, king of kings, Lord of Lords, the only ruler of princes, which dost from thy throne behold all the dwellers upon earth: most heartily we beseech thee with thy favor to behold our most gracious sovereign Lady Queen Elizabeth, and so replenish her with the grace of thy holy spirit, that she may always incline to thy will and walk in thy way. Indue her plentifully with heavenly gifts: grant her in health and wealth long to live, strength her that she may vanquish and overcome all her enemies. And finally after this life, she may attain everlasting joy and felicity: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Chapel Royal Litany was printed without significant revisions in the 1559 Book of Common Prayer, and the prayer became a permanent part of the Anglican liturgy.

The alterations made to Parr’s prayer shed light on how Elizabeth wanted her subjects to view her at the beginning of her reign. The other prayers in the Litany are addressed to God the Father, and so the opening of Parr’s prayer (which was addressed to Christ) was reworked in that light. Parr’s prayer was also longer than the other prayers in the Litany, and it was shortened in ways that make it more appropriate for a young, female monarch who was seeking to establish her authority. In Parr’s

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prayer, there were three petitions asking God to guide and teach the monarch: the prayer for Elizabeth retains the petition that asks God to ‘replenish’ her with the Holy Spirit so that she would ‘incline to [God’s] will and walk in [God’s] way.’ By contrast, the heavy-handed petitions asking God to ‘keep’ the monarch from ‘ignorance’ and to ‘instruct’ the monarch in obedience, fear, and dread have been eliminated. Elizabeth may have felt that these petitions were unhelpful as she sought to elicit obedience and respect from her subjects. The petitions derived from Psalm 20 have also been pruned. The new prayer retains requests for heavenly gifts, health, wealth, and strength against enemies, but omits requests for glory, honor, and military ferocity. These are the places where Parr had intensified Henry’s martial glory, but their excision is consistent with Elizabeth’s gender and her desire to appear as an agent of peace after a decade of domestic and foreign conflict. Some contemporary readers must have realized that the new prayer was derived from Parr because her *Psalms or Prayers and Prayers or Meditations* were reprinted in 1559.

But who edited and moved Parr’s prayer from the realm of private devotion into the realm of communal worship? In answering this, we must remember that the Chapel Royal was not a place, but an institution of forty-five people who attended to the liturgical needs of the monarch. Uniquely, it was run by a Dean who was responsible to the monarch rather than to Rome or to a bishop. Scholars agree that Tudor monarchs used the services of the Chapel Royal to display their religious views to domestic and foreign audiences, and scholars have always asserted that the monarch’s liturgical will lay behind any unusual activities in their chapels. Although Elizabeth ensured that the worship performed by her Chapel remained (largely) within the limits of the law in the first months of her reign, she famously engaged in what Roger Bowers refers to as an illegal ‘liturgical adventure’ when she insisted (from Christmas 1558 onwards) that the celebrant refrain from elevating the host at Mass. This understanding of the functioning of the Chapel Royal allows us to hypothesize that Elizabeth must have been involved in the appearance of Parr’s prayer in the Chapel Royal Litany, probably in consultation with Cecil and Carew.

This hypothesis is strengthened by evidence from Elizabeth’s earlier life, for it is clear that she was very familiar with her step-mother’s prayer, and that the prayer and the Litany played a vital role in her developing understanding of the power of state prayers to promote

and display obedience. When Henry was in France in 1544, the ten-year-old Elizabeth wrote a letter to Parr in which she demonstrated her understanding of the importance of praying for Henry and asked Parr to recommend her prayers to him. In December 1545, she produced a translation of Parr's *Prayers or Meditations* into Latin, French and Italian as a New Year's gift for Henry. She displayed her political and filial obedience by including three translations of 'A Prayer for the King' in the gift, and in doing so, she immersed herself in the language of Parr's prayer, figuring out how to render its monarchical ideals into three languages. She was, moreover, inspired to imitate Parr's literary activity, and she concluded her dedication to Henry with her own short one-line prayer for him.

Finally, we can see that by the age of twenty-one Elizabeth had experienced the power of the monarch's liturgical will as well as the power of prayer to signal obedience or resistance. In the wake of Thomas Wyatt's rebellion in March 1554, Elizabeth was imprisoned in the Tower and then at Woodstock. She dutifully attended Latin Mass, but she obtained permission to use the Henrician Litany with her chaplain. In October, her keeper questioned Queen Mary about this, noting with alarm that Elizabeth would not respond aloud to the petitions that had been adapted to ask God to protect Philip and Mary. Elizabeth's silence obviously registered her resistance to Philip's and Mary's authority, but it also invoked the memory of Henry and Parr by drawing attention to what was actually on the page in front of her—petitions for God's 'servant' Henry and the 'noble queen' Katherine. Mary responded to Elizabeth's resistance by asserting that she was to stop using the English Litany and to use the Latin rite used in Mary's 'own chapel.' Elizabeth prudently acquiesced.

With these documents in mind, we can return to the sudden appearance of Parr's prayer in the Chapel Royal Litany. Elizabeth had a long history with Parr's prayer, and as she sought to establish her authority, it is perhaps not surprising that she turned to a prayer that recalled both her father and her erudite, reformist, and politically engaged step-mother. Cecil and Carew were surely consulted about this liturgical innovation, and although there is no concrete evidence regarding their views, both men had longstanding connections to Parr. Carew's brother had married one of Parr's ladies-in-waiting in 1540, and Carew would have known Parr's wartime prayers when they first circulated: his brother and

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nephews were military commanders during the Anglo-French conflict, and his nephew, Sir George Carew, drowned when the *Mary Rose* sank in July 1545. Cecil had written the preface for Parr's explicitly Protestant *Lamentation of a Sinner* in November 1547.

The Book of Common Prayer, then, still holds some surprises for us. Although Cranmer and other male clerics were undoubtedly its primary sixteenth-century editors and authors, Katherine Parr and Elizabeth Tudor played a role in shaping the text still used today. As translators, editors, and liturgists, these queens contributed to the production of political iconography and shaped the words that Anglicans have long used to ask God to guide, bless, and protect their monarchs and presidents.

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No Imposition: The Commination and Lent

LIAM BEADLE

Introduction

The Commination service is unlikely to rank as anyone's favourite part of the Prayer Book. If someone told me it was their favourite service, I should probably want to avoid them! The service's subtitle sets the tone: it is the 'Denouncing of God's Anger and Judgements Against Sinners'. We shall discuss the service in three parts: first, a justification for the service; secondly, an exposition of the service; and thirdly, some implications of the service.

Justification

Those of us who use the 1871 Lectionary at Morning Prayer read I Corinthians in the weeks leading up to this Conference. In his letter, the apostle Paul refers to 'the parts [of the body] that are unrepresentable', and notes that they 'are treated with special modesty' (I Cor 12.23). Is the Commination service an unrepresentable part of the Prayer Book? Should it be covered up? Should we, perhaps, tear the pages out of our Prayer Books? Many have thought so. It is a service which has gone rather out of fashion. In the *Hymnal Companion to the Book of Common Prayer*, published at the end of the nineteenth century, there were two hymns for use at the Commination. But in its successor, the *Anglican Hymn Book* of 1965, there is no mention at all of the Commination. When Hodder and Stoughton published their (excellent) Prayer Book Commentary series in the 1960s, there was no volume on the Commination. There is a lot of good penitential material in *Common Worship*, much of it the work of Michael Vasey; but despite the gargantuan number of volumes, there is no *Common Worship* Commination service. It might be assumed that it is mainly those with a more liberal theological stance who disapprove of the Commination, but it has also had conservative detractors. The Church Society's *An English Prayer Book*, in which Prayer Book material is (helpfully) put into contemporary English, surprisingly does not include any form

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of Communion. Herbert Carson was the Vicar of St. Paul's, Hills Road in Cambridge for seven years, before he became a Strict Baptist at the end of 1964. His book *Farewell to Anglicanism* cuts close to the bone. This is what he said about the Communion:

Theologically I found the service a dubious exercise. The call is addressed to 'brethren' and the summons is to repentance. But it is couched in legalistic rather than gospel terms. 'Brethren' in the New Testament are those who rejoice in the Gospel declaration, 'Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law'. Repentance is always in the context of the confidence that 'there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus'. But the Communion service, addressed though it be to Christian people, speaks of a deliverance from the curse as still future and dependent on their repentance.¹

If Mr Carson was right, and the Communion service is an affront to the gospel of God's grace, we must stop using it immediately. But while I appreciate his note of caution, I do not think he quite understood what was going on in the Communion. It is addressed not only to those who have been born anew, but also to other members of the visible Church, who have been baptized and who may therefore rightly be regarded as our brothers and sisters, even though we long for their conversion. Moreover, much of the service is taken directly from Scripture. It seems that Herbert Carson's rejection of Anglicanism also entailed a rejection of Article VII: 'The Old Testament is not contrary to the New: for both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to Mankind by Christ....' If this service is a biblical service, then it must also be a gospel service; for even the very harshest parts of the Old Testament reveal to us the love of God in Jesus Christ, and the redemption won for us at the cross. John Chapman, the Australian evangelist, put it like this: 'When the Scriptures are seen as pointing us to salvation through faith in Christ, then, if dealt with in its context, any part of the Bible must be evangelistic.'² That must include the verses used in the Communion. Herbert Carson was right about many things. But about the Communion, as indeed about Anglicanism, he was wrong.

1 H. M. Carson, *Farewell to Anglicanism* (Worthing 1969), p. 56.

2 John Chapman, 'Preaching that Converts the Word', in *When God's Voice is Heard: Essays on Preaching Presented to Dick Lucas*, ed. Christopher Green and David Jackman (Leicester 1995), p.164.

If Herbert Carson hated the Communion, Dyson Hague loved it. Indeed, if anything, he went too far the other way. Here he is extolling the service with astonishing fervour:

We question whether in the whole compass of the Prayer Book there is to be found a service more fervent, more scriptural, more touching in its pathos, more searching in its appeal, and one that is more calculated to lead unconverted souls to Christ, than the great appeal of the Communion Service. [...] From first to last it breathes the spirit of the yearning Christ...³

Well, there you have it! If you take that to heart, you'll want to have the Communion every week—perhaps to replace your Parish Communion with a Parish Communion. Few of us are likely to want to do that. Nevertheless, there are signs that the Communion is becoming less unpopular. Archbishop Justin has reintroduced the Communion service on the first day of Lent at Lambeth. I gather Fergus Butler-Gallie read the service at Westcott House, accompanied by house music and burning hyssop. The late John Hughes used to read it, certainly as an assistant curate in Exeter, and probably at Jesus College, too. Nor is the Communion only a Cambridge thing: Fergus says it was used at Pusey House in Oxford. Tim Vasby-Burnie has used it at St Bartholomew's, Wednesbury and St George's, Frankwell, in Shrewsbury. It was certainly read in Honley on the first day of Lent. I am prepared to say that the recovery of this service is a good thing for three reasons. First, it is a reminder in days of laxity that there is such a thing as divine judgement. Secondly, it is in the Prayer Book, and so remains part of our doctrinal and liturgical norm. There is therefore a sense in which reading the Communion is the normal thing to do at the beginning of Lent, and so to fail to read it would be to make a point; and making points is not what the liturgy is for. Thirdly, the service communicates the gospel of Jesus Christ, and includes much that is wholesome. It bears witness to the truth that 'The Church lives in a tension between the new order made possible in Christ and the continuing reality of human sin.'⁴ To see that, we now turn to the Communion service itself to see exactly what it contains.

3 Dyson Hague, *Through the Prayer Book* (1932), p.347.

4 Trevor Lloyd and Philip Tovey, *Celebrating Forgiveness: An Original Text Drafted by Michael Vasey* (Cambridge 2004), p.11. The words are those of Michael Vasey.

Exposition

The service is in four parts. First, there is a Preface, which explains what the service is about. Secondly, there is what we can regard as the service's liturgical action: the congregation hears from God's word a number of condemnations of sinful actions, and professes its agreement. Thirdly, there is an address. Fourthly, there are prayers, beginning with David's prayer of repentance in Psalm 51. As at Morning and Evening Prayer and the administration of the Lord's Supper, the liturgical order expresses the Church's belief in the primacy and sovereignty of God's grace. First, we hear God speak, and only once he has done so do we presume to approach his throne of grace by way of response.

The service's title mandates the use of the service only on the first day of Lent, but also tells us that it can be used on other occasions, 'as the Ordinary shall appoint'. There is historical justification for using the service four times a year. It was Bucer's wish, and during Elizabeth's reign Archbishop Grindal directed that it should be held four times a year, 'on Ash Wednesday, on one of the three Sundays next before Easter, one of the two Sundays next before the feast of Pentecost, and one of the two Sundays next before the feast of the birth of our Lord.' If, like Dyson Hague, you are very keen on the Communion service, you might like to think about using it after Evening Prayer on the third Sunday of Advent, which would echo the Collect's petition that ministers would turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.

Before the Preface, there is a rubric which locates the Communion at a particular point in the activities of the day. This is not a service to stand alone; it comes after Morning Prayer and the Litany. To level accusations of harshness at the service is to forget that the congregation has already celebrated the grace and love of God. They have heard that God 'pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel'. They may well have sung that the Lord Jesus Christ has 'open[ed] the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.' They have addressed God not only as an 'Almighty and everlasting God', but also as a 'heavenly Father', and as one 'in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life'. Congregations whose ministers never give them a realistic opportunity to attend Morning Prayer may never have those words ringing in their ears, and what a scandalous tragedy that is; but that cannot be said of those who attend the Communion. This is a service for people who have heard the good news.

The Preface itself is, admittedly, one of the stranger parts of the Prayer Book. It speaks of the 'godly discipline' of 'open penance', and includes a delicious tidbit of political campaigning: the restoration of the said discipline 'is much to be wished'. I cannot think of a politician who has stood on that particular ticket. If we wanted to restore it in Honley, it would be easy so to do, because there are stocks outside of the church door. I have not been brave enough to suggest it. However, what may be regarded as a modern equivalent of 'open penance' did almost see the light of day. During the preparations for *Common Worship*, Michael Vasey drafted a liturgy which he called 'A Celebration of Forgiveness and Reconciliation'. The intention was that those who had committed 'sins that have been a source of public scandal or have done grievous damage to the health and witness of the Christian fellowship'⁵ would be identified, enrol as penitents, and attend a 'Public Celebration of Forgiveness and Reconciliation'. The idea had been prompted by Oliver O'Donovan's 1992 lecture 'Liturgy and Ethics',⁶ which he gave as a celebration of the twentieth anniversary of Grove Books. Something of what Oliver O'Donovan and Michael Vasey sought to do at an individual level is accomplished by the Communion at a corporate level: it names specific sins and announces the displeasure of God towards those who habitually continue in them. It does so not out of malice, but so that the faithful may 'be moved to earnest and true repentance'. The Communion is therefore a socially responsible liturgy, albeit one framed in bald and uncompromising terms.

It was Michael Vasey who said that 'Liturgy is just a way of doing the Bible', and that is exactly what happens next. In Deuteronomy 27, the Levites address the people of Israel by announcing the curse of God on those who commit particular sins. At the end of each sentence of God's cursing, it says 'And all the people shall say, Amen.' That is precisely what happens in the Communion. Most of the 'cursings' are taken from Deuteronomy 27, but with one or two notable exceptions. The 'cursings' on those who commit incest or bestiality are excluded; not, presumably, because Cranmer thought incest or bestiality trivial matters, but probably out of regard for propriety. Indeed, there is the danger that by naming such eyebrow-raising acts during a church service, the thought of

5 Lloyd and Tovey, p.12. The words are those of Michael Vasey.

6 Available as Grove Ethical Study No. 89.

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committing them may be planted in someone's mind. Instead, Leviticus 20.10's admonition against adultery is substituted: 'Cursed is he that lieth with his neighbour's wife.' The Commination's emphasis on the sin of injustice is thereby maintained. The penultimate 'cursing' is from Jeremiah 17.5, to tackle the sin of faithlessness; and the last cursing combines verses from St Matthew, I Corinthians, Galatians, and the book of Psalms, to address the human tendency to be harsh towards others, to take advantage of others, to cheat others, to desire what others have, to value the wrong things, to be mean, to be self-indulgent, and to be dishonest. They are all things which stop people from receiving the gift of life in all its fulness. They are all things which should drive us back to the mercy and grace of God in Jesus Christ.

That is the subject of the address which follows. This is an Exhortation of sorts. It exhorts those who have assented to the 'cursings' to return to God. It is, essentially, an evangelistic sermon. It is full of the good news. It echoes the Comfortable Words, quoting from 1 John: 'Although we have sinned, yet we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins.' It speaks of the cross as something in which each of us is implicated, and from which each of us may benefit: 'For he was wounded for our offences, and smitten for our wickedness.' It pleads with those who listen: 'Let us therefore return unto him.' This is preaching of a singular quality. Here, in the pages of the Book of Common Prayer, is a sermon of the sort George Whitefield, William Grimshaw, and Henry Venn would go on to preach in the eighteenth century, and which would bring countless people in England to a living faith in Jesus Christ.

Now, we see the point of the announcements of God's cursing of those who break God's law. Their intention is not moralistic, as if to encourage those who hear them to turn over a new leaf. Nor is their intention religious, as if to encourage those who hear them to attend church services. Rather, their intention is pastoral and evangelistic, to lead those who hear them to God and his gospel. There is 'forgiveness of that which is past, if with a perfect and true heart we return unto him.'

If you visit the Crown Jewels at the Tower of London, you will see that they are displayed against a black background. The idea is that their splendour is more magnificent when seen in the context of darkness. The same principle applies in the Commination service. The 'cursings'

are chilling. God's judgement is real. The service uses graphic imagery from the Bible to communicate just how serious our predicament is: 'O terrible voice of most just judgement, which shall be pronounced upon them, when it shall be said unto them, Go, ye cursed, into the fire everlasting, which is prepared for the devil and his angels.' But in the context of such a terrifying prospect, the gospel makes real sense. It is not only attractive; it is absolutely necessary. If I may say so, this is a lesson the Church of England as a whole needs desperately to learn. Some time ago, Dominic Keech (the Vicar of S. Nicholas of Myra, Brighton) and I were out for the day in rural Buckinghamshire. We visited a church, and were delighted to find it filled with children. We were less delighted when we discovered the event they were attending was called 'Fun with God'. The God of the Communion—the God of the gospel—is holy, wrathful, merciful, loving, gracious, and magnificent. He is not fun. No wonder it has been reported this week that only three per cent of those aged 18 to 24 consider themselves members of the Church of England. Dare I say it, if fun is what I am after, there are better places to get it than Anglican parish churches.

It is certainly not fun to recite Psalm 51 on your knees, but that is what happens next in the service. On the first day of Lent, at Morning Prayer, Psalms 6, 32, and 38 have been read. At Evening Prayer, Psalms 102, 130, and 143 will be read. If the Communion is omitted, so is Psalm 51, and only six of the seven penitential Psalms are used. That is a very important reason to use the Communion service!

The prayers which follow have an interesting history. They are prefaced by the Kyries and the Lord's Prayer, as the pattern of all Christian prayer. Following the responses, there is a simple prayer for absolution, which is followed by another prayer, beginning 'O most mighty God'. The first part of this prayer is taken from the prayer said over the ashes on Ash Wednesday in the Sarum Missal; and so, an ancient form, attached to a jettisoned ritual, finds new life in a Reformed liturgy.

Michael Vasey summarised Cranmer's liturgical principles as fourfold.⁷ The first principle was that 'worship should be biblical in the doctrine it expresses', and we have seen that the Communion is. The second was that 'worship should be adapted to the language, customs and

⁷ Michael Vasey, 'The Church's Role in Worship' in *Anglican Worship Today*, ed. Colin Buchanan, Trevor Lloyd and Harold Miller (1980), p. 40.

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circumstances of the worshippers.’ The fourth was that ‘worship should be the ordered, reverent, corporate activity of the whole Church of Christ, clergy and people together.’ But the third, which I have left till last, was that ‘where it is possible and helpful, worship should continue the customs and traditions of the ancient Church.’ It is this third principle which is given voice here, in the second Collect of the Communion. Cranmer saw fit to exclude the imposition of ashes from his penitential rite at the beginning of Lent. But he also retained part of the liturgical form which was attached to it, words the Church had developed over time. These words are tastefully reframed, and so the worshipper at the Communion in Reformed England joins those who worshipped long before. As Richard Baxter would later sing, referring to those who have gone before us: ‘Before Thy throne we daily meet/As joint-petitioners to Thee;/In spirit we each other greet,/And shall again each other see.’⁸

The penultimate prayer in the rite is very beautiful. Again, it alludes to the antiphons used in the Sarum Missal’s rite for the blessing of ashes on Ash Wednesday, as well as echoing Joel 2, which is the portion of Scripture appointed for the Epistle at the Lord’s Supper on the first day of Lent. The prayer is to be said together, and it places the repentance of the faithful in the context of the sovereign grace of God. ‘Turn thou us, O good Lord, and so shall we be turned’: even our turning to God is the action of God. He is merciful. He is full of compassion. He is long-suffering. He is of great pity. He spares when we deserve judgement. In his wrath, he thinks upon mercy. And he always relates to us through the merits and mediation of his blessed Son Jesus Christ our Lord. This is the God with whom we have to do in the Communion service. If parts of the service take our breath away with their stark pronouncement of God’s judgement, by the time we have reached the end of the service, we find ourselves addressing a loving heavenly Father who cares for us as his children. This is a prayer which could be well used after the Third Collect at Morning or Evening Prayer, or learned and used devotionally.

The service ends with a benediction. The words are those of the Aaronic blessing in Numbers 6, but with part of the words omitted. Neil and Willoughby think they were ‘omitted [...] by the inadvertence of the printer.’⁹ There is no proof of that, and there is, of course, nothing

8 *Anglican Hymn Book* (1965), 430, v. 5.

9 *The Tutorial Prayer Book*, ed. Charles Neil and J. M. Willoughby (1912, 1959), p. 493.

wrong with the shortened form as it appears in this order of service. Most services in the Prayer Book conclude with the Grace from the end of I Corinthians. Some, such as Confirmation, conclude with a simple Trinitarian benediction. The Lord's Supper concludes with beautiful words of the apostle Paul from Philippians. But in 1662 this shortened form of the Aaronic blessing was added to the Communion. Those who imply there is no variety in the Prayer Book are wrong. Those who are addicted to the restless innovation of contemporary liturgies in which a different benediction can be used on every Sunday of the year (ironically making the words themselves rather less likely to become a means of blessing to the hearers) would do well to learn from the Prayer Book's gracious restraint.

Implications

We have considered some of the objections to the service and reasons for continuing to use it. We have examined what we find in the Communion service. Finally, it is time to consider some of the implications of this service: first, the implications for our view of God; secondly, the implications for our view of the Church; and thirdly, the implications for our view of ourselves.

It was Richard Niebuhr in 1937 who characterised the message of early twentieth-century theology in these words: 'A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgement through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross.' This was not only a North American phenomenon. In 1931, a book with the title *Princes of the Modern Pulpit* was published. It contained short biographies of a number of eminent British preachers from both the Anglican and the Non-Conformist traditions. The book's introduction is 'A Note on Modern Preaching', and it makes chilling reading:

Many preachers would find it difficult to state precisely their beliefs as to the Divinity of Jesus; and what would still more horrify the preachers of a generation ago, some of them would say that precise statements are not essential. [...] And there is a difficulty in speaking of the Cross. The central emphasis is placed on the life and teaching of Jesus, where for centuries it had been placed on His atoning death. 'Atonement' is a word seldom used in the modern pulpit; so also is 'blood.' No change in pulpit emphasis is really more revolutionary

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than this. If a student of preaching were to visit, say, twelve churches of each of the chief British denominations during the coming year, I doubt whether he would hear, more than once or twice, any more orthodox doctrine of the Cross than this: that it is the supreme revelation of the sacrificial nature of Love, a sort of parable or drama of Love, loving to the uttermost.¹⁰

Sadly, in many places, not much has changed. It is a gutless and unconvincing gospel, and it is hardly surprising that when children are exposed to it they are inoculated against the Christian faith for life, imagining that Christians have little of worth to say about the big questions of life, death, God and eternity. That is one of the main reasons that only three per cent of British 18 to 24 year olds identify as Anglicans. As Marcus Walker has observed, ‘This isn’t gentle drift, it’s catastrophic generational failure.’¹¹

The Communion sounds the death-knell for the gutless gospel. It would be absurd to read the Communion, and then go on to preach the sort of message characterized by Niebuhr. The God we meet in the Communion service hates sin. The congregation is told that it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands. There is such a thing as the day of vengeance. But this is good news; for such a God is able to save. He is no impotent well-wisher; he is a powerful saviour. The service’s exhortation alludes to Isaiah 53, and applies the words of the prophet to the death of the Lord Jesus Christ: ‘he was wounded for our offences’. In this sense, the Communion is a liturgical outworking of Article II, which tells us that Christ ‘truly suffered, was crucified, dead and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of men.’ If you are in danger of forgetting the true nature of almighty God—and I am certainly in perpetual danger of that—a useful remedy may well be slowly to read the Communion service.

The Communion can help us recapture our view of God. It can also help us to remember the true nature of the Church of England. Writing at about the same time as Richard Niebuhr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer surveyed the North American religious scene and described it as *Protestantismus ohne Reformation*—‘Protestantism without the Reformation’. Such a criticism

10 Ernest H. Jeffs, *Princes of the Modern Pulpit: Religious Leaders of a Generation* (1931), pp. 4 ff.

11 Twitter, @WalkerMarcus, 5.9.2017, 8.30.

could not be made of a Catholic Church such as the Church of England, because our Reformed character is very clear from our Prayer Book; and in few places is it clearer than in the Communion service.

Before the Reformation, the rite of Ash Wednesday had involved the blessing of ashes made from the previous year's palm crosses, and the imposition of that ash on the foreheads of the faithful. The ceremony was meant to be a reminder of human mortality, and thereby to encourage penance. However, when St Paul wishes to encourage his readers to forsake sin, he reminds them not that their bodies will rot in the ground when they die, but that they will be raised, bodily, from the dead: 'For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection' (Rom. 6.5). Christian holiness finds its ground not in human mortality, but in the sure and certain hope of the new creation. As the Communion service tells us, Christ 'will set us on his right hand, and give us the gracious benediction of his Father, commanding us to take possession of his glorious kingdom'. The day may commonly be called 'Ash Wednesday', but in the Prayer Book, this is very much the First Day of Lent.

I was grateful to read Tom Plant's letter in the Trinity 2017 edition of *Faith and Worship*. Like him, I 'cherish our Prayer Book precisely as an exemplar and guardian of the spiritual riches of the ancient Catholic Church'.¹² But I cannot forget that our English Reformers deliberately excised many of the liturgical practices which had characterised the Church in the mediaeval period and continued to be found in parts of continental Europe.

Here is Rowan Williams's view of Anglicanism:

I have simply taken it as referring to the sort of Reformed Christian thinking that was done by those [...] who were content to settle with a church order grounded in the historic ministry of bishops, priest [sic] and deacons, and with the classical early Christian formulations of doctrine about God and Jesus Christ—the Nicene Creed and the Definition of Chalcedon. It is certainly *Reformed* thinking, and we should not let the deep and pervasive echoes of the Middle Ages mislead us: it assumes the governing authority of the Bible....¹³

It is gloriously true that the Church of England is Catholic. The

¹² *Faith and Worship*, no. 81, p. 61.

¹³ Rowan Williams, *Anglican Identities* (2004), p. 2.

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Commination is to be used at the beginning of the season of Lent, which Anglican Christians are bound to observe. There is a definite and deliberate continuity with universal Christian practice. But the Church of England is also Reformed. As far as the Prayer Book is concerned, no longer do those who go to church at the beginning of Lent emerge with black smudges on their faces. Indeed, they have heard the command of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospel of the day: 'anoint thine head, and wash thy face'. It is apparently true that in our own time, many Anglicans have reached the conclusion that ashes may be imposed on Ash Wednesday. But I trust they do so for the same reason that the ceremony was excluded from our Prayer Book: that they have reflected on Scripture, and that they long, as those justified by grace through faith, to be sanctified. They should not forget that the ceremony is a comparatively recent innovation in the Church of England. It was absent from the *Alternative Service Book* 1980, and only appeared as an option in *Lent, Holy Week, Easter*, a book not authorised but commended by the Bishops in 1986.

There is evidence that the service for Ash Wednesday in *Common Worship: Times and Seasons* seeks to express the same theology as the Commination service. It coyly describes the reception of ashes as 'a sign of the spirit of penitence with which we shall keep [...] Lent', and it strongly affirms that 'it is by [...] grace alone that we receive eternal life in Jesus Christ our Saviour.'¹⁴ It is certainly not a wicked rite. But it stands awkwardly alongside our doctrinal and liturgical norm. There is, in the *Book of Common Prayer*, a careful rejection of that which is fiddly or ambiguous. My own training incumbent eschewed the use of ash at the beginning of Lent on the supremely Anglican grounds that it is messy, and in this I think he captured part of the essence of the Prayer Book: here we find liturgical and devotional cleanliness, a dignified restraint, a noble simplicity. This is Reformed Christianity. This is Anglicanism.

The Commination has implications for our view of God: he is holy and merciful. The Commination has implications for our view of the Church of England: it is Catholic and Reformed, carefully maintaining the universal pattern of Christian life at the same time as being prepared to take radical action to simplify its rites and to seek complete agreement with Scripture. And the Commination has implications for our view

14 *Common Worship: Times and Seasons*, p. 230.

of ourselves. It is axiomatic to say that the twentieth century was the bloodiest of centuries. We observe it with hindsight, but one brave genius with the gift of foresight was Karl Barth. He was the Reformed pastor at Safenwil, to the west of Zürich. This, in his own words, is how he realised what was happening:

One day in early August 1914 stands out in my personal memory as a black day. Ninety-three German intellectuals impressed public opinion by their proclamation in support of the war policy of Wilhelm II and his counsellors. Among these intellectuals I discovered to my horror almost all my theological teachers whom I had greatly venerated. In despair over what this indicated about the signs of the time I suddenly realised that I could not any longer follow either their ethics and dogmatics or their understanding of the Bible and of history. For me at least, 19th-century theology no longer held any future.¹⁵

That nineteenth-century theology was unremittingly optimistic about the human condition. Its great rallying-cry was of continuous progress. One of its primary exponents was Adolf von Harnack, who developed his view of the infinite worth of the human soul in such a way as to argue that the kingdom of God was to be found inside of each one of us. It is easy to see how the proponents of such a theological system could be impressed by political consensus. The problem was that a gospel devoid of honesty about the reality of human sin was unable to confront evil, tended to capitulate to popular opinion, and so paved the way for the rise of National Socialism.

It may seem grim to focus on humanity's capacity for wickedness in the way the Communion does. But it is much grimmer to ignore it or explain it away. There is such a thing as 'notorious sin'. It is right that people should be 'afraid to offend'. If they are not, disorder ensues, with terrifying consequences. 'Cursed is he that removeth his neighbour's landmark, that maketh the blind to go out of his way, that taketh reward to slay the innocent,' not because God is vindictive, but because a universe in which such people do not incur the displeasure of almighty God is a universe in which evil is triumphant. People are capable of doing terrible

15 Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God* (1961), p. 14.

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things. We ignore that at our peril.

And if people are capable of doing terrible things, we are capable of doing terrible things. No wonder we pray, in the Communion, 'O Lord, save thy servants; send unto them help from above'; we need that salvation and that help, because otherwise we shall ruin our lives and those of others. As I was preparing this, I received a telephone call about a neighbour who had been to the doctor's surgery complaining of chest pain. He was taken straight to the infirmary in an ambulance. A GP who brushed the chest pain under the carpet and explained it away would not be a kind doctor. He would be criminally negligent. Like the good doctor, the Communion is kind, because it is a service which is honest about our predicament, and enables us to do something about it.

Conclusion

It remains true that few Anglicans are likely to say that the Communion service is their favourite. It is probably not used often enough for it to work its way into the knapsack in that way. But I wonder whether as individual Christians, there are not parts of the service which could become firm favourites. The service's exhortation could usefully be read as part of our devotional preparation for the Lord's Supper. Individual phrases from it have the potential to form us as disciples of Jesus Christ. It is hard to think of a more heart-warming reference to God than 'the merciful receiver of all true penitent sinners'. As an aspiration for the Christian life, it is hard to think of a better one than to 'be ordered by the governance of [the] Holy Spirit'. In our daily prayers, we can use those lovely words at the end of the Communion: 'Turn thou us, O good Lord, and so shall we be turned. Be favourable, O Lord, be favourable to thy people...' To quote Dyson Hague again, the prayer 'breathes the very spirit of the profoundest supplication in the confessions of Ezra and Nehemiah.'¹⁶ These are liturgical and devotional treasures. And like the little-known restaurant you stumble across accidentally on holiday and which turns out to be excellent, they are all the more precious because they are in an unlikely and little-visited corner of the Prayer Book.

If we are to be happy and fulfilled Prayer Book Anglicans, we shall want to be comprehensively Prayer Book Anglicans. I understand why many of my fellow-Anglicans almost forget the Book of Common

16 Dyson Hague, p. 347.

Prayer is there and reach instinctively for one of the many volumes of *Common Worship*. They often do so because they have been led to believe that the Prayer Book contains little variety, that its provision is akin to that of a high-quality but dull menu. It is hardly surprising that they think in this way. Too often our use of the Prayer Book has been unimaginative, ignoring even the alternative canticles at Morning and Evening Prayer, and rushing to other resources as soon as the Third Collect has been said. But within the Prayer Book itself there are more than enough words for any Christian. There is something perverse about an Anglican who loves books of specially-written intercessions, but who never uses the Litany; who revels in mystical contemplative techniques, but who has never bothered to memorise a Prayer Book collect. It is like walking past free champagne in order to buy expensive water. To discover a treasure in a neglected part of the Book of Common Prayer is one of the secret joys of being a member of the Church of England. You need never be bored! So I commend the Communion, and specifically its exhortation and prayers, to you and to your parishes and chaplaincies—not only on the First Day of Lent, but on other occasions, too.

The Lord bless us, and keep us; the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon us, and give us peace, now and for evermore. Amen.

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Rediscovering the Little-Used Collects, Prayers and Thanksgivings in the Book of Common Prayer

DAVID PHILLIPS

Introduction – About Prayer

Before looking at the particular prayers that I've been asked to speak about in the Book of Common Prayer, I would like us to reflect for a moment on what prayer is, then on the purpose of following set prayers and their place in our spiritual development.

Fr Robert Crouse, a long-time member of the Prayer Book Society of Canada, and spiritual mentor of many Prayer Book priests in Canada, in a sermon for Rogation Sunday, says this,

The practicality of new life in Christ, the new life of charity, is only possible by prayer. Therefore this final Sunday of the Easter season is the Sunday of 'Rogation,' which means 'prayer.' And it is crucial that we understand just what this prayer is all about. For many, I suppose, prayer is just a matter of asking God for this or that, according to particular occasions, or particular emergencies. But really, prayer is something much more basic than this or that particular request. It is a much more radical sort of asking. It is the habit of relating, the habit of referring all our thoughts and words and deeds, and all our circumstances to God through Jesus Christ... I don't mean just 'saying prayers,' though that is a beginning, a sort of method of prayer. By prayer, I mean habitual, continual awareness of our life as being plainly in the presence of the Father, in every instant and in every circumstance, and a steadfast willing of the will of God.¹

So it is into this understanding of prayer, as a way of being, that we consider the helpfulness of set prayers. When we pray, we are interceding with God, but we are also remembering God and placing ourselves under God—it is the most basic act of humbling ourselves to counter

¹ www.lectionarycentral.com/rogation/Crouse1.html

our pride. The Church's set prayers are objectively intercession to God, but they also shape the way we think. We are being shaped by the very words—what we ask, how we ask it, how God is connected with our daily concerns, the relation of God to the world, to his Church, to the individual, to His Creation, and His Providential care—there are a whole range of ideas that are being formed in us when we use set prayers.

Richard Hooker, in defending the use of set prayers, speaks also about the moving of our hearts. He says,

A great part of the cause, wherefore religious minds are *so inflamed with the love of public devotion*, is that virtue, force, and efficacy, which by experience they find that the very form and reverend solemnity of common prayer duly ordered hath, to help that imbecility and weakness in us, by means whereof we are otherwise of ourselves the less apt to perform unto God so heavenly a service, with such *affection of heart, and disposition in the powers of our souls* as is requisite. To this end therefore all things hereunto appertaining have been ever thought convenient to be done with the most solemnity and majesty that the wisest could devise.²

This understanding is also reiterated in the *Eikon Basilike*, an anonymous treatise published soon after the execution of Charles I in 1649:

For the manner of using set and prescribed forms, there is no doubt but that wholesome words, being known and fitted to men's understanding, are soonest received into their hearts, and aptest to excite and carry along with them judicious and fervent affections.³

So the set prayers we use, lead us to pray for things we would not otherwise think of and as we use them they help in the very forming of our souls, they shape the way we think and, if we are persistent, lead us to a state of prayerful being—to 'praying at all times'. They also ought to be ordered in such a way by 'the wisest', so as to stir up our love of praying and most importantly our love of God and of all things in God. They can be a preparation for contemplation.

This is why the Book of Common Prayer, with its solid doctrine, Catholic and Reformed, set in clear and poetic language can be such

2 Richard Hooker, *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book V, c. xxv [1] (italics added).

3 As quoted in Paul Elmer Moore and Frank Leslie Cross, *Anglicanism* (1935), p. 622.

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a powerful instrument in the conversion, by grace, of our hearts and minds and lead us into the heights.

I've been asked to speak today about certain prayers found in the Book of Common Prayer: the Prayers and Thanksgivings found after the Litany and the collects found at the end of the Holy Communion service.

My primary source for the historical background of these prayers is John Henry Blunt's Annotated Commentary, Revised and Enlarged Edition, 1884. (*The Annotated Book of Common Prayer, being an historical, ritual, and theological commentary on the devotional system of the Church of England*). I highly recommend it as a resource for understanding the riches of the Prayer Book. If you haven't heard of it, or don't already have one, it is now available online to download for free in PDF format.⁴ There are many editions, the online version is even more comprehensive than some printed versions—it has extensive Scriptural references for every prayer. (Blunt comments from a high-church perspective. I'm told that probably the best resource from a low-church perspective is *The Tutorial Prayer Book*, by Charles Neil and J.M. Willoughby.⁵)

I The Prayers and Thanksgivings

Let's look first at the Prayers and Thanksgivings found after the Litany. Blunt says this about the origin of these Occasional prayers:

This collection of prayers and thanksgivings for special occasions was appended to Morning and Evening Prayer in 1661, but some of the prayers had been in use at an earlier date. Such a collection had occupied a place at the end of the ancient Service-books of the Church: and the use of prayers similar to these is very ancient. (p. 235)

The first two prayers, *For Rain* and *For Fair Weather*, were in the first Book of Common Prayer of 1549, included with the prayers after the Communion service. The next four were added in the 1552 Prayer Book—but the six were then placed at the end of the Litany where they are now. Corresponding thanksgivings were added in 1604 and the remaining prayers and thanksgivings were added in 1661.

4 At www.archive.org

5 Also available on-line—see note 4.

Let's look at the specific prayers:

The first six prayers related to weather, to dearth or famine, to war and tumult, to plague and sickness

For those of you who are steeped in the Scriptures, these prayers will bring to mind certain Biblical history and prophesy:

The plagues brought upon Egypt to bring about its repentance in the book of Exodus (and in Genesis)

The sword, famine and pestilence brought upon Israel to bring about its repentance (both in its Exodus from Egypt and during the time of the Prophets after they had come into the Promised Land)

They might remind us of the prayer of Solomon at the consecration of the Temple

When heaven is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against you, ...If there is famine in the land, if there is pestilence or blight or mildew or locust or caterpillar, if their enemies besiege them in the land at their gates, whatever plague, whatever sickness there is, whatever prayer, whatever plea is made by any man or by all your people Israel, each knowing his own affliction and his own sorrow and stretching out his hands towards this house, then hear from heaven your dwelling place and forgive and render to each whose heart you know... (2 Chronicles 6:26-31)

They might remind us of the four horses of the Apocalypse—famine, pestilence and the sword are signs of judgement of the earth.

In these prayers, there is: a calling upon God, acknowledging his power to bring a change if he wills it; there is a stating of the disaster, and acknowledging of our culpability, though not necessarily directly, for the disaster; that it is a just punishment, that we deserve, which is an expression of repentance; and they conclude with an act of faith, trusting in and pleading for the mercy of God to bring about a change.

These prayers deal with the question of Theodicy—if God is all powerful and all loving, then why do we suffer? The Christian answer is that these disasters are related to the Fallenness of creation and stem ultimately from human sin.

There would have been a time perhaps two generations ago when what we call 'natural disasters' would be explained away completely by

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scientific reasonings, and maybe these prayers would have been seen as unfitting. But a more recent development in our society, is to think about natural disasters as very much related to our sinfulness—our excess, our greed, our poor stewardship of the environment—blaming natural disasters on man-made global warming, or excessive use of antibiotics (leading to pestilence) or poor farming practices (leading to famine), overfishing leading to a depletion of fish stocks . . . It may be that in this generation these prayers have a greater resonance.

These prayers used from time to time in such crises bring our minds to seeing disaster as a place of learning and growth and to see all that is happening in the created order as within the realm of God's Providence.

A couple of notes about the specific prayers:

In the time of Dearth and Famine—the word 'cheapness' as the opposite of 'dearth' is difficult, given that we generally understand 'cheapness' in a negative way as referring to low quality, rather than as a description of abundance. It comes from the idea that prices go up during shortages and go down in times of abundance—as when Samaria is besieged by Syria and Elijah predicts that 'Tomorrow about this time a seah of fine flour shall be sold for shekel, and two seahs of barley for a shekel, at the gate of Samaria' (2 Kings 7:1). Revisions of Books of Common Prayer in other countries have included revisions to these prayers—you could look at the version in the proposed 1928 Prayer Book.

The Prayer *In the time of War and Tumults* would, I think, be well suited in our time of terrorism, or in the case of a parish with members of the military serving in dangerous places. There is one of those memorable triads that we find in BCP prayers, in relation to our enemies: 'abate their pride, assuage their malice, and confound their devices'!

Blunt mentions that John Cosin, Bishop of Durham, who was quite involved in the Prayer Book revisions in 1662, was responsible for some minor alterations of these prayers. For example, in the last of these prayer related to disasters, *In the time of any common Plague or Sickness* he added words 'who didst send a plague upon thine own people in the wilderness, for their obstinate rebellion against Moses and Aaron', and also the reference to the atonement offered. He says of Bishop Cosin's alterations: 'the general tendency...was to raise the objective tone of the prayers here and elsewhere, making our addresses to God of a more reverent and humble character' (p. 236).

Ember week prayers

There are two prayers for Ember Weeks. Ember days happen four times a year for three days: the Wednesday, Friday and Saturday after the Feast of St Lucy (Dec 13), Ash Wednesday, Whitsunday, and Holy Cross Day (Sept 14). The word ‘ember’ comes from the Latin ‘quatour tempora’, shortened in German to ‘quatember’ and further shortened in English to ‘ember’. The observance of these Ember times dates back to Pope Callistus (c. 220 AD) and we have sermons on Ember days from Pope Leo from the fifth century. These observances may have had their origin in pagan festivals related to harvest, vintage, and seeding time. But since at least the fifth century, the focus shifted to the spiritual planting and harvesting of the gospel, and so became times of ordination. This is no longer the case for Roman Catholics—since Vatican II, they are now days of prayers for various needs as decided by regional conferences of bishops. But, retaining the memory of the Church, they remain, in Anglicanism, especially a time for praying for ordinands.⁶

The BCP sets forth these Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays as days of fasting or abstinence. But the rubric above these two Ember day collects says one or the other is to be said *every day* during the Ember Week (from Saturday Evening Prayer to Saturday Evening Prayer).

Blunt says that the first prayer appears to be a composition of Bishop Cosin, as it is found nowhere else and is in the Durham Prayer Book margins in his handwriting. He describes it as, ‘one of the most beautiful and striking prayers in the Prayer Book, and one which is not surpassed by anything in the ancient Sacramentaries or the Eastern Liturgies’ (p. 236). Blunt notes that ‘the Bishops and Pastors of thy flock’ does not refer to Bishops and Priests, but to Bishops, who are the chief pastors of the Church (see the consecration of Bishops Collect).

The second of these prayers is taken from the Collect used at the Ordinations services of Deacons and Priests, with the specific reference to deacons or priests removed.

Notice that both prayers, as is usual in Prayer Book intercessions for clergy, refer to both the ‘doctrine’ of the clergy and ‘their way of life’, addressing the two means by which the Gospel is proclaimed, or undermined.

6 See article in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*.

A Prayer that may be said after any of the former.

Blunt says this is an ancient prayer from the Sacramentary of St Gregory (tenth century—the sacramentary was before the missal, without the lections or sung portions in the liturgy). It was in the Litany until 1544 and then from 1559, but then moved to this place in 1661. Blunt has some helpful suggestions for when these can be used:

The proper times for the use of this prayer are *seasons of penitence*. All days in Lent, Fridays, the Rogation Days (that's the Monday to Wednesday before Ascension Day), and the days of Ember Weeks, are obviously occasions when it comes in with a marked appropriateness . . . It may also be pointed out as a most suitable prayer for use by Clergy and Laity alike *after any confession of sins in private prayer; or in praying with sick persons, in cases when an authoritative absolution is not used.*

A Prayer for the High Court of Parliament

Blunt says this prayer was probably composed by Archbishop William Laud when he was Bishop of St David's. The only alteration was in 1801, when 'Kingdoms' was replaced by the 'Dominions' by an order in Council.

What a beautiful hope is expressed here as the fruit of good government: 'that peace and happiness, truth and justice, religion and piety, may be established among us for all generations': 'Peace and happiness' (not just an absence of war, as peace could be established by fear), 'truth and justice' (that there might be a correspondence between the laws of the state and God's laws and that they be upheld by the judicial system with mercy), 'religion and piety' (a flourishing of religion, but not just of the outward forms or a religion of the head but also of the heart).

As a Canadian Prayer Book Anglican, I know this prayer well because it was moved into our Morning Prayer section as an option in the revisions in 1918 and in 1962 in the *Prayers for the Queen and all in Authority*.

The Collect or Prayer for all Conditions of men

Now to two of the most important of these prayers, the *Collect or Prayer for all Conditions of men* and the *General Thanksgiving*.

Blunt says that the *Prayer for all Conditions of men* was composed by Dr Peter Gunning, later Bishop of Chichester and then of Ely. He describes him as 'one of the chief instruments, under God, in the restoration of the

Prayer Book to national use in 1662' (p. 238). The prayer is believed to be a compilation of some of the petitions from the nine ancient Collects for Good Friday.

I know this prayer well as it was also placed within Morning Prayer as an option in the Canadian revisions in 1918 and in 1962. (It had been brought into the American Morning Prayer service in their 1892 revision.) I used this prayer often in Northern Quebec in my first parish, which was among the Naskapi Cree. There is an interesting part of the prayer which I thought I had to explain to them. In that community, there were Anglicans, Roman Catholics and a few breakaway Pentecostals who called themselves 'Christians' and were known by Anglicans by that name. So when it got to the part 'we pray for the good estate of the Catholic Church; that it may be so guided and governed by thy good Spirit' I had to explain we're not just praying for Roman Catholics; and concerning 'that all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth...' I had to explain that we were praying not just for the Pentecostals; we were praying for ourselves also in both of these names—'Catholic' and 'Christian'. Interestingly, I read in Blunt, that the phrase 'all who profess and call themselves Christians',

was evidently framed with reference to the Puritan Nonconformists, who had sprung up in such large numbers during the great Rebellion; but it is equally applicable as a prayer of charity for Dissenters at all times; and no words could be more gentle or loving than these, when connected with the petitions for unity, peace, and righteousness which follow.

So maybe the initial Naskapi understanding was not so far off after all.

This prayer, said regularly, fixes into our minds our ecclesiology—that the Anglican Church is part of the wider Catholic Church and recognizes Christians of other denominations as part of that Catholic Church—and this prayer is a call to unity in Christ. You could also see here the basis of that unity, being 'led into the way of truth', (expressing a humility that we are not there yet) 'unity of spirit, in the bond of peace', (a genuine love for one another), 'and in righteousness of life' (again, doctrine and life are held together).

This prayer includes petitions for the world (the nations), for the Church, and for the suffering. Notice that in the petition for the afflicted

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we ask God to give ‘them patience under their sufferings, and a happy issue out of all their afflictions...’ Even to hear this reminds us of the salutary effects that suffering can have when borne in faith—growth in patience, a new perspective on life as we are delivered, drawing closer to God.

It is a great prayer to memorize, so you can use it, if you have to say your office in the car while travelling or elsewhere, without a book at hand.

The rubric for this prayer states that it is to be used at such times when the *Litany* is not appointed to be said. Blunt thinks that ‘to be used’ is identical with ‘that may be used’.

General Thanksgiving

Blunt says ‘It was composed or compiled by Edward Reynolds, Bishop of Norwich, for the revision of 1661.’ The first part of it may be from a prayer by Queen Elizabeth I or they both may have borrowed from an earlier prayer that we’re not aware of.

I personally think this is one of the most beautiful prayers in the Book of Common Prayer. I’m quite familiar with it because it was also moved by the Americans revisers in 1892 and by Canadian revisers in 1918 as a closing prayer before the Prayer of St Chrysostom in Morning Prayer. In the English Prayer Book it has no rubric about its use, but in Utrecht, when I ask people to join me if they know it, there are a number who know it by heart.

I think this is another prayer that is especially useful to commit to memory. Especially beautiful are these phrases about things we are to be thankful for:

‘but above all for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ’, the word ‘inestimable’ itself is not easy to say—by its very difficulty it expresses something of the inestimability of God’s love!

‘for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory’. Even to say this is to be reminded in our current circumstances of our hope and to lift up our hearts with an enthusiasm, a joy.

‘give us that due sense of all thy mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful’:

If we are oppressed by our current trials, feeling ungrateful, it is surely because we have failed to hold before our minds also the many mercies that are falling upon us daily from God.

‘that we show forth thy praise, not only with our lips but in our lives; by giving up ourselves to thy service, and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days’.

It reminds me of the counsel of St James, ‘Pure religion...is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world’ (James 1:27). This Thanksgiving prayer, said almost daily at Evening Prayer in a parish church I went to on the way home from work as a Chemical Engineer, worked in my heart as a continual nudge to my own sense of calling to ordained ministry.

Other thanksgivings

The rest of the Thanksgiving prayers correspond with the petitions in the section on Prayers about weather, plague, enemies or strife as a response to a petition received. You would probably agree that we are much better at making requests in our need than in thanking God once our prayers have been answered. Using such prayers more often would be a part of giving us a ‘due sense of all his mercies, that our hearts might be unfeignedly thankful’.

Strangely, Blunt has no time for these other thanksgiving prayers. He says:

Except the General Thanksgiving, none of these Occasional Thanksgivings are well adapted to the necessities of present times: and the introduction of several new ‘Memoriae Communes’ would be a good work of revision, provided they were worded in language whose suitableness and dignity made them fit to be placed beside more ancient parts of the Prayer Book.

Does the beginning of the prayers for the *Deliverance from the Plague*, or other common Sickness strike too harsh a tone? Is every disaster a direct punishment for our sins?

O LORD God, who hast wounded us for our sins, and consumed us for our transgressions, by thy late heavy and dreadful visitation...

and

WE humbly acknowledge before thee, O most merciful Father, that

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all the punishments which are threatened in thy law might justly have fallen upon us, by reason of our manifold transgressions and hardness of heart:

These statements are true, but do they help us see the distinction between God's directive will and his permissive will—that he allows suffering to happen, he removes his wall of protection, if nothing else will wake us up? Some changes were proposed in the 1928 BCP to capture that distinction, but have they gone too far? The second of these prayers, in their revision, begins with: 'O LORD God, who dost not willingly afflict the children of men . . .'

The prayers as they stand are true, and by their very offensiveness, reveal a certain loss of nerve in our speaking about sin. But I'm not convinced it would be pastorally sensitive to say a prayer like this, in the presence of someone on the edge of the Christian faith, someone just exploring, someone immature. It could be an obstacle rather than help them to draw closer. In the same way that a cleric would take great care in sharing the pastoral consolations (the Church's responses to theodicy) with someone who has suffered a tragedy in their lives, these prayers require discretion as to when and in front of whom to use them.

II The Collects after Holy Communion

These Collects are appointed in the rubric to be used, one or more, at an 'Ante-Communion' service (a service from the beginning of Holy Communion to the end of the Prayer of Intercession), or after the Collects of Morning Prayer or Evening Prayer, Holy Communion, or the Litany.

These Collects are from a mixture of sources. The first, second, and fourth are translations of ancient collects found in the Church of England at least as early as the Sarum Missal (eleventh century) and the earlier Gregorian Sacramentary.

The first Collect: has the memorable phrase 'among all the changes and chances of this mortal life' that characterizes our pilgrimage status in this life (Heb 11.13; 1 Peter 2.11). In praying this prayer we are reminded in the midst of our present sufferings of the promise of 'the attainment of everlasting salvation' and hope is renewed.

The second Collect: We call upon God to 'direct, sanctify and govern, both our hearts and bodies.' In this prayer we acknowledge that the greatest dangers we face in the spiritual life are not from without, but

from within—an unsteady heart, out of which come all sorts of evil thoughts (e.g. Matt 15.19), and the disordered passions of the body (e.g. James 4). Here we acknowledge the need for grace: to *direct* our thoughts and passions; to *sanctify* us i.e. form new habits of holiness in us, of love (the substance of God's moral Law, His commandments); and to *govern*—keep us steadfast in willing His commandments.

The third Collect: This is apparently a paraphrase of a prayer in the Liturgy of St James. It appealed to the Reformers (e.g. Pollanus) because of their special interest in the Word of God written taking deep root and changing our lives. This is a great prayer calling on God to bring the lessons heard in the readings at the Offices or Ante-Communion to our hearts, but also good for use at the end of a Bible study. We see that 'good living' is the fruit of the Word of God being planted and allowed to take root (e.g. the Parable of the Sower, the Gospel for Sexagesima Sunday, St Luke 8.4-15).

The fourth Collect: It begins with the important but difficult word 'Prevent us' which used to mean, to go before us. We are more used to the related term, 'prevenient' grace—the grace which guides us even before we have become a Christian to seek out Christ. (As in that prayer in the Communion service—'Turn thou us, O good Lord, and so shall we be turned...') In the 1918 revision of the Book of Common Prayer in Canada, there was much debate about changing this word because even then it would normally be understood in the opposite way, as 'to hinder us', but in the end they chose not change it because the alternatives suggested, such as 'Direct us' (as in the American revision), didn't hold the full meaning, and it would also further alienate us from other collects in the Prayer Book:

Collect for Trinity XVII—'Lord, we pray thee that thy grace may always prevent and follow us . . .' (direct doesn't work)

Easter Collect—'as by thy special grace preventing us thou dost put into our minds good desires' (changed in the Canadian 1962 Book of Common Prayer by taking out the words 'preventing us')

One solution might be to replace 'Prevent us...' with the phrase 'Go before us...'

This prayer is found also at the end of the services for the Ordering of Deacons and the Ordering of Priests, and is appointed to be used every

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day by the Royal Navy when at sea. It is also one of the optional prayers for the Prayers used in the House of Lords.

As well as being great for use in Morning Prayer, it would be a very good prayer to start or end PCC meetings.

The fifth and sixth Collects, Blunt says, 'appear to be compositions of the Reformers.' The fifth Collect reminds us of the Providence of God in seeing all our needs before we ask, but also of the call to pray despite this (e.g. Matt 6.8). It lays out some of the obstacles to prayer—our ignorance in knowing what to ask for, our fear of unworthiness—and yet that despite these, because of the great mercy of God revealed to us in Christ we have assurance and a boldness to ask (e.g. Luke 11.1-13; Ps 19.12).

The sixth Collect: Blunt notes that this prayer is 'like a paraphrase of the Prayer of St Chrysostom' and so would not be appropriate for use at Morning and Evening Prayer which ends with the Prayer of St Chrysostom and the Grace.

Conclusion

We've been gifted with the Prayers and Thanksgivings and extra Collects in the Book of Common Prayer for use in our services of Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, Ante-Communion and Holy Communion and with the Litany. Perhaps the highlights of these gems are the *Prayer for all Conditions of men* and the *General Thanksgiving*, and the prayers *In the Ember Weeks*, reminding us to take times in the year to focus especially on prayer for those to be admitted to Holy Orders. Some of these prayers and thanksgivings, will require a certain discretion on the part of worship leaders for their use and, in the case of some prayers, we may want to consider the revisions in 1928 and in other Anglican Churches since 1662.

These gifts to the Church of set prayers, 'that the wisest have devised', are helpful in guiding our corporate prayer life in a way that shapes our understanding of who God is, our relation to Him and His relation to the world, and give us a certain comfort when prayers are being said that we can heartily say the Amen! These prayers move our hearts by their poetry to love to pray and to love our Lord and neighbour. They can play their part in leading us to a state of being where we are 'continually at prayer'. It seems fitting that we conclude with one these prayers, prayer being one of our chief 'doings':

PREVENT us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy most gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help; that in all our works, begun,

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continued, and ended in thee, we may glorify thy holy Name, and finally by thy mercy obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

(The Revd David Phillips is Chaplain of Holy Trinity Church, Utrecht, in the Diocese of Europe. This paper was delivered at the Prayer Book Society Conference 2017.)

A Public Affair

MERLIN SUDELEY

Our lives are a public affair, so it is better for us to be not ourselves but what we represent. I am a hereditary peer, and when the House of Lords was hereditary the favourite topics for debate were deer-stalking, capital punishment and the Book of Common Prayer. So it is my pleasure to speak about what before my eviction from the House of Lords I sought to achieve for the Prayer Book in Parliament – and to begin with the Sudeleys, especially to explain their service to God provided by other links than my own with the Church. It is natural for the aristocracy to look back.

‘How are your peacocks?’ a woman asked me after she had seen them at Sudeley Castle. I have no peacocks, and it was back in 1469 that, being Lancastrians, we were obliged to surrender Sudeley to the Yorkist Crown. So why did we take the name of Sudeley for our peerage? At Queen Victoria’s Coronation Charles Hanbury-Tracy was created Lord Sudeley because through marriage to his first cousin the Tracy heiress he represented his father-in-law’s Irish peerage of Tracy given by Charles I owing to the splendour and antiquity of our descent from Charlemagne. But there were Irish claimants to the Irish peerage who were defeated later on. So for the new English peerage the name of Sudeley was taken as our next best historical precedent. It is by accident of birth rather than any fault of our own we have been born into the aristocracy. But when the present owners of Sudeley Castle, who are Victorian industrialists, came to dine with us in the nineteenth century, they complained afterwards that being mediaeval aristocracy made us very decadent and tedious.

For two centuries before the Conquest the Tracys were Frankish aristocracy descended from Charlemagne, whose ancestry can be taken back with certainty to St. Arnulf, consecrated Bishop of Metz in 611. Child of the Romantic Revival, Byron preferred a bad ancestor to a good one, and unfortunately it is only with a fair degree of probability that we can take the descent of St. Arnulf back to Cloderic the Parricide, King of Cologne, and himself a kinsman of Clovis, King of the Franks.

We came to hold the Norman County of the Vexin. In 1042 our Tracy ancestor Ralph Earl of Hereford was brought to England from Normandy by his uncle Edward the Confessor, and put in charge of the fleet at the time of Godwine's exile. Because his crews absconded Godwine was able to return.

In the twelfth century the family bifurcated. I am descended from the younger son William de Tracy, who was subinfeudated of Toddington by his elder brother Ralph at Sudeley. William has been identified as one of the four knights who killed Becket. All of them deserve exoneration. It is the cause which makes the martyr. The scope of canon law over which King and Archbishop fell into dispute was hardly a cause for which martyrs should die. Moreover, Henry II knew his canon law better than Becket, and nowadays scholars agree the knights did not intend to kill Becket, merely to arrest him. Murder happened because Becket did not come quietly. A verdict of manslaughter makes sense to explain the surprising lightness of the punishment which the knights received—a lifetime of fasting and prayer, and fourteen years of military service with the Knights Templar in the Holy Land.

On the eve of the Reformation, an erudite theologian Sir William Tracy made a famous Protestant will where he expressed his disbelief in Purgatory by declaring no masses should be said on behalf of his soul, and he left the burial of his body just to his executors. Probate was governed by the ecclesiastical courts, and the order was sent out from the highest ecclesiastical court of Convocation that the heretic's corpse should be exhumed from consecrated ground. The Provost of the diocese, however, went further and burnt it. Forbidden on every count to shed blood, the Church was not allowed to burn a heretic if he was dead any more than if he was alive. For exceeding his authority in this way the Provost paid a heavy fine. The incident was a powder trail for the Reformation. Tyndale wrote a commentary on the will; to possess a copy was a sure sign you were a man of sound Protestant convictions; and for over a century the will was widely distributed.

The springboard for the career of Sir William Tracy's younger son Richard was to clear his father's name from the humiliation of being exhumed. Because there were so many monasteries in Gloucestershire there is an old saying God dwelt there, and Richard Tracy was appointed a commissioner to examine the Holy Blood at Hailes Abbey near

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Toddington, declared to be honey coloured with saffron. Standing high in the favour of Thomas Cromwell, Richard Tracy was granted a lease on Stanway, also near Toddington, which had been the Summer House of the Abbots of Tewkesbury and was later to pass through marriage from us to our Scottish cousins the Charterises, Earls of Wemyss and March who still live there today. Because it was feared the monasteries might be restored, no remodelling of Stanway took place till the end of the reign of Queen Elizabeth. With its Great Hall and Jacobean Gatehouse the remodelled Stanway is a jewel of Cotswold architecture, looking more like an Oxford college than a country home, nevertheless declared by Frank Lloyd Wright to be the American's idea of what an Englishman's house should be.

In Regency times the first Lord Sudeley personally designed our ostentatious new home of Toddington in Gloucestershire in his blend of the Perpendicular Gothic and Picturesque styles. As a token of ancestor worship our murder of Becket is sculpted over the entrance, and in the Great Tower is set the statue of Henry VIII who dissolved the monasteries and disgraced Becket's memory. The second Lord Sudeley's grandson, the Edwardian actor Cyril Maude, about whom we used to say he was the first gentleman to appear on the stage, complained it was a queer sort of cathedral. That was a misjudgement. Its sculpture is secular in its orientation, and Toddington was the happy home of my family, our new ball gown which we kept till the usurers took it from us. It is a disgrace the Church has forgotten its old teaching against usury. Toddington is no less than the fore-runner of the new Houses of Parliament where the first Lord Sudeley was Chairman of the Commission which chose Barry's design. At first committee rooms of the new Houses of Parliament were squashed awkwardly into triangles. Later, when more ground was allowed, the river front was much lengthened. Sudeley liked to insist such lengthening spoilt the full effect of the vertical line, which is the essence of Gothic architecture pointing upwards to God.

The architects of the Gothic Revival were forever whistling in the dark for a style of their own they never found. Under this limitation the paradox of the Gothic Revival was to move backwards. With the passage of time imitation of earlier mediaeval styles was attempted.

Whilst Toddington is Perpendicular, in the 1870s we commissioned Street, the architect of the Law Courts, to build a new church at Toddington

in the chaste classical Gothic of Salisbury Cathedral. It is too large for the village, more an estate church built to correspond to what the third Lord Sudeley perceived to be his position in Victorian society. Ever since the clergy in Gloucestershire have complained about the expense of its upkeep, which is unfair. Its superb acoustics have made it into a good money spinner when hired out for recording and concerts.

Coming to the Prayer Book, my summary of how it fell into disfavour and the work in Parliament of the Prayer Book Society and myself in its defence will have to be superseded by the biography of the Prayer Book Society being prepared by its old Chairman Tony Kilmister. His packet of jokes is a large one, so I am sure his story will be informed with wit and humour.

Most of all the Prayer Book has to matter because it is the yardstick of Anglican doctrine. It began to be discredited in the nineteenth century owing to the sharpening of the division within the Church of England between High and Low. The Prayer Book came to be used by the Evangelicals as a banner to hale the Anglo-Catholics before the courts for confession, bells and incense. After the First World War the governing body of the Church of England, the Church Assembly (now become the Synod) was established. At first it was not intended that this organisation should touch doctrine, but merely to attend to the minutiae of church affairs. In little time, however, in 1928, it proposed a revision of the Prayer Book, which was rejected by the House of Commons, owing to its controversial doctrinal provisions about the Reservation of the Sacrament. It is suggested it was the rejection of this mild revision which opened Pandora's Box for the release of all the more drastic revisions we have had ever since.

From about the end of the Second World War revisers of the liturgy became mesmerised by the publication of the Anglo-Catholic Gregory Dix's tome *The Shape of the Liturgy* which tried to say that Cranmer was unorthodox and a Zwinglian. Then with the 1960s came falling church attendance. Because amongst themselves they cannot agree about anything, even the time of day, the bishops have to sit in conclave to give afterwards at least the appearance of unanimity, so we do not know how the bishops reach their decisions. But it is a fair guess the bishops decided the only way to restore church attendance was to modernise the liturgy. It was the wrong decision.

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The scene was set now for the stormy passage given to liturgical revision in Parliament in which I have participated. Now democracy has become an entirely clean word, so for me it was a most happy conjunction of circumstances that bishops should still be sitting in the House of Lords and as a hereditary peer I should be there too. Bishops have sat in the House of Lords since the mists of time during the Saxon period when links between Church and State were exceptionally close, and on matters of conscience their voice should indeed still be heard in Parliament, yet we read in the odd Government Paper the recommendation that in a purely democratic Upper Chamber the bishops would occupy no reserved place. Then as to the presence of hereditary peers in the House of Lords, it was settled as a matter of administrative convenience by the end of the fourteenth century, and in the eighteenth century was given ample justification under Aristotle's Theory of a Mixed Constitution. Then come the end of the last century we were told there could be no Stage II of reform of the House of Lords without Stage I of the elimination, they did not say liquidation, of the hereditaries. Yet no Stage II of reform has been realised owing to the lack of consensus over whether we should have an appointed or elected Upper Chamber.

We look forward therefore to the full restoration of the hereditaries just as happened after Cromwell's disastrous experiment of the Commonwealth. Humpty Dumpty may have fallen off his wall, but certainly he can be put back again.

I have digressed from the Prayer Book, and now to return to it. In 1974 Michael Ramsay, Archbishop of Canterbury, confirmed liturgical revision by introducing into the House of Lords the Synod's Worship and Doctrine Measure. In my speech I was helped by memoranda prepared for me from various dioceses by the Prayer Book Society which enabled me to show how the new services were a clerical initiative imposed upon the laity who did not wish and had never wanted to have them. This unfair situation had arisen owing largely to the complex gearing of the Synod's electoral processes. The parish sends its representative to the Deanery Synod, and it is only the Deanery Synod which elects representatives to the General Synod, so the poor man in the pew seldom knows who his representative in the General Synod may be. Nevertheless we were given the firm assurance that the new services were alternative only, and the old book would keep its place.

Yet in the event matters turned out quite differently. The new services were becoming more than alternative, and the Prayer Book was on the way out. Too many of the laity were left without exposure to the Prayer Book to make any choice. To hold the line, and make sure the Prayer Book was not to disappear altogether we had to go to Parliament. In 1981 I cleared a Bill in the House of Lords to enable the laity who wished to have the Prayer Book on Sundays to do so. And as a flag-waving exercise, without any legislative force behind it, we arranged for the same Bill to be introduced on the same day under the Ten Minute Rule in the House of Commons, where it was equally successful. Lord Cranborne (now Lord Salisbury) carried the day there also, helped by his youth and the identification of his Cecil family with the Elizabethan religious settlement.

Unfortunately I could not split the Bench of Bishops, since all of them were opposed to me, and the most powerful argument I had to face was that I was acting in breach of the custom in the constitution which had existed since the Enabling Act set up the Church Assembly, which had later become the Synod, that all legislation on church matters must start from there rather than be initiated in Parliament. The Secretary-General of the Synod told me I should be disestablishing the Church. I took this threat with a pinch of salt. An internal dispute within the Church about its liturgy would be incommensurate with a step of the magnitude of Disestablishment. Parliament would have to agree to find time. It would mean no bishops sitting in the House of Lords or attending the Coronation.

To oppose the argument that I was acting in breach of the aforementioned custom in the constitution I got just the speech I needed from Lord Dacre, formerly Hugh Trevor-Roper and Regius Professor of History at Oxford, to say that the autonomy granted to the Church of England by the Enabling Act was not the same as the independence it would have on Disestablishment, so it was quite proper for Parliament to intervene on a matter so fundamental as the present revolution in Anglican liturgy. The comedy about Dacre's intervention, and it could happen only in England, was that Dacre was not a believer. Like Gibbon, whom he admired above all other other historians, Dacre was a well-known member of the cultural establishment who despised the Christian faith. Recently elected Master of the High Anglican Peterhouse

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in Cambridge he had applied for leave to preach there, and permission was understandably refused.

My victory was due to the strong feeling that the assurances given over the Prayer Book keeping its place had been broken. In response to my victory, the House of Bishops passed a series of resolutions to improve the status of the Prayer Book in the Church of England. But it soon became apparent that my victory was qualified because the bishops could not be bothered to implement their own recommendations. Still the Prayer Book was on the way out. At this point the Prayer Book Society came to owe a great debt to David Martin, Professor of Sociology at the LSE, in the way described in his autobiography *The Education of David Martin, The Making of an Unlikely Sociologist* (2013). He began with an article for the *Daily Telegraph*, 'The Great Act of Forgetting the Prayer Book.' Over a glass of whisky the Editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, William Deedes, announced gleefully that this article has attracted the largest postbag since the issue had arisen of dogs fouling the pavement. Next Martin solicited petitions on behalf of the old book from many of the great of the land—ranging from politicians and actors to leaders of the musical profession—all for presentation to all members of the Synod. This act was followed by a Gallup poll to show how most of the laity, including young people, preferred the Prayer Book, about which *The Times* editorial gloated 'Gallup Poll comes to the rescue.' But none of these initiatives elicited any response from the Church because it was nobody's business to deal with informal pressure. The only recourse was to re-introduce my Bill in Parliament. It was then at last David Martin was received by Robert Runcie, the Archbishop of Canterbury, at Lambeth Palace. We assumed the Prayer Book was the Church of England. But to Runcie the Prayer Book was less important than holding his church together. He declined to negotiate because, he said, there were people at the sharp end of liturgical change threatening to campaign for Disestablishment. David Martin said he did not expect to negotiate, but simply to be heard.

On the eve of the debate in Parliament David Martin held a press conference which brought the excellent result that all the national newspapers backed the traditionalists. The question now was whether Parliament would agree with public opinion and the press. Once again my victory was qualified.

Out of our Bill we intended to establish a Select Committee in the House of Lords on the Prayer Book, empowered to summon and

examine witnesses. Chief amongst those we intended to put in the witness box was Ramsay, the old Archbishop of Canterbury, to cross-examine him about his intentions when he introduced the Worship and Doctrine Measure. Did he wish to see the Prayer book out? I could tell at once from the way in which the Whip's Office had arranged the list of speakers the Government felt we had gone too far.

At all costs I had to avoid an open defeat. Help came from two quarters, the intemperance of the Lord Chancellor, Lord Hailsham, and the accommodation given to us by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Most probably Lord Hailsham preferred the Prayer Book, so it is unlikely he himself believed in the official position he adopted as a member of the Government to adduce the constitutional argument that all legislation on church matters should start in the Synod rather than in Parliament. Summing up I alluded to the remark in the *Daily Telegraph* editorial that the peers should not permit themselves to be bamboozled by the forensic skill of the Lord Chancellor. Hailsham blew into a rage and threw his stick from the Woolsack. Afterwards the Leader of the House, Lord Whitelaw, apologised, saying Hailsham could win every case yet lost a few through his intemperance.

It appears the Archbishop of Canterbury put his name down to speak because he was alarmed and felt he had no choice except to do so. But he did give us what we wanted, the assurance, and it was the best we could hope for, that the Prayer Book would not be confined to a museum, but remain available to all who wished to use it. I thanked him for that assurance. With it, I said, I hoped the resurrection of my Bill would not be necessary.

In 1987 I introduced a debate in the House of Lords about the Report of the Prayer Book Society on the inadequate teaching and use of the Prayer Book in theological colleges. Before my Bill in 1981, in many theological colleges there was almost no alternative to the new services; and even in those colleges which had a fairer approach, the Prayer Book was used for no more than one term in three.

The Prayer Book Society found how jealous the theological colleges were of their misconceived autonomy. Some colleges decided it was not college policy to give information to the Prayer Book Society; and one college in particular, Ridley Hall in Cambridge, refused to take up the Prayer Book Society's questionnaire because it disliked even the remote

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possibility of being used for statistical information in a public debate. Then the Bishop of Newcastle added that if experience in officiating according to the rites of the Prayer Book is withheld from ordinands at theological colleges, that was not to matter, instruction could be given later on in the dioceses to which ordinands are sent. In point of fact theological colleges are not sovereign. They are subject to the discipline of bishops' visitations. The bishops can refuse recognition to a theological college where the Prayer Book is not sufficiently taught and used by not sending to it any more candidates for ordination, and if that were to happen the college would have to close.

The year 2000 marked the beginning of a reaction. To replace the *Alternative Service Book*, the Liturgical Commission, by then a more conservative body than the Synod, gave us a new book, *Common Worship*, where some Cranmerian material is inserted alongside the new services.

To turn now to what is wrong with the new services, chiefly criticism has centred on the two issues of language and theology.

On language, liturgy must be written by a poet. The new services have been composed by a committee. It is well said that a committee can no more write a liturgy than British Rail can do a performance of *Swan Lake* on Waterloo Station.

Often it is said the Prayer Book cannot be understood because its language is archaic. Shakespeare's language is equally archaic, and more difficult than the Prayer Book because as Dr Johnson observed his language is too tight a case for his thought. Nonetheless, the box office takings for Shakespeare's plays are full. It is true that there are words and phrases in the Prayer Book which have changed their meaning. A good example is provided by the Marriage Service. Over what is taken to be the robust Tudor injunction that we should not conduct ourselves like brute beasts, the word brute does not refer to brutality, but to how animals are endowed with less than a human degree of intelligence. The word carnal does not refer to our libidinousness, but to our human as opposed to divine condition which Christ Himself entered when He became man. And the word lust is not about fornication but refers simply to our pleasure, in the way Germans speak about a *Lustgarten*. Shifts of meaning such as these are explained to us in a pamphlet¹ prepared by

1 Roger Beckwith, *Praying with Understanding: Explanations of Words and Passages in the Book of Common Prayer* (2006).

Roger Beckwith of Latimer House in Oxford, which should be read by all confirmands.

Then the change from Thou to You in the new services brings a dangerous shift of theological emphasis. After his 100 terms of converting undergraduates at Cambridge, Vatican II was too much for Monsignor Gilbey, who took up gentleman's residence at the Travellers Club with his own private chapel there, where we were all of us reminded of the priests described in the novels by Ronald Firbank. Never a friend to egalitarianism, Monsignor Gilbey emphasised the need to establish aright our vertical relationship to the Deity before we can hope to succeed in our horizontal relationship with others. Contrariwise, our new prayers of the 'You Who' variety condescend towards the Deity, giving Him orders and information about Himself. The *Alternative Service Book* says: 'Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of God, You take away the sins of the world. You are at the right hand of God.'

Now to speak more fully about Doctrine. Buddhists manage their religion without belief in the existence of a Deity, Jews and Moslems subscribe to the Unity of the Godhead, and Christians believe in the Trinity realised under the Doctrine of the Atonement. Here Christian theology is difficult, but I will attempt a definition of it. Because we inherit sin, Christ as a Divine Person has atoned for our sins through His Death on the Cross. By this act of redemption He has endowed each of us through the Holy Spirit with Grace, so that by our own act of Free Will we may choose to avoid sin. Christians are free to do what they ought, and in this way make our society a better one to live in.

By contrast the ideals of the French Enlightenment and Marxism are secular. According to those ideals we inherit no sin, and as individuals we are left without opportunity to improve ourselves. The community has to be improved through the agency of politicians and social engineers who by the Marxist formula must achieve their end with a political revolution.

There are no new heresies, they are all old ones. Like therefore the Arian heretics of the ancient world, the revisers of the liturgy have undermined the Doctrine of the Atonement by reducing any proper emphasis on the Divinity of Christ which it is the purpose of the Creeds to affirm. The statement given in the *Alternative Service Book* that Christ is one in being with the Father does not carry the firm emphasis in the Prayer Book of

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His being of one substance with the Father. And the *Alternative Service Book* tells us Christ became incarnate of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. That allows the believer to suppose that Joseph, fortified by the Holy Spirit, had a part in the Fatherhood of Christ, whilst the Prayer Book leaves no doubt about the function of the Holy Ghost as a male parent, so that the paternity of Christ is divine. The genealogy of Our Saviour is most important.

Secularising in this way the Divinity of Christ who atoned for the sins of mankind has led in the new services to a weakening of the old emphasis in the Prayer Book on sin and the exercise of our Free Will to rectify it. Our inheritance of sin is omitted from the new service of Baptism where it should hold its essential place. And we seldom hear the Litany nowadays.

Let me add an extra note on the archaeological revival of elements in the services of the early Church which has happened under the influence of Gregory Dix and others. It has to be an eclectic and sham revival when we compare the little which has been revived with everything else which has been left out.

More than fifty years ago I was at Eton. Unlike everything else in the world around it, Eton had not changed. It was just the same as in the late Victorian period so perfectly evoked by Lord Berners in his book *A Distant Prospect*, where Berners says he left Eton as Antony left Cleopatra, with more love than benediction. At Eton Holy Communion happened only three times a year, so for most Sunday mornings in Eton College Chapel we had Mattins. Now, since it was of monastic origin later on in the fourth century, Mattins has been replaced by the Eucharist because that was the regular service of the Primitive Church. Further revivals from the early Church have been the movement towards the abolition of the chancel screen which from the fourth century has separated the clergy from the laity, and the handshake or the kiss which has been taken from an early Greek manual on church order, Justin's *First Apology*. So much for what has been revived.

Most noticeable in what has been omitted from the liturgy of the early Church are the extemporary prayers replaced by fixed prayers for the good reason that fixed prayers were found to be better; and the absence of a Church calendar to spread out through the Christian Year our celebration of the Incarnation, Redemption, Resurrection and Ascension. Before the conversion of Constantine there was but one annual feast, that

of Easter, when these separated events were all celebrated together on the same day.

The rest of what has been omitted was all of it informed by the austere character of the early Christians, which Gibbon describes in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. In their eschewal of pleasure the early Christians were the Puritans of the ancient world.

Their diet was of the plainest kind. Their meat was boiled instead of roasted, and all cooked food had to be eaten without any sauces. They were forbidden to play dice, or attend the theatre and wild beast shows. Their women were not allowed to paint themselves because to do so was an affront to the bounty of their Creator.

Amongst the austerities to be followed in the customs and liturgy of the early Church were these—fasting on all Wednesdays and Fridays and during the whole of the week before Easter ; the penitential discipline for adultery of not being allowed to wash or shave; the discomfort endured by feet from standing throughout all services; and the absence of all instruments for the playing of church music. The pleasures of music should never be withheld from us. G.K. Chesterton was full of *bons mots*, and the best of them was to say of music that it was the purest form of sensuality because no vice is attached to it.

Liturgy is an emotive topic. Ever since the passage of the Worship and Doctrine Measure in 1974 feeling and support for the Book of Common Prayer has been very strong, so I end by saying where the old book stands now. We are a significant minority which does not like what has happened. In part we have ourselves to blame. It is a familiar English sickness to stay away when decisions are taken and complain about the result afterwards. But it does not have to be that way. Regardless of the wishes of their vicar the laity can insist on having the Prayer Book by getting themselves elected to their Parochial Church Councils. For the moment the Prayer Book Society has preferred a low, non-confrontational profile. At its annual conference in Cambridge last September talks were given on the byways of the liturgy—the Communion Service, the lesser known Collects, and the Visitation of the Sick. No panel was set up to discuss how the teaching and use of the Prayer Book in theological colleges might be improved by Bishops' Visitations. Yet quietly the Prayer Book Society ensures that all ordinands are given the Book of Common Prayer with explanatory material, and an invitation free of charge to

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attend our conferences, and provision is arranged for any training which may be needed on how to take a Prayer Book service after coming out of theological college. Our conference in Cambridge was excellently attended by young ordinands and clergy.

For centuries the Church of England has managed to be a broad and comprehensive church accommodating both High and Low because of the two formulas given in the Prayer Book for the administration at Holy Communion, the first to affirm the Real Presence, and the second to give the signal that the Eucharist is a memorial. Why therefore within the brief period of our own generation has the Prayer Book come to be marginalised? Apart from all the other factors I will be controversial and affirm, in conclusion, that because of its old emphasis on our inheritance of sin the Prayer Book has to be out of tune with our present political climate, that of a Liberal Orthodoxy that prevails in our universities to the extent that it is this sad orthodoxy which has come to form our new Establishment.

(Lord Sudeley, F.S.A., is a Lay Patron of the Prayer Book Society.)

Review

Bryan D. Spinks, *The Rise and Fall of the Incomparable Liturgy: The Book of Common Prayer 1559-1906*, SPCK 2017, pp. xi + 198; ISBN 9780-0-281-07605-5 Pbk. £19.99.

Professor Bryan Spinks has written a readable and interesting book, which almost all students of the Prayer Book will learn from, though its usefulness as an ‘account of the ascent and decline of a world classic’ (promised by the blurb) is limited by two factors. The first of these arises from the book’s genesis—Professor Spinks tells us that its composition was prompted by the remark of a colleague that ‘he heard things in my lectures that he hadn’t read or heard before, and that I should write them up while I was still alive’. The second is the decision to confine the narrative to the period of 1559 to 1906.

The latter decision he bases, firstly, on the consideration that the Edwardian books were in use for only a few years—it is the Elizabethan book and its successors which made a lasting impact. This is true of course, and if the book confined itself purely to ‘reception history’ the decision would be justified, but in fact the discussion ranges a good deal wider than use and reception, and in practice readers will need to have at least some idea of the earlier history and an existing knowledge of the contents of the 1662 book. In effect this limits the book’s audience to fellow scholars on the one hand and the minority of instructed Anglicans who are familiar with the traditional liturgy on the other. As to the decision to end the story in 1906, Spinks writes that ‘the Report of the Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline (1906) . . . in many ways set the scene in England for the eventual move towards alternative forms for worship other than the Book of Common Prayer’. This is arguable, but blurs the difference between the limited revision of the Prayer Book proposed as a result of the Commission’s report, and the proliferation of independent ‘alternatives’ later in the century. The history is complex, of course, but it won’t do to suggest that the commissioners’ work so anticipated later developments as to make discussion of these unnecessary.

Apart, however, from these chronological limits the character of the book is affected by the desire to showcase Spinks’s own original research,

as previously mentioned. Some of this had already been set forth in learned journals and 'in this volume', he tells us, 'I have rearranged, expanded and in places précised the previous work to form a single narrative'. The strength of the book then is in the unusual sources which are quoted from and discussed, which this reader at any rate has learnt from. For example, one theme which is illuminatingly stressed is the role of the Chapel Royal, and the Royal Peculiars generally. Court life in any case involved unusual opulence and ceremoniousness, and this naturally extended to not only coronations, but royal baptisms and church services generally. Even in Presbyterian Scotland the baptism of Prince Henry (James I's son) was a gorgeous affair, with a new pulpit 'richly hung with cloth of gold'. This higher ceremonial standard remotely affected arrangements at Durham Cathedral through the Durham House group, many of whom had Chapel Royal connections.

This emphasis on less familiar sources does lead to a certain imbalance, however. Obscure treatments of the Prayer Book are discussed, while commentaries and companions which went through many editions (Nelson, Wheatley, Blunt, Procter Daniel) are ignored. And in common with much previous liturgical history-writing disproportionate space is taken up with complaints about the liturgy: we expect of course to hear the objections, wearisomely reiterated, of the 'Godly' to various things in the authorised liturgy (the cross in Baptism, the ring in the marriage service, and so on), as also the criticisms, from some High Churchmen, of the Communion service, which they would have preferred to follow the 1549 order. But considerable space is also devoted to liturgies that never were, such as 'The Liturgy of Comprehension' of 1689, or liturgies used by very few, such as those of the various Non-Juring groups which Spinks himself describes as 'exotic compilations . . . used by only a small minority of people in a movement that atrophied to extinction'.

The result of this imbalance, as in other liturgical histories, is in effect to privilege the malcontent, the eccentric and the *provocateur* and to marginalise the conformist majority. As Judith Maltby observed in her ground-breaking study of *Prayer Book and People in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England*:

...historians of religion have concentrated on disaffection from the reformed Church of England. The spotlighting of the spiritually disgruntled is explained, if not justified, by the greater visibility of the non-conformist over the conformist in the historical record as well

as the confessional needs which may at times influence the agenda of historical enquiry. The result, however, has been to produce many and varied 'group portraits' of Tudor and Stuart Christianity with some important figures never making it onto the canvas. The women and men who did conform and whose conformity grew beyond mere obedience to the prince (though we must never lose sight of the religious significance of obedience) into an attachment, perhaps even love, for the Church of England surely deserve some attention.

And it is not only 'confessional needs' that may 'influence the agenda'. The principal works on the history of Anglican liturgy during the last fifty years have been written by men such as Geoffrey Cuming and Ronald Jasper who as members of the Liturgical Commission were actively engaged in the supersession of the Book of Common Prayer.¹ And Professor Spinks too has been a member, as he mentions in a Postscript to this book—a Postscript which undertakes to summarise the history from 1906 to the present day, and which is suggestive of his own 'agenda':

With the founding of a Liturgical Commission in 1955, there eventually flowed the experimental texts of Series 1, Series 2 and Series 3, culminating in *The Alternative Service Book* 1980 (ASB) . . . The *Daily Telegraph* extolled the literary merits of 1662 over what it regarded as the banal and thin language of the ASB, failing perhaps to notice that this was because the ASB was written in *Daily Telegraph*-style language . . . I had the privilege of serving on the Liturgical Commission as a member from 1986 to 1995, and thereafter as a consultant until 2000, helping to prepare *Patterns for Worship* and *Common Worship* in its several volumes. The 1662 Book of Common Prayer still holds sway in cathedrals and collegiate churches for Morning and Evening Prayer, enriched with several centuries of wonderful music, proving how successful, even if somewhat monastic in character, those offices were and are. For other services, though, the newest rites hold sway in most parish churches, as indeed they should. What is surprising is that the 1662 revision remained so long without any

1 This was recognised in a review of Geoffrey Cuming's *History of Anglican Liturgy*: 'No better way could have been found to mark the end of the long unchallenged reign of Cranmer's Prayer Book than Dr Cuming's superb charting of its history'. Cuming joined the Liturgical Commission in 1965; Ronald Jasper had been appointed Chairman the previous year.

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further revision. This had more to do with the lack of ecclesiastical machinery to allow for such an undertaking than any literary merit the Book is deemed to possess. The Book of Common Prayer no longer holds the position in the Church of England that it had from 1559 until the nineteenth-century erosion. With the choice of so many alternative new services, there is no concern to remove the 1662 Book from the statute books and so perhaps, like the poor, it will always be with us.

The gibe at the *Daily Telegraph* is rather wide of the mark, almost childishly so: is the implication that if the *Telegraph* had realised the resemblance they would have been perfectly content? Or perhaps the gibe is really at the ASB, which was often accused, and is here admitted to be, written in the style of the broadsheet newspapers? One registers the firmness with which Spinks declares that the 'newest rites' should hold sway in parish churches, while contrasting this with the unconvinced way in which he notes that 1662 is only 'deemed' to have merits. It is of course true that the Book of Common Prayer held its place through its statutory position, and so required parliamentary approval for revision—approval which was not forthcoming even in 1927—but it would take some *chutzpah* to assert that the 'ecclesiastical machinery' evolved to overcome this problem was more representative of the ordinary laity than Parliament had been. The final sentence should put those who would like to see the Prayer Book assume a more prominent position in the Church's worship on their guard: while the Prayer holds a lowly place among a welter of alternatives it can be tolerated (though, like poverty, its presence is presumably disagreeable), but should its fortunes revive we might expect to see a renewed 'concern to remove [it] from the statute books'.

The book then is one from which most readers will learn something new, but it cannot be recommended as a general, still less as a definitive, history of the Prayer Book. For the general reader Alan Jacobs' *The Book of Common Prayer: A Biography* would probably be preferable, though written from an American point of view. There remains is a need for a history of the Prayer Book in England which could be recommended to ordinands and the general reader alike.

John Scrivener

Letter

From Miss A.J.M.Hole, Kidderminster.

I found the Revd Dr Thomas Plant's letter (*Faith & Worship* 81) unnecessarily combative. We are a broad church: a Catholic church by definition, but we can, without contradiction, call ourselves 'Protestant', as the term is embedded in our church history and constitution. The word 'reformed' may be more accurate, but I do think that Anglicans should respect the various traditions and certainly not use the word 'Protestant' as a term of abuse, as some Anglo-Catholics most regrettably do.

It is a pity that Dr Plant could not commend Dr Gatiss's telling account of the neglect of vital liturgical content without the distracting accompaniment of cynical comment. The matter is too important for that.

It has been a great achievement of the Prayer Book that it has for centuries held the whole spectrum of churchmanship together by means of what Dr Plant refers to as 'the discipline of liturgical worship'. Where the Prayer Book is abandoned, 'high' and 'low' fly apart, and each is liable to go off the rails in its own way, leaving not so much a church as various local groups doing their own thing and becoming, at worst, increasingly vague about what they believe and with little if any sense of belonging to something greater than themselves.

All the issues mentioned in Dr Gatiss's article and Dr Plant's letter will and should continue to be debated, but, please, remembering that as Christians, Anglicans and Prayer Book people we are all on the same side. The (recent?) tendency to portray the Anglican Church as consisting of opposite poles of 'Evangelical' and 'Anglo-Catholic', as if the two are at loggerheads and there is nothing in between, is both mistaken and harmful—though it may suit the media—and the damage is compounded when some Anglo-Catholics drop the 'Anglo' from the traditional and well-understood title and most improperly use the word 'Catholic' in an exclusive way; a strange tactic indeed by a movement whose good and important aim is (or was) to remind the Church of England of its Catholic identity.

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