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Editorial

The 400th anniversary of the Authorised or 'King James' Version of the Bible calls to mind that the Prayer Book Society might very easily have been the 'Society for the Defence of the 1662 Prayer Book and Authorised Version'. This was the name proposed at a meeting in 1972 when the future of both looked uncertain in the Church of England. An organisation which would defend them together seemed sensible. As plans developed, however,

advice was flowing in from influential quarters that too much was being attempted and that so wide-ranging a society could not continue. The late Archbishop Lord Fisher of Lambeth wrote to Mr Kilmister from Trent Rectory in Dorset—in his own hand and not long before his death—saying 'I think the Authorised Version can be trusted to look after itself; but I agree that the 1662 Prayer Book needs active protection.'¹

The decision was made to concentrate on the Book of Common Prayer, and the newly-formed BCP Action Group became in due course the Prayer Book Society.

Was Archbishop Fisher right to think that the Authorised Version could 'look after itself'? So far as use by the Church is concerned it seems to have fared less well than the Prayer Book; certainly there are many churches which use more modern translations, such as the New International Version or the New Revised Standard Version, for the readings at Morning and Evening Prayer. Where the Prayer Book service of Holy Communion is used the Epistle and Gospel should be as provided in the volume itself, and so in the Authorised Version, but it is not uncommon to find the *Common Worship* readings used instead, and in a modern translation, and of course this is legal if the service used is Order Two in Traditional Language from *Common Worship*. If my impression is right the Authorised Version has much less of a place than the Book of Common Prayer in the modern Church of England.

It does not follow of course that the decision to separate the two causes was wrong—though it is true that many of those who continue to prefer the Prayer Book also prefer the Authorised Version to any other translation, not only in its own right, but because its language seems more suited to the Prayer Book. But the cases are not exactly alike, and there are difficulties about some parts of the Authorised Version which do not apply to any part of the Prayer Book. Some of these difficulties are simply difficulties in the

1 'Twenty-Five Years Ago', *Faith & Heritage*, No 42, Spring 1997, pp. 3–5

Bible itself, of course, and appear in any translation. The Prayer Book was compiled with the unlettered as well as the learned in mind, and aims at a perspicuity which some parts of the Bible inherently lack: the preacher can expound the darker parts of Scripture, but the service must expound itself. The translators, too, wished the Bible to be as widely understood as possible, but their first concern was faithfulness to what they found in the original tongues, and if in some places this was obscure they were content for the obscurity to remain in the English, provided they had brought it as close to the original words as they could.¹ The compilers of the liturgy were not acting under this constraint. It is noticeable that the scriptural sentences which appear in the offices and in the Holy Communion have been chosen for their clear and direct meaning. In any case, however sympathetic one is to the Authorised Version, it is arguable that there would have been less success in defending the continued use of the Prayer Book if the defence had had to embrace the 'King James Bible' as well.

Whatever one thinks of that, members of the Prayer Book Society may be said to have a stake in the Authorised Version by virtue of its presence in the 1662 Prayer Book. At the Savoy Conference the Presbyterians had asked 'that the new translation of the Bible [i.e. the Authorised Version] should alone be used in the portions selected in the Prayer Book,'² and the bishops at length responded that they were 'willing that all the Epistles and Gospels be used according to the last translation.'³ From 1662 on these have been in the Authorised Version.⁴ The Authorised Version was also used for the introductory sentences at Morning and Evening Prayer. In the Communion service, on the other hand, the Ten Commandments, the offertory sentences, and the Comfortable Words stay as before. The Psalter remained in Coverdale's version, of course, and the Canticles were unchanged including those from the New Testament.⁵ The presence of the Authorised

1 'It hath pleased God in his divine providence here and there to scatter words and sentences of that difficulty and doubtfulness, not in doctrinal points that concern salvation . . . but in matters of less moment, that fearfulness would better beseem us than confidence . . . [quoting Augustine] It is better to make doubt of those things which are secret than to strive about those things that are uncertain.' ('The Translators to the Reader')

2 F. Procter & W.H. Frere, *A New History of the Book of Common Prayer*, 1901 (1961 edn.), p.173

3 *Ibid.*, p.187

4 The readings printed in the Prayer Book are sometimes altered where removal of the context has made this necessary—for example the Gospel for the Sixth Sunday after Trinity begins 'Jesus said unto his disciples . . .'. In the AV this reads 'For I say unto you that . . .'. The Epistles and Gospels seem to have been altered from time to time to conform to the current standard text of the AV. 1 Corinthians 13:2 appeared in 1611 as 'Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have no charity . . .', which in 1762 became 'and have not charity'. Modern BCPs read accordingly. But it is not clear how rigorously this has been done; I have found at least one reading which seems to go back behind the eighteenth-century changes.

5 The *Benedicite* in the 1549 book has the refrain 'Praise him, and set him up for ever', which in 1552 becomes the familiar 'Praise him, and magnify him for ever'. Presumably this reflects revisions to the Great Bible. The AV translation of the Apocrypha is different again: 'Praise and exalt him above all for ever'.

Version in the 1662 Prayer Book is only partial then, and on a strict construction of the Prayer Book Society's objects, the Society is committed only to those portions of it which appear there.

However, many of the arguments concerning the value, and the use, of the Authorised Version resemble those surrounding the Prayer Book, and we can expect to hear them again in this anniversary year. Adam Nicolson's television programme on the Authorised Version,¹ in which he told the story of the translation and tried to express his own sense of this version's power, called forth an irritated response from the *Church Times* reviewer, Gillean Craig, who 'had to be restrained from going down to church and chucking out all the AVs I could lay my hands on':

The AV, he averred, is superior to any other translation because it conveys the grandeur and majesty of God, and because its tone is sumptuous and mysterious.

The more he maintained, the more I protested. Did the original writers intend to convey these qualities, or did they seek to communicate something quite different—something raw, immediate, life-or-death? His position seemed to me like a National Trust version of the Church of England: part of the heritage industry and a source of comfort in time of trouble, but essentially unconnected with everyday life. But, as St Paul says, we have not so learned Christ.²

This is not perhaps very fair to Mr Nicolson, who, if I remember rightly, has a fairly subtle discussion of the Authorised Version's language in his book, but was here working within the constraints of a one-hour programme for a mass audience. But nor should we assume, as at first I did, that Fr Craig is simply hostile to the King James: his church (St Mary Abbots, Kensington) makes, to judge from its website, a very full use of the Prayer Book, and there really may be copies of the AV around, and used. His difference with Adam Nicolson is perhaps more interesting than that. It may be that his reaction is that of one who believes that the Authorised Version is capable of being, in Coleridge's phrase, a 'living educt' of God's word, but fears that it will cease to be so if it is embalmed in the bad old way as a 'monument of English prose'.

It is an old problem, the problem of familiarity with a well-loved text becoming too comfortable and unchallenging—while the opposing vice, the unappeasable search for novelty, never allows anything to sink deep enough to slumber. Those of us who believe that the Authorised Version (and the Prayer Book) can still speak to us deeply of 'immediate, life-or-

1 *When God Spoke English: The Making of the King James Bible* (BBC4). Mr Nicolson is the author of *Power and Glory: Jacobean England and the Making of the King James Bible* (2003), now re-issued as *When God Spoke English* and known, in the US, by yet another title, *God's Secretaries*.

2 *Church Times*, 4 March 2011, p. 34

death' things will not be content with the praise offered by Lord Bragg:

The King James Version is a magnificent work of literature. For some the religious messages of the prophets, the Apostles, the psalmists are of lesser significance than the sound and song of the words themselves.¹

And we will not be content with it because we can hardly accept it as an accurate account of Lord Bragg's own experience when he reads this or anything else. But the admiration of the Nicolsons and the Braggs, however inadequately expressed, ought to present itself to the Church as an opportunity. They are at least friendly, and the chance of building bridges towards the 'cultured despisers of religion' ought not to be neglected: a beginning might be made by persuading Lord Bragg to recognise that he cannot only be responding to the 'sound and song' of the words when he reads, and to explore more fully what it is that moves him. But that would require the Church, too, to think more profoundly than it sometimes has about the relation of 'medium' to 'message', and to consider that in the Authorised Version it has a treasure which it has not made good use of in recent times.

John Scrivener

¹ Church Times, 11 March 2011, p. 21

Have we an Anchor?

Reasserting the Doctrinal Role

of the Book of Common Prayer

JOHN RICHARDSON

Is there an Anglican doctrine?

As I'm sure every member of the Prayer Book Society will know, all Anglican clergy, at their ordination or their admission to a new post, are required to make the Declaration of Assent.

The Declaration is really in two parts, consisting of a Preface, and then a response affirming what the Preface declares. And it is in the Preface that we hear the following:

The Church of England is part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church worshipping the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It professes the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds, which faith the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation. Led by the Holy Spirit, it has borne witness to Christian truth in its historic formularies, the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer and the Ordering of Bishops, Priests and Deacons.

There is a lot which could be said, and I'm sure has been said, about the statements and claims being made here concerning the Church of England.

Crucially, and notably in view of the Pope's present visit to these shores, there is the claim that the Church of England is 'part of the one Holy, Catholic and Apostolic' church.

Despite the Reformation break with Rome, Anglicanism has never seen itself as separate from the universal Church, either in the present or the past. And this has implications for what we understand by the term 'Anglican doctrine'. It is perhaps useful to remind ourselves of the rhetorical question put by Bishop Stephen Neill in his potted history of Anglicanism, where he asked, 'What are the special theological doctrines of the Church of England and of the Anglican Churches in fellowship with it?' And of his reply: 'The answer is that there are no special Anglican theological doctrines, there is no particular Anglican theology. The Church of England is the Catholic Church in England.' And in support of this, he threw out a challenge:

Show us anything clearly set forth in Holy Scripture that we do not teach and we will teach it. Show us anything in our teaching or practice that is clearly contrary to Holy Scripture, and we will abandon it.¹

Not ‘merely Catholic’

But as soon as Neill makes this challenge, we realize it is rather simplistic of him to assert that the Church of England is simply, without any qualification, the Catholic Church in England—indeed, we must recognize that there is at least one other body that might wish to make the same claim.

It is equally simplistic to assert, without qualification, that there are no special or particular Anglican doctrines. On the contrary, to tie ourselves to Scripture in the way that Neill does is, when put in the context of Church history, precisely the expression of a ‘special or particular’ doctrine.

We confront the difficulty in Neill’s claim when, to take just one example, we read Article XXII. Of Purgatory.

The Romish Doctrine concerning Purgatory, Pardons, Worshipping and Adoration as well of Images as of Reliques, and also invocation of Saints, is a fond thing vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God.

Now I am all in favour of the Church of England aiming to be, as they say, ‘exactly what it says on the tin’, namely nothing more nor less than the Church of England, in as straightforward, and indeed inclusive, a way as possible. Nevertheless, experience shows that a Church so-called which attempts to define itself as anything other than merely a loose collection of anyone or anything that claims to be Christian is bound to exclude some even as it seeks to include others.

Right Doctrine

In fact, despite perhaps two centuries of theological ferment, the Book of Common Prayer stems from a tradition which began with the Church of England trying not only to get things right but to get everyone to agree on what was the ‘right thing’.

In his *Documents of the English Reformation*, a work indispensable to students of the subject, Dr Gerald Bray writes in his introduction to the Preface to the 1662 edition of the Book of Common Prayer: ‘... it must be remembered that in 1662, it was uniformity which appealed to the Church more than liturgy—the latter was merely an aid to the former’. And if some in this audience may bridle at those words, I am sure they will sympathize with his next remarks, that

1 *Anglicanism*, Pelican Books, 1965, p. 417

Have we an Anchor?

In this respect, it is not without interest to note that the revival of interest in liturgy has signalled the death of uniformity, and the virtual loss of a truly common prayer in the Church of England.¹

As conceived by Thomas Cranmer, then, liturgical revision was just one part of a programme designed to promote not just common, but *sound*, doctrine throughout England, and the target of this programme included not just the clergy but the laity as well.

Reformation by Repetition

The sheer fact that the Prayer Book was in English rather than Latin represented a fundamental step in the direction intended by Cranmer and the other Reformers. But even more so did the emphasis on Scripture in the daily offices. As the 1549 preface, Concerning the Service of the Church, puts it: ‘. . . here you have an order for prayer and for the reading of the Holy Scripture much agreeable to the mind and purpose of the old Fathers . . .’, a purpose which, we have been told earlier, intended that ‘Divine Service’ was for ‘a great advancement of godliness’, particularly by having ‘the whole Bible (or the greatest part thereof) . . . read over once every year’.

And this continual and, just as importantly, sequential reading of Scripture—in English, following through whole books with nothing left out—is, according to the same Preface, ‘. . . a great deal more profitable and commodious than that which of late was used’.

How so? We may ask:

. . . because here are left out many things whereof some are untrue, some uncertain, some vain and superstitious, and nothing is ordained to be read but the very pure Word of God, the Holy Scriptures, or that which is agreeable to the same.

There is, in other words, a particular doctrine behind the very ordering of the services in the Prayer Book—a doctrine that Scripture reading is to be at the heart of the Church’s public prayer, so that the clergy ‘by often reading’ and the people ‘by often hearing’, ‘. . . might continually profit more and more in the knowledge of God, and be the more inflamed with the love of his true religion.’

Context

This process, however, does not rely merely on Bible reading. Rather, the services of Morning and Evening Prayer in particular ensure that we approach the Bible in a certain way and with a right understanding.

¹ Bray, p. 560

Both the daily offices begin with the same Scriptural sentences, which establish emphatically that we are sinners before a God who, albeit that he is gracious and merciful, is one who judges and condemns both sin and sinners. There can be no doubt of the agenda, when we begin the meeting with these words:

When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.

It is intended to focus our attention, and it is only in this frame of mind that we are allowed to move on to the other business in hand, listed in the introduction to the service as being,

. . . to render thanks for the great benefits that we have received at his hands, to set forth his most worthy praise, to hear his most holy Word, and to ask those things which are requisite and necessary, as well for the body as the soul.

These are worthy objectives, but we cannot (as it were) pass ‘Go’, until we have got down on our knees and confessed to God himself that ‘we have erred and strayed like lost sheep,’ that we have, ‘followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts,’ that we have, ‘offended against [his] holy laws’ and that we have ‘left undone those things which we ought to have done’ and ‘done those things which we ought not to have done.’

By this stage, if we have been paying attention with our hearts, rather than merely moving our lips, we will indeed be ready to admit, ‘there is no health in us.’

And yet immediately after this comes the critical word, ‘But’: ‘But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders’—‘miserable’ here meaning not ‘unhappy’ but ‘needing mercy’, in the same sense as in the *Deus Misereatur* at Evening Prayer: ‘God be merciful unto us’. And so we ready ourselves for the absolution, which follows not just the logical order of the service, but the logical sense of the words: we are sinners, we need mercy, but God is merciful, and so the absolution ends with the stirring words, ‘. . . at the last we may come to his eternal joy, through Jesus Christ our Lord.’

Venite

But—Cranmer is not quite done with us yet, at least not at Morning Prayer, for next we have the *Venite*. And the choice of Psalm 95 was surely made in the light of what it has to say about God’s word.

We are indeed coming to ‘sing unto the Lord’, to ‘heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation’—all in good time. But first we need to hear the warnings which begin in the seventh verse:

Have we an Anchor?

To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts : as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness;

When your fathers tempted me : proved me and saw my works.

Forty years long was I grieved with this generation and said : It is a people that do err in their hearts, for they have not known my ways.

Unto whom I sware in my wrath : that they should not enter into my rest.

Surely Cranmer wanted us to hear this so as to make the same point to his congregations as the writer to the Hebrews does from this Psalm:

Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (Heb 4: 11-12)

And the crucial thing is to hear his voice. Now we are ready for the Psalms and the Bible readings which, as we have seen, are the package that the liturgy is designed to deliver.

And the rest . . .

Morning and Evening Prayer, then, are not just fine examples of liturgical craft. They are educational vehicles designed to promote a proper relationship with God and a growth in godliness through a constant engagement with his unexpurgated word.

Fundamental to this is the presumption that though God is indeed merciful, we come to him as sinners in need of mercy. And this presumption continues throughout the rest of the Prayer Book.

I was particularly struck by this when I was called out the other day (unusually for me, as it happens) to pray with a woman who was dying in our local hospice. What better material could I use, I thought to myself, than prayers taken from the Order for the Visitation of the Sick? But first there had to be some judicious selecting and editing.

You may have noticed that the Prayer Book lays out the occasional offices in an unsentimentally logical sequence: Baptism, Catechism, Confirmation, Matrimony, the Visitation of the Sick, the Communion of the Sick, the Burial of the Dead. And the Order for the Visitation of the Sick certainly embodies a 'robust' attitude to illness:

Peace be to this house [says the minister as he enters the building] and to all that dwell in it.

And then, as he comes into the sick person's presence, kneeling down he says,

Remember not, Lord, our iniquities, nor the iniquities of our forefathers; Spare us, good Lord, spare thy people, whom thou hast redeemed with thy most precious blood, and be not angry with us for ever.

Now where, you may ask, is the prayer for healing? Well, it is there, tucked away if you know where to look. The emphasis, however, is not on getting better but on getting right with God. And you can only be ready to meet God if you have acknowledged your sin and he has dealt with it.

The whole service is thus really a long exhortation to prepare to meet your maker. And should you not recover, the funeral service presents an opportunity for the living to hear the same message.

So when the burial party comes to the grave side, the minister reminds us,

In the midst of life we are in death : of whom may we seek for succour, but of thee, O Lord, who for our sins art justly displeased?

Gloomy or Gospel?

Now it may be objected that all this is rather gloomy. And indeed I have often said that Cranmer is better at getting us down on our knees as penitential sinners than he is at letting us stand on our feet as forgiven saints.

Nevertheless, I am arguing that the Book of Common Prayer is established on and seeks to impart the following understanding of the Christian gospel:

(1) That the chief issue between us and God is our sinfulness and his holiness.

(2) That we stand in constant need of Jesus's work of redemption to deliver us from God's judgement and condemnation, and

(3) That hearing the words of the Bible is fundamental to establishing and maintaining our relationship with this fearful and yet merciful God.

The Communion and Salvation

And with this in mind, we can see the Communion service as the crowning glory of the Prayer Book, and the 'prayer of consecration' as the jewel in that crown, reminding us, as it does, that God gave his only Son Jesus Christ,

to suffer death upon the Cross for our redemption ; who made there (by his one oblation of himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world.

Have we an Anchor?

It is a ringing affirmation of the work of Jesus on the cross. It is also, though, an emphatic denial that any other work is necessary—and certainly not the offering of any other sacrifices either for us or by us, other than, as the Prayer of Oblation has it, the sacrifices of ‘praise and thanksgiving’ and the ‘bounden duty and service’ of our worship and our lives.

It surely cannot be doubted, in the light of all this, that the intention of the Prayer Book is to express and embody a particular doctrine of salvation and redemption—one which regrettably, but necessarily, rules out of court other doctrines of salvation and redemption even though they are sincerely and tenaciously held within Christendom.

And, we may add, the Thirty-Nine Articles of religion and the Ordinal, though not technically part of the Book of Common Prayer as such, reinforce the same point of view.

The present situation

Equally, though, we must admit that this perspective is some way from where many of our clergy and congregations now seem to be.

Not so long ago, the clergy of my own Diocese of Chelmsford gathered in the Cathedral for a special celebration, which included singing a popular contemporary Christian hymn. There was, however, an alteration in the words. Instead of

... on the cross where Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied.

The assembled clergy sang, ‘The word of God was satisfied.’

Apart from the fact that this scarcely makes sense, it is also a breach of copyright. When one of the organizers was challenged on this, however, he answered that he had personally changed the words because, in his view, many of the clergy in the diocese would be uncomfortable with the word ‘wrath’.

How, then, would they cope with the Commination—subtitle, a ‘Denouncing of God’s anger and judgements against sinners, with certain prayers, to be used on the first day of Lent’—which consists of nine whole pages basically reminding us that ‘all they are accursed . . . who do err and go astray from the commandments of God’.

One wonders, indeed, how many clergy, let alone laypeople, are even aware that such sentiments exist in what the Declaration of Assent calls our ‘inheritance of faith’. And this is a matter of no small concern, for it really does come down to fundamental questions about ourselves and God and how we stand in relation to one another.

Contemporary Anglican liturgies have already redefined this relationship as one which is rather more comfortable—to use a popular phrase, rather less ‘edgy’—than the Prayer Book assumes.

The next stage in liturgical revision is, we know, to render God rather less distinct, rather less clear-cut, as the gendered language of Father, Lord, He and Him is replaced by gender-inclusive terms or a 'balanced' use of male and female imagery.

Having rewritten our relationship with God, we will redefine God. In fact, we will become idolaters.

Actions

So what is to be done?

Let me say straight away, anyone who thinks that the Church of England is going to re-adopt the Book of Common Prayer as its regular week-by-week public liturgy is living in cloud-cuckoo-land. It is not going to happen, any more than the Church is going to abandon women priests or turn back from introducing women bishops—and for much the same reason, which is that culturally, in both society and the Church, we have long since passed a point of no return. This, however, I intend as a council of realism, not despair.

Secondly, let me say that what matters most to the Prayer Book, according to the Prayer Book itself, is not its beautiful sixteenth-century language but its solid sixteenth- (and to some extent seventeenth-) century theology:

St Paul [we are reminded in the 1549 Preface] would have such language spoken to the people in the Church as they might understand and have profit by hearing the same.

And in case we should think this still commits us to the letter of the text, we read in the 1662 Preface that many of the alterations from 1552 were made

for the more proper expressing of some words or phrases of ancient usage in terms more suitable to the language of the present times.

If we want the Prayer Book to help us, we must recognize what the Prayer Book was designed to do.

Despite these limitations, however, there is much, I believe, that we can do with the Prayer Book, and much that the Prayer Book can do for us.

Specifics

First, we ought to insist that the Book of Common Prayer represents the liturgical 'gold standard' of the Church of England.

This means that all our other liturgies and liturgical practices should be assessed in relation to this standard, whatever may be the current fashion or the personal preferences of our liturgists.

Have we an Anchor?

Canon B 5, incidentally, 'Of the Discretion of Ministers in the Conduct of Public Prayer', whilst allowing the exercise of such discretion, insists that

All variations in forms of service . . . shall be neither contrary to, nor indicative of any departure from, the doctrine of the Church of England in any essential matter.

If, however, we ask in a liturgical context what is that doctrine, the answer is surely to be found by looking first at the doctrine embodied and expressed in the Prayer Book.

Secondly, and necessarily, however, we should expect that clergy be familiar with the Prayer Book. And that means it must be studied and taught in our colleges and on our courses.

Indeed, in this regard I would say there is a third step which could be taken, and that is to insist that in our colleges, on our courses and throughout our programmes of Continuing Ministerial Education, the Prayer Book should be in regular and frequent use.

Now it may be objected that this will detach our theological training and equipping from what is happening in the parishes. Do not trainee clergy need exposure to the liturgical practices they will actually find in parishes?

Several responses may, however, be made:

- First, the Declaration of Assent does require a commitment to the Prayer Book which it does not require concerning *Common Worship*.
- Secondly, we may be sure that most ministry trainees will be more than familiar with non-Prayer-Book material but much less familiar with the Prayer Book.
- Thirdly, the diversity of experiences and practices amongst candidates ought to be confronted by the contrasting unity embodied in the Prayer Book.
- Fourthly, familiarization with the Prayer Book is itself a form of theological education.
- Fifthly, such familiarity is surely essential for Anglican ministers.

More could be said, no doubt, to justify the use of the Prayer Book as part of ministerial training. The point is that the courses would be doing the Church a service by deliberately adopting the use of the Prayer Book.

In the same way, it would be helpful for the Prayer Book to be used regularly at diocesan gatherings. This would provide an important reminder that, despite the diversity of contemporary Anglicanism, we do indeed have a common doctrinal heritage.

Conclusion

The Church of England has long recognized the principle *lex orandi, lex credendi*—the law of prayer is the law of faith. The Book of Common Prayer was thus introduced not as an end in itself but as a means to an end, which was nothing less than the godliness of the people of God. Yet the Prayer Book also promoted doctrinal reform, and those who have since wanted to change the doctrines of the Church, from the Commonwealth, via 1928 to the present day, have likewise recognized the importance of liturgical revision.

Not all revision is wrong. Certainly not all revision is preventable. The Prayer Book of 1662 is in some ways better and in others worse, than that of 1552, which is however a notable improvement on 1549. Nevertheless, the Church of England was undoubtedly anchored doctrinally by the Book of Common Prayer for four hundred years, so that whatever might be the vagaries and varieties of theological fashion, both priest and people were constantly required to rehearse their position as sinners before a wrathful, yet merciful, God who has redeemed us through his Son and speaks to us daily through his Word.

At a time when the future of the nation is uncertain, and the future of the national Church perhaps even more so, it would prudent to find ways of reattaching ourselves to the anchor that has held fast in previous generations.

(The Revd John Richardson is Associate Minister of the United Benefice of Henham, Elsenham and Ugley. He blogs as 'the Ugley Vicar', at ugleyvicar.blogspot.com. The above address was delivered at the Prayer Book Society Annual Conference in September 2010.)

Ethical Themes in the Common Prayer Collects

NICHOLAS WEBB

The Collects were originally the summing up of the private silent prayer of the congregation: the officiant propounded certain subjects for prayer in the form of a bidding, such as has survived in many places in the Gallican Books and in some few places in the Roman Books; then according to the direction of the Deacon, the people either stood or knelt in silent prayer . . . and then the officiant said the Collect to sum up in one short form the private prayers of the people, and they responded 'Amen'. In the course of time this method for brevity's sake was curtailed, the interval for silent prayer disappeared, the preface bidding to prayer was reduced to a simple 'Oremus' (Let us pray), and only this and . . . the name 'Collect' survived to bear witness to the former use.¹

That the Bible provided much of the language for self-expression and introspection from St Augustine until Sigmund Freud is a commonplace of European cultural history. Similarly, the Commandments and the New Testament precepts have served as constant guides to social conduct. The demise of a general education in the Classics since 1918 has perhaps reduced awareness of the cultural resonances of the Prayer Book Collects for self-understanding and behaviour. From the Tridentine Catechism onwards, Classical concepts of virtue ethics have been adapted to the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Christian life, with philosophical support from St Thomas Aquinas to Alisdair MacIntyre. There has also been a long line of Anglican writers from Richard Hooker to Joseph Butler and C.S. Lewis who have considered Christian ethics as the active extension of inward prayer.²

From the perspective of the history of ideas it is noteworthy that the words used in the Prayer Book Collects—drawing especially on the Psalms, Pauline Epistles, Gelasian and Gregorian Sacramentaries (fifth- and sixth-century)—had limited connection with the dominant author in academic moral philosophy during the sixteenth and, to a lesser extent, seventeenth centuries, the Greek Aristotle (d. 322 BC). His complete *Nicomachean Ethics* only began to circulate extensively in Latin during the thirteenth century, but it featured in the philosophy curriculum of most European

1 Procter and Frere, *A New History of the Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 523–4

2 R. Hooker (d. 1600), *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, V.23: 'Is not the name of prayer usual to signify even all the service that ever we do unto God? . . . It is the first thing wherewith a righteous life beginneth, and the last wherewith it doth end.'

universities thereafter. The conceptual allusions of the Collects have somewhat more association with other philosophical schools of Classical Antiquity: Neo-Platonism with Platonism; Stoicism; Epicureanism. All four main philosophical schools, including Aristotle and his Peripatetic commentators, were known to early Christian theologians and were criticized, quoted and adapted according to context.

For terminology source-hunting, the deliberately simple style of the Collects inhibits lexical association beyond their immediate liturgical and biblical sources. Indeed, both in the early sacramentaries and the derived Collects it is debateable how much specific meaning was intended. The names of the virtues; ideas such as providence or the will; normative relations such as master-servant, doctor-patient, could have a general sense as current vocabulary or could denote particular habitual behaviours. Aristotle had maintained that the iteration of good behaviour as a habit was fundamental to its status as a virtue. Incremental development assisted by divine grace recurs as a Collect theme. Many of the original sacramentary prayers concerned alignment with God in daily life, taking either the liturgical feast or a biblical reading as their starting-point. As practical prescriptions the festive Collects should be read in conjunction with the Catechism and Articles as well as the diurnal office prayers. The possible intellectual resonances contemporaneous with the Prayer Book's origins can be shown through a comparison between several Collect themes and arguments of the philosophical schools, and through some examples of the ethical texts which would have informed the composition and early interpretation of the English Collects.

Inward reflection is recommended before Communion in the Catechism, at the start of the morning and evening Offices, and in the evening Collect for Peace. The Collect for the second Sunday in Advent has the well-known petition to 'hear . . . read, mark and inwardly digest' Holy Scripture. This wording is apparently Thomas Cranmer's own, but it recalls the earlier metaphor of reflective *ruminatio* 'eating and consuming' the Bible—a practice now revived through the interest in *lectio divina*. The contemplative theme is taken up again at Trinity 2 1, which is used in place of Absolution in the Offices when no priest is present. Here Cranmer translates the Gregorian sacramentary *secura mente* as 'with a quiet mind' which re-interprets the Latin, possibly with reference to 1 Thessalonians 4. 1 1. The fourth Sunday after Easter, also derived from the Gelasian and Gregorian sacramentaries, has a similar juxtaposition between the changeable world and certainty of God, but there the translation is more straightforward, if still an elaboration of the Latin text. Thus: *Deus, Qui fidelium mentes unius efficit voluntatis* becomes 'O Almighty God, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men' and inter

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mundanas varietates—‘among the sundry and manifold changes of the world’.

The servant’s request in the Trinity 21 Collect recalls the theme of non-disturbance as a pre-requisite for clear thinking associated with the Hellenic schools of philosophy, the Stoics and the actual Epicureans (as opposed to their Christian caricature as material hedonists). Influenced by both these schools, the Roman statesman and author, Seneca the Younger (d. 65 AD by obligatory suicide under Emperor Nero) advocated self-reflection at the end of each day in a manner similar to the Collects: tranquillity of mind was achieved through cultivating an appropriate attitude of philosophical indifference towards fluctuating experience, detachment from worldly events and control of reason over the passions. However, while the Collects encourage present attention to matters eternal (Trinity 4), Seneca’s equanimity was achieved through daily remembrance of inevitable death as a full stop, *cotidiana meditatio mortis*. His *Epistulae morales* were widely read as school texts and he enjoyed a medieval reputation as a correspondent of St Paul.¹

A rather different view of emotions had been taken by Aristotle. He thought that they gave the necessary impulse for virtuous behaviour provided that they were correctly calibrated towards an appropriate object, in the right way and to a proportionate extent: each virtue represented a Golden Mean in attitude and action. Many of his virtues were other-regarding, whether in a domestic or public context. Aristotle is the source of the definition of man as a social animal. Aristotle sometimes develops his ethical arguments by analogy to medicine in applying theory to practice; curing behavioural distortion and weakness; balancing the psychological (emotional and intellectual virtues) as well as physical components (such as the humours of phlegm, blood, yellow and black bile) of human beings.² The Collects repeatedly request the right direction of human hearts and minds: God’s ordering of our ‘unruly wills and affections’ ensures our hearts are fixed on ‘true joys’ at Easter 4; ‘thy Church may joyfully serve thee in all godly quietness’ at Trinity 5; loving God above all we gain promises which exceed our desire at Trinity 6, although the New Testament emphasis on love authorized benign emotions for patristic literature. Charity is celebrated in the Quinquagesima Collect derived partly from the adjacent reading of 1 Corinthians 13 and, as the ‘bond of peace’, partly from Colossians 3:14. The Easter week Collect refers us to the ‘good desires’ which God ‘by preventing us . . . [has] put into our minds’: these are not mentioned in the Gregorian Sacramentary as such, although the ‘preventing’—*praeveniēdo*—is. The Collect for the feast

1 Seneca, *Epistulae morales*, 4; 16; 98 2 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.13.7

day of St Luke refers to the ‘Physician of the soul’ and the ‘wholesome medicines of the doctrine delivered by him’, while several mention health of body and mind.

The Platonic strain in the Pauline Epistles is perhaps not as overt as in St John’s Gospel, but it is noticeable in respect of particular topics, such as the bodily limitation on the human soul: Romans 8; 1 Corinthians; Philippians 3. This idealist and puritanical argument recalls the ‘body as tomb’ view of the philosophical mind–body problem (compare Plato, *Phaedrus* 250C) which had prompted Neoplatonic recommendations for abstinence during the third and fourth centuries AD (compare Lent 1 and 2). Control over the body and the overcoming of material desires are requested in several of the Collects: not only that for the Circumcision—‘the true Circumcision of the Spirit . . .’, translating the Gregorian Sacramentary, and for Lent—‘outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls’, but also at Easter Even—‘mortifying our corrupt affections’, and immediately after Trinity Sunday—‘the weakness of our mortal nature’. Traditionally, St Paul’s converts included one of the principal articulators of Christian Neo-Platonism, Dionysius the Areopagite (the attributed texts date from the early sixth century AD). The dialogues of Plato (d. 427 BC), such as the *Republic*, were the ultimate source for the four cardinal virtues—prudence, fortitude, temperance, justice—which were employed as a framework by the philosophical schools except Aristotle, with the control of mind over body as a main aim. The Quinquagesima Collect refers to ‘all the virtues’. However, despite some correlation in meaning, the immediate source for the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit divided into four donations in the invoking prayer for Confirmation is Isaiah 11:2–3 (where the same quadripartite division is made in the Vulgate and the Authorized Version). There was some disagreement among the Fathers as to whether the gifts and the virtues were identical, so it cannot be assumed that the cardinals are intended in this pre-Lenten Collect for purification.

The orderliness of life in the world reflected God’s protection and providence. This is a recurrent theme in the early weeks after Trinity in the Gregorian Sacramentary, with God’s governance ensuring the tranquillity of the Church. Several Collects suggest how adherence to this archetypal structure can be achieved in the individual life. Trinity 9 requests that we live in accordance with God’s will; Epiphany 1 asks that we perceive and know what to do; while at Whitsun, there is the (wishful) supplication for a ‘right judgement in all things’ through the Holy Spirit. These petitions are reminiscent of Aristotelian psychology in which correct assessment of stimuli by the senses and reason was combined with an appropriate positive or negative response. The Aristotelian intellectual virtue of

prudence supervised the requisite practical reasoning. It included foresight and had providence as its theological equivalent. The care, rule and order of God's providence in Trinity 2–8 recalls the well-known, cosmological passages in works attributed to Aristotle, such as *De mundo* and *Metaphysics XII*, as well as the pastoral care of rulers advocated in the political writings of both Aristotle and Plato. Advent 3, composed by Bishop John Cosin of Durham in 1661 (d. 1672), relates these themes to the Last Judgement. He refers to the ministers turning 'the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just'. St Ambrose, *De officiis ministrorum*, II.8, following Cicero's *De officiis* (*On Duties*), II.9, had linked the virtues of prudence and justice together as essential attributes of good governance. Cosin's elaboration thus extends the Advent 3 Epistle reading from 1 Corinthians 4.1 on the sound judgement of God's stewards.

Besides considering personal behaviour within concentric circles of legal identity (family, state, nature, cosmos) each encompassed by providence, another approach towards ensuring good behaviour advocated in the pagan and Christian versions of *De officiis* was *emulatio*—taking the saints as exemplary models and imitating their conduct. Thus, predictably the 'virtuous and godly living' of all the saints is commemorated on November 1st. On each of the particular saint's days a salient characteristic or act is recommended usually for positive imitation, but the feast of St Thomas, 21 December, has the entreaty that our faith is never reproved as his was.

A third approach to ethical development found frequently in the Collects is more distinctive of religious morality, namely the requests for love, mercy or other virtues as gifts from God that are then passed on to others. An improved ability to work in and resist the temporal world through an increasing conviction in God's grace is expounded in the epistles of Saints Paul (Romans 12–13, 1 Corinthians 12, Galatians 5) and Peter (2 Peter 1) as well as by Patristic writers seeking to reconcile pagan and Christian virtues, such as St Augustine of Hippo (d. 430 AD), in his *On Church Morals* (*De moribus ecclesiae*), chapter 15, where all four Cardinal virtues are aspects of love. Pauline penitence, faith, humility—all acknowledging the Fall—have less direct correlation with Classical authors for whom effective political governance, magnanimity or philosophical contemplation were versions of the virtuous acme, although the Platonic descriptions of different levels of love (for example, in the *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*) were extensively developed by Christian writers.

The following representative texts illustrate the intellectual context for a sixteenth- and seventeenth-century reading of the Collects as ethical guidance. They belong to a genre with a vast book list in Classical and vernacular languages, ranging from simple prescriptions for children to complex philosophical analyses of ethical terms. The early Christian

response to Classical culture had tended either to sharp differentiation both in language and concept (St Jerome) or towards a sympathetic adaptation and co-option (St Augustine). Even attempts to draw a disapproving line between pagan and Christian cultures provided much exclusive information about philosophical texts and ideas from Antiquity which have not otherwise survived (Lactantius).

For the influential *De officiis ministrorum* (*Duties of the Clergy*) composed by St Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (d. 397), we have the Ciceronian source text and can gauge how far Ambrose adheres to Cicero in structure and thematic presentation. Primarily summarizing Stoic ethics in a treatise addressed to his son, Cicero had set out the moral requirements of active life as opposed to the perfected behaviour of the Stoic Wise Person, arguing that there was no contradiction between genuine expediency and honesty. Ambrose argued that Christian duties in this life pertained to grace in the hereafter, while perfect knowledge was attained in heaven. In the Prayer Book Catechism reference is made to our duties towards God and our neighbour. For Ambrose, the Old Testament provided numerous examples of expediency understood as spiritual rather than material advantage, even if the exemplified careers were sometimes selectively reported.¹ He provides distinctly Christian alternative interpretations for several virtues: endurance, patience, constancy, largely but not entirely replace the bellicose virtue of fortitude. Discipline and conscience represent Christian temperance, while modesty and humility as much as an extrovert sense of decorum govern public behaviour. Philanthropy is motivated by altruistic charity rather than the proud display or political investment of a 'big soul'. The foundation of justice is faith rather than human reason. Ambrose and other patristic authors influenced the early medieval liturgical sources for the Collects. They also supplied ideas and quotations directly to the Renaissance humanists, seeking intellectual alternatives in Antiquity to the dominant Scholasticism.² One such humanist was the wandering Dutch scholar, Desiderius Erasmus (d. 1536), who spent several years in England and whose philological, rhetorical and ethical writings, including editions of the Greek New Testament, affected both Protestant and Catholic reform movements. If humanism as an intellectual movement had limited reflection in the Prayer Book, it did prompt identification with the Early Church as a reforming source of liturgical authority and it endorsed a more flexible approach to translation.

The humanist professor, Philip Melancthon (d. 1560), was one of the intellectual founders of the German Lutheran Reformation, an Erasmian correspondent, and an extensive commentator on Classical literature,

1 Ambrose, *De officiis ministrorum*, I.25–44; III.19 2 *ibid.*, I. 29, 35–42; II. 7, 16, 22

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including philosophy. His *Epitome of Moral Philosophy* (*Philosophiae moralis epitomes libri duo*), included Christian interpretations of the four main Classical schools, besides providing a statement of Protestant ethics. Melanchthon distinguishes tranquillity of conscience from tranquillity of body, claiming unfairly that the latter was the Epicurean pre-occupation. The Stoic theme of harmonious living according to natural law corresponds with Christian obedience to the *ordinatio Dei*. Conscience similarly features in the personal relationship with God in the Collects (Trinity 12). Melanchthon's division of the virtues is a New Testament reading of the Ten Commandments. While individual virtues mentioned by the philosophical schools find place in his scheme, Melanchthon sees their accounts as fundamentally flawed by the absence of a concept of sin and redemption (an argument rehearsed before by Dante and after by Lewis). Fear of and delight in God, repentance, faith, obedience to heavenly imposed afflictions—these all come before church or natural duties. The second book of the *Epitome* defines different aspects of justice: again recalling the legal terms of St Paul and comparable to the vocabulary of the Collects. The role of the magistrate is compared to that of the *Paterfamilias* as the head of the household as in the Gospels and Aristotelian ethics. However, Melanchthon's other named virtues at the end of this treatise—truth, generosity or good works (*beneficentia seu liberalitas*), gratitude and friendship—had received varying attention as social habits from Aristotle.¹ In his introduction to the Ciceronian *De officiis*, Melanchthon contrasted the *disciplina* required for Christian daily life with the true virtue of the Word inspired through the Holy Spirit: the former aided by the secular virtues and the Commandments, the latter by Faith, Hope and Charity (compare Trinity 14).² He included ethics in the criteria for church visitors inspecting local congregations. Archbishop Cranmer's personal contact with this moral aspect of the Lutheran Reform is reflected in a 1539 edition of the *Epitome* in the British Library that came from Cranmer's Library.³ Shortly before Melanchthon had been seeking to persuade Cranmer's royal master to join the Lutheran Augsburg Confession; several times Cranmer tried to bring about Melanchthon's attendance at a Protestant conference in England; the Lutheran liturgical text, *Simplex ac pia deliberatio*, was one of Cranmer's sources. By 1570 Melanchthon had become a set author for epitome-writing on the English school curriculum.⁴

1 Compare Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, IV, V and IX.

2 Melanchthon, *Prologomena in Officia Ciceronis*, 'Quid disciplina a vera virtute'

3 It has their library shelf marks besides the names of *Thomas Cantuariensis* and *Lumley* respectively. I am grateful to Ms Alison Bailey, Curator of British and Early Printed Collections at the British Library for confirming this identification by reference to the main authority, Selwyn, p. 127.

4 R. Ascham, *The Schoolmaster*, 'Eloquence', §§2 Paraphrasis, 4 *Epitome*

English ethical thought contemporary with Cranmer can also be illustrated by the example of William Baldwin's *A Treatise of Moral Philosophy*, first published in 1547 and again in 1555. Active in the first half of the sixteenth century, Baldwin was the editor of the collection of poems about political exemplars, the *Mirror for Magistrates*, and the author of the feline religious satire, *Beware the Cat*. The *Treatise* is addressed to the Duke of Somerset's son and indirectly to his parents. It is a pedagogical tract in that it provides a large quantity of historical notes, anecdotes and apothegms about sundry ancient philosophers while advising on how to behave. Compared with Ambrose or Melanchthon, there is less critical analysis of terminology. Baldwin takes a more integrationist approach than Melanchthon, emphasizing the common agreements between philosophy and Christianity: just as the Precepts of Good Manners have been obscured by philosophical science, so has the understanding of Holy Scripture. Baldwin's appreciation of wise pagans can be compared with that of Italian humanists of the late fifteenth century, such as Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, the former a translator of, among many others, the Neoplatonist texts attributed to the pseudonymous Hermes Trismegistus, whom Baldwin identifies with Enoch as a philosophical founder; the latter famous for his oration on the dignity of man, affirming a primitive theology—*prisca theologia*—revealed to the ancients.¹

Baldwin was particularly keen on sayings and examples as sources of ethical teaching for most areas of daily life. He regards the adage as a rhetorical device which fixes a moral point in the memory through the 'pithiness' of the language used. His work derives from well-known Classical compendia, the potted biographies and 'witty answers' from the *Lives of the Philosophers* compiled by Diogenes Laertius (d. 250 AD), whom he names; exemplary anecdotes of Classical heroes and villains from the *Memorable Words and Deeds* of Valerius Maximus (first half of first century AD); together with 'modern' collections of proverbs circulating in Tudor England, such as that compiled by Erasmus, also named in the text. Proverbs had various uses: at school for philological exercises and ready moral precepts; for family mottoes; in combination with pictures for extended or obscured meanings and intellectual games like those subsequently played in the conceits and elaborate metaphors of the Metaphysical Poets. The Book of Proverbs and the apocryphal Book of Sirach are the cited Christian equivalent sources for Baldwin's adages. 'Sembables' are parables, stories with a message: 'wherein by easy and familiar truths, harder and more out of use, are declared; that by the one,

1 Baldwin, *A Treatise of Moral Philosophy*, 'Prologue'; I.1, I. 6

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the other may be better perceived and borne in mind . . . ’—as in the Gospels and Aesop. Moral philosophy improves ‘unperfect [sic] Nature’ and accords with the Commandments. Good Manners are required because we necessarily live with others.¹ Under his precepts category, Baldwin gives a number of attributed translations on the ephemeral nature of the world; on death; counsel; governance; on masters and servants; on benefits and ‘unthankfulness’. Thus, attributed to Plato: ‘That bondage is moderate which is awe of God, and that immoderate which is awe of men.’—compare *Laws* IV.715–16. Again, Baldwin’s similes relate to the metaphorical language of several Collects (St Luke; Sts Matthias and Peter; Advent 4, with Hebrews 12:1):

As a sick man is cured of his disease, by virtue of a Medicine: so an evil man healed of his malice, by virtue of the Law. Like as men choose good Ground to labour and to sow: so should they choose honest men to be their Servant. . . . As a Shepherd among his sheep; so ought a King to be among his subject. . . . As he which, in a Game Place, runneth swiftest, and continueth still his pace, obtaineth the crown for his labour: so all that diligently learn, and earnestly follow Wisdome and Virtue shall be crowned with Everlasting Glory.²

Over a century later, the Reverend Thomas Traherne’s *Christian Ethicks* is arguably an instance of Latitudinarian writing, being published in 1674, the year of his death, just as that theological movement was beginning to gain popularity among the Established Church clergy, and in content reading much like the sermons of the movement’s leading exponents. The Latitude-Men emphasized the ethical benefits of a simpler, inclusive and more tolerant view of religious practice in reaction to the turmoil and Puritan strictures of the previous half-century in which the Prayer Book had been subjected to severe criticism and alteration. Bishop Cosin and the 1662 revisers were not themselves members of this movement, but Traherne’s treatise provides an indication of how the Prayer Book might be read as an ethical guide in its revised form. Cosin’s own youthful *Collection of Private Devotions* (1627) for the older Caroline court had summarized the theological framework before the Puritan ascendancy. He there gave an elaborated interpretation of the Ten Commandments, together with checklists of Natural and Church Precepts; Theological Virtues and Good Works; Seven Virtues and Vices; Beatitudes. There are some passing allusions to the cardinal virtues: the duties of Commandment Seven against adultery are treated as a matter of temperance; offences against false witness contravene justice as well as charity; a prayer for the anniversary of

1 Baldwin, *Op. cit.*, I.5; II.1; III.1; IV.1 2 *Ibid.*, III.15; IV.2

the King's reign relates God's gracious Providence to the King 'ruling prudently over us'.¹

Christian and Classical virtues are combined in Traherne's treatise, but without Baldwin's claims for their non-contradiction. While heathens may behave like Christians, they do not have the same aim for their action, which is the 'Celestial Epicurisme' of a life in God. Traherne is best known for his metaphysical poems and *Centuries of Meditations* reflecting belief founded on grace rather than reason. An author frequently linked with Neo-Platonism, his *Ethicks* also quotes from Aristotle, Epicurus and the French author, Pierre Charron (d. 1603). From the latter's *On Wisdom (De la Sagesse)*, Traherne argues for and against enlightened self-love as a basis for loving God, concluding that godliness is to be equated with God-likeness. Godliness as an *imitatio Christi* is a recurrent theme among the later Trinity Collects (for example, 22 and 23). For Traherne, self-interested love is merely terrestrial prudence and is incapable of achieving what it seeks. He gives a range of natural examples of love for others superseding self and extends this to the reciprocal bond between God and Man on the grounds that it is natural to love benefactors. Traherne's charity is an ethical and metaphysical force like Plato's justice: 'vertuous love . . . under reason . . . renders to all things their just Due and is the Great Daemon of the World . . . the sole cause of all operations.' Traherne associates different virtues with the Estates of Innocence, Grace and Glory. For example, patience 'is one of those distasteful Vertues which God never intended. It received its bitterness from sin, its life and beauty from God's mercy.' God is 'the first Patient Person in the World' (compare the Collect for Sunday before Easter). Other distinctly Christian virtues named in the Collects (Trinity 1 and 10), in Cosin's *Devotions* (from Galatians 5), and by Traherne, are due to the weakness of human nature: 'meekness respecteth others faults; humility and penitence our own.'² Traherne assumes that his readers are acted on or against as well as acting, and like the Collect authors, Traherne is aware of the practical problems in applying ethical behaviour to daily life, conceding that while rest on the Sabbath

has something in it of Heaven; and it is a hard matter to be wicked in the sanctuary. . . . But in ordinary conversation, in shops and taverns, in the camp, in the navy, at a feast, or in a journey . . . to carry all the virtues and graces about a Man, is not ordinary for a Common Christian.

Traherne's treatise is eminently quotable and his humane attitude may appeal to a modern reader. In this treatise, unlike his transcendent *Centuries*, Traherne appears somewhat more appreciative of the urbane world than

1 J. Cosin, *A Collection of Private Devotions*, pp. 29–42, 222–3

2 Traherne, *Christian Ethicks*, pp. 311, 357

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the Prayer Book Collects or their early medieval sources: 'wealth and honour . . . beauty and wit . . . he may be happy with Difficulty without them, but Easily with them', whereas the Collects stress purity of life and wariness of material goods (Easter 1, Trinity 4, Matthew the Apostle). Again, Traherne adds the rider that 'Better things are evil, if compared with the Best' and as Christians 'we are touched with an unknown Beauty which we never saw, and in the midst of our Ignorance are actuated with a Tendency, which does not abate the Value of our Virtues, but puts Life and energy into our Actions . . .'.¹

The Collects cannot properly be separated from the other sections of the Prayer Book. Indeed, verbal echoes between the parts would seem intentional, such as the Trinity 18 paraphrase of the godparents' renunciation of the world, the flesh and the devil, itself derived from Matthew 4. Cosin makes clear the 'centring' function of the Collects as regular and communal prayers reviving the 'ardour of ancient piety' in early Church language to set against our mundane 'affairs and pleasures'.² Given the Prayer Book's purpose as public worship accessible to all, the perspective of virtue ethics may give an oblique reading of these requests to the First Person of the Trinity, but the contemporaneous literature suggests that such an interpretation is relevant to understanding the Collects for times past when the Classics were less a minority interest. The reading also explains how the two-way relationship between God and supplicant could be extended to the work of the Church and in the world: 'the fruit of a lively Faith'. The breadth of supplicatory stances shown in the 1549 Book of Common Prayer from abject contrition to aspirational agency was sustained through the subsequent revisions. As reflective prayers they affirm the inseparability of behaviour from religious belief. The Collects help shape the space for God when the service is over.

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(Dr Nicholas Webb is currently employed as a part-time post-delivery person with Royal Mail Letters.)

‘May the King Live for Ever’

The Coronation in Theory and Practice

JOHN MILNER

On 19 July 1821 Miss Fellowes walked into history. As the Herb Woman to George IV, accompanied by six maids walking two by two, she led the great procession of peers and dignitaries on that Coronation day from Westminster Hall to Westminster Abbey, strewing the way with herbs.¹ History was made because this was the last Coronation at which the ceremony was preceded by the procession from the Hall to the Abbey. History was also made later that same day by Henry Dymock, Esquire who, as Lord of the Manor of Scrivelsby in Lincolnshire, exercised his right as King’s Champion. So it was that, at the end of the banquet following George IV’s Coronation, Henry Dymock rode into Westminster Hall, in a full suit of polished armour and luxuriant plumes of ostrich feathers. If anyone present were to gainsay that George IV is the rightful heir ‘to the Imperial Crown of this United Kingdom, here is his champion, who saith that he lieth and is a false traitor, being ready in person to combat with him, and in this quarrel will adventure his life against him on what day soever he shall appoint.’²

George IV was delighted by this spectacle and the sight of his champion riding round Westminster Hall, flinging down his gauntlet on four occasions. Nobody challenged Dymock and he backed his horse awkwardly out of the Hall, clutching the gold cup which the king had given him as a reward for his valour. On 13 October 1399, the Feast of the Translation of Edward the Confessor, Thomas Dymock had likewise appeared on horseback at the banquet following Henry IV’s Coronation and had issued the same challenge. Although there is no evidence through the long history of the king’s champion of any challenge ever being made, Henry IV’s position was very different from that of George IV. He had, after all, just usurped the throne from Richard II. Astute and politically aware as he was, Henry would have known that not all those who had sworn fealty to him earlier in the day at the Abbey actually had any intention of keeping their oath. He very wisely, therefore, responded to his champion’s promise to engage in combat with anyone challenging his right as king by saying, ‘If need be, Sir Thomas, I will in my own person ease thee of this office.’³

It was doubtless the grotesque cost of George IV’s Coronation—£238,238, an enormous sum—that led to two significant changes at all

1 L.G. Wickham Legg, *English Coronation Records*, 1901, p. 347 2 *Ibid.*, pp. 359–60

3 *The Chronicle of Adam Usk 1377–1421*, C. Given Wilson (ed. & tr.) Oxford, 1997, pp. 143–4

future coronations: there were no more processions from Hall to Abbey and no more banquets. The abandonment of the procession was a pity because it was central to the whole process of coronation, but less important than in previous centuries given the changing role of the monarch. None the less, the procession demonstrated the formal acceptance of the monarch by the peers of the realm and was a visible sign of unity as they processed to the Abbey for the Coronation Service. The abandonment of the banquet and, therefore, of the appearance of the Champion is of less significance. It is perhaps of interest, however, that, over more than four centuries, the same family performed that role. Coronations were about continuity and the ceremonial has ancient origins. Performing a service at the coronation gave great distinction to individuals and helped to weld the individual to loyal service of the monarch. In his masterly commentary on the Coronation of Elizabeth II, Richard Dimbleby made a reference to the appearance, stepping out of time before returning again, of the Lord of the Manor of Worksop to play his role at the Investiture *per Annulum et Baculum*.

Modern coronation liturgies specify that, after the monarch has received the Ring, 'the Dean of Westminster [shall] bring the Sceptre with the Cross and the Sceptre with the Dove to the Archbishop [of Canterbury].' Then, 'the Glove presented by the Lord of the Manor of Worksop, being put on, the Archbishop shall deliver the Sceptre with the Cross into the King's right hand.' The Archbishop then delivers the Sceptre with the Dove into the King's left hand. The rubric states that, 'The Lord of the Manor of Worksop may support his Majesty's right arm'.¹ In 1316 there is a reference to the Manor of Farnham Royal, Bucks., being held 'of the King in chief by service of finding a glove for his right hand on the day of the King's coronation for supporting the King's right arm with his said gloved hand whilst the king shall hold his sceptre'. Farnham Royal passed to the Furnival family who performed this office at the Coronations of Richard II, Henry IV and Henry V, and it then passed to the Nevills and later the Talbot Earls of Shrewsbury. In 1541, the Earl of Shrewsbury exchanged with Henry VIII the manor of Farnham Royal for the 'site of the late Priory or Manor of Worksop'—his service for which was to include the finding of one glove for the King's right hand and to bear up his right arm while the 'King bears the Sceptre Royal' at his coronation.² And so an involvement that started at least as early as 1316 was continuing in 1953.

1 *The Form and Order of the Service that is to be Performed and the Ceremonies that are to be Observed in the Coronation of Their Majesties . . . on the 12th Day of May 1937, 1937*, rubrics on pp. 23 & 24

2 J.H. Round, *The King's Serjeants and Officers of State with their Coronation Services*, 1911, pp. 374–5, 387

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These examples hopefully illustrate the extraordinary sense of history with which the coronation ceremony is imbued. Although the form of the ceremony has undergone regular change and developed over the centuries, in essentials it remains as it has been since earliest Christian times. There have been those who have attempted to invent traditions for their own advantage. As late as 1911, prior to the Coronation of George V, the Court of Claims heard a claim from Sir Marteine Lloyd asserting his right to 'carry the King's silver harp at the coronation'. His Counsel stated that, 'the ancestors of the petitioner on divers occasions attended at coronations as bearers of the king's silver harp.' In response to a question from the Lord Chancellor, counsel had to accept that Sir Marteine had no documentary evidence in proof of this claim 'which rested in tradition.' The claim was dismissed and it was subsequently found that it had been based on a distortion of the family's practice of presenting a silver harp at the Eisteddfod.¹ Of course, if someone was prepared to go to those lengths to try to participate in a coronation, clearly, even at the start of the twentieth century, it was seen as an important ceremony.

Coronation had, perhaps, lost some of its mystical quality with the emergence of a constitutional monarchy. Writing to the Countess of Aylesbury on 27 September 1761, Horace Walpole comments on George III's recent Coronation:

It was in truth a brave sight. The sea of heads in Palace-yard, the guards, horse and foot, the scaffolds, balconies and procession, exceeded imagination. Well, it was all delightful, but not half so charming as its being over. The gabble one heard about it for six weeks before, and the fatigue of the day, could not well be compensated by a mere puppet-show; for puppet-show it was, though it cost a million.²

Coronations were also opportunities for observing people. 'My Lady Harrington, covered with all the diamonds she could borrow, hire, or seize . . . was the finest figure at a distance.' 'Lady Kildare, still beauty itself, if not a little too large.' Then there were those who did not follow protocol and took up places in the procession which suggested they had greater precedence than was the case. Nobody, Walpole thought, was so 'perilously angry as my Lady Cowper, who refused to set a foot with my Lady Macclesfield; and when she was at last obliged to associate with her, set out on a round trot, as if she designed to prove the antiquity of her family by marching as lustily as a maid of honour of Queen Gwiniver.'³ Lady Macclesfield had attempted to take a more senior place in the procession than the one to which she was entitled.

1 *Ibid.*, pp. 334–5 and Round, 'The Lords of Kenes', in *Family Origins*, 1930, pp. 73–102, especially p. 101 2 Horace Walpole, *Select Letters*, 1941, p. 148 3 *Ibid.*, pp. 150–1

For the last two coronations, the diaries of Sir Henry ‘Chips’ Channon are particularly interesting since he was at both, although he did not fulfil the ambition expressed in 1937, ‘I must really try to be a Peer before the next Coronation,’ in time for 1953. He comments, on George VI’s Coronation, that ‘the church atmosphere, I fear, had completely gone . . . the North Transept was a vitrine of bosoms and jewels and bobbing tiaras. I recognised many . . .’ What was missing in numinous atmosphere was, however, compensated in other respects. ‘The lavatory arrangements were excellent—“Peeresses”, “Peers”, “Gentlemen”, and several of these three orders were smoking cigarettes on the outer built-up balcony.’ When the ceremony started, there might have been ‘too much of the Archbishop,’ ‘the heat and airlessness . . . indeed overpowering’ but when ‘at last the Procession formed up, we watched, spellbound.’ In 1953, ‘it was all finer, and better organised than last time, although the Archbishop’s voice was not as sonorous as that of the wicked old Lang.’ It was, of course, a long ceremony and ‘once or twice I slipped out on to the parapet for a cigarette and a chat.’ Yet the overwhelming impression was of the splendour of the occasion. There was ‘the magic moment of the Queen’s arrival: she was calm and confident and even touching, and quite perfect, while Prince Philip was like a medieval knight.’ The scene was ‘so splendid, so breathtaking in its solemn splendour.’¹

Yet there were others who were less enthusiastic. Anthony Montague Browne, Churchill’s Private Secretary, writes:

I had been invited to be a Gold Stick—an usher in the Abbey—but had declined. I don’t quite know why. The cost of acquiring full-dress diplomatic uniform? An innate distaste for elaborate ceremonial? A dislike of getting up at 4 a.m.? Probably just a curmudgeonly nature, and a feeling that such showy rejoicing did not fit in with our lamentable national decline.²

But, overwhelmingly, the sentiments were positive and the mood one of excitement and anticipation, with the splendour of the occasion being especially impressive. Sir John Colville, Private Secretary to the Queen as Princess Elizabeth, had been invited to sit in the Queen’s box. They ‘looked straight at the massed peeresses whose robes and jewels sparkled with unique magnificence and whose movement as, with white gloved hands, they put their coronets on was aptly compared to the corps de ballet in *Lac des Cygnes*.’ Harold Nicolson who watched the ceremony on television comments in his diary that, even through this medium, ‘I was deeply moved.’³

1 Chips: *The Diaries of Sir Henry Channon*, ed. Robert Rhodes James, 1967, pp. 124–5 & 475–6

2 Anthony Montague Browne, *Long Sunset*, 1996, p. 174

3 John Colville, *The Fringes of Power: Downing Street Diaries 1939–1955*, 1985, p. 714; Harold Nicolson, *Diaries and Letters 1945–1962*, ed. Nigel Nicolson, 1968, p. 241

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When we look at coronations from earlier periods we cannot know how people reacted or what were their experiences or emotions. There are simply no sources that would reveal such things. That George V was exhausted but moved by his Coronation ('The service in the Abbey was most beautiful, but it was a terrible ordeal,' he wrote in his diary) and that the future Edward VIII felt overwhelmed with emotion paying homage as Prince of Wales to his father at the same Coronation, give us insights into individual reactions. George V saw the ceremony as hugely significant—'a gathering up of the treasures of the past and a preparing of the path of the future'.¹ Perhaps the medieval monarchs of centuries ago experienced similar emotions. It is impossible to know. Perhaps, although again we cannot know, there were the medieval equivalents of the scene in November 1952 (six months before the event) described by Chips Channon:

People are prattling of the Coronation already . . . of their robes and places and arrangements . . . Coaches and robes, tiaras and decorations. Winnie Portarlington announced at luncheon that she has harness but no coach; Circe Londonderry has a coach but no horses; Mollie Buccleuch has no postillions—but five tiaras.²

Looking at some relatively recent coronations perhaps helps in an understanding of earlier ones where the scene would be peopled by individuals who would react to what they saw and experienced and would then go out into a society where the practical and political significance of the monarch was of critical importance. Coronations have always been attended by people with ambitions and political aspirations. More recent coronations might have been dominated by social gossip; when the king ruled rather than reigned, the Abbey could be a dangerous place.

Theories of great antiquity and sacred importance underpinned all coronation ceremonies. Coronations happened, of course, in time and the theories of kingship and the solemnity of the ceremony was overshadowed by the reality of the political situation. The three Lancastrian kings (Henry IV (1399–1413), Henry V (1413–22) and Henry VI (1422–61)) provide interesting insights into a range of issues faced by monarchs at the times of their coronations and illustrate what those coronations meant in practical terms in the political context in which they occurred.

1 John Buchan, *The King's Grace 1910–1935*, 1935, p. 23; see e.g. Hector Bolitho, *Edward VIII: His Life and Reign*, p. 19 and in particular *Histoire d'un Roi*, Paris, 1951, pp. 105 & 106 (memoirs of the Duke of Windsor translated from English by Marie-Madeleine Beauquesne and George Roditi; Lawrence E. Tanner, *The History of the Coronation*, 1952, p.70.

2 Chips, p. 470

To take the Lancastrians as examples, it is important to begin with Richard II who, in 1399, was deposed by Henry Bolingbroke who seized the throne as Henry IV. Immediately there is a conflict between theory and practice, between the symbolism of the coronation and the reality of events. Starting with Richard II, there is no better place to begin than the eponymous Shakespeare play and the famous lines he gives to the deposed King. They illustrate beautifully the drama and the poignancy inevitable at the deposition of an anointed king.

Not all the water in the rough rude sea
Can wash the balm off from an anointed king;
The breath of worldly men cannot depose
The deputy elected by the Lord.

(Richard II, III.ii.54–7)¹

When, later, Richard bows to the inevitability of the loss of his crown, he reverses the coronation ceremony as he surrenders his royal state. In the emotionally charged words of Shakespeare's play, this is not just an abdication: it is far more than a political act. He is taking away each of the sacred elements of his Coronation in turn.

Now mark me how I will undo myself:
I give this heavy weight from off my head,
And this unwieldy sceptre from my hand,
The pride of kingly sway from out my heart;
With mine own tears I wash away my balm,
With mine own hands I give away my crown,
With mine own tongue deny my sacred state,
With mine own breath release all duteous oaths
All pomp and majesty I do forswear.

(IV.i.203–11)

In order properly to understand the significance of these haunting lines, it is necessary to go back to the First Book of Samuel. Samuel, it will be recalled, made his sons judges over Israel, but the people wanted a king. Samuel, unhappy, and warning them what that will entail ('he will take your sons and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen . . . and he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks and to be bakers . . .') (1 Sam. 8:11 & 13)² consults with God who tells him, 'Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king' (*ibid.*, v. 22). Saul is subsequently chosen and, 'Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him and said, "Is it not because the Lord hath

1 All quotations from Shakespeare: The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, ed. P. Alexander, Vol. 2, The Histories, 1958.

2 All biblical quotations are from the Authorised (or King James) Version.

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anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?” (1 Sam. 10:1). And then, in the First Book of Kings, we come to the key text.

So Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet . . . went down, and caused Solomon to ride upon King David’s mule, and brought him to Gihon. And Zadok the priest took an horn of oil out of the tabernacle, and anointed Solomon. And they blew the trumpet; and all the people said, ‘God save King Solomon!’ And all the people came up after him, and the people piped with pipes, and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth rent with the sound of them. (1 Kings 1:38–40)

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of these verses, which became central to the Judaeo-Christian coronation tradition, sanctifying the coronation ceremony and imbuing it with a vital liturgical and sacramental force. The king was God’s anointed. In the early Middle Ages, the Archbishop of Mainz declared:

The grace of God hath this day [i.e. coronation day] changed thee into another man, and by the holy rite of unction hath made thee partaker in its divinity.¹

So it is that those verses from 1 Kings have been used as an Anthem at the anointing at every English coronation since that of Edgar in 958. The famous setting by Handel was first heard at George II’s Coronation in 1727—albeit sung there in the wrong place by mistake—and it has been used at all subsequent coronations.²

‘Le Roi est mort, vive le Roi’ (‘The King is dead! Long live the King!’) is the famous cry when a monarch dies. The person has died but the institution has not. The successor to the office of king enters upon his office at the moment of his predecessor’s death. The concept of the ‘king’s two bodies’ is important here—the individual and the living symbol of continuous monarchical rule and authority. In the anointing, the king is outwardly changed by the hand of the priest while inwardly being cleansed and purified by the grace of the Holy Spirit. The anointed person becomes another man, entering into a new status and a new relationship with God. He is now the Lord’s Anointed. The coronation ruler has, as it were, a twin body, one descending from nature, that is the human body, and the other descending from grace through the bestowal at the coronation of God’s authority upon him. He is God’s office-bearer in the world.³ All this is, of

1 Fritz Kern, *Kingship and Law in the Middle Ages*, tr. S.B. Chrimes, Oxford, 1939, p. 37. This seminal and magisterial work explores in depth the concepts of kingship and monarchy in the Middle Ages and the problem of relationships between Church and State over these issues.

2 Roy Strong, *Coronation from the 8th to the 21st Century*, 2005, pp. 5, 407

3 Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies*, Princeton, 1981, especially pp. 46–7. This is a book of major importance in exploring the nature of medieval kingship. See also P.E. Schramm, *A History of the English Coronation*, Oxford, 1937 (tr. L.G. Wickham Legg), p. 1.

course, very encouraging for the newly anointed king. He has the power and authority of the Church behind him, the assurance of a universally respected Church that he is God's representative. It is difficult to recognise in our age the importance that was attached to the anointing except by recognising that in the Middle Ages the authority of the Church was largely unquestioned.

The Papacy—especially the most influential and power-conscious popes like Gregory VII and Innocent III—did their utmost to constrain the mystical authority which consecration might be said to give to a king. To Innocent III, consecration gave the king a place in the ecclesiastical hierarchy—but not as 'head', only as an 'arm' which obeys the priestly head. Bishop Grosseteste of Lincoln in the thirteenth century argued that the anointing gave inner sacramental efficacy but expressly emphasised that it bestowed no spiritual character.¹ Whatever the finer points of the arguments between Church and State, anointing was a supreme liturgical moment of great sacred importance. In 1838, *The Times* suggested that the anointing should be omitted from the Coronation of Queen Victoria on the grounds that it is 'a part of the ceremony more recommended by antiquity than delicacy' but it was included as it has been on all subsequent occasions. Of course, as they had been at least since Henry VI's Coronation in Westminster in 1429, the Knights of the Garter were on hand to hold a canopy over the monarch during the anointing.² That is because it is central. It is essential to recognise the key significance of the anointing as the point at which the king receives God's authority.

Joan of Arc, it may be noted, continued to address Charles VII simply as the Dauphin long after his accession. She would not call him king until he had been anointed with the chrism from the sacred ampulla at the right place—Rheims Cathedral. Once he had been consecrated there, she accepted him as king because this consecration expressed the judgement of God.³ Place and proper form were crucial to coronations, a point well illustrated by reference to English coronations. At the end of the twelfth century the Pope confirmed the right of the Archbishop of Canterbury to crown the English monarch. Interestingly, when Henry III was crowned hurriedly at Gloucester in 1216 to try to ensure his unimpeded succession (successful overall as he reigned until 1272), the Coronation was conducted by the Bishop of Winchester as the Archbishop of Canterbury's suffragan. The Archbishop of York has no special function at the Coronation.⁴ Indeed, one of Lang's concerns in 1937 when he decided to

1 Kern, pp. 56, 55 2 Tanner, *Coronation*, p. 41

3 Kern, p. 61 4 Tanner, *Coronation*, p. 41

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omit the sermon from George VI’s Coronation was that the Archbishop of York would have no role to play in the ceremony.¹

In fifteenth-century France, the leading cleric and chronicler, Jean Juvenal des Ursins, wrote:

A king is verily like a prelate; you, my sovereign lord, are not simply a layman but a prelate of the church, the first in your kingdom after the pope, the right arm of the church.²

Around the monarch, who was both *rex* and *sacerdos*, king and priest, myths developed which, of course, enhanced the position of the individual monarch and the monarchy collectively. Of particular importance in this respect was the alleged power, gained through the anointing, to heal those suffering from the terrible skin condition, scrofula. Thus it was said, ‘The king touches you; God heals you’ (*‘Le Roi te touche, Dieu te guérise’*). ‘Even in the age of Voltaire, a few years before the Jacobins enthroned the goddess of Reason, the last king of the *ancien régime* (Louis XVI) solemnly paraded through the ranks of scrofulous sufferers,’ one authority has observed.³ Clearly such superstitions would be more strongly believed in the Middle Ages and, again, the mystical power of the monarch would be emphasised in the minds of the people. Even as late as the early eighteenth century, people were travelling from England to France to be touched by the exiled Stuarts, a practice that continued until the death of the exiled Cardinal of York, the self-styled Henry IX, in 1807.⁴

Although central to the coronation ceremony—more important in many ways than the actual crowning—anointing was not everything. A king had to be acknowledged and accepted by his people: this is part of the reason why the procession from Westminster Hall to Westminster Abbey was important. The peers had accepted the man who was to be anointed and crowned and would acclaim him in the Abbey during the ceremony. The culmination of the ceremony was, of course, the coronation itself and had been since the Byzantine emperor, Leo I, had been crowned by a patriarch in 457. So the tradition which established itself in the Eastern, Byzantine, Empire was extended to the west with the Coronation by the Pope of Charlemagne on Christmas Day 800. The sacred nature of the whole ceremony cannot be avoided. The Church anointed and the Church crowned. The realm made homage and the king was accepted as the nation’s ruler but the actions by which this happened were conducted by the Church.

1 J.G. Lockhart, *Cosmo Gordon Lang*, 1949, p. 411 (‘Little could be profitably said within the limits of five or six minutes’); Lang himself as Archbishop of York had preached at George V’s Coronation.

2 P.S. Lewis, *Later Medieval France*, 1968, p. 81

3 Kern, p. 59; Marc Bloch, *Les Rois Thaumaturges*, Paris, 1961, pp. 85, 90–1 and especially p. 93

4 Strong, *Coronation*, p. 281

For Henry IV, a usurper, it was essential that he was accepted by his people and this happened after Richard had renounced his throne, ostensibly voluntarily although this clearly was not the case in practice. In 1404 the Lancastrian succession was embodied in statute, parliament giving its support and endorsement to the new dynasty. This was not enough. The king also needed to be seen by his people and acknowledged by them. Thus, at least from Richard II's Coronation in 1377, monarchs processed from the Tower to Westminster Hall, the procession in 1377 taking three hours. It must be remembered that the first photographs of a coronation were taken at that of George V in 1911 and the first film at that of George VI in 1937. The childhood memories of many of crowding round a tiny television screen in 1953 is a reminder that it is only at the last coronation that the majority of people were able to see the coronation as it happened.¹

Henry IV played a master stroke at his Coronation in an attempt to use the mystique of the occasion to assert what were, after all, highly questionable rights to the English crown. It needs to be remembered that this Coronation occurred well over a century before the Reformation and the corrupt practices in the Church that were exposed at that time were still in evidence. Indeed, the Church was able to play its part in helping to establish the new dynasty, something which the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Arundel, very much wanted to do. So it was that this story was told, a detailed account of it appearing in one of the major contemporary chronicles, the *Historia Anglicana* of Thomas Walsingham, a monk at St Albans Abbey.

When Thomas Becket was in exile in France in the mid-twelfth century, the story went, he prayed to the Virgin Mary that the King of England and his heirs should amend their lives. Immediately the Virgin appeared. Clasped to her bosom was an eagle of gold and, in her hand, a small stone phial. The phial was placed in the eagle and both were entrusted to Becket. She said to him, 'This is the oil with which the kings of England must be anointed—not those wicked ones who now reign—but kings of the English shall arise who will be anointed with this oil . . . who will recover by force the lands lost by his forefathers, that is to say Normandy and Aquitaine.' The eagle and phial were hidden in a church at Poitiers on the Virgin's instruction and discovered there by the Black Prince in the fourteenth century. They were brought back to England and placed in the Tower where Richard II discovered them by chance after his Coronation. So impressed was Richard by his discovery that he wanted to be anointed a second time, a request refused by the Church. The sacred oil was, there-

1 Tanner, *Coronation*, pp. 52, 71

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fore, used for the first time at Henry IV's Coronation. If the attempted recovery of the lost lands of France was to be a key Lancastrian aim, thus meeting the Virgin's prophecy, so this oil's heavenly origins helped to put the English king on equal terms with the King of France. The title adopted by kings of France of *Rex christianissimus* (Most Christian King) stemmed from the delivery from heaven of a vial of sacred oil during the baptism of Clovis, the first Christian king of France.¹

The first half of Henry IV's reign was dominated by rebellion, and he and his family faced the first substantial attempt on their lives as early as Twelfth Night 1399/1400, when noble conspirators, disguised as mummers, joined the festivities at Windsor Castle with the intention of murdering the King and his four sons.² In an age when stories such as that of the sacred oil would largely have been accepted without question, Henry IV had played a master stroke at his Coronation. He needed to be accepted by his peers and people, but did not want to be in thrall to them. The use of the sacred oil, and the origin of the story, could easily suggest that here was the king who, with his dynasty, was to bring a fresh approach to kingship and restore lost lands. Henry V was probably anointed using the same oil and he, of course, albeit temporarily, did restore English authority in France.³ The story, so far as Henry IV is concerned, did not, however, have a happy ending. He was plagued by ill-health for the latter part of his reign. The chronicler Adam of Usk wrote that, by the time of the King's death in 1413, he had been troubled for five years by a rotting of the flesh, a drying up of the eyes and by a rupture of the intestines. That same rotting, Adam wrote, 'did the anointing at his Coronation portend.' For, following that ceremony, 'there ensued such a growth of lice, especially on his head, that he neither grew hair nor could he have his head uncovered for many months.' This might account for the fact that the Lancastrians, who normally had a good sense of the value of propaganda, did not make as much of the holy oil as might have been expected.⁴

By the time Henry V succeeded to the throne in 1413, the Lancastrian dynasty was well established. Henry's only potential problem was with his second brother and heir presumptive, Thomas, Duke of Clarence. Clarence was in Bordeaux following a campaign in France which Henry IV had

1 *Thomae Walsingham quondam Monachi S. Albani, Historia Anglicana*, ed. H.T. Riley, Rolls Series, 1864, II.239–40; cf. T.A. Sandquist, 'The Holy Oil of St Thomas of Canterbury', in T.A. Sandquist & M.R. Powicke (eds.), *Essays in Medieval History Presented to Bertie Wilkinson*, Toronto, 1969, pp. 330–44

2 *Ibid.*, pp. 243–4

3 See Christopher Allmand, *Henry V*, 1992, p. 65 for the Coronation and *passim* for Henry's achievement in France. This is the best available biography of Henry V. See also Schramm, *English Coronation*, pp. 173, 174 for the measures taken to legitimise the Lancastrian succession.

4 *Chronicle of Adam Usk*, pp. 242–3

advocated strongly but which his eldest son, the Prince of Wales, now the new king Henry V, had strongly opposed. Would the new reign start with conflict between the royal brothers? Clarence, after all, had an army with him in France. Henry V, therefore, made sure that this could not happen by the two simple expedients of ensuring that the news of his father's death was not sent to Clarence and by arranging the Coronation very rapidly so that, by the time Clarence returned, his brother would be the *de facto* crowned and anointed king. This perhaps provides a different insight on the great medieval hero, the victor of Agincourt; here he is seen as a rather anxious new monarch. On 7 April 1413, seventeen days after Henry V had succeeded to the throne, letters patent were issued in Bordeaux in the name of Henry IV. This was just two days before Henry V's Coronation on Passion Sunday, 9 April. Henry IV had died on 20 March. Within that three week period, there had been a royal funeral to arrange—and one at Canterbury not the more usual Westminster—and the Coronation to plan. The new King was clearly determined that for his Coronation and the crucial first weeks of his reign, no possibility of potentially serious family disagreements should cloud events or hinder the smooth transition of power. None the less, it was not an easy transition, perhaps accounting for his reported moodiness at the Coronation banquet where he scarcely ate anything.¹ Given Henry V's later considerable interest in St George and the Garter, it is worth noting that had he chosen to delay his Coronation for a little longer he could have been crowned on St George's Day, although it was transferred that year as 23 April was Easter Day.

The Coronation of Henry VI is a completely different example of how a coronation could serve a political end. Following the death of Charles VI of France in 1422, not long after the untimely death of Henry V in August that year, Henry VI, under the terms of the Treaty of Troyes, became King of both England and France. Henry VI was just nine months old on his accession. So, Henry VI had two Coronations, one in Westminster Abbey in November 1429, the other a year later in Notre Dame de Paris. Both were incredibly lavish occasions with the emphasis placed throughout on the union of the two crowns. At each course of the Coronation banquet, there was a tableau. After the third course at the Westminster Coronation—at which had been served roasted venison, curlew, cocks, plover, quails, great birds, larks, carp and crab, the tableau was meant to illustrate the divine blessing given to the union of the two crowns. The tableau comprised, 'our

¹ See my article, 'The English Enterprise in France, 1412–1413', in D.J. Clayton, R.G. Davies and P. McNiven (eds.), *Trade, Devotion and Governance: Papers in Later Medieval History*, Stroud, 1994, pp. 80–101 (especially pp. 89–90); for Westminster as the established, normal place for royal burials, including the re-burial of Richard II by Henry V, see Michael Evans, *The Death of kings in Medieval England*, 2007, pp. 27, 28. For Henry V at his Coronation banquet, see J.H. Wylie, *The Reign of Henry the Fifth*, Vol.1, Cambridge, 1914, p. 7.

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lady sitting and her child in her lap, and she holding in her hand a crown and Saint George kneeling on that one side and Saint Denis on that other side.' Magnificent as it was, it was illusory. English authority in France was slipping irrevocably away and the hopes of Henry V were to disappear like the dream which dies at the opening day. Nearer to the truth was what was happening outside the Abbey. 'The day was fine, the crowds huge, several people were crushed to death and a number of cut-purses were imprisoned and had their ears cut off.'¹

Perhaps inevitably, the solemnity of the Coronation, with its mystical and sacramental overshadowing and ancient traditions, was always going to be tainted by the realities of the politics of the time. Yet the ceremony has survived, little changed in essentials, over the Christian centuries. It is ironic that in tandem with the radical change in the political significance of the monarchy, technical developments have allowed more and more people to see and hear coronation ceremonies. This has, however, had its negative aspects. When Henry V, during his Coronation Mass, dropped one of the coins he was to present at the offertory, only those present and in close proximity to the King saw what had happened. At the Coronation of George VI, the first to be filmed, it was rather different when a mistake was made. The King was very anxious that the Crown should be placed on his head with the right side to the front. A thin line of red cotton was placed under one of the principal jewels as a guide to the Archbishop. When the moment came for the crowning, Lang discovered that 'some officious person must have removed it [the thread].' He had to turn the crown round to make sure the cotton was not on the other side—which, of course, it was not. Next day, the press comments, 'Archbishop fumbles with the crown,' faced Lang despite the general verdict that, 'The Archbishop [had] performed his duty to perfection.'²

The social and technological changes since 1953 have been so enormous that it seems unlikely that a similar ceremony will ever be re-enacted. The 1953 Coronation did, however, accomplish something for national life, eight years after the end of the devastations of the Second World War. Throughout the country there were festivities, organised at local level, bringing people together to celebrate the start of a new era. The Coronation created a sense of united national purpose, the nation led by a young and elegant Queen, and the sense of a new opportunity and a new beginning. So, ironically, when the political significance of the Coronation had never been less, the event's symbolic importance had never been greater.

¹ *A Chronicle of London from 1089 to 1483, Written in the Fifteenth Century*, N.H. Nicolas & E. Tyrrell (eds.), 1827, pp. 118, 168–9 ² Lockhart, Lang, p. 420

In Soho Street, Glasgow . . . my father spied me at the window. ‘Gi’us a song, Marie, hen,’ he called out. I started singing ‘In a Golden Coach’, a song that had been written for the Coronation (and a then current Dickie Valentine hit).

‘In a golden coach
There’s a heart of gold
That belongs to you and me . . .’

Simple but genuine—a long way from Zadok and Nathan and the pomp and circumstance of the Abbey service, this was the ceremonial brought into the everyday, knitting people together in communities, giving them a focus on something beyond the humdrum. And that was, adds Lulu, ‘my first public appearance’.¹

Note: Those wishing to explore the English Coronation in depth should turn to Roy Strong’s *Coronation from the 8th to the 21st Century, 2005*, as well as the works of Legg, Schramm and Tanner cited in the notes.

This article is a revised version of a paper read to the Manchester Branch of the Prayer Book Society at St Anne, Tottington, on Saturday 6 February 2010, the 58th anniversary of the Queen’s Accession.

John Milner has been a Lay Reader for forty years, and after a career in education retired in 2009 as Principal Director of the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance. His MA dissertation was on the Order of the Garter in Henry VI’s reign, and he has published several articles on fifteenth-century history.

1 David Kynaston, *Family Britain 1951–57*, 2009, p. 304

Why the Magnificat?

JULIET HOLE

During a meeting held in our parish to discuss services, the question was asked: Why do we sing the *Magnificat* at Evensong? The Prayer Book Society has of course published clear, specific and scholarly answers to this and related questions. What is offered here is more general and peripheral.

Some of our opponents take refuge in a comfortable parody of our view rather than engage in serious discussion: ‘harking back to their childhood’, ‘dislike of change’, etc. There is in fact no need to deny or apologise for any of this. Memory is essential to our understanding and control of our lives, and a church—or a nation—with no memory, no learning, no loves, attachments, loyalties and habits, is an entirely artificial and fundamentally inhuman product, trapped in the present moment far more stickily than any living tradition is ‘trapped in the past’. The wish for stability and continuity is normal and natural and a powerful hindrance to tyranny, exploitation and manipulation.

But this is just a preamble to the case for the Prayer Book and its place at the centre of our worship, and it is essential that we, both as individuals and as a society, articulate and argue that case; this in turn means that we need to analyse our own understanding of the Prayer Book’s significance and do the same for the opposing view. In order to do this it is vital to get beyond considerations of who likes what, and which services in our particular parish have the largest or smallest congregations—factors in which the discussion so easily becomes hopelessly stuck—and think about what we ought to be doing ‘to the glory of God and the edification of His people’.

To return to the original question: the *Magnificat*, the *Nunc Dimittis* and the *Benedictus* are inspired and prophetic words from the Gospels, each uttered by a particular person at a significant moment, in obedience and joy and thankfulness, filled with the Holy Spirit. The form in each case is that of poetry, fitting them to be remembered, prayed and sung.

These and other canticles are in the services by tradition, which in the Church has special significance, being one of the grounds of faith. The tradition is not there by chance. It embodies what has always been accepted and practised by the Church, and signifies authenticity; it houses our faith. ‘Tradition’ has also an everyday sense, and here it is what makes our daily lives human: it is truly democratic, embodying what belongs to the people—what they have taken to their hearts. And we can only ‘value

our tradition' as people who do nothing of the kind are fond of putting it, by participating in that tradition.

We might then ask why tradition is so much under attack in today's world. Governments with totalitarian ambitions, and all political and commercial interests that desire control over our minds and behaviour, are hostile to tradition (whatever they may say) because it is not of them or provided by them. It is on the contrary one of the continual reminders that the world they are constructing around us is not the only possible one; it has not always been there, and it will pass, like all fashions. It has an outside. Contempt for tradition (as when officers of the state refuse to wear the uniform that goes with the job) is a leading characteristic of modern politics. The spirit of service, and principles of duty and honour, can be seen to collapse as the sense of participation in something greater than one's personal interests and concerns is abandoned. The result is elitism at its most irresponsible and intolerant.

Along with this fundamental hostility comes the utilitarian mind-set prevalent both in the modern state and in the Church, which requires everything to conform to its current policies and be justified in terms of some sort of measurable productivity. Thus in churches that are being 'moved on', to quote the usual weasel terminology, an atmosphere of busy self-assertiveness and a certain ruthlessness are cultivated. Quiet churches, small congregations and a liturgy that is wholly independent of the styles, fashions and preoccupations of the moment are found embarrassing.

Yet these are things which should not merely be tolerated but treasured. Through them the community and the nation are sustained by the prayers of the whole Church. How often are they swept aside in pursuit of some new 'initiative' or possible crowd-puller which leaves liturgy and even buildings unrecognisable and many faithful worshippers as collateral damage.

'Why do we sing the *Magnificat*?' was in the case mentioned a straight question, but its variants, implied or expressed, are all too common: why should we sing the canticles? What is the point? Why bother? When the historic liturgies that should be central are marginalised, or their content regarded as optional or disposable, the modern Church begins to come off the rails. It loses its catholicity, its unity and its standard of doctrine. It disintegrates, as some congregations wander off in a 'Roman' direction and others into a diet of informal services. 'High' and 'low' fly apart, where once the Prayer Book held them together. The fact and sense of being a Church, Anglican and universal, is progressively diminished until only local congregations and bureaucratic structures remain.

The liturgies are the gift of the Catholic and Apostolic Church. Instead of accepting them with gratitude and using them as intended, partici-

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pating in the continuous historic worship of the whole Church, the envious modern spirit seems to drive us persistently to emphasise all that is most ephemeral in our own times. It is not just that the Church of England has become fidgety and distracted; it is more serious. Just when society is in desperate need of rootedness, stability and the serenity of the greater truth, the Church is swept up by the disturbed mentality of the age: image-obsessed, looking at itself as it were from outside, at the expense of the life and work that comes from the heart. It is surely no coincidence that one of the most striking differences between the language of the Prayer Book and that of modern versions is that the former is so much more heartfelt.

The canticles, especially when made familiar by memorable language, provide food for thought, and religious thinking is not confined to the secular materialism which is often taken to represent the limits of rationality, and which itself struggles to cope with, for instance, the physics of the sub-atomic world. It is hard to argue simultaneously that the human mind is only a biological product thrown up by evolution and consisting of physical and chemical events in the brain, and that this same mind can objectively and reliably (if incompletely) comprehend the universe. Either human reason is in some sense divine (as C.S. Lewis put it, 'cosmic': having a validity that transcends the physical human condition), or it is very considerably giving itself airs.

So rather than use 'why' questions to try and corner the worship of the Church and insist that it justify itself in purely functional terms, let us understand that it is precisely the 'given-ness' of the services that sets us free from the sort of contentiousness that can become distracting—just as regularity and familiarity in worship set us free to get beyond the surface.

Morning and Evening Prayer are appointed to be said in church, not just once a month if you are lucky, but every day. Within living memory this, or something like it, was done, and the benefit to parish and nation of faithfully carrying out this simple, unspectacular duty was immense. If only the will existed in the Church of England to modify its restless pursuit of novelty and take up this duty again! Any literate parishioner can read the service in under half an hour; the size, or even existence, of a participating congregation is not an issue. Perhaps this is something the Prayer Book Society could promote.

Necessary or Expedient

PAUL GRIFFIN

We know well enough how the 1662 Prayer Book came into being: the Church of England took a Prayer Book used before the Commonwealth and made something currently as acceptable as possible to different shades of opinion.

The very fact of this being done indicates a belief that the Prayer Book can and should be revised over the years, in itself a sufficient answer to anyone who thinks a particular version is set in stone. Those eirenic motives apart, we learn from the Preface of reasons why from time to time this revision is and will be necessary. One of the reasons given is to make easier the baptising, and presumably the subsequent ministering to, the 'natives in our plantations'. This may seem regrettable, or funny and outdated, but it signals a new situation, in which the Church of England is becoming the world-wide Anglican Church. The statement leads to the subsequent concession that different countries may well need a different sort of Prayer Book, let alone a translated one. For our domestic purposes it may however raise the question of how far we need to consider the new mixing of our population.

This is associated with another stated object of revision, that it should be for 'the more proper expression of some words or phrases of ancient usage in terms more suitable to the language of our present time'. Over the years, in other words, meanings of words change. To profess a 'gay religion' in 1662 would have a different significance today. In addition some words cease to be used or understood altogether. They can sometimes be replaced by modern terms, but often a word, like 'oblation' in the Communion service, carries with it implications that are not easily to be discarded, for it means more than 'offering'. In this case there may be no alternative but to incorporate its meaning into the instructions given to new arrivals. I remember Bishop Basil Guy telling a resentful congregation of schoolboys not to complain about the words used in the Prayer Book: 'If you don't understand them, look them up!' True, my Lord, though it might have been more gently put.

Clearly, we should reduce the need for a dictionary to the minimum, which is why some words, like 'travail' can be replaced in a revision by more current ones. It is curious that the 1928 Prayer Book continues to use 'travail' in the Comfortable Words, rather than the Authorised Version's 'labour'.

A third reason for revision given in the Preface is to catch up with any newer and better translation of Scripture. Biblical scholars are always

claiming fresh discoveries of what Isaiah or St Paul actually meant, and a term like 'propitiation' may or may not be better replaced.

All in all, therefore, we must not regard the Preface as more than another step in a long process of bringing the Word and Sacraments to current people. The 1928 revision was a step, denied by a Parliament of obfuscators, but reappearing as Order One (Traditional Language) in *Common Worship*. So we come, as delicately as possible, to that volume.

The Prayer Book Society is at pains to state that its aim is to defend the Prayer Book, not to attack *Common Worship*. Even so, I hope it is permissible to stress here that the object of the 1662 Prayer Book was to achieve one uniform way of worship, and that the adjective 'common' is not well applied to a book that offers more than one order of service and goodness knows how many alternatives within the orders. The only way congregations can be led into necessary new ways is surely to build on what is there already, bearing in mind that only what manifestly does not work should be 'fixed'. By that standard, the alterations to the Lord's Prayer and the response to 'The Lord be with you' are completely pointless and divisive.

What I suppose has happened is that a process of genuinely building on the Prayer Book has galloped out of control, through the various 'Series' and the *Alternative Service Book* 1980, with other factors intervening such as guesses about early Church customs and the desire for unity with Rome, until we have what is virtually a new thing.

Common Worship is a fact, and one that has taken over the vast majority of parishes, which is why rubbishing it is pointless. None the less, reading the words of the Prince of Wales, Baroness James and others, one is aware of another factor, the aesthetic, which is very strong for those of us who have been brought up in one tradition and are now asked to switch to another.

The aesthetic problem presents itself in a more familiar form over translations of the Bible, where many of those responsible have made clear efforts to preserve the poetry, and only the extremists have concentrated entirely on making logical sense at the expense of the aesthetic. In the Good News Bible, for example, the translators, coming across that wonderful passage in Ecclesiastes beginning 'Remember now thy creator . . .' laboured to make clear that it was about blind, toothless old men dying, which I suppose it is; but it was not written as a literal description, and for a public reading surely no sane person could accept what does not preserve the original mood and intention. Later versions have made better sense of it.

It may be that there is a difference between translating the Old and New Testaments, corresponding to the tone and intentions of each. St Paul at times is obviously intending to write sublimely clear poetry, and at others

terribly obscure reasoning; so a translator had best be highly respectful to the one, while thoroughly sorting out the other. Even at the start of St John's Gospel, the New English Bible will not refrain from tinkering. 'When all things began, the Word already was,' it says; while the Jerusalem Bible mercifully has the traditional 'In the beginning was the Word.'

How do we turn these reflections to the Prayer Book? It is not biblical translation, but a rite of worship, and inevitably partakes more of the poem than of the reasoned explication, so that we have to be exceptionally careful not to tinker. One prime cause of tinkering is political correctness: in Order One of *Common Worship* the beautiful rhythm of 'for us men and for our salvation' becomes 'for us and for our salvation', in case some idiot thinks women are excluded. One is pleasantly surprised to find that Jesus is still permitted to be 'made man'.

Another cause of tinkering is the conviction that what is clearly understandable, however archaic, should become current speech. 'It is meet and right so to do' uses a word no longer current, and therefore becomes the lame 'It is right to give thanks and praise'. If the word 'meet' must go, 'fit' would be suitable, and the original prose rhythm could be saved.

I am not opposed to minor alterations in themselves: the omission of 'meekly kneeling upon your knees' in a church where pews are so confined or kneelers so absent as to make kneeling ridiculous, or the substitution of specific intercessions for the Prayer for the Church Militant. More than that, I welcome really good interpolations, such as that of the 1928 Prayer Book about the saints being 'the lights of the world in their several generations'.

The point and burden of what I have to say is that the prevailing Prayer Book will, as the old Preface implies, need changing now and again; but that any change must be built as closely as possible upon what has been found effectual in the past. Any revision must resist the sentimentality which is a curse of our nation—that brings heaps of dying flowers to be strewn at any point where the media have whipped us up to it. It really is not sufficient just to say 'I love the 1662 Prayer Book.' We should love it so much that we are prepared to see moderate and sensitive change that preserves its effect, taking great care that we do not damage its insights and beauty.

Letters

Conversation with Mr Robinson

DEWI HOPKINS

It is difficult to argue with Ian Robinson for two reasons. One is that what he writes is usually largely what one thinks oneself: not only ‘what oft was thought but ne’er so well expressed’; but also what one might have thought if only one had the same resources of logical thought and erudition. The other is that his typical approach to any subject is by way of an expert knowledge of language in its common and special contexts and the history of its development.

Nevertheless I do feel that some elements in his ‘The Idea of a Christian Society in the Book of Common Prayer’¹ call for further ‘discussion’ (his favourite synonym for ‘criticism’). As far as I am concerned he certainly establishes that the Book of Common Prayer is the book containing what were the common understandings, beliefs and assumptions of the English people as a Christian society, and correctly identifies a radical shift of these understandings, beliefs and assumptions from the Christian society that we were to the secular society that we (almost but crucially not quite) have become. Having read the books mentioned in his footnotes I think he has also correctly characterised the King James Bible as the Bible (the word of God) in English. The decline in the esteem in which both Prayer Book and Bible are now held is an obvious sign of this shift.

The first point I should like to discuss is the meaning of the word ‘comfort’. It is quite true, as Mr Robinson says, that the word has a history, but I am not sure that its decline from its medieval meaning of ‘strengthen’ to a contemporary one of carpet slippers and a comfy chair by the fire is quite so simple, even though the earlier meaning is described as ‘obsolete’ in, for example, the *Collins English Dictionary*. How could it be obsolete when it is so much in use in Prayer Book and Bible?

Even apart from the Bible and Prayer Book it appears to me that more than one meaning has been inherent in the word for a very long time. When Chaucer wrote in his *Tale of Melibee* that the young man tries to comfort his wife for the loss of their child by quoting Ovid:

He is a fool that disturbeth the mother to wepen in the death of her child, till she have wept her fill as for a certain time; and then shall man doon his diligence with aimiable words to recomfort, and prayen her of her weeping for to stint.

1 *Faith & Worship* 65–66, pp.65–78

It sounds to me as if comfort means something like ‘soothe’ or ‘solace’ as well as to help her to face her bereavement. Similarly in *Thomas of Reading* (1623) Thomas Deloney has a husband promise his wife anything if she will only recover her health (i.e. have her own way) and she replies: ‘Thy words have greatly comforted my heart, mee thinketh if I had it, I could drink a good draught of renish wine’. Likewise Robert Greene in *The Card of Fancie* (1587) has a young man, at last in favour with his ‘Goddesse’, say: ‘I am now refreshed with comfort’. In *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594) Thomas Nashe has one that has fallen sick treated by a doctor with ‘a gentle comfortive for the stomach’: as we might say now, ‘something to settle your stomach’. Izaak Walton (1593–1683) wrote in *The Compleat Angler* of ‘the harmless lambs; some leaping securely in the cool shade . . . others craving comfort from the swollen udders of their bleating dams’. The context in which this is set suggests rural ease and contentment. In the same author’s *Life of Mr Richard Hooker* the dying man says

I have lived to see this world is made up of perturbations, and I have been long preparing to leave it, and gathering comfort for the dreadful hour of making my account with God.

It is not that I reject the claim that ‘comfort’ means ‘strengthen’ or ‘fortify’, but that the word seems to have had for a long time a variety of shades of meaning: and in that last example more of the meaning that Mr Robinson and others identify. But if I am right about the ambivalence of the others why should I not believe that the meaning of ‘solace’ or ‘ease’ might be also present in the Book of Common Prayer and perhaps, too, in the Bible? ‘Comfort ye my people’ seems loaded with solace as well as strengthening. In the third chapter of St Paul’s First Epistle to the Thessalonians verse two (‘And sent Timotheus, our brother . . . to comfort you concerning your faith’) seems to suggest ‘strengthen’, and verse seven (‘Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction . . .’) something like ‘cheered’. The Comfortable Words will cheer me up after my humble confession as well as giving me strength of purpose for the amendment of life.

In the marriage service ‘comfort’ might well mean that each should strengthen the other in the living of the Christian life, as Mr Robinson says, but I do not believe that it thereby necessarily excludes the other meanings. If it did I do not know how marriage would be a very effective means to ‘the avoidance of fornication’. A decent Christian married couple would try hard to supply comfort to each other, in a comfortable home, cheerful companionship, constant help and a loving sexual relationship. Otherwise why should Paul advise that they should not withhold themselves from each other except by mutual consent, for a time, and for an agreed spiritual purpose?

Does the Old Testament anywhere support the idea (not the word) that joyful sexual love is a proper part of marriage? Well there is Proverbs 5:18–19:

Let thy fountain be blessed and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished at all times with her love.

Cranmer (and he was married) must, I suppose, have known this, and nowhere in the New Testament, as far as I know, is it contradicted. In fact it supports the ‘avoidance of fornication’ and Jesus’s reminder of the commandment against adultery.

When we consider modern usage we find, similarly, that ‘comfort’ comprehends a range of meanings, and this confirms me in my belief that dictionaries might be mistaken in making a decision that a word has a new development of meaning and that this makes the old necessarily obsolete. I would not wish the medieval meaning of ‘comfort’ to be regarded as obsolete because it still gives us a useful word, especially in religious contexts. Clergy can often expound the meaning of ‘comfort’ and of a number of other words in use in our liturgy and the Bible, and so they should. In everyday usage, however, we have a baby’s ‘comforter’; a ‘comfortable win’; a ‘comfortable income’; a letter that is a ‘great comfort’ in bereavement or in having to face some ordeal; a hurt child running to its mother to be kissed better and so receive both solace and fortitude, both expressed in ‘comfort’, and so on. The word in both its senses is alive and well.

The point I have been seeking to make, however, is that perhaps in the marriage service the word need not be too confidently assumed to have a cut and dried meaning. In that case I wonder how Mr Robinson reads ‘with my body I thee worship’? I understand it to mean ‘I am your true body-servant and set myself to do you all the service you require of me, whatever you demand’. In other words the obedience is something mutual and lies in obeying the constitution, as we might call it, of the marriage.

How then, some might ask, can the making of such a close bond by God be so readily declared to be not a sacrament? (I can just about imagine that someone might make a distinction between ‘sacramental’ and a ‘sacrament’, but I cannot really subscribe to anything of that sort.) If we go to common understanding I think a character in Thomas Deloney’s *Jacke of Newberrie* (1626) expresses the common understanding quite well. She is a comely young married woman and, having consented to a young Italian merchant’s coming to her bed at a certain time, repents of her intention in these words: ‘Good Lord, shall I breake that holy vow which I made in marriage, and pollute this body of mine which the Lord hath sanctified?’ This is post-Cranmer and suggests to me that she believes her marriage was

sacramental and that what she made were vows. I am not so rash as to suppose that this is a sufficient answer to Mr Robinson: but it might lead to an answer that some people would accept. I remember that when one of my daughters was being prepared for Confirmation the priest responsible gave her a short book to read. There it was stated with full confidence that there are seven sacraments. It is true, of course, that Article XXV declares equally unequivocally that there are only two and that those others ‘commonly called Sacraments . . . are not to be counted Sacraments of the Gospel’. Could they conceivably be counted as some other sort of sacraments? Hardly, I should have thought, but then how does it come to be believed by a substantial part of the Church of England that they are?

Newman, while still a minister in the Church of England, caused some dismay by writing a tract in which he expounded his Catholic faith by reference to the Thirty-Nine Articles. Perhaps it could be said that here, too, there is a development in the history of words and that this would account for the difference between the Catechism and the Articles: ‘Two only, as generally necessary to salvation’. I believe some consider that this is deliberately ambiguous, leaving us to understand if we wish that there are others that are not generally necessary; but then what does ‘generally’ mean? Not what it means today (‘usually’) but ‘universally’—as in a poem quoted by Mr Robinson in an earlier *Faith and Worship*¹ “‘It is general/ To be mortal” says Skelton: that is, to die belongs to our race, as to the lesser created beings.’ ‘General’ there means ‘applying to everyone without exception’. Understanding it in that way some would say that ‘Baptism and the Supper of the Lord’ are necessary to everyone who wishes to be saved, while the other five are necessary only to those to whom they apply.

That might be an argument for declaring the other five to be sacraments too. Another argument—though I am not sure whether it is a good one—is that if the Church of England were to declare them to be sacraments it might have a salutary effect on the durability of, and fidelity within, some or even many marriages. (After all common language assumptions still harbour the feeling that that is how marriage should be, while there is a contemptuous counter-assumption that it is ‘just a piece of paper’.) It might have an effect too on the still-seething quarrel about women’s ordination as well as those other matters in which, as Mr Robinson points out, clergy—even bishops—can be punished by the State for preaching and practising in accordance with Christian doctrine.

This brings me to the final matter I should like to discuss: the widespread assumption that our society is better now than ever before because it is democratic and that it is only right that in a democracy a

1 ‘How do we Say What Needs to be Said about Death?’, *Faith & Worship* 36

church and all its citizens should be compelled to be obedient to the will of a democratic state in all its enactments no matter how frivolous, imprudent or wicked they might be. I take it that I am expressing complete agreement with Mr Robinson's description of the relationship between Church and State in England today as approaching that in Imperial Rome. For myself I should say that the practice of sending one of but little esteem to 'represent' me in Parliament by a majority vote (even if it were a majority, as it very often is not) is neither efficacious nor what I should call 'democratic'. To cast a vote at all is to agree implicitly to accept the result and its consequences. Even to make a registered abstention does so too. What I should recognise as democratic (a state to which we can hope to move only by slow, painful progress) would not be a form of society in which 'The People' (a political fiction) was engineered to inflict edicts of corporate will (an impossibility) upon all, but one in which people (without the definite article and capital initials) were suffered to live—within the common law—with the freedom of choice which our religion offers us. After all we are individually allowed to make the choice between Heaven and Hell.

Pie in the sky? It would seem so at present, but it seems difficult to doubt that we are being led down the broad and pleasant highway to the latter destination with or without our consent. Even the Church has imitated the State with its tyrannical device of elective government. The Synod should be allowed to exist, if at all, only in a very subordinate form: as advisory only. It remains the function of a bishop to protect the Faith, and he will do this not through 'collegiality', which makes no one personally responsible, but through obedience to his calling, whatever others might do. Gregory Dix proposed something like this, but his advice was disregarded.

Mr Robinson, if I understand him aright, thinks that a determined restoration of the Book of Common Prayer and the Bible to their rightful precedence might gradually restore the forms and norms of the society that the former implies, and that more remains of that society even now than is often suspected. I more than share this suspicion, having been shown much kindness as I have grown old—and not least by young people. Who is right I am not sure, perhaps neither, perhaps in some way both. This is intended only as a contribution to discussion. What would be useful and interesting now would be a contribution by a Prayer-Book Catholic, or a Prayer-Book Evangelical.

So much of what is offered as guidance today is really assumption or assertion—'the new common sense', as Mr Robinson has expressed it elsewhere; though how widely it is *really* accepted is by no means clear.

Comment on Dr Jeanes

S I M O N M c K I E

Dr Jeanes' article 'For Better or for Worse? The Marriage Service in Prayer Book Tradition' (*Faith & Worship* 68) is interesting in many ways in its discussion of the development of the marriage service in England. Dr Jeanes turns, however, a Nelsonian eye to much that is important in understanding the significance of the tale which he has to tell.

Are the alternative service books a development of the Prayer Book tradition?

First, he considers that '... it makes good sense to include in the tradition of the Prayer Book not only the revisions of 1928 and the 1965 Series 1 but also the modern language versions of the *Alternative Service Book* and *Common Worship*.' As we shall see, the narrative which he actually relates is of a precipitate retreat in the twentieth century alternative service books from the scriptural authorities on which the Prayer Book service is based. In that retreat, the authors of the alternative services have deliberately attempted to escape from truths which the Prayer Book service expresses; truths which discomfort many modern worshippers.

Has the BCP been superseded by a linear progression of liturgy?

Linked to this first misunderstanding, is the assumption that the marriage services have developed in a linear manner. On this view, the Book of Common Prayer gave way to the 1928 Deposited book, which in turn gave way to Series 1 (2 and 3?), which in turn were superseded by the *Alternative Service Book* which in turn gave place to *Common Worship*. Dr Jeanes says, for example, 'Society has not stayed unchanged since Cranmer's day, nor have the vows . . . ' and he goes on 'I am not at all sure that we have reached a settled position yet' as if *Common Worship* could be regarded as representing the current position and the Prayer Book has in some way ceased to be current.

The Prayer Book, of course, has not been superseded by the alternatives. Series 1, 2 and 3 and the *Alternative Service Book* 1980 lasted only for a few years and were then consigned to the dustbin of history. As Dr Jeanes seems to accept, *Common Worship* is almost certain to be equally transitory. Its status in Canon Law remains as a mere alternative to the Book of Common Prayer which, under Canon A5, remains one of the key sources in which 'the doctrine of the Church of England is to be found' and, under Canon B3, is

the default form of liturgy which must be used unless both the incumbent and the PCC positively opt for an alternative. In spite of all of the bureaucratic pressures which exist to discourage its use, the Book of Common Prayer is still widely used in Church services. It is true that *Common Worship* is probably the service book which is now most often found in Church pews, but its babel of alternative forms means that it is almost certain that no single version of a service out of *Common Worship* is used to the same extent as the equivalent service from the Prayer Book. Certainly, to judge from literature, television and the newspapers, it is the Prayer Book, and not the alternatives, which continues to resonate with ordinary people; to the extent that any liturgical words resonate at all.

It is this false assumption of linearity which allows Dr Jeanes to miss the significance of the facts which he records.

The Vows

First, in respect of the vows, he does not notice that the medieval service and the Book of Common Prayer are, to echo the words of Cranmer's preface, agreeable to 'the very pure Word of God, the Holy Scriptures'. Like many modern commentators, he is uncomfortable with the bride's promise to obey, and he approves of the *Common Worship* vows as 'clear and egalitarian' (it seems to be assumed by Dr Jeanes that being egalitarian is a good thing) whilst he admits that they are not expressed in 'the most elegant phrasing'. What Dr Jeanes does not mention is that the bride's vow to obey is firmly based on scriptural authority. Colossians, Chapter 3, Verses 18 & 19 exhorts:

Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and be not bitter against them.

Titus, Chapter 2, Verses 4 & 5 instructs older women to teach young women:

. . . to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, and chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands.

Ephesians 5:22 commands:

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

But as the Prayer Book marriage service makes clear (in the Preface, in the bridegroom's vows and in the concluding exposition of the duties of man and wife), although marriage is not a relationship of equality of authority,

the authority of the husband is to be exercised lovingly and unselfishly.¹ St Paul goes on to explain in Ephesians 5:25:

Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the Church and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies . . . For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall be joined unto his wife and they two shall be one flesh.

St Peter's commands in 1 Peter, Chapter 3, are similarly balanced. In Verse 1 he says:

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands;

and in Verse 7:

Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with [your wives] according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

So the husband's vow in the Prayer Book marriage service to love and to cherish his wife and the wife's vow to love, cherish and to obey her husband,² are firmly rooted in Scripture. It is not surprising that we find that this differentiation between the duties of husband and wife is given expression in their vows for as far back as we have records until the authors of the 1928 Deposited Book chose to depart from the tradition. It may be true, as Dr Jeanes says, that 'Society has not stayed unchanged since Cranmer's day' but the Scriptures have done so and the vows in the Book of Common Prayer remain similarly unchanged. The decision of the authors of the modern alternative services to excise the wife's promise to obey is a deliberate rejection of the scriptural teaching on marriage. Of course, there are many who think that that rejection is correct, but one cannot pretend that the alternative marriage services simply develop the doctrine of marriage found in the Book of Common Prayer; they are a considered departure from it.

1 Feminist theologians have suggested that the Greek word used here should be translated as 'be thoughtful and considerate; act in love [towards one another]'. That translation has found little support amongst scholars of New Testament Greek.

2 The 'Homily on the State of Matrimony' expands on the Prayer Book's doctrine of marriage in words of great beauty showing how lovely is its ideal of marriage and how difficult it is to live up to the ideal. The Homilies' importance is emphasised by Article XXXV of the Articles of Religion which, under Canon A5, are also a source in which the doctrine of the Church of England is to be found.

Giving Away the Bride

In his discussion of the giving away of the bride, Dr Jeanes repeats a popular myth about the past status of women in English law. A 'chattel' is a right of property over a physical but non-human thing, other than a freehold interest in land, or the physical thing itself in which the interest subsists. Human beings have never been chattels in English law but the law has recognised various forms of authority of one person over another. It is not surprising that the discussion of marriage by Bucer to which Dr Jeanes refers, has 'nothing about a girl being her father's property' because daughters never have been the property of a father in English law. In the Prayer Book marriage service, when the father brings his daughter to be married, he voluntarily passes her from his authority to her husband's. Again, that is entirely consistent with Scripture (see for example 1 Corinthians 7, Verses 36–8). Indeed, if one accepts the scriptural view that the wife is subject to her husband's authority, it would be most peculiar for a girl to pass out of her father's authority at some intermediate stage before marriage, have a brief period of independence and then pass into the authority of her husband. Again, we can see that the Book of Common Prayer's doctrine of marriage is firmly based on a scriptural understanding.

The Exhortation Against Unadvised, Light or Wanton Marriage

Dr Jeanes seems rather ambivalent about Cranmer's exhortation that matrimony should not be 'enterprised or taken in hand, unadvisedly, lightly, or wantonly, to satisfy men's carnal lusts and appetites, like brute beasts that have no understanding'

On the one hand, he seems to take some satisfaction in thinking, erroneously, that this passage 'has not reappeared, and one would think that it has been decently buried without trace' and yet his quotation from Robin Gills' 'Only Connect' shows some appreciation that 'the new liturgy has sacrificed . . . an honest recognition of the ambiguity of human sexuality' and that the Prayer Book shows, 'a more realistic grasp of the destructive, as well as creative power of sexuality'.

In ages when many people's first experience of sexual intercourse took place on their wedding night, it would be unsurprising if some unions were not primarily driven by lust rather than love. If that is not the case today, it is surely not because of any increase in virtue but because most now anticipate the physical pleasures of marriage before their wedding. Young people continue to enter into marriage unadvisedly and lightly and, no doubt, wantonly as well, if we define that word in accordance

with the third definition given in the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary: ‘without regard for right consequences; recklessly, gratuitously, wilfully’. Indeed, such marriages may well be more common today than in Cranmer’s time. Dr Jeanes finds the Prayer Book’s concentration on an uncomfortable truth inappropriate to a wedding but it is one of the glories of the Prayer Book that it is not mealy-mouthed. The truth has a continuing power which commands our attention. It is for that reason that the preface of the Prayer Book marriage service continues to resonate with people who may never actually have attended a wedding strictly according to the order of the Book of Common Prayer.

The Second Reason for Matrimony

Finally, Dr Jeanes finds the 1928 Deposited Book’s re-writing of the second reason for matrimony ‘a more positive wording’ than the Book of Common Prayer’s formulation, that:

... it was ordained for a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication, that such persons who have not the gift of continency might marry, and keep themselves undefiled members of Christ’s body.

Once again, however, the Prayer Book’s formulation is scriptural, being based on 1 Corinthians, Chapter 7, which contains the longest scriptural discussion of the nature of marriage, and in particular on verses 2 & 9. If it is a negative view of marriage, it is one shared by the Holy Ghost. It is, of course, to be understood in the context of all of the other, positive statements about marriage which the Prayer Book takes from the Scriptures including the vow of the husband to love and to cherish his wife and of the wife to love, cherish and to obey her husband.

The Resonant Power of the Truth

Modern people, even if they are churchgoers, living as we do in an atheist culture with a very different view of the nature of man than the Christian one, may very well feel uncomfortable with the Prayer Book’s doctrine of marriage. The modern alternative services have certainly been designed to remove that feeling of discomfort—at whatever cost to the truth.

What one has to recognise, however, is that until the twentieth century, and for as far back as we have evidence, the marriage service in England has given expression to a doctrine of marriage which is firmly based upon Scripture. The Book of Common Prayer has not ‘been decently buried without trace’ even by the generation (which is now passing into old age) to which Dr Jeanes refers as ‘post-pill and . . . psychologically more aware [is it really? Than whom?].’ The Prayer Book has not been superseded by

the alternative services. It remains normative for members of the Church of England.

Dr Jeanes considers that 'the marriage vows are bigger than their verbal content and meaning.' It is because he adopts that view that he fails to comprehend the source of their power; it lies in their perfect expression of deep and sometimes uncomfortable truths. Truths which the alternative services of the twentieth century have done their utmost to obfuscate or deny.

Reviews

Barry Spurr, 'Anglo-Catholic in Religion': T.S. Eliot and Christianity, The Lutterworth Press, 2010, ISBN 978-0-7188-3073-1, £25.00

Ichabod—the glory has departed (1 Samuel 4:21). Just as those of a progressive outlook may naïvely embrace all that is new, so those of us with a more conservative disposition can sometimes find it hard to resist the mode of lament when recalling the past. Barry Spurr's account of the Anglo-Catholicism of T.S. Eliot, whom he describes without qualification as 'the greatest poet of the twentieth century' (p. 249), is a timely work of scholarship. Written from a position sympathetic to Eliot's faith, it sheds new light on the ways in which Anglican Catholicism informed and enabled the poet's writing from the mid-1920s onwards. Yet at intervals a vein of nostalgia forces its way to the surface of this monograph, detracting a little from its meticulous research and persuasive argument.

Eliot himself was not free from the temptation to nostalgia. The terms chosen for the famous declaration of his 'present position' in the preface to the 1928 collection of essays, *For Lancelot Andrews*, run this risk, but they are immediately checked by qualifying irony:

The general point of view may be described as classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic in religion. I am quite aware that the first term is completely vague, and easily lends itself to clap-trap; I am aware that the second term is at present without definition, and easily lends itself to what is worse than clap-trap, I mean temperate conservatism; the third term does not rest with me to define.

Spurr discusses this passage illuminatingly, pointing to its antecedents not only in a formulation of the unsavoury Charles Maurras, but in a statement of Eliot's mentor, T.E. Hulme, who in 1912 had explained 'why I believe in original sin, why I can't stand romanticism, and why I am a certain kind of Tory' (p. vii). As we might expect from one of the founding figures of poetic Modernism, Eliot's literary, political and religious conservatism, far from being reactionary and xenophobic in the manner of Maurras, was complex, self-aware and self-critical.

Though he was glad to break free from the stifling idealism of his Unitarian upbringing, Eliot never shared the dismissive attitude to Christianity common among his literary contemporaries. Spurr sensitively discusses the confusions of Eliot's early acquaintance with orthodox Christianity. In 1918 when his friend, H.B. Child, decided to take Anglican orders, Eliot's reaction betrayed both fascination and hesitation. Describing this vocation as at once 'appealing' and 'pathetic', he took

refuge in witticism: one should have theories, he wrote, 'but one need not believe in them' (p. 15).

In the longer term such detached observation of God's call to others did influence Eliot's own conversion. Six years before his own baptism and confirmation, Eliot was defending the churches of the City of London against proposed demolition: 'The loss of these towers, to meet the eye down a grimy lane, and of these empty naves, to receive the solitary visitor at noon from the dust and tumult of Lombard Street, will be irreparable and unforgotten' (p. 36). Eliot's friend and correspondent, George Every, recalled the deep impression made on Eliot by the sight of people praying in such places: 'he suddenly realised that prayer still went on and could be made. It wasn't simply of historic and cultural interest. People did pray and he might' (p. 37). As Spurr observes, there are hints here of the famous lines from 'Little Gidding', 'you are here to kneel / where prayer has been valid'. And if there is a sense in which Eliot's faith remained cerebral and disciplined, it was never dry or routine. It carried with it a self-critical edge: 'the more conscious becomes the belief, so the more conscious becomes unbelief', as he wrote in 1948, hinting at the reciprocity between the *via affirmativa* and the *via negativa* that is one of the keys to *Four Quartets*.

Part of the purpose of Spurr's book is to show how it was specifically the Anglican brand of Catholicism that left its mark on Eliot's work. Alongside the obvious influence of European Catholic culture, notably in the work of Dante and Saint John of the Cross, Spurr shows how the higher reaches of the Church of England, through clergy and parishes, religious communities and shrines, and liturgies English and Latin, left their mark on Eliot's poetry and prose alike. The verse pageant, *The Rock*, (written, I was fascinated to learn, to raise funds for new church building in London), *Murder in the Cathedral* and 'Burnt Norton' all had their genesis at the mother house of the Society of the Sacred Mission in Kelham. Their composition in an Anglo-Catholic community of prayer bore fruit in their form and content: the creative adaption of the legend of Saint Peter's founding of Westminster Abbey in *The Rock*; the imitation of 'the liturgical recitation of the psalmody, with "the great breathing caesuras" mid-verse' (p. 208) in *Ash-Wednesday*; perhaps most clearly of all, the anachronistic placing of the language of the Book of Common Prayer in the mouth of Thomas Becket in *Murder in the Cathedral*. Each of these exemplifies what Spurr calls Eliot's Anglo-Catholic desire 'to emphasise Catholic continuity rather than Protestant rupture' (p. 235) in his depiction of the Church of England.

Anglo-Catholic in Religion is a rich and highly informative piece of research, but, as I have hinted, its scholarly equilibrium is at times upset by the unquiet spirit of Ichabod, lamenting what has been lost: the distinct sense

of English culture that attracted Eliot to this country; the power of Anglo-Catholicism as a united and outward-looking force in the Church of England; the Christian ethos that was part of our common inheritance. No doubt much of this analysis is accurate, but, to me at least, the picture seems less bleak. For all the disunity and dissension in our Communion today, we Anglicans are enjoying a startling revival in biblical and theological scholarship that surpasses all but the very best produced in Eliot's lifetime. In poetry too the work of Geoffrey Hill and Michael Symmons Roberts, among others, shows that the vocation of the Anglican poet-seer is far from a thing of the past. And whilst there have undoubtedly been losses, the very decline of Anglo-Catholicism is in part a sign of the movement's success in reacquainting the Church of England with its sacramental roots.

This quibble apart, Spurr's book is a clearly argued and informative demonstration of Anglo-Catholicism's influence on the last forty years of Eliot's life and work. With clarity, sympathy and erudition, Barry Spurr has given us a proper understanding of the doctrinal and devotional culture that underlies Eliot's rich and varied legacy of poetry and criticism.

Edmund Newey

Peter Lillback, *George Washington's Sacred Fire*, Providence Forum Press, ISBN 9780978605261 (Pbk), £22.50

Modern scholars have portrayed George Washington, America's first President, as a deist, while Dr Peter Lillback, President and Professor of Westminster Theological Seminary, amasses evidence that he was, on the contrary, a quiet, unassuming and consistent Anglican of the Prayer Book type.

The book gives in-depth insights into colonial and post-colonial American religious life. So even if you are not too interested in the controversy over Washington's religion you are given a good insight into American Anglicanism of this period. The background is given to provide context for the clues, so, as in a detective story, we slowly discover the clues' significance and this adds to the fascination of the book.

There is in-depth discussion of the contents and spirituality of the 1662 Prayer Book that formed Washington's religion. This in Lillback's judgement 'is more theologically sound than the average book available in the Christian book store today.'

Lillback asks: would Washington, a man of integrity, have continued to make the Prayer Book promises required of godparents if he had ceased to believe as a Christian? Again, would he have subscribed to the Thirty-Nine

Articles as a vestryman if he rejected Christianity as the true and revealed religion? Would a deist have commended the separate plans of the Evangelical Countess of Huntingdon and the United Brethren (Moravians) for the conversion of the Indians?

When it comes to Washington's habit of skipping Communion having attended Morning Prayer, Lillback points out that this may have several explanations. Firstly he was a busy man with his own and the nation's affairs to supervise even on a Sunday. With Christian blood on his hands as a soldier he might have felt unworthy at times. The High Church views of his bishop and minister, which unchurched his Presbyterian and Congregational friends, may have caused a breach of fellowship at this level. To explore this we get an overview of the origins of the Protestant Episcopal Church, its first bishops and their opinions.

Modern scholars point to Washington's involvement in Freemasonry as evidence of deism. Lillback, a Presbyterian, points to a masonic sermon in Washington's collection by leading Presbyterian Samuel Miller. This shows that the English Freemasonry of Washington's day was a Christian Freemasonry that was not afraid to bring the fuller revelation of the Christian religion into its lodges. Being infrequent at lodges in later life Washington was unaware of the changes coming in, and did not believe the lodges of America to be 'contaminated with the principles ascribed to the Society of the Illuminate'.

Lillback suggests that Washington's reluctance to be over-familiar with God in the way common today is ambiguous and was not uncommon among Christians of his day. Washington uses the biblical imagery of the day, but this again is ambiguous and might have been invoked by any orator. He refers to 'Great Lord and Ruler of Nations', 'the Judge of the hearts of men', 'the Divine author of life and felicity', 'the Lord and Giver of Victory' and the like. These could be used by a deist; others, such as 'our gracious Redeemer', 'Divine Author of our blessed Religion', could not. Claims that Washington never mentioned the name Jesus or commended Christianity are refuted by the few recorded times when he did that have come down to us.

Slowly Lillback shows that 'an honest look at the facts of history show that George Washington was a devout eighteenth-century Anglican.' A man who quietly goes about his calling, takes up the duties of vestryman etc., but who mainly shows his public witness in supporting the Prayer Book services of his Church.

Alan Bartley

Branches and Branch Contacts

- BATH & WELLS:** Mr Ian Girvan,
59 Kempthorne Lane, Bath. BA2 5DX
T:01225-830663 iangirvan@me.com
- BIRMINGHAM:** Revd Dr John Breadon,
101 Causeway Green Road, Langley,
Oldbury Birmingham. B68 8LE
- BLACKBURN:** Mr Neil Inkley, 6 Knot
Lane, Walton-le-Dale, Preston,
Lancashire. PR5 4BQ T:01772-
821676 F:01772-259340
- BRADFORD:** Mrs Armored Nelson,
Old Gledstone, West Marton, Skipton,
North Yorkshire. BD23 3JR
T:01282-843476
- BRISTOL:** Mr David Selwyn,
8 Barrow Court, Barrow Gurney,
Bristol. BS48 3RW T:01275-463421
(Membership) Mrs Joyce Morris,
29 St John's Road, Clifton, Bristol.
BS8 2HD
- CANTERBURY:** Mr Christopher Cooper,
Goose and Gridiron, 6 Churchyard
Passage, Ashford, Kent. TN23 1QL
T:07525-095717
saveashfordchurch@yahoo.co.uk
- CARLISLE:** Mrs Joy Budden,
Arthuret House, Longtown. CA6 5SJ
T:01228-792263
jobudsignofthefish@yahoo.co.uk
(Membership) Mrs Kate East,
10 Fernwood Drive, Kendal. LA9 5BU
T:01539-725055
- CHELMSFORD:** Mr David Martin, The Oak
House, Chelmsford Road, Felsted.
CM6 3EP T:01371-820591
- CHESTER:** Mr J. Baldwin, Rosalie Farm,
Church Minshull, Nantwich, Cheshire.
CW5 6EF T:01270-528487
mdsc187@aol.com
- CHICHESTER:** Mrs Valerie Dane
225 Chichester Road, Bognor Regis.
PO21 5AQ T:01243-827330
valerie.225@btinternet.com
(Chichester East) The Revd G. Butter-
worth, The Vicarage, 51 Saltdean Vale,
Saltdean, East Sussex. BN2 8HE
T:01273-302345
- COVENTRY:** Mr Peter Bolton, 19 Kineton
Road, Wellesbourne, Warwickshire.
CV35 9NE
T:01789-840814
peterandrosalindbolton@hotmail.com
- DERBY:** Mrs Jennifer Radford,
Poplar Farm, Hognaston
Ashbourne, Derbyshire. DE6 1PR
T:01335-370143 j-radford@beeb.net
- DURHAM:** Mrs Rosemary Hall, 23 Beatty
Avenue, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. NE2 3QN
T:0191-285-7534
hallrosyhall@aol.com
- ELY:** Mr P.K.C. White, The Orchard House
12 Thrift's Walk, Old Chesterton,
Cambridge. CB4 1NR T:01223-324176
pkcwhite@waitrose.com
- EXETER:** Mrs Esme Heath, Brookfield,
Stokenham, Kingsbridge, Devon.
TQ7 2SL T:01548-580615
esme.heath@sky.com
- GLOUCESTER:** Mr Tony Hilder,
28 St Luke's Place, Cheltenham
GL53 7HP T:01242-580444
tony@aphilder.wanadoo.co.uk
- GUILDFORD:** Mr John Fox-Reynolds,
3 Orchard Cottages, Bron-y-de,
Churt, Farnham. GU10 2LL
T:01428-605156
john_reynolds2002@hotmail.com
- HEREFORD:** Mr Stephen Evans,
14 Raven Lane, Ludlow, Shropshire.
SY8 1BW T:01584-873436 M:07812-
424007 onny@hotmail.co.uk
- LEICESTER:** Mrs S. Packe-Drury-Lowe,
35 Green Lane, Seagrave, Loughborough.
LE12 7LU T:01509-815262
ritaphillips@gmail.com
- LICHFIELD:** Mr David Doggett, Grassen-
dale, 5 Park Drive, Oswestry, Shropshire.
SY11 1BN T:01691-652902
- LINCOLN:** Hon. Christopher Brightman,
The Grange, Hall Street, Wellingore.
LH5 0HU T:01522-811432
cbrightman@hotmail.co.uk
- LIVERPOOL:** Mr I.K. Lang, 5 Bayfield Road,
Garston, Liverpool. L19 3QL
T:0151-427-0381
- LONDON:** Mrs Kay Wolf, 1 Hereford
Court, 77 Worcester Road, Sutton,
Surrey. SM2 6QN T:0208-6428446
kpwolf@hotmail.co.uk
- MANCHESTER:** Mr Nicholas Johnson,
94 Rocky Lane, Monton, Eccles,
Manchester. M30 9LY
nicholasj2104@yahoo.co.uk
- NEWCASTLE:** see DURHAM.