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# Editorial

The attempt to displace the Book of Common Prayer from public worship was, many of us think, based on a misapprehension. It was thought that the ‘archaic’ language of the liturgy was a barrier in the way of modern people coming to church, and that to remove the barrier the language must be modernized. The lack of success attending this change, however, would suggest that it was not the language of the Prayer Book itself that was unattractive, but liturgy *tout court*. If this is right, and we live in an ‘anti-liturgical’ age, then for the Book of Common Prayer to get a hearing there is a prior work to be done, and the argument must be made from scratch for the advantages of fixed prayers and liturgical worship.

I opened with interest, then, a fairly recent publication from Church House entitled *Liturgical Worship*<sup>1</sup> which undertakes to say ‘how it works and why it matters’. I must confess to disappointment. The author, Mark Earey, does, I think, really intend to recommend stable, or structured, forms of worship to his readers, but he imagines those readers, in what he calls the ‘post-denominational context’, to be so diverse in tradition as to stultify his efforts. Church House Publishing proclaims itself to be the ‘official publisher of the Church of England’ and offers this title, on its web-site, as ‘essential introductory reading for both ordinands and lay readers’, but the author conceives himself to be writing for absolutely anyone, and loses the advantage of addressing a specific audience with a specific background. ‘This book’s message’, he announces at the outset, ‘is that there is little (if anything) that is non-negotiable in the practice of liturgical worship’. I am not convinced that so much had to be conceded, and the desire to appear open to any and every tradition gives rise to a hesitancy which perhaps reaches its apogee in the claim that ‘it is very difficult to know what we should do with [the Lord’s Prayer]’. This is unnecessary. I can’t help thinking that Mr Earey would have done better to confine himself to a more limited context—the Church of England is surely varied enough, without looking farther afield.

But through the bewildering blizzard of bullet-points, diagrams, inset ‘case studies’, ‘worship checklists’ and the like a theme of sorts emerges. It is along these lines: if worship, in the most general sense, is, as he

asserts, ‘doing good, caring for the most vulnerable and seeking justice for the oppressed’,<sup>2</sup> then it follows that ‘corporate worship should engage, in a representative way, with things that matter in our daily lives’. On this view some forms of worship will appear, by comparison, to be ‘an escape from life rather than a part of it’; furthermore, the ‘assumption that the natural state for liturgy [is] fixity and stability’ will issue in services which are ‘archaic, dull, repetitive, irrelevant and predetermined to the point of squeezing out any spontaneity’.

It would be unfair to suggest that these are the only things the author has to say about liturgy, but the overall effect is to make other views, and other language, seem eccentric. The Orthodox Church—the one Christian body not, apparently, addressed by the book, presumably because considered impermeable—maintains here a kind of subversive, counter-cultural presence. In Orthodoxy, he allows, “‘liturgy’ is assumed to be, in essence, unvarying and stable’; ‘archaic forms are deliberately preserved in order to portray “another world”—the heavenly world with which we connect in worship’. It stresses ‘the mystery of the Eucharist, in which we are caught up into the worship of heaven’. Language of this sort would not have seemed out of place in earlier Anglican writers,<sup>3</sup> but here it sticks out like a sore thumb. The cover is not misleading when it describes the book as ‘bringing liturgy down to earth’.

But a close reading of *Liturgical Worship* is revealing in another way. The new Anglican liturgies were commended on the grounds not just that they were modern and accessible, but that they were, at the same time, very *old*—primitive, and true to the authentic shape of early Christian worship as discovered by liturgiologists. However, when Mr Earey comes to discuss the history and form of the Eucharist he is too honest to conceal the tendency of more recent scholarship—the work especially of Professor Paul Bradshaw, whose scepticism is accurately reflected so far as I can see.<sup>4</sup> ‘We know less than we thought we did about Christian worship in the early centuries’. Not only does the New Testament provide ‘no evidence of any uniformity’, but the second- and third-century texts so often relied on have little authority: ‘We don’t know to what degree [Justin Martyr’s] account is typical’, and the author of the *Apostolic Tradition* may only be describing ‘what he thought ought to happen—we don’t really know’. In short, ‘historic research has shown the folly of searching for the original “pure” liturgy’. But alongside this story is another. The twentieth-century Liturgical Movement, we are told, ‘turned its attention to the patterns of worship in the early centuries of the Church’. It drew on ‘new discoveries about the shape of early Christian worship’, and these,

‘together with a new emphasis on the action of the Eucharist ... led to a lot of common thinking about [its] structure’. The evidence of Justin Martyr was ‘extremely influential in the renewal of the Eucharist’, and the ‘growth in ecumenical working’, together with the ‘new thinking’ of the Liturgical Movement, led to ‘much liturgical revision in the twentieth century’.

The effect of running these two stories alongside each other—the sceptical drift of recent liturgical scholarship on the one hand, and the history and justification of liturgical revision on the other—is for the first to undermine the second. Mr Earey doesn’t draw attention to this, but if we merge the two narratives with each other we find ourselves contemplating a movement of liturgical revision founding itself on ‘new discoveries’, and on convictions as to the ‘pattern’ and ‘shape’ of early Christian worship, which subsequent scholarship has shown to be themselves unfounded.<sup>5</sup> In other words, and if I have read aright, the new agreed form for the Eucharist was an ecumenical construct based on an hypothesis which no longer enjoys scholarly support. Mr Earey—with characteristic honesty—comes close to admitting this by calling it ‘the new (or “classic”) shape for the service’.

If things are as fluid as all this suggests, we might have done better to avoid, in C. H. Sisson’s words, ‘changing the liturgy to keep up with the changing fortunes of scholarly brawls’.<sup>6</sup> At any rate the only ‘classic’ version for members of the Church of England is that to be found in the Prayer Book. A very sane and learned Anglican commented forty years ago that

the distracting knowledge of the rudiments of Comparative Liturgiology ... makes the Anglican clergy apt to forget that the primary considerations by which a liturgy must be judged are (i) whether it makes sense or not (that is, whether it has a logical coherence), and (ii) what kind of sense it makes when measured by the Bible, [and] has tended to weaken among us the proper and rational conviction that the Order of the Administration of the Lord’s Supper, or Holy Communion, in our Prayer Book, not only does most admirably what Cranmer intended it to do, but also does precisely what it ought to do.<sup>7</sup>

This still holds good.

John Scrivener

<sup>1</sup> Mark Earey, *Liturgical Worship* (London 2002).

<sup>2</sup> This is Mr Earey’s commentary on ‘present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God’, and on Romans 12 generally.

<sup>3</sup> e.g. 'But church services, it is sometimes urged, are valuable because they provide an inspiration for Christian living during the six days ahead. That may often indeed be true, but only if the worshipper is not primarily seeking that inspiration, and is engaged upon some less self-regarding activity ... Worship is the characteristic activity of Heaven and of all those whom God has called to their places there. A justification of worship on the grounds that it makes man more at home in this world, even if on the highest plane, is bound not only to fail, but to deceive' (Colin Dunlop, *Anglican Public Worship* [London 1953], p. 10).

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship*, 2nd edn (London 2002).

<sup>5</sup> Even Gregory Dix's celebrated fourfold shape or action 'can only be sustained by very selective use of the evidence—by denying that primitive Christianity was as pluriform as ... historical scholarship suggests, and by ignoring meals that were patterned otherwise'. Bradshaw, p. 140.

<sup>6</sup> C. H. Sisson, *Is There a Church of England?* (Manchester 1993), p. 274.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Smyth, *The Church and the Nation: Six Studies in the Anglican Tradition* (London 1962), pp.54–5.

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*Faith and Worship* has always carried a disclaimer to the effect that the opinions expressed in it are not to be taken as those of the Prayer Book Society, or indeed of the editor. The society takes no view, as a society, on, for example, the question of women priests or bishops. Individual members hold different views. The article by the Society's former president expresses one view. It raises questions on the Church's future which all members of the Church of England must consider seriously, but it also raises questions as to what we mean by loyalty to the Prayer Book, and how we interpret it today—questions equally posed by Mrs Selka in her letter, and by Mr Hopkins in an aside. This at any rate is an area *Faith and Worship* can legitimately explore. Would anyone care to take up Mrs Selka's challenge, for example?

# Here and Now: Cranmer's Sense of Liturgical Moment

ALAN GRIFFIN

I recently took down from my library shelf the Book of Common Prayer I used in the Church of Ireland until I was fifteen years of age. At fifteen I was confirmed and got a present of a new Book of Common Prayer on India paper, as one did in those days. The Church of Ireland Prayer Book was essentially the English Prayer Book of 1662 with a very few Irish idiosyncrasies and even an improvement or two thrown in. What interested me were the thumb and finger-marks on my first Prayer Book: the first twenty or so pages were very well thumbed—that is, Morning and Evening Prayer—with fewer thumb-marks on the Litany. These three services come at the start of the Prayer Book and provided the diet of public worship I grew up on for fifteen years, with Morning Prayer by far the largest component.

I have to confess that I do not think that this diet would have seen me through a lifetime, but the early diet did teach me some things that I can never unlearn—the Lord's Prayer, the Magnificat, the Apostles' Creed and the Te Deum. I think the Te Deum alone explains why Morning Prayer became the chief act of worship in England after the Reformation. At a time when people communicated very infrequently in all Christian churches the Te Deum gave Morning Prayer a non-communicating, but unmistakably Eucharistic, tone and climax. My early diet of public worship in Ireland also firmly implanted the daily collects; 'O Lord, our heavenly Father, Almighty and everlasting God, who hast safely brought us to the beginning of this day; Defend us in the same with thy mighty power'; 'Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord; and by thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night ...' When senile dementia strikes I shall probably

go round the residential home endlessly repeating these words to the annoyance of other inmates and have to be locked away in a secure room.

My parents' hearts always sank when they discovered on arrival in church that the Litany was to accompany Morning Prayer that Sunday. On spying that the litany-desk had been put out in the centre my mother would say to my father, 'look, Frank, it must be the Litany today and I had hoped that we were going to get out of church early. Why do we have to have the Litany on this lovely sunny day?' In contrast to my parents I loved the Litany's cadences: 'By thine Agony and bloody sweat; by thy Cross and Passion; by thy precious Death and Burial; by thy glorious Resurrection and Ascension; and by the coming of the Holy Ghost'. I responded to its incantatory quality and admired the vain repetitions: 'We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord'. Virtually no ceremonial of any kind accompanied the public worship of my childhood. Apart from hymns all services were composed entirely of spoken words.

In my fifteenth year I began to explore the Book of Common Prayer further. To my delight I discovered the Nicene Creed and the Holy Communion service and I began to investigate the other three hundred or so pages that make up the Prayer Book. I can still recapture the excitement I felt on discovering the Order of Confirmation, the Solemnization of Matrimony, the Visitation of the Sick, the Burial of the Dead, the Ordination of Bishops, Priests and Deacons. I pored over the Forms of Prayer to be used at Sea, and even the Prefaces. I was a very sad teenager, you see, and my parents were convinced I had contracted religious mania. I was intrigued to discover that we had priests in the Church of Ireland—nobody ever referred to them as such, but there they were in the Prayer Book. My parents just weren't interested when I pointed this out—a priest for them was, and always would be, a Roman Catholic.

As an eighteen-year-old undergraduate at Trinity College, Dublin, I discovered St Bartholomew's Church and started attending high-church services there. My parents' fear of religious mania now reached fever pitch: services were not the sort of thing that any normal Church of Ireland person took any interest in at all. But I found at eighteen that Christianity is essentially a Eucharistic faith and that the Prayer Book service of Holy Communion (with very minor adaptations in those days) was capable of being celebrated in a dignified way that made it crystal-clear that the service was nothing other than the Eucharist celebrated throughout Christendom for two thousand years in all the major churches of the world, including, of course, the Roman

Catholic Church. This discovery remains the bedrock of my faith and ecclesiology to this day.

Then at the age of twenty-two I went to Cambridge and adapted quite happily to Series 1 and, less happily, to Series 2. I am not, and never was, a liturgical fundamentalist—who could be after reading Dom Gregory Dix’s *The Shape of the Liturgy* or Diarmaid MacCulloch on Cranmer? I moved from Cambridge to Exeter University to teach Classics there for thirty-two years and was also an honorary chaplain. We used Series 3 and the new ASB. For my last three years in Exeter I was an assistant curate in the largest Exeter parish and introduced *Common Worship*. At the Alms House chapel we used the Roman Rite. Almost four years on my Exeter parish is still celebrating *Common Worship* Eucharists in the pattern I devised. And now I am at St James Garlickhythe, ‘the Prayer Book church’ as it is called, and my other parish, St Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe, is also a Prayer Book church.

Now we come to the point. Christians have a choice between good and bad liturgy, and good is better. For Anglicans the Prayer Book remains normative, liturgically and doctrinally—it sustained Christian faith and public worship in England for hundreds of years. In a real sense the Church of England stands or falls by the Prayer Book. It too can be badly performed, but it ought to be widely used and not just at Evensong where, interestingly, it survives almost universally. Cardinal Hume looked forward to the day when Christians of all traditions would attend Evensong. There spoke a Benedictine monk. The Prayer Book daily offices are Benedictine in spirituality and have stood the test of time.

At St James Garlickhythe we use the Prayer Book Eucharist in what is called the ‘Prayer Book Catholic’ style. We shamelessly insert Kyries, Benedictus Qui Venit and Agnus Dei, and use settings by Mozart, Haydn and great Anglican composers. First-rate professional music and traditional liturgy (music by Mozart and libretto by Cranmer, as someone put it) attracts between forty and eighty people each Sunday. Some come in from the suburbs, one regularly from Somerset. Given the fact that very, very few live in the Square Mile, particularly at weekends, we are doing well. We are filling a niche abandoned by most London suburban parishes.

I accept almost fanatically that the Eucharist is the Christian sacrifice. I know I am still suffering (as my parents foresaw) from religious mania. I know of no liturgy which expresses the link between Calvary and the Eucharist more strongly than the 1662 Prayer Book consecration:

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who of thy tender mercy didst give thine 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; and did institute, and in his holy Gospel command us to continue, a perpetual memory of that his precious death, until his coming again ...

Note the exquisite linking of what happened *there* with what is happening *here*: *there* the oblation of Christ on the cross, *here and now* the consecration of the liturgical and sacramental memorial of that oblation. Cranmer was a trained liturgist, not just a superb stylist. He chose his words with extreme care: 'a perpetual memory ... until his coming again' has a precise liturgical meaning. The 'memory' is not just a subjective calling to mind by individuals. *Memoria*, a memory, was the technical term for a liturgical commemoration and Cranmer uses it here in that sense quite deliberately. This unceasing liturgy will continue until time ends. As the prayer continues it inextricably links together, in a quite remarkable way, Christ's death and passion, this Eucharistic liturgy, and feeding on Christ's body and blood—*there and here, then and now*. Nothing could be clearer or more simply expressed.

After distributing Holy Communion with the words 'the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee ... the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life', the consecrated sacrament is placed on the Holy Table and reverently veiled. The priest then offers 'this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving', adding 'here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto thee', and concluding with 'although we be unworthy, through our manifold sins, to offer unto thee any sacrifice, yet we beseech thee to accept this our bounden duty and service'. One bread, one body—that is, and always has been, the Church's offering. How presumptuous at first sight is Cranmer's description of 'ourselves, our souls and bodies' as a holy sacrifice, until we remember that we are in fact one bread, one body, in Christ, as St Paul teaches us. The post-communion prayers in 1662 are a kind of Eucharistic devotion, for all takes place while the consecrated sacrament is veiled on the altar.

Cranmer's sense of liturgical moment and significance is superior to that of modern liturgists. For Cranmer the reception of Communion was the liturgical climax of the Eucharist, and his liturgy of 1552 reflected that. But we use 1662, where consecration, communion and oblation are linked together as the climax. The 1662 services of Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage, Ministry to the Sick, Ordination always rise to the occasion by providing moving and climactic moments for what are very significant events in the life of any Christian. And

the significant moments are always personalised: I baptize *thee*. The modern liturgies repeatedly ask God to send down the Holy Spirit on this or that, or on this person or that. No harm here, but Cranmer usually has more point at a climax and is simple, clear and decisive. Who can ever forget the words repeated over and over by the bishop as he lays on hands at Confirmation:

Defend, O Lord, this thy child with thy heavenly grace, that he may continue thine for ever; and daily increase in thy Holy Spirit more and more, until he come into thy everlasting kingdom.

The sense of solemn spiritual occasion is always present when I say at a wedding :

Forasmuch as John and Mary have consented together in holy wedlock, and have witnessed the same before God and this company, and thereto have given and pledged their troth either to other, and have declared the same by giving and receiving of a Ring, and by joining of hands; I pronounce that they be Man and Wife together, In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

Powerful and elevated sentiments, God-centred and person-centred. And 1662 does not go on to say, 'now you may kiss the bride'.

What judge pronouncing acquittal in any law court, or what form of absolution anywhere in Christendom, is more sure, certain and unconditional than when a priest says to a sick person or to an individual penitent, in the words of 1662:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to his Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him, of his great mercy forgive thee thine offences; And by his authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Awesome words. 'I absolve *thee*', and not in my own name but in the name of the Triune God. There are fifteen pages of confessions and absolutions in *Common Worship*, but not one of them is as authoritative, liberating, reassuring or personal (I ... *thee*) as the Prayer Book form.

It's as well to tell ordinands that parish life is not all cucumber sandwiches with their crusts cut off. As I walk about my parishes an occasional young man (it's always a man) grins at me and says 'More tea, vicar?' I'll always respond: 'I never touch the stuff myself'. Parish life can also be mucky and painful. Thank God it isn't always so. But as in the Gospels Christ attracted an entourage of odds and sods (whom the religious establishment of his day disliked), so now the Church also attracts odds and sods (and, of course, I'm thinking only of the

clergy!). Christianity can be a messy and sometimes bloody business: inevitably so when egos and sin and pride are involved. Whenever I need encouragement (and I often do) I turn to the Prayer Book Ordinal and read the formula used at my ordination to the priesthood and used recently at St James Garlickhythe for the priestly ordination of a colleague. I also look at the *Alternative Service Book* Ordinal from time to time to encourage and challenge me, but there is a stark contrast between the moment of ordination in the ASB and the Prayer Book, and the Prayer Book is better. As the Bishop lays on hands in the ASB he says: 'Send down the Holy Spirit upon your servant John for the office and work of a priest in your church'. In the Prayer Book the Bishop says:

Receive the Holy Ghost for the Office and Work of a Priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the Imposition of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained. And be thou a faithful Dispenser of the Word of God, and of his holy Sacraments. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The Prayer Book form begins with the gloriously confident imperative: 'Receive the Holy Ghost', translating the Latin Ordinal 'Accipe Spiritum Sanctum'. The laying on of hands is not just a ceremonial sign, but an effectual sign of grace, that is to say that it actually effects what it signifies. The laying on of hands conveys the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest to the kneeling candidate. It is almost as dramatic as the day of Pentecost was in the second chapter of Acts. And it happens here and now and personally—'now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands'. 'Now ... thee ... our' are highly significant monosyllables in this context.

Christ's whole life—including his death on the Cross, his Resurrection and Ascension—was for the purpose of reconciling man to God and for the forgiveness of the sins of the world. Exactly that same ministry is given personally to the one being ordained priest: 'Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained'. And how is the priest to take this part in Christ's high-priestly work of reconciling the whole world to God? He is to do so by being a faithful minister of word and sacrament: 'Be thou a faithful Dispenser of the word of God, and of his holy Sacraments'.

When it comes to ordination you will not be asked to give assent to *Common Worship* or its replacement. But you will be required to give your assent to the Book of Common Prayer and the Ordering of Bishops, Priests and Deacons. I do not think you need to cross your fingers behind your back or make mental reservations as you do so. The Book of Common Prayer and the Ordinal are fundamental documents

of the Church of England and may be used, as the canons put it, 'by all members of the Church of England with a good conscience'. Remember this when you lead public worship. The Prayer Book is a much easier book to use than the many *CommonWorship* volumes. It does not contain a proliferation of alternatives, or the frequent ejaculations that are a bad feature of *CommonWorship*, necessitating the continual irritating reference to different paragraphs and pages.

With *CommonWorship* we are back at the situation that Cranmer complained of in the Preface to his first Prayer Book when he wrote of the old service books 'that many times there was more business to find out what should be read, than to read it when it was found out'. Let the reader and the user of the *CommonWorship* volumes understand.

The shape of Prayer Book Matins and Evensong is simple and straightforward. Holy Communion moves steadily through scripture, intercession and penitence, to consecration, communion and oblation, and then to a joyful post-communion section. The marriage service has no fussy interjections and explanations. The Prayer Book rubrics are good too and cover almost all contingencies. What are we to do if the consecrated elements run out? What are we to do with them after the service? What are we to do if we are unsure whether or not a child has been baptized? What are we to do if an impediment is alleged at a wedding? Worry not. The Prayer Book rubrics tell you what to do—the book is the instruction manual for the clergy as well as a reliable service book and a compendium of orthodox Christian belief. All within the covers of a single small volume.

Resolve to look carefully at the Book of Common Prayer. Inform yourself about its origins, development and usage. Do not think that it has to be used inflexibly. The preface to 1662 admitted that changes had become necessary since 1559 and made them without compunction, expressing the hope that the alterations, additions and new translations 'will be also well accepted and approved by all sober, peaceable and truly conscientious sons of the Church of England'. I personally think that the Prayer Book-style Series 1 Holy Communion is the best and most satisfying that the Church of England has produced, and am happy that it is still authorized for use. Study our Prayer Book and then make intelligent decisions about your and your people's liturgical needs. For it is a matter of supreme importance, and the old adage is as true as it ever was; *lex orandi lex credendi*: what people pray is what they believe.

(The Revd Dr Alan H. F. Griffin is rector of St Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe and St James Garlickhythe. The above was given as an address to a PBS conference for ordinands in 2004.)

# The Demolition of Common Prayer: A Story in Four Prefaces

GEORGE TOLLEY

**T**he progression from the Book of Common Prayer to *Common Worship* is from an ordered liturgy to a liturgy of choice. *Common Worship* claims to offer a structure, a framework, and it is a source book of worship material, to which are added other source books, providing variety of choice, but no coherence. Revisions of the liturgy from 1662 through 1928, 1980 and 2000 occur on a timeline that indicates that we must now expect the Church of England to be in a state of continuous revision, as indeed it is. There has been a dismantling of the firm foundation of liturgy upon which the Church of England was built. Consumer choice has been elevated to a principle which has priority over coherence of doctrine.

In looking at the progression that has radically changed the landscape of liturgy, it is instructive to read the Prefaces of the four revisions: *The Book of Common Prayer* (1662); *The Book of Common Prayer* (1928); the *Alternative Service Book* 1980; and *Common Worship* (2000). They tell a story of the pulling up of landmarks; of the decline of ordered worship.

## **The Book of Common Prayer (1662)**

The Preface was, it is believed, written by Robert Sanderson, Bishop of Lincoln. He states the principles underlying revision:

1. Moderation: 'to keep the mean between two extremes.'
2. To make changes only 'upon weighty and important considerations.' There is to be no yielding to fashion.
3. To maintain the 'main body and essentials' of the liturgy; 'as well in the chiefest materials, as in the frame and order thereof.'
4. To reject alternatives that were 'either of dangerous consequence (as

severely striking at some established doctrine, or laudable practice of the Church of England, or indeed of the whole Catholick Church of Christ), or else of no consequence at all, but utterly frivolous and vain.’

5. The general aim was ‘not to gratify this or that party’, but to do that which ‘might most tend to the preservation of peace and unity in the Church; the procuring of reverence, and exciting of piety and devotion in the publick worship of God.’
6. Most of the alterations were made:
  - i. ‘for the better direction of them that are to officiate in ... Divine Service.’
  - ii. for ‘the more proper expressing of some words and phrases of ancient usage in terms more suitable to the language of the present times.’
  - iii. to give ‘a more perfect rendering of ... Holy Scripture.’

Having set out the principles, the Preface concludes by having ‘good hope that what is here presented ... will be well accepted and approved by all sober, peaceable and truly conscientious sons of the Church of England.’

That hope did not prevent a great deal of controversy and many Puritan clergy did not accept the Book. But the principles, and the original structure and edifice provided by Thomas Cranmer, gave a Book of Common Prayer that lasted for almost three centuries.

### **The Book of Common Prayer (1928)**

The Preface to the ill-fated 1928 revision is more a commentary than a statement of principles. Starting with an assertion that the ‘Book of Common Prayer in English is ... and always will be, one of the great books of the world,’ it goes on to set out the factors that influenced the revision.

1. Social, educational and economic change meant that ‘we are living in a new world [and] we dare not think that a Book of Common Prayer fitted for the seventeenth century can supply every want of the twentieth.’
2. But ‘the marvel is that it calls for so little change.’
3. ‘It is the duty no less than the right of those who bear the burden of a great trust to see that plain needs are plainly met, and that the book is still in our day, as of old, understood of the people.’
4. ‘We have made no change for the sake of change.’
5. ‘We do not mean any change of doctrine.’
6. ‘In all things we have set before our eyes the duty of faithfulness to the teaching of Scripture and the godly and decent order of the ancient Fathers.’

## **The Alternative Service Book 1980**

The Preface of the ASB marks a great discontinuity in the process of revision. It is not a revision of the Book of Common Prayer, but the provision of an alternative liturgy. That much is made clear in the opening paragraph of the Preface.

1. The *Alternative Service Book* (1980), as its name implies, 'is intended to supplement the Book of Common Prayer, not to supersede it.' To underline that, services from the BCP do not appear in the ASB.
2. As a pointer to what was to follow it adds: 'The addition of a date to the title may serve as a reminder that revision and adaptation of the Church's worship are continuous processes.'
3. 'Rapid social and intellectual changes, however ... have made it desirable that new understandings of worship should find expression in new forms and styles.'
4. There is a statement of justification that 'the provision of alternative services is to be welcomed as an enrichment of the Church's life rather than as a threat to its integrity.' And, 'unity need no longer be seen to entail strict uniformity of practice.'
5. A plea for the necessity of change and variety is expressed as, 'the gospel of the living Christ is too rich in content, and the spiritual needs of his people are too diverse, for a single form of worship to suffice.'
6. The claim is made that the publication of the ASB 'marks a pause in a programme of liturgical business which has occupied, first the Convocations and the House of Laity, and latterly the General Synod, for more than fifteen years.'
7. Recognizing the authority of the Book of Common Prayer as a doctrinal standard, the ASB is offered, not in extension or improvement, but to stand alongside that standard. 'New forms of worship do not erode the historical foundations of the Church's faith, nor render respect for them any less appropriate than it was before.'
8. There is an invitation to further amendment and revision; 'Words are only the beginning of worship. Those who use them do well to recognize their transience and imperfections.'
9. There is in the final sentence of the Preface an echo of Robert Sanderson's closing plea. 'This book is offered ... in the hope that God's people may find in it a means in our day to worship God with honest minds and thankful hearts.'

## **Common Worship (2000)**

This Preface, whilst introducing far-reaching changes, is the shortest.

1. A bold claim is made at the outset: '*Common Worship* draws together the

rich inheritance of the past and the very best of our contemporary forms of worship.’

2. The outcome is not a revision of what has gone before but ‘this combination of old and new provides for the diverse worshipping needs of our communities, within an ordered structure which affirms our essential unity and common life.’

The emphasis is upon a framework of liturgy, with freedom to adapt and adopt material to that framework.

3. The BCP is allotted its place as ‘the permanently authorized provision for public worship in the Church of England.’
4. The book aims to reflect ‘the multiplicity of contexts in which worship is offered today’ and to ‘encourage an imaginative engagement in worship ... for people in the varied circumstances of their lives to experience the love of God in Jesus Christ in the life and power of the Holy Spirit.’

### **Comment**

The 1662 Preface stands out from the others, firstly, because the purpose of the revision was effectively to re-establish the Prayer Book which had been banned for seventeen years. It was necessary to re-assert continuity. It had to be much more sensitive to doctrinal controversy than the other revisions. And it had to affirm the authority of the new Book of Common Prayer and that authority had to be evident in the unity of a common order. Furthermore, with the Restoration of 1660, the nation, having looked into the abyss and not liking what it saw, had no stomach for extremism or lack of order. But those factors, significant though they were in the seventeenth century, do not explain the continued acceptance of the 1662 Book until well into the nineteenth century. I think Sanderson’s Preface gives clues to this continued acceptance and standing of the BCP. Common prayer gave a known, familiar order, immediately recognizable wherever one may go to Church and in that sense was inclusive. Secondly, the BCP provided a standard of quality in the riches and ordering of its material and comprised a storehouse of spirituality. The quality of those materials gave both a dependable and tested liturgy for regular worship and a treasure house to be explored. And, thirdly, BCP encapsulated the doctrine upon which is built the ministry and integrity of the Church. It is doctrine which must be the foundation of the liturgy, not literary form, nor aesthetics, nor response to the spirit of the age, nor the encouragement of shared emotional experiences. The bedrock of the 1662 revision was common prayer based upon firm doctrine.

The Preface of the 1928 Prayer Book also affirmed continuity and order, although Parliament differed and as a consequence approval as

an authorized book was not given. Might things have been different subsequently had the book been authorized? Who can answer that question?

The Preface affirmed the need to respond to a world that had moved on from the seventeenth century, but did not find it necessary to make a case to recast the essentials of a liturgy that had stood the test of time. Amidst the upheavals of the post-World War I world and the ferment of ideas and social change so prevalent then, it was felt to be necessary to safeguard and assert order and stability. Liturgy was not to be put into the melting pot of experiment.

The setting for the *Alternative Service Book* was very different. The Preface makes clear that the revision is based upon fifteen years and more of experiment and consultation. It should have got it right and failed. It gave us the worst of all worlds. The modern language idiom failed to carry conviction, power or inspiration. The search for clarity and relevance ended in banality. The comment in the Preface that words can be transient and imperfect was a self-fulfilling prophecy on the part of the Liturgical Commission. The second aberration was to choose to introduce alternative services based upon experimental material that had been 'judged to be most generally useful.' The Preface does not attempt cogent or convincing arguments in favour of 'authorized books', rather than an authorized book. The Preface is an invitation to further revision rather than a statement of liturgical authority.

We might have expected the Preface of *Common Worship* to make some reference to what had been learned from previous years of liturgical experiment and use of the ASB. There is none; only the self-satisfied claim that the book 'draws together the rich inheritance of the past and the very best of contemporary worship.' We are invited in the Preface to enter upon an adventure of worship. The words used are intended no doubt to add spice to that adventure: 'old and new'; 'diverse worshipping needs'; 'ordered structure'; 'rich and varied'; 'multiplicity of contexts'; 'imaginative engagement in worship'; 'resonant and memorable'.

The Preface states, 'the publication of these services is a challenge.' Indeed it is. A challenge not least in how to make use of so much material which runs now to several books and is in continuous revision. Within a few months of publication a series of alternative Collects was in course of preparation. The claim that 'this volume contains all that is needed for worship on Sundays and on Principal Feasts and Holy Days' very quickly turned out to be misleading and the very people who had made that claim encouraged the preparation and publication of additional and alternative material. There is another claim—that

the material of *Common Worship* 'will enter and remain in the Church of England's corporate memory.' Will it? It seems all too likely that we are back where Thomas Cranmer started in 1549 when 'a godly and decent order (had) been altered, broken and neglected.' And we have a book (or rather books) where 'to turn the book only was so hard and intricate a matter, that many times there was more business to find out what should be read, than to read it when it was found out.'

The demolition of common prayer is clearly the agenda of the Liturgical Commission. Liturgy is no longer regarded as a foundation of doctrine, unifying and nurturing the whole Church, but a collection of resource materials for use by worshipping congregations. The Preface of 2000, compared with the Preface of 1662, sadly, tells of a Church that has lost its way.

*(The Revd Canon George Tolley is an Honorary Canon Emeritus of Sheffield Cathedral and was formerly Principal of Sheffield Polytechnic.)*

# The Prayer Book would then Mean what it Says

ANTHONY KILMISTER

**A**re we worrying about the possibility that the bathroom curtains have shrunk instead of realizing that flames have taken hold in the dining-room and threaten to turn the whole house into a burning inferno?

Is a Third or Free (non-territorial) Province the price to be paid by the Church of England for the planned innovation of women bishops in the existing Provinces, which was ‘flagged up’ at the July 2005 meeting of the General Synod? Dr Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, in talking of a Third Province solution said: ‘We have to face the reality that a lot of people who still identify themselves as Anglicans will not want to be in the kind of structural relationship they are now in with the rest of the Communion’.<sup>1</sup>

I most certainly want to remain an Anglican—and if a Third Province is created, as it must be if the Church is not to implode, then within that. I want, if possible, to live and die a member of the Church of England. Traditional liturgy as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer together with tombstones marking ancestors’ graves in Church of England churchyards, old plaques on church walls and the ever-present royal supremacy are all part of the inner feeling of what it is to be an Anglican.

Until recent times an unspoken but understood deal had been at the heart of this Anglicanism. An understanding which began with the Elizabethan Settlement in the 16th century was renewed with the truce between Tractarians and Protestants at the end of the 19th. The deal was that no decision or policy would be imposed on the Church of England that would drive another section of it out into the wilderness or into oblivion.<sup>2</sup> The deal started to unravel<sup>3</sup> in 1992–1994 when the Church of England began to ordain women. The ‘Flying Bishops’ and other schemes related to them have helped to plaster over the cracks for

the time being but the prospect of making women bishops has huge potential for schism. Indeed even the possibility makes the creation by Measure of a Free, non-territorial Third Province (in which women bishops and women priests do not function) an absolute necessity.

The Church of England Assembly (Powers) Act 1919 provides that a Measure may relate to any matter concerning the Church of England. Unlike the formation of the Church in Wales<sup>4</sup> in 1920 when a separate Church was carved out of the Church of England, the new, additional (i.e. Third) Province would remain part of the Church of England. PBS members could be recruited in all three provinces and the Book of Common Prayer could be used in all three. Though the Church of England existed perfectly well for over three hundred years without a Church Assembly or General Synod the new Province would nevertheless have its own Provincial Synod.

Reverting to the need for this, it must be clearly understood that misogyny is not even remotely involved—the issue is a doctrinal one. As a very happily married man I have no quarrel with women as women. To suggest opponents of women's ordination and consecration are motivated by 'pure prejudice' is to completely misunderstand the objection. As I see it, men and women are equal before God but they are not interchangeable and I contend that the Church's task is to sanctify the natural order—not to repudiate it. No, my quarrel is with the concept of women as priests and most especially as bishops. It cuts right across my understanding of Anglican doctrine as set forth in Canon A5—in which the pre-eminent status of the Book of Common Prayer is proclaimed.<sup>5</sup>

The report<sup>6</sup> of a powerful Commission set up by Archbishop Randall Davidson showed, after making a thorough examination of the biblical and patristic evidence, that there was no case for women's ordination and the only women priests there had been were those in extreme heretical sects. In such far off days nobody would even have dreamt of women-bishops. Even in the changed world of the 21st century it would be heart-breaking to be driven from Anglicanism as a result of feminists and their sympathizers having seized control and driven mainstream, every-day Anglicans out of their natural home. As matters stand the whole ethos of Anglicanism is at risk. If the Church is not to be mortally wounded then it is vital that the danger be contained.

There is yet another part of this 'jig-saw'. Obviously *Lex orandi lex credendi* is hugely important to Prayer Book supporters. Language and theology go together like horse and carriage or love and marriage. What and how we pray give voice to what we believe. One expresses the other. The introduction of alternative services has not only done

much to undermine the Book of Common Prayer (and banal ‘new’ services have often been insensitively imposed) but, as a result, it is difficult to discern any uniformity. Grindingly the Church keeps on floating its currency. It seems to be forever seeking novelty yet geared to never finding stability.

It has become difficult to defend the BCP as one had always known it for with the passing of legislation in 1992 aimed at women’s ordination to the priesthood a new item of canon law was introduced in the form of Canon C4(b). This amounted to placing an *erratum* slip in the Prayer Book so that after 300 years the BCP could be understood differently and with ambiguity.<sup>7</sup> The words on the page in the Prayer Book Ordinal could be taken to mean one thing or equally to mean another thing according to taste.

Many of us are faced therefore with the choice of defending the BCP as one had always previously understood it or of appreciating that the words on the page could also be deemed to mean what the innovators of 1992–1994 want them to mean. The difficulty is likely to increase in these early years of the 21st century when a General Synod Measure is brought forward to appoint women to the Episcopate or if women who hold senior posts within the Methodist church are recognized by our Church as bishops—by way of entry by the side door.

Furthermore the Preface to the BCP Ordinal says that ‘It is evident ... from the Apostles’ time there have been these Orders of ministers in Christ’s Church—Bishops, Priests and Deacons ... and therefore to the intent that these Orders may be *Continued* ...’ The happenings of the 1990s are no continuation but rather are a politically-correct discontinuation or innovation. Innovation, *pace* the argument often used in the 1990s of enlisting the proposition of John Henry Newman (1801–1890) about ‘the development of doctrine’. Newman, however, had listed strict criteria to determine whether a particular change is indeed a true development. One of these was the requirement of a ‘seed’ from which the development has grown. In the 1990s the advocates of women’s ordination seized on this idea and promptly ‘discovered’ that the prophetesses of the Old Testament and Mary Magdalen in the New Testament were the ‘seeds’ of women priests in the Church. Having decided the truth of this to their own satisfaction—and claiming Newman as the authority who gave respectability to their cause (notwithstanding that Newman would have submitted their claim to the judgment of the Roman *Magisterium*)—they proclaimed that women priests would be a legitimate development of a doctrine already present in Scripture and *therefore* not an innovation. Such twentieth-century advocates did not

take into account that, whereas the Holy Ghost falls upon whom he will (whether new converts, men or women) the Christian priesthood (stemming from the Apostles) is a matter of duties rather than sudden inspirations—duties specifically spelt out to the Apostles by the Lord (celebrating the Eucharist, pronouncing absolution and so on). So a prophetess cannot ‘develop’ into a priest any more than an apple can develop into a Brazil nut.

Furthermore, anyone who studies the Book of Common Prayer can point also to the injunction in the Epistle set forth in the Form for consecrating a Bishop (1 Tim. 3.1) that a bishop be ‘the husband of one wife’—and the proposed consecration of women bishops can then be seen to be further from the BCP than ever.

One looks back over the years and can see that the writing has been on the wall for a long time. A head of pressure was built up with the case for women priests in the Church of England seeming to rest on ‘equal rights’ and ‘women’s liberation’ rather than on sound theology. Certainly no coherent theological case in their favour appears to be extant though the revealed truth of God is, apparently, no longer authoritative—never mind the Jewish and Christian tradition we inherited. In the years since the 1992 time-bomb exploded I have often wondered why these women did not become ministers in the non-conformist churches rather than damage (by their innovative and doctrinally unjustified action) Anglican Orders that had been ‘evident from the Apostles’ time’.

Since the canonical ordination of women became a fact—just over a decade ago—a bishop wishing to do so has had to ordain priests to work in the Church of England. Prior to 1994 he was able to say ‘Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a Priest in the Church of God’. How restrictive and narrowing that change has been and how like the action of a sect rather than of a part of the Universal Church. The possibility that women might, in the not too distant future, become bishops can only alienate us even further from the great Churches of the West and the East and from each other.

If the Church of England means what it says in the Creed about believing in one Catholic and Apostolic Church it must mean that it believes itself to be a continuation of the Church of St Augustine of Canterbury—still faithful to all the essential elements that define it as a true Church with real priests and so on. However that should mean that Anglicans ought not to have unilaterally altered Holy Orders. In May 1994 Pope John Paul II declared in his Apostolic Letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* that the Church ‘has no authority<sup>8</sup> whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is

to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful'. The ruling was 'founded on the written word of God' and 'belongs to the deposit of faith'. Pope John Paul II pointed out in the same statement that this tradition had 'also been faithfully maintained by the Oriental [Eastern Orthodox] Churches'. Only the Church of England has seen fit to go ahead with the altering of Orders thus showing a complete disregard for those bigger Churches around her. Furthermore it is clear that the new Pope (formerly Cardinal Ratzinger) holds even more strongly his predecessor's view.

The best-selling writer and Christian apologist the late C. S. Lewis (1898–1963) in 'Priestesses in the Church?' from *God in the Dock*<sup>9</sup> wrote: 'If all these supposals were ever carried into effect we should be embarked on a *different religion*. Goddesses have, of course, been worshipped: many religions have had priestesses. But they are religions quite different in character from Christianity'.

Is this what the innovators really want? If so, women-bishops will make for a bumpy ride in the period ahead. In tandem with the legislation providing for this novelty the creation of a Third Province within the Church of England (for which draft legislation also exists) would become the only acceptable way forward that would prevent the religious equivalent of a 'Civil War' and mutual destruction.

(Anthony Kilmister is a former National Chairman of the Prayer Book Society, but writes here in a purely personal capacity.)

<sup>1</sup> Interview for the *Church Times* (29th November 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Article XX of the Thirty-nine Articles says the Church 'ought not to enforce anything to be believed for necessity of Salvation'.

<sup>3</sup> In the wake of the General Synod vote on the Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure, 11th November 1992.

<sup>4</sup> See Welsh Church Act 1914 which took effect after the First World War.

<sup>5</sup> Canon A5 says: 'The doctrine of the Church of England is grounded in the Holy Scriptures and in such teachings of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church as are agreeable to the said Scriptures. In particular such doctrine is to be found in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, The Book of Common Prayer and the Ordinal'.

<sup>6</sup> *The Ministry of Women*, SPCK, 1919.

<sup>7</sup> In the 1990s a new Canon C4(b) was introduced saying: '(1) A woman may be ordained to the office of priest if she otherwise satisfies the requirements of Canon C4 as to the persons who may be ordained as priests. (2) In the forms of service contained in the Book of Common Prayer or in the Ordinal words importing the masculine gender in relation to the priesthood shall be construed as including the feminine except where the context otherwise requires'.

<sup>8</sup> 'facultatem': this suggests 'ability' and not just 'authority'.

<sup>9</sup> C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock*, HarperCollins 1979.

# The Cranmerian Doublet

G. A. WILLIAMS

So many people have said that the Book of Common Prayer and the Authorized Version of the Bible were compiled at a time when the English language was at its full flowering that people have come to believe it. The statement that Thomas Cranmer was a master of English prose loses credibility if one tries to read any of his sermons. Similarly if we were to judge her ability to use language forcefully or stirringly by the letters of Queen Elizabeth the First she would not pass for the superb orator she undoubtedly was. No! Sixteenth-century English was classical in form, tortuous in style and tedious in expression. But when the Queen visited her troops at Tilbury on the eve of the Armada, she did not use sixteenth-century language, the language in which she wrote her letters; she used ageless English.

My loving people, we have been persuaded by some that are careful of our safety, to take heed how we commit ourselves to armed multitudes for fear of treachery. But I assure you, I do not desire to live to distrust my faithful and loving people. Let tyrants fear. I have always so behaved myself that, under God, I have placed my chiefest strength and safeguard in the loyal hearts and good will of my subjects; and therefore I am come amongst you, as you see, at this time, not for my recreation and disport, but being resolved, in the midst and heat of the battle, to live or die amongst you all, to lay down for my God and for my kingdom and for my people, my honour and my blood, even in the dust. I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain or any prince of Europe should dare to invade the borders of my realm.

These words were spoken in the sixteenth century, but the style is not peculiar to that age. These words were spoken to uplift and

inspire, to be remembered and recalled. And with the passage of the years they have lost none of their force and power.

Consider other words, once again spoken at a time of national crisis and disaster. Words similarly calculated and designed to encourage and inspire, and also we even dare to say, words spoken in the hope that they will have power to be retained in the memory so that their effectiveness be not transitory or ephemeral, but that their potency should be retained and their emotive power extended into the future.

Even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous states have fallen, or may fall, into the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of the Nazi rule, we shall not flag nor fail. We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France, we shall fight in the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air. We shall fight on the beaches; we shall fight on the landing grounds. We shall fight in the fields and in the streets. We shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender; and even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British fleet would carry on the struggle until in God's good time the New World, with all its power and might steps forth to the rescue and liberation of the old.

There is a close similarity, not only of event and circumstance, but also of oratory and style in these two speeches. Winston Churchill spoke his in the twentieth century, but the language cannot be described as of that age, as Queen Elizabeth's equally do not belong to the sixteenth century. Both speeches are potent and effective, the words remain and reverberate in the memory; they are easily recalled; they still inspire.

For some weeks after the wedding of the Prince and Princess of Wales in St Paul's Cathedral, almost every encounter for the first time with friend or acquaintance contained a question as to whether the broadcast of the ceremony by the television authorities had been watched and observed. In every such case I played a little game. I asked the companion what he thought of the prayers. Not one could remember anything about them. The words had not penetrated, the memory was blank; their effectiveness was non-existent. I couldn't of course remember them myself.

Why is it that words like: 'Grant that this man may love his wife as Christ loves his bride, the Church, giving himself for it and cherishing it as his own flesh; and grant that this woman may love her husband and follow the example of those holy women whose praises are sung

in the Scriptures' fail to be remembered, their content to be recalled? Whereas words such as: '[Grant] that both this man may love his wife ... (as Christ did love his spouse the Church, who gave himself for it, loving and cherishing it even as his own flesh,) and also that this woman may be loving and amiable, faithful and obedient to her husband; and in all quietness, sobriety, and peace, be a follower of holy and godly matrons' penetrate, are remembered and have an effect which is not transitory.

First let us take the point that since the public prayers of the Church should be intended to inspire, be recalled and to penetrate, we need to use a language which is different from the spoken conversational vernacular of any particular age or century, or even the written words of correspondence or other necessary communications. If economy of words and contemporary idiom are the only considerations in public-prayer construction we end up with prayers like 'We thank thee for feeding us with the body and blood of thy son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Through him we offer thee our souls and bodies to be a living sacrifice. Send us out in the power of thy Spirit to live and work to thy praise and glory'. It is no more than a series of ejaculatory utterances and peremptory commands. Come on God, jump to it. Surely this is neither liturgical language, conversational English nor written communication but the barked out orders of the barracks square

If therefore compilers of liturgies should use a language which penetrates, is memorable and effective they would be well advised to study those speeches and declarations, not necessarily liturgical, which have these qualities. They should also recognize that such language belongs to all ages and cannot be considered as peculiar to one.

When a man wishes to knock a nail into a piece of wood, he takes a hammer and the nail, holds the nail in the required position, and before giving it the knock with the hammer which will drive it home he first finds the measure of it with a gentle tap. He doesn't just give one blow and let that be a hit and miss affair, but makes the previous calculation by a weaker passage through the same movement.

As we analyse the speech of Queen Elizabeth at Tilbury in 1588 and that of Winston Churchill under the threat of invasion in 1940, we see a repeated use of a doublet—two words roughly synonymous, the first weaker than the second. It is the same technique as that of driving in a nail. In the short oration of 1588 we have: 'faithful and loving', 'strength and safeguard', 'loyal hearts and goodwill', 'recreation and disport', 'live or die', 'for my God and for my kingdom', 'my honour and my blood', 'weak and feeble', 'heart and stomach'. Nine doublets. A similar exercise with the 1940 speech also yields nine doublets: 'old

and famous', 'flag nor fail', 'seas and oceans', 'growing confidence and growing strength', 'in the fields and in the streets', 'subjugated and starving', 'armed and guarded', 'power and might', 'the rescue and the liberation'.

Now let us turn to the Book of Common Prayer. Just one example will suffice.

Dearly beloved brethren, the scripture moveth us in sundry places to acknowledge and confess our manifold sins and wickedness; and that we should not dissemble nor cloke them before the face of Almighty God our heavenly Father; but confess them with an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart; to the end that we may obtain forgiveness of the same, by his infinite goodness and mercy. And although we ought at all times humbly to acknowledge our sins before God; yet ought we most chiefly so to do, when we assemble and meet together to render thanks for the great benefits 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. Wherefore I pray and beseech you, as many as are here present, to accompany me with a pure heart, and humble voice, unto the throne of the heavenly grace, saying after me;

In this exhortation there are eight simple doublets and two double doublets if they may so be described ('humble, lowly, penitent and obedient' and 'to render thanks ... to set forth ... to hear ... and to ask'). It is the observance of this elementary precept of liturgical language which has enabled the Book of Common Prayer to resist authorized revision for over four hundred years and has made it formative and effective in the life of the nation. Cranmer was not using Cranmerian English, he was not even using sixteenth-century English. He knew the rules and he obeyed them and produced a masterpiece. His liturgical genius lay in his ability to translate Latin prayers into good liturgical English and in the inspired choice of English words. It is surprising how few of the words he used from a living and developing language have changed their meaning with the passage of time, words like 'prevent', 'convenient' or 'comfort'.

Future revisers of the Prayer Book therefore do not need to fear that their task will be beyond their powers. Equally memorable and formative language can be produced even using modern terminology, if only the rules of liturgiology are observed.

Where genius comes in it lies in the ability to recognize that some words by their very sound are 'unliturgical'. For the coronation of Queen Elizabeth the Second the old phrase 'grant to her a pious nobility

and a faithful commonalty’—which admittedly had grown completely out of date and become inappropriate—was superseded by ‘leaders of integrity in learning and labour’. The alliteration is successful but ‘integrity’ is not a liturgical word, whereas ‘worthiness’ is. The Bidding Prayer uses the phrase ‘fit and worthy persons to serve God in both Church and State’. It is in the recognition of the appropriate sound of some words and the inappropriate sound of others that there lies the distinction between a competent and incompetent liturgiologist. But above all the existence of a liturgical language must be recognized if church services are to speak powerfully. There is such a language just as much as there is conversational English, rhetorical language, business language, civil service jargon and journalese. If liturgical language is to be superseded by conversational phraseology, prayers in the next attempted revision of the Prayer Book will probably be introduced ‘Well, God, you know ...’

*(The late Canon Williams’ For All Ages is published by the Prayer Book Society. This undated, and apparently unpublished, essay was found among his papers.)*

SCRUTINY (34):

# The Collect of the Third Sunday after Trinity

EDMUND NEWEY

If in doubt, always preach on the collect'. That was the advice of Douglas Fever, sometime Bishop of Peterborough. My grandfather,<sup>1</sup> a priest in Bishop Fever's diocese for many years, will often quote those words when asked for advice on the delightful but demanding task of preaching.

'Always preach on the collect'. It is sound counsel, I believe, especially when the collects in question are those of the Book of Common Prayer. Their compiler was, of course, the great Thomas Cranmer, but many of them have their origin much further back in time than the sixteenth century. The majority of the Prayer Book collects in fact come from the liturgy of the early Church, from the collections of prayers that we know as the Sacramentaries of Leo, Gelasius and Gregory. Those sacramentaries are a wonderful survival from the early life of the Church, putting us in touch with the prayer life of our Christian forebears fifteen and sixteen hundred years ago. But we are also very fortunate in the felicity with which Cranmer, in his day, handed them on to us in English translation. The original Latin may often be more concise, but it is in Cranmer's beautifully balanced cadences that the full resonance of the collects sounds forth.

Let me remind you of the collect for today, the third Sunday after Trinity:

O Lord, we beseech thee mercifully to hear us; and grant that we, to whom thou hast given an hearty desire to pray, may by thy mighty aid be defended and comforted in all dangers and adversities; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

This is neither one of the more famous nor one of the more immediately attractive of the Prayer Book collects, but in its brief compass it says a great

deal with clarity, simplicity and dignity—the hallmarks of good liturgy. As with all collects, the punctuation is vital, and especially important is that much-abused syntactical tool, the semi-colon. The prayer falls into three parts, divided by the semi-colons: first, the invocation, asking that God will hear us; secondly, the specific request; and, thirdly, the naming of the one through whom we make our prayer, Jesus Christ our Lord.

If I may, I would like to take just one word from each of those three sections, and reflect on it a little.

From the first section of the collect, the word I want to focus on is 'beseech'. In modern life we don't go in very much for beseeching—it smacks too much of powerlessness, of a posture of humility before God. But our scriptures are full of beseeching, even if modern translations tone it down a bit and substitute the weaker verb, 'ask'. Think of all the prophets in the Old Testament who 'besought the Lord' and were answered; or of the crowds around Jesus in the gospels who beseech him that he would heal their sick. Obviously languages move on and there is no point in persisting with words that people can no longer understand, but in losing the verb 'to beseech' from our vocabulary, we are letting go of something important. To beseech is also to seek—the words come from the same Middle English root—and so the posture of beseeching is not one of abject humility. To beseech is to engage actively in the search for God, 'to seek the Lord while he may be found'. And, in the words of one of our great East Anglian saints, Julian of Norwich, it is to remember that God is 'the ground of our beseeching'. Even before we seek him, even before we exist, God is there, animating our prayer and leading us towards him.

From the second section, the word I want us to think about is another verb, the past participle 'comforted': 'grant that we, to whom thou hast given an hearty desire to pray, may by thy mighty aid be defended and *comforted* in all dangers and adversities'. It's a simple word, a familiar word. The images it conjures for us, perhaps, are of plump cushions, warm baths and deep-pile carpets. But that's not quite what Cranmer intended the word to mean when he set about his translation. Think of the Comfortable Words in the order for Holy Communion. The first of them is this: 'Come unto me all that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you'. Words of comfort indeed, but not the pampering comfort of a night with your feet up in front of the telly. We come to Christ to be refreshed, not to be pampered. In fact, at the risk of trying your patience with another etymology, the word comfort originally meant to strengthen—to *make strong together with*, to com-fort. That is what the life of faith does to us—makes us strong together with one another and with God, comforting us through the gracious gifts of word and sacrament.

The last word I would like to think about is the preposition ‘through’. All our prayer is offered through Jesus Christ our Lord. We hear that phrase so often that we almost overlook it. All it becomes is a sort of signal that the prayer is coming to an end. But that little word ‘through’ is a vital reminder that the prayer we offer is not our own effort, but the work of Christ in us. Back in the fourth century a monk called Pelagius gave his name to a heresy that continues to beset us. Pelagius was a very pious and holy man, a man whose life of self-denial and prayer was second to none. But he taught that human beings, if they strive hard enough, can take the first steps towards God through their own efforts, without the help of divine grace. He taught this because he thought that otherwise there was no incentive for any of us to do anything. If everything we did was God’s work, not ours, why should we ever exert ourselves? But, what he overlooked was the fundamental fact that by his very nature, God is before us in everything. God isn’t another person or thing in a universe of persons and things. God is the unfathomable creative and redemptive mystery of love, the reason there are any persons or things at all. And so, of course, we can do nothing outside God’s grace, because that grace is nothing more and nothing less than God’s very great goodness itself, poured out on us and on all people. Poured out on us through Jesus Christ.

I said that ‘through’ was the last word I wanted to reflect on, but there is of course a final word that I can’t overlook: ‘Amen’. ‘Amen’ is the word that comes at the end of all our prayers. It is the seal of our assent to what we have prayed for: Amen, so be it. But ‘Amen’ also comes first. ‘Verily, verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he shall give it you’, says our Lord in the gospel according to St John. And those words ‘verily, verily’ translate the Greek ‘Amen, amen’. ‘Amen, amen—in truth, in very truth—I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, he shall give it you’. That is the promise of Christ, through whom we beseech the Father to comfort us with the Holy Spirit.

O Lord, we beseech thee mercifully to hear us; and grant that we, to whom thou hast given an hearty desire to pray, may by thy mighty aid be defended and comforted in all dangers and adversities; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*(A Sermon preached at Evensong on the Third Sunday after Trinity, 27th June 2004 at St Nicholas, Landwade. The Revd Edmund Newey is Rector of St Mary’s, Newmarket.)*

<sup>1</sup> The author’s grandfather, David Stevens, who was received into the Roman Catholic Church in 1988, died on 6th July 2005. May he rest in peace and rise with Christ in glory.

# Religion and Memory

D. B. TAYLOR

Overwhelmingly the reason for the decline of religion in the modern world is the sense of never-failing, ever-growing prosperity; and the perception is not a new one—see Deuteronomy 8.17. It may be that even as we are saying to ourselves ‘peace and security’, sudden destruction is only just around the corner waiting to surprise us. A particularly ominous sign, for instance, is the sudden and unlikely-to-be-reversed increase in the price of oil. *Initium dolorum hæc?* But if that is the case, the remedy is first of all not in our hands, and secondly to be deplored rather than welcomed, since the consequences will be as disastrous for us who are faithful as for the world in general which is not. Insofar then as it is caused by prosperity, the problem should be more or less without regard, being more or less without remedy.

But there is also an important aspect of the problem which it is well within our power to remedy, and it is that aspect that I wish to examine. If you casually drop by into almost any church during a service, the congregation is chiefly elderly. This is normally held up as an enormous problem, and I think I agree; but it seems to me that it is precisely what is on offer as the remedy which chiefly causes it. The turmoil of revision and innovation which has engulfed the Church has been going on now for about forty years; and yet most of the surviving congregation acquired the habit of church-going before the turmoil started. And whereas the turmoil was originally initiated in the hope of attracting new blood into the Church, it has been remarkably successful in ejecting an enormous quantity of old blood, but had very little success in achieving its declared aim (and yet most of the clergy, like drowning men clutching at straws, still profess to hope that just another bit of revision, just another round of innovation, will at last begin to crack the problem.)

Let us compare some of the differences between our present situation and that of forty years ago. In those days we still had an agreed and accepted translation of the Bible, and an agreed and accepted liturgy.

Today we have neither. I do not hold that no changes should ever have been made; but I do hold that if we must have changes they should be as little noticeable and disruptive as possible, and that initially they should be merely suggested rather than immediately compulsory. Actual practice has been the opposite of that, as though wholesale upheaval were itself a major form of evangelism. In both areas there has been not just a neglect of the importance of memory as the cement of religious loyalty; there has been a deliberate and unremitting assault on it. I know a clergyman who prides himself, even when conducting a service supposedly using the 1984 Welsh revision of the Prayer Book (which, I suspect to the horror of many readers, I rather like), on being able to 'break through the rigidity and archaism' of the actual text, and 'recast the sentiments in more immediate and accessible language'. And he does this very systematically. And what is the result? Not only does he fail to connect with the richly-stored memories of his hearers; even worse, he offers them nothing to remember in their place. What they actually remember is abandoned, what they hear makes no appeal to the memory, nor is it intended to; no one attending these services will ever know any part of the liturgy off by heart. This has been the implication of what the church as a whole has been consistently doing for more than a generation. Can anyone honestly claim to be surprised at the outcome?

But a more serious consequence is what has gone wrong with our attitude to the Bible. The modern church comes across as having no message, and it is easy to see why. If we look at Catholicism, the core of the message is the claim made by the Church for itself: 'Come under our protection,' it seems to say, 'and we will take you by the hand and lead you along the path to salvation.' That has never been our message, nor can it be. In my youth the 'message' of the Church of England was essentially that of the Bible. Not only did the clergy by and large know it well, but quite a lot of the laity seemed to also (one could tell that from the way they read the lessons; they used to say that the Bible, when well read, comes across as though the reader knows it by heart.) Nowadays the 'readings' are no more than snippets compared with the lessons of the past, they are commonly read with extreme ineptitude, they amount in total to no more than a tiny fraction of the Bible as a whole and, worst of all, no one has a clue what any of it is supposed to mean. And by 'no one' I don't mean just the congregation; the laity don't ask the clergy what it means because they shrewdly guess—and correctly—that the clergy are just as mystified as they are.

How has all this come about? Overwhelmingly the blame must

be laid at the door of scholarship. I am not suggesting scholarship does not have an important contribution to make; the trouble is, it is not content with such a modest claim as that. As far as scholarship is concerned, interpretation of the Bible is exclusively its province; no one who is not a recognized and fully accredited professional scholar has any right to be heard. Unfortunately the scholar's aim is almost solely to establish what was in the mind of the particular author at the particular time of writing; and any text whatever, if examined solely with this in view, would begin to seem, as the Bible has been made to seem, obscure, irrelevant, trivial and dull. If the works of Shakespeare were purely in the hands of scholarship, the above would long have been true of these also; it is the activity of the acting profession which prevents this from happening, and keeps the texts looking fresh, inspiring and instructive. And how does it do this? It doesn't ignore scholarship completely, but it does work on the assumption that the aims of scholarship have nothing to do with what are its own aims, which are to present the plays to the audience in such a way that they connect with, and seem to throw light on, its own experience. And it is important to notice this does not involve tampering with the actual text in any way. The text dates from roughly the same period as the Authorized Version; but in the case of Shakespeare, no one would dream of suggesting that the language must be brought up to date or that the idiom is unfamiliar—which, nevertheless, undoubtedly it is. On the contrary, the acting profession takes it for granted that to modernize the text, in the way the Church has modernized its own texts, would be not merely a cultural but, more importantly, a commercial disaster. In the case of Shakespeare, scholars are aware of this, and so far from decrying it, actually approve of it; and the clergy could, and should, do for the Bible what actors do for Shakespeare. So why don't they?

A Shakespearian actor is convinced—and I agree with him—that his performances are not only culturally enriching for his audience, but they are also an important element in its moral education. The values he thinks the plays exemplify are those of a large, liberal and generous outlook, more anxious to overlook injuries than to avenge them, and on the side of kindness and good humour. And, of course, one doesn't have to 'believe' the plays in order to derive this benefit from them; on the contrary, the very notion of believing them is laughable. The plays impart the values without needing to be believed. Here, I will be told, my analogy with Scripture totally breaks down. Personally, I don't think it does. In the first place, it will be very obvious to anyone of intelligence that a very large proportion of the biblical narrative

cannot be literally believed; and even where it can be, its power to lift up and sustain the hearer only very rarely, if at all, depends on the truth of the narrative. So the values do not depend on the truth of the story, even if the Christian tradition has generally insisted that they do.

That answers the objection coming from the churchgoing side; but there is another objection, this time coming from the non-churchgoing side, which is harder to deal with. I mentioned that the values of the plays promote 'a large, liberal and generous outlook', and are 'on the side of kindness and good humour'. When, it will be asked, has the Bible ever been used to promote those particular virtues? On the contrary, the typical outlook of the Bible-bashing Christian is narrow, dogmatic and peevish, preaching the virtue of forgiveness in an abstract and theoretical way, but in practice displaying a petty and uncharitable eagerness to condemn what to most of us do not even appear to be offences—particularly, of course, in the area of sex.

We need to be reminded that, almost from earliest times, there have been two contrasting attitudes in the Church to the earlier tradition of pagan classicism, whose religion the Church superseded and suppressed. One attitude, which has always been vigorously maintained and survives in the evangelical tradition to this day, derives from Paul's famous challenge: 'What accord has Christ with Belial?' (2 Cor. 6.15), which became in the mouths of later zealots, 'What fellowship has Athens with Jerusalem?' This party takes the view that Christianity is opposed to the classical tradition and regards its intellectual values as a snare, an ever-present insidious temptation to raise questions against the utter certainties of revealed religion. But another—less strident, and therefore less audible, but no less persistent—tradition insists that the intellectual values of pagan classicism are of permanent worth and, instead of being suppressed, must be incorporated into Christian thinking.

The Church of England all but universally took the second view from the word go, and has only abandoned it—and with disastrous consequences—as the secular world began systematically to eject the study of the classics from the education system. This has been a major cause of the visible deterioration of Christianity in England into something rather crude and nasty (and distinctly unintelligent) compared with what it was in my youth. As a schoolboy it was taken for granted I would need A level classics if I was going to be ordained, and at the time this was an almost universal assumption. The advantages were that such students would not then be deterred, as they now definitely are, by the thought that the material they would

have to study was between two and three thousand years old: we were thoroughly used to viewing such material. We instinctively rejected a suggestion that is now universally insisted on, that the Bible must be made to sound like a modern book, otherwise no one would take any interest in it.

If the Church of England is to recover a Bible-based message, it must first of all resurrect the notion of a standard translation; and I concede the Authorized Version can no longer serve this purpose. The trouble with it is not the archaic language—as we have seen, that is probably on the plus side; the trouble is that the text being translated was simply not good enough, too often the translators themselves could not make head of tail of it, so that outside the well-known passages it not infrequently descends into gibberish. There began to be complaints about this two hundred years ago, which bore fruit in 1870, when the Convocation of Canterbury put a revision in hand. The brief was ‘to introduce as few alterations as possible into the text of the AV’; a further principle, not part of the brief, but followed as desirable by the translators, was to use, as far as practicable, the same English word or phrase to render the same Greek or Hebrew. This has made it ideal for the use of those whose knowledge of those languages is imperfect (in the case of Hebrew, therefore, most of us!). This is probably the best version that has ever been produced in English, or is ever likely to be; but if the Victorian Gothic is a bit heavy for modern tastes, there is always the American RSV which appeared in the 1950s. This too, though far less rigidly, aims to preserve the Tyndale idiom, but it also offers the tremendous boon of having a concordance to it—not, though, an analytical concordance: you have to get used to the idea, for instance, that the entries under ‘bow’ include indiscriminately those for ‘bow’ as in ‘bow and scrape’, but also for ‘bow’ as in ‘bow and arrows’. But once you get used to this limitation it is perfectly serviceable, and it’s the one I’ve been using now for more than forty years.

What is not acceptable is any of the so-called ‘modern language’ versions that have proliferated since the New English Bible first broke the barrier in the 1960s; and the reason why they are not acceptable is precisely because not only are they not memorable, but they seem to cultivate non-memorability almost as if it were itself a virtue. The attempt to produce a translation of the Bible that will be completely intelligible at first reading (which seems to be the underlying aim of all such productions) is quite hopeless. Understanding even the simplest portion of the text often requires considerable cross-referencing with other parts of the Bible. One does not need superior intelligence to

do this, but one does need a degree of familiarity with more or less the entire collection; and this in turn requires that one should have read the whole of it not once but several times. The general air of silliness and inconsequence surrounding all the modern-language translations that I have ever heard ensures for most people that they cannot bear to read them even once, let alone several times (there is also the point that the concordance only begins to be useful once the actual phrases of the translation have begun to stick in the mind). Archaic translations are generally to be preferred to modern-language ones precisely because archaic language is generally more memorable than the so-called modern-language idiom.

There is one final point to be discussed, the place of memory in instilling moral doctrine, and its relation to religion in the process. As the Book of Proverbs reminds us: ‘Train a child up in the way he should go: and when he is old he will not depart from it’ (Prov. 22.6). Every society and every age before the present one would have given automatic assent to this idea, and would have assumed that it was the task of religion to undertake that training. The present age professes to see two insurmountable difficulties: (a) religion, in order to be able to effect the task, has to be believed; (b) the methods of religion are not guaranteed to impart desirable attitudes, and we should in any case put a much greater emphasis on the role of rationality and debate in moral education. The first of these objections is the fault of the clergy themselves, and it is up to them to give thought to how to surmount it; the second I regard as wholly erroneous. It is perfectly true that religion, unless carefully scrutinized, is just as capable of instilling nasty ideas as it is of nice ones; but the answer there is scrutiny, not irreligion. Queen Elizabeth I took it for granted there should be bishops in the church (an idea which the Protestantism of her day mostly opposed), not chiefly because of the importance of Apostolic Succession—which I would be very surprised if she took all that seriously—but because she well understood that bishops would be appointed by the Crown, which would give her the necessary power to ensure the Church followed a path of development that she approved of. The Pope controls the direction of the Catholic Church by precisely the same means to this day. It is normally thought scandalous in the modern world that politicians should be involved in church appointments, but I take a more practical view of this question. If the Church of England of today seems divorced from, and irrelevant to, the concerns of the nation as a whole, it is the ever-increasing autonomy which it demands and has largely been conceded to it that is the cause of this.

And so down to the question of memory and moral instruction. When we are confronted with a situation which demands a moral response, it is not in fact the case that we enter into a debate with ourselves as to what is the preferred course of action, nor is it desirable that we should. Most such situations require a far quicker response than allows for such a process. We respond with a more or less instinctive reaction prompted by the memory of what we have been taught in childhood (see the quotation from Proverbs above). And it is for this reason that the traditional acceptance of religion as the moral instructor of children is practically superior to the processes of intellectuality and debate which modern education claims (to all appearances vainly) to be able to instil.

*(D. B. Taylor read theology at Oxford 1959–62.)*

# The Beauty of Holiness

GORDON McPHATE

**L**ast Summer I was invited to give some lectures in the University of Pennsylvania at Philadelphia. It had been many years since I last visited the USA, and I experienced many changes in the prevailing culture—some welcome, others not.

Perhaps the biggest irritant was a single word, which seemed to crop up in every conversation, in every TV show, in every public place. It was the word ‘awesome’, which seemed to have ubiquitous and universal application. ‘Awesome’ was used to describe all sorts of pedestrian trivia such as a customized car, a football team’s performance, or a new ‘hoagie’ at the local diner!

The dumbing-down of language is a regrettable consequence of colloquial fashions, by which words of power and meaning are rendered weak and irrelevant. From what great heights the word ‘awe’ has fallen!

In St Mark’s Gospel we read of the disciples: ‘They were filled with great awe and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”’ (Mark 4.41).

Here is the fundamental and proper human response to theophany, to the presence and action of the living God—the response of *awe*. Fundamentally, awe is *reverence*, and that reverence is itself a combination of two emotions—the emotion of *fear*, and the emotion of *wonder*. A powerful combination!

For several years I studied at the University of Aberdeen, and often passed under the entrance arch into the quadrangle of King's College there. Engraved in gold letters above the arch was an inscription which read: 'Initium sapientiae timor domini', or 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom' (Ps. 111.10).

If *fear* is the beginning of wisdom, then *wonder* is the beginning of religion—in the sense of our response to encounter with the numinous. Wonder is also the motivational foundation for the work of many scientists, as they observe and measure the processes of nature, and the marvels of God's design as Creator.

Awe, then, is our *natural* response to encounter with God, involving both our fear and our wonder, and issuing in both knowledge and wisdom. Of course, our ritual response to God is liturgical—expressed in worship. But these responses cannot and must not be different: our worship must always express our awe, our fear *and* our wonder, as we approach the living God.

Among the options for introducing the Offices in the Book of Common Prayer (1928) is the verse from the First Book of Chronicles: 'O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness, let the whole earth stand in awe of him' (1 Chr. 16.29; Ps. 96.9).

Here is the proper link between Worship and the attitude of Awe, neatly and perfectly expressed. And it is *beauty* which provides the link between the two. But what is beauty? My niece has been studying 'beauty' at college, which seems to consist of a variety of techniques, and an ephemeral variety of fashions which could all change tomorrow—overnight! So is beauty simply in the eye of the beholder?

Consider these words of Kahlil Gibran:

Beauty is not a need but an ecstasy.

It is not a mouth thirsting nor an empty hand stretched forth,  
But rather a heart inflamed and a soul enchanted ...

Beauty is life when life unveils her holy face.

But you are life and you are the veil.

Beauty is eternity gazing at itself in a mirror.

But you are eternity and you are the mirror.

In other words, beauty is the link between the spiritual realm and the physical, material realm. It is a link of disclosure, such that the

spiritual makes itself known to the sensual, as the philosopher Hegel once remarked. Of course, all true beauty is simply a reflection and a derivation of the ultimate beauty of God. When St Augustine looked back over his life, and thought with sorrow about his many wasted years, his biggest regret was his neglect of the beauty of God. Our own experience of beauty should therefore call us out of ourselves, out of our narrow limited lives and horizons, beyond all that restricts us and blunts us, to the beauty of God's Kingdom and the beauty of God. In other words, our experience of true beauty should transform us and transfigure our world.

The Book of Common Prayer points us from the beauty of linguistic expression, and the beauty of liturgical order, towards the beauty of God's Kingdom and the beauty of God. Its call is to worship in the beauty of holiness—which cannot simply mean striving for high standards of liturgy, music, and ritual. It is a call to holiness, which is attractive and therefore beautiful in itself. Quite simply, God is holy, and we must become holy too—set apart by our journey of faith, our vocation, and our conduct. In short, we must become righteous by being transformed in our innermost beings.

The 'beauty of holiness', then, is about nothing less than the transformation of ourselves, and of those around us, and of our world. As the Russian philosopher Nicolas Berdyaev once said:

The transfiguration of the World is the attainment of Beauty. The Kingdom of God is beauty. Art gives us merely symbols of beauty. Real beauty is given only in the religious transfiguration of the creature. Beauty is God's idea of the creature, of man, and of the World.

Back to the USA. The film *American Beauty* was an incisive critique of the American Dream, in which the hero *does* manage to transform himself against all the odds stocked against him, and upsets everyone around him in the process—the result is chaos!

In the Christian life, it is different—for it is God who calls us to holiness, and who transforms us. The beauty of our worship reflects the beauty of the God who calls us, and our response to God is a mixture of fear and wonder—in short, awe. And the result is harmony and peace. 'O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness, let the whole earth stand in awe of him'! Only that worship is truly AWESOME.

(The Very Revd Professor Gordon McPhate is Dean of Chester. This sermon was preached at the church of St Thomas of Canterbury, Chester in June, 2005 at a service of Evensong for the Prayer Book Society.)

# Charles Simeon and the Prayer Book

JOHN SCRIVENER

Charles Simeon (1759–1836) lived the whole of his adult life in Cambridge where he was a fellow of King’s College, and vicar of Holy Trinity; but the bare statement of fact gives no notion of his extraordinary influence. ‘As for Simeon’, wrote Macaulay, ‘if you knew what his authority and influence were, and how they extended from Cambridge to the most remote corners of England, you would allow that his real sway over the Church was far greater than that of any primate’.<sup>1</sup> As a scion of the Clapham Sect, Macaulay was in a position to know. And Simeon’s influence extended beyond England: he was a founder of the Church Missionary Society (he inspired Henry Martyn, among others, to missionary work) and a great mover in the interdenominational British and Foreign Bible Society. His influence was above all personal; but he is not one of those, like F. D. Maurice or J. H. Newman, whose influence has been continued by writings which still live for us. His sermons, so striking to those who heard them, have been found ‘unreadable’,<sup>2</sup> and his outline sermons for preachers in twenty volumes, *Horae Homileticae*, have been declared ‘as dead as a door-nail’.<sup>3</sup> But his *personal* influence—on undergraduates, on congregations and on a large network of correspondents—was immense.<sup>4</sup> Where influence has been of this kind we recapture the sense of personal power most readily from memoirs and informal remains, and Simeon still lives in the biography of his close friend William Carus.<sup>5</sup>

Simeon was a strong Evangelical in an age in which ‘enthusiasm’ was suspect. The suspicion is conveyed in the lowering note of this letter from his brother:

I trust that in the common course of things your zeal will slacken a little ... which I consider much more favourable to the cause you

mean to serve, than the enthusiasm by which you at present seem to be influenced.<sup>6</sup>

To family disapproval may be added the opposition he met in the university and from a section of his parishioners, who went so far on one occasion as to lock their incumbent out of his own church. The suspicion of his party by High Churchmen was that it was rigidly Calvinist and set light to Church principles and order; but Simeon, though he had his distinctive theological position, longed at bottom to rise above party, and wished that 'names and parties were buried in eternal oblivion'.<sup>7</sup> As to Calvinism: 'Let me speak the truth before God: though I am no Arminian, I do think that the refinements of Calvin have done great harm in the Church'.<sup>8</sup> What he loved was 'the simplicity of Scripture', and it was a favourite saying that 'the truth is not in the middle, and not in one extreme; but in both extremes'.<sup>9</sup> His own summary of the tendency of his teaching was simple: 'To humble the sinner. To exalt the Saviour. To promote holiness. If in one single instance it lose sight of any of these points, let it be condemned without mercy'.<sup>10</sup> He was (as his epitaph, at his own suggestion, expresses it): 'determined to know nothing but "Jesus Christ, and Him crucified"'.<sup>11</sup>

His sense of sin is strongly—to us almost exaggeratedly—expressed:

I scarcely ever join in the confession of our Church without perceiving, almost as with my bodily organs, my soul as a dead and putrefied carcass; and I join in that acknowledgement, 'There is no health in us', in a way that none but God Himself can conceive.

It is striking to find this quoted from Carus by H. P. Liddon in his life of another great Christian leader, E. B. Pusey. Comparing the two men's language Liddon comments: 'this language of saintly men has always been misunderstood ... the truth, of course, is that with nearness to God comes a new and more exacting standard of sin and holiness'.<sup>11</sup> Liddon's characterisation of Simeon as a 'saintly' man is an impressive tribute from one of very different churchmanship.

Where the second accusation against Evangelicals is concerned, that they were careless of Church order, Simeon's influence was decisive:

There had been a time in the eighteenth century when Evangelical clergyman had followed lines of action doubtfully compatible with loyalty to the Church of their ordination. The influence of Charles Simeon swung the movement the other way, and all the Evangelicals of the first half of the nineteenth century were convinced and devoted churchmen. Wherever their influence penetrated, the result was a renewed devotion to the services of the Church, and a new reverence for its sacramental ordinances.<sup>12</sup>

In the light of this it seems appropriate that the spiritual crisis after which, by his own account, he ‘never ceased to regard the salvation of my soul as the one thing needful’ was precipitated by the requirement of Corporate Communion:

It was but the third day after my arrival [at Cambridge] that I understood that I should be expected in the space of about three weeks to attend the Lord’s Supper. What! said I, must I attend? On being informed that I must, the thought rushed into my mind that Satan himself was as fit to attend as I; and that if I must attend, I must *prepare* for my attendance there. Without a moment’s loss of time, I bought the old *Whole Duty of Man*, (the only religious book that I had ever heard of) and began to read it with great diligence; at the same time calling my ways to remembrance, and crying to God for mercy ...<sup>13</sup>

This argues some prior disposition to take the Holy Communion with great seriousness. He continues:

The service in our chapel has almost at all times been very irreverently performed [he is writing this in 1813]: but such was the state of my soul for many months from that time, that the prayers were marrow and fatness to me ... this is a proof to me, that the deadness and formality experienced in the worship of the Church, arise far more from the low state of our graces, than from any defect in our Liturgy; if only we had our hearts deeply penitent and contrite, I know from my experience at this hour, that no prayers in the world could be better suited to our wants, or more delightful to our souls.<sup>14</sup>

He remained to the end firmly persuaded of the ‘awakening’ power of the Prayer Book: ‘surely the Liturgy is of more service than is generally imagined’.<sup>15</sup>

Simeon discountenanced unlicensed preaching after the early years, but thought it justifiable to preach to Presbyterians in Scotland, on the grounds that ‘where the king and his court must attend a clergyman may preach’. He made several such trips, but

I cannot help recording here, to the honour of the Church of England, that, on all the three times that I have visited Scotland, and have attended almost entirely the presbyterian churches, I have on my return to the use of our Liturgy been perfectly astonished at the vast superiority of our mode of worship, and felt it an inestimable privilege that we possess a form of sound words, so adapted in every respect to the wants and desires of all who would worship God in spirit and in truth.

Carus adds: 'Mr Simeon would frequently observe: "if all men could pray at all times, as some men can sometimes, then indeed we might prefer extempore to pre-composed prayers"'.<sup>16</sup>

Simeon's convinced defence of the Book of Common Prayer against criticisms levelled by his own Evangelical brethren must have done much to soften the asperities of High Churchmen. The defence was made in his *Sermons on the Excellency of the Liturgy* (1811), in the third of which he says:

I have not confined myself to general assertions, but have set forth the difficulties which are supposed to exist against it, and have given such a solution of them, as I think is sufficient to satisfy any conscientious mind ... Let its excellencies be fairly weighed; and its blemishes will sink into nothing: let its excellencies be duly appreciated, and every person in the kingdom will acknowledge himself deeply indebted to those, who with so much care and piety compiled it.<sup>17</sup>

This defended the Prayer Book from one line of attack; to critics on another flank he was prepared to say simply: 'I desire every thing I ever have written, or ever shall write, to be brought to that test, the *Liturgy of the Church of England*; persuaded as I am of its perfect conformity to the Holy Scriptures.'

These were public statements. Moule, drawing on Brown's *Recollections of Simeon's Conversation Parties*, gives the flavour of Simeon's informal teaching on the same point:

He would say, 'Seek not to change even what you deem faulty, for hardly any change could be effected in the Prayer-book which would not result in greater evils than those which you wish to remedy. You cannot realize the evil results to England of any material alteration to the Book of Common Prayer; no other human work is so free from faults as it is'. In the use of that Book in public worship he found one of his purest joys. We saw how its prayers became 'marrow and fatness' to his soul after his conversion; and so they remained: 'Never do I find myself nearer to God than I often am in the reading-desk'. 'The finest sight short of heaven would be a whole congregation using the prayers of the Liturgy in the true spirit of them'.<sup>18</sup>

He strikes a more intimate note in a private document of 1819, quoted by Carus:

There are but two objects that I have ever desired for these forty years to behold; the one is, my own vileness; and the other is, the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ: and I have always thought that they should be viewed together ... By this I seek to be, not only *humbled and thankful*, but *humbled in thankfulness*, before my God and Saviour continually.

This is the religion that pervades the whole Liturgy, and particularly the Communion Service; and this makes the Liturgy inexpressibly sweet to me. The repeated cries to each Person of the ever-adorable Trinity for mercy, are not at all too frequent or too fervent for me; nor is the confession in the Communion service too strong for me; nor the 'Te Deum' nor the ascriptions of glory after the Lord's Supper, 'Glory be to God on high, &c.' too exalted for me; the praise all through savours of adoration; and the adoration of humility. And this shews what men of God the framers of our Liturgy were, and what I pant, and long, and strive to be. This makes the Liturgy as superior to all modern compositions, as the work of a Philosopher on any deep subject is to that of a school-boy who understands scarcely anything about it.<sup>19</sup>

The view that the confession in the service of Holy Communion is 'too strong' is not a purely modern reaction, evidently. The sense of personal 'vileness'—to us perhaps itself rather 'strong'—is made something different from morbid self-loathing by the note of 'adoration' and by the co-presence insisted on: 'my own vileness ... and the glory of God ... should be viewed together'. It is, perhaps, an instance of the truth being found in 'both extremes'. If the modern criticism of the confession is hinted at—that it asks the worshipper to use a language he cannot feel—so, too, is the answer to that criticism: it 'shews ... what I pant, and long, and strive to be'.

In his later years 'Mr Simeon of King's' came to be regarded with esteem and affection in the town where he had lived and worked for so long. 'He has gradually won', a contemporary recorded, 'a popularity at Cambridge which now seems to triumph over all prejudice and persecution'.<sup>20</sup> Carus's account of the last days<sup>21</sup> still has the power to move. Simeon was very emphatic that he did not want 'a death-bed scene'. 'You want to see what is called a *dying-scene*. That I abhor from my inmost soul'. The restraint of Carus's narrative is in obedience to the spirit of that. What moves the reader most perhaps is Simeon's increasing dependence; as he grows weaker and incapable of action there is a conscious acceptance of, and exposure to, the ministrations of others—a patience in the fullest sense.<sup>22</sup> Asked if he would like to take his medicine: 'Why do you ask me what I like? I am the Lord's patient, I cannot but like everything; don't say "Will you do this, or that?" but say "Here is this—you must take that—or, you are to do so: I like everything.' And later: 'I want nothing ... I seem to have nothing to do but to wait—there is now nothing but *peace—the sweetest peace*.' And near the end: 'Jesus Christ is my all in all for my soul; and now you must be my all for my body; I cannot tell you any longer what I want, or ask for

anything. I give my body into your charge; you must give me what you think necessary.’

His life was now fast ebbing away; he lay partially raised, his head drooping on one side, but supported by pillows, his eyes closed, and his hands stretched out motionless on the bed ... The last words I addressed to him were on this night, when I gently took his withered hand, and slowly pronounced the Benediction; ‘The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace;’ he faintly answered, Amen;—after which I heard him speak no more.

<sup>1</sup> Handley C. G. Moule, *Charles Simeon* (London 1948: 1st edn. 1892), p. 148.

<sup>2</sup> S. C. Carpenter, *Church and People 1789–1889* (London 1933), p. 156.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Smyth, *The Art of Preaching* (London 1940), p. 175.

<sup>4</sup> One influence, continued to this day, is to be found in the work of the Simeon Trustees, a body set up for the purpose of purchasing advowsons, and disseminating Simeon’s principles through the exercise of patronage.

<sup>5</sup> William Carus, *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. Charles Simeon, M.A.* (London 1847).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* p.31.

<sup>7</sup> Moule, p. 76.

<sup>8</sup> Carus, p. 304.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* p. 600.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* p.188.

<sup>11</sup> H. P. Liddon, *Life of Edward Bouverie Pusey*, 4th edn. (London 1898), vol. III, p. 98.

<sup>12</sup> Stephen Neill, *Anglicanism*, 4th edn. (London 1977), p. 236.

<sup>13</sup> Carus, p. 6. It is noteworthy that he continued from *The Whole Duty of Man* to Kettlewell, Bishop Wilson on the Holy Communion and Bishop Beveridge on Common Prayer—all High Church divines, of course. Simeon’s account of this occasion was written in 1813, by which time a new seriousness was making itself felt, reflected in Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park* of a year later.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* p. 10.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* p. 223.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 113–4.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* p. 300.

<sup>18</sup> Moule, p. 85.

<sup>19</sup> Carus, pp. 519–20.

<sup>20</sup> Moule, p.154.

<sup>21</sup> Carus, pp. 801–25.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. W. H. Vanstone, *The Stature of Waiting* (London 1982).

# The Strength of Words

PAUL GRIFFIN

**D**uring the 1930s, when I was adolescent, society was by modern standards very rigid. Obedience, decency, loyalty, courtesy, sexual morality were assumed and exceptions condemned without further controversy. All these qualities are admirable, but the overall effect of the situation could be stifling. Churchgoing was still among the accepted virtues, and the main regular diet was of Morning and Evening Prayer, potentially good services not always imaginatively conducted. There were much smaller numbers of people attending the early Eucharist, people who in some parishes were thought to be opting out. I remember in one place prayers being offered as late as 1970 that ‘those who attend Early Service may come to Matins and hear the Word of God.’

Incumbents were in a different and easier position in those days: there were more of them, they tended to have only one or two churches each to worry about, and convention still in most places gave them ready-made congregations. Their services did not always benefit from this. They certainly did not in our large suburban parish.

Fortunately, although my parents had given up, I had a devout Grandma who felt as I felt and knew of a daughter church not far from our quiet road, where an eight o’clock Communion was conducted by a man who had a real feeling for words. There were no hymns and no sermon; nobody welcomed us, or spoke to us after the service; there were just the words of the Book of Common Prayer affectionately spoken. It will shock you to hear me say that it was lovely.

Grandma and I knew nothing of the theology of communal worship. We went to Communion to cheer ourselves and clean ourselves spiritually. We did understand that we were all members one of another and were expected to communicate our faith and give to the poor, but ‘mission’ was a word applied to people who went abroad, and we had not been taught the word ‘outreach’. In most respects Grandma was quite a ‘clubby’ person; but the Eucharist seemed to her not an occasion for socializing.

Looking back on those early steps, I recall that I was newly confirmed (at school, else it might not have happened) and was discovering Dickens and Shakespeare. I devoured those plays and novels, and felt the immense impact of words tellingly used, whether of Samuel Weller or the tragic Cleopatra. Just from reading the words 'Finish, good lady; the bright day is done, And we are for the dark' I felt uniquely moved. It was an experience that some would call literary, but I would go further and call it religious. It came I suppose from hearing thought and emotion put perfectly into words, and it was of a kind with my reaction to those other words I heard in church, from the Authorized Version of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer.

I had not at that time discovered the similar power of music, which I now value highly; but I have no great musical power of my own, and I thought then, as I think now, that a life could be well spent using words to the best possible effect.

When the *Alternative Service Book* came out in 1980, the Bishop introducing it felt free to poke fun at people like Grandma and myself who scuttled into early service to make, as we admittedly called it, 'my Communion'. Perhaps he was right that we had given insufficient weight to the second of the two great Commandments; but I do still sometimes wonder whether this age sufficiently remembers, understands, and values that Commandment that comes before, that we should love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. That surely has to come before loving our neighbours. Having followed it we are free to turn our hearts, our souls, our minds, and our strengths towards them.

God has given us a variety of methods of communicating his, and our, love. One of the most powerful methods is by words. There is great strength in words; and I am sure that we tamper with the best at our peril.

# Knowing the Unknowable: A Review of Peter Mullen's *Everyday Thoughts*.

DEWI HOPKINS

Let no man deceive you with vain words (Eph. 5.6)

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy (Col. 2.8)  
and oppositions of science falsely so called (1 Tim. 6.20)

**T**he form taken by *Everyday Thoughts*<sup>1</sup> does pose some difficulties for the reviewer. It looks like a collection of random Thoughts for the Day; for, apart from New Year's Day and Christmas Day, it is hard to see the readings as essentially tied to their dates. But then it would be. The Incarnation—Christmas, obviously, but the other great feasts (apart from those for the BVM, which do not figure in the book) do not have fixed dates. The author claims that in arranging his matter in 366 bites, which he calls 'remarks', he is following a recommendation by W. H. Auden 'to write down one's thoughts in a series or collection of brief statements or aphorisms'; and he defends the form by saying that the book can be picked up and put down at will without loss of sense. But this is true, perhaps more true, of a more conventionally arranged dissertation. It gives me two immediate fears. One is that the book might sell to conscientious, but not what would be described as critical, Christian readers, who would expect to find edifying thoughts to take them pleasantly through a whole year. It is misleading in this respect, and the false impression is confirmed by the publisher's blurb on the back cover, which refers to 'a little philosophy'. It is *all* philosophy. It would be doubly dangerous

in that such a reader might not notice that a remark in one part of the book sometimes appears to contradict one in another; and this might reinforce just what Mr Mullen does not allow—that we seem to believe today that we might, without any obvious loss of sanity, judge different questions by different and contradictory criteria. That is my second fear. So I think it falls to me here to say that to read this book you need an easy familiarity with words like ‘epistemology’ and ‘phenomenology’ and some acquaintance with a number of philosophers.

Then it becomes a matter of deciding whether these ‘remarks’ constitute ‘a series’ or ‘a collection’, or indeed an assortment. ‘Remarks’ is a kindly word (it might be a nasty one in a different register: ‘he is passing remarks about us!’) suggesting conversation in a relaxed atmosphere without much systematic argument or too much attention to consistency. (‘you may or may not agree’, ‘it appears to me’, ‘don’t you find it so?’, ‘well, perhaps not after all’). This again is not at all the sort of thing that Mr Mullen is after, although there is about the book a degree of apparent inconsistency that he considers not at odds with his reading of some of the great philosophers. It is impossible, he reasons (I use the word advisedly, in preference to ‘declares’, ‘asserts’ or ‘claims’), to have a theory-of-everything, because that would necessitate a stance outside ‘everything’, and outside ‘everything’ is where the limitations of reason, philosophy, science and empirical experience cannot go (I hope ‘empirical experience’ is an allowable tautology).

From this two things follow. One is that different philosophies may be valid in different ways, each perhaps useful in itself but misleading when presented as the final, the one true philosophy. The other is that other fields of human activity represent other ways of knowing, or of exploring, experience: ways of *doing* philosophy, in fact. Thus mathematics, music, the various arts, are to be seen as languages that explore what language cannot: theology, I suppose, being part of philosophy—though one does hear of non-linguistic theology—and literature, including poetry, being, I will not say bastard, but special combinations of symbolic language.

Philosophies are in two lines of descent (I am trying to see Mr Mullen’s approach as clearly as I can in my own terms): one stemming from Plato and the other from Aristotle. The former includes idealists, utilitarians and all forms of linguistic analytical philosophy and provides, in the case of an analyst like Wittgenstein—whom the author admires particularly though not, finally, uncritically—useful tools for testing the propositions and assumptions (Descartes’ *cogito* principle

is severely criticized) of other philosophers, non-philosophers and scientists. He seems to me, and I think he must share the blame if I am mistaken, to give this whole band of philosophy—and not just those classed, or classing themselves, as logical positivists—the generic title of logical positivism. It is a little confusing but makes sense. Where they go wrong is in being so successful as to have infected recent and present society with subjectivism and at its worst solipsism. The great sins of this way of thinking are to fail to see that even the finest minds, if the fineness of a mind could be judged, could not judge in favour of determinism, since the thoughts of the minds must themselves be determined; and to make the quite unjustified assumption that every explanation implies an ‘only’.

Tsunami, for instance—that is only the result of a sudden big shifting of tectonic plates. Yet, we may reflect, other explanations in terms of the will of God are not necessarily or logically contradictory. Two explanations may be complementary. Similar points may be made about the Big Bang and evolution; and a number of examples of illogical ‘onlys’ are given, showing how this thinking has induced an unhealthy (or, as Chesterton put it, ‘insane’) relativism. This piece of music or that? This view of abortion or that? This or that version of the morality of vital-organ transplants, cloning, feeding or not feeding the supposedly terminally ill? The answer is what you personally fancy—you may decide on different grounds in different cases; but it all boils down to: what *can* be done may be done. Society has calmly defied the long-held logical principle that you cannot derive an *ought* from an *is*. In any case no one can help anything he thinks or does because it is all determined—the three great determinisms of Freud, Marx and the economists. In the philosophy of Plato and his descendants, even down to Russell and beyond, the Idea precedes the Form.

The other line of descent, from Aristotle, is generalized as empiricism; the philosophy of experience or common sense. Though Mr Mullen names a number of philosophers the only empiricist he names is Dr Johnson, repeating the famous anecdote of the stone. This shows a faith in the reality of matter, the world, the *res publica*, the authority of tradition, objective moral imperatives and indeed that Bentham and Mill were wrong, push-pin being by no means as good as poetry, or one work of art necessarily as good as another.

Much is made of this last consideration; and an attempt is made to offer ways of judging aesthetic products or performances. First there is the criterion of the craftsmanship employed; then there is the authority of experts in the form of art under consideration. The first tends to be barely considered at all in judging today’s artistic

creations, which makes them, when foisted upon a sceptical public by supposed experts, the objects of derision and even of destructive anger (and, in one or two cases, pardonable mistake, when an assemblage of 'objects' is discarded by cleaners). I do not think this criterion will secure general acceptance, because aesthetics places a demarcation line between craft and art. So do lazy and ungifted artists. My own experience (not in art) tells me to put not my trust in experts—even less than in princes, who might be rather reliable guides. No mention is made of the 'test of time' criterion: I suspect a reason for the omission might be guessed at. It *seems* a valid criterion although the obvious successes from the past might be admitted to stand in the way of a fair hearing or viewing for some lesser but still notable talents of their own time. Mr Mullen, however, in pursuance of his principle that music (in particular) is a form of philosophy, wants to convince us that we should give Sir Harrison Birtwistle an opportunity to bed down (with some other twentieth-century composers) into the same tradition with Beethoven. He explains music lovers' reluctance to grant this by reference to the invention of the gramophone, We do not go so readily to concerts any more but just put our well-loved music on the player; so we never learn to come to terms with new composers' 'philosophy' as our forbears did with difficult Beethoven. That itself is only a theory and difficult to put to any test. I have listened to Birtwistle and am not quite convinced. The expert cannot convince me without himself learning to communicate with me—much as a parson must learn to convey theological ideas in language that his congregation can understand.

My own belief is that what is advanced in the arts, and the lines of enquiry that are followed in science, are made possible because money in quantity is made available for one sort of thing rather than another (clergymen-botanists took up what they didn't need much money for, but only leisure, which they were blessed with), and that the 'sort of thing' that is thus favoured is favoured by the ruling élite of a relativist, amoral, anti-traditional, egalitarian society, intent on keeping us childish, confused and short-sightedly self-indulgent. There are hints in the book that the author might be inclined to something rather like this view. He represents usury as sinful, and criticizes society for living by it. It would be interesting to have him develop this idea; for here he does not. This leaves me wondering how much understanding he has of the money system, which I see as radically unjust, unchristian, and the main cause of poverty in a world of plenty.

He has disconcerting things to say about single-issue campaigns: disconcerting, that is, to the campaigners. They tend not to take a

broad enough view of things and, therefore, apply a criterion to judge one issue that they do not apply in others. As a one-time campaigner I note that, and I hope that I thought carefully enough to avoid the danger. It is a little ironic, however, that the book should have been offered for notice to a Prayer Book Society review. The PBS is distinctly a single-issue society. How should his strictures be received? Perhaps I am not best placed to say, but I believe it might be acknowledged that issues that appear to me to be related to the preservation in use of the Book of Common Prayer have not always been squarely faced by the society. The priesting of women is an example. It *seems* (I am treading warily) to have been judged at the time to have been divisive and therefore a threat to the main thrust of the campaign and best left alone; but the preservation of the Prayer Book is but part of the matter of the whole state of Christ's Church of England. There is not much hope for the part where the condition of the whole is parlous. These are my own observations, not Mr Mullen's, but this seems to be where his philosophy leads; and incidentally he does refer at one point to the 'death' of the Church of England. Surely in a Church of England true to itself the Prayer Book would never have been under threat.

But to leave that aside, I regard Mr Mullen now as a friend; for nearly all his examples accord with things that I have written myself. I am not sure that I would have adopted the form he has chosen for the book; I could quibble with some of his verbal arguments (for example, that all thought is fundamentally verbal—I am rather sure I have thoughts without words; that all language is fundamentally pictorial—'is'? 'love'?; and that there is no thought without language—I can't put my idea into words'); and I am afraid I have taken issue with him on one or two particular things. He should be pleased with that; for he quotes in his preface Schopenhauer on what to do with one of his books: 'or finally he can review it: this is the best course of all and the one I especially advise'.

In fact Schopenhauer is one of his most favoured philosophers. In the December chapter we are invited to consider Kant's dictum (or 'truism' as Mr Mullen calls it: but then a piece of pure reason, according to Russell and others, can only be false or a truism) that we can know only what we are equipped by our faculties to know. What is beyond the reach of our faculties we cannot know. It is out of reach behind the Big Bang or any other theory of an origin, and because it is the originator it is necessarily unknowable, 'the Ding an Sich, the Thing-in-itself, the Noumenon'. At this point we may notice that in the biblical tradition this entity seems to have a wish to manifest itself to us: from 'I am that I am', to the revelation of itself in the

Incarnation; but here we are held to philosophy. Schopenhauer puts what I have just said in a more technical way: he has a specific idea that he calls Will, 'the perpetual driving energy such as we are aware of in our bodies. Indeed for Schopenhauer the Noumenon is the Will, it is these felt energies'.

If that is the case it makes no sense to talk of the will of God; since by this philosophy the will is God. We are left with a question still. Of what entity is this will the attribute? Indeed, are there any other attributes? Whatever this entity is that is what I mean by God. From there on it becomes a matter of getting to know God better—with his consent or active will, I believe—through experience of life, Scripture, tradition, theology and all sorts of other things, as Mr Mullen insists, and through contemplation. Fortunately Schopenhauer's 'Will', Kant's 'Noumenon', decided to give us direct revelation (as well as Wordsworth's 'intimations'); and so the remark for 25 December, '... we do not see human personality as an intolerable burden, but as what once and forever it was, and that we celebrate on this day: the Incarnation—when the Noumenon became embodied, "and they wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger"'.<sup>1</sup>

But is it a book worth buying? Well, I thought that nearly everything I have said here affirms: 'Yes, buy it'. It has certainly won my friendship: and if you think that I have dealt with everything in the book you are much mistaken. As a matter of fact I am strangely reminded of Mark 12, where Jesus is cunningly questioned by Sadducees and Scribes—and what are they but a sort of philosopher and linguistic analyst, logical positivists you might say in the very broad sense I have suggested? The example of the woman who had had seven husbands is obviously a hypothetical case cooked up to demonstrate that there could be no resurrection as it would cause too many logical difficulties. Jesus answers them in more traditional, common sense terms and ends, 'ye therefore do greatly err'. Then the one scribe who sensibly ('discreetly') endorses what Jesus has said about the first and second Great Commandments is told, 'Thou art not far from the kingdom of God'.

That is what I feel about Peter Mullen's book.

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Mullen, *Everyday Thoughts*, St Michael's Foundation, 2005. ISBN 0 954 71571 3

# Reviews

ROGER NASH: *The Poetry of Prayer*  
Edgeways, 2004 ISBN 0 907839 83 5 £4.80

The title of this little book is economical but maybe ambiguous. Professor Nash's subject is the nature and mode of language used in, mainly, public prayer for which in Western religions, the Psalms, subject of one of his chapters, are the exemplars. What kind of utterance is being made when prayer is being articulated? Even when a new prayer is formulated its terms must, for example, recognizably stand within that tradition of prayerful words which guarantee that it belongs to the historic worshipping community, that it is not 'heretical'. The best analogy, he argues, for this use of language at once old and new, intensely felt, the mind aware of its need yet open to whatever realisations then occur, is how poetry happens in the mind of the person writing it and, ideally, how it is also read. When Cædmon, the subject of another chapter, spoke in the seventh century what has traditionally been taken to be the earliest recorded piece of English poetry, his hymn to the Creator, Bede ascribes it to a miracle, the illiterate servant of Whitby Abbey commanded by a voice in his dream to sing. Yet for Professor Nash all poetry could be said to share in this miraculous condition in which words arrive with a significance that, as Bede himself maintains, lies beyond the translation of his own Latin paraphrase and is inherent in those words and no other:

Cædmon did not know what his Hymn would be like until he had first composed it. The language of the poem pursues its purposes, and is not a chaos of fragments. But it was not composed from some antecedent plan or blueprint, from which each detail of the poem could have been predicted by Cædmon (p. 61).

As though to prove that point, this book is itself a collection of essays written over several years yet it is the product of a coherent mind passionately concerned with a specific and large idea. The author is a poet, a professor of philosophy and a synagogue cantor, a useful combining of analysis and practice for the kind of discussion in which

he engages. He is not concerned with doctrinal argument or literary theory but rather with the analogy between apparently different kinds of perception. So, that phrase 'not a chaos of fragments' refers not simply to Cædmon's own poem or its antecedents in Genesis or the Psalms but to how the physical universe may be contemplated in the mind of the believer. He is much more concerned with God the Creator than is usual in our post-evolutionary times but not for evidence of any 'antecedent plan or blueprint'. In chapters on the Psalms and chapter 38 of Job, he restores the old analogy between Creation and *pöesis*, like Wordsworth not seeking hidden design but responding to the particularity and variousness with which Being expresses itself:

'Let there be light' might be taken as an analogy for a poetic dimension of human language, in which a word or expression in a sense calls forth the very being of something, creating and constituting it in our understanding (p. 65).

This is a difficult and rewarding book. The first chapter which establishes its method of reasoning makes that difficulty inherent in the language of prayer as much as of poetry. Both exist within customs of procedure but, for both, those traditions have also to be apprehended as offering new possibilities of meaning not precisely realised before they rise within the mind. Poetry constantly modernizes itself not out of mere restlessness but because its traditions conceal as well as announce meaning which has therefore perpetually to be sought in new places. That the Hidden God may also today be difficult of access may have similar causes to the corresponding difficulty of meaning in poetry for the last hundred years or so; 'for God to reveal himself authentically to us he must wait upon our developing appropriate ways of participatory response' (p. 17). The important word here is 'appropriate'; if God is content to wait, so also must we, instead of rushing prematurely into styles of discussion that involve pre-determined conclusions so unlike the language of poetry.

This is a book written from the heart, the mere ninety-six pages of which stimulate more thought than most books four or five times its length. Its brevity is also polemical in its refusal to settle for battle-cries or fashionable theory and in its defence of actual practice in both poetry and liturgy:

The philosophy of religion has often tried to assimilate religious understanding to understanding a theory; or concluding that it cannot be done, to write off religion as unintelligible. The present

analogy suggests that it may be received standards of what is to count as understanding that are at fault, not the nature of religious practices (p. 18).

Brian Nellist

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THEO HOBSON: *Anarchy, Church and Utopia: Rowan Williams on Church*  
Darton, Longman and Todd, 2005 ISBN 0 232 52578 1 £9.95

ROWAN WILLIAMS: *Why Study the Past? The Quest for the Historical Church*  
Darton, Longman and Todd, 2005 ISBN 0 232 52549 8 £8.95

Recent debates in the Anglican communion have once again raised questions about the quality and extent of our unity. The two short books reviewed here seldom discuss our present discontents directly, but they do helpfully explore the theological substructure (or lack of it) on which the current crises have arisen.

Theo Hobson's *Anarchy, Church and Utopia* bills itself as a constructive critique of Rowan Williams' writings on the nature of the Church. Its professed aim is 'to reveal an instability' (p. ix) held to affect the Archbishop's ecclesiology, painstakingly tracing its development from his earliest to his most recent writing. Theo Hobson has done a good job of exploring Williams' published work, penetrating into its more inaccessible margins in obscure journals and out of print books. He is clearly fascinated by the range of Rowan Williams' thought, but, equally obviously, he is frustrated by what he takes to be its ambiguity. Every so often his exasperation bursts forth, speaking of his subject's 'category confusions' and his 'equivocation'. Memorably, he even calls the Archbishop's conception of catholicity 'an impossible ideal, cubed' (p.43)!

The heart of Hobson's case lies in the accusation that Williams tries to bring together in his ecclesiology two incompatible accounts of the Church. The first Hobson characterises as *utopian*: the belief that the Church is the sacramental school of virtue, in whose specific practices the Kingdom of God is lived out. The second he calls *anarchistic*: the Church as embodying in its life the all-embracing gift of God's love, 'the social fact of a community with no foreordained boundaries' (p.99). Williams would freely admit that both these accounts stand at some distance from the realities of ecclesial life, but Hobson's point is not the obvious accusation that practice falls short of theory. Rather he believes that these two theories cannot co-exist: that the particularity

of the former and the universalism of the latter are contradictory.

As I see it, what Hobson misses is the centrality of paradox in all theological discourse of any depth. In so far as paradox features in Hobson's lexicon, it seems to be synonymous with contradiction. Yet, famously, the two central doctrines of Christianity are paradoxes: the Holy Trinity ('not three incomprehensibles, but one incomprehensible'); and the Incarnation ('although he be God and Man: yet he is not two, but one Christ'). Of course paradox can be an excuse for lazy thinking. At root, though, it will always be a constitutive category in any theology worthy of the name. How can the Church avoid being both particular and universal, when that is just what her Lord was and is—'this Jesus', whom God has made 'Lord and Messiah' of the cosmos (Acts 2.36)? In the Church's faithful proclamation of Christ in word and sacrament the universality of the kingdom of God is inaugurated. What Hobson sees as an 'instability' is in fact an opening from 'the paradox and mystery of the Church' (Henri de Lubac) into the eternal life of God.

My guess is that the second book under review here, Rowan Williams' own *Why Study the Past? The Quest for the Historical Church* will be of greater interest to Prayer Book Society members. This book publishes the Sarum Theological Lectures of 2003. Many of its themes will be familiar to the Archbishop's regular listeners, though they certainly bear re-statement: the questioning of the nostrums of left and right alike, whether political, theological or ethical; the importance of irony in the discourse of fallen humanity—'the recognition that what is said and done by human beings routinely misses or misrepresents its mark' (p.75); the identification of William Tyndale, with 'his vivid sense of how the shape and character of God's gift determines how we shall live' (p.79), as the genius of the first generation of the post-reformation Church of England.

The chief merit of this book, however, is to remind us how much history matters. Not the caricature history of a certain kind of traditionalist, nor the implicit denial of history's relevance by a certain kind of modernizer, but the real history that is a constant grappling with the material our past hands down to us so that we may come to grips with our present identity. History that reminds us, in Williams' words, that we do not know, theologically, where our debts begin and end. History of this sort is not an optional extra, it is vital to the Church's life. As Williams argues, the teaching of the early Church arose out of just this sort of negotiation with the past: doctrine in the early Church was an exegesis of the martyrdom suffered by the early Christians, and martyrdom itself was 'an exegesis, a living exposition,

of taking Christ seriously as the one through whom the definition of God's people has been changed' (p.53).

What about the book's subtitle, though: *The Quest for the Historical Church*? Those seeking here a Eusebius for the contemporary Church will be disappointed. Williams offers no account of the purity of a true Church, midst the toil and tribulation of heretical onslaught. His point is that it is in unceasing engagement with the reality of its human failure that the Church becomes itself and remains faithful to its origin and end in God. Those with paradox-intolerance may find such conclusions hard to swallow. In the final analysis, though, I am not convinced that the Church is a topic of central importance for Rowan Williams. Of the Archbishop's seventeen books to date, only the one under review mentions the Church in its title. The Church 'militant here in earth' is not of itself a primary concern, because the Church's calling is to point not to itself but to God. In these troubled times we may be thankful for the guidance of an Archbishop who knows that the common discourse of the Church is not principally 'a language with which to communicate with each other; it is first a language to speak together to God'. Such insights must surely gladden the hearts of all who are schooled in the Book of Common Prayer.

Edmund Newey

# Letters

## A SHORTENED PRAYER BOOK

From Mr CHRISTOPHER PIERPOINT, Llandrindod Wells, Powys

I was interested to read both the suggestion of the Revd Dr David Pym in *Faith & Worship* No.55 that parts of the 1662 and 1928 Prayer Books should be published separately and also the letter from my old friend Mary Hopson in the following issue giving support in principle to his suggestion. I have serious doubts as to the wisdom of this suggestion.

As Mrs Hopson suggests, the first problem would be what to put in and what to leave out. The second one would be which services should be 1662 and which ones 1928. Dr Pym doesn't want the Litany included; Mrs Hopson does. How are the top twenty psalms to be chosen? (Why twenty?) Why omit the Exhortations from the Communion service? If they are rarely heard today, this is a reflection on modern clergy, not on the Exhortations. Dr Pym wishes the order of the 1928 burial service to be 'tidied up' and 'rarely used' material to be omitted. 'Tidying up' is always likely to be subjective, and almost any omissions are likely to be controversial.

I do not agree with Dr Pym that the 1662 book is too long, or with his implication that it is expensive. It is very cheap indeed compared with the full *Common Worship*. Surely no one is deterred from buying 1662 either by its size or its cost.

One other point. There is one service in the Prayer Book which I have attended only once in my life—the Churching of Women. Yet, as so often with the 1662 book, the frequency of a service's use (or its length) is no indication of its value. For that quarter of an hour in church a few days after my wife and daughter returned home from hospital convinced me of the importance (and the quality) of the 'occasional' services.

As mentioned in your editorial, we already have something on the lines suggested by Dr Pym in the 1946 Shorter Prayer Book, but I imagine that sales of this book are low. We should stick to the real (i.e. the whole) thing—once we start trying to amend 1662 we are on a slippery slope. Make no mistake—'tidying up' some parts and omitting others are changes which will only encourage further meddling. Leave it alone!

## ANGELOLOGY

From the Revd Dr NICHOLAS W.S. CRANFIELD, *Blackheath*

I was much interested to read Jonathan Macy's article about Cranmer's selective use of Scripture in his discussion of angelology. Although I have not had the opportunity yet to read Dr Macy's doctoral thesis on angels in the Anglican tradition I wished to point out that his puzzlement over Cranmer's retention of Michaelmas (29 September) is misplaced.

He finds it odd that Cranmer had retained the calendar feast, commenting 'it is noticeable that Michael is the only non-New Testament saint to have a festival—and the fact that he is still cited as a saint at all is strange' (p.48).

It is probably worth observing that the 1549 Prayer Book nowhere calls Simon and Jude saints (but rather apostles), an omission maintained in 1552. This might suggest that Cranmer was less concerned with such a designation than later commentators suggest.

More importantly, we need to remember that for all that Cranmer possessed a sound theological instinct he was also an adroit politician. As 29 September was one of the Quarter Days, crucial in many cases for the payment of rents and for the annual opening of Term, the suppression of its feast would have been well nigh impossible in the society of early Modern England. That he removed the other two Archangels was about as far as he could go although whether Cranmer knew of the more historic origin of keeping the September date, for the dedication of a basilica in Rome, is a moot point.

And of course it is not until 1608 in the Pontificate of Paul V (1605–21) that a feast of the Guardian Angels was introduced in to the universal calendar despite years of local usage, of which Sarum is a good case in point.

## REFLECTIONS ON THE WORD GOD

From Mrs J. CRAWLEY-BOEVEY, *Dorchester*

It was most interesting to read the last two paragraphs of Mr John Garbutt's article in *Faith & Worship* No.55, because many people are afraid to mention such things.

I agree with him entirely and blame the attitude of assorted Churches towards scientific discoveries for putting off countless would-be church-goers by their near-fundamentalist attitudes.

If Einstein, possessor of the greatest mind of the twentieth century,

could believe in evolution and in God to the end of his life, why are there so many problems for so many Christians?

I am in my seventies and get tired of hearing how Dr Jenkins, when Bishop of Durham, 'upset so many old people'. I was not so old then, but his questioning of events that were easily believable two thousand years ago, but less so nowadays, actually strengthened my faith, although I did not agree with all he said and think he was less than tactful. We cannot expect everybody nowadays to see things from the same perspective as people who lived so long ago.

Of course many people still wish to do so, and no one should insist that this is wrong. All I would ask is that it should be made clear that, in the Church of England at any rate, people with more questioning minds are made welcome.

From Mr G. J. HARDWICK, Putney

Faith & Worship readers will not, I hope, be misled by John Garbutt's suggestion, that the state executioner of Saudi Arabia, one Mohammed Saad al-Beshi, is 'said to behead on average seven people a day', into thinking that that means every day. Being state executioner is not a full-time job! It should be self-evident that there could not be over 2,500 people beheaded every year in what is an overwhelmingly god-fearing and law-abiding country.

Amnesty International has reports indicating that, over the last twenty years, an average of something over fifty-five people have been executed per year in Saudi Arabia (still, of course, a disturbing figure).

My own conclusion is that, somewhere along the line, sensationalist journalism has become garbled. Probably what the allegation originally said was that, on average, al-Beshi executes seven people on each execution day, and that there are about eight execution days per year.

However, from your editorial standpoint, and in the context of an article on the use of the word God, Garbutt's quotation of al-Beshi, taken from the *Observer*, would have been equally effective unsupported by any added allegation.

We should bear in mind that *Faith & Worship* may be read throughout the Arab world via the internet.

## PRESENT ISSUES

From Mrs WILLIAM SELKA, Lincoln

I am a new and younger (born in the 1960s) member of the Prayer Book Society. I joined because I consider the Book of Common Prayer to be a great and undervalued masterpiece of Church and English literature, and I wish to support its reconsideration and revival.

Recently I attended my first meeting, and the speaker on this occasion emphasized the importance of the Society attracting new and younger members. To this end, could *Faith and Worship* explore some contemporary issues (this is in no way to criticize the quality of articles to date)? For example, I would be interested in reading a scholarly discussion of how the Book of Common Prayer is reconciled with the aims of those who support the consecration of women bishops. How in this context are the words 'this man' (as opposed to 'this person' in the ordination of priests) dealt with?