

CHAPTER SIX

Baptism & Confirmation

Despite the fact that religion is for many people a privatised faith, there are still many families who do not attend church regularly but wish their infants to be "christened" or "baptized" in church. Not all these children, however, proceed after Baptism to Confirmation when they are sufficiently mature to appreciate the meaning and commitment of their baptism. Nevertheless, Confirmation services are still common in English parishes and provide occasion for the visit of the Bishop.

In *The Book of Common Prayer* there are two services for Holy Baptism, one for infants and one for adults—"The Order of Baptism both Publick and Private" and "The Order of Baptism for those of Riper Years"—and one "Order of Confirmation". *The Alternative Service Book 1980* has a collection of services under the general title of "Initiation Services", including services of thanksgiving for a child, of baptism, of confirmation, and combinations of these at both Holy Communion and Morning and Evening Prayer. We may note that the word "initiation", though used sparingly in the Early Church of Baptism, has entered liturgical language in modern times rather because of the general influence of anthropology and the "rites of initiation" much discussed by this science. *Common Worship* has in the main volume services of "Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child" and "Holy Baptism" but there is also another whole volume entitled *Initiation Services*, wherein are the service outlines and possible ingredients for Baptism, Confirmation, and Reception into the Church of England. Further, the Liturgical Commission is planning to produce more services for this "journey" of what they see as "Christian Initiation".

Background

It has long been known by scholars that the administration of Baptism and Confirmation according to the *Prayer Book* is not modelled on that of the Early Church, when the majority of those

baptized were adult converts, but on that of the later Western Church, when the vast majority of those baptized were infants. In this situation, what had earlier been done together, Baptism with Confirmation (laying on of hands) as one rite, was separated so that the baptized infant later had the opportunity of, in a sacramental kind of way, publicly appropriating the faith, grace and effects of his Baptism. Such a method has within it a sound psychology for it both receives children as infants and receives them again, after they have been instructed, as young persons who can now understand what it is they have embraced and Who it is that has embraced them.

It became somewhat unfashionable to defend the method of the *Prayer Book* during the period after World War II when much concern was expressed about indiscriminate infant baptism in parishes and when there was intense study and interest in the history of the practice and doctrine of Baptism, Chrismation and Confirmation. There were significant Reports to the General Synod on such topics in the 1970s which had their effect upon the services provided in *The Alternative Service Book 1980*. Further, Baptism became a major topic for ecumenical study at the highest level and the so-called Lima Document, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (1982), reveals some of the agreement and disagreement in the World Council of Churches. What seems to have gained much acceptance is the conviction that Christian initiation is complete in Baptism. This meant of course that for Anglicans and Lutherans Confirmation became a sacramental rite in search of a theology or even of justification. Then also the practice of Chrismation, the anointing with oil after the immersion in or pouring on of water, began to be widely adopted, especially since diocesan bishops have adopted the custom of blessing oils on Maundy Thursday in their cathedrals for the use of the parochial clergy. But this ceremony was without an agreed clear theology. In the light of all this debate and continuing discussion it is not surprising that the position adopted concerning what is now usually called "initiation" in *Common Worship* is not identical with that adopted in *The Alternative Service Book 1980*, and both are different from that of the *Prayer Book*. In fact, under the heading of "Approaching the Services" of *Common Worship* we are advised as follows:

It is important to come to these services with a fresh mind, trying to put aside the approaches which have conditioned thinking while the *A[ternative] S[ervice] B[ook 1980]* has been in use. The authorized text needs to be seen not as an intrusive legal regulation but as a guide to performance".¹

This may suggest not only that it is believed that the new services

¹ *Initiation Services*, p. 8

have the right shape and content but also that the problem of what to do with both Chrismation and Confirmation has been solved. A new, exciting adventure apparently begins in Christian initiation, and if one word can name it, that word is "journey" (or "pilgrimage"). In fact this motif and paradigm is so powerful that it tends to absorb all other themes and models used in Scripture and tradition.

As already noted, the provision of services for "Christian initiation" in *Common Worship* is found not only in the main volume¹ but also in greater detail in *Common Worship: Initiation Services*, actually published in 1998, two years before the main volume. All these services are authorized pursuant to Canon B2 of the Canons of the Church of England. This volume from 1998 contains "A Commentary by the Liturgical Commission" on initiation.² There is also an excellent chapter in the *Companion to Common Worship* providing the background to and meaning of the services, indicating where they differ from those of 1662 & 1980. From these sources and elsewhere we learn that the shape and ingredients of the new services of initiation were very much influenced by the recommendations of a working party from two General Synod Boards (Education and Mission) and the Liturgical Commission contained in a joint Report entitled *Towards an Integrated Approach to Christian Initiation* (1995). From this source the Liturgical Commission adopted a checklist of the five elements of Christian Initiation, with each element having a series of sub-headings. First of all there is the fact and context of the church as the society of baptized people; secondly, the necessity of warm welcome to enquirers; in the third place the need for prayer in the church for the enquirers and converts; fourthly, the reality of "the Way" of new disciples learning of Christ; fifthly, there is the goal of true worship and service for all the baptized. The services already published and those to be made available later are seen as coming within these pastoral guidelines.

The theology in the new services is based on the Liturgical Commission's belief that baptism involves four basic elements—separation from the world (in those aspects where it is seen as alienated from God); reception into a universal community centred on God; growth within this community into the fullness of the pattern of Christ; and sharing within this community in mission with God's Spirit. In the explanation of these themes, the dominant image is again that of *journey*—from the world into the church, within the church through different stages of maturity and responsibility, and then as the church in the world as a witnessing, pilgrim people,

¹ pp. 337–75

² pp. 185ff.

moving towards the goal, the Kingdom of Heaven. And, it is held, it is necessary to make liturgical provision for the whole of this journey, not only for its first decisive moment, Baptism, and what precedes and immediately follows it. Thus significant, later stages of the journey need to be marked by forms of service and these can include such things as reconciliation (confession, penance) in case of straying from the way; affirmation of baptismal faith in case of lapse or of new forms of commitment; of healing; of deliverance from addiction or bad habit or evil spirits; and of preparation for death, the end of the earthly part of the journey.

Since the Liturgical Commission seems to have taken on in its provision for initiation and pilgrimage a tremendously varied and in part controversial amount of theology, liturgy and pastoralia, we cannot begin here to evaluate all of it, even if it were all actually available. (What is available now is open to revision and what is not yet available could be provided over a period of several years and then revised.) Instead, we shall concentrate on the central shape and ingredients of the Baptism and Confirmation Services.

Baptism

The Lord Jesus Christ gave clear instructions to his disciples to make converts and to baptize them. At the end of the Gospel according to St Matthew we hear him say, "All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (28: 18–19). At the end of the Gospel according to St Mark we hear the same Jesus say, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned" (16: 15–16). And near the beginning of the Gospel according to St John we hear Jesus say to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily I say unto thee, unless a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the Kingdom of God" (3:3). In the Acts of the Apostles, St Luke records the words of the Apostle Peter before the first baptisms on the Day of Pentecost after the Ascension of Jesus: "Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (2: 38). Then in the Epistles, the apostles provide rich teaching on the purpose and meaning of baptism, using a variety of images.¹ So Baptism became the first Sacrament of the Church, the outward and visible gate of entry into the Household of God and the Body of Christ.

¹ See e. g. Romans 6: 1–11; Titus 3:5; Galatians 3:27; and Hebrews 6:4 and 10:32.

Unlike the *Prayer Book* of 1662, which provides two services of Baptism (one for infants and a new one meant for missionary situations in the emerging British Empire), *Common Worship* provides one basic service (in terms of basic shape and required ingredients) to be used for all those to be baptized whether they be infants or old folks. We are told that

For both infants and adults the service has the same inner logic, a movement from welcome and renunciation through to an identification with the people of God in their dependence upon God, their profession of the saving name, and the common activities of prayer, eucharist and mission. The different life circumstances of the newly baptized finds [*sic*] expression in the very different form that the Commission takes in each case.¹

So the shape is as follows: Greeting, Liturgy of the Word and Liturgy of Baptism (Presentation of Candidates, Decision, Signing with the Cross, Prayer over the Water, Profession of Faith, Baptism, Commission, Prayers of Intercession, Welcome and Peace).

The signing with the cross is before the baptism and thus differs from the position in the *Prayer Book*, where immediately after the baptism the priest makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of the baptized and says,

We receive this Child into the Congregation of Christ's flock and do sign him with the sign of the Cross, in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified and manfully to fight under his banner against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end.

In the new service, immediately after the Decision and before the Prayer over the Water, the minister makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of each candidate, and says, "Christ claims you for his own. Receive the sign of his cross." Then parents, godparents and sponsors are invited also to make the sign of the cross on the foreheads of the candidates, after which the minister says, "Do not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified" and the people then join in saying, "Fight valiantly as a disciple of Christ against sin, the world and the devil, and remain faithful to Christ to the end of your life." The justification for the place of the signing in the new services can be based upon the larger theme of journey:

The pre-baptismal position for the signing fits well with the catechumenal approach to baptism and allows the Decision to be seen as the climax of a period of spiritual preparation, where the sign of the cross is a badge of Christian discipleship embraced after the decision and before the waters of death and resurrection.²

¹ *Initiation Services*, p. 193 ² *Ibid.*, p. 197

Or it can be based upon the idea of ritual response:

The signing with the cross comes as a ritual response to the decision made by the candidates. Since they have repented of their sins and committed themselves to the way of Christ, the Church marks them with his sign as a symbol of his acceptance of their decision, their belonging to him, and their new identity as disciples of the crucified one.¹

These explanations having been noted, it is difficult to see compelling reasons why the signing could not have been left where it had been for over three centuries, where it has a simple logic of dramatic identification of a new child of God with Christ the crucified one. In fact the rubrics actually allow this to happen if the minister so determines.

The "Prayer over the Water" is the central prayer of the new rite and also contains "the main theological statement about baptism". So we must carefully examine it. Our confidence in it is not given a boost when we learn that its ancestry is not some patristic source but the American 1979 *Prayer Book*, via the Canadian 1985 *Book of Alternative Services*, together with some input from the latest New Zealand *Prayer Book*.² None of these sources is renowned for its classic orthodoxy!

It begins with the praise of God and the call for thanksgiving to him, including the response, if you are using *Initiation Services*, "It is right to give him thanks and praise,"³ but if you are using the main volume of *Common Worship*, "It is right to give thanks and praise."⁴ In the space of two years from the authorization of the first to that of the second, the demands of the feminist lobby had been heard and the masculine pronoun disappeared, as God apparently lost his masculine gender.

The Prayer itself has three paragraphs. The first gives thanks for the gift of water and its use in human life generally, and this leads on to a recital of mighty acts of God wherein water is prominent—the Holy Spirit moving over the waters (Genesis 1); the Exodus through water of the children of Israel; and the Baptism of Jesus in the river Jordan. In the second paragraph, there is thanksgiving for the water of baptism wherein "we are buried with Christ in his death" and by it "we share in his resurrection" and through it "we are reborn by the Holy Spirit". In the final paragraph there is petition for the sanctifying of the water in the font, that those who are baptized in it may be cleansed from sin, born again, renewed in the divine image, walk by the light of faith, and continue for ever in the risen life of Christ.

¹ *Companion*, p. 166 ² *Ibid.*, p. 168
³ *Initiation Services*, p. 23 ⁴ *Common Worship*, p. 355

Perhaps it needs to be observed that in the space of under 200 words this prayer incorporates a large variety of natural and biblical themes. To follow all this and understand it, when it is read out in a service, must require concentration and an above-average knowledge of the Bible, which few at a Baptismal Service would normally possess. Yet, as it were at the other extreme, the opening sentence unnecessarily simplifies. One wonders why it was necessary to add in the opening sentence after the "gift of water" the further words "to sustain, refresh and cleanse all life". Most people know what is the use of water and the American 1979 *Book of Common Prayer* simply has, "We thank you, Almighty God, for the gift of water." Then, if this Prayer over the Water is really a prayer, why does it take the form of telling God what he already knows and knows with perfection? He is told that "through water you led" and "in water your Son Jesus received" and "we are buried in the water of baptism". Further, it is as if he, the Master, were being commanded by his servants in the words, "Now sanctify this water . . ." In contrast in *The Book of Common Prayer*, the information which forms the basis of the petition for the sanctification of the water for the mystical washing away of sin, is presented, by means of relative clauses, as recollection before God of authentic parts of the total standing before and addressing of God and without presuming that he needs to be reminded of (in this case) the shedding of blood by the Son of God incarnate for our salvation. And the petition for sanctifying of the water begins in a suitably humble way, recognizing to whom we are speaking: "Regard, we beseech thee, the supplications of thy Congregation; Sanctify . . ."

But apart from the style of addressing the Almighty Father, the question must be asked whether too much emphasis is placed upon the *water* in "the water of baptism" as the means by which union with Jesus Christ unto salvation is brought into reality. The *Prayer Book* recognizes the sanctifying of water to the mystical washing away of sin, but the actual divine operation of spiritual washing, sanctifying and receiving of the candidate into the Body of Christ and Household of God is solely and only by and with the Holy Ghost. The second paragraph of the Prayer over the Water of the new rite reads:

We thank you, Father, for the water of baptism.
In it we are buried with Christ in his death.
By it we share in his resurrection.
Through it we are reborn by the Holy Spirit.

This language is probably too realistic and therefore in this day and age open to being interpreted literally. If we go back to the

Catechism of the *Prayer Book*, from which we take the basic lines of our sacramental doctrine, we learn that there are two parts to the Sacrament of Baptism, the outward visible sign and the inward spiritual grace. The outward part is water wherein the person is baptized/dipped, and the inward and spiritual part is "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness: for being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace". The latter is effected by the Holy Ghost; the conveyance of grace and spiritual gifts has nothing to do with the water as such. God has ordained the use of water and this use is therefore necessary but it is also symbolic. The water even as set apart for this holy use contains no divine properties of healing of the soul.

In the new last paragraph we read:

Now sanctify this water that, by the power of your Holy Spirit, they may be cleansed from sin and born again.

This can be taken to mean that after God sanctifies the water as requested, the power of the Holy Spirit will make it, the water, the means of the inner cleansing from sin and new birth. In other words, the sanctifying of the water, which is important for the Sacrament, is not sufficiently carefully distinguished from the inner sanctification of the human soul by the Holy Ghost. In the one case, the water is set apart for a holy and symbolic use; in the other case sanctification is a spiritual setting apart of the person from sin into the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

In Appendix 2 to the Holy Baptism of *Initiation Services*, under the title of "Seasonal Material", appear a further three Prayers over the Water, supplied for use at Epiphany, Easter/Pentecost and All Saints. Two of these Prayers happily do not attempt to tell the Almighty Lord what he knows already, though one does, that for All Saints. But when it comes to the content of the Prayers all three have petitions which move outside the doctrine of the Catechism. The Prayer for use at Epiphany requests:

May your holy and life-giving Spirit
move upon these waters.
Restore through them the beauty of your creation,
and bring those who are baptized
to new birth in the family of your Church.

Here there seems to be a request for the water to effect the restoration of the created order to its pristine condition (which recalls the statement about worship and the promise God makes for all creation in the Preface of the main volume—see above, Chapter One). And the Prayer for use at All Saints requests:

Fill these waters, we pray, with the power of that same Spirit,
that all who enter them may be reborn,
and rise from the grave to new life in Christ.

Again, it seems as though it is the water as energized by the Spirit of God that will effect the rebirth and resurrection.

Looking back to the Prayer over the Water in *The Alternative Service Book 1980* we find a keener appreciation of the distinction long held in Anglican doctrine. The priest prays (in prose):

Bless this water, that your servants who are washed in it may be made one with Christ in his death and resurrection, to be cleansed and delivered from all sin. Send your Holy Spirit upon them to bring them to new birth in the family of your Church, and raise them with Christ to full and eternal life.

While there is an element of realism in the first petition, the second asking for the descent of the Holy Spirit is clear that it is he and no other who causes internal cleansing and regeneration.

We noticed that the origins of the Prayer over the Water went back to the American Prayer Book of 1979. It seems also that from this same source comes the social and political dimension of the commitment made by the newly baptized at the end of the service in the "Commission". One of the great phrases of the revolutionary 1960s was "seeking peace and justice" and this entered the baptismal service in the American Episcopal Church. Because it was regarded as part of the "Baptismal Covenant" made freely with God by the baptized, it became the basis for many calls and not a few programmes of social, economic and political kinds generated by the General Convention of the Episcopal Church. Peace and justice can take a strict biblical meaning or they can so easily take an activist political secular meaning suited to modern peace and liberation movements. In the Episcopal Church all kinds of human rights movements have used these words as the basis of their right to acceptance in church and society, especially, in recent times, the lesbians. In the new English service, imitating the older American service, the newly baptized are asked: "Will you acknowledge Christ's authority over human society, by prayer for the world and its leaders, by defending the weak, and by seeking peace and justice?" To which they answer, "With the help of God, I will." It is highly probable that much the same use will be made of the theme of "seeking of peace and justice" by groups within the Church of England as has already been made by powerful lobbies in the Episcopal Church of the USA.

Another theological trend common in the Episcopal Church and intimately related to baptism and the baptismal covenant is the claim that since initiation is complete in baptism, then all gifts of ministry

are also given in potentiality in baptism and lie in the soul awaiting to become active. It is the sacrament that has within it the seeds of all possible and future forms of ministry. Such a doctrine allows a person when ordained to say, "This is a realisation of what was there in embryo in my baptism." When the present Presiding Bishop, Frank Griswold, was installed in the National Cathedral in Washington, he boldly stated that this was an outworking of the meaning of his baptism. But it also serves the radical cause very well for it allows persons of both sexes, the few who are bisexual, and those of gay or lesbian sexual orientation, to claim a right to ordination as they are, because in their baptisms, as they were, they were given in potentiality the gift of all the church's ministries. He or she who is baptized, whatever his or her sexual orientation, is potentially a deacon, a priest, a bishop and a primate. How far this type of thinking will be used to press radical agendas in the Church of England time will tell.

Confirmation

What is the biblical basis of Confirmation? It has long been argued that in the time of the apostles and evangelists the normal procedure for admitting converts to Christianity into the membership of the Catholic Church, the Household of God, was by baptism (usually immersion in water) and with the laying on of hands.¹ If this is so, then why has Confirmation as such been treated as separate from Baptism for so long in the history of the Church in the West? It is well known that Confirmation has been regarded by many in the Latin, Western Church as one of the Seven Sacraments and though related to Baptism, yet distinct from it and having a biblical foundation in the apostolic laying on of hands upon converts to Jesus Christ. However, in terms of historical development, the rite of Confirmation is what was once the concluding part of the rich service administered by the local church in the late patristic era of the Baptism of households, adults and children. The reason for this division of the patristic baptismal rite into two was that the vast majority of those being baptized in the early Middle Ages were infants of already baptized parents. The provision of another rite or sacrament made it possible for infants, baptized when they were not fully conscious of what was happening to them, to be blessed later in life by the Bishop and to be publicly incorporated into the Church and their Christian duties. At the Reformation in the sixteenth century, the reformed Church of England retained the Rite of Confirmation as distinct from Baptism, primarily for use with

¹ Acts 8:14-17 and 19:1-7; Hebrews 6:2; 2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13 & 4:30

children who having been baptized as infants were now old enough to speak for themselves.

According to the *Prayer Book* the infant children of baptized parents should themselves be baptized as soon as possible after birth and then be brought to Confirmation when older, usually seven years of age and above, when they have been taught the Catechism. Adult converts to Christianity are to be baptized and then confirmed as soon as possible afterwards. Thus Baptism is seen as a Sacrament which is complete in terms of salvation and as a means of entry into the kingdom of God and into the Body of Christ, the Church of God. Yet there is a sense in which Baptism is incomplete, the sense of perfecting a baptized person's relation to Christ and his Church. The relation is to be brought to fulfilment by Confirmation so that each child of God can walk rightly in the strength of the Holy Ghost. The infant growing into the young person needs to make his very own the vows made for him by godparents and also to receive the strengthening of the Holy Ghost, by the laying on of hands and prayer of the Bishop. The older person also needs the laying on of hands to receive the gifts of the Holy Ghost, in order to live the Christian life in the fullness of the Spirit within the Body of Christ. In this approach, one's first reception of Holy Communion is normally but not necessarily after Confirmation.

Whether it is held at the Eucharist or with Morning or Evening Prayer, the shape and content of the new service of Confirmation in *Common Worship* is the same. Its ingredients are the Greeting, the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of Initiation (Presentation, Decision, Profession of Faith, Confirmation, Commission and Peace). Within this Liturgy of Initiation, Confirmation itself is quite short, beginning with the traditional versicles and responses (Psalms 124:8 & 113:2). The Bishop, who alone takes this service, then extends his hands towards those to be confirmed and asks God to cause his Spirit to rest upon these baptized persons. He continues by laying his hand on the head of each one, saying, "Confirm, O Lord, your servant with your Holy Spirit." Finally, the whole congregation prays for those confirmed using words suggested by the Bishop's own prayer in the *Prayer Book*, "Defend, O Lord, your servants ..."

Confirmation continues to be a popular service in parishes in the life of the Church of England even though there has been very little if any positive publicity given to it within the Church in recent times. The Liturgical Commission comments:

The high pastoral profile of confirmation within the mission of the Church was largely a development of the nineteenth century and there is continuing debate about its precise relation to admission to communion and to the development of mature faith

in those baptized in infancy... The confirmation services authorized in this provision follow carefully traditional Anglican practice and make no attempt to resolve these difficult questions. On all views confirmation derives its meaning from baptism. The structure of the confirmation services therefore conforms to the baptism service and has a similar inherent logic and flow.¹

This means that there are definite similarities between the whole service in the *Prayer Book* and the part of the Liturgy of Initiation called "Confirmation" in the modern service, but the similarity is via the Canadian *Book of Alternative Services*, upon whose service of Confirmation that in *Common Worship* is specifically based.

Isaiah 11:2 ("And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding ...") is the key biblical text for the historical meaning of Confirmation as a distinctive rite. It is the basis of the reference in the Western tradition to the seven-fold gift of the Holy Ghost given to the Messiah, and from him to his people. This reference to the seven-fold gift, which is very clear in the *Prayer Book*, is maintained, though less clearly, in this new service. This is because its use of Isaiah 11:3 is a straight borrowing from *The Alternative Service Book 1980* and not a modern rendering of the words in the *Prayer Book*. The Prayer in the 1662 Service makes it clear that it is the traditional seven-fold gift of grace that is being sought from God, while the new prayer from 1980 can be taken as referring only to a six-fold gift, because it does not say, "the spirit of thy holy fear" but "let their delight be in the fear of the Lord."

The laying on of a hand by the bishop on each candidate is also maintained in the new service but again not with the same words as in 1662 but rather using those from 1980. Thus the Bishop does not say as he lays his hand upon the head of every candidate, "Defend, O Lord, this thy child/servant with thy heavenly grace ..." as in the *Prayer Book*, but, says, rather, as in the 1980 service, "Confirm, O Lord, your servant with your Holy Spirit." However, the well-known prayer, "Defend, O Lord ...", is retained, following the 1980 service, but as a congregational prayer for the newly confirmed.

Because the Liturgical Commission apparently holds that Confirmation is really a "pastoral rite" (as it is called in the American 1979 Prayer Book) and is a ceremony in search of a theology, it has deliberately not supplied it with the context and doctrine that it contains in *The Book of Common Prayer* (1662). Here the opening Preface makes clear who should be confirmed and for what purpose. Those who were baptized as infants and have learned the Catechism should come before the Bishop so that they can with their own mouths and consent ratify and confirm before him and the

¹ *Initiation Services*, p. 202

church the promises made for them by their godparents and go forth to live as faithful Christians. The Bishop in turn prays for them that they will be strengthened by the presence of the Holy Ghost and by the imparting to them the seven-fold gifts of the Spirit of Messiah. Then he lays his hand on each of them and asks God to defend, protect and keep them by his grace as his faithful children for ever. Further, after the Lord's Prayer, comes the Collect in which the Bishop again prays for those confirmed: "Let thy fatherly hand, we beseech thee, ever be over them; let thy Holy Spirit ever be with them; and so lead them in the knowledge and obedience of thy Word, that in the end they may obtain everlasting life"

While theologians and liturgists debate the finer points of initiation and constantly seek to show that Confirmation was not in the Early Church a sacrament in its own right, and while ecumenical agreements with Lutheran and Methodists seem to make Confirmation by the Bishop out of place and unnecessary, there can be no doubt but that, at the parish level, the *Prayer Book* service of Confirmation is still popular and does work today in most social settings when there is a will to make it do so. It provides not only a goal which young people in the church can be inspired to desire and move towards, but it also provides a sound reason for them to be instructed in the basics of the faith, the Creed, the Commandments, the Lord's Prayer and the Beatitudes, as starters. Further, its verbal content is memorable and moving and leaves a profound impression upon young minds. And it is compact enough to fit easily into either Morning or Evening Prayer or Holy Communion from the same *Prayer Book*.

It is worthy of note that the first Confirmation service conducted by Dr Rowan Williams as Archbishop of Canterbury, in his Cathedral, was of sixty young people and using the *Prayer Book* service.

Summary

Certainly for those who are fascinated by study of ancient baptismal liturgies and catechetical schools, and who also find pleasure in trying out new shapes and ingredients for modern services of baptism, what is going on in the Church of England now under the heading of Initiation is exciting and stimulating. The ferment, which began before the appearance of the provisions for initiation in 1980, continues to this day, fuelled by more study, the creation of more services, and the implications of inter-communion agreements between churches. At the same time, an ordinary person who begins to try to read and understand *Common Worship: Initiation Services* will probably find himself utterly confused and wonder why there is so

much choice and so many options. We are reasonably attuned to choice in everything from life-style to consumer goods as people living in the western world, but the variety of this volume is so overwhelming as to make even such persons wonder what virtue there can be in multiple choice for such a basic thing in Christianity as Holy Baptism. After all, what is really important are the words, "I baptize thee in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost". And when so much is produced to surround these words the principle of "quality control" is in danger of being compromised or forgotten. What we have ended up with is a lot of mediocre liturgy wherein are doctrinal statements open to serious misunderstanding, clothed in a rather flat and dull English, which ends up being hardly worthy of the high vocation to which it is put—of the entry of the sinner into the family of God for communion with the Holy Trinity and the gift of eternal life.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Pastoral Services

Some people may perhaps be surprised, when they open the volume entitled *Common Worship: Pastoral Services*, to find that the Introduction is devoted to the theme of “The Journey”. We are told that

We are all on a journey through life. One of the presuppositions on which the Church of England’s Pastoral Services are based is that we do not travel alone. Where is God in relation to that journey? He is both the starting point and the ending point, the Alpha and the Omega. Not only that but ... in all our rushing around between the beginning and the end, he is there too.¹

Yet, on reflection and recalling the intriguing reference in the Preface of the main volume of *Common Worship* to worship and liturgy as a kind of journey or pilgrimage, and then the prominent use of the image of journey in *Common Worship: Initiation Services*, we are not surprised that journeying should again be the predominant image for the context and meaning of such services as marriage and the burial of the dead—though, it seems, a badly organized journeying (“rushing around”) which does not seem likely to get anywhere.

Within *Pastoral Services* there are provisions and resources for Wholeness and Healing, Marriage, Emergency Baptism, Thanksgivng for a Child, and Ministry before, at and after Funerals. Again we learn that

Through all of these resources runs the theme of being accompanied on the journey by the Church, by the people who, in surrounding and supporting us, reveal the personal love and care of Jesus Christ, whose death put an end to death for eternity.

The pastoral task of the Christian Church, all the people of God, ministers and laity, is to provide company on the journey, towards baptism, marriage, welcoming children and at death itself.²

Those who adopt the metaphor of the journey so predominantly and thoroughly run the risk of seeing everything in the light of it and thus interpreting the Christian life and vocation in a restricted way. Certainly the vocation of the pilgrim, the walking in the Way of Christ, the walking in the Spirit, and the pressing on to the goal of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, are strong biblical themes, and they are to be embraced by the Household of God, which is the Body of Christ. But there are other images and metaphors such as the Christian life as a constant battle with enemies (those invisible and visible powers which seek to do harm to the church of God, each individual believer and the cause of Christ—see Ephesians 6). We are told to become as little children, and as such in his Epistles St John habitually addresses us. The Bible frequently calls us members of a body, a household, a family, and even more frequently a flock of sheep. All these images are much used in hymns, but in *Common Worship* they have given place altogether to this *journey*.

The danger in the West, where people have become used to the comfortable life with a pill for every pain and discomfort, is that *the journey* will be understood creatively, colourfully and imaginatively and yet as pointing to something easy, pain-free and without difficult mountains to climb, dangerous rapids to cross, wild animals to avoid or kill, and stinking swamps to negotiate. These last are not mentioned in the brochures of the most popular contemporary journeys, the package tours. The walking with the Lord Jesus in the Spirit towards the Father’s glory is the highest of privileges and vocations, but it is a hard and tough way with privation, tribulation and persecution. “Believe not those who say / The upward path is smooth.” In the Sermon on the Mount the Lord Jesus urged us: “Enter ye in at the strait gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:13–14). The Way of the Father in which Jesus himself walked was the very opposite of easy and smooth, for it was exceedingly narrow all the way and headed straight for Mount Calvary *via* the Judean desert and the Garden of Gethsemane. Therefore, he said to his disciples: “Take up your cross and follow me.” Is that the journey to which *Common Worship* invites us?

Healing Services

In the “Theological Introduction”¹—produced by a theologian rather than a liturgist?—to the services and resources on “Wholeness

1 *Common Worship: Pastoral Services*, p. 3 2 *Ibid.*, p. 6

1 *Common Worship: Pastoral Services*, pp. 9–11

and Healing” there is strangely no mention of journeying! However, evil forces are recognized to be at work in the world:

This series of pictures [of evil powers], while not absolving us from personal responsibility for our actions, also strongly implies that without the grace of God we are at risk of being in the grip of an array of forces beyond our powers to resist or break.

Here the full reality of Satan and evil forces in the world is somewhat understated and minimised. These spiritual antagonistic realities surround and embrace us much more than we commonly know or admit. They ambush us constantly as we walk in the way of Christ and thus we need, in Paul’s words, to be protected by the Christian armour and stay alongside our fellow soldiers in the army of Christ Jesus, the Captain of our salvation. The apostle’s description of the “whole armour of God” in Ephesians 6 is as relevant today as it was in A.D. 60.

Certainly in the Church of God no-one should walk towards Zion alone and no-one should fight evil alone for we are members one of another in the Body of Christ. We all know that it is much easier to speak of these things or to put together liturgies with introductions which emphasise togetherness, community, fellowship and being with and for each other, than it is to live this out practically day by day. We are fallen, sinful, human beings in the process of being sanctified. Such biblical and theological realism is to be read and felt in the Services of the *Prayer Book* for Marriage, the Visitation and Communion of the Sick and the Burial of the Dead. It is also found in these *Pastoral Services*, but in a somewhat diluted form, for occasionally the famous British heresy of Pelagianism (that the human will is basically good) makes its presence known.

It is regrettable that what is found here and there in *Pastoral Services* but not anywhere in the *Prayer Book* itself are hints of a vague universalism; that is, in the sense of this present world and all its creatures being ultimately regenerated and renewed by God. For example healing (explained as experiencing the work of the Holy Spirit) is said to be “a way of partaking in God’s new life that will not be complete until it includes the whole creation and the destruction of death itself”.¹ Here there seems to be no place for the wrath and judgement of God against sin and evil. In Prayer E we are directed to pray:

Lord of all life,
help us to work together for that day
when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.²

This suggests the arrival of the kingdom without judgement and by human work. In a text provided to be read during a service of healing

we are told: “Jesus sets before us the hope of the kingdom of God. All that is broken will be bound up in God’s healing love. All that is marred by weakness and sin will be transformed by God’s reconciling love.”¹ Will nothing be purified by the fires of the wrath of God against sin? Will not the kingdom of God be a wholly different sphere, reality and space to this present world and cosmos? What is the purpose of Christ’s Second Coming to judge the living and the dead?

Another matter that has specific pastoral consequences and implications is the way in which absolutions and declarations of healing are presented in this volume, that is the way they are worded. Specifically, under what conditions should the word “May” be used? (We raised this matter briefly in Chapter Five when examining the Absolutions provided for use in Daily Prayer.) In *Pastoral Services* one sometimes gets the impression that the bishop and priest should pronounce an Absolution that is direct and that does not use “may”. For example, when hands are laid upon a dying person only the priest (or bishop) is allowed to say:

By the ministry of reconciliation,
entrusted by Christ to his Church,
receive his pardon and peace
to stand before him in his strength alone,
this day and evermore.

The deacon or lay person must say:

May almighty God have mercy on you,
forgive you your sins,
and bring you to everlasting life.²

This seems to be the old distinction made in the Church of England that only those ordained priest can pronounce an absolution. However, this principle is not put into consistent practice: the rubrics state that the priest may use the second form if he wishes. Apparently in all the provisions for the laying on of hands and anointing with oil³ the accepted form, whether spoken by priest or lay minister, is that which begins with “May”. For example:

May Christ bring you wholeness
of body, mind and spirit,
deliver you from every evil,
and give you his peace.

The “May” form is also used for most blessings.⁴ However, in the “Prayers for Protection and Peace”,⁵ presumably to be said by any kind of minister, the more direct form of addressing a person seeking divine blessing has found its way into the provisions:

Our Lord Jesus Christ,
 present with us in his risen power,
 enter into your body and spirit,
 take from you all that harms and hinders you
 and fill you with his healing and his peace.

Here a linguistic deed is being done, but in the “May” form of the others the whole business becomes tentative. Possibly for healing services such is the appropriate form! But if so this means that the whole thing is set in the context of possibility rather than a certainty that in some way, in part or in whole, the gift of healing is given.

The Marriage Service

In the Introduction to the whole *Pastoral Services* volume, the Marriage Service is said to be not for everyone as is Baptism. True enough, for the call to celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of God is still on the table! Nevertheless it is claimed for marriage that “here again the Church is present on the journey, surrounding the couple with love, providing preparation and promising—for the first time in a Church of England service—support and prayer.”¹ The service itself is provided with a “Pastoral Introduction” to be read by those present as they sit and wait for the ceremony to begin. It may safely be assumed that its content tells us something important about how the liturgists and General Synod view marriage in general and this service in particular. If so, we are left wondering whether they are so affected by the modern divorce culture and sexual liaisons that they either have no really high doctrine of Christian marriage or, if they have one, no right words to describe it.

Before commenting on the actual doctrinal content of the Introduction, it is necessary to observe that it is a most disappointing literary piece. It is after all intended to be read silently not aloud and it needs to captivate the interest of people in the pews as they await the arrival of the bride. But it begins with the rather obvious information that “a wedding is one of life’s great moments”! Then in its doctrinal statement of what God intends for marriage we are told, very much in the secular language of our time, that marriage is a “creative relationship”. If there is one over-used word in modern English it is “relationship” and it usually points to a coming together freely of persons or groups for a short time and for a limited purpose. A relationship as such may be broken at will by either party. Further, it is an expression much used since the 1960s for making

¹ *Pastoral Services*, p. 4. Stephen Lake in the practical guide *Using Common Worship: Marriage* (2000) praises “the innovative aspect” of presenting marriage as a “series of stages” on “a journey”.

“acceptable” adulterous and illicit sexual unions. Christian marriage, in fact any genuine marriage, is much more than, and should be qualitatively much different from, a “relationship”. The use of the term here merely confirms for people the low view of marriage in modern society and the right of either “partner” to end it at will.

In the Service itself a Statement of the nature and purpose of marriage is read out by the Minister and for this he or she has a choice between two discourses.¹ Each of them says touching things about marriage as a union of persons and as the foundation of family life. But neither of them has the realism of the Statement in the 1928 *Prayer Book* that marriage “was ordained [of God] in order that the natural instincts and affections, implanted by God, should be hallowed and directed aright; that those who are called of God to this holy estate, should continue therein in pureness of living.” And, further, neither of them has the more definite realism of the older 1662 *Prayer Book* which states: “It was ordained for a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication.” The context of church marriage today is a society and culture which is drenched with illicit and abnormal sexual propaganda and activity, more so than in 1662 or 1928. But we today think it not nice to mention such obvious and realistic things “at one of life’s great moments” and in connection with a God, who approves of niceness—a God who may be addressed at the beginning of the service in these terms: “God of wonder and of joy: grace comes from you, and you are the source of life and love.” Turning to the vows made by each, it is to be noted that (if you turn to page 150 from page 108 or have provided for this option in your own local pamphlet) the woman may, if she so chooses, add “obey” to “love and cherish”. To their credit, those who created this service still allowed for the possibility that some pious woman, having taken the words of the apostle Paul to heart that a wife is to submit to her husband as unto the Lord (Ephesians 5:22), decides she wants publicly to say “obey” in her vow at her marriage.

In the words that accompany the placing of the ring on the hand, the required ending is “within the love of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” This replaces “In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost” in the 1662 and 1928 *Prayer Books*. It is difficult to conceive what “in the love of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit” really means in this context, although the mention of love may be seen by some as giving the whole thing a “nice flavour”. As created, finite beings we are not within the ineffable, holy Love that is God, the Love which unites the Three Persons in the one Godhead. A man and woman do not share all that they have within the love of God but they share as they each separately and both together seek to love

¹ *Pastoral Services*, p. 105 and p. 136

God as he has commanded them to do, and as he sends the Holy Spirit to bring holy love to their souls. Better surely to make their promises in the Name of the Persons of the Holy Trinity even as long tradition recommends! The alternative Prayer¹ at the giving of the ring(s) also does not distinguish sufficiently clearly between the unique, eternal Love which is the eternal Essence of the relations between the Three Persons and the love that God gives to human beings according to their creaturely reality. What we receive as human beings is truly the love of God, his gift to us, but that love in a form receivable by finite creatures made in his image and after his likeness. The Prayer speaks of the heavenly Father, “source of everlasting love” which is “poured into our hearts”. Then that love is described in terms recalling the Song of Solomon 8:6–7 as “that love which many waters cannot quench, neither floods drown”. Finally, it speaks of the marriage covenant between the man and woman as made “in the love of your Son”. It is not clear whether this is “in the loving of your Son” or “in the love of the Father which he reveals and bestows” or something else. Finally, on this theme of love and the distinction between God as Love and God as loving us we may note one of the optional blessings of the marriage:

Eternal God,
 you create us out of love
 that we should love you and one another.
 Bless this man and this woman, made in your image,
 who today become a sign of your faithful love to us
 in Christ Jesus our Lord.²

This as read aloud sounds like the kind of prayer a modern clergyman or Reader would compose if he were asked to pray on the spot in an *ex tempore* way. Apart from the attempt to inform the Eternal One of what he decided in eternity, the prayer expresses the questionable doctrine that a couple by the act of marriage itself (which is their act done before God and man) actually become thereby “a sign of your faithful love to us in Christ Jesus our Lord”.

In the “Additional Prayers”³ frequent mention, as one would expect, is made of love; but, again, those who composed these prayers and vetted them did not have clear guidelines in their minds as to the nature and character of love as of God as God is in himself, as of human beings in the relations one with another, and as the merciful, compassionate attitude of God towards man in, through and with Jesus Christ and by the Holy Ghost. The petition, “May their life together be a sign of your love to this broken world” is acceptable if they are living as individuals and together according to

1 p. 151 2 p. 153 3 pp. 156ff.

God’s laws and in the power of his Spirit as servants of Jesus Christ. However, the request that “as their love ripens and their marriage matures, they may reap the harvest of the Spirit, rejoice in your gifts, and reflect your glory” seems to make everything depend on their life together as a couple and to discount that fact that each of them always remains an individual person, with a body and soul, a mind, emotions and will, who is loved by God, needs to be individually purified and sanctified and to mature in faith, hope and love. The man and woman are united as one flesh not as one body and soul—a fact that not a few of the prayers seem not to have grasped, for they have “you have made one” not as “one flesh” (which truth is recognized in Prayer 2 on page 157). Finally, it is perhaps to be expected in the twenty-first century that the new prayer book of the Church of England would enlarge the New Testament vocabulary and meaning of love and include *eros* along with *philia* and *agape*. Thus one prayer begins, “God our creator, we thank you for the gift of sexual love [*eros*] by which husband and wife may delight in each other”. It is not necessary to make what is so often mentioned in the world into a public prayer at a wedding.

It would seem that instead of providing a minimum of options and making every effort to guarantee the doctrine and quality of the prayers, the Liturgical Commission has given us so many options that the impression one gets of their overall quality is not a good one. The composition of suitable prayers for any occasion in public worship is difficult, and here it was made the more difficult because so many were provided it seems that they could not be carefully scrutinized.

The Funeral Service

The Funeral Service does not come alone (as in the *Prayer Book*) but together with the provision of services or outlines of services for use before the Funeral and after the Funeral, together with other sources—prayers, Bible readings, psalms and canticles, and even a theological essay. If Marriage is only loosely connected with the overall theme of “journey” the Funeral Service is tightly connected. “The Funeral Service,” we are told,

is both the end of the human journey in this world and a whole series of journeys in itself. ... As grieving is a process marked by different stages, we believe that one helpful contribution the Church can make pastorally is to have a series of services and resources in which some of these different stages can be recognized, spoken of in advance or recapitulated.

So “the Funeral Service is part of a longer continuum, though it

stands perfectly well on its own if necessary.” And “the bereaved will need to be able to say different things to God and to one another at each of these different stages.”¹

Usually modern liturgists do not want to copy or retain anything that developed in the Middle Ages for their eyes are upon the pristine, primitive Church. However, in this case, they have decided to create a modern equivalent for the Funeral rite and customs of the pre-Reformation period.

From the eighth century or earlier, the Funeral rite was a continuum, broken by movements from place to place, from home to church, to the place of burial and back to the home. This pattern was severely truncated at the Reformation, but today’s pastoral needs suggest a return to it.²

In other words, modern psychological and pastoral insights show the wisdom of the medieval practice and lie behind the provision of prayers and services for this continuum. What perhaps needs to be said here is that many clergy, using the various parson’s or priest’s handbooks that have long been available for guidance, have been doing as pastoral routines rather than liturgical tasks the kind of things here made into semi-official services and provisions. So the question arises as to whether a National Church needs anything more than a basic Funeral Service, with suitable provisions for infants, children and adults, in its Prayer Book. When so much is provided it is difficult to see the wood for the trees. Too many of the prayers, like those provided for marriage, are similar to good *ex tempore* prayers and, further, most of them attempt to tell God who he is, what is his character, what he has revealed, what he plans to do and will do and so on.

Turning to The Funeral Service,³ we find that, like the marriage service, it has a Pastoral Introduction, to be read by those present before the service begins. Once more it has to be said that this is extremely disappointing as a literary production. Here was an opportunity to use a good “popular writer” to communicate the biblically-based Christian hope in words that are dignified and informative. Let us note the first of the two paragraphs:

God’s love and power extend over all creation. Every life, including our own, is precious to God. Christians have always believed that there is hope in death as in life, and that there is new life in Christ over death.

The first sentence is true enough as far as it goes but hardly the place or the way to start in a brief message to mourners. The second sentence is awkward in its construction and would have been better kept wholly personal, relating specifically to the one individual reading it. The

1 *Pastoral Services*, p. 5 2 *Ibid.* 3 pp. 256ff.

third and longest sentence expresses the Christian hope in a less than satisfactory way. The truth is not “that there is hope in death as in life”. How can a dead person hope? The Christian virtue and gift of hope focuses rather upon God the Father and on what he has promised, in and through Jesus Christ, and will provide for his sake for baptized believers—eternal life in a resurrected, immortal, glorious body with all the redeemed in heaven. Thus the Christian hope is to be proclaimed at the Funeral Service, and is done so very clearly in that of the *Prayer Book* and in this service being considered here. Why not so also in the Pastoral Introduction? Further, what does “new life in Christ OVER death” mean? It is an odd expression.

Apart from any inadequacy of style, some of the optional prayers fail to rise to the level of biblical truth. At the beginning of the service God is told how he will judge the world: “Almighty God, you judge us with infinite mercy and justice and love everything you have made.”¹ It may be asked: How can God the wholly righteous Lord judge the angels and man except by his justice? If in his infinite mercy he has provided One to stand in our place, even the Lord Jesus Christ, he still judges righteously and justly. His mercy provides what his justice requires, even the one Mediator, who died in our place and rose for our justification before God the Father.

Then in the confession of sins we are instructed to say: “We turn from the wrong that we have thought and said and done, and are mindful of all that we have failed to do.” Do we really hold in mind at this moment of speech all, truly all, that we have failed to do, all our sins of omission?

In the Resources for the funeral of a child,² there is much that is touching and moving. However, one cannot but notice again the mediocre or poor quality of many of the thirty or so prayers provided for optional use. Better to have provided fewer of excellent quality. Prayer 9, for example, begins, “God of all mystery” and ends “we make our prayer in Jesus’ name.” In prayer in times of loss, the bereaved need to know that they pray to a Divine Person, the Almighty, heavenly Father. It is difficult to conceive of communion with and consolation from the “God of all mystery”. Then the ending of the prayer is the kind so familiar in popular prayer meetings where *ex tempore* prayer is the norm, and does not sound or feel right in public prayer where a proper reverential and theological way of ending prayers has long been known and in use.

Again in the *ninety* or so “Prayers for use with the Dying and at Funeral and Memorial Services”³ there is much that is touching and moving. Yet once more the quality of many of the prayers, as public prayers, is disappointing. Prayer 16 as a “Thanksgiving for the Life of

1 p. 260 2 pp. 300ff. 3 pp. 345ff.

the Departed” begins with the lofty words of St Paul in Ephesians 1, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us.” This surely leads us to expect a prayer filled with the thought of divine grace given to the one being remembered. But the prayer leaves the heavenly realms where Paul’s thoughts were, in order to descend immediately to earth and speak of “the gift of this earthly life”, “span of years and gift of character” and of “every good deed done by him/her”. In offering thanksgiving for the departed, there is a fine line to tread between referring, on the one hand, to their life so that God is praised and, on the other hand, suggesting that their good works somehow in a little way actually help to earn eternal salvation. Thus it is wise to compose prayers where no hint of this latter idea appears. In Prayer 37 God is told that “you do not willingly grieve or afflict your children.” Maybe a “nice God” of our imagination does not, but the God of the Bible, who loves us with an everlasting love, does sometimes afflict us in order to test us, to chastise us and to make us worthy to be called his adopted children. And did not the Father afflict his Incarnate Son with the pain of Gethsemane and Calvary for our sake and the world’s salvation?

In contrast to the frequent mediocrity within general orthodoxy, Prayer 57 shows signs of careful composition in order to present an alternative view of God. It begins:

Intimate God,
you are able to accept in us
what we cannot even acknowledge;

and continues by telling him (or is it her?) further matters before making the request,

Reconcile us through your cross
to all that we have rejected in ourselves,
that we may find no part of your creation
to be alien or strange to us,

and ends “through Jesus Christ, our lover and our friend”. The identity of the intimate God, his/her relation to “your cross” and to Jesus “our lover” are far from clear, nor is it clear why the Cross is expected to reconcile us to the evil that we may have rejected in ourselves.

The “Theological Note on the Funeral of a Child dying near the time of Birth”¹ is hardly appropriate for a prayer book, however erudite and thoughtful it is judged to be. The content of this Note is said to draw upon advice given by Professor Oliver O’Donovan of Christ Church, Oxford, but it is not clear what are the views of the

Professor and what are those of the Liturgical Commission. The reason for the Note is to make a contribution to the growing recognition of the need for particular care for those parents and families who have experienced the tragedy of an infant who dies near but before the time of birth. It is fully accepted that a funeral service is appropriate, but we are told that the words in the Committal, “in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life”, raise two questions. The first is, “Is it right to regard an unborn child as a human person with a capacity for life after death?” And the second is, “Is it right to speak of ‘a sure and certain hope’ in the case of someone who has not lived outside the womb and has not been baptized?” What is said in answer to the second question tends to leave us with more questions than before it was raised. It states, for example, that “we are right to be cautious about a *particular* assertion of the individual child’s resurrection” and that the text of the Committal provided for the service actually stops short of this assertion. However, seemingly in contradiction of this, the ending of Prayer 5 entitled “Stillbirth” on page 313 is: “We had longed to welcome him/her amongst us; grant us the assurance that he/she is now encircled in your arms of love, and shares the resurrection life of your Son, Jesus Christ.” Also the next prayer, number 6, entitled “Miscarriage” (where the infant/foetus in question is probably less than 24 weeks) ends: “Grant them [parents] the assurance that their child, though not seen by us, is seen and known by you, and will share the risen life of your Son, Jesus Christ.” It would have been far better not to have included this short essay and to have assumed that priests in their training in college and in parish would be directed both to read appropriate essays and also to learn from experienced pastors how to handle such situations.

Conclusion

Those who put *Pastoral Services* together certainly made a great effort to provide comprehensively for the parishes of England, and they have displayed all kinds of pastoral sensitivity. Nevertheless, however important and useful the pastoral sensitivities revealed in the texts of *Pastoral Services* may be, the fact of too much choice from that which is not often of the best quality reduces the value of this volume. At the local level, what the clergyman or local worship committee is faced with in this book as he/they plan a service of healing, a wedding service or minister to the dying and bereaved, is too much material—unless, that is, they have plenty of time on their hands. Certainly those who are experienced pastors will be able to put together biblically based and orthodox services from the plentiful

provision, even if their idiom and style turns out to be somewhat ordinary and flat. And since the dominating theme of journey is not built into quite all the texts, it is possible to create services which allow full scope for other biblical and theological images of the vocation of a Christian on earth.

The marriage service is an occasion where the liturgy should realistically assess the human condition, the high calling of husband and wife, and the grace of God available to be with them in this vocation. It also needs to be memorable so that its teaching makes its way into the memory and thus into the consciences of those who hear and speak it. This is obviously true of the marriage service in both the 1662 and 1928 *Prayer Books*, even though some modern people do not like their declaration of the sexual weaknesses of human beings or the vow of obedience taken by the woman. What is provided in *Pastoral Services* is certainly a Christian marriage ceremony; but, in that which surrounds the basic solemn declarations and vows it is a text/ceremony without real quality in the contents of its Introduction, Preface, Collect and Prayers at the end. Composing long statements and prayers to be read aloud and which do appropriate honour to God and man, and which make good use of the English language is, as we have said often, a gift which few possess.

Likewise, the Funeral Service needs to be both grave and memorable on the one hand and filled with Christian hope through dramatic but controlled language on the other. After all it is, in the reformed Catholic tradition of the Church of England, meant to be a strong affirmation of the resurrection to eternal life in the society of the redeemed in the kingdom of God, and a committing of the deceased baptized person in faith, hope and love into the everlasting care of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Funeral Services in *Pastoral Services* provide an adequate but not an engaging proclamation of the Christian hope. Further, if all the provisions are taken seriously at the local parish level then the minister will need to take his volume, *Pastoral Services*, everywhere he goes in connection with the events and pastoral visits surrounding a death and funeral service. Happily it has an Index and so it is to be hoped that he will be able to locate what he needs to use efficiently and quickly.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Prayers and Collects

A necessary and essential part of Christian public worship is the addressing of Almighty God, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, in prayer. Over the centuries the Church, the people who are called to enjoy and glorify God for ever, have daily worshipped this Almighty Father. To do so they have developed suitably reverential, humble and intelligible forms of words together with an appropriate style in order to fulfil this high vocation of speaking to God in the sanctuary. The form of words used has not been either the lowest or the highest common denominator, but has been of such a kind that most ordinary people after instruction and through habit of use can grasp its meaning, that to which it points and that which it communicates. At the same time the vocabulary and style have been such as to satisfy the educated and those of high culture. There has been the pursuit of excellence in the sense of providing the best form of words and style to provide for the unique purpose of being spoken aloud in public worship and being memorable.

One of the more distinctive parts of both the medieval Latin Missal and English Common Prayer is that form of prayer, always one sentence, known as “the collect” (Latin, *collecta* and *oratio*). In the Latin Mass, the collect made its appearance in the second half of the fifth century and was constructed within the conventions of the classical Roman and Latin rhetorical tradition. It became the first distinctly priestly prayer of the mass and served both to conclude the entrance rite and to introduce the reading of the Epistle and Gospel. Further, by its content it often announced a particular festival or theme. The *Sarum Missal*, which Archbishop Cranmer used as a young priest, contained many such collects for Sundays, Festivals, Holy Days, and Commemorations of Saints. *Collect* is a word descending by two routes from Latin, meaning in the one “a prayer of the collected people” and in the other “a prayer collecting the thoughts of the day”. Cranmer was aware of both meanings and especially the second which spoke to him of the need for clear, well-

constructed prayers, suitable for use in public worship. So it is not surprising that in the English *Book of the Common Prayer* (1549), of which he was the major architect, the collect not only retained its unique place before the Epistle and Gospel but also displayed a style and characteristics that soon made it a most memorable part of the English Liturgy. Further, other prayers, similar in structure but different in content, were created by him for use in the major public services and these are often also in English referred to as collects. The best known of these include the Collect for Purity in Holy Communion, the Collects for Peace at the end of Morning and Evening Prayer and the Collects at the end of the Litany.

Of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer's work in producing the English Liturgy, Professor E. C. Ratcliff wrote:

Cranmer was the master, or rather the creator, of English liturgical style, because he had apprehended the nature of worship. To serve the purposes of worship he brought the resources of the scholar: appreciation of the fine compositions of liturgical Latin; knowledge of the rules of rhythm and clausula; facility and felicity in translation; a feeling for the wonder of words. With such resources, and moved by a profound religious sincerity, Cranmer made of English a liturgical language comparable with Latin at its best. "The ink of the scholar," so runs an Arabic proverb, "is of more worth than the blood of a martyr." The proverb is true of Cranmer. In his liturgy he bequeathed to the newly reformed Church of England an instrument of life, and which also, in its remarkable combination of the traditional with the contemporary, of the old with the new, was to be not the least important factor in imparting to Anglican Christianity its distinctive stamp.¹

Cranmer did his translating and composing in order to produce prayers to be read aloud. The challenge before him was to reproduce in English the complicated syntax of a Latin sentence and at the same time make it both pleasant to hear and worthy of being committed to memory. He succeeded, and millions of every social class and educational background have benefited from that success over the centuries.²

The English Collect

The Collect is a one-sentence prayer which in its fullest expression has five parts, but which may only have three (the first, third and fifth below). First comes the Invocation or Address, usually to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, but occasionally to the Lord Jesus himself

¹ E. C. Ratcliff, *Liturgical Studies*, 1976, p. 199

² See further Ian Robinson, *The Establishment of Modern English Prose in the Reformation and the Enlightenment*, Cambridge, 1998.

and once to the Blessed Trinity. In the second place, there is the Recital and Remembrance of some doctrine or biblical fact, by means of a relative clause. Thirdly, the Petition or Request, which constitutes the body of the prayer and uses the first person plural (*us* or *our*). In the fourth place the Aspiration or devout wish, expressing a purpose of the petition. Finally, there is the Pleading of the Name of Jesus the Mediator when the prayer is addressed to the Father, and a doxology when addressed to the Son or the Holy Trinity.

In the Recital or Remembrance (which we may also call the Commemoration) Cranmer consistently followed the *Deus qui* of his originals and made constant use of the relative clause. For example for Christmas Day he provided, "Almighty God, who hast given us thy only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and as at this time to be born of a pure Virgin: Grant" Here we see the Invocation to the Father, the Recital by means of a relative clause, "who hast given ... ", and the beginning of the Petition. Let us focus on the use of the relative clause. It is skilfully constructed both here and in 44 other collects in the original 1549 *Prayer Book* in order to preserve the mood of reverence and recollection as God's people engage in active remembrance of one or another aspect of God's revelation to men. If it had been third person singular, "who has given us his only-begotten Son", then it would have ceased to be prayerful meditation before God and have become a kind of aside to oneself or those near to one. The use of the second person singular seeks to ensure the flow and continuity of the prayer as an address to God the Father; and the use of the relative avoids the suggestion that the recital, remembrance and commemoration is in the mind of God and not in ours.

Here is another example to help clarify the matter. The Collect for The Epiphany begins: "O God, who by the leading of a star didst manifest thy only-begotten Son to the Gentiles: Mercifully grant that we" First there is the Invocation or Address to the Father of the incarnate Son, next the relative clause, and then the Petition. If the text had "did manifest his only-begotten Son" it would be third person singular, and the meaning would be that the priest offering the prayer was ceasing to address God while he said a few words to himself or to those listening to him. The use of the second person singular in the relative clause ensures that the information is prayerful meditation and not a public announcement.

It may seem that we are labouring the point. Perhaps we are. However, to make it as clear as possible is necessary today if we are to understand and appreciate the particular nature of English Common Prayer and of the unique function within it of the collect.

After all we do live in days when few people seem to have been taught the basics of grammar and syntax in their study of the English language at school; so talk in the church of first person and second person as well as relative clauses is as a foreign tongue to many or as computer language is to the elderly. In fact, it is partly because of a general decline amongst English-speaking people of a knowledge of basic grammar that the Liturgical Commission of the late 1970s decided to modify the structure and style of collects which were put into *The Alternative Service Book 1980*. Thus, according to the Liturgical Commission of 2000,

The *A[ternative] S[ervice] B[ook]* significantly reshaped the language, function, and traditional reference points [as they had been known in the *Prayer Book*] of the collects. Simpler, contemporary language replaced the latinate Cranmerian style, and the relative clause containing an attribute of God gave way (often with unfortunate results) to a statement about God.¹

Also, the association of familiar collects with particular Sundays was often lost in the 1980 production because of the decision to make the collect serve the purpose of introducing the appointed, thematic Bible readings for that day.

Common Worship sought to correct the admitted errors and excesses of its predecessor of two decades earlier by restoring in many cases the relative clause and also by producing a full set of collects in traditional language to accompany those services which use this idiom. Further, the doxological, Trinitarian, longer ending is mandatory for Sundays and major holy days—"who is alive and reigns with you [O Father], in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever". Here the provision of the *Prayer Book* is much exceeded, which wisely reserved the full Trinitarian ending primarily for major Festivals—Christmas, Easter, Ascension and Whitsunday—so that it would be heard and recognized as very special indeed. Then, also, *Common Worship* provides (as did the Latin Mass and the 1549 *Prayer Book*) Post-Communion Prayers, having a structure similar to the collect. These prayers "acknowledge feast days and seasons in their intentions" but "again and again, they are eschatological, reminding worshippers that it is through participation in the Eucharist that we are offered a foretaste of the heavenly banquet."²

It appears that the present Liturgical Commission and General Synod face a crisis about this unique form of prayer, the collect. They have tried to do better than their predecessors in the 1970s by drawing nearer to the classic tradition of English Common Prayer and by using the relative clause. However, they believed it was right

1 *Companion*, p. 181 2 *Ibid.*, p. 183

or necessary sometimes to retain the 1970s innovation of the declarative main clause in which God is seemingly told what he already knows. This mixed effort sent forth mixed signals into the church and world and has not met with the general approval expected and hoped for from all quarters.

Some people were unhappy either with the recovery of the relative clause or the use of the declarative clause. One letter in the *Church Times*, from Dr Ross Hutchison, claimed that "about half the collects [in the main volume] use distorted and unnatural English, while about 30 per cent use jargon. Advent 2 is perhaps the most extreme case."¹ So what is provided for the Second Sunday of Advent?

O Lord, raise up, we pray, your power
and come among us,
and with great might succour us;
that whereas, through our sins and wickedness
we are grievously hindered
in running the race that is set before us,
your bountiful grace and mercy
may speedily help and deliver us;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit,
be honour and glory, now and for ever.

This, no doubt, is seen an example of "distorted and unnatural English" rather than jargon. It is certainly not the easiest of the collects either to read or to understand, because of the awkward "that whereas" It is best encountered in its original Latin form or in its 1549 English rendering.²

Demands increased for radically new and simplified collects. A consultation exercise undertaken by the Liturgical Commission in 2002 produced a wide range of criticisms of the collects in *Common Worship*. The most common were:—The syntax of them is too complicated and archaic; they are too long; they are bland in the themes, imagery and choice of language which they use ("they end up saying very little, and take a long time to say it, in an unnecessarily complicated way"); the closing doxology adds to their complexity and length, and their language is frequently inaccessible for certain contexts; for example, where children are present in significant numbers, in "non-book" contexts, and among missionary congregations where there is no background experience of the language of *The Book of Common Prayer*.

1 21 February 2003

2 The original Latin form of this collect is for Advent 1 in the Sarum Missal while in the 1549 and 1662 *Prayer Book* it is for Advent 4. The present collect is an attempt to put into "contemporary English" the "traditional language" of the 1662 collect at the same time as omitting the reference in 1662 to "the satisfaction of" Jesus Christ.

To meet this barrage of criticism, which the Commission apparently took very seriously, it was decided that a whole new alternative set of collects must be composed—short, simple in their syntax, vivid and interesting in their themes and imagery, accessible in the kind of language they use, and which end up by saying something clear and distinct. The Commission decided upon the following Guidelines:—

- 1 The collects are, in general, to be significantly shorter than those contained in *Common Worship*;
- 2 On the occasions when the relative clause is used, attention is to be paid to the need for brevity;
- 3 Use of the vocative form “O God ...” is to be avoided;
- 4 Use of archaisms in both syntax and language is to be rigorously avoided;
- 5 Use of a closing Trinitarian doxology is to be dropped except in a few significant cases, but in a number of instances an essentially Trinitarian framework will govern the structure of the prayer;
- 6 Contemporary imagery and directness of language are to be adopted in many cases, without the concomitant pitfall of being so over-direct that the prayer fails to apply “across the board” and so to perform its function of “collecting” the prayers of all the people; and
- 7 When direct language is used, sermonizing or moralizing in the prayer is to be avoided.

The result was that in February 2003, as was noted in Chapter Three, the Liturgical Commission placed before the General Synod another set of collects, *Common Worship: Additional Collects*, to provide an alternative to those already authorised. The new set is intended to be as simple as possible and in being so it runs the serious risk of providing an outstanding example of dumbing down within the official liturgy of a national Church that has such a fine history of the pursuit of excellence in words and music in the service of God.

In Chapter Three we looked at several examples of the latest simplified collects and it will be useful now to look at more. Here are those for Ash Wednesday and the First Sunday of Lent:

God the only saviour,
our lives are laid open before you:
help us to turn to you this Lent,
and through your Son,
the skilful healer,
strengthen us and make us whole
in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Heavenly Father,
your Son battled with the powers of darkness,

and grew closer to you in the desert:
help us to use these days to grow in wisdom and prayer
that we may witness to your saving love
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

The first one does not address God as “O God” but directly as “God” which sounds strange to English ears. There is no logical connection between his being the “only saviour” and the fact that we tell him that “our lives are open before you”. Then the petition “help us to turn to you this Lent” is a strange request for we should be turned to God all the time and be asking here for special Lenten grace. Finally, the collect has no ending or termination normal in prayer addressed to the Father. Possibly the reason for this is the use of “through your Son” as part of the petition for strengthening and being made whole. In the second one, Jesus is made to appear like one of us when he is said to have “grown closer to you (God) in the desert.” He was in intimate communion when he went into the desert, through the testing, and when he left. It is we, who are sinners, who by grace may grow closer. Also, there is no proper ending, probably because the “in Jesus Christ” which is an extension of “saving love” is treated as if it were the actual ending. The general impression made by these and the rest of this collection is that they were composed either by novices or by those who were on a determined mission to dumb down this most ancient western form of prayer called the collect.

The style and theological content of these new prayers raise serious questions about what is happening within the Liturgical Commission, the General Synod and the Church of England. Not too long ago, this Church possessed in the collects of the *Prayer Book* a treasury of prayer and practical doctrine that was very widely appreciated and admired. Now the same Church does not seem to know where to go next to find within the new idiom of contemporary language suitable replacements for the old collects in their traditional language of prayer.

Another letter in the 21 February 2003 issue of the *Church Times*, from Dr Alistair MacGregor, makes a claim concerning the unity of a true collect.

A collect presents a sequence of ideas unifying the entire prayer, in which the parts are so skilfully blended that the joints do not protrude. The relative clause is a vital element that helps to preserve the unity of the prayer. It sustains the predicative attributes of God, and thus anticipates the remainder of the prayer. Remove the relative pronoun and substitute a main clause for the relative clause, and the prayer loses its cohesion and flow and falls flat. A declarative statement at the beginning of a collect inevitably detracts from the petitionary imperative at its heart.

Here we have a description of a perfect medieval Latin or Cranmerian collect with a warning of how not to change it.

The Collect for Christmas Day in the *Prayer Book* (noted above) fits the bill but that in *Common Worship* “loses its cohesion and flow and falls flat on its face”:

Almighty God,
you have given us your only-begotten Son
to take our nature upon him
and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin:
grant that we, who have been born again ...

This could have begun, “Almighty God, who have given us ...” but the relative pronoun has been removed and a main clause has been substituted. And God is being told of what he has done for us in his only-begotten Son, and perhaps we expect a reply from him like, “Oh yes I did so. Thanks for reminding me.” The creators of the Collect for Christmas Eve make the same mistake as for Christmas Day. Instead of beginning, “Almighty God, who make us glad ...” we are given:

Almighty God,
you make us glad with the yearly remembrance
of the birth of your Son Jesus Christ:
grant that, as we joyfully receive him as our redeemer ...

Again it all falls flat on its face, as do the whole of the nineteen collects that have this structure. Although not tried in *Common Worship*, it is possible to begin a collect with, “Almighty God, you who ...”. It has been observed that there is no grammatical or stylistic reason why a contemporary version of the *Agnus Dei* should not begin, “O Lamb of God, you who take away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us.” Apparently “you who” is commonplace in novels and on the stage and so would not be out of place in contemporary liturgical English. However, there seems to be a widely held feeling, perhaps conviction, that in “contemporary liturgical language” the use of the relative clause and “you who” sound odd and should be avoided. If this is so, then the question arises whether new collects that are worthy of being used publicly can actually be written today! However, amongst all the extremely numerous options within *Common Worship* the use of the *Prayer Book* collects is not one. Any church that decides to take the simplest route out of this maze will have to use the *Prayer Book*, its collects and its lectionary.

Be that as it may, the new set of simplified collects is soon to be made available, and it is likely that some both in the main set and the subsidiary set will sooner or later be revised or rewritten. There is, therefore, confusion as to what is the collect and whether it is really

necessary any more to have it with the Bible readings when the liturgy is much more flexible. At the moment it is seen as part of the invariable shape but perhaps it will soon cease to be so and become only one of the possible ingredients.

Post-Communion Prayers

It is not clear whether the criticisms levelled against the collects also applied to the Post-Communion Prayers, for some of them do use the relative clause and others the declarative clause. Since the Post-Communion Prayers are only used at the Eucharist, even though they are as plentiful in numbers as the former, they are used less and so make less impact. Nevertheless they are prayers and as such, if the law of praying is the law of believing, then what they contain is to be taken seriously. Their quality, shape and ingredients vary tremendously even though it is claimed that a major theme in many of them is the Christian hope of being with the redeemed at the heavenly banquet of the Lord in the age to come.

The prayer for Advent 1 is based on that in the Gelasian Sacramentary and is thematically linked with the collect in the images of watchfulness and wakefulness:

O Lord our God,
make us watchful and keep us faithful
as we await the coming of your Son our Lord;
that, when he shall appear,
he may not find us sleeping in sin
but active in his service
and joyful in his praise;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

One cannot find major fault with this, but that for Advent 3 is open to serious criticism:

We give you thanks, O Lord, for these heavenly gifts;
kindle in us the fire of your Spirit
that when your Christ comes again
we may shine as lights before his face;
who is alive and reigns now and for ever.

It is not clear what are “these heavenly gifts”. Perhaps they are the sacramental bread and wine or perhaps (from the Collect for the Day) the gifts of ministry. The relation between kindling a fire and shining as lights is strained, for while a fire gives light it primarily burns and is hot. Then the last line is a poor way to end a prayer, for while it speaks of God’s Christ as alive and reigning it does not establish his role as Mediator, that we plead and pray in his Name. It

could have been “through him who is alive and reigns now and forever” as in other places.

The Annunciation of our Lord (25 March) is a Principal Feast and the Collect is sound and based on that in the *Prayer Book*, but with the longer, Trinitarian ending. In contrast, the Post-Communion Prayer is entirely new and most daring in its use of images.

God most high,
 whose handmaid bore the Word made flesh:
 we thank you that in this sacrament of our redemption
 you visit us with your Holy Spirit
 and overshadow us by your power;
 strengthen us to walk with Mary the joyful path of obedience
 and so to bring forth the fruits of holiness;
 through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Whether it is right to begin “God” rather than “O God” we pass by, to ask whether it is appropriate or even reverent to use of Christians the image/words addressed to the Blessed Virgin at a unique moment in her life and in the redeeming acts of God. The angel said to Mary, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God” (RSV, Luke 1: 35). This statement both points to the miraculous conception by Mary of the one to be called Jesus and to the first moment of Incarnation of the Son of God, taking flesh in the virgin’s womb. The uniqueness of the event makes it inappropriate for use in a general way. Here is a bright idea gone wrong.

Other Prayers

Apart from Collects, Post-Communion Prayers and Eucharistic Prayers, there are in the main volume other forms of prayer, notably the Litany, Thanksgivings for use at Morning and Evening Prayer, Prayers for Various Occasions, Authorized Forms of Confession and various other optional prayers.

One of the first things one notices, if one is familiar with the *Prayer Book*, is that it is possible to use *Common Worship* and, apparently, never pray for the Queen, who has a unique relation to the Church of England as its supreme governor. Apparently it is not part of the required ingredients, not even on Sundays, that there be intercessions for the Queen or the Royal Family. This is very odd and may be an over-reaction against the *Prayer Book*, where repeated and required intercession is made for the monarch. Prayers for the Sovereign, the Royal Family and Those who Govern are certainly

provided in “Prayers for Various Occasions”¹ from which one or more may be [not “must be”] selected for use in the Intercessions before the end of Morning or Evening Prayer. Happily none of these collects includes a declarative clause telling the Most High Sovereign and King of kings what he already knows about this English monarch! But in the “Additional Collects” in this section four out of the nine provided make use of the declarative instead of the relative clause in the addressing of God and end up telling the Almighty and Omniscient Father some very basic information about his ways and deeds. It is also of note that there is no prayer anywhere to be prayed in time of war (this is written as the War against Iraq proceeds).

The new Litany,² which does, happily, allow prayer for the monarch, is stripped down to the bare essential petitions and responses and presents human beings before God who are apparently less conscious of their sinfulness than those who use the old Litany. Section 1 uses both the minimum number of words to address the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity and to ask for mercy. For example, “Holy, blessed and glorious Trinity” is used instead of “O holy, blessed and glorious Trinity, three Persons and one God” and thus an opportunity to express right doctrine to God is lost. In the response “Have mercy upon us” replaces the full naming of the Holy Trinity followed by “... have mercy upon us, miserable sinners.” No one enjoys being described as a miserable sinner but if this is what we are before the holy Lord our God then this is what we must call ourselves (miserable = wretchedly needy).

The Authorized Forms of Confession and Absolution³ like the Litany deal with sinfulness as though it were less than the devastating and disastrous spiritual disease and cancer that it is. The general tenor and content of the confessions to God lack the appropriate element of seriousness expressed in carefully chosen vocabulary and phraseology. They give the impression that the way to forgiveness is a reasonably trouble-free route not needing profound self-examination and penitence. And virtually all the Absolutions begin with “May ...” thus giving the impression of probability rather than certainty, or perhaps communicating the idea that since sin is serious but not all that devastating, a sure word of forgiveness is not wholly required.

The form of Confession suggested for Christmas time is a brief Litany where the people respond, “Forgive and heal us” after a statement has been made to the “Lord of grace and truth”. Thus we have:

The Virgin Mary accepted your call
 to be the mother of Jesus.
 Forgive our disobedience to your will.

We have sinned:

All **forgive and heal us.**

Your Son our Saviour

was born in poverty in a manger.

Forgive our greed and rejection of your ways.

We have sinned:

All **forgive and heal us.**

The shepherds left their flocks

to go to Bethlehem.

Forgive our self-interest and lack of vision.

We have sinned:

All **forgive and heal us.**¹

This has the appearance of being put together by someone who was given the task (in committee) of relating well-known facts about Christmas to confessing sins. Not only is it not real prayer to a living, holy God, but also it has factual errors (Jesus was not born in a manger but placed in one after being born) and the connection of the information given to God and the confession made to him is a very weak one at best. How can genuinely contrite and repentant people pray this kind of prayer without feeling embarrassed and humiliated?

The Forms of Intercession² for use at Holy Communion that are not from the *Prayer Book* are, like the Litany, trimmed down to basics and have a somewhat staccato effect because of their brevity of expression and the way their petitions follow on from each other—asking/telling God to Strengthen, Bless, Guide, Give grace to, Comfort, Heal and so on. They are very much designed for the modern happy situation where a lay person takes the lead and the assembled people respond or are allowed to make additions or name names. Further, they are designed to be followed by a collect said by the Celebrant. Of the eight endings (collects) provided, four have a declarative clause, one (from the *Prayer Book*) has the relative clause, and the others are direct petitions without any remembrance before God or declaration to him at the beginning of the prayer.

Conclusion

If there is one area of human life where an assembly of Christian people ought to excel at offering their best to God it is in prayer, in the daring exercise where mortal, feeble man addresses (and expects to be heard by) the immortal, omnipotent LORD God. In private prayer each person is personally responsible for himself before his

Creator and Redeemer, but in public worship, what is addressed to the Almighty LORD our God is addressed on behalf of all present (and in fact sometimes on behalf of the whole creation). The meaningful words, phrases and sentences reverently and humbly offered have to speak on behalf of all and thus must be in a form and style that fulfils the dual purpose both of adequately representing all present and also of representing these adopted children of God as they address their heavenly Father, who is also their Creator, Redeemer and Judge. Obviously here the language of the street or of the media show will hardly suffice, for we are not dealing with people saying “Hi, John! How are you?” to each other. No, we are dealing with finite, weak creatures, wholly dependent upon their Creator and Sustainer, who are speaking collectively to this personal Deity, who is their heavenly Father.

So it is not surprising that the Church has developed and cultivated ways of addressing the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is foolish, perhaps arrogant, not to use them or be guided by them today. Simplifying and dumbing down do not work, for they speak in the end for no-one, being merely the propaganda tools of those who sincerely desire to change radically the relation of man to God, thinking that ordinary folks cannot raise their eyes and voices towards heaven, when they use a form of words hallowed by tradition over centuries of prayerful use. It is worth recalling that millions of ordinary people learned off by heart the prayers/collects of *The Book of Common Prayer* and found them to be in the changing circumstances and challenges of life their own real prayer to God.

This canon is based on The Worship and Doctrine Measure, 1974, Section 5(1), and it is under this Measure that alternative forms of service to those in *The Book of Common Prayer* have been authorised.

The Bible

It has been widely acknowledged that the historic Liturgy of the Church of England is scriptural. Not only does it include large portions of the Bible (Epistle, Gospel, Canticles, Versicles and Psalter) but also there is the rich and varied use of scriptural language, images, citations, and doctrines in the litany, prayers, collects, commandments, exhortations, and absolutions. Happily this has been documented in great detail by Henry Ives Bailey, Vicar of North Leverton, near Retford, Nottinghamshire.¹ In an Appendix his book also contains a List of all the direct quotations from the Bible in the *Prayer Book*. Further, the official Lectionaries (i.e., those of 1662, 1871 & 1922) that go with the *Prayer Book* and associated with the weekday and Sunday services provide a more than adequate coverage of the whole Bible.

In the writing of modern liturgies the close and intimate ties with the language of the Bible have not been maintained. One reason for this is that there is an excessive number of modern versions of the Bible and thus no one of them is sufficiently well known to be quoted or cited. Another reason is that the desire to create gender inclusive language, as it is called, makes the relation to the ancient Bible problematic. But, probably the major reason is that modern liturgical scholars do not live in the world and text of the Bible as did Archbishop Cranmer and his colleagues. They do not know the content and text of the Bible as well as did the sixteenth century churchmen and so in their writing the allusions, citations and quotations do not flow so easily or richly as they did for Cranmer.²

If one combed through the main services of *The Alternative Service Book* and *Common Worship* one would not be able to write a book such as Bailey wrote because the new liturgies cannot be realistically compared with the Bible by the use of parallel columns. They are not scriptural in a direct sense for they do not often weave biblical phrases and texts into the prayer or exhortation or address. In truth they are, as it were, in most of their content, one remove from the Bible. The relation is general rather than specific. Take for example this extract from Prayer D, newly composed for Order One, the Holy

¹ H. I. Bailey, *The Liturgy compared with the Bible, or an illustration and confirmation by Scripture quotations and references of such parts of The Book of Common Prayer ... as are not direct extracts from the Holy Scriptures*, SPCK, 778 pp., first published 1833 and often reprinted

² For Cranmer's attitude to the Bible see his original preface for the 1549 *Prayer Book* entitled in the 1662 *Prayer Book* "Concerning the Service of the Church", and the first Homily on the "Reading of Holy Scripture" in *The First Book of Homilies* (1547).

CHAPTER NINE

Bible and Doctrine

Apologists for the Church of England at the end of the Elizabethan period invented a simple way to state and remember the doctrinal foundation of the Church of England as a national church and a jurisdiction of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of God the Father. They said that it was built upon *One* canon of Holy Scripture made up of *Two* Testaments, whose central witness and teaching is summarised in *Three* Creeds (Apostles', Nicene & Athanasian), whose basic dogma is set forth by the first *Four* Ecumenical Councils (Nicea [325], Constantinople [381], Ephesus [431] & Chalcedon [451]) and whose worship, ministry and general life is based on *Five* centuries of history and experience. Because of this kind of apology, the curriculum for theological students up to the 1960s was dominated by studies of Scripture and the Early Church to A.D. 500. It was further argued that the Formularies of the Church of England, the *Prayer Book*, the Articles of Religion and the Ordinal conformed to this general pattern, in which the primacy and authority of Scripture is clear. Yet this is Scripture in the context of the Church, the Household of God, not Scripture standing alone, and further the Church of England traditionally emphasizes the logic of beginning with the whole of Scripture as given by God and then seeing it as made up of two testaments. In modern universities the departments of Old and New Testament Studies are usually separated not only spatially but also in terms of method. Thus few students come away with a sense of the primary unity of Scripture. Rather, they come away with questions as to the relation of the two Testaments, and in particular, the Messianic and Christological interpretation of the Old Testament.

Canon A5 states the current doctrinal basis of the Church of England:

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.

Communion of *Common Worship*:

Almighty God, good Father to us all,
 your face is turned towards your world.
 In love you gave us Jesus your Son
 to rescue us from sin and death.
 Your Word goes out to call us home
 to the city where angels sing your praise.

Whatever may be the theological and devotional merit of these sentences, placed between the *Sursum Corda* and the *Sanctus*, it would be difficult to line up alongside them verses from the New Revised Standard Version, for example, to show their direct relation to a prominent English version of Holy Scripture favoured by the Liturgical Commission. Where can we find a direct parallel to "good Father to us all" and where do we read in the Bible that God's face is turned towards the world? Then, though it is said that God's face is turned towards the world, it is only to "us" not the world as world that he gave Jesus. The use of the upper case for "Word" suggests that the Son of God rather than the spoken word of God is intended. But in the Prologue of the Gospel according to St John, the Word "became flesh and dwelt among us." He did so to save us from the wrath of God and draw us into communion with the Father and the Son, a communion which is both for this age and the age to come, and into a communal life that embraces all the children of God. The association of the Logos with "the city" (= the Jerusalem which is above) is far from clear. The relation of Eucharistic Prayer to Scripture here is at best indirect.

Nevertheless, one can be misled into supposing that within the texts of *Common Worship: Services and Prayers* an index to actual biblical references can be found, for in the main volume from page 823 to page 836 (some 14 pages) there is what is called "Index of Biblical References". However, this is primarily and nearly exclusively an index of the Lectionary found on pages 537-90. Therefore, even if it does not tell us how the Bible is used in the text of the Liturgy it does provide a most useful source to check which parts of the Bible are *not* read on Sundays and principal feast days. One such omission is Romans 1: 18ff., which is a major statement concerning God's wrath against ungodliness and unrighteousness, including sodomy.

One further comment is appropriate with respect to the general relation of *Common Worship* to the Bible, and this concerns what we have come to call Bible Sunday. In the *Prayer Book*, the place of the Bible in the Church of God is celebrated on the Second Sunday in Advent, at the very beginning of the Christian Year. For this day the well-known Collect written by Archbishop Cranmer is used: "Blessed Lord, who hast caused all Holy Scripture to be written for

our learning" In *Common Worship* Bible Sunday is the Last Sunday after Trinity, the end of the Christian Year. Here symbolism, it could be said, speaks louder than words.

One book of the Bible was especially translated for *Common Worship*: the Psalter. This is the one book of the Bible that is used daily at both Morning and Evening Prayer, as well as at Compline. Its importance in the life of the Church and Christian people is clear. The new Psalter

differs from any Psalter previously printed in Church of England service books, and yet is closely related to them. It is cast in "you" form language, is generally inclusive of men and women, attends to the worshipping traditions which have shaped the Church of England, is rhythmic, is reasonably accessible to a wide range of worshippers and falls within the parameters of contemporary Hebrew scholarship.¹

Significantly, it is *not* claimed that this Psalter can be *prayed* in the way in which the Church has traditionally prayed the Psalter over the centuries in the daily offices, that is, with a full messianic and christological understanding and insight. This is how the Introduction to *The Divine Office* of the Roman Catholic Church stated this approach:

Whoever says the Psalms in the name of the Church should pay attention to the full meaning of the Psalms, especially the messianic understanding which led the Church to adopt the Psalter. The messianic meaning is made completely manifest in the New Testament; it is in fact declared by Christ our Lord. ... Following this path, the Fathers took the whole Psalter and explained it as a prophecy about Christ and his Church; and for this same reason psalms were chosen for the sacred liturgy. Even if certain artificial interpretations were sometimes accepted, generally both the Fathers and the liturgy rightly heard in the Psalms Christ calling out to his Father, or the Father speaking to the Son; they even recognized in them the voice of the Church, the apostles and martyrs. ... This christological interpretation in no way refers only to those psalms which are considered messianic but also extends to many in which without doubt there are mere appropriations. Such appropriations, however, have been commended by the tradition of the Church.

In his *Ennarations* upon the Psalms, Bishop Augustine of Hippo uses the christological interpretation to powerful effect. One of his finest expositions of the logic of the christological approach is found in his comments on Psalm 86: "We pray to him [Jesus], through him, in him; and we speak with him, and he speaks with us; we speak in him, he speaks in us the prayer of this Psalm, which is entitled 'A Prayer of David'." This approach to the Psalter is well expressed in a

¹ *Companion*, p. 238

simplified form in the Preface to the much-used devotional *Commentary on the Psalms* (1836) by George Horne, Bishop of Norwich. It is found in richness in the Neale and Littledale *Commentary on the Psalter* in four volumes.¹ In more recent times it was embraced by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the opponent of Hitler's régime in Germany, when he was Director of the seminary of the Confessing Church. His book *Das Gebetbuch der Bibel* (1940) has been translated as *The Psalms: Prayer Book of the Bible*,² and shows how the Christological can be married to the historical, literary approach.

The traditional meditative and christological use of the Psalms has been made nearly impossible today in Anglican public worship by at least two basic causes. First, the emphasis in modern Biblical Studies is to ascertain who wrote the Psalms, when, for whom, in what context and for what purpose. This can be a fascinating study but runs the risk of merely making one an expert in ancient religion and practice and with little or no ear for the patristic way of using the Psalter or for its use as the primary Christian Prayer Book. In the second place, because of the success of the feminist movement, most modern translations or paraphrases seek to exclude as far as possible what in our era is perceived as the patriarchal, androcentric and sexist emphasis of the original composers of the Psalms, king David and his allies. This unwanted emphasis and orientation is removed surgically and practically by the use of "inclusive language", which method is used in the Psalter of *Common Worship* in three ways: changing the Hebrew third person masculine singular pronoun to the first person singular or to impersonal or plural pronouns; the use of abstract nouns; and the use of generic terms such as "mortals" and "humanity".

One need only look at the first verse of the first Psalm to see how, from the viewpoint of the Church in days past, Jesus Christ has been excluded from the very Psalter that was his basic prayer book and from which he used prayers at critical moments in his life and ministry. The *Prayer Book* has, "Blessed is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly" "Man" here has for centuries been taken to refer prophetically to "the Man, Christ Jesus" who is the new Adam. And the Psalm has been taken as introducing the whole Psalter, with the result that Jesus is here established as the One to whom the whole Psalter witnesses. In total contrast Psalm 1 in *Common Worship* uses one of its three means to make the masculine singular into an inclusive form, here an impersonal plural pronoun, "they". Thus "Blessed are they who have not walked in the counsel of the wicked" Yet there is no doubt

¹ Recently reprinted in the USA by the Lancelot Andrewes Press

² *The Psalms: Prayer Book of the Bible*, Fairacres, Oxford, 1982

that the original Hebrew word in verse 1 is the word for the male human being, the man, not mankind.¹

It will be instructive to look at what explanation is offered in the most widely used commentary on the *Prayer Book* in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, *The Annotated Prayer Book* by Canon J. H. Blunt. Here is part of his comment on the meaning of Psalm 1:

Beyond the obvious moral meaning of this Psalm, it contains a prophetic laudation of the holiness of Christ. He is "the Man" to whom we sing, "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might" as the Lamb of God who is God, throughout the Psalms.

In this particular Psalm he is praised as the only one wearer of our nature in whom pure and perfect holiness has been found during the time of earthly sojourn and probation. In his Temptation, he walked not in the counsel of the Wicked One, stood not in the way of sinners by yielding thereto, and refused the temporal cathedra [throne] which was offered him (though it seemed to bring him in a moment that sovereignty which could otherwise only be won through suffering), because it was the throne of the Evil One, the Prince of this world, and not the throne of the Cross.

His delight was to do the will of Him that sent him, in the day when there was glad sunshine and time to work, and in the night too, when all was eclipse, and darkness and sorrow. Being made perfect through suffering, he became the origin of perfection in others; the Corn of wheat cast into the ground to die and to spring up again with a power of life-giving in its own resurrection; the Corn and Wine of the Tree of Life, planted by that River the streams whereof make glad the City of God; a fruit of sacramental life for the regeneration, edification and resurrection of souls. Nor can any of his work fail through any deficiency of its own; for whatsoever he doeth, whether of grace towards men, or of intercession towards God, it shall prosper, because it is his.

As for The Ungodly who sets up his kingdom against that of Christ, opposing him first by the Jews, then by the heathen, and at all times by sin, the end will prove how great the contrast. The Wind of Pentecost will at least scatter altogether all the opponents of the Kingdom of God, as it has been doing in part ever since its first sound was heard. For them there will be no defence in the dreadful Day of Judgement, nor any place in the Communion of glorified saints. Only the path which he has marked out, who said, "I am the way," can lead to the Presence of God; and they who go in the path of the adversary must take their lot with him.

¹ Latin *vir* not *homo*; Greek *aner* not *anthropos*. On Christ and the Psalter see further: Patrick H. Reardon, "Christology and the Psalter: the Church's Christian Prayer Book", in *Creed & Culture*, ed. James H. Kushiner, Wilmington, Delaware, 2003.

Blessed is the follower of the Man Christ Jesus, who walks in his way, and endureth temptation with steadfastness; for after his trial and victory he also shall receive a crown of life, which the Lord Jesus, the righteous Judge, hath prepared for them that love him, that they may reign with him in glory.¹

Such doctrinal and devotional thinking and praying is certainly not popular today but it is an authentic way of prayer if the witness of the saints has a vote in what is acceptable. And the point being made here is that it is rendered difficult if not impossible by the inclusivist versions of the Psalter. Those who wish to pray in the traditional way are thus forced to use the Psalter in the *Prayer Book*, in the King James Version, or perhaps *The Revised Psalter* of 1964, in whose creation Professor C. S. Lewis had a significant role.

The favoured translation of the Bible in *Common Worship* is *The New Revised Standard Version* [NRSV] published in 1990. Its origins go back to 1974 when the Policies Committee of the National Council of Churches in the USA authorized the preparation of a revision of the entire *Revised Standard Bible*. The general mandate to the translation team was summed up in the maxim: "As literal as possible, as free as necessary". Specific mandates to the translators included the elimination of masculine-oriented language where, in their opinion, the reference was clearly to both men and women (e. g., "brothers and sisters" for "brethren"). Interestingly, it never seems to have occurred to the participants in this project that the substitution of "brothers and sisters" for the single Greek word translated "brethren" (*adelphoi*) might actually work against Christian equality, since men and women were no longer defined by a single shared word, but broken into separate categories by a phrase (a group of words). Often the inclusiveness desired by feminist theorists was achieved in the NRSV by simply rephrasing the original or by substituting plural for singular forms (e. g., "Happy are those ..." in Psalm 1:1, instead of "Happy is the man ..."). The judgement expressed by advocates of the NRSV that "with notable success the NRSV has tackled the difficult task of making the English text inclusive where the original is not exclusive" is not as theologically neutral as it sounds.

The Preface of the NRSV states its policy about how to address God:

It will be seen that in the Psalms and other prayers addressed to God the archaic second person singular pronouns (thou, thee, thine) and verb forms (art, hast, hadst) are no longer used. Although some readers may regret this change, it should be pointed out that in the original languages neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament makes any linguistic distinction between addressing a human being and addressing the Deity.

¹ *The Annotated Prayer Book*, edition of 1868, p. 318

What goes missing here is any admission that the Biblical languages do, indeed, distinguish between singular and plural pronouns and verbs, or that such distinctions are important both to the meaning of Scripture and to the absolute assertion that God is One.¹ A different sort of thought has required a different sort of language, and thus, this Version has completely abandoned the traditional English idiom of Prayer, and embraced the modern call for inclusiveness.

Before leaving our reflections on the Bible in Liturgy, a few thoughts on the new Lectionary will be in order. The *Common Worship Lectionary* is not identical with but is based upon *The Revised Common Lectionary*, an ecumenical lectionary closely related to the original Roman Catholic Lectionary. Instead of the one-year cycle of the *Prayer Book* or the two-year cycle of *The Alternative Service Book 1980*, this latest Sunday Lectionary is a three-year cycle, providing three readings (Old Testament, Epistle and Gospel) and a psalm for each Sunday. The year 2000–1 began with the third provision, C, but for the Weekday Lectionary, which is a two year cycle, it began with 1. Thus 2003–4 is C and 2. In the *Companion* the following comment is made about the new provisions: "Obviously this [Sunday provision] leads to a greater use of Scripture, and enables more coherent, continuous reading of biblical books."² This is a comment one has heard often in the last twenty or thirty years with respect to new Lectionaries and the adding of an Old Testament reading to the Epistle and Gospel of the *Prayer Book* Eucharist Lectionary. In response it can be said that there is no doubt that those who actually follow the Sunday and Daily Lectionaries and read all the Scripture allocated will certainly read through a vast amount of the Bible, which is in principle an excellent thing. Nevertheless, those who follow the original or the revised (1871/1922) Lectionary of *The Book of Common Prayer* read more, much more, of Holy Scripture weekly, monthly and yearly.

This is probably not the right place to examine the hermeneutical and theological principles that underpin or determine both what is included in and what is omitted from the choice of the readings for the new Lectionary, and when they are used. But questions do arise. For example, do modern critical theories about the literary and textual relations of the Gospel to each other determine the choice of Gospel passages? Do modern critical theories about the origins of the Pentateuch determine which parts are read and when? The advantages of the old Lectionaries are clear even if arguable. First, the Eucharistic Lectionary is very ancient and made holy through devotional usage; thus the Church continued to read what she had read for centuries, accumulating insight as she did so. Then, secondly, the Daily

¹ See further, Chapter Ten. ² *Companion*, p. 230

Lectionary read straight through the Bible in a coherent manner, even when this did not fit into the festivals of the Christian Year.

Doctrine

It is surprising that neither in the main volume of *Common Worship* nor, apparently, anywhere else in other volumes are we provided, in either their original form or in a modern rendering, with the text of either the Thirty-Nine Articles, one of the Formularies of the Church of England, or of one of the three Creeds of the Church, the Athanasian Creed (= *Quicumque Vult*), or of the Catechism of the Church. Since one of the aims of *Common Worship* is to be so comprehensive that one does not need *The Book of Common Prayer*, the omission of these three fundamental doctrinal statements is most serious; without them the Church of England is beginning to be like a ship without a rudder. *Common Worship* refers to The Articles on page xi and to the Athanasian Creed on page 143 of the main volume, but the actual text of them is not included, and one has to go the *Prayer Book* or to some source of historical documents to find them.¹

It may be asked: Why should we worry about the Athanasian Creed when its opening words identify rejection of right, orthodox belief with everlasting damnation and thereby offend some people? The answer is that this Creed provides the fullest and clearest statements in the Church of the doctrines of the Blessed, Holy and Undivided Trinity and of the Person of Christ and his Incarnation. The services of *Common Worship* are meant to conform to these foundational doctrines, which are also found in shorter form in Articles I, II, III, IV and V of The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion.

What we learn from both the Articles and the Athanasian Creed is that doctrinal truth matters, and that to express doctrinal truth, carefully chosen words are necessary. Bearing this in mind it is disappointing that in some places in *Common Worship* the expressions used in relation to the Holy Trinity or the Person of Christ are not accurate. This stands in contrast with *The Book of Common Prayer* which was always seen as providing the means not only to worship the Holy Trinity but also of teaching right ways to think of God.

With respect to the doctrine/dogma of the Holy Trinity, for example, *Common Worship* repeatedly uses the formula, "Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit: Blessed be God for ever" in both the main volume² and in the *Daily Prayer*.³ The colon suggests the equivalency of what goes before and after it. In the New Testament

the word "God" virtually always means "God the Father" and only rarely means "Deity, Godhead and Divinity"; and this principle also applies in the collects and prayers of the *Prayer Book*. Now in the contexts of *Common Worship* where this novel pattern of words occurs, the initial prayer is addressed to the Father—for example, "Blessed are you, Lord our God, creator and redeemer of all" Then later in the prayer there is reference usually to both the Son and to the Holy Spirit. Finally, after a full stop there occurs this "blessing of God" which is a required ingredient in the structure.

Several questions arise as one relates this wording to the familiar orthodox statements found in classic sources. In this particular formula it may be asked: Is the first "Blessed be God" a reference to the Godhead, wholly possessed by the each of the Three Persons—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit? Or does the word "God" go with each of the Names so that the intended meaning is, "Blessed be God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit"? Is the second use of the word "God" after the colon a reference to God the Father (to whom prayer is usually addressed) or is it to God as the one Divinity, Deity and Godhead wholly present (according to patristic dogma) in each of the Three Persons?

In the modern church environment, where emphasis is upon accessibility, intelligibility and simplicity (even "dumbing-down"), and where not much weight is placed upon the patristic and classical Protestant search for carefully crafted propositional statements of central dogma, such an expression as "God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit" is perhaps deliberately vague. It can be taken to mean that God is One Person with three Modes of being and/or three primary Names. Such a doctrine is by classic standards clearly heresy. It would have been far better to have gone for clarity and accuracy and written, for example, the following. "Blessed be the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God" with the response, "Blessed be God the Holy Trinity for ever," or another pattern of words that does not leave open the real possibility of understanding God to be One Person with Three Names or Three Expressions of Being. For Unitarianism is more easily embraced by the human mind than is Trinitarianism.

The same general points can be made with reference to the ending of a very short confession of faith on page 148. Here there are three statements: "We believe in God the Father ... in God the Son ... in God the Holy Spirit," followed by "We believe in one God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit". Again why does this last statement have the semicolon? To whom or to what does "God" refer? To the Godhead, to the Trinity or to the Father? The final statement could have been, "We believe in one God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit", to avoid all suggestion of God being one Person with three Names.

¹ A part of the Athanasian Creed is, however, used on page 145 as a modern confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

² E. g., pp. 32, 48 and 50 ³ E. g., pp. 185, 209 and 215

When we turn to the Collect and Post-Communion [prayer] for Trinity Sunday,¹ the day when the Church should be at her very clearest in terms of praising the One, Blessed, Holy and Undivided Trinity of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, a Trinity in Unity and a Unity in Trinity, we find ourselves disappointed by the Post-Communion:

Almighty and eternal God,
 you have revealed yourself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
 and live and reign in the perfect unity of love:
 hold us firm in this faith,
 that we may know you in all your ways
 and evermore rejoice in your eternal glory,
 who are three Persons yet one God,
 now and for ever.

The first question to face is, To whom is the Collect addressed? Is it “God” meaning “the Holy Trinity” or “God” meaning the “One Godhead/Divinity/Deity”? If God is meant to be the Holy Trinity, then on Trinity Sunday, such would be understandable and acceptable, even if unique as an address. Yet if it is addressed to the Holy Trinity then confusion begins to surface by the content of the first declaratory clause. The “you have revealed yourself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit ...” seems harmless and straightforward, but stands in contrast to the way of revelation of the Holy Trinity to the people of God as found in Scripture and much studied in the Early Church. The Father is the First Person of the Trinity and it is he who creates the universe through his Son, the Logos, and by the Holy Ghost; the Father is also the First Person who sends the Second Person, the Son, to be the Incarnate Logos, living in his manhood and being the Messiah, empowered and led by the presence and power of the Holy Ghost. The way of revelation is that the Father reveals the Son and the Son makes the Father known to man; further, it is in and by the Incarnate Son that the personhood of the Holy Ghost is known. Bearing this in mind, this prayer would have been better had it begun: “Almighty and eternal God who are the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and live and reign in the perfect unity of love ...” (the traditional version uses the relative clause and so could read, “who art the Father, Son and Holy Ghost ...”).

At least it can be said that this English lack of clarity in dogma is not as bad as that in the American Prayer Book of 1979. Here, in a variety of places, this Greeting or Acclamation occurs:

Celebrant Blessed be God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
People And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever.

¹ pp. 406–7 and 478–9

The person who composed this was consciously simplifying and at the same time placing in a different context the Blessing given by the priest, holding the Gospel-book, in the Divine Liturgy of the Orthodox Church. The priest says, “Blessed be the kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, now and always, even unto ages of ages.” While the words of the Orthodox liturgy are faultless in terms of adherence to the Bible and patristic dogma, the words of the American prayer book (in the context of lack of clear doctrinal teaching in the Episcopal Church) can easily be taken to mean that the One Person of God, with three Names, has an everlasting kingdom. Often these days in that Church the three Names are made non-sexist—Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier. It would have been far better had the original Greek Blessing been used without any editing and simply as the words of the celebrant. Once we try to simplify we take on a task that is far more complex than most of us either realise or recognize.

In the volume of *Initiation Services* the Church of England has followed the lead of the Episcopal Church in the use of these words but has modified the punctuation possibly to make them less likely to be taken as an expression of the doctrine that God is One Person with Three Names. Thus on several occasions these lines appear at the beginning of a service:

Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever. Amen.¹

Again, why could not the original blessing from the Orthodox Liturgy be used? for it is not only, after all, the original, but is also doctrinally clear, verbally attractive and not open to the charge of Modalism.

Finally, we may note the “act of faith” in the “Ministry at the time of death” in the *Pastoral Services* which is as follows:

Holy God,
 Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
 I trust you,
 I believe in you,
 I love you.²

Again, an orthodox mind can state this and mean the God as set forth in orthodoxy but at the same time its common-sense meaning seems to be that of telling a God with three Names that you trust, believe and love him as one Person, which is Unitarianism.

With respect to the identity, role and work of Jesus of Nazareth, that which we refer to as Christology, we have already noted that his being pushed out of the Psalter is a most serious loss to Christian

¹ pp. 103, 122, 134, 143 and 154 ² p. 223

worship, for it decreases its Christ-centredness. Further, we have already raised questions in discussing the Nicene Creed concerning the advisability of the translations, “eternally begotten of the Father” and “of one Being with the Father” rather than “begotten of the Father before all worlds/ages” and “of one substance with the Father”. Here we raise further questions about the way in which Jesus Christ is presented in different parts of *Common Worship*.

One of the innovations of *Common Worship* is that an authorized Affirmation of Faith may be used instead of a Catholic Creed. One such is the poem/hymn, specially written by Bishop Timothy Dudley-Smith, which begins, “We believe in God the Father”.¹ Poetry is a wonderful medium for expressing certain thoughts and feelings but it is hardly appropriate for expressing the dogma of the Church, which needs precision in propositional statement. This weakness is well illustrated in these lines:

We believe in Christ the Saviour,
Son of God in human frame,
virgin-born, the child of Mary
upon whom the Spirit came.

In the original Nicene Creed, there is an accumulation of phrases to state the precise relation of the Son to the Father and of the “descent” of the Son in Incarnation into the world, in and through the womb of Mary, the virgin. Here the content of the Nicene Creed (or the Apostles’ Creed, or both) is simplified so much that the words can support error and heresy. “Son of God in human frame” does not (for a church Creed) adequately convey the nature of the Incarnation, that the only-begotten Son of the Father took to himself in the womb of the Virgin a full and complete human nature and made it his very own so that he is One Person made known in Two natures, divine and human. “In human frame” hardly communicates the assumption of a total human nature, body and mind/soul. It is not even clear whether the Spirit is declared to come upon Mary or upon the Son of God or both. The lines “virgin-born ... ” and “upon whom ... ” can be read as stating that when Jesus was born the Spirit of God descended upon him and thereby God the Father adopted him as his Son, the Son destined to be his Messiah and Saviour. Presumably they are intended to teach that Jesus was born of Mary, the virgin, and that her conception of Jesus was caused by the direct action of the Holy Spirit, but one can only claim this if one already is familiar with the classic formulations of the Church in her authoritative Creeds.

The simplifying or carelessness in the expression of the classic dogma of the Person of Christ is seen in various collects and post-communions. The Post-Communion for Christmas Day runs:

God our Father,
whose Word has come among us
in the Holy Child of Bethlehem:
may the light of faith illumine our hearts
and shine in our words and deeds;
through him who is Christ the Lord.

The theological problem here is the way in which the Incarnation of the Word or Logos or Son¹ is presented. The use of prepositions in theology and collects is often critical for the conveying of what becomes accurate or inaccurate meaning. Here “in” is a bad choice for it suggests that the Son is contained in the baby Jesus as the yolk of an egg is contained in the shell. What theology has called “the hypostatic union”, that there is one Divine Person who is made known in two natures without any confusion, is hardly presented here. Rather it seems that this prayer joins Charles Wesley who erroneously (but attractively) wrote, “Veiled in flesh the Godhead see”, in his well known hymn, “Hark the Herald Angels Sing”.

In the Collect for the First Sunday of Christmas the petition to God the Father is, “grant that, as he [the Son] came to share our humanity, / so we may share the life of his divinity.” Again, the desire to simplify as much as possible has made something near to, if not, heresy. Certainly the eternal Son and Logos/Word took to himself and made his very own our human nature, which he received from the Blessed Virgin Mary. Certainly in spiritual union with him in the Body of Christ and by the action of the Holy Ghost, we partake of everlasting life, which comes to us as pure gift from the Father and the Son by the Holy Ghost. Yet it is not a matter of simple equivalency, that he shares our humanity and we share his divinity, as this Collect suggests. We can never be as he is—One Person with two natures, human and divine. We are each a single human being with only a human nature which by grace can be, as the Orthodox say, divinised and deified by the presence in it of the Holy Ghost.

The Post-Communion for “The Naming and Circumcision of Jesus” seems to have not rightly understood the Christological hymn in Philippians 2:5–11 where the humiliation and then the exaltation of Christ is described and celebrated. The hymn ends with his being given the Name above all names, the Name revealed to Moses at the burning bush, YHWH, the LORD. Yet we read:

Eternal God,
whose incarnate Son was given the Name of Saviour:
grant that we who have shared
in this sacrament of our salvation

may live out our years in the power
of the Name that is above all other names,
Jesus Christ our Lord.¹

First we have “the Name of Saviour” and then the title of “Jesus Christ our Lord” but there is no clarity as to what is the Name above all other names. Who would guess from this prayer that the Name is YHWH, LORD? Perhaps the confusion is caused by seeking to use Philippians 2 in a context where it is not directly applicable. There was no need in the final part of this Prayer to introduce “the Name that is above every name” (verse 9).

Having taken examples from the beginning of the Christian Year let us now turn to the end. The Post-Communion for The Last Sunday after Trinity (Bible Sunday!) tells “the God of all grace” that his Son Jesus Christ “fed the hungry with the bread of his life and the word of his kingdom.” Then it requests that he sustain his people “by your true and living bread”. Certainly Jesus, the Son, preached the Gospel or word of the kingdom and certainly according to John 6 he feeds people not only with material bread but with the bread that comes down from heaven, the bread of everlasting life. But to state that he fed the hungry “with the bread of his life” by the lakeside is to be in danger of losing the distinction between on the one hand the unique life of God, wholly possessed by the Father and the Son, the gift of everlasting life from the Father and the Son, which enters into human nature to sanctify it and immortalize it, and on the other ordinary bread as food.

Finally, a few more examples of carelessness or inaccuracy in statements of the doctrine of the Incarnation of our Lord. From the “Common of the Saints” here are the opening lines of the Collect for The Blessed Virgin Mary:

Almighty and everlasting God,
who stooped to raise fallen humanity
through the child-bearing of blessed Mary ...

Certainly the Blessed Virgin is the *Theotokos*, the birth-giver of God the Son in his assumed human nature, the Infant, Jesus. Certainly also Mary’s cooperation with the God of Israel was absolutely necessary to make the Incarnation of the Son possible. But, it is to exaggerate or to be imprecise to state that God raised fallen humanity by her child-bearing, for two reasons. First, God the Father raised fallen humanity in Christ to the heights of heaven through the total mission and saving work of the Son of God, not through Mary’s child-bearing; and secondly, “child-bearing” is a general expression and thus can refer to Mary’s having had other children as well as Jesus (which many Protestants believe that she did).

¹ *Common Worship*, p. 427

In the “Seasonal Provisions”¹ of Eucharistic Prefaces there are all kinds of expressions concerning the Incarnation which belong more to the ornately sentimental than to the plainly accurate. Yet there is one expression, left over from the translation of the Nicene Creed favoured in *The Alternative Service Book 1980* but discarded in *Common Worship*, that is retained. It is “by the power of the Holy Spirit” with reference to the conception of Jesus by Mary. The 1980 translation was: “by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate of the Virgin Mary” (in contrast to the *Prayer Book* rendering of “was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary”). Objections were made to the 1980 rendering on the ground that (a) there is no basis in the Greek or the Latin originals for “the power of”; and (b) theologically all of us are conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, for he energizes the act of procreation in the natural world, but the conception of Jesus was made unique, by the immediate personal presence of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity. However, the expression “by the power of” appears in several of these prefaces. For example, “was born of the Virgin Mary by the power of your Spirit”² and “Mary ... conceived by the power of your Holy Spirit.”³ The first of these is careless, suggesting that her giving birth rather than her conception was the time when the Holy Spirit was especially present and the second is inaccurate for she conceived “by the Holy Ghost” personally as the Nicene Creed teaches on the basis of Luke’s Gospel (1:35 where “Power of the Highest” is a Name of God).

In *Pastoral Services* there are several examples of carelessness in the stating of Christology. In “Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child” it is stated in the Introduction: “God became one of us in Jesus, and understands all that surrounds the arrival and upbringing of children ...”⁴ This is not a true statement. The only-begotten Son of the Father took to himself in the Virgin’s womb our human nature and made it his very own. God did not become one of us in Jesus but the Son of God Incarnate is named Jesus.

It is not often recognized that there are Christological (as well as devotional) implications in changes to the Calendar. Take the period of fifty days from Easter to Pentecost which, for over a thousand years in the West, and still so in the *Prayer Book*, included Easter Day, five Sundays after Easter, Ascension Day, the Sunday after Ascension and then Whit Sunday. Here the Feast of the Ascension is given the importance that, as a Festival of the Lord Jesus, it rightly deserves. There are forty days before it and ten days after it, following the biblical, chronological presentation in Acts 1 and 2. In *Common Worship*, beginning with Easter Day (which is called The

¹ pp. 300ff. ² p. 303 ³ p. 311 ⁴ p. 202

First Sunday of Easter) there are six other Sundays of Easter before the Feast of Pentecost. Here the attempt of the modern liturgists is to recover the period of “the great Fifty Days” of the third-century Church before the Feast of the Ascension gained prominence and entered the Calendar. The general effect of this piece of restoration of an ancient arrangement in a new context is that the Feast of the Ascension, and thus the doctrine of the Exaltation of the Lord Jesus, can be and is neglected, downplayed or ignored. Further, to add insult to injury, congregations are often taught that the public confession of sins in these fifty days is not appropriate because it is a period of celebration, which should not include penitence. (We have noted that in genuine biblical piety the true confession of sin is also the real praise of God, who is celebrated as just and merciful.)

It is perhaps worth observing that the results of the fixation of liturgists of the last third of the twentieth century on “the early Church”, and their attempts to put primitive patterns into modern worship to replace that which originated in the medieval period, are with us in all kinds of ways, with the most obvious being the general walkabout and greeting called “the passing of the peace” at the centre of the Eucharist. We can only speculate as to what liturgy would have looked like today had there been in the general culture and in the churches of the 1960s and 1970s (a) a deeper appreciation of the medieval centuries and what the Church achieved by the grace of God then, and (b) little or no fascination with the vaguely primitive and early as having a certain superiority to the later developed forms. Whatever “the Peace” actually was in the third and fourth centuries (and who really knows?) it developed in such a way that the Church abandoned that form of it. Thus it ceased to be a period of congregational movement and encounter and become a simple, quiet and dignified act between priest and people.

Conclusion

The simple point we are making is that modern liturgy should be as accurate as ancient liturgy when it comes to being faithful to Scripture as this Scripture was understood and given dogmatic expression by the Early Church and confirmed by the reformed Churches of the sixteenth centuries. Oversimplifying or dumbing down or sentimentalising are not appropriate when expressing the central, holy dogma of Mother Church. Further, when the results of simplifying occur in the Daily Office, its constant repetition causes imperfect and imprecise understanding of the basic dogma of the Church in some of her most devoted members, who pray daily in a structured way. We hear often the claim that “the law of praying is

the law of believing.” By this principle, claimed as coming from the Early Church, modern liturgists are able to change the doctrine of the Church. That is, they write their modern services in which there may be (unwittingly or deliberately) imprecision, vagueness or error in the expression of classic dogma. When the services are approved by a church synod their content is said to be what we are to believe on the basis of this “law”. In the Episcopal Church of the USA, this was given deliberate form in the new Catechism of the new Prayer Book, authorized in 1979. The committee which produced the Catechism did so by studying the new rites approved for this prayer book and by use of the inductive method produced the doctrine set forth in the Catechism, “An Outline of Faith”, of the Episcopal Church. Apparently no account was taken either of the classic Formularies of the Anglican Way or of the Rite 1 traditional texts in this enterprise. Thus the doctrines of God, Christ and Man within it do not obviously agree with the statement of these doctrines in the Formularies and in the dogma of the First Four Ecumenical Councils of the Church.

Happily, as yet no Catechism has been produced from the abundance of new material in the volumes of *Common Worship*. However, if the law of praying is the law of believing, we are in great danger. It is possible, as has been done in brief here, to go through the newer compositions of Liturgies, Litanies, Collects and Post-Communions and to show that some of them lack precision, or are even in clear error, in their presentation of such basic doctrines as theology proper (God), Christology, pneumatology, anthropology and soteriology. Again it seems that the quest for relevancy and intelligibility, that has so influenced the Church since the 1960s, has led to cutting corners and taking short cuts in linguistic expression. The result is often not the greater intelligibility that was the aim but, at best, vagueness. Sadly, one must also raise the possibility that this situation may also reflect the educational background of the writers who probably are not so well tutored in patristic and classic theology as were their forefathers, and this despite their preference for models from the Early Church.

Anglican Communion, especially America and New Zealand, gender inclusiveness is being developed and applied as much to deity as to humanity!

Revolution in the 1960s

When did the change in the addressing and naming of God occur? It seems clear that it began in the 1960s, gained momentum in the 1970s, has continued to roll since then and shows no sign of stopping in the new millennium. The 1960s was a time of social and cultural revolution in the Western world, especially in America. It was during this revolutionary period, and as an aspect of it, that all the mainstream churches of the English-speaking world, in their accommodation to the changing culture and Zeitgeist, began their move from addressing the Lord God as “Thou” to speaking to him as “You”. One can be reasonably sure that it was a cultural phenomenon, rather than a theological development, because it was not only the old Protestant Churches (e. g., Lutheran, Presbyterian, Anglican and Congregationalist) but the new Protestant Churches (e. g. Assemblies of God, Southern Baptists and Church of the Nazarene) who participated; and even more amazingly it was not only Protestants but also Roman Catholics, who far outnumbered any Protestant denomination in the USA, who joined in. This was a phenomenon that knew no denominational, sectarian or kith-and-kin boundaries.

With little preparation, and sometimes with unbridled enthusiasm, millions of Christians, tutored by preachers in white suits and clergy in black robes or bright vestments, dropped the traditional, long-standing English language of prayer that they had been using (alone or alongside Latin) in public worship. They replaced it with a contemporary form of English, taken from the secular idiom of the time, a language that—as was soon demonstrated—would be always open to adjustment and development, as society and culture changed. They read the Bible, said prayers, ministered sacraments, preached sermons and gave blessings in this new language that was called “contemporary” English to distinguish it from “traditional” English as found in the King James Version of the Bible, *The Book of Common Prayer* and their old hymnbooks. And in doing so they were told by their ministers that by making their services of worship more intelligible and simple, more accessible and relevant, more down to earth and less élite, they would attract and hold the young people (who in the 1960s and 1970s were apt to reject the old institutions of public life) and at the same time not drive away the older folks. And, together with the paradigmatic change in speaking to God, there came all kinds of further changes in what was said about him (or

CHAPTER TEN

*Thou and You*¹

In *Patterns for Worship* (1989) the Church of England Liturgical Commission provided guidelines to those who were writing their own local liturgy. Included in the nine points were these two: “Address God as you” and “Use language that includes women as well as men.”² It appears that in all the advice offered in the last decade by the experts to worship leaders in parishes, there is none that says, “It is quite all right to address God as ‘Thou’” and “Women are included in traditional English.”

A little of the total provision that is *Common Worship* is in the traditional language of prayer and worship—e. g., the Services of Holy Communion Order 1 and 2 in Traditional Language. In contrast, most of *Common Worship* is in what is called “contemporary language”, which both involves addressing the Deity as “You” and striving for gender inclusiveness so that feminists feel that they are included in the services. So, for example, instead of “brethren” we have “brothers and sisters” and instead of “the man” we have “the one” or “they”. This modern search for inclusiveness is in stark contrast to *The Book of Common Prayer* (1662), the King James Version of the Bible and the hymns of Charles Wesley and Isaac Watts, wherein the Deity is most clearly the “Thou-God” and the language is (by modern criteria) patriarchal, androcentric and sexist, even as it is also judged to be in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek and Latin of the Bible and the early Liturgies of the Church. However, it is most important to note that *Common Worship* has not yet gone as far down the road of gender inclusiveness as have other modern prayer books. The Holy Trinity and the Three Persons thereof are still named in the biblical, patristic and orthodox way as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and the pronoun “he” is used of the Godhead and the Persons thereof. In other parts of the

¹ This chapter makes use of Peter Toon and Louis R. Tarsitano, *Neither Archaic nor Obsolete*, 2003, to which the reader is referred for a fuller discussion.

² *Patterns for Worship*, p. 273

her), and done for him (or her), as well as in the music used to celebrate what was proclaimed as his/her enabling and affirming presence.

It will be recalled that in the late 1920s the Church of England prepared a revised edition of *The Book of Common Prayer* (1662) which was eventually not approved by Parliament because of its supposed “Romish” trends. However, the language, idiom and dialect of prayer were wholly in the very same traditional language as the *Prayer Book* of 1662 that it was intended to replace, and nobody at that time in Church, Parliament or general population in the British Empire thought this to be odd or wrong. Then, even after World War II and the social changes it caused, the Anglican Church of Canada published its revised version of the *Prayer Book* of 1662 in 1960/62 and once again this was wholly in the traditional language of prayer, with apparently no pressure for modern language, even though some of its content was affected by “the liturgical movement”, then gaining influence. Further, when in mid 1960s the process of “liturgical renewal” officially began in the Church of England, the first set of trial texts called Series 1 & 2, with their new structures or shapes and content, still used traditional language to address God.

Only in 1966 was the decision taken in the Liturgical Commission to begin to look into the possibility of producing modern language services. Thus in 1967 the Liturgical Commission published *Modern Liturgical Texts* and a year later the international Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops gave the green light to the use of contemporary language for God in the worldwide Anglican Communion of Churches, even as the Lambeth Conference ten years earlier had given the green light to liturgical revision (including departures from the structure and content of the classic *Prayer Book*). Alongside this dramatic change in Liturgy, and perhaps prior to it, a similar change was occurring in the translation of the Bible as new versions were being planned and produced to meet contemporary needs. So it came to be that the new “You-God” was encountered in both sacred Scripture and holy Liturgy, including new hymns and choruses.

It is well known that a living language does not change overnight but evolves slowly. Yet here, in English-speaking churches in the 1960s and 1970s, without any previous development and adaptation of language to draw upon, and no tried and tested models to follow, a dramatic and major change was achieved. There had been no trial runs to test the market, as it were—even though a few hymns and choruses had been around for a while addressing God as “You” or using “Thank you Lord” in a chorus. The revolution was quickly and efficiently executed, as if driven by an irresistible force. It was a change that involved no natural evolution. It was planned and decreed from the top but was not opposed over much at the bottom,

except for pockets of resistance such as those who formed societies for the defence of the *Prayer Book* and the *King James Version* of the Bible (the American Society for the Preservation of the Book of Common Prayer was formed in 1971 by academics who could see the trend and where it was going). The rapid move from the so-called “traditional” to the so-called “contemporary” is therefore more likely to be explained meaningfully in terms of religious, social and cultural factors rather than by the normal evolution of language. Many people were simply swept along by it without consciously saying “yes” to it. There was no public discussion followed by a referendum. The powerful cultural winds blew and kept on blowing and what they caused to happen just stayed there, albeit in an unstable form, ever searching for further development and expression.

To take one important case. Why did Evangelicals generally enthusiastically embrace the revolution? It appears that many evangelical Christians in America and Britain were taken up with the themes of relevance, intelligibility, accessibility and simplicity. They wanted to have a simple message from an accessible Bible using intelligible forms of services in plain person’s speech in order to evangelise their fellow citizens, especially the youth, and bring them into “a relationship” with the Saviour, Jesus Christ the Lord. They believed that the “traditional language” with its mystery and poetic quality was not, and could not ever be, effective to this end with the type of people who had inherited or caught the spirit of the 1960s. Modern people in a modern world dressing in modern clothing and using modern technology needed to hear a vibrant, modern message in a language that was much the same as they used and heard day by day. In short, it was believed that God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ would only become really and convincingly available, accessible and intelligible to the majority, if these divine Persons, together with the Holy Spirit, were addressed as “You”. To keep on using “Thou, Thee, Thy and Thine” with strange verb endings for God was to put people off and thus to miss a great opportunity to offer the gospel of the revolutionary Jesus Christ to a people who craved for the “New”.

Reasons offered by scholars and church leaders for totally new translations of the Bible (such as the *New International Version*, “the Evangelical Bible”, the *New English Bible*, the *Revised English Bible*), and for replacements for the *King James* (or *Authorized*) *Version*, the *Revised Version* and the *Revised Standard Version* (such as the *New Revised Standard Version*), included the availability of better manuscripts of the Greek New Testament, better knowledge of the Hebrew text of the Jewish Bible, the presence of archaic words in the old versions to be replaced, and that no distinction was made in the original Hebrew

or Greek between addressing God and a human being in terms of the pronouns and verb forms used. But at the street level the reason given for new versions and paraphrases was quite simple. The *King James Version* was not understood and modern language versions were needed to open the Bible to ordinary folk, young and old. Young Protestant ministers were taught in their colleges that they could not trust the KJV for it was not an accurate translation of the originals; they needed a modern, contemporary and accurate version from which to preach to a generation of young people who were rejecting the old ways. Further, young Anglican clergy were taught that *The Book of Common Prayer* was not based upon the best texts of the Bible in the original languages or the best understanding of the worship and doctrine of the Early Church. Moreover, it was supposedly written in a nearly inaccessible Tudor English and its content was too much concerned with painting human beings as “miserable sinners”. They needed not only an accurate but also a modern Prayer Book for leading the people in public prayer and genuine Celebration.

Many of the consequent innovations were presented as experimental. Whatever the genuine attractions of the reasoning behind them, forty years later we are in a better position to see that, in England at least, the experiments have missed their aim of bringing Christianity to ordinary people and the young.

At the same time, thousands of Roman Catholic parishes had begun using “contemporary” English for their Masses and the Roman Church was being shaken from top to bottom as it embraced *aggiornamento* (up-dating) and *reaccentramento* (re-centring). The decision by the Roman Catholic Church in the late 1960s to go from the Latin into the vernacular and to have one form of English for the whole and vast English-speaking world was taken in the Vatican in Rome. It was assumed that a basic English could be utilised that was intelligible and accessible to English-speaking Catholics wherever they lived, be it in North America, Australasia, the West Indies, Africa, the Philippines, India and so on. The resulting English Mass was in a form and style that no-one spoke, that was lacking any sense of mystery and transcendence, and that was only contemporary in the sense that it was not traditional. From those days to the present, there has been strong agitation within the Roman Church for improvement of the English as well as for a return to the use of Latin in some situations. And there is evidence that there is now a sympathetic ear in the Vatican City.

Underneath the call for relevance, intelligibility, accessibility and simplicity and the claims that better scholarship was being used for Bible translation and liturgical revision were other reasons, the underground springs that supplied the streams and lakes. These were

the ideas and ideologies that made the 1960s into a period of major discontent, change and revolution in the western world and in America in particular. All who lived in this period, even if cloistered in the Vatican, or drinking sherry in an English country rectory, or teaching in Oxbridge, breathed into their souls some of this new air and ferment. In fact, even those who rebelled against the innovations and changes of the time were affected by them, so powerful was this *Zeitgeist*! Having breathed in this new air and having been blown by this new wind, church leaders (without necessarily consciously thinking it through) felt impelled to introduce the new, be it a new language for worship, new forms of service, new designs for churches, new seating arrangements within them, new hymns, new music, new dress for clergy, new emphases for the agenda, a new ethos—a new gospel. It seemed at times that the 1960s had discovered and made available to the 1970s a new God, a God who was much more intelligible, accessible, available, plausible, believable, warm-hearted, friendly and less judgemental than the transcendent God of the 1950s and of traditional Christianity. In fact, in the 1960s he had been brought down from on high to be present within the “community of faith”. He had to be given a new name, the “You-God” and the name of the former God, the “Thou-God”, had to be used as little as possible—better, not at all.

Returning to what was happening in the Church of England, we may recall that Series 3 was the name given to a series of new trial services, addressing God as “You”, produced by the Liturgical Commission in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In introducing them the Commission wrote:

The change from *thou* to *you* when praying to God will be difficult for some people; but we must be careful to look at the problem in its true perspective. By a linguistic accident, the *thou*-form, which was a highly intimate mode of address in Cranmer’s day, has become generally obsolete; but through its survival in prayers it has acquired a sacral tone which the Reformers did not intend.¹

Most clergy apparently accepted this argument with little or no serious questioning, even though it is not a sound argument. They also accepted without much hesitation the (doubtful) argument presented by the translators of the new versions of the Bible—e. g., the *New English Bible*, *Jerusalem Bible* and *New International Version*—that there is nothing in the originals of the Bible to justify the use of different pronouns for God and man in modern English, since in Hebrew and Greek the same pronouns are used for both.

¹ *Commentary on Holy Communion Series 3*, 1973, p. 7

The Revolution Examined

So what people were told and what many of them came to believe from the 1970s in the English-speaking world went something like this: "There is absolutely no need any longer to address God with the archaic, second-person-singular pronoun (*thou, thee* with *thy & thine* and the old verb endings). It was right to use *thou* in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; but it is not right to do so today because we do not use this pronoun any more in contemporary English. We should use the same pronoun to God as we do to man, for to do so is to speak naturally and normally. In fact, in this usage we are being true to the spirit of the sixteenth-century Reformers who spoke and wrote in the idiom of their day. Further, the Bible in its original languages supports us in doing so for there the same pronouns are used of both God and man. God was not set apart for special linguistic treatment!"

We need to show why such claims are at least partly false, and why at the same time there are good reasons why intelligent people should have the opportunity to use in its fullness the official language of prayer of the Church of England.

We can all agree firstly that in the main languages used in the Bible and in the Church of East and West up to the sixteenth century there are two different second person pronouns, one for the singular and one for the plural. It is also true that the Lord God and Jesus Christ are addressed by the same pronoun as a man—second person singular. Thus in the rendering of the original texts into English in the sixteenth century the translators used the singular "thou/thee/thy/thine" of both God and one man/woman and used the plural "you/ye/your" of more than one person. They also followed the same rule in the rendering of medieval liturgical texts into English, as Archbishop Cranmer's translation and editing of the Collects amply demonstrates. Not surprisingly in 1611 the translators who created the *Authorized Version* of the Bible kept to this plan as they found it in the English *Prayer Book* and English Bibles of the sixteenth century.

In the second place we need to be aware that, while the second person singular ("thou") was widely used in the sixteenth century in everyday speech, the (grammatically speaking) second person plural ("you") was already used to one person in certain contexts, and used so regularly that *not* to use it would have been as extraordinary as for us to address a king as "thou". This distinction is even found in the 1662 *Prayer Book* and also, from 1549 onwards, in the Ordinal now usually included in copies of the *Prayer Book*. In the Catechism the catechumen is addressed both as "you" and "thou", to distinguish different relations to the Church and thus to God the Father—"you"

when he is viewed as being a Christian through the faith of his godparents acting on his behalf, and "thou" when he has embraced the faith for himself and stands in an immediate and intimate relation to God, the Father, as a believer.

The use of a second *singular* "you" in the "Form of Consecrating a Bishop" is even more informative. As the Archbishop delivers a Bible to the newly ordained bishop he addresses him to begin with, as we might expect, using the words *thysself, thou* and *thee*. Then, perhaps surprisingly, he switches to *ye* and *you*. "Be so merciful, that ye be not too remiss; so minister discipline, that you forget not mercy . . ." This is not because there is suddenly more than one bishop. With both "thou" and "you" one man is being addressed, and "you" is used just as we would use it, as a singular.

In each of the eight questions put to the bishop-elect, as well as in the introduction and final statement of the questioning, the Archbishop similarly addresses him as "you" and "ye". "Are you persuaded . . . ?", "Will you maintain . . . ?" and so on. Now in the parallel questions addressed to the candidates in the other two ordination services, of deacons and of priests, "you" is also used, but only when it is assumed that several men are being ordained together and so the plural is required. Nowhere in these two services is an individual man addressed as "you". So why are bishops treated differently? The explanation is not far to seek. In making these distinctions the Reformers were indeed using the language of their age—in which the normal address to God in the second person singular was already sharply distinct from the common speech of address to our earthly superiors. In the sixteenth century "thou" was the form of address in an intimate relation or to a social inferior, while "you" was already the *only* polite form of address to the great ones of the earth, the only variety being some odd uses of the *third* person: "Will your majesty dine?" and so on. There, the possessive pronoun is unmistakably the second plural used to one person. Since a bishop was a lord spiritual, he was properly addressed as a temporal lord or a king would have been, in the plural. However, in divine worship he is a servant of God and like everyone else can be "thou". This politeness of plural address was never extended to God.

Thus the word "thou" to God was already special in the sixteenth century and *did* have a sacral tone from the very beginning of liturgy in English. By the beginning of the seventeenth century the "thou" form was becoming obsolete among educated people in common conversation. It was regarded as a rustic form and used for addressing inferiors or even as a deliberately contemptuous form of humiliation; and it was retained by some poets. On the other hand the second singular was still unchallenged as the form of address to God.

From the seventeenth century onwards, then, “you” became the most used form in English for addressing one or more human beings and “thou” was increasingly used only to God. In *A Short English Grammar* (1753), written for the children in the Methodist Kingswood School, Bristol, John Wesley, the great communicator and evangelist, stated this principle most clearly as ordinary grammar: “We say ‘Thou, Thee’ to God and ‘You’ to man.” And this rule was used by his brother, Charles, in his 4,000-plus hymns. It was also the rule followed by virtually all educated English-speaking people from the seventeenth century to the 1960s. So for a long time when “thou” was unheard in common educated non-religious speech, no other pronoun was used to God.¹ The distinct, sacral language of prayer flourished and developed for four hundred years.

If asked why they addressed God as “Thou” and not as “You” in public worship, family devotions, metrical psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, people in the eighteenth, nineteenth or twentieth centuries gave reasons such as these: (a) its sacral tone communicates both a sense of apartness from God who is wholly different from us and a sense of intimacy with God who comes near to us in Christ Jesus by the Holy Ghost; (b) its being grammatically singular not plural underlines and upholds the Christian doctrine that God is One God, even though a Trinity of Persons (and that to call God “You” raises the possibility [yet not necessity] of Tritheism with God becoming a plurality not a unity); and (c) its long, deep and wide history as the focal point of the English tradition of prayer keeps the church of today in the full stream of English worship and devotion and preserves continuity of faith and worship.

With the experience of thirty or so years of “contemporary language” in church services, we can now demonstrate by simple comparisons that Liturgies and Directories (from various denominational sources) which use “Thou” generally have a stronger sense of human sin, of God’s holiness, of the absolute centrality of the saving work of Jesus Christ, and of the comfort of the Gospel, than those which use “You”. In fact “You” liturgies seem to belong to a different level, even type, of Christian doctrine as they usually claim to be celebratory, in contrast to what their users call the sombre and penitential nature of the “Thou” forms. Further, it is obvious to many of us that the “You” address to God not only has the effect of detaching us from our past (to which we surely belong in the communion of saints) but has also quickly adapted itself since the 1970s to the secular demands of society, as the continuing attempts by the churches to be inclusive and not gender-specific in their

¹ “Thou/thee” continues to be used for addressing human beings in certain rural and urban dialects in the twenty-first century; but the use is obsolete in standard English speech.

contemporary language of prayer well demonstrate. Without doubt we may say that the “You” idiom is in a state of flux and, as yet, no seemingly permanent form of it has been worked out.

In fact, as we have observed, not until the 1960s did any sizeable group of people even begin to think that the long-standing English language of public prayer was not appropriate for people who felt themselves to be totally modern. As well as those who had an evangelistic passion “to reach the unsaved” and saw the use of ordinary street language as a great advantage in communication, the “You” address to God was welcomed by those caught up in the revolutionary decades of the 1960s and 1970s. They felt that the change in pronoun brought God nearer to the people of a democratic and egalitarian world, with its emphasis upon human and civil rights and familiar relationships. They believed that a God to whom they could talk as to a fellow traveller better fitted where they were in the great search for up-to-date-ness (*aggiornamento*), relevancy, and meaningfulness in life.

Finally, we may note that the resistance to addressing the Lord God as “You” came from the minority (a) who were less caught up in the *Zeitgeist*; (b) who placed a high value on the inherited tradition of the language and literature of public prayer; (c) who strongly felt that there is a real and important—even necessary—sacral tone in the “Thou” address to God; (d) who believed that the communication of biblically orthodox doctrine in and for worship is almost inextricably tied to that form and idiom used and perfected over the centuries; (e) who held that the “You” form could not easily or quickly become a language of prayer if the qualities of reverence and intimacy, biblical orthodoxy and traditional devotion/piety were to be prominent, and (f) who challenged the assumptions of the liturgists that the only proper liturgical language is that of the man/woman in the street; and that language is no more than a means of communication, with no emotional, affective and numinous role. They felt that by insisting on the most commonplace language in worship the modern liturgists were making it difficult for people to have a sense of the wonder, mystery, majesty and glory of the eternal and infinite God.

Language and Style

Let us now move on to note why intelligent and informed people, including not a few distinguished writers and teachers of prose and poetry, have stated in varying degrees of intensity since the 1970s that modern liturgies, versions of the Bible and hymns for public worship have no style. It will be appreciated that this is a larger concern than merely criticising a change from “Thou” to “You” in

addressing God in public prayer. Let us presume in charity that they possibly know what they are talking about, that there is a possibility that they are at least in part right, and that we want to know precisely what it is they are saying and claiming. Further, let us confine ourselves specifically to Liturgy to keep the discussion manageable.

First of all, we need to clear the ground and explain what it is they are not saying when they say that there was no style in the contemporary rites printed in such books as *The Prayer Book* (1979) of the Episcopal Church, USA, *The Alternative Service Book 1980* of the Church of England, *The Book of Alternative Services* (1985) of the Anglican Church of Canada, and the Church of England *Common Worship* (2000). They are not saying that the Liturgical Commissions produced necessarily bad or illiterate prose or that these services are not in some ways educated and careful compositions. Further, they are not claiming that those who produced them had bad intentions such as desiring to undermine the Christian religion or drive people from churches. And they are not saying that some of these services are totally unattractive or without meaning to some people, especially those who feel that the church must move with the times. What they are saying is that these modern liturgies have no distinctive features of language specifically appropriate for their unique purpose as services of worship, because those distinctive and required features are not available in the modern world that gave them birth. They are also convinced that there is nothing to distinguish the language of modern liturgical rites from that of a piece of secular writing, except that technical words from the Bible and theology (e. g., grace and glory) and phrases from the old liturgy (“communion of saints”) are used by them, and that some pomposity of rhythm is occasionally attempted.

To make this point clearer and explain their case more carefully, we need to make use of several technical terms. We are all aware that our language can be used in a whole variety of ways and in differing contexts and circumstances. This is referred to as *register*, which may be defined as “a variety of language as used by a particular speaker or writer in a particular context”. And when a number or group of people, who share a common interest or purpose, use the same *register* in a reasonably consistent way, *register* becomes *style*. Here *style* is not something to be praised or blamed as such for it is a descriptive not an evaluative way of speaking.

There are many examples of *style* in English—e. g., that used for debates in the British House of Commons, for addressing judge and jury in courts of law, for the composing of pop songs, for the working of computers, for describing American football, and so on. The form

of language in each of these examples is clearly recognizable as belonging to a specific context and usually serves little or no purpose outside that context.

Is there a *style* for public worship in English that is recognizable? Yes there is and it is that found in *The Book of Common Prayer*, the *King James Version* of the Bible and in classic English hymnody (Watts, Wesley, Keble etc.). Certainly this *style* was much better known in 1960, but it is still known and recognized today. People who are not regular churchgoers recognize this *style* immediately when, for example, the traditional forms of the Ten Commandments or the Lord’s Prayer or the Apostles’ Creed or “Thus saith the Lord” are quoted. If people hear, “And with thy spirit,” most recognize religious language, but this is hardly the case if they hear its modern form “And also with you”. This point also applies in the use of phrases (“world without end”), clauses (“hallowed be thy Name”) and sentences (e. g., “Those whom God has joined together let no man put asunder”).

The central point that the critics of modern liturgies have made is that there is no religious *style* available in written and spoken contemporary English. That is, there are no appropriate *registers* to communicate certain basic feelings and convictions—e. g., for awe and reverence towards superiors, for earnest petition of what we cannot demand as a right, and for love which we know we are unworthy to express except by permission of the beloved. Social structures and family relations have changed and contemporary language has necessarily changed with changes in society and culture (and thus modern language is disposed towards the democratic, egalitarian and utilitarian). However, the absolute need for certain forms of expression, relatedness and address in the public language of worship has not changed because of the need to communicate certain givens (e. g., concerning the nature and character of God and the situation and need of man) that are there in the basic Revelation to which the Holy Scriptures witness and of which the Liturgy speaks and sings.

The critics think that the creators of modern liturgical texts had a most difficult and probably impossible task, for they sought to produce in a modern form of language a style that the language itself could not in its late twentieth-century or early twenty-first century modern forms fully deliver or allow. The reason for this is that it does not contain a *register* of what may be called the basics of a modern religious language that can communicate at one and the same time reverence and contrition before a transcendent, holy God and genuine intimacy with him in communion, fellowship and friendship through his grace. Sometimes half-aware of this, modern liturgists

have sought to make use of the traditional language of prayer (e. g., the verb, "Grant ..."); but language wrenched from its original context and placed in an unfamiliar context shows that it is not working by sounding and feeling odd.

So (the critics conclude) it has in reason to be accepted that only one genuine religious *style* is available, and that this traditional language of prayer and worship has the real potential to put people in the right mood and disposition for reverence and attention before God and for intimate communion with God (if he graciously makes this possible). It alone has the potential and wherewithal (as God allows) to make possible the subtle and varied relation of the worshipper to the Holy Trinity, who is Creator, Redeemer and Judge. While modern forms of English, using theological terms, may take pilgrims some of the way towards worshipping the LORD God in spirit and in truth and in the beauty of holiness, only the genuine *style* of traditional language of public prayer can do the work really well (again as God graciously permits). The fact that the traditional language/style of prayer was fashioned in Tudor English and then used everywhere by all until the 1960s is, for devout Christians, part of the providence of God that they gladly accept.

Conclusion

We may regret that the slow and solid development of the English idiom and classic language of prayer was virtually stopped short in the 1960s. Had it not been so we do not know what could have been—e. g., in the writing of new hymns to express Christian Faith in the conditions of the late twentieth or early twenty-first century. Further, we do not know what solid improvements there could have been made to *The Book of Common Prayer* (1662) if Liturgical Commissions had actually lived within and sought to think within the received English language and style of common prayer.

What is not usually recognized is the significance of the fact that the Formularies of the Church of England—*Prayer Book*, Articles and Ordinal—are themselves written in the traditional idiom of the language of prayer and doctrine. Therefore, even as these Formularies stand as more authoritative than any form of alternative services and statements of faith (even those in *Common Worship*), so the classic, traditional language stands before the modern attempts to create a new language for public worship and translation of the Bible. Therefore the official language of public prayer of the National Church remains that found in the *Prayer Book* and the *King James Version* of the Bible. In saying this it needs also to be admitted that since at least the seventeenth century the sermon and notices were

given in the modern form where "you" serves for both singular and plural when human beings are addressed outside the liturgy and its Bible readings. However, what is absolutely clear is that the authentic English language of public prayer addresses God as "Thou" not "You", and in providing the guideline, cited above, "Address God as you," the Liturgical Commission was exceeding its authority and giving bad advice.

Bearing this in mind, it is probably unwise in public worship to mix the two different languages of prayer, the so called "traditional" and "contemporary". The traditional has been around for a very long time, possesses a logic of its own, and has acquired a style in which meaning is associated with particular forms of words and expressions. In contrast, the new one is still searching for an identity and its own logic and style. The two do not mix well, even at all, even as oil and water do not mix. It would therefore seem to be the case that it was a major mistake to include in *Common Worship* actual texts from *The Book of Common Prayer* even if these texts are adapted and modified and thus not precisely the same as their originals. They are, however, of the same shape and with nearly identical ingredients. As used within the general provisions of *Common Worship* and alongside a Psalter, Bible and Prayers that are most likely to be in contemporary language, the logic of language and the internal consistency and style of the traditional language is broken. And there is the further point, which has been made elsewhere, that if *The Book of Common Prayer* is the standard against which the doctrine of *Common Worship* is to be judged, that permanent standard should not be part of the temporary usage.

Epilogue

It would be foolish to underestimate the challenge being faced by the Church of England as a national and established Church situated in a secular culture which has deeply penetrated individuals and society as a whole. Though a majority of citizens of Great Britain state on their Census form that they are Christians, their expression of that religious preference is rarely through public worship, except at Christmas and at weddings and funerals. More often it is in private forms and ways. Thus the question of how to attract people to the regular public worship of God in the Name of Jesus Christ in such a nation is not easy to solve, especially when the Church has chosen to replace the ancient forms of service provided in *The Book of Common Prayer* with a major modern Directory of options for services. Once the tried and the familiar, with minimal choice, is set aside and replaced by the multiple choice of a kind of religious supermarket, one real problem becomes what to choose from the seemingly endless possibilities and permutations.

The General Synod of the Church of England has moved, from the position of presenting to the nation the possibility of either worship according to the *Prayer Book* or according to the limited choices within *The Alternative Service Book 1980*, to offering to the nation from 2000 one vast collection of outlines and ingredients for services under the general title of *Common Worship* and including the primary services of the *Prayer Book* within this collection. And it has done so while paying lip service to the authority of the *Prayer Book* of 1662 as a primary Formulary of the Church. Let it be clear that Synod has not attempted to ban the *Prayer Book*, which only the Parliament could do; but, it has sent out the message, if only in sign language, that parishes no longer really need the *Prayer Book* even if they intend to use its provisions, since its major content is located within the main volume of *Common Worship*. This noted, one needs also to state that it is generally agreed in the General Synod that, in the Church of England as a whole, the attitude towards *The Book of Common Prayer* (1662) is considerably more favourable than it was in 1980 when, by

all accounts, overtly hostile attitudes towards the *Prayer Book* were far from uncommon. Further, if Synod had the power to ban the *Prayer Book*, such a move would be overwhelmingly rejected now (which it might not have been a couple of decades ago). But the position of the *Prayer Book* has changed. In 2003 *The Book of Common Prayer* is regarded only as one small though essential ingredient of the “smorgasbord” that is the liturgy of the modern Church.

So we find in 2003 that the Liturgical Commission on behalf of the General Synod has produced for the Church of England a vast liturgical provision or Directory called *Common Worship*, and alongside it has produced explanatory essays and books, which local worship leaders are encouraged to study before planning local services. Despite its great bulk, the production of the corpus is a task that is not yet ended since texts already produced have a restricted life and have to be revised and new ones (e. g., on initiation) have to be designed and produced. In comparison, the provision within *The Alternative Service Book 1980* was, despite its weaknesses in doctrine and style, a much smaller, restricted, unified and somewhat simple alternative to the *Prayer Book*.

In a task so vast, taken on by a national Church seeking to be comprehensive, open to the winds of change blowing through society, and attempting to attract people with privatised religion back to public worship, the probability of making mistakes, and getting important as well as minor things wrong, is great. So anyone of a sound mind and sensitive disposition, who buys the various volumes and takes the time carefully and sympathetically to review rationally and calmly the basic design and contents of the enterprise, soon realises that parts of this collection are strange, wrong or misguided. It is as if the Synod and Commission were engaged in a task that began to define them rather than they it and so they did not know when to stop (and still do not seem to know as the publication of *Additional Collects* in 2003 shows). There is apparently a satisfaction for the liturgist in the constant planning, creating and getting approved, and a related satisfaction for much of the Synod in vetting and approving this or that new service, set of prayers, or advice on how to put together a suitable public service of worship.

The most obvious thing wrong with the whole thing is the title. To call the whole by the adjective “Common” is to enter into a basic redefinition of the word and call something the very opposite of its true nature. “Common” in religious usage has for centuries pointed to the specific liturgy of *The Book of Common Prayer*, a liturgy which has a fixed structure and content and thus presents very little scope for innovation locally, except in the addition of hymns and ceremonial. The effect of this vast provision of *Common Worship* with

its many options is certainly not to produce a common way, structure and content of public worship at the parish level throughout the two provinces of the Church of England. It is rather to create a situation where each parish does what is pleasing in its own estimation and judgement, believing that it is being "led by the Spirit" as its "worship leaders" meet regularly to plan the public services for the next Lord's Day, choosing a shape and ingredients from the possibilities provided. Innovation and change rather than tradition and stability are the names of the game. Thus parishes a few miles apart geographically may be a million miles apart liturgically in terms of the form and contents of worship as well as in the idiom of prayer used. If they notice this and begin to ask probing questions, it will be told them by Rural Dean, Archdeacon or Bishop that if they are getting the shape/structure of the service right and are putting into it only approved ingredients (supplied in the volumes of *Common Worship*) then they will truly be making it possible for people to worship God in a modern, dynamic way.

Another serious problem that is noticed in reviewing the texts is that the preferred language of the Synod and Liturgical Commission, the idiom known as "contemporary liturgical language", is not a stable language. Rather, it is a changing language as it both seeks to retain traditional words, expressions and syntax from the old texts and also absorbs certain ways of speech and prohibitions from the secular agenda of the world. Even within the texts produced by the Commission and approved by Synod over the last decade one can see changes made in the language. On the one hand, the liturgists are more conscious of the demands of, say, the feminist movement in 2003 than they were in 1999 and, on the other, at the same time, they want to bring on board those whose piety is still rooted in the idiom of the old *Prayer Book*. Thus, even as linguistic changes have been made in 2000 to the texts approved in 1980, so it is highly likely that much of the material in the present texts will be judged inappropriate in ten years' time, simply because what is deemed acceptable in terms both of speaking of human beings and of describing and addressing God will have changed.

Further, one cannot help noticing that, within the multiple ingredients in the variety of options that are provided in contemporary language for *Common Worship*, there are examples of imprecision in the statements of the central dogmas of the Faith, of disagreement with the theology of the classic Formularies, of poor translation of original texts, of misuse or misunderstanding of biblical texts and sources, of overplaying the "social gospel", of diminishing the significance of sin and the crucial importance of personal salvation, of unsuitable phrases and images in prayers, of unutterable prayers,

of excessive simplifying or dumbing down, of failure to make anything memorable, of not producing a sense of the numinous, of being too related to the "horizontal" and too little to the "transcendent" dimension of grace, and of slack phrasing and syntax. Then, also, it is not surprising that, as the whole thing grows in size, doctrine or instruction in one volume contradicts that in another.

Then, we must not avoid facing the serious question as to whether the power to invent our own services for public worship is good for us as scholars in the school of Christ Jesus. We need to ask: Does the "perfect freedom" of his service mean the same as the freedom of supermarket shopping? however restrictive our choices may seem to others? Making up our own services according to our own tastes can be a way of avoiding spiritual discipline and the painful aspects of sanctification. Rather than facing the regular demand to conform ourselves to the Word of God and to be shaped by the Holy Ghost according to the doctrine and discipline of the Church, the constant choice—by the few entrusted to do so—of content and ingredients replaces the idea of an ascetic rule with one of personal preference. It is a typical vision of modern life: specific and hard-edged content is replaced by technique or a common "structure". However, without the fixed content, the shape, with the variable ingredients, can become a vain form. This kind of "Common Worship" makes self-expression more important than formation in godly habits and holiness. The intercessions become "prayers of the people", the peace enforces sentimental cosiness, and making sure that as many people as possible get a public role in the "main Sunday service" is viewed as more important than having things done well. The theological implications of making the priest (already construed as the President) into a Master of Ceremonies seem not to be considered. This changed understanding of worship and sanctification may be a bigger challenge to classical Common Prayer and all that it entails than the actual content of the "Common Worship multiplex".

It appears to be the case that in 2003 many ordinary members of the Church of England are blissfully unaware of the whole story and provisions of *Common Worship*. They may be aware of the main volume which some churches have placed in the pews, but more likely they have their services for Sundays, Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals printed in a booklet and so do not see any of the several volumes. In fact, it appears to be widely believed amongst the laity that *Common Worship* is simply the most recent form of a modern language alternative to the *Prayer Book*, replacing the book they were recently told to send for (reverent) recycling, which they called "the ASB". They change their car every five years or so and thus they are not too surprised to see their modern liturgy changing every twenty

years. However, as they do not change their old Georgian or Victorian house for a modern purpose-built mobile home, so they do not expect *The Book of Common Prayer* to disappear from the bookshelves at the back of the church, and they are upset when it is taken away by impetuous clergy. Most of the faithful are not yet aware of the massive effort of bishops, liturgists and some clergy during the last decade to broaden the meaning of "common prayer" so that the ancient book of that name is merely one optional element in the totality of possible options and permutations. In fact they do not yet grasp fully the fact that a revolution has occurred in their church. Sooner or later they will catch up with the news.

A calm consideration of the situation suggests that the Church of England has embarked upon a path leading to a goal which will eventually be utter confusion of identity, style and commonality. The flood gates of choice have been opened and the pressure of the waters, energized by the *Zeitgeist*, is pushing them open even wider. Good people will grow increasingly weary as they have to choose continually what to include in their Sunday worship or as they have to endure the results of that choice. Those outside the churches who could be attracted to enter them will be turned off by the inability of the Church of England, as a National Church, to present a coherent message and form of worship for the nation. People everywhere, including the young, will become confused, upset and angry because deep down in their souls they yearn for solidity, stability and excellence in public worship. It seems probable that *Common Worship* will eventually collapse under its own weight and volume, even if every incumbent and lay leader has it all on the hard drive of his computer as well as on CDs. The vast provision takes so much time and preparation to consider carefully, and does so when time is precious, since the work load of the clergy and lay leaders of the Church of England is getting heavier, not lighter, as patterns of ministry are radically changed to face economic and pastoral reality. What is there to say except that the situation is a real mess and will get worse because the continuous manufacture of new "worship material" is not improving it!

So it is hardly surprising that groups of dedicated churchmen are rejecting the path of *Common Worship*. Probably five hundred parishes, maybe more, that are linked to the Forward in Faith movement, and that are Anglo-Catholic in doctrine and worship, have already voted with their feet, as it were. They conform their practice to that of the Church of Rome and use the Missal, Sacramentary and Breviary of that Church, even though many in their number recognize the poor quality of the English idiom used in these texts. Then there is another minority voice firmly yet gently

saying that there is nothing wrong with the ideal of common prayer, that is, with the post-sixteenth-century tradition of forms of worship uniform throughout a large Church, which system served both the Church of England and the Church of Rome well for many years. One of the most important virtues of *The Book of Common Prayer* is having all the necessary elements for worship bound together in a single volume that is the common possession of clergy and people. As soon as one begins to approach the "smorgasbord" of liturgical options that *Common Worship* provides the balance is inappropriately tipped in favour of the "designer" whether the clergy or a local committee including the lay insiders. Better to have one book, the *Prayer Book*, and submit to the discipline of learning its devotional logic and inviting others to join in this spiritually energizing exercise.

Those who have decided or will decide to stand with *The Book of Common Prayer*, to use it and to promote its use, and not to encourage the use of *Common Worship*, will act well within the spirit and the law of the land and of the Church. Not only should they seek to make their use of the services of the *Prayer Book* reverent and attractive to those who are genuinely searching for meaning—for God—in their lives, but they should also seek to do much alongside the use of, and in harmony with, the *Prayer Book* to encourage people to leave their privatised religion, join in the truly Common Prayer and experience the fellowship of the Household of God. There is obviously opportunity to use modern means of communication through web sites, video and sound cassettes to CDs to promote classical worship that is different in ethos and content to what is provided by way of entertainment and edification in the world around. And, of course, the way is wide open to offer an apologetic for and instruction in the godly life to which the *Prayer Book*, using the Bible, calls us.

Then there is some mileage in exploring the need for supplementary forms of worship that cater for modern situations not envisaged by *The Book of Common Prayer* (1662). For example, there is a need for some kind of children's liturgy (specifically for children, rather than for "family" or "all-age" services attended by adults for their own benefit, as well as by children). This could be a simplified act of worship including such elements as the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, the short (and in some cases long) form of the Commandments and the Collect of the Day in their *Prayer Book* forms and words, with appropriate teaching and some special children's prayers composed in the same idiom as used in the *Prayer Book*. This would help to dispel the totally unfounded assumption that children's services cannot and should not be done with traditional texts in the classical English language of public prayer.

After all, we know that in England thousands of children go several times each week after school to mosque, synagogue and temple to learn prayers and texts in Arabic, Hebrew and Punjabi! Yet another area for exploration is the revival of the writing of hymns in the classic idiom of public prayer and providing a hymnbook for use with the *Prayer Book* that is wholly supportive of it.

Although many will seek to live in both worlds, that of Common Prayer and “Common Worship”, perhaps the best way forward is not to mix these two but to see *Common Worship* for what it is, an alternative to but not replacement of, the real *Common Prayer*. Thus parishes are to be encouraged to choose which of these ways to follow, the original or the innovative, in order to bring a consistency of theory and practice to the parish life. *Common Prayer* is by its nature jealous of its position and does not sit happily with competitors. When it is not followed according to its own internal rules it ceases to be what it is, a total provision, in well tried and stable ways, for a whole nation, a whole parish, a complete family and a baptized believer of a godly life through the worship of God.

To conclude. *Common Worship*, despite the scale of its innovations, its concern with Shape and its pastoral sensitivities, is not truly a viable alternative to *The Book of Common Prayer*. It has too many volumes, in which are too many rites and options, not a few of which are of mediocre quality as spoken English. It is imaginatively impoverished by the dominance of the single image of “a journey”, and, finally, as we have shown, *Common Worship* is of doubtful orthodoxy as Christian liturgy.