

# ANGLICAN WAY

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# Reflections FROM THE Editor's Desk

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The baptismal rite found in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, which is the official prayer book of the Church of England, has some features which are lacking in the baptismal rite found in the 1928 American Book of Common Prayer. In this issue, the Reverend G. G. Dunbar explains, through the work of the late Stephen Sykes, Bishop of Ely and professor of Divinity at the universities of Durham and Cambridge, why the baptismal service of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer has a commendable “depth and subtlety of content and structure” which is pastoral, catechetical and evangelical.

Also included is an excerpt from the talk given last year by Canon Ashley Null at the Peter Toon Memorial Lecture. Null, author of *Thomas Cranmer's Doctrine of Repentance: Renewing the Power to Love*, spoke on Cranmer's Comfortable Words. This year's Peter Toon lecture will take place at Pusey House, Oxford on June 10, 2015. (See advertisement below.) The Reverend Dr. Paul Russell, lecturer at the seminary of the Anglican Province of Christ the King, who is learned in the early church, describes the history of the offices of bishop and priest and deacon, so to better understand how the three fold ministry developed.

Reading Lewis' *The Abolition of Man* around the same time as re-reading St Athanasius' *On the Incarnation*, suggested to me that there is a correspondence between the drive to technological mastery that characterizes modern science and the rise of process theology, which views God as subject to human passions, and to human understanding in history. St. Athanasius (296–373 A.D.) was at pains to show that

God's Word, through whom all things are made and redeemed, is eternally-begotten and unchanging. His position was developed in opposition to Arius the Deacon who maintained that Christ or the Word was the “first-created being” of God the Father. But just as his position was useful in combatting ancient heresy, it might be helpful in defeating a modern one as well.

Fr. Peter Geromel has contributed a useful article on why pastors should adopt the service for the Visitation for Prisoners, which appeared in the American Books of Common Prayer prior to 1928. My own observation is that he is probably right. A number of years ago, when my husband taught at a college in a small midwestern city, where there were a few prisons nearby, we observed that the local Episcopal minister never visited the local prisons. Yet, each Sunday the local Roman Catholic priest visited the inmates in those prisons, accompanied by two of our fellow faculty members who provided music for the mass. Other faculty members held Bible studies for inmates behind bars. I was told that the Episcopalians in prison attended the Roman Catholic services, as there was no other sacramental service available. This seemed to me rather sad, and draws attention not only to the lack of a rite in either the 1928 or the 1979 prayer books, but also, how easy it is for the busy parish priest to forget to visit those who are behind bars. Also included in this issue is a reprint of an article from *Crossways* magazine, on the appeal of traditional prayer, and finally there is a short history of the Puritan prayer books of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, written in the midst of great theological and ecclesiastical dispute.

## Anglican Way

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The 35th Annual Atlantic Theological Conference will take place June 21–24 at St. Peter’s Cathedral, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. The title of this year’s conference is: “The Outward Sense Befriending”: The Beautiful, the True, and the Good. Among this year’s speakers are Dr. Anthony Esolen, Professor of English, Providence College, Providence R.I., and Dr. Douglas Hedley, Reader in Hermeneutics and Metaphysics, Clare College, Cambridge. The papers will be interesting and informative as usual.



The 2015 Peter Toon Memorial Lecture takes place on [Wednesday June 10](#) Pusey House, Oxford, England  
Tea at 4 pm, Evensong 5pm–6pm,  
followed by a Lecture from 6pm–7pm  
The Speaker will be The Reverend Dr. George Westhaver, Principal of Pusey House

## FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE PRAYER BOOK SOCIETY

The Reverend G. G. Dunbar, St. John’s Episcopal Church, Savannah, Georgia

# Stephen Sykes on the Prayer Book Order of Baptism

In the 20th century, baptism was one of the defining preoccupations of the Liturgical Movement, and by its standards the Prayer Book service was often found wanting, to be severely criticized or timidly defended. One of the few sympathetic readers of the Prayer Book order of Baptism (1552/1662) was the late Stephen Sykes, a scholar and priest who combined academic distinction with pastoral gifts, first as professor of Divinity at Durham and Cambridge, and then as Bishop of Ely. Sykes was a late 20th century moderate English liberal of a familiar kind, but in an essay collected in *Unashamed Anglicanism* (1995), “Baptisme doth Represente unto us Oure Profession,” he proved himself a perceptive reader of the classical liturgy apart from the rigid orthodoxies of the liturgists.

Sykes acknowledges the doctrinal importance of the Prayer Book: “attention to the ‘inheritance’ of the BCP is . . . an integral element (to put it no higher) in the theological formation of all Anglicans” (p. 8). Nonetheless, he cautions against viewing liturgies simply as “repositories of doctrine,” and examining them “as though they were simply a collection of dogmatic declarations or confessional statements put into the mouths of priest and people.” He is more severe towards the source-critical approach dominant among liturgists, which treats the liturgical text “as a pastiche of elements drawn from earlier sources.” The analysis of a liturgical text in terms of its sources yields “quick and easy comparisons of a strictly limited character,” but there are other “less sterile perspectives” in

which they may be understood. Sykes was no devotee of the Liturgical Movement.

Over against the limitations of these approaches, he welcomes the wider perspectives permitted by reader-response theory: “it remains the case that ‘reading’ the text of the ministration of baptism involves being responsive to what is conveyed to the participant by its structure, dramatic actions, rhythms and repetitions as well as by its overt doctrines” (p. 8).

### Structure

In accord with this approach, Sykes attends carefully to the structure of the service. Broadly speaking, it consists of three elements: a ministry of the Word (centered on the gospel lesson) and of the Sacrament (centered on the Baptism proper) with a “hinge” element between them, consisting of the promises made by the godparents on behalf of the child, “the human response to God’s promises declared in the gospel.” He correctly concludes that “the whole service, therefore, has the form of a covenant between God and the child, initiated from God’s side,” and, one might add, administered in the community of faith, the church, as represented by the godparents, as well as parents and clergy. Within this covenantal structure (about which more anon), Sykes discerns a structure of key repetitions.

### ‘Receiving’

This first of these repetitions is that of the words “receive” or “reception.” They appear in each of the



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### Mission Statement

*The Society is dedicated to the preservation, understanding, and propagation of the Anglican Doctrine as contained in the traditional editions of The Book of Common Prayer.*

introductory texts leading up to the gospel (Mark 10, “Suffer the little children to come unto me”), and in the address which follows the gospel, with its “emotionally powerful image of the child being embraced in the arms of Jesus’ mercy,” the “affective heart of this liturgy.” In all the word “receive” is repeated ten times at regular intervals throughout the entire service—so that “Cranmer’s liturgy . . . was, by reason of its structure, drama, and repetitions, a liturgy proclaiming Christ’s reception of little children.”

When the priest at the height of the drama takes the child into his arms he is doing what Christ himself did. The congregation witnesses Christ’s own embrace. The sacrament is God’s own act. . . . Thus the theology, Gospel reading, drama, and repetitions cohere in the word “receive.”

Sykes is withering about the omission of Mark 10 by the new liturgists (so ASB 1980, BAS 1985 et al.) on the grounds that it does not refer explicitly to baptism:

This is pedantry of the first order. We already know from the text of the liturgy that the Church has been commanded to baptize. The justification for baptizing infants lies not in any direct precedent of Christ’s, but in the quality of his response to little children, conveyed by the phrase ‘embrace with the arms of his mercy.’

What Sykes calls pedantry might also be called literalism: the same kind of thinking that objects to the gospel of Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem on the first Sunday in Advent, or to penitential themes after the absolution has been pronounced.

## Promise

The other structurally significant repetition Sykes identifies is that of the word “promise”—found in the “promise” prayer at the beginning, “as though daring the participants . . . to disbelieve”. After the address after the gospel exhorts the listeners to earnest belief, the theme of promise reappears, this time not only as the promise of God, but also the promise of man:

Ye have heard also that our Lord Jesus Christ hath *promised* in his Gospel to grant all those things that ye have prayed for: which *promise* he, for his part, will most surely keep and perform. Wherefore, after this *promise* made by Christ, this Infant must also faithfully, for his part, *promise* by you that are his sureties (until he come of age to take it upon himself) that he will renounce the devil and all his works, and constantly believe God’s holy Word, and obediently keep his commandments. . . .

Faith in the gracious promises of Christ is of course a cornerstone of Reformation orthodoxy; but Sykes notes that the “theme of promise amounts to a structural element, not just a doctrinal allusion”:

The permeation of the theme of promise throughout the service suggests that the life of the participant is itself being structured by the liturgy. (p. 13)

Baptism is not just a momentary event in one’s life: it is “a reminder of the Christian profession, a structure and framework for the whole of Christian living.” And at various points, the service provides comprehensive summaries of our life in Christ, as a three stage sequence of “deliverance from sin, sanctification, and entry into the kingdom” (p. 14).

This three-stage sequence is alluded to in the opening prayers, in the address to the godparents before the baptismal vows, and in the prayer of thanksgiving after the baptism, in which the new beginning of the child in baptism now shapes a new life and a new destiny:

We yield thee hearty thanks most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this Infant with thy Holy Spirit, to receive him for thine own Child by adoption, and to incorporate him into thy holy Church. And humbly we beseech thee to grant, that he, being dead unto sin, and living unto righteousness, and being buried with Christ in his death, may crucify the old man, and utterly abolish the whole body of sin; and that, as he is made partaker of the death of thy Son, he may also be partaker of his resurrection; so that finally, with the residue of thy holy Church, he may be an inheritor of thine everlasting kingdom; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

There is the beginning—regeneration, adoption, incorporation into the Church, deliverance from sin unto righteousness. There is also the ongoing sanctification: because those who are objectively dead to sin, alive to righteousness, and “buried with Christ in his death,” now cooperate with the grace of Christ as they actively “crucify the old man [the sinful nature], and utterly abolish the whole body of sin” (the language here is entirely scriptural, and draws on Romans 6, as well as Galatians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:24; Colossians 2:12,13; 3:1–15). There also is the glorious destiny, of participation in Christ’s own bodily resurrection to glory, and the inheritance of the kingdom.

The final exhortation to the godparents and other participants draws again on Romans 6 and similar passages to drive home the way Baptism shapes Christian life on a daily basis:

Remembering always, that Baptism doth represent unto us our profession; which is, to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto him; that, as he died and rose again for us, so should we, who are baptized, die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness; continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living.

The Order of Baptism sets before us more than once the three stages in the “following of Christ,” in his death and resurrection. It begins with the atoning work of Christ: “He died and rose again for us” there is the objective side of our redemption, set forth in the Sacrament of Baptism, which is both a deliverance from or remission of sin, but also a new beginning in regeneration, adoption, incorporation. This objective work then becomes the pattern or template of the new life it confers: “that, as he died, and rose again for us, so should we, who are baptized, die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness; continually mortifying [i.e. putting to death] all our evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding [i.e. increasing] in all virtue and godliness of living.” What is *received* by means of faith then becomes something we *do* in the work of ongoing sanctification and moral renewal.

### Open-endedness

Sykes’ final structural observation concerns its open-endedness. “Indeed it hardly ends at all.” When it is administered in the context of Morning or Evening Prayer (the norm), the service continues with one of the gospel canticles—an appropriate response of praise and thanksgiving for the grace proclaimed in the sacrament—and continues with the Creed and prayers. When it is administered privately, it simply stops. Either way, as Sykes comments, “it is wholly appropriate that there should be no formal closure, because the liturgy itself opens out on to the daily service of the church, the life of growth in all virtue and godliness of living.” This theme, of growth and increase, Sykes points out, appears in the prayer of thanksgiving after the ministry of the Word (“we give thee humble thanks, that thou hast vouchsafed to call us, to the knowledge of thy grace, and faith in thee: increase this knowledge, and confirm his faith in us evermore”), in the short “Grant” prayers that follow the baptismal promises, and of course in the final exhortation already cited.

In other words, this liturgy is characterized by a structure and a pattern of repetitions expressive of the way in which a Christian becomes involved in the divine plan, and the consequences of having done so. The structure focuses the drama upon the child, deploying the powerful thought of divine tenderness towards small children, but at the same time addresses adult participants through the metaphor of growth to maturity. It deliberately sets out to remind all present of the fundamental character of their own baptism, and to reinforce and encourage Christians in the profession of their faith. (p 16)

Sykes’ reading reveals “a depth and subtlety of content and structure” in the Prayer Book Order of Baptism which few others have noted, at least in recent times. Others have noted the theological and rhetorical aspects of Cranmer’s liturgy: Sykes’ reading

brings out his pastoral, catechetical, and evangelistic approach. Ironically, the new liturgists, who criticized Cranmer’s liturgy so harshly, and abolished it in the name of a new integration of liturgy and life, failed to note that the very features they disliked (the key repetitions, for instance, the use of Mark 10) are the elements by which Cranmer crafted a liturgical instrument for that integration.

### Ripe for Rediscovery—The Missing Texts from the 1928 Order of Baptism

For supporters of the Prayer Book tradition, criticism of the 1928 Prayer book may be difficult. The excellence of the 1928 Prayer Book, however, lies not primarily in the work of its revisers—it was not dreamed up in 1927!—but in the traditional material it inherited from the earlier American Prayer Books (1789 and 1892) from its English forbears (1662, 1559, 1552, 1549.) Yet in some places the hand of the 1928 American revisers was ill-judged in its departures from this legacy, and one of these is the rite of Baptism. In order to combine the baptism of adults and children in one service, and for sake of brevity, the addresses (after the gospel and at the end of the service) were deleted; in the interests of brevity an opening prayer was deleted; and in accommodation of liberal protests, some references to sin were softened. The result is somewhat skeletal. The missing texts were not just extra verbiage, but served to flesh out the meaning of the service.

The first significant deletion is short but doctrinally weighty, a reference to original sin in the opening address, said to have been resented for its harshness. The doctrine is still taught in the Prayer Book, in the Catechism and Articles of Religion, (especially Article IX), but it has a special relevance to Baptism which makes its omission regrettable. Here is the 1552/1662/1789/1892 text, with the words omitted in italics:

Dearly beloved, *forasmuch as all men are conceived and born in sin; and* our Saviour Christ saith, None can enter into the kingdom of God, except he be regenerate and born anew of Water and of the Holy Ghost;

Following this opening address were two prayers—a “promise” prayer (based on Luke 11:9), which is retained, and the “flood Prayer,” which was not. The latter, based on Martin Luther’s adaptation of a medieval text, grounds baptism in a rich set of scriptural references to “salvation through water”—not only the Flood, but also the Exodus, and the Baptism of Christ in Jordan. It also looks at baptism as a comprehensive frame for the whole of Christian life: its grounding in God’s work of salvation in the past, his ongoing work of sanctification in the present, and our future destiny in glory.

Almighty and everlasting God, who of thy great mercy didst save Noah and his family in the ark

from perishing by water; and also didst safely lead the children of Israel thy people through the Red Sea, figuring thereby thy holy Baptism; and by the Baptism of thy well-beloved Son Jesus Christ in the river Jordan, didst sanctify Water to the mystical washing away of sin; We beseech thee, for thine infinite mercies, that thou wilt mercifully look upon this Child; wash him and sanctify him with the Holy Ghost; that he, being delivered from thy wrath, may be received into the ark of Christ's Church; and being stedfast in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in charity, may so pass the waves of this troublesome world, that finally he may come to the land of everlasting life, there to reign with thee, world without end; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The third major omission in the 1928 rite is the address after the Gospel (Mark 10 in the public baptism of infants), which draws out the meaning of the gospel as declaration of Christ's loving reception of little children in baptism, and invites the congregation to faith.

Beloved, ye hear in this Gospel the words of our Saviour Christ, that he commanded the children to be brought unto him; how he blamed those who would have kept them from him; how he exhorteth all men to follow their innocency. Ye perceive how, by his outward gesture and deed, he declared his good will toward them; for he embraced them in his arms, he laid his hands upon them, and blessed them. Doubt ye not therefore, but earnestly believe, that he will likewise favourably receive this present Infant; that he will embrace him with the arms of his mercy; that he will give unto him the blessing of eternal life and make him partaker of his everlasting kingdom. Wherefore we being thus persuaded of the good will of our heavenly Father towards this Infant, declared by his Son Jesus Christ; and nothing doubting but that he favourably alloweth all charitable work of ours in bringing this Infant to his holy Baptism; let us faithfully and devoutly give thanks unto him, and say. . . .

Fourth, a clause was removed from the Thanksgiving after Baptism, which describes how we actively invest ourselves in the death and resurrection of Christ that has been presented to us in the sacrament, by putting sin to death ('mortification'). This clause clarified how in daily sanctification - in actively putting sin to death—we live out our baptism and lay hold of the hope of glory.

WE yield thee hearty thanks most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this Infant with thy Holy Spirit, to receive him for thine own Child by adoption, and to incorporate him into thy holy Church. And humbly we beseech thee to grant, that he, being dead

unto sin, and living unto righteousness, *and being buried with Christ in his death, may crucify the old man, and utterly abolish the whole body of sin*; and that, as he is made partaker of the death of thy Son, he may also be partaker of his resurrection; so that finally, with the residue of thy holy Church, he may be an inheritor of thine everlasting kingdom; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Fifth, the final charge to the godparents was deleted, although the first part was repurposed as promises of Christian nurture:

FORASMUCH as this Child hath promised by you his sureties to renounce the devil and all his works, to believe in God, and to serve him; ye must remember, that it is your parts and duties to see that this Infant be taught, so soon as he shall be able to learn, what a solemn vow, promise, and profession, he hath here made by you. And that he may know these things the better, ye shall call upon him to hear Sermons; and chiefly ye shall provide, that he may learn the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health; and that this Child may be virtuously brought up to lead a godly and a Christian life. . . .

The real loss here is in the second part of this address, with its use of the teaching of Romans 6, in which Baptism supplies the paradigm for the whole of the Christian life:

. . . remembering always, that Baptism doth represent unto us our profession; which is, to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto him; that, as he died, and rose again for us, so should we, who are baptized, die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness; continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living.

"Baptism doth represent unto us our profession": the integration of baptism and the Christian life is one of the major strengths of the 1552/1662/1789/1892 rite.

What is particularly sad about the larger deletions, is that the aim—allowing for brevity—could have been achieved simply by leaving them in the Prayer Book, but giving priests permission to omit them when brevity is required. What should an Anglican/Episcopalian priest do about these missing texts? Restoring them to the service might be confusing to worshipers, if they are following the service in the Prayer Book. But their content—original sin, scriptural basis, faith in Christ's promises and the efficacy of the Sacrament, ongoing sanctification, baptism as a paradigm of the Christian life – these can all be restored by way of teaching and preaching in association with Baptism.

# Cranmer's Comfortable Words

By Ashley Null

Given at the Peter Toon Memorial Lecture  
Spring 2014

The good news of salvation by transforming grace alone was the message Cranmer sought to convey in one of his most famous compositions for the new English liturgy he devised—Holy Communion's Comfortable Words. It is the Gospel according to Reformation Anglicanism.

Hear what comfortable words our Savior Christ says to all that truly turn to him.<sup>1</sup>

Cranmer's opening sentence highlights the interconnectedness of Gospel, comfort and Christ. This was, after all, an important point in dispute between Catholics and Protestants.

If you had walked into any medieval parish, above the chancel arch would have been a painting of Jesus as Judge. It dominated the whole interior of the nave. There on high before every parishioner's eyes Christ sat in judgment at the general resurrection, sending some people to the devils in Hell, while sending others to be welcomed by angelic choirs into Heaven. Here was the high point of a 'moralistic strain' in late medieval piety which Eamon Duffy himself admitted 'could be oppressive':

Churches contained not only the chancel-arch representation of the Day of Doom, with its threat of terrifying reckoning down to the last farthing, but wall-paintings and windows illustrating the deadly sins, the works of mercy, the Commandments, Christ wounded by sabbath-breaking, the figures of the three living and the three dead, or the related *danse macabre*.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, according to Duffy, the 'whole machinery of late medieval piety was designed to shield the soul from Christ's doomsday anger.'<sup>3</sup> Little wonder Duffy had to admit again that the omnipresent threat of terror 'must have seemed at times oppressive.' The English reformers, however, rejected such a proclamation of the Gospel as 'bad news'. They wanted the English people to know that Christ was first and foremost the Good Shepherd who allured his lost sheep back by the power of his self-sacrificing love.

1. The original language of the Comfortable Words has been modernized. For the final version of Cranmer's Comfortable Words as found in the 1549 and 1552 *Book of Communion Prayer*, see Ketley, *Liturgies of Edward VI*, pp. 91, 276.

2. Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400—c. 1580* (London: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 187.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 309.

Naturally, then, Cranmer's Comfortable Words do not begin with God's wrath. In fact, they do not start with God at all. Rather, the first Scripture verse focuses on hurting humanity—with its felt needs, its longing for wholeness. The Comfortable Words begin with Matthew 11:28:

Come to me all that travail, and are heavy laden, and I shall refresh you.

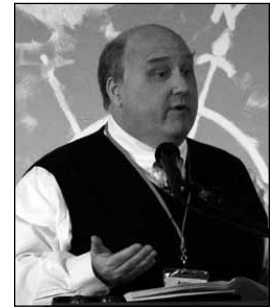
Human misery caused by captivity to the destructive power of sin was a favorite theme of the English Reformers. They wholeheartedly agreed with Luther's teaching that the human heart cannot, of itself, free itself from slavery to sin and selfishness. Listen to what the second sermon from the *Book of Homilies* says. Entitled 'The Misery of All Mankind,' it concisely sums up sin's effect on human nature: 'We are sheep that run astray, but we cannot of our own power come again to the sheepfold, so great is our imperfection and weakness.'<sup>4</sup> In fact, Cranmer appears to have chosen the word 'travail' instead of the more usual 'labour' specifically because of its inclusion of emotional, not merely physical, weariness.<sup>5</sup> He gave an enduring voice to the *Anfechtungen* (spiritual anxieties) of the sin-sick soul in his confession in the 1549 *Book of Common Prayer*:

Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of all things, judge of all men, we acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness . . . the remembrance of them is grievous unto us, the burden of them is intolerable.

Slavery to selfishness and the innate sense of guilt which resulted—here were the two fundamental sources for human misery. What could be done about them? For the English Reformers, the answer lay in divine action alone. We can see this in the absolution which followed the confession. The minister asked God to 'pardon and deliver' the congregation. Why two verbs instead of merely one? Because Cranmer was making clear that humanity needed to turn God

4. Ronald B. Bond, ed., *Certain Sermons or Homilies (1547) AND A Homily against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion (1570): A Critical Edition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p. 74.

5. Whereas Tyndale's New Testament, the Henrician Primers (see, e.g., *A Primer in English* (London: John Byddell, 1534), sig. L3v) and the Great Bible use 'labour', Erasmus wrote: 'Come unto me (sayeth he) as many of you as be grieved with afflictions, cares, or with conscience of your sins, and as many as be oppressed with the burden of adversity, I will refresh you, I will give you solace and comfort against all kinds of displeasures,' Erasmus, *First Volume on the New Testament*, fol. 70r.



Ashley Null,  
Canon Theologian of  
Western Kansas

as the only antidote for both sources of human misery. Only God could heal a conscience wounded by selfish acts.<sup>6</sup> Only God could draw to his purposes a will chained to self-centeredness.

In the 1552 prayer book, Cranmer reinforced these themes by adding a new opening for the Daily Office which once again compared sin-sodden humanity to helpless sheep:

Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from thy ways, like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devises and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done, and there is no health in us.<sup>7</sup>

Now both Morning and Evening Prayer began with a confession of humanity's profound spiritual neediness in the face of its on-going struggle with self-centered waywardness. As a result, Cranmer made turning to God because of sin so as to be turned by God from it the essence of Anglican worship.

God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son to the end that all that believe in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Having used Jesus' own words to acknowledge the depth of human longing for good news, Cranmer's second Comfortable Word now turns again to Jesus to establish the depth of God's own longing to respond. The divine desire and initiative to save his people is at the very heart of the English Reformers' theology. John 3:16 makes clear that God the Father, moved by the love which is his very being, sent God the Son into this world to become the visible embodiment of the divine Good Shepherd. Jesus came to seek out the lost, gently freeing lambs caught in the thicket of sin. He laid down his own life so that in the end he could bear his wandering creatures safely back to the flock on his own wounded shoulders. In the face of such alluring love, the Reformers were convinced that humanity could

not but be drawn out of their deeply entrenched soul-sickness back to their Creator by the stirring up of their own inner longings.

Hear also what Saint Paul says. This is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be received, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.

Having laid out the two sides—the longing of humanity for relief and the longing of God to rescue—Cranmer's third Comfortable Word circles back like a hawk to the human condition, but now at a higher level. On the one hand, humanity's situation is no longer described in subjective terms of felt needs but rather as the objective consequences of violating divine law. Humanity suffers from spiritual fatigue because that is merely the most readily apparent fruit

of human sinfulness. As rebels against divine order, they are cut off from God's peace now and stand under the threat of the divine wrath to come. Humanity's refreshment can only come by addressing humanity's sin. On the other hand, to do so is also clearly beyond human beings. Having been so weakened by sin's power, humanity cannot co-operate with grace to achieve their salvation. According to Cranmer, that would be the 'ready way unto desperation.'<sup>8</sup> I Tim. 1:15 makes plain that here is the reason Jesus came into this world. It is Christ's mission to save sinners, not their own. As Cranmer's 'Homily of Salvation' expressed it:



Portrait of Thomas Cranmer by Gerlach Flicke, 1545

Justification is not the office of man, but of God. For man cannot justify himself by his own works neither in part nor in the whole . . . But justification is the office of God only, and is not a thing which we render unto him, but which we receive of him, not which we give to him, but which we take of him, by his free mercy, and by the only merits of his most dearly beloved Son.<sup>9</sup>

Only upon realizing this distinction did Cranmer believe the English people could find refreshment from their spiritual fatigue.

6. Ketley, *Liturgies of Edward VI*, pp. 6–7, 90–1.

7. Ketley, *Liturgies of Edward VI*, pp. 218–19.

8. Cox, *Cranmer's Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 94.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 131.



Hear also what Saint John says. If any man sin, we have an advocate with the father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins.

With the fourth Comfortable Word we have come full circle. In I Tim 1:15, the Gospel truth about the human condition was seen from the human point of view, i.e., ‘How can I be saved?’ Now we turn to the Gospel truth about the human condition from God’s perspective, i.e., ‘How can God be true to both his righteous nature and his enduring love for an unrighteous humanity?’ I John 2:1–2 concisely states that problem from heaven’s point-of-view. God’s justice requires ‘propitiation,’ i.e., the fulfilling of his determination to destroy sin because of all the hurt

and harm it causes. Of course, Cranmer’s confession for Communion explicitly acknowledged the need for such propitiation, saying that the congregation had sinned ‘by thought, word, and deed, against thy divine majesty, provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us.’<sup>10</sup> That’s why the only answer to human misery was utter divine graciousness, God’s taking humanity’s sin upon himself, so he can destroy sin on the cross without having to destroy humanity as well. Cranmer’s Eucharistic prayer clearly affirmed the complete effectiveness of Christ’s death to take away God’s wrath. The cross was ‘a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world.’<sup>11</sup> As a result, according to the ‘Homily on Salvation,’ ‘the justice of God and his mercy did embrace together, and fulfilled the mystery of our redemption.’<sup>12</sup> What good news! As I John 2:1–2 reminds us, because Christ has made the sacrifice which has removed God’s wrath from us, he now is our advocate. Jesus himself is the one who stands by our side. He is the one who answers for us when we are accused of being sinners! Here is the heart of the revolution in understanding of Jesus that the English Reformers wanted to proclaim. For believers, Jesus is not our judge. He is our defense lawyer.

Yet, there is still more to the story. John’s use of legal language reinforced the Reformers’ understanding of how people can have a right relationship with God. The theological term for that is ‘justification,’ i.e., ‘just as if I had never sinned, but always did God’s will so as to live a life of perfect righteousness.’ Protestants believe that this theological word should be understood in the legal sense of being

‘declared righteous.’ That’s what ‘justification’ means in Greek, where δικαιοσύνη is used specifically of what a judge does in a courtroom, acquitting defendants of charges by declaring them ‘not guilty.’ Of course, the medieval church used Latin, and in Latin ‘justification’ means ‘to be made righteous.’ That’s why the medieval church argued that the moment someone had sinned, they no longer had a relationship with God. In the medieval view, only the perfectly righteous were ‘justified,’ i.e., were good enough to have a relationship with God. Once they sinned, they lost their salvation until they did penance to become pure enough again to be acceptable to God.

Now the New Testament was written in Greek, so it made perfect sense to the English Reformers to follow the Greek understanding of the word rather than the

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The cross was ‘a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world.’

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later Latin one. Consequently, for Protestants, believers can have an on-going relationship with God, even though we are not totally freed from sin and selfishness in this life. When we trust Jesus to win divine forgiveness for us, he will act as our advocate. He will present the cross as the answer to the charges that we are not good enough for God. Then God the Father, as judge, will accept Jesus’ righteousness as the best possible and indeed the only possible defense on our behalf. As Cranmer’s confession for Holy Communion expressed it: ‘for thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, forgive us all that is past.’<sup>13</sup> Because of Jesus, God the Father declares us ‘not guilty’ of any sin which would separate us from him. Thus, Cranmer concluded his four promises of the Gospel as he had begun, with utter reliance on Christ’s saving activity both to meet human needs and fulfill divine desires.

13. Ketley, *Liturgies of Edward VI*, p. 91.



The Board of the Prayer Book Society would like to offer thanks to all those individuals and churches which have sent in donations over the past year. We could not continue our work without you, nor publish this magazine. Thank you for helping us continue to teach the faith in the Anglican way.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 88.

12. Cox, *Cranmer’s Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 129.

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# The Development of Church Life and Christian Ministry

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Where does the historical pattern of ministry and Church life come from? Is it mandated in Scripture, commanded from above or subject to fashionable change? Does it vary with time and place or is it universal? Is it part of the essence of the Church as the Body of Christ or is it merely an arrangement of furniture in God's house that might well be different? The best way to come to an appreciation of the historic ministry and organization of the Church, it seems to me, is to watch it grow by observing its history and origins. Christians ought to want to structure their religious lives as well as possible, so this subject should be a natural interest for us. Even a brief look at the history of the Church may help us find a place to begin considering the value and validity of our present patterns. Just like those who want to follow the Yellow Brick Road, those who want to understand the Church's present would do well to start at the very beginning.

In the New Testament, the Church, as a structured body of human beings, appears only in *The Book of Acts* and the letters and *Revelation*. Sadly, the words used in those books to describe leadership positions and leaders in the Church have often become fighting words among Christians and other readers of the New Testament. Translations of the New Testament into English, since they spring from the period of the Reformation and after, are often expressed in terms that "over translate" the underlying Greek original. Every translator finds his own practice present in the New Testament but never sees those he considers undesirable. To avoid that trap, we ought to look at the New Testament's own words before we try to judge what it is showing us.

When it describes the Christian ministry, the New Testament speaks of *episkopoi*, which is cognate with the English word "overseers" and the Latin word "supervisors," *diakonoi*, which means "assistants" and "*presbuteroi*," which means "elders." A moment's consideration of this list will be very helpful. Let us start with the hardest one first.

*Presbuter* was the usual word among Greek speaking Jews in the Roman period for any leader of the local community. (These local communities were beginning to develop, or were near to developing, synagogues, so synagogue positions were also labeled with this word.

The date of the appearance of the synagogue is hotly contested among scholars, so it is best to be cautious in using that parallel, but the Greek Old Testament uses *presbuter* of Israelite officials in *Joshua* 20:4 and *Ruth* 4:2, which roots its meaning of "leader of the community" in the scriptural mind of the Jews.) Among Jews, "*presbuter*" seems to have meant someone who was a leader of the community, but not to have referred to any particular office or rank. This general usage seems to work when applied to the New Testament. To make a long, and sometimes tedious, discussion very short, it seems best to me to read the New Testament as using *presbuter* generically and *episkopos* and *diakonos* specifically. (When Peter, in *1 Peter* 5:1, calls himself a "fellow *presbuter*" with the presbyters he addresses, he is not claiming that he holds the rank of "priest" in each of the communities to which his letter was sent, but that they are all in this project of serving as Church leaders together. All the officers of the Churches he addresses share the rank of "*presbuter*" or "elder" or "leader" together with Peter, the apostle. This seems a clear and important example of the generic use of the term.) Each local Christian community seems to have had an *episkopos* who led it and was assisted by *diakonoi*, whose numbers are uncertain. (Apostles, prophets and teachers seem to have been travelling folk who visited local communities but did not hold "local office." *The Didache* is very helpful in our grasp of how this dual level of ministry worked.) Using what we know of early Christian practice as a guide, it seems safe to say that a community could function fully if it had an *episkopos* and a female *diakonos*. (Mediterranean households were more like modern Middle Eastern households than our own: they had women's quarters into which no unrelated man could enter. Visiting a sick woman or child at home would have been impossible for an adult man of another family. Also, the practice of baptism by immersion meant that a woman was needed to administer that rite to female converts, if decorum were to be preserved.) It might have been desirable for an *episkopos* to have one or more male *diakonoi*, but it is hard for me to imagine a community surviving long without a female one. These assistants would, in all likelihood, multiply as the community grew, but the *episkopos* seems to have remained solitary, by the nature of his office. For a number of centuries, all mainstream Christian communities of which we know lived according to this pattern. When we first see something different, we see it in the city that left the best records of itself from the ancient period: Rome. (We should remember that

for many centuries most Christian communities were small by our standards, which allowed the early, simple pattern to continue. The later three-fold pattern seems only to have developed when the increasing size of the Church made it necessary.)

There are some pieces of evidence that show that the three-fold pattern was not formed only in Rome but seems to have sprung into being across the larger Christian community when practicalities demanded. Most small Christian communities leave no record of themselves behind. It is the larger places that write and receive letters and the famous leaders whose writings are preserved and disseminated. Fairness demands that we remember the many small churches that nourished and exemplified Christian living even as we notice the evidence their more well-known brethren left behind. It is also important to recall that any picture we draw of the past is made up of small details gathered from multiple sources and locations. The study of the early Church requires imagination and creativity as well as persistence.

St. Ignatius of Antioch (+ ca. 110), the leader of a large important Christian community, left letters behind him that reflect his experience of the three-fold pattern. *The Letter to the Tralians* 3.1 is a clear, though passing, reference to this:<sup>1</sup>

In like manner let all men respect the deacons as Jesus Christ, even as they should respect the bishop as being a type of the father and the presbyters as the council of God and the college of the Apostles.

We can see that Ignatius takes the pattern for granted. We can get no more details about how these types of ministers functioned from his words, however. In truth, we know very little about how most Christian communities worked, though passing references like Ignatius's could be offered by the score. Only in the mid-third century in Rome does some light appear about what was going on. When it shines out, it comes from the coast of Palestine.

Eusebius, the bishop of Caesarea in Palestine (ca. 313–ca. 339), was one of the Church's first great scholars and wrote its earliest surviving history. In this history, in Book 6.43, Eusebius gives us virtually our only set of statistics for a local Church from the entire ancient period.<sup>2</sup> He records the Church in Rome in the mid-third century as having 46 presbyters; 7 deacons; 7 sub-deacons; 42 acolytes; 52 exorcists, readers and doorkeepers; and to have been supporting more

than 1500 widows and poor. Here we have evidence of a much more developed form of Church life than we saw in the New Testament, but this parade of numbers does not answer all our questions.

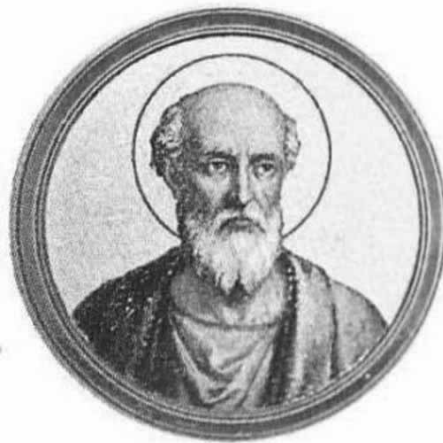
We can see, immediately, that the number of church offices has grown. There are "acolytes" (the word means "follower"—linguistically, an acolyte follows someone else in a procession), sub-deacons, readers and doorkeepers. Rome was known for being traditional at that time and clung to having 7 deacons (the original number created in *Acts* 6) long after other churches had created more to match their practical ministers to their size. The sub-deacons helped to handle the work that the deacons could not manage and their number leads one to suspect that they were paired with them. "Readers" would provide a necessary service to the community in which literacy was not as widespread as in our own. Their assistance would also allow pious and

wise men who were illiterate to be chosen for offices in the Liturgy. (Since prayers were not yet written down, only the lessons required literacy.) Doorkeepers are always necessary when groups meet together, whatever they may be called. Modern "ushers" are the current holders of this office.

While it is tempting to take these numbers and begin applying them, as if they came from a modern ecclesiastical organization that would be to go too far. (It has been suggested, for example, that we can conclude that the Church in Rome had 46 parishes, since there are 46 presbyters. That seems to me to trust

too much to the Roman Church's organizational powers and to our own ability to imagine just what each of these people actually did.) However, we can combine what we know of Rome and of the wider Church to make some tentative suggestions about the ministry and Church life in Rome around the year 250.

Rome is known to have had a daily life that was conducted along neighborhood lines throughout the ancient period. Its original existence was as a collection of villages on adjoining hills and these villages became neighborhoods of the later city. There were local civic clubs and religious institutions that served each neighborhood, as well as public baths and other amenities. The Jews, of whom there were many, tended to congregate in one of these areas, which served to support their desire to live a life in common in addition to their familial lives. Other ethnic groups from beyond the city also stuck together, so one could hear Greek, Celtic, Aramaic, Egyptian, Etruscan and other languages in various quarters of the city. When the Church arrived in Rome, it gathered converts from among these locales and began to make itself at home.



Evaristus (d. c. 107) He is said by the *Liber Pontificalis* to have divided Rome into several "titles," or parishes, assigning a priest to each, and appointed seven deacons for the city.

1. P. 147 of Lightfoot and Harmer

2. This list is found on pages 118 and 119 in the Loeb text.

Christians continued the habits they had practiced before their conversions and applied them to their Church life. For example, we hear of groups of Christians meeting in baths and lecture halls for instruction and worship, a custom that was standard for philosophers and other educators.<sup>3</sup> (The large rooms were obvious places for groups to gather.) It seems to have been expected that the Church would organize itself to serve the needs of groups of Christians who resided in particular parts of the city. These congregations seem, like the institutions of the city's past, to have been neighborhood based. Why is this interesting to us?

When we are trying to discern the pattern of Christian life in the distant past, we must imagine the circumstances in which that life was lived. Only then can we make sense of how the few things we know fit into the background against which they existed. The locally divided life of Rome is a good example of this. Since we know that Roman life was often led in a constricted, neighborhood-based compass, it makes sense to think that Roman Christians would follow that general pattern. The large size of the Church, evidenced by the number of burials that survive to be discovered in the catacombs surrounding the city, as well as by the large number of poor the Church supported, also argues for division in the Church's life. (Can we imagine thousands of Christians meeting weekly for worship in the capital of the Empire at a time when their religion was outlawed?)

It is likely that the Church in Rome was the largest single Christian community in the world. Since Rome was the largest city in the Mediterranean world this makes perfect sense. Its large size would both encourage its division into multiple pieces as well as allowing the pieces to be large enough to survive and flourish on their own. Both a practical need to distribute a large group into small gatherings that could fit into available spaces and be small enough to avoid detection and a need to support the Christian aspect of the sectional life of the city would encourage the development of established, local congregations. Christians would tend to worship, as they did all other things, in their own part of the city. Thus was the neighborhood (the Greek word is *paroikos*) church born and from this "neighborhood" we get our words *parochial* and *parish*.

When a Christian community met as a whole in the early days, the Bishop celebrated the Eucharist. It was his central duty. When the church grew too large to gather in one place, how could all believers attend the liturgy? *Diakonoi* were the assistants of the *episkopos*. If the *episkopos* could not meet for the congregation on Sunday for service, the *diakonos* in that group would have no one to assist. What was needed was a new order of ministers who could stand in for the

Bishop in the neighborhoods he could not manage to visit. There was no traditional Christian term for this role, but those who performed it did qualify as being among the genuine group of leaders; they were "*presbuteroi*" even if they were not *episkopoi* or *diakonoi*. Thus was the neighborhood "parochial" congregation born and its local minister, the presbyter, along with it.

There is no place in the historical record where we can see this process underway. We can see the discussions of apostles about choosing leaders for the local churches and mentioning both the *episkopoi* and the *diakonoi* (e.g. *1 Timothy* 3:1–13; 5:17–22 and *Titus* 1:5–9) and we have Eusebius's offering of the statistics in Rome, at which time the system we know seems to be up and running. In between, we have numerous passing mentions of the three-fold ministry to show that the categories, at least, were broadly spread throughout the Christian body. All we can do to try to form a picture of how the Church moved from one situation we can glimpse to another is to use our imagination, informed by what we know of ancient life. This is why Rome is such a useful locale to consider, because we know something of how life was actually led there.

If this sketch is accurate, it shows that the traditional pattern of Church life is a mixture of original organization and practical adaptation. Indeed, one purpose of the story of the creation of the Diaconate in *Acts* 6 seems to be to make the point that the Apostles were using their wits to try to solve pressing problems in a way that fit with Christian goals and expectations. The creation of "*presbuteroi*" for the local congregations in the neighborhoods must have worked the same way. The fact that this solution seems to have been present everywhere (for we know of no locale without it) argues for its being well-chosen both in its effects and in its character. Christians seem to have accepted the new "*presbuteroi*" as being the best they could hope for once the "*episkopos*" could no longer care for them all. The fact that local churches were structured to support this arrangement is eloquent testimony to its acceptability.

For Christians in our own day, this quick glance at the development of Church order seems to offer both structure and freedom. It shows us that the roots of the pattern we know reach back to the followers of Jesus but also demonstrates that Christians have used their own ingenuity to try to adapt their pattern of life to their circumstances as they changed. Reverent freedom seems to be the most basic element in the process of fitting the Church to its circumstances as the circumstances have altered. It seems a hopeful sign for us as we strive to manage our lives in these turbulent times. We have both a strong tradition to guide us and the freedom to meet the challenges that come our way. The Church has a record of 20 centuries of success behind it. I do not think our trials will knock us off a foundation so deeply dug and firmly set.

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3. "The Acts of Justin and His Companions," printed as "Recension A" on 42–47 in *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (texts and translations by Herbert Musurillo, OUP, 1972) is an easy place to find this information and an important witness to early Christian martyrdom.

# St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*

## ITS CONTINUING IMPORTANCE

By Roberta Bayer

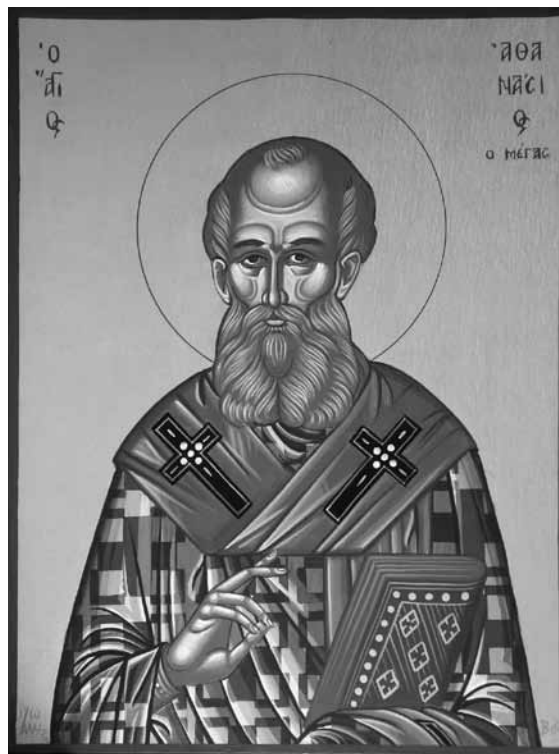
*St. Athanasius (c.328–373), Bishop of Alexandria vigilantly defended orthodox Trinitarianism against Arianism throughout his ministry and episcopate. He is associated with the Athanasian Creed. Among his best known works is De Incarnatione Verbi Dei (On the Incarnation of the Word of God), which considers why it is that the Word of the Father, the Word made manifest, joined himself to human nature, for the salvation of mankind. The first fact, as he puts it, that one must grasp to understand this is that “the renewal of creation has been wrought by the Self-same Word who made it in the beginning.” Athanasius’ insights reveal the errors of Process Theology, expounded by Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne, who maintain that God can be affected by temporal processes and human will; that God is in the process of developing alongside men. Process Theologians hold that God is a becoming and passible being. Linked inextricably to this metaphysic is the presumption that God and men are united in time and then in eternity. Athanasius would conclude that like the Arianism against which he argued, this reflects a misunderstanding of God’s nature and creative power, and the distinction between Creator and creation.*

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Rather than working with pre-existing material and then shaping and forming it into life; God the Trinity created everything *ex nihilo*—out of nothing. Pagans told a story of how the gods had shaped men and animals out of “pre-existent and uncreated matter.” No pagan conceived of any god who had the capacity to make things out of nothing; in the myths the gods were limited by what was other than themselves, and were even moved by human actions, subject to human-like emotions, divided, factious, without universal power. But the God of Scripture is a God above all other gods. It is inconceivable that He should ever be subject to his creation, or suffer change because of human willing. To suffer comes from the word “*passio*”, the root of the English word passion. The closest He comes to suffering is through the Passion of His Son on the Cross of Calvary. And even then it is only incorrectly held that God the Father suffers. The Christian faith maintains that the Second Person of the Trinity “assumed a human body, in order that in it death might once for all be destroyed, and that men might be renewed according to the Image.” (*On the Incarnation*) If God underwent passion and suffering as God, he would be

weak and He could not have saved us. For this reason to suggest that God is in time or subject to it denies the fundamental characteristic of the Incarnation that Athanasius identified as absolutely necessary to orthodoxy.

The Christian faith teaches that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost spoke everything into existence out of nothing through His Word and His Spirit. This is because “there is Mind behind the universe, it did not originate itself”; creation is an expression of God’s goodness itself, for “God is good—or rather, of all goodness He is the Fountainhead and it is impossible for one who is good to be mean or grudging about anything. Grudging existence to none therefore, He made all things out of nothing through His own Word.” (*On the Incarnation*) Because He is Goodness itself, Creation is good.

From this we learn about ourselves. We learn that human beings were created good and were created with minds. He impressed His own Image upon mankind, and they share in “the reasonable being of the very Word Himself, so that reflecting Him and themselves becoming reasonable and expressing the Mind of God even as he does, though in limited degree, they might continue forever in the blessed



Saint Athanasius of Alexandria (296–373 AD)

and only true life of the saints in paradise.” (*On the Incarnation*) But they did not.

Human beings, created in goodness, out of nothing, brought about their evil and their death, indeed their own nothingness; Adam and Eve made themselves corrupt. “God had made man thus . . . and had willed that he should remain in incorruption. But man, having turned from the contemplation of God to evil of their own devising, had come inevitably under the law of death.” (*On the Incarnation*) Athanasius continued, “man is mortal, since he was made from nothing; but he bears also the Likeness of Him Who is, and if he preserves that Likeness through constant contemplation, then his nature is deprived of its power and he remains incorrupt.” Men “had at the beginning come into being out of non-existence, so were they now on the way of returning, through corruption, to non-existence again.” (*On the Incarnation*)

Why was repentance upon the part of a man necessary, but not enough, for his salvation? Why must corruption put on incorruption; why is the Incarnation necessary? Because human nature was corrupted. Repentance does not recall men from what was according to their nature; it is a request for grace. Athanasius states that because the Word had called mankind into being; “inevitably, therefore, when they lost the knowledge of God, they lost existence [their incorrupt nature] with it; for it is God alone Who exists, evil is non-being, the negation and antithesis of Good.” (*On the Incarnation*) An act of re-creation was required that could redeem the solidarity of mankind, the human race.

Bringing creation into being from nothingness is something that mankind cannot do; human beings cannot redeem themselves, put on incorruption, turn death into life, re-order the disorder in nature. We *make* things by taking pre-existent matter and forming it according to our ideas. That is our creatureliness—we take what is already there, copper for example, buried in rock, we refine, mold and put it to use. But copper has the potential to be made into something. We do not give it that potentiality; its potentiality lies within its created nature, its molecular structure. We find it, and use it, but what we can do with it is depends upon the kind of thing it is. Our existence is one kind of thing, the copper is another, and the product that emerges out of this is a third, and all are united and dependent to some degree. The nature of the copper limits what we can do with it,

just as we are limited by our own talents. So making is different from creating.

The Incarnation is a re-creating. God desires to remake something out of the raw materials of human nature. But human nature is fallen, and so God must redraw the Image and Likeness into it. Here is Athanasius’ analogy: “You know what happens when a portrait that has been painted on a panel becomes obliterated through external stains. The artist does not throw away the panel, but the subject of the portrait has to come and sit for it again, and then the likeness is re-drawn from the same material.” (*On the Incarnation*) We should not forget that God is God and the creature is the creature and there is a huge separation between them. Our desire is for God our creator, our salvation is achieved by God through his gracious love for his creation.

A second and related point follows from creation ex nihilo, namely that creation itself is the writing of God, and tells us of his glory and power. By pondering the “immensity of heaven and the harmony of creation,” God is glimpsed within his creative work. In historical theology this is called a knowledge of God through natural theology. It supports and complements the sure and certain path to knowing God, which is revealed in Holy Scripture—the way of faith, “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen.” *Hebrews 11.1*. It is said therefore, that God’s existence is known

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by reason through natural theology. But His essential nature, his Trinitarian nature and the expression of his love of Mankind through the Incarnation, is known only by direct revelation of Himself. When Christ became Incarnate, fully man and fully God, he made use of those two ways by which to know him, nature our sensate nature and reason, and through revelation and miracle.

How we view nature has much to do with how we view God. Those two factors cannot be separated because God’s mark is on his creation and to be blind to that is to be blind to God. When, for example, a process theologian argues that God is subject to our will, he shows himself or herself to have misunderstood not only God but also nature. It has been remarked frequently enough that modern men, with their science and technology, have come to think of Nature as nothing but raw material subject to human will. Tapping into the hidden energies of nature to create a comfortable world for ourselves, we have become insulated from the unpleasantness of bitter

cold and extreme heat; overcoming the limitations of gravity we have mastered flight, and in discovering the intricacies of particle physics, we can now generate nuclear energy. Nature appears plastic, malleable, useful to human ends; it appears to have no fixed nature discernable through the traditional categories of theology. Thus natural theology can be written out of the picture because people are apparently co-creators of nature with God, as if sharing in God's great powers. It is not too far a leap in thought to consider nature and God constructs elicited from man's creation and re-creation of himself.

Viewing creation correctly, as C. S. Lewis said in *The Abolition of Man*, is the first step in viewing mankind properly as well. He also remarked that people who think nature is a construct of human will may easily come to think of human nature as a construct as well. Hence the danger of tyranny exists, if human beings forget the divine origin of things. The Christian faith teaches that 'From dust we have come, and to dust we will return.' Nature will have her way. Even if God's creation, the natural order of things, everything around us, appears to be subject to our will, simple reflection upon the inevitability of death should affirm that this power we appear to have over natural bodies in this world is only temporary. We cannot bring life out of death—human beings make, they do not create. Only Christ re-creates life, and brings life out of death.

Some Christians might well remark that there is nothing to fear from our technological mastery of

nature. Human beings have been conquering nature with varying success since leaving Paradise. Dominion over the Earth was given us by God, and it was intended that we exercise our power with virtue and in the knowledge that it was originally created by God. All this is true, of course. But as Athanasius pointed out, we were given a power over nature not to devote ourselves to its exploitation, but also to read in it the very order of creation; it is there for us to contemplate. Thus we must return to contemplation of what God created and God Himself—the God who is unchanging, in glory and might—considering not just how to exercise our power over nature for our comfort and pleasure, but how far this power has led us astray from knowing Him and His Word, delivered once and for all time—His unchanging will for us, His unchanging nature, his impassibility in the face of the flux and change around us. God is not like us, for He is the beginning and the ending of all life.

There is a sermon delivered by Austin Farrer, when he was Warden of Keble College, Oxford University, entitled *The End of Man*. Farrer was a man given to the contemplation of God, and in his sermon we find this Athanasian thought: "But a God who reverses nature, a God who undoes death, that those in whom the likeness of his glory has faintly and fitfully shone may be drawn everlastingly into the heart of light, and know him as he is: this is a God indeed, a God Almighty, a God to be trusted, loved, adored."

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## From the Genevan Service Book to the Westminster Directory: A Short History

While the Elizabethan settlement has garnered much attention for the establishing worship according to the *Book of Common Prayer*, the English Puritan rites emerging at the same time represent Reformed liturgies of a strikingly different ethos.<sup>1</sup> From John Knox's Genevan Service Book (1556), to the Westminster Directory (1644) one sees key changes including the removal of the Gradual, the disappearance of variable collects and salutations, the rejection of the liturgical calendar, and the elimination of selected Epistle and Gospel lections. This history suggests that the Puritans maintained prescribed forms of prayer, eschewing charismatic usage, and maintained Calvin's view of the centrality of the sacraments to worship.

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1. B. D. Spinks, *From the Lord and "the Best Reformed Churches": A Study of the Eucharistic Liturgy in the English Puritan and Separatist Tradition 1550–1633* (Rome: Centro Liturgico Vincenziano, 1984), 143.

### The Genevan Form of Prayers (1556)

The Genevan book came about during Mary's reign among the English exiles who had fled to Reformed congregations on the continent. The morning service climaxes with the exposition of the Scriptures ending in the Creed. Since the authorities in both Strasbourg and Geneva did not allow Calvin to celebrate Communion weekly as he preferred, Knox's morning service is deliberately truncated like Calvin's to resemble an Ante-Communion. The Communion which occasionally follows the morning service takes place in the below order:

- Words of institution
- Exhortation with an excommunication of the unworthy
- Eucharistic prayer (Adoration, thanksgiving, anamnesis, and doxology)
- Fraction
- Delivery (Scripture reading during delivery)

- Post-Communion Thanksgiving
- Psalm 103 or similar psalm
- Blessing (from the morning service)

The Communion rite eliminates the familiar songs of the gradual and omits the epiclesis. It emphasizes public prayer, the sermon, the institution of the supper, the fencing of the table, prayer for sanctification, and an acknowledgement of unworthiness.<sup>2</sup> The structural unity of the morning service and Communion stresses the unity of Word and Sacrament. Yet, the Calvinist tradition proceeding from the Genevan book failed to restore weekly Communion to the church, effectively separating Word and Sacrament by accepting infrequent Communion. While the two services were intended to be joined into one rite, in practice they came to become two quite separate events.

### Waldegrave (1584) and Middleburg (1586)

The 1559 Elizabethan *Book of Common Prayer* reverted away from the Puritan expectation of reform by reintroducing the old Eucharistic ornaments and vestments, combining the 1459 and 1552 words of administration to suggest the connection between the elements and Christ, removing the Black Rubric, and maintaining the overall structure of the Mass. When influential Puritan exiles returned to England from Geneva, they printed two important versions of the Genevan Form of Prayers: one by Waldegrave in London (1584), and one for the Puritan exiles in Middleburgh.

The Waldegrave and Middleburgh orders are based upon the Genevan Form of Prayers with few alterations; in their orders for the Lord's Supper, the three agree exactly. Both give the Scriptural warrant for each of their forms in the margins, showing a growing emphasis on fencing the table and the dangers of unworthy reception.<sup>3</sup> On a broad level, the Waldegrave and Middleburgh editions suggest that the main stream of the Puritan tradition favored set liturgical prayer rather than a charismatic type of worship. Richard Hooker refers to the Waldegrave edition in his *Laws of the Ecclesiastical Polity*, and suggests that the moderate Puritans were migrating towards prescribed forms of prayer, since these editions severely restrict free prayers.<sup>4</sup>

### The 1604 Book of Common Prayer

By the death of Elizabeth I, the radical traditions within the Church of England had established themselves into two camps, either desiring a reformation of the Anglican prayer book or a fresh start on a different basis. As far as Puritans and Separatists were concerned, the 1604 *Book of Common Prayer*

produced under the reign of James I was unaltered from previous prayer books. Its pedigree and lineage were still readily discernable as proceeding from the Latin Mass.

During his royal procession from Scotland to London, a group of Puritans presented James with the Millenary Petition, which requested ceremonial reforms including the shortening of services, elimination of confirmation and of the cross in baptism, and the putting away of cap and surplice. James referred matters to the Hampton Court Conference, which met in January of 1604.<sup>5</sup> Hampton Court agreed upon a list of emendations to the 1559 BCP, but the authorities who were in charge of implementing these changes did not carry out the full list as promised. The actual changes from this conference resulted in enlarging the catechism's teaching on the sacraments, authorizing the creation of the 1611 Authorized Version of the Bible, and writing new canons to explain the continued use of certain church furnishings such as adorning the Communion table with a 'fair linen cloth'.

While the results fell far short of the hopes of the petitioners, the provisions of Hampton Court had the effect of persuading the moderate Puritans to stay within the Church of England, separating them from the more radical Nonconformists.<sup>6</sup> The moderate Puritans tended not to dispute with the Anglican authorities about the Eucharist because the authorities were largely concerned with securing conformity in outward act, and did not meddle in the private theological variances. However, the Puritans sometimes were cited and prosecuted for disputing the place of the table, for not conforming to receive the elements kneeling, and for traveling to other parishes to receive Communion in a manner they preferred.<sup>7</sup>

### The 1637 Book of Common Prayer

These underlying differences became political with the attempts of James I to conform the Scottish Church to the episcopal polity and liturgy of England. After James' death, the bishops of Scotland again attempted to introduce a new liturgy under Charles I. This time they reintroduced material from the 1549 *Book of Common Prayer*. The 1637 *Book of Common Prayer* received even fiercer opposition in Scotland. Although Archbishop Laud was not

2. Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans*, 120.

3. Stephen Mayor, *The Lord's Supper in Early English Dissent*, (London: Epworth Press, 1972), 13.

4. Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans*, 123.

5. B.D. Spinks, "From Elizabeth I to Charles II", *The Oxford Guide to the Book of Common Prayer: A Worldwide Survey*, ed. Charles Hefling and Cynthia Shattuck, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 48.

6. The Separatists made a marked deviation from Catholic tradition, seeking a form of worship without liturgical structure. Mayor describes the Lord's Supper as turning from action to word, completely transforming the Eucharist into something different than the rite known to Calvin, who still belonged to the sacramental Catholic tradition. Mayor, *The Lord's Supper in Early English Dissent*, 48.

7. Mayor, *The Lord's Supper in Early English Dissent*, 50, 52.



directly responsible for the Scottish book, it came to be known as “Laud’s Liturgy.”

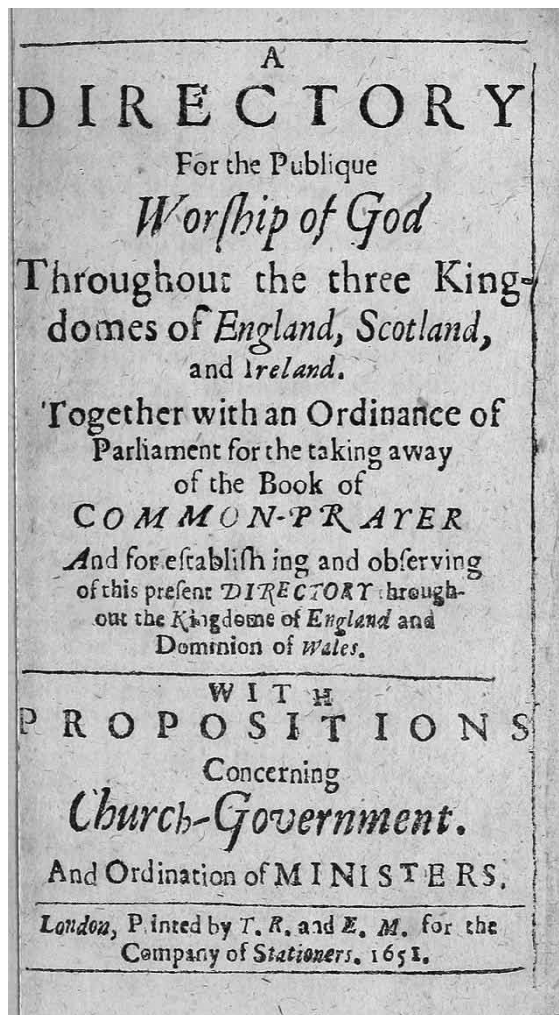
Laud’s followers desired Eucharistic changes to the prayer book of a different kind. While the Puritans appealed to the Word of God alone, the Laudians appealed to Patristic usage and to the Greek Church. Their liturgical ideas found expression in ceremonial—in Laud’s introduction of calling the Communion table an ‘altar’ and placing it at the east end of the church behind a rail.<sup>8</sup> Such policies aggravated extreme controversy, escalating eventually to the expulsion of bishops from the Church of Scotland in 1638, the Scottish invasion of England, the Civil War, the execution of Charles I, the protectorate of Cromwell, and the replacement of the 1604 BCP with the Westminster Directory.

### The Westminster Directory

When the Westminster Assembly convened in 1645, it undertook at first only a revision of the existing prayer book, presumably with one of its aims being a greater alignment of the Communion service with the Reformed rites. As we have noted, the editions of Waldegrave and Middleburgh show that the Puritans did not object to a prayer book in principle. However, the Assembly ended up moving away from prescribed prayers due to the influence of a small group of Independents. The *Directory for the Public Worship of God* that emerged was thus a compromise between the moderate Presbyterians who liked a set liturgy, and the more radical parties in England and Scotland who did not want to be tied to any set liturgy. It was not a prayer book but a rubric book, providing a structure of services with an outline for suggested prayers.<sup>9</sup>

Both the morning service and the Lord’s Supper in the Directory resemble the Middleburgh liturgy and by proxy the Genevan Form of Prayers. In the following Communion order, we see the complete transformation of the Latin Mass and its successors into the structure of the evangelical supper:

- Opening Exhortation
- Fencing of the table (warning about unworthy eating)
- Minister comes to the table so that the communicants may orderly sit about it or at it
- Words of institution and exhortation
- Eucharistic prayer
- Fraction
- Delivery
- Minister communicates, followed by the officers and the people
- Exhortation to a worthy life
- Post-Communion prayer
- Metrical psalm
- Blessing



Title page of the Westminster Directory or Directory for Public Worship

For the Communion service, the table is required to be moved down into the body of the church. The rubrics permit sitting or standing to receive Communion, and leave the frequency of Communion to the discretion of local ministers. Because of its permissiveness, the Directory allowed Presbyterian-minded ministers to use Reformed prayers and Independents to use free prayer. It even gave royalist clergy a loophole to recite disguised prayer book material from memory. Despite its flexibility, the Westminster Directory resembles its Reformed predecessors in its maintenance of Calvin’s teaching that the sacraments are a fundamentally constitutive mark of the Church and in its rubrics stressing the importance of correct teaching, preparation, and reception of Communion. Puritans rejected Cranmer’s liturgies as too close to the Roman Catholic mass, but even in so doing they did not downgrade the importance of communion, but changed the way it looked.

<sup>8</sup> Mayor, *The Lord’s Supper in Early English Dissent*, 52.

<sup>9</sup> Spinks, “From Elizabeth I to Charles II”, 51.

# Visitation of Prisoners

By Peter Geromel



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In the History of the American Prayer Book, some reflect on the Proposed Book of 1785 as something of an embarrassment, with its omission of the Athanasian and Nicene Creeds as well as various other defects. The first American Book of Common Prayer of 1789 at least had the Nicene Creed as well as what many find to be a great heritage and triumph in its similarity to the Prayer Book of the Scottish Episcopal Church. (The proposed book followed the more standard consecration prayer of England's 1662 Prayer Book as opposed to the Scottish Prayer Book of 1764.) Unfortunately, the Athanasian Creed never was to be seen again in an American Prayer Book and, I should think, many of us await its return in glory.

Nevertheless, we can thank the Proposed Book of 1785 for the addition of something not taken from England but from Ireland, proving that Scotland was not the only Celtic land to have influence on the American Prayer Book; and thus the American Prayer Book was influenced by three different Prayer Book traditions: England, Scotland *and* Ireland. Because of its omission in the 1928 Book of Common Prayer, many are not aware of the Visitation of Prisoners which was a distinctive part of our prayer book tradition from 1785 *until* 1928. This office was approved by the Church of Ireland in 1711 and was similarly printed in the Irish Prayer Book of 1785 as well as earlier in 1739. Perhaps the House of Bishops in England found it ironic that a rebellious land like Ireland bequeathed to the rebellious land of the United States a "Visitation of Prisoners"!

Quite clearly based on the Visitation of the Sick, the Visitation of Prisoners combines suffrages, exhortations, Scripture and examination of beliefs and conscience to provide a valuable resource for prisoners even today. Although it might be considered a bit harsh in its Calvinistic undertones, the wonderful thing about the Visitation of Prisoners is what is wonderful about the Visitation of the Sick in its original exhortation (unfortunately also omitted in the 1928 Prayer Book): it makes it clear that sickness may be a result of bad living, or it may not be, but either way it is a time of God's visitation to us, to call us to righteousness and to further sanctification. Thus the 1892 American Prayer Book exhorts those who are ill,

Wherefore, whatsoever your sickness be, know you certainly that it is God's visitation. And for what cause soever this sickness be sent unto you; whether it be to try your patience for the example of others, and that your faith may be found, in the day of the Lord, laudable, glorious, and honourable, to the increase of glory and

endless felicity, or else it be sent unto you to correct and amend in you whatsoever doth offend the eyes of your heavenly Father; know you certainly that if thou truly repent you of your sins, and bear your sickness patiently, trusting in God's mercy for his dear Son Jesus Christ's sake, and render unto him humble thanks for his fatherly visitation, submitting yourself wholly unto his will, it shall turn to your profit, and help you forward in the right way that leadeth unto everlasting life.

Similarly, the Visitation of Prisoners exhorts, "It is your part and duty, therefore, to humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, to acknowledge the righteousness of his judgments, and to endeavour that, by his grace, this present visitation may lead you to a sincere and hearty repentance."

Both of these exhortations avoid that fruitless discussion of "why is this happening to me?" and get to the heart of the matter. Again, we don't know if it is one's fault one is sick or not, but this is a blessing in disguise, a way to become more holy. Furthermore, the Visitation of Prisoners avoids that fruitless and quite pastorally inappropriate question of whether or not the prisoner is guilty or innocent. That is not for a clergyman to decide. It is not his duty or office. His duty and office is to use the time as an opportunity for grace. Some find this harsh and un-pastoral, but becoming enmeshed in something outside of our purview and capability can become disastrously damaging both for those who are ill and those who are prisoners.

These things certainly are complicated. Think of the sex offender or child abuser, the embezzler and the others who swear up and down that they are falsely accused and innocent. The one occasion that I used the Visitation of Prisoners pastorally was in the case of a fellow who was homeless. I had a few weeks before taken him to the emergency room on the pretense of some ailment or other when, in fact, what he wanted was a bed. (I was serving in a rural area with no homeless shelter or mission.) The next time I heard from him he had been arrested for going down the street hitting mailboxes, yet another cry for help and for a bed in which to sleep. He found one in the local jail. I went to see him and went through this service through a tiny security window. Under these circumstances of mental illness and estrangement from home and family, what could I say? This office said what needed to be said in clear biblical language (that, as a Baptist, he respected). Certainly it is not the only response pastorally, but it is a fresh breath of pastoral air in a world that has become so sensitive that it has forgotten to speak into people's lives clearly and biblically.

This office "works" on a certain level because one has a "captive" audience who is living under authority

already and who generally wishes to submit to holy religion, whether for genuine or disingenuous reasons. The Visitation of the Sick is much more difficult to utilize in the midst of the hustle and bustle of hospitals than it used to be when much healing was done at home. Indeed, this office for the ailing is considered even more insensitive because one nowadays is supposed to distract or comfort the ill, not remind them of their mortality as the Visitation of the Sick does. (I once read the exhortation from the older Visitation of the Sick and was never invited back again.)

That being said, if one finds these offices too abrasive there are other resources. For example, *The Priest's Prayer Book with A Brief Pontifical* (1890), an older book, provides a very similar Visitation of Prisoners without a prescribed exhortation and conveniently located next to the form for auricular confession. In addition, I might add that the exhortation of the sick provided in the Proposed Book of 1928, that Church-approved book which was never approved by Parliament, is especially theologically profound with none of the Calvinistic undertones that some might find problematic.

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## The Curious Death of Evangelical Liturgical Worship

By Julian Hardyman

We had a nice week in Brittany for the first half of our family holiday a few Augusts ago. But the place was rather like Britain—Devon in a beret or Cornwall with baguettes. I was expecting to find differences but had to look hard to see past all the similarities.

I have often had similar feelings after playing truant from my own (Baptist) church and visiting conservative evangelical Anglican churches. Familiar services: the same songs either in words or style; more or less the same Bible versions; similar sorts of sermon (a bit shorter perhaps and more to the point). The surprise is the relative absence of liturgy. One had none at all, not even the Lord's Prayer, (which I habitually include when I am leading). Some have a brief home-made confession. In the charismatic Anglican churches I visit it is the same story: they are pretty much liturgy-free zones.

Historically this is a startling and monumental change. Although the Baptists (and other Nonconformists) and the evangelical Anglicans were 90% agreed theologically, for hundreds of years you could never have mistaken one service for another. In one, Cranmer's sinewy prose dominated. In the other, the homespun piety of the minister shaped the congregation's encounter with God in prayer.

It was far more than a difference in preference, but one of deeply held principle. Part of the glue which was thought to hold the Church of England together was the Book of Common Prayer, used in every parish throughout the land, ensuring some sort of uniformity of practice—and thus conformity with a shared theology. In theory at least. There was a fear of lower standards, theologically and linguistically; of slipshod, dull, interminable, repetitive, unbalanced, and even unsound prayers. Surely no one who has been in evangelical prayer meetings or Baptist services can argue that these fears were completely unfounded. Liturgy was also more inclusive, allowing the whole congregation to speak to God simultaneously.

From the non-conformist side, liturgical conformity was anathema: nonconformist identity was

based on not saying the same words as everyone else in church, particularly when some of those words seemed theologically debatable. Beyond a kind of liturgical localism lay a further objection: the fear that liturgy quenched the Spirit. Bunyan and others argued that extempore prayer was the highest and truest kind. It is harder to express personal feeling through a polished liturgical prayer and for some people that expression of feeling is paramount.

My sympathies lie with the non-conformists in the historic debates. But I don't find their arguments so persuasive as to make me eschew liturgy. There is much to be said for it. Exposure even to the rather low-fat milk of the Alternative Service Book has left me appreciative of many of those prayers and responses. I haven't encountered much resistance when we have used the Lord's Prayer, the General Confession, or the Apostles Creed at Eden, and they contribute to the texture of our services.

I am not aware of any great debate about the curious incident of the disappearing liturgy. I wonder whether my rather limited sampling represents a wider trend. If so, does it represent a wider loss which is happening without anyone noticing?

May there not be some advantages in a liturgical service in helping some Christians in their worship or in reaching out to those who aren't yet Christians? Perhaps liturgy enables connections with those who have a neglected church background? It might appeal to the more linguistically sensitive who appreciate words that have been written in advance and with care. It might suit those who prefer the familiar to the ever-changing (like CS Lewis).

It doesn't much matter for me personally. There are only so many Sundays when I can sneak off for a bit of liturgical prayer, like a schoolboy nipping behind the bike sheds for an illicit cigarette. And I like my own church services, anyway.

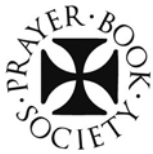
But I can't help wondering if the trend towards non-liturgical homogeneity in conservative Anglican evangelical worship might mean that some missional adaptivity is being lost. And that might have some serious consequences



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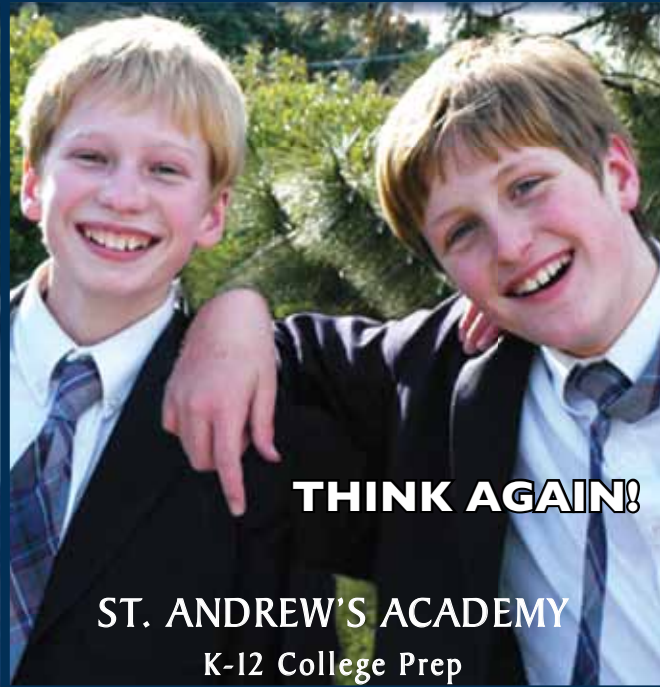
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