

# ANGLICAN WAY

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# Reflections FROM THE Editor's Desk

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Articles in this issue of *Anglican Way* argue the importance of teaching doctrine through catechesis and worship, and by example, Bill Murchison illustrates in his report on the General Convention, the ill effects of abandoning this practice. Quoting George Herbert in the *Country Parson*, Fr. Dunbar writes that catechesis is infusing “a competent knowledge of salvation to every one of his Flock.” It is basic Christian instruction with the intent to save.

As Canon Alistair Macdonald-Radcliff notes, too frequently one hears complaints about negativity of the phrase “and there is no health in us,” which is repeated in the General Confession at Morning and Evening Prayer in the Prayer Book. Yet, as he points out, Cranmer places this phrase in the confession because to confess our unworthiness and sinfulness in the eyes of God is to admit to ourselves as we must, that we are nothing without God. As sinning is turning away from God and rejecting him as sovereign in our lives, there can be no health within us without asking God to heal us. If our souls were in perfect health we would not need Christ, and that error was the failing of the Pelagians.

C. S. Lewis addressed the same issue from a different angle in his discussion of the phrase “miserable offenders” found in the same General Confession. I have re-printed Lewis’ essay to accompany Fr. Alistair’s article. Lewis notes that when the Prayer Book confession directs us to call ourselves “miserable offenders,” it is not telling us primarily to feel badly about ourselves. Rather, that phrase speaks to the fact

that from the *divine* perspective human beings, fallen as they are, are indeed an object of pity. And the fact that we do not feel our misery results from not really knowing our inner state. But this inner state with all its flaws is what God sees all the time. The discovery of that inner state is what we hope for in practicing self-examination and confession.

Psalm 139 speaks directly to Lewis’ argument: *O Lord, thou hast searched me out and known me: thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising; thou understandest my thoughts from afar. Thou art about my path and about my bed, /and art acquainted with all my ways. For lo, there is not a word in my tongue, /but thou, O Lord knowest it altogether. Thou has beset me behind and before, /and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me: /I cannot attain unto it.*

Bill Murchison reports on General Convention held this past summer, June 26–July 3, which once again proposed a liturgical revision to bring the BCP “up-to-date” on the subject of marriage. Meanwhile, the Forward in Faith Congress held on July 13 in Dallas met to affirm and renew their attachment to Christian orthodoxy. James Syrow offers an extended report on the highlights of this conference.

Gillis Harp’s excellent article “Gospel Ordered Worship,” addresses the skewed construction of the Gospel which leads contemporary evangelicals to eschew outward forms of worship for emotive and spontaneous expression. Professor Harp has contributed some excerpts from the work of J. C. Ryle

## Anglican Way

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(1816–1900), the evangelical Anglican theologian and first Bishop of Liverpool who was a strong defender of Cranmer’s prayer book. In Ryle one sees an Anglican who while sympathetic to Presbyterianism and the practice of extemporaneous prayer, continues to find the Book of Common Prayer the best and most efficacious manner of worship. This is not as complete an argument for the historical BCP as might be made, but today when most evangelicals are suspicious of any form of liturgical worship, Ryle notes the limitations inherent in relying upon one’s own resources for worship, rather than received liturgy. One of those limitations is that the congregation “becomes entirely dependent upon the minister’s doctrinal beliefs. He may be moving away, gradually, from the true faith; adding to, or taking away from the Gospel. If this is happening, the people are bound to suffer, for his unsoundness will become apparent in his prayers.” One is reminded of the fact that an important part of catechesis lies in using the Book of Common Prayer.

Finally, Fr. Brian Foos notes how important the ‘beauty of holiness’ is to Christian education. I will quote from his article for emphasis: “Worship is the real foundation of the education we want our children to have. Worship is the real foundation of a life lived for the glory of God. We want our students to become disciples of Jesus, and this occurs most effectively in the life of worship lived around the throne of God. Incarnational and Catholic education is education which is experienced; to have a Christian education, we must first experience Christ, not just in our heads or our rational thoughts, as good and important as that is, but in our lives and with our knees.” Beautifully said.

On matters ecumenical, one hears much about the controversies swirling around the recent Synod of the Family in Rome. NY Times columnist and conservative Roman Catholic Ross Douthat gave the

Erasmus Lecture in New York on Monday, October 26, 2015 for the journal *First Things*, and listening to it I thought to myself how important is the task of lay and clerical groups like the Prayer Book Society, to maintain orthodoxy. Douthat remarked that conservative Roman Catholics have been too inclined to rely upon Rome to defend the faith during past decades while a first rate theologian held the Papal Chair. But, he argued, such moments are rare enough, and history shows that orthodoxy is not maintained by the hierarchy as much as by great saints and theologians who lived in times when Christian thought and piety was being undermined by heresy or an antagonistic culture or simply the intellectual challenges of the day, and so devoted their intellectual powers to reminding Christians of the central tenets of faith and personal holiness. The Anglican Church, which has never had the luxury of an institutional magisterium, has had to rely on the writings of lay and clerical Anglicans to maintain the orthodoxy which is found in its magisterial documents, the Book of Common Prayer, the 39 Articles and the Ordinal. The struggle is waged by few or many, through the work of the Holy Ghost in the body of Christ as a whole. It is a reminder that each generation must be taught the faith, and it is the duty of those living to pass it on. We in the Prayer Book Society see this as our task. To watch the lecture: <http://www.firstthings.com/events/erasmus-lecture-live-webcast>



I offer my sincere apologies for the choice of artwork that graced the cover of the last issue, as I fear it gave offence. Unfortunately, paintings of the Baptism of Jesus available from the late medieval period, seem to all show Our Lord in a state of undress.

## 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.*

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE PRAYER BOOK SOCIETY

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

# Catechizing

Christ commissioned the church to make disciples of all nations, by “baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”; and by “teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19). There is a doctrine to be learned, “mere Christianity” if you like, “the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, the Ten Commandments and all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul’s health.” In accordance with Scripture’s command

(Psalm 78:1–8) the Prayer Book provides a Catechism, in question and answer form, “that is to say, An Instruccion to bee learned of every childe, before he be brought to be confirmed of the bishop” (1549 Prayer Book rubric in original spelling!).

In his classic treatise on pastoral care, the *Country Parson*, the priest-poet George Herbert values Catechizing for infusing “a competent knowledge of salvation to every one of his Flock”: The “secret” benefit of this practice “consists in this, that at Sermons,



The Rev. Gavin G. Dunbar, President, Prayer Book Society, and Rector, St John’s Episcopal Church, Savannah, Georgia

and Prayers, men may sleep or wander; but when one is asked a question, he must discover what he is [i.e. awake, and alert or asleep, and wandering!].” T. F. Torrance makes a subtle point about the value of this question and answer form. A major part of any serious research or education, he says, is learning to ask the right questions—“the questions appropriate to the nature of the object,” and in answer to which the object’s nature is disclosed to us. In Christian instruction, “the young learner does not know enough as yet to ask the right questions. We have to encourage him to ask questions, but also to learn that only the appropriate questions will be a means of knowledge. This is nowhere more true than in regard to Christian communication. Christianity does not set out to answer man’s questions. (. . .) Christianity is above the question the Truth puts to man at every point in his life, so that it teaches him to ask the right, the true questions about himself . . .” (The School of Faith, pp. xxv–xxvi). The Catechism thus trains the young Christian to ask the right questions, in answer to which the Truth may disclose Himself to him.

To learn a catechism no doubt involves drill, but in the hands of a competent catechist, even drill need not be a dull affair, but varied, interactive, game-like, and mixed with instruction in the meaning of the words and concepts they are memorizing. Herbert describes the process thus (original spelling alert):

When once all have learned the words of the Catechisme, he thinks it the most usefull way that a Pastor can take, to go over the same, but in other words: for many say the Catechisme

by rote, as parrats, without ever piercing into the sense of it. In this course the order of the Catechisme would be kept, but the rest varied: as thus, in the Creed: How came this world to be as it is? Was it made, or came it by chance? Who made it? Did you see God make it? Then are there some things to be beleaved that are not seen? Is this the nature of believe? Is not Christianity full of such things, as are not to be seen, but beleaved? You said, God made the world; Who is God? And so forward, requiring answers to all these, and helping and cherishing the Answerer, by making the Question very plaine with comparisons, and making much even of a word of truth from him. This order being used to one, would be a little varied to another. And this is an admirable way of teaching, wherein the Catechized will at length finde delight, and by which the Catechizer, if he once get the skill of it, will draw out of ignorant and silly souls, even the dark and deep points of Religion.

Herbert compares this process to the Socratic method and suggests a catechist might learn some teaching tools from the dialogues of Plato! No question: the catechizing of the young is a demanding art and craft, which too often is abandoned in favour of softer and less profitable options: but merely providing youngsters will pleasant experiences is not enough (although we hope for them as well)—we hope they will master “all things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul’s health.” Your prayers please for those who undertake this ministry!



The Prayer Book Society is planning a **new website** featuring an interactive map of all the parishes in the United States where the Prayer Book is used. As it is difficult to track down all the parishes which use the Book of Common Prayer 1928 or 1662, **we need your help**. If your parish uses either of these prayerbooks on a regular basis, let us know.

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or  
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# “... there is no health in us” Really?

Alistair Macdonald-Radcliff

It is very interesting that this phrase, “there is no health in us,” which has been repeated daily by Anglicans using the Prayer Book for centuries, can now provoke indignation. Some even think it so deeply wrongheaded as to warrant repudiating the entire prayer of confession in which it is found, even though it goes back to Cranmer himself.

One way to consider this response might be to see it as good news. Apparently more people now see themselves to be in the same happy state as the Blessed Virgin Mary, which is to say they feel Immaculate (without sin) as the Roman Catholic Church has formally declared her to be from her conception, since Pope Pius IX in 1854 promulgated this doctrine (in his bull, *Ineffabilis Deus*) so making it a belief of obligation for all Catholics, upon pain of damnation ever since.

Of course, some objectors to the “no health” clause want to qualify the parallels between themselves and the Catholic view of the Virgin Mary as a touch extravagant. Thus, they might say that they were not claiming to be without sin *altogether*, and even less that they have been without sin *at all times*, but rather that—like the curate’s egg—they are good in parts. Accordingly, they feel that to proclaim themselves to be wholly without virtue, even before God, would be a step too far: “I cannot tell a lie” even in the cause of humility, so to speak.

Such a qualified repudiation, is thus different from the case of complete non-believers, who may think of themselves in a way that is—ironic as this may seem—potentially closer to that of the Roman Catholic view of Mary, except that, far from supposing her unique (in being wholly good throughout life), they like to think we *all* are, because they like to think all human beings are basically good.

Looking at the state of the world and the role we human beings have played in forging it, one might

expect more reluctance to reject original sin and to embrace instead this happy assumption of basic goodness. And indeed, there are signs that those most taken with the idea that human beings are to be apportioned universal blame for global warming, for example, may believe in a new form of ancestral sin. Is there here perhaps the seed of a new secular doctrine of the Fall, where it will be held that it was the arrival of man that occasioned the Fall of creation?

Be that as it may, from a theological point of view—aside from the curious but growing phenomenon of atheists who embrace Christian liturgy upon the basis of its appealing musical aesthetic, it is the objections of Christian believers that most press for attention.

Thus our fellow Christians may explain either that, while not yet wholly good, they are ‘improving’ as they progress upon their spiritual journey through life. Thus they feel they really ought not to be seen as without any spiritual good in them whatever.

them would not only be a falsehood but amount to a denial of what Christ had already and completely accomplished in effecting their salvation.

This line of critique has been further developed by some in the Eastern Orthodox tradition, such as Professor David Frost, at a 2012 Sarum College symposium held, ironically, to celebrate the 350th Anniversary of the 1662 Prayer Book.<sup>1</sup> Despite the fact that some Orthodox (mainly Antiochians) have adopted the 1662 text as part of the Rite of St. Tikhon, he asked: “What are the redeemed of Christ doing asserting that there is ‘no health’ in them?”

1. See his “The Influence of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer on the Orthodox: Opening a Can of Worms?”



Alistair  
Macdonald-Radcliff

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Thus our fellow Christians may explain either that, while not yet wholly good, they are ‘improving’ as they progress upon their spiritual journey through life. Thus they feel they really ought not to be seen as without any spiritual good in them whatever.

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Where is the Holy Spirit given them at baptism? Is there no presence of Christ within the human soul? Is there not even a spark of regeneration remaining?" He goes on to argue that, "The problem for the Orthodox as regards the anthropology of the Book of Common Prayer is that we do not accept a western doctrine of inherited Original Sin." Rather, he states, "we . . . hold that children are born innocent and that their sinfulness develops inevitably as a consequence of existing in a corrupted world. Yet we and they retain a memory, however damaged and distorted, of what we were meant to be: we do not lose our status of being 'made in the image and likeness of God'. We can, as it were, wound and mar God's image in us but not destroy it."<sup>2</sup>

Thus, we are confronted with a range of reasons for abandoning in the confession the words that there is 'no health in us,' ranging from a belief that we are basically good, or at least not all bad, through to the specific points that by virtue of being made in the image of God, and especially where possessed of the gift of the Holy Spirit after baptism, there is forever within us an ineradicable element of the divine that must not be denied.

In response, it is requisite to recall that the contested phrase does not stand in isolation, but comes after a cumulative series of statements acknowledging that we have:

- erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep
- followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts
- offended against thy holy laws
- left undone those things which we ought to have done
- done those things which we ought not to have done.

Taken together, while sadly compelling, these hardly suggest we are the picture of spiritual health! Moreover, we all know that we have failed to follow all God's Commandments and that in the memorable image of the psalmist,—all we like sheep have gone astray. This is simply a matter of fact.

So it is only at this point, after all these painful acknowledgments that we come to say that "there is no health in us," whereupon there is an immediate turning point hinging upon the single word "But" after which we implore God to:

- have mercy upon us,
- Spare . . . those, . . . who confess their faults.
- Restore . . . those who are penitent;

So that: "According to Thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord. And . . . for His sake, we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, To the glory of Thy holy Name. Amen.

So where does this leave the difficulty? Certainly there is a tension here that can perhaps be caught in more poetic imagery that holds in juxtaposition the conflicting perspectives we variously discern:

Light upon water in a dark place  
 Pleases the peevish hungry for sense  
 We change, we are dispersed, oblivious,  
 We are made up of accidents.  
 There is no health in us,  
 But light is nevertheless.

(Iris Murdoch, *The Brown Horse*,  
*The Transatlantic Review*,  
 No. 60 (June 1977), pp. 32–33)

But more substantively, the first step towards theological progress is perhaps to recognise that the issue is at heart about the nature of the language being used, rather than simply about what it asserts on one surface level.

It is tempting to recall here, Boswell's recollection of a discussion he had once with Samuel Johnson upon leaving the Church in Harwich before Johnson took a ship to Holland:

. . . we stood talking for some time together of Bishop Berkeley's ingenious sophistry to prove the non-existence of matter and that everything in the universe is merely ideal. . . . I shall never forget the alacrity with which Johnson answered, striking his foot with mighty force against a large stone till he rebounded from it, "I refute it thus." (*Life of Johnson*, Oxford, 1935, Vol. I, 471)

Arresting though the image and the story is, it arguably shows that the great Dr. Johnson, for once, had entirely missed the point. Insofar as Berkeley's contention was right at all, it would have held as much of Dr. Johnson's foot as of the stone, so the hitting of one with the other proved nothing. Arguably, there is a degree of parallel in respect to how we should understand the role of the language in the confession, where an excessive literalism is arguably leading astray those who object.

Consider the liturgy of Ash Wednesday when, typically, we are all informed as the ashes are imposed "Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return." Would it be sensible to object that "while it may be that I shall become dust upon death, just at the moment I am nothing of the sort, and my integrity

2. A perspective reflected in the Confession offered in *Common Worship* Order One, A Form of Preparation, Confession, p. 165, Order Two (Contemporary), Prayers of Penitence, p. 257, and also among the Supplementary Texts, Confession, p. 276.) where human sinfulness is defined in terms that an Orthodox person would thus recognise, with an emphasis on God's overriding love and our falling-away from a status which we cannot however entirely lose.

requires that I must deny your claim and I suggest you stop making it about others too”?

So too, it is surely to miss a key point to object to the literal and univocal meaning of declaring there to be no health in us, when what is really being said is that without God we are truly nothing. To sin is to withdraw from God and without God there can be no health: so insofar as we sin, there is indeed no health in us. While we might remember too the striking Gospel words of Christ himself in saying “no one is good but God alone” (Mark, 10, 18)

We have to remember as well that there is the figure of Cranmer behind these words. Someone for whom, as Dr. Ashley Null has powerfully reminded us, contrition was of fundamental importance to complement imputed righteousness with righteousness produced by the regeneration of the believer through the power and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. For Cranmer it was from a will renewed by grace that there emerged the capacity to ‘rightly-will’ and thus an amended life, with such a life being the ultimate meaning of repentance. In short, for Cranmer to be justified was to be *made* repentant and the Christian life was to *be* repentant, with all this being enabled through gratuitous grace.

But, then again, as C.S. Lewis observed of the whole concept of contrition and Lent, there is much here that seems now peculiarly uncongenial to the modern temperament:

... every day in Lent. . . . we ask God to give us ‘contrite hearts.’ Contrite. . . is a word translated from Latin, meaning crushed or pulverized. Now modern people complain that there is too much of that note in our Prayer Book. They do not wish their hearts to be pulverized, and they do not feel that they can sincerely say that they are ‘miserable offenders.’ I once knew a regular churchgoer who never repeated the words, “the burden of them (i.e. his sins) is intolerable,” because he did not feel that they were intolerable. (in his essay, “‘Miserable Offenders’: An Interpretation of Prayer Book Language”)

The late Professor Rowan Greer of Yale used often to observe, forlornly, of the modern Church that, within it, ‘we are all Pelagians now’ so perhaps it is time to remember too the risks of presumption, as the response of Jesus to the Pharisees, after healing the man blind from birth, serves to remind us:

And some of the Pharisees . . . said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth. (St. John’s Gospel, 9, 40–41)

Accordingly if there is to be health in us we do well to beseech God in the words of the Lenten Collect to

Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Amen.*

Canon Macdonald-Radcliff is International Advisor and Board Member of the PBS. He was formerly Dean of All Saints’ Cathedral Cairo and worked with Lord Carey the former Archbishop of Canterbury specializing in interfaith matters and relations with Islam.

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# “Miserable Offenders”

## AN INTERPRETATION OF PRAYER BOOK LANGUAGE

*From the works of C. S. Lewis found at Project Canterbury*

One of the advantages of having a written and printed service, is that it enables you to see when people's feelings and thoughts have changed. When people begin to find the words of our service difficult to join in, that is of course a sign that we do not feel about those things exactly as our ancestors. Many people have, as their immediate reaction to that situation the simple remedy—“Well, change the words”—which would be very sensible if you knew that we are right and our ancestors were wrong. It is always at least worth while to find out who it is that is wrong.

The Lenten season is devoted especially to what the theologians call contrition, and so every day in Lent a prayer is said in which we ask God to give us “contrite hearts.”<sup>1</sup> Contrite, as you know, is a word translated from Latin, meaning crushed or pulverized. Now modern people complain that there is too much of that note in our Prayer Book. They do not wish their hearts to be pulverized, and they do not feel that they can sincerely say that they are “miserable offenders.”<sup>2</sup> I once knew a regular churchgoer who never repeated the words, “the burden of them (i.e.

his sins) is intolerable,”<sup>3</sup> because he did not feel that they were intolerable. But he was not understanding the words. I think the Prayer Book is very seldom talking primarily about our feelings; that is (I think) the first mistake we're apt to make about these words “we are miserable offenders.” I do not think whether we are feeling miserable or not matters. I think it is using the word miserable in the old sense—meaning an object of pity. That a person can be a proper object of pity when he is not feeling miserable, you can easily understand if you imagine yourself looking down from a height on two crowded express trains that are traveling towards one another along the same line at 60 miles an hour. You can see that in forty seconds there will be a head-on collision. I think it would be very natural to say about the passengers of these trains, that they were objects of pity. This would not mean that they felt miserable themselves; but they would certainly be proper objects of pity. I think that is the sense in which to take the word ‘miserable.’ The Prayer Book does not mean that we should feel miserable but that if we could see things from a sufficient height above we should all realize that we are in fact proper objects of pity.

As to the other one, about the burden of our sins being intolerable it might be clearer if we said ‘unbearable,’ because that still has two meanings you say ‘I cannot bear it,’ when you mean it gives you great pain, but you also say ‘That bridge will not bear that truck’—not meaning ‘That bridge will feel pain,’ but ‘if that truck goes on to it, it will break and not be a bridge any longer, but a mass of rubble.’ I wonder if that is what the Prayer Book means; that, whether

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1. The Lenten Collect is appended at the end of this paper.

Almighty and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all those who are penitent; Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

This Collect is to be said every day in Lent, after the Collect appointed for the day, until Palm Sunday.

2. The General Confession at Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer, which is appended.

Almighty and most merciful Father; We have erred, and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices 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 we ought not to have done; and there is no health in us. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare thou those, O God, who confess their faults. Restore thou those who are penitent; According to thy promises declared unto mankind In Christ Jesus our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake; That we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, To the glory of thy holy Name. Amen.

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3. The General Confession at the Holy Communion, also appended.

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, Which we, from time to time, most grievously have committed, By thought, word, and deed, Against thy Divine Majesty, Provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us. We do earnestly repent, And are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; The remembrance of them is grievous unto us; The burden of them is intolerable. Have mercy upon us, Have mercy upon us, most merciful Father; For thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, Forgive us all that is past; And grant that we may ever hereafter Serve and please thee In newness of life, To the honour and glory of thy Name; Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(From the American Book of Common Prayer p. 124, p. 6, p. 75.)



we feel miserable or not, and however we feel, there is on each of us a load which, if nothing is done about it, will in fact break us, will send us from this world to whatever happens afterwards, not as souls but as broken souls.

But are we really to believe that on each of us there lies something which if not taken off us, will in fact break us? It is very difficult. No man has any natural knowledge of his own inner state and I think that at the beginning we probably find it much easier to understand and believe this about other people than about ourselves. I wonder, would I be safe in guessing that every second person has in his life a terrible problem, conditioned by some other person; either someone you work for, or someone who works for you, either someone among your friends or your relations, or actually someone in your own house, who is making, and has for years made, your life very much more difficult than it need be?—someone who has that fatal flaw in his character, on which again and again all your efforts have been wrecked, someone whose fatal laziness or jealousy or intolerable temper, or the fact that he never tells the truth, or the fact that he will always backbite and bear tales, or whatever the fatal flaw may be, which, whether it breaks him or not, will certainly break you.

There are two stages, I think, in one's approach to this problem. One begins by thinking that if only something external happened; if only after the war you could get a better job, if only you could get a new house or if only your mother-in-law or daughter-in-law was no longer living with you; if something like that happened, then things would really be better. But after a certain age you no longer think that, because you know for a fact, that even if all this happened, your husband would still be sulky and self-centered, your wife jealous or extravagant, or your employer a bully, or someone whom you employ and cannot dispense with, a cheat. You know, that if the war ended and you had a better job and a new house, and your mother-in-law or your daughter-in-law no longer lived with you, there would still be that final flaw in "so and so's" character.

Perhaps in one's misery, one lets out to an intimate friend a little of what the real trouble is, and your intimate friend says, "Why do you not speak to him or her? Why not have the matter out? They really cannot be as bad as you think." But you say to yourself "Oh! He doesn't know," for of course you have tried again and again to have the matter out, and you know by bitter experience that it will not do the slightest good. You have tried it so often, and you know that any attempt to have it out will only produce either a scene or a total failure of understanding; or, perhaps worst of all, the other person will be kind and equable, and entirely agree with you, and promise to be different. And then in twenty-four hours everything will be exactly the same as it always has been!

Supposing you are not mistaken, misled by your own anger or something of that sort. Supposing you

are fairly near the truth, then you are in one sense getting a glimpse of what God must see all the time, because in a certain sense He's up against these people. He is up against their problem as you are. He also has made excellent plans; He has also again and again done His part, by sending into the world prophets and wise men and at last Himself, His own Son. Again and again His plans too have been shipwrecked by that fatal flaw in people's character. And no doubt He sees much more clearly than we do; but even we can see in the case of other people, that unless something is done about their load it will break them. We can see that under the influence of nagging jealousy, or possessive selfishness, their character is day by day ceasing to be human.

Now take a step further. When God looks into your office, or parish, or school, or hospital, or factory, or home, He sees all these people like that, and of course, sees one more, the one whom you do not see. For we may be quite certain that, just as in other people, there is something on which our best endeavors have again and again been shipwrecked, so in us there is something quite equally fatal, on which their endeavors have again and again been shipwrecked. If we are beginners in the Christian life we have nothing to make the fatal flaw clear to ourselves. Does the person with a smelly breath know it smells? Or does the Club bore know he is a bore? Is there a single man or woman who believes himself or herself to be a bore or temperamentally jealous? Yet the world is pretty well sprinkled with bores and jealous people. If we are like that, everyone else will know it before we do. You ask why your friends have not told you about it. But what if they have? They may have tried again and again; but on every occasion, we thought they were being queer, that they were in a bad temper, or simply mistaken. They have tried again and again, and have probably now given it up.

What should be done about it? What is the good of my talking about the fatal flaw if one does not know about it? I think the first step is to get down to the flaws which one does know. I am speaking to Christians. Many of you, no doubt, are very far ahead of me in the Christian way. It is not for me to decide whether you should confess your sins to a priest or not (our Prayer Book leaves that free to all and demands it of none)<sup>4</sup> but if you do not, you should at least make a list on a piece of paper, and make a serious act of penance about each one of them. There is something about the mere words, you know, provided you avoid two dangers, either of sensational exaggeration—trying to work things up and make melodramatic sins out of small matters—or the opposite danger of slurring things over. It is essential to use the plain, simple old-fashioned words that you would use about anyone else. I mean words like theft,

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4. Exhortation, Prayer Book, p. 86, especially the last paragraph.

or fornication, or hatred, instead of “I did not mean to be dishonest,” or “I was only a boy then,” or “I lost my temper.” I think that this steady facing of what one does know and bringing it before God, without excuses, and seriously asking for Forgiveness and Grace, and resolving as far as in one lies to do better, is the only way in which we can ever begin to know the fatal thing which is always there, and preventing us from becoming perfectly just to our wife or husband, or being a better employer or employee. If this process is gone through, I do not doubt that most of us will come to understand and to share these old words like “contrite,” “miserable” and “intolerable.”

Does that sound very gloomy? Does Christianity encourage morbid introspection? The alternative is much more morbid. Those who do not think about

their own sins make up for it by thinking incessantly about the sins of others. It is healthier to think of one’s own. It is the reverse of morbid. It is not even, in the long run, very gloomy. A serious attempt to repent and really to know one’s own sins is in the long run a lightening and relieving process. Of course, there is bound to be a first dismay and often terror and later great pain, yet that is much less in the long run than the anguish of a mass of unrepented and unexamined sins, lurking the background of our minds. It is the difference between the pain of the tooth about which you should go to the dentist, and the simple straightforward pain which you know is getting less and less every moment when you have had the tooth out.

<http://anglicanhistory.org/usa/advent/misoff.html>

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## So let it be rotten—so let it be done!



William Murchison

William Murchison

‘Boy!’ thought I to myself. Here we were, moving through General Convention with some dispatch and lowered voices. There hadn’t been any resolutions in favor of granting statehood to Washington, D.C., or closing Guantanamo, or requiring government permits to purchase cap-pistols. True, both houses of Convention were busily re-inventing marriage: closing up loopholes in God’s work so as better to gratify the editorial staff of the *New York Times*.

Could be worse, thought I—veteran as I am of General Conventions dating back to the mid-1990s.

Then it happened. I might have seen it coming, but I found the prospect hard to credit. Another prayer book revision? Surely not. We beat that old nag to death back in the ’70s. Wherefore the rekindled interest in going round the track once more?

Because—I guess—it always can be worse, when you’re dealing with the Episcopal hierarchy as it glides cross the ballroom floor, in the arms of the spirit of the age. The spirit appears to grasp some unfathomable need for the first prayer book revision since the disaster of 1979.

And so it shall be done, my brothers and sisters. So it shall be done, notwithstanding the track record of rancor and innocent hurt racked up by the successful attempts of the Rev. Leo Malania and his Standing Liturgical Commission to foist on the church a schizophrenic prayer book heavy with bad writing and doubtful theology.

Ah, here we go again!

One deputy in the House spoke to the matter. I was that deputy. The chair politely recognized me (I

should pay tribute to the good manners and good nature with which the Rev. Gay Jennings of Ohio, an undoubted liberal, ran the House in her initial outing as president). I consumed the two minutes allotted floor speakers, stated my objections to the matter at hand, saw no one else rise, duly voted no—and, behold, it was resolved by solemn order of the House of Deputies that there should be formed a “plan” for revision of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer.

There aren’t many “conservatives” at General Convention any more. Well did I know it! I told the House I knew what it was going to do—viz., approve the proposal for revision. I stated what seemed to me, for this body, the apposite objection that the last revision seriously divided the Episcopal Church, and did we really want to go down that road again?

Of course we did—and do. I confess to Almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I didn’t then and don’t now believe the next revision process will produce anything like the ruction the last one did. There aren’t enough of us prayer book traditionalists still around to proffer the kind of principled, well-informed objections that were put forth in the ’70s. Not a few traditionalists subsequently made their peace with revision, either because they were told they could use Rite I, or because they thought the game of resistance wasn’t worth the candle.

“And also with you,” this latter group found itself able to utter, with resignation or, as time went by, complete indifference.

Which isn’t to say the prospect of a new prayer book is yet another matter of general indifference. It isn’t. It shouldn’t become one.

The prayer book—even “the ’79” version—is in Anglican worship a standard. It tells us how things are.

It tell us what to do about those things. The '79 is permissive and forgiving to a degree hard to contemplate in earlier years. Still, there is some standard: some sense of rightness, due-ness, meet-ness. There aren't many standards in modern life; there aren't many norms. To be instructed that something is "meet, right and our bounden duty" is to encounter an unfamiliar requirement that taste and opinion be submerged for a moment at least in an act of submission.

Submission! Ha! You don't hear much about that any more, do you? No one else's judgment is presumed capable of overriding our own. You open a book of worship full of doctrines and rules and rubrics, and you get the impression of something very un-modern. Something, in fact, very *anti-modern*: this narrowing of options, this channeling of actions and devotions toward an end we may not have chosen freely, according to preference, according to instinct.

All of us in the '70s—all of us who were alive then, and anxious over the emptying-out of a spiritual treasury called the prayer book—often focused on the language of the old book and the capacity of that language to mark with candles the intersections where divine love and generosity meet human frailty and hard-headedness. *Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord; and by thy great mercy. . .*

Entreaty of this character came together with knowledge. And became knowledge. And fixed itself in the soul. And we knew what had to be done. And why.

Thus the love of so-called sublime prayer book language only half-explained the moral authority of the Book of Common Prayer. It was well enough to quote Dr. Johnson on how there were no good prayers but those in the prayer book. It was better to understand how he could make such a magisterial judgment. He could make it because he knew the prayer book reflected Reality: that which *is*, as contrasted with the daily run of tea-table (nowadays Twitter) chit-chat.

But here we go again, as I say, with the Lord alone knowing the stopping point. Maybe that's OK, because the prayer book belongs not to the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music (current name of the old SLC) and not even to the General Convention of the Episcopal Church, bless its collectively well-meaning, embarrassingly uninformed heart.

The prayer book is the Lord's. He will use it for His own glorious purposes. Or He will give it such a funeral as General Convention could never devise or contemplate.

[William Murchison is a syndicated columnist and sits on the Board of the Prayer Book Society.](#)

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## An Eyewitness to the Forward in Faith Congress, 2015

James Syrow

**O**n July 13, several hundred members of Anglican clergy, American and international, had gathered in Fort Worth for five days of the Forward in Faith Congress, 2015. As with Anglican events in general, this congress, with its sea of collars and vestments, the purple attire of episcopacy and the "hum" of religion in the air, carried with it an undeniable impression of 'ecclesiastical presence.' Lay onlookers, young and old, perhaps estranged from the Church, perhaps skeptical and agnostic, would have seen here a veritable cloud of cassocks and collars, figures in purple with a rush of entourage around them; black shapes of two-three strewn all around in armchairs across the lounge—all an unusual sight, conveying the sense of men set aside and apart from the world.

My presence at the congress, twofold, promoting the Media Dei website ministry, and as a registered attendee, had provided a platform to experience the

full range of activities and sessions the Congress had scheduled. Each day was planned out with two keynote speeches and four breakout sessions, bookended by morning Matins, mid-day Holy Communion, and concluding Evensong.

At the start of the Congress, the most prominent in attendance was the Primate of the Anglican Church in North America, Most Reverend Archbishop Foley Beach, who had graced the Congress for Morning Prayer, the afternoon sessions, and most centrally as the preacher at the Divine Service of Holy Communion. His sermon, unfortunately not captured on video but fondly remembered by those who were present, spoke eloquently and forcefully about Christian unity, charity, and affection within the Church, with a sense of urgency referencing the new dangers that threaten it. The Archbishop cited recent legal developments wherein Christian marriage had been attacked and put in danger. Those who would look for weakness of faith in Anglican prelates would look in vain in the Archbishop's

analysis of our times, and in his resolve to face them. I had the honor of speaking with the Archbishop after the divine service, in gratitude for his faithful witness and continual courage.

Among other prelates in attendance was the previous Primate, Archbishop Duncan, always a prominent figure, whom many Anglicans cannot sufficiently thank for his fortitude against innumerable odds.

Among the international visitors, was an impressive figure—the Very Reverend Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali, one of the legendary and faithful stalwarts of the Church of England. At the Congress, he was given a prominent platform for teaching and spiritual edification, and every morning he spent an hour or more leading the whole body of attendees in a lengthy and detailed scriptural study on the Church, her origins, her nature, and her Savior. Where each of the other speakers had a session, Bishop Nazir-Ali had an entire week, leaving those present at the conference deeply edified on the Scriptural doctrines of the Church as the body of Christ.

The first keynote address of the Congress, and one of the most fascinating, was given by an international visitor, Most Reverend Archbishop Valentino Mokiwa of Tanzania. His speech was a eulogy in gracious memory of an historic English missionary bishop, Frank Weston, who held forth in Tanzania as an indomitable bishop in the early twentieth century. This was no dry history—Weston came alive as a man of towering and sanctified piety, firm, solid, and wholly given over to God. As the archbishop's testimony of Weston's life unfolded, it became apparent just how indifferent archbishop Mokiwa (as an African) was to Colonial and post-Modern narratives about Africa, which are almost habitual in the West, and which disfigure our perceptions. Unambiguously and repeatedly, the Archbishop expressed how deeply grateful he was for this stalwart Englishman who brought the gospel to his ancestors, dedicating his life to bring salvation to those who lack it. With the gospel he brought schools, medicine, education, poetry, and a kind of Christian learning, which nearly 60–70 years later the Archbishop on the podium embodied in his character and learning, for the rest of us. I had the privilege of meeting his grace Archbishop Mokiwa, and if the reader imagines him a most gracious, refined, and inspiring man, he will not be far off the mark.

During reflections like these, I became aware of the error of indulging in empty post-colonial guilt. The missionary spirit is nothing to be ashamed of. The Archbishop even concluded by asking the audience to repeat Weston's spiritual conquest, redouble his fervor, and come again to his native Tanzania to spiritually wrestle for the gospel, given today's challenges, including the Muslim majorities, the Tanzanian control over Christian schools and institutions, and make these an opportunity for teaching the holy life for the faith.

If the keynote sessions during the week were edifying, the breakout sessions were no less so. The breakout session on the Christian and Anglican doctrine of marriage, led by Dr. Stephen Noll, outlined first the apostolic and patristic view, as formulated by St. Augustine. As he explained them, these are the goals of marriage: procreation and fidelity. Then Dr. Noll connected this to Anglican teaching—the Preface on Marriage from the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, describes the goals of marriage as these: first (the Prayer Book says), is the procreation of children; second, is a remedy against sin. Only lastly does it add the “mutual society” of the spouses. In contrast to this, Dr. Noll explained, the central tenet of the contemporary view of marriage is, as he termed it, the “Ethic of Intimacy,” redefining sexuality, and severing it from all connection to kinship and progeneration, for the purpose of realizing the idols of modernity: self-fulfillment, self-realization, and “confluent love.” Where (Christian) romantic love would focus on one special person, confluent love focuses on “one or more” special relationships. With the recent Court ruling, Dr. Noll argued that the Ethic of Intimacy has been effectively enthroned as law in the United States.

The way forward, said Dr. Noll, is to embrace and elaborate on ACNA's fidelity to apostolic teaching, recently seen in the bishops' statement “Bearing Witness to Holy Matrimony.” Second, he urged for stronger Church discipline against improper heterosexual relationships: cohabitation, fornication, and notorious offenders, the inadequate prohibition of which (he argued) had opened the Church to the charge of prejudicial bias against homosexuality. Thirdly, the audience was urged to take back holy matrimony from the state: “It's a public institution, but not a state institution,” Dr. Noll repeated. “No magistrate has the right to redefine marriage.” Yet since the state did redefine it, what should the Church do? “The church must adjudicate, pastorally but firmly, the cases of divorce and unrepentant remarriage.” No-fault divorce is at the bottom root of this problem. No auditors were left unmoved by Dr. Noll's teaching and resolution concerning these hard teachings.

Among other sessions there were speakers such as Georgette Forney, who is head of Anglicans for Life. She led an excellent session on the pro-life movement, and her reasons for involvement with it. Each year the March for Life in Washington DC has seen a large host of Anglican bishops present, but insufficient numbers of priests and laity, whereupon she called for new volunteers. Kevin Kallsen and David Virtue led a session on the new and old media, teaching on the lessons from years in the business. Glen Petta of SOMA Ministries spoke about pastoral work overseas, and the challenges of evangelizing in hostile countries, instancing missionaries in Myanmar who struggle to be heard in a country that is

99% Buddhist, and bishops in Africa who try to support the family in the context of a traditional culture of polygamy.

Dr. Edith Humphrey gave a talk on Conciliarity: “The Nature of the Church: Apostolic, Conciliar and Concrete.” She spoke of the Church as an organic institution, not an aggregate of individuals acting on their own. Apostolicity, she argued, developed in the early church to mark the dedication to the teaching (doctrine) and the “koinonia” (communion) of the Apostles. The communal aspects necessary to the perpetuation of the Faith were argued to be essential; and she noted that even church planting is a communal act, from a whole community. “The early church knew nothing of a lone ranger missionary,” Humphrey argued. “Early churches did not appear by autogenesis,” she added, to laughter from the audience. To be apostolic, then, would be to cleave unto the apostles and their successors.


However, she continued, the primacy of the tactile church and hierarchy opened the door for abuse. Hence the need for Conciliarity to serve as a check on individual communities, churches, and ‘rogue bishops.’ As she noted, some in the Church have expressed fear and “synodophobia,” perhaps naturally wary of the cruel and lamentable abuses so

many at the Congress attendees have suffered over past years. Yet, pressing on, Humphrey argued that synods and Councils are essential to Church decisions, as seen in the New Testament. Central to all this is the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, namely that far from each person knowing the whole truth, God speaks to each person in complementary and harmonizing ways. This concept she supported by the example of Acts 10, the decisions by St Peter, by Cornelius, and by other apostles. God reveals parts of the whole to each individual, and it is only in community that they are able to ascertain the whole. Prayer, Edith argued, is essential for the workings of the Holy Ghost in Synodal and Conciliar structures, as for instance in the verse from Acts 15: “For it has seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us. . .” The Church then should be guided between these two rocks of “Synodophobia” and “Prelatical autocracy,” with Conciliarity as an essential element in its government.

These were some of the fascinating and stimulating discussions at the Congress. Undoubtedly the discussion of such topics will continue in the ensuing years, with the questions of Marriage acquiring a greater urgency than ever before. Those in the world, perhaps estranged from the church, perhaps seeking for answers in their lives, look to the Church (whether they know it or not) for the divine and unchanging truth which even they recognize within their hearts as true. The strength and witness of our churchmen, in standing with God, is all the world needs to begin to heal again, and strength was in abundance at the Congress. May this be an indication that the Anglican church is on a renewed path of unified strength, and an undaunted witness to the truth of her savior and founder.

James Syrow is a lay Anglican, with an interest in IT, humanities, and theology. He runs a media and website ministry “Media Dei,” equipping Anglican churches, schools and organizations with a compelling online presence.

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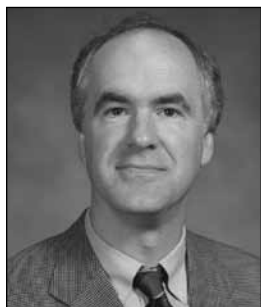
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# Gospel Ordered Worship



Gillis Harp

Gillis Harp

**D**utch theologian, Dr. G. van der Leuw, once aptly observed that “whoever takes the little finger of liturgy soon discovers that he has grabbed the whole fist of theology.” Evangelicals appear to have confirmed the truth of this dictum in their rediscovery of worship in recent years. In the past, we have understandably focused on the content of preaching in considering whether our worship was Biblical. This article seeks to answer two different theological questions about worship: In what ways do our conceptions of both the Gospel and worship affect our corporate worship? And, in what sense should that story of redemption actually shape our worship? Or, to put it differently, how exactly does the Gospel constitute the heart of Christian worship and, more specifically, how should it frame the very structure of our corporate worship as well as determine its contents? The Holy Scriptures, the Early Church and many of the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformers shared a general consensus about how the order and components of Christian worship should reflect the great redemptive events of incarnation, atonement and resurrection. Much of contemporary Protestant worship has lost or mangled this Biblical order and its recovery should be a high priority for those of us committed to a modern Reformation.

## Getting the Gospel Straight

Before proceeding to examine what constitutes Gospel-ordered worship, we need first to clarify our understanding of God’s Good News; for, as theologian David Peterson puts it, “the gospel is the key to New Testament teaching about worship.” “Essentially the gospel is a declaration of what God has done *for* us in Jesus Christ,” writes Graeme Goldsworthy, “rather than (as is often implied) what God does *in* the believer, although we may not separate the two. It is the objective historical facts of the coming of Jesus in the flesh and the God-given interpretation of those facts.” Goldsworthy hastens to note that when the Apostle Peter delivered his important sermon recorded in Acts 2, “he was quick to divert attention

from what God had done in the apostles by giving them the Holy Spirit, and to concentrate on the facts concerning Jesus of Nazareth.” Very little “what the Lord has been doing in my life” testimony here! “The facts,” Goldsworthy continues, “are those of the incarnation, of the perfect life of Jesus of Nazareth, and of his dying and rising from the grave. The interpretation of these facts is that this took place [in the words of the creed] ‘for us men and for our salvation.’ In these two simple statements of fact and interpretation we sum up the breadth and depth of biblical revelation.” The Gospel is thus the story of redemption, of God working in history to redeem his people, a redemption prefigured in the Old Testament and

culminating in the person and work of Christ recorded in the New Testament. In and through Christ, God dealt definitively with human sin. Christ’s death and resurrection saved his people from their sins, a perfect redemption that will achieve final consummation at His glorious return.

Many evangelicals today focus primarily

on the subjective dimension of the Good News as it relates to themselves as believers. Some contemporary errors in the realm of worship are rooted in a pietistic (and ultimately subjectivist) understanding of the Gospel. Just as their Pietist forbears criticized the formalism of the state churches, so modern-day evangelicals stress that personal commitment to Christ is the heart of the Gospel. Such an approach has bred a suspicion of outward forms of any kind and a preference for spontaneous or extemporaneous expressions of piety. Accordingly, one should not be surprised to see this subjective dimension highlighted in evangelical worship. Because of their skewed construction of the Gospel, some evangelicals actually end up making their worship man-centered as they seek to be Gospel-centered. What an ironic outcome! Their misreading of the Gospel is such that when they seek to make it the heart of their worship, the service inevitably becomes highly subjective and individualistic. Frequently, the focus is on the minister (whose extemporaneous prayers naturally reflect his individual skill or creativity) and worship often features personal testimonies of how the Gospel has transformed the lives of particular

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In what ways do our conceptions of both the Gospel and worship affect our corporate worship? And, in what sense should that story of redemption actually shape our worship?

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individuals. Individuals may provide ‘special music’ in the form of an emotive solo. Often, the liturgical climax of the service is the altar call when, significantly, one sees the Gospel at work in the lives of individuals who come forward to commit themselves to Christ.

The concerns of the eighteenth-century Pietists about the arid formalism of nominal Christianity were legitimate. Christianity without a personal commitment to Christ is indeed what Bishop Ryle called a “useless form of religion.” But this valid concern for experiential religion (to employ an eighteenth-century phrase) has warped our understanding of the Gospel and consequently sidetracked our worship. Indeed, it has kept many from seeing in what important ways the Gospel should shape our corporate worship.

### Clarifying the Meaning of Worship

The word ‘worship’ literally means ascribing worthiness to the object of worship. The dictionary defines it as “a reverent homage or service paid to God” arising from the latter’s worthiness or merit. Christians today tend to see this sort of homage as consisting of praise, prayer and related acts of adoration within the context of a church service. Although the Old Testament carefully stipulates ritual acts of worship in the tabernacle and subsequently in the Temple, the New Testament transforms this cultic character of worship. Indeed, St. Paul (picking up on OT passages that upheld obedience as preferable to worship) exhorts the brethren in a familiar passage to present their entire lives “as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.” Such a whole-hearted self-offering of obedience Paul characterizes as “your spiritual worship.” (Romans 12:1) It is this “total life-response that is the worship of the new covenant,” concludes David Peterson. This is radical stuff and it should rebuke us when we fall into the unscriptural habit of conceiving of worship as only that which we do when seated in a pew of Sunday morning beneath a gothic arch.

While this radical perspective on worship in the New Testament is a helpful corrective, it should not prompt us to exclude the earlier notion entirely. For Christians under the new covenant there is still a *cultus* of sorts, though there is now no human priest and the sacrifices offered are strictly the responsive sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving of the redeemed. Although there is now no carefully prescribed Temple ritual, the corporate worship of the body of Christ on the Lord’s Day is not unimportant. Peterson stresses “that the indwelling in and communion of Christ with the church have their point of concentration and special realization in its unity as assembled congregation. Those of us in the Reformed tradition have sometimes so stressed the ‘whole-life-service’ aspect of worship (definitely an important point) that we have neglected or dismissed liturgical questions

as ephemera or neglected the physical setting of the church’s corporate worship. Indeed, sometimes we seem to identify the ability to conduct corporate worship in the ugliest settings as evidence of being ‘super-spiritual.’ Many ask: as long as there are three hymns and a sermon what’s the difference? But both the Early Church and the Magisterial Reformers did not think that the components of corporate worship, or the order of the service were *adiaphora*.

### Corporate Worship: A Gospel Design

But how should this redemptive ‘meta-narrative’ mold what Christians do when they gather together on the Lord’s Day? We need to return to Biblical first principles. Protestants look to Scripture as our supreme authority, while respecting the church’s tradition as an important, albeit fallible, guide to understanding that authority. Reformed Christians may be familiar with the tripartite division of the Heidelberg Catechism into the categories of guilt, grace and gratitude. Sinners are convicted of their guilt by the Holy Spirit, they are justified by God graciously crediting Christ’s perfect righteousness to them (which they receive through faith) and they then offer lives of obedience as a sign of their gratitude. One recognizes this ‘Gospel design’ in the Bible’s own treatment of worship. There is a clear movement from self-examination and confession to receiving the word of grace and expressing thanks through praise and prayer for others. But there is considerably more in the Biblical models than this bare outline might suggest.<sup>1</sup>

The pattern of Old Testament worship reflects the larger story of redemption highlighting God’s covenant relationship with His chosen people. The Old Testament teaches that God’s people may only approach Him through blood sacrifice. One of the few detailed descriptions of OT worship is contained in 2 Chronicles 5–7. It describes a pattern we see repeated elsewhere (see also 1 Chron 15–16; 28–29; Neh 8–10): God’s people gather together in one spot; there is animal sacrifice; they enter the Most Holy Place (2 Chron 5:7–10); they sing praises to God; God’s word is read aloud and expounded; there is prayer for the entire community; fire comes down from heaven (2 Chron 7:1–2): responsive singing of praise, peace offering or covenant meal then follows; a benediction ends worship (not explicitly included in this account but evident in others).

The New Testament picture of heavenly worship provided by the Apostle John in Revelation appears to follow a similar pattern, although Biblical scholars disagree about how best to understand these difficult passages. In some respects, the order of heavenly worship seems to reflect the order of redemptive history (i.e. worship begins based on the sacrifice

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1. The writings of Rev’d Peter Wallace and the Rev’d G. VanDooren have informed my thinking on this subject.

of Christ and concludes by partaking of that sacrifice in the wedding supper of the Lamb). One might interpret St. John's vision this way: First, the heavenly hosts call John to worship (Rev. 4:1–11), no one is deemed worthy to open the scrolls but the Lamb of God is worthy and thus the worshipers enter God's presence on these terms (Rev. 5:1–7), and a Psalm of praise is sung (Rev. 5:8–14). Then, the Word of God is read and preached (in the Seven Seals, Rev. 6:1–8:5), the covenant community prays and praises God (Rev. 7:9–8:4) and Heaven responds with fire (Rev. 8:5).

Of course the worship of the OT has been transformed under the new covenant. There are now no human priests, Christ is our only mediator and advocate. Although God's covenant people are still only able to enter His presence on the basis of blood sacrifice, it is now on the basis of the single, past, completed sacrifice of Calvary. The author of Hebrews puts it eloquently in words that helped early Christians understand the basis of worship under the New Covenant: "Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart full of assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." (Hebrews 10:19–22) There are, notably, no detailed worship instructions contained in the pages of the NT (outside of the heavenly worship recorded by John). Yet Acts 2:42 does speak significantly of the gathering together of the saints for "the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." As their counterparts in Heaven, the early Christians had access to God only through the blood of the spotless Lamb and they enjoyed spiritual fellowship with their Savior and their brethren by sharing the covenant meal. Observance of the covenant meal appears to have been weekly, i.e. every Lord's Day.

### A Pattern Preserved: the Early Church and the Reformers

It is significant that one of the earliest extra-biblical accounts of Christian worship retains this general pattern. Note, for instance, the description of the Church's worship in Justin Martyr's *First Apology* (ca. 155): "On the day which is called Sunday, all who live in the cities or in the countryside gather together in one place. And the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read as long as there is time. Then, when the reader has finished, the president, in a discourse, admonishes and invites the people to practice these examples of virtue. Then we all stand up together and offer prayers. And as we mentioned before, when we have finished the prayer, bread is presented, and wine with water; the president likewise offers up prayers and thanksgiving according

to his ability, and the people assent by saying Amen." The faithful then received communion and the service ended with an outward directed response: a collection taken for the needy. Again, second century Christians obviously did not assemble on the Lord's Day without sharing in their covenant meal together—the very logic of the service called for it.

What may be surprising to many contemporary evangelicals, is that most of the Protestant Reformers of the sixteenth century did not seek to reinvent the wheel when they came to reform the practice of corporate worship. Rather than beginning with a blank sheet of paper, they chose instead to revise the existing liturgical forms. Although they took pains to cleanse the church's worship of medieval corruptions (especially seeking to expunge thoroughly anything that taught the unbiblical doctrines of transubstantiation or the propitiatory sacrifice of the Mass) most Reformers maintained the ancient order. For example, Luther excised from the eucharistic prayer all of the material that taught eucharistic sacrifice, so much so that the eucharistic prayer ended abruptly (in the minds of some commentators) with the immediate communion of the faithful. The Augsburg Confession rejected the medieval doctrine of Mass sacrifice in strong terms: "Concerning these opinions our teachers have given warning that they depart from the Holy Scriptures and diminish the glory of the passion of Christ. . . Now if the Mass take away the sins of the living and the dead by the outward act[,] justification comes of the work of Masses, and not of faith, which Scripture does not allow." (Augsburg Conf., Article 24) Nevertheless, despite his radicalism in this respect, despite Luther's eagerness to cleanse the service of Holy Communion of medieval error, he scrupulously retained the traditional order we have outlined. Melancthon stressed that he and his fellow 'Evangelicals' were not seeking to depart from ancient tradition when it was consonant with Holy Writ. As the Augsburg Confession puts it: "This worship pleases God; such use of the Sacrament nourishes true devotion toward God. It does not, therefore, appear that the Mass is more devoutly celebrated among our adversaries than among us." (See Augsburg Confession [1530] Article 24 'Of the Mass')

Although the wording of their liturgical handiwork varied, the leaders of the Reformed tradition were also concerned to preserve the broad outlines of the ancient order. Martin Bucer at Strasburg, for example, sought to restore the Church's worship to a shape and form that he termed "old, true, and eternal." It was, moreover, Bucer's liturgical work at Strasburg that Calvin relied upon heavily. Calvin's liturgy, as set forth in *The Form of Prayers and Manner of Administering the Sacraments according to the Use of the Ancient Church* (1545—the wording of the title here is notable), adhered to the traditional order of confession of sins, metrical psalm, reading from both testaments, offertory, pastoral prayer/intercessions,



prayer of consecration, communion of faithful, blessing. In an often ignored passage, Calvin offered a rationale for this sequence and its components: “We begin with confession of our sins, adding verses from the Law and the Gospel [i.e. words of absolution], . . . and after we are assured that, as Jesus Christ has righteousness and life in Himself, and that, as He lives for the sake of the Father, we are justified in Him and live in the new life through the same Jesus Christ, . . . we continue with psalms, hymns of praise, the reading of the Gospel, the confession of our faith [i.e. the Apostles’ Creed], and the holy oblations and offerings. . . And, . . . quickened and stirred by the reading and preaching of the Gospel and the confession of our faith, . . . it follows that we must pray for the salvation of all men, . . . And, because we receive Jesus Christ truly in this Sacrament, . . . we worship Him in spirit and in truth; and receive the eucharist with great reverence, concluding the whole mystery with praise and thanksgiving.” Calvin then concluded significantly: “This, therefore, is the whole order and reason for its administration in this manner; and it agrees also with the administration in the ancient Church of the Apostles, martyrs, and holy Fathers.” The Swiss Reformer also battled unsuccessfully to return to the Apostolic pattern of celebrating the Lord’s Supper every Sunday. The Reformed scholar, Dr. K. Deddens, comments: “Did Calvin link up with liturgical customs of the late Middle Ages and with the situation in Strasbourg for the sake of convenience or because he himself was not very inventive? Neither is the case! We already saw that Calvin consciously wanted to base himself on Holy Scripture. Besides, he also very much stressed the connection with the early church (*L’église ancienne*). Especially when liturgical matters were involved he pointed to the customs of the New Testament church and the first period after Pentecost. Frequently he quoted apostolic fathers and church fathers in order to emphasize his argument. It must also be said that Calvin was absolutely not aiming for a multitude of forms in worship. But that which had shown itself to be significant in former ages, especially in the early church, had to be taken over.”<sup>2</sup> Nor did Calvin’s Scottish student, John Knox, radically depart from this pattern in his otherwise simplified service contained in *The Forme of Prayers* (1556).

2. Deddens summarizes Calvin’s approach thus: “In summary, I come to the following conclusions:

1. It was an important and laudable principle of Calvin that liturgically he sought connection with:
  - a. what he found in Holy Scripture;
  - b. the custom of the early church;
  - c. good customs which had developed in the course of history.
2. The first part of Calvin’s order of liturgy (the part before the prayer for the opening of God’s Word) forms an organic whole according to the triad: misery, deliverance, and thankfulness.” (*Clarion*, 1988)

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# Thoughts on the Prayer Book

## THE USEFULNESS OF A LITURGY

*From the works of J. C. Ryle found in the Church Society website*

*This article comes from the archived writings of John Charles Ryle, the first Bishop of Liverpool, lived from 1816–1900. He was a prolific writer of both Devotional and Doctrinal books and tracts. This present booklet is an edited version of the ninth paper in his book “Principles for Churchmen” which was published in 1884, four years after his consecration. The book is sub-titled “A Manual of positive statements on some subjects of controversy.” Church Book Room Press—Ryle Reprint Series 1962*

### Thoughts on the Prayer Book

It is probably true to say that there is no book in existence, apart from the Bible, which is so well known and yet so little appreciated, as the Book of Common Prayer. Every Sunday a very large number of people throughout the world, hold it and use it, and yet probably very few have ever really considered what an immense value there is in a liturgical form of worship. Even fewer no doubt, have realised the excellencies and principles of the Church of England liturgy.

### The Usefulness of a Liturgy

Let us first of all, then, examine the general usefulness of forms of prayer in public worship. Now it must be admitted that Christians are not entirely of one mind on this point. Some Churches hold that no prepared form of prayer ought ever to be used. It is left entirely to the minister, and the Spirit is trusted to guide him aright, on the grounds that prayers should always be extempore. This is, of course, the opinion of the Scottish Presbyterians and most Nonconformists.

On the other hand, other churches maintain that it is best to have a fully prepared form of worship, which the minister must use. He is left with no discretion in the matter, but must use the form of prayer provided. The Church of England is among these denominations.

The question which we have to answer then, is, “Which of these two plans is the better form of public worship?” “Which is the more edifying, wiser and profitable for the Christian?” As a minister of the Church of England, I obviously think that a set form is better than extempore prayer. But before giving reasons for this preference, it must first be stated that this is not a matter which is necessary to salvation. It is not claimed that there can be no acceptable public worship without a prayer book. Nor is this, at

the moment, a special defence of the Church of England Prayer Book as such. The immediate question concerns what is the most useful manner of worship; and whether it is good to have any liturgy at all. At present the aim is to give some general reasons why forms of public prayer appear to be preferable to extempore prayer.

Let us look for a moment at some of the disadvantages of extempore prayer, without a prayer book. Firstly, it makes the congregation dependent upon the minister’s health, circumstances or feelings. If he is sick, or depressed in spirit by some matter, then the devotions of the congregation are bound to suffer. A minister is only a man, and if he prays extempore, his feelings must of necessity colour his prayers.

Secondly, the worship becomes dependent upon the minister’s memory. He may forget many things which he ought to pray for, and which he intended to pray for. But again, he is a man, and liable to forget.

Thirdly, the congregation becomes entirely dependent upon the minister’s doctrinal beliefs. He may be moving away, gradually, from the true faith; adding to, or taking away from the Gospel. If this is happening, the people are bound to suffer, for his unsoundness will become apparent in his prayers.

Fourthly, extempore prayer makes it almost impossible for the congregation to join in public worship. They cannot know what the minister is going to pray for. They must concentrate very hard to avoid losing the thread of the prayer. Indeed, sometimes they may not understand him because of his language.

Lastly, it must be added that, after a time, extempore prayer becomes as much a form to most congregations, as any form of prayer ever written. After a few years the congregation knows well the phrases, expressions and order of the petitions of the minister. Sometimes they can make a shrewd guess how long the prayer will last, and when it is nearing its end. When this is the case, it is just as formal to pray extempore as to pray from a book.

All of these reasons indicate how much more useful is an ordered form of worship. Indeed, these problems do not arise when a book is used. It is very easy to say that an ordered worship is formal and bondage, and to claim that extempore prayer is more spiritual. But it is far more easy to make such claims than to prove them, and so often they are made without any real thought.

Before we go on to think particularly concerning the Prayer Book, there are a few general remarks which must be made.

1. Salvation does not depend on being a member of a Church which uses a prayer book form of worship. Nor does it depend upon belonging to one which uses extempore prayer in worship. The way of salvation is for each person to be born again, repent of sin, believe on Christ, become a new creature and live a holy life. Without this, it will not make the slightest difference what was thought about form of worship.

2. Extempore prayer may sometimes be very solemn, spiritual, soul-exalting and heart-edifying. Sometimes Church of England clergy pray, extempore, so beautifully that nothing better could be desired. If all men prayed always as some men do sometimes, there would be nothing better than extempore prayer. But all ministers are not highly gifted, and the question to be considered is, what mode of worship is most likely to be carried on effectively and profitably to a congregation, by the average run of ministers? Taking the broad view of clergy, it is better for most to pray from a book.

3. Liturgical prayers may be spoiled by the bad reading of the minister. Through speed, bad tone, or irreverence he may do no good to the congregation; he may even weary and disgust them. But forms of prayer cannot be judged by the reading of careless

or unconverted ministers. Before any judgment is made, they should be heard when read reverently, carefully and audibly, with the congregation joining in. It will then be discovered that forms may be read spiritually, quite as easily as extempore prayers may be used formally.

4. Let anyone who is used to the Prayer Book, but who says he is tired of it, attend no other worship for a while than “extempore.” He will hear many good prayers, no doubt, and sometimes be much edified and pleased. It must be remembered that, for example, the Presbyterian church has many clergy who would benefit any church on earth. But at the end of a few months, most sensible churchmen will return, convinced that there is nothing so useful for a congregation as a good liturgical form of worship.

The church that has good, sound Scriptural fervent extempore prayer does well. But the church that has a well-composed, well-arranged Scriptural liturgy does far better. The way of “forms” in public worship, is better than the way of “extempore” prayer.

From the Church Society website: [http://archive.churchsociety.org/issues\\_new/doctrine/bcp/rylethoughts/iss\\_doctrine\\_bcp\\_rylethoughts\\_usefulness.asp](http://archive.churchsociety.org/issues_new/doctrine/bcp/rylethoughts/iss_doctrine_bcp_rylethoughts_usefulness.asp)

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# Incarnational Education

Father Brian Foos

**T**he question of how we ought to educate seems, paradoxically, both a hot topic and one that no one really wants to discuss deeply. A few pithy phrases or digs at the public educational establishment down the street often suffice for many Christians. Yet this is a fundamental issue lying right at the heart of the life of the Church. Without answering the question of how we ought to educate, we leave behind another generation unequipped to build God’s kingdom after us. Statistics about young people’s leaving the Church after high school show that the Church in America is in trouble. A quick perusal of teenage culture—within the Church—will tell us the same thing. What’s to be done?

As the headmaster of a classical school, I might be expected to say that studies of the Christian students ought to be more aggressive, harder, and more challenging, and that their minds must be formed by the study of Latin and Greek, higher math, Formal Logic, and Rhetoric.

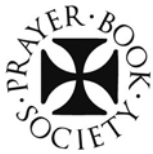
As a priest, I might be expected to say that the moral theology of the students’ education must be intensified, and we should be more concerned with helping our young people through the ethical dilemmas they will likely face in our culture.

As a parent, I might be expected to say that a student’s relationship with God should be emphasized and a student should be taught how to find an alternative teenage culture to participate in.

What I propose as the simple answer to the question is neither new nor original. But it is, I believe, somewhat shocking to our modern culture. The answer is quite simple. It does not necessarily exclude all the suggestions above, which are excellent in themselves; but it does come before them.

The simple answer is that we must educate our young people in the beauty of holiness. By this I don’t mean just that we teach them “this is holy,” or “this is beautiful,”—though no good education ought to omit this. What I mean is that our students should experience the beauty of holiness every time they come to school. Furthermore, the primary place for this experience is not the classroom, but the chapel.

Worship is the real foundation of the education we want our children to have. Worship is the real foundation of a life lived for the glory of God. We want our students to become disciples of Jesus, and this occurs most effectively in the life of worship lived around the throne of God. Incarnational and Catholic education is education which is experienced; to have a Christian education, we must first experience Christ, not just in our heads or our



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rational thoughts, as good and important as that is, but in our lives and with our knees.

This means that we connect with God as a community each school morning. It means that we understand every student in our school community to be a human created in the likeness and image of God. It means we must not treat our students as cogs in a machine, or as material just needing to be stamped with the stamp of “a good Christian education.”

Rather, each student is a unique person with gifts and talents and weaknesses, all of which need shaping, discipline, practice, correction, modeling, and forming. Thus, education is not, at heart, so much about facts and figures, spelling lists and readers, as it is about spiritual formation.

At our school, our students work hard at Math, Grammar, Reading, and philosophical discussion. The higher calling on all of our students, however, is to model their lives—including their academic lives—after the Master. That means that the masters of the school—the teachers—must be modeling their own lives after the Master, so that we might say with St. Paul, “Follow me as I follow Christ.”

This education is no easy task. It is much simpler to come up with a checklist to turn out the perfect brand-name, factory-stamped student. The problem is that this type of education just doesn’t work. The factory model of education—run them through the factory, adding pieces as they go—has failed miserably. So we’re left with the kind of teaching we see Jesus doing—challenging, telling stories, calling to higher purposes, explaining, loving, forming. It’s a lot harder, but, with God’s blessing, produces the kind of kingdom citizens whom the Church needs to be about her business.

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