

THE REVISION OF THE PRAYER BOOK

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In this lecture I am concerned with the attempts to revise the Prayer Book in the twentieth century. I cannot, because of the limited time available, deal in detail with the successive revisions. I must content myself with the broad sweep of the movement and try to explain the principles and motives behind it. I showed in my lecture on the Doctrine of the Prayer Book how the Protestant Reformed character of the Prayer Book had been fashioned in the reign of Edward VI, under the influence of continental Reformers like Calvin, Bucer and Peter Martyr. Cranmer and those who assisted him, such as Bishop Ridley, were persuaded of the Scripturalness of their position, and sought to produce a book that truly reflected the Reformed theology of the Articles of Religion, which were forged at the same time and under the same influence. Such then was the position arrived at in 1552 with the second Prayer Book of the reign of Edward VI, and this was carried through with only minor changes in 1662. So it remained for 300 years.

THE ORIGIN OF THE MOVEMENT FOR REVISION

Most people in the Church of England, during that long period when the Book of Common Prayer held sway, gloried in its liturgy, in its beauty and teaching, in its euphonious language and felicitous expression. Even in 1962, when the tercentenary of the Book of Common Prayer was celebrated, that was still broadly speaking the official attitude. But despite the official declarations, the position of the Prayer Book had been radically weakened and undermined by earlier events. The roots of this alienation went back to the nineteenth century and the rise of the Tractarian Movement, and particularly its successor the Ritualist Movement. John Henry Newman, who began the Tractarian Movement in 1833~with the plea that he was seeking to revive the authority of the church in face of what he saw as the growing Erastianism of the day, showed later by his attempt in Tract 90 to reconcile the Thirty Nine Articles with the official teaching of the Church of Rome exactly where the movement was heading. He joined the Church of Rome in 1845 and a number of those who were close to him did the same. But soon after he issued an appeal to his followers still in the Church of England not to do as he had done, but to remain in the Church of England and to work in it as leaven to change its character and ultimately to bring it into

convergence with the Church of Rome¹. "Convergence" is a word that figures prominently in modern ecumenical discussions, particularly in the official relations between the Anglican churches and the Church of Rome. *The Final Report* of ARCIC, which was published in 1982, is the fruition of the movement started by Newman in 1833. A convergence has been reached and the Church of England has now acceded very largely to the claims of the Church of Rome.

But we are concerned here with liturgy and, particularly, with the Book of Common Prayer. The chosen path of the Ritualists in the nineteenth century was to introduce into the services of the Established Church those very elements that would make it appear to approximate to the worship of the Church of Rome. Newman himself made no attempt to change the vesture of ministers or ornaments of the Church of England. But his successors, the Ritualists, introduced coloured mass vestments, eastward position, lights, bowing, crossings, incense and so forth. In addition to these, they introduced into the liturgy itself features associated with the Roman Catholic mass, such as, prayers and ceremonies belonging to the Canon of the Mass and the use of the words, "Behold the Lamb of God", accompanied by the exhibition of the consecrated wafer or bread.

These innovations caused a great stir up and down the land in many parishes. People were concerned that the Church of England and its Protestant doctrine and worship were being subverted, and that a deliberate attempt was being made to Romanise the Church of England. Parishioners were alienated from their parish churches by these practices and it was chiefly the lay people who bore the brunt of the innovations. They therefore took the initiative in forming defensive associations to resist these attacks on the worship and doctrine of the Church of England. One such body was the Church Association, founded in 1865. The *cause célèbre* of the nineteenth century was the trial of Bishop Edward King of Lincoln. It is in itself a sort of epitome of what happened in those times and is therefore worth looking at in some detail.

THE TRIAL OF BISHOP KING

The trial of Bishop King took its rise in a part of the Lincoln diocese near where I was for fifteen years an incumbent, and is of special interest to me for that reason. A new Rector of advanced ritualistic views had been appointed in 1886 to the Parish of Clee-cum-

Cleethorpes by the Bishop of Lincoln. At his first vestry meeting objections to changes in the services were voiced by Mr. de Lacy Read, one of the Church Wardens, by Mr. Richard Mason, a solicitor, and by others present. Mr. Read contended that the new Rector had turned the services upside down and had introduced practices that were quite illegal and distasteful to the people, so that parishioners had to go elsewhere on Easter Day to receive communion in accordance with their consciences. The innovations consisted of the wearing of an alb and chasuble, the eastward position and the making of the sign of the cross during the benediction. All these tended to assimilate the services of the Church of England to those of the Church of Rome.

Mr. Read had complained to the Bishop and the Bishop had said that if they would leave matters in his hands things would be alright, but that was not good enough because "the Bishop was very fond of these practices". The result was that a formal presentment of the Rector was made to the Bishop, which drew attention to the fact that the Church Wardens had already complained to the Bishop of some of these unlawful practices and there had been no abatement or discontinuance of them.

The Bishop's response to the presentment was wholly inadequate. He wrote to the Church Wardens to the effect that the Rector had been instructed to hold a communion service once a month at Clee Church, "as nearly as possible in the same way as it had formerly been ministered". "For the rest", he said, "I forbear to interfere, believing that in this way I shall best secure the highest interests of the Church of England". It is not surprising that the Church Warden described this as "an unworthy offer of compromise". Remember, that the practices complained of had been previously declared illegal by the ecclesiastical courts of the country. What the Bishop proposed was that the illegal and offensive practices should continue side by side with the other regular and legal service provided once a month according to the Book of Common Prayer. Such a compromise was unacceptable and was rejected by the Church Wardens.

Soon after these innovations were introduced at Clee Church, Mr. de Lacy Read and Mr. Richard Mason had, with others, formed at Cleethorpes a branch of the Church Association to strengthen and encourage those who objected to what was taking place in the parish church. The refusal of the Bishop to proscribe the illegal practices at Clee came to the attention of the meeting of the Church Association at Bristol, where the Rev. C. H. Wainwright declared that, as a

consequence of the Bishop of Lincoln's decision, "you have bishops who are sworn to do their utmost to enforce the law, and drive away false doctrine from the church, not only sanctioning what is illegal, but actually providing that the illegality may be legalised and constituted an authorised part of divine service... Such a case", Mr. Wainwright continued, "you have in the Bishop of Lincoln... he distinctly refuses to enforce the law, and he states that by allowing in the Protestant Church of England practices which are popish and illegal, he believes he shall best secure the highest interests of the Church of England".²

It was clear that the problem could not be dealt with in the case of the inferior clergy, if the bishops behaved in this way. It was necessary, then, that something should be done to bring the bishops to book, and the Church Association was to be the instrument to prompt the Archbishop of Canterbury to take action against the Bishop of Lincoln.

The case was brought to the Archbishop of Canterbury, who declined to intervene on the grounds that he had no jurisdiction in the matter, and could offer no advice as to means of compelling a compliance with the law. This difficulty was overcome by the Church Association by bringing a charge of ritualism against the Bishop of Lincoln himself, as a result of a service he conducted at St. Peter-at-Gowts in Lincoln. The Bishop belonged to the English Church Union, a high church body which had done much to encourage ritualism.

The charges brought against the Bishop were much the same as those brought against the Rector of Clee. The use of lighted candles, adopting the eastward position, mixing water with the wine, permitting the singing of the *Agnus Dei*, making the sign of the cross over the people, etc. All of which had been pronounced illegal. Of this impending trial of the Bishop, *The Rock* reported

Dr. King's episcopal position has long protected him in the practice of illegal ritual, the majority of people who disapproved of his practices being unwilling to appeal to a legal authority against a Bishop, whose duty it is ... to uphold the law – not to infringe it. At last, however, these time-serving counsels no longer prevail. Sensible men recognise that there is no use in appealing to the law in the case of the ordinary clergy, when all the time a Bishop is openly setting them an example of law defiance.³

So the attempt of the Archbishop to avoid a trial by declaring that he had no jurisdiction was overcome. The charges were brought directly against the Bishop himself, not one of his clergy. The Judicial

Committee of the Privy Council advised the Queen that the Archbishop of Canterbury had jurisdiction. Bishop King, therefore, appeared before the court of Archbishop Benson.

THE PLACE OF LITIGATION

There have been those who have condemned the Church Association for engaging in litigation over these matters. In doing this they forget two things. First, with the refusal of the bishops to act there was no other way of redress for the laity of the church who were being deprived of the Protestant services of the Book of Common Prayer. And, secondly, the first people to engage in litigation were not the Church Association but the ritualists themselves. Elliot Binns, in his *Religion in the Victorian Era*, states:

After the founding of the English Church Union in 1859 the High Churchmen became aggressive and such harmless practices as holding mission services in theatres proved especially obnoxious to them. They even tried in another sphere to prosecute Bishop Waldegrave of Carlisle.⁴

Archbishop Randall Davidson stated later, in 1905 before the Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline, that “the Church Association decided (most people will say, I think, rightly and bravely from their point of view)” to make a test case with regard to the Bishop of Lincoln.⁵

The paramount desire was not to persecute any individual, but to vindicate the Reformed and Protestant character of the Church of England, for the benefit of all her members and to make an end of the contention and strife, which were tearing the church apart.

A FUDGED JUDGMENT

After long deliberation, while the church held its breath, the Archbishop came up with a fudged judgment, which was intended to be pacifying but in fact settled nothing. The decision given by the Archbishop on November 21, 1890, declared the mixed chalice legal if not mixed during the service, the eastward position not illegal, the *Agnus Dei* permissible if sung as other hymns, ablutions if outside the service not wrong, and the two lights not illegal if the lighting of them was not made a ceremony. The signing of the cross was illegal. In arriving at this judgment the Archbishop was guided less by the facts of the matter than by a desire to drive a line firmly down the middle between the two

exhibition of a consecrated wafer or bread.

Reservation of the Sacrament under conditions which lead to its adoration.

Mass of the Prae-sanctified.

Corpus Christi processions with the Sacrament.

Benediction with the Sacrament.

Celebration of the Holy Eucharist with the intent that there shall be no communicant except the celebrant.

Hymns, prayers, and devotions involving invocation of or confession to the Blessed Virgin Mary or the Saints.

The observance of the festivals of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of the Sacred Heart.

The veneration of images and roods.⁸

These practices they said “should be promptly made to cease by the exercise of the authority belonging to the Bishops, and, if necessary, by proceedings in the Ecclesiastical Courts.”⁹ From the point of view of the Commission these practices ought not to be tolerated, because they lay on the Romeward side of a deep cleavage between the Church of England and the Church of Rome. They were inconsistent with the teaching of the Church of England in its 39 Articles and with the letter and the spirit of the Prayer Book. But the Commission did not minimise the significance of other practices contrary to the teaching of the Church of England. With regard to these it stated that

an accumulation of such practices in a service may, under certain conditions, have an aggregate effect which is more serious, and further removed from the standard of the Prayer Book and the type of worship inculcated by the Church of England, than the several practices taken singly would appear to have.

Together they

unite to change the outward character of the service from that of the traditional service of the Reformed English Church to that of the traditional service of the Church of Rome.¹⁰

It is clear that the Royal Commission sought to preserve the Protestant and Reformed character of the Church of England, which was jeopardised by the changes which were being introduced illegally.

Here an opportunity was given to the Archbishop and Bishops to restore the unity and doctrinal integrity of the Church of England, which had been threatened throughout the latter half of the nineteenth

century by the ritualistic movement. Backed by the Royal Commission, they could have required in the first instance acceptance of and obedience to its recommendations. But, instead of this, the Archbishop merely took the step of applying for Letters of Business to permit Convocation to embark on the revision of the Prayer Book, which set in train a process that has continued throughout this century.

PREPARATION OF A NEW PRAYER BOOK

Amongst the recommendations of the Royal Commission was one to the effect that Letters of Business should be issued to the Convocations instructing them to consider the preparation of new rubrics and to frame modifications to the law relating to ornaments and fittings. But this was subordinate to the main concern of the Commission to get the grave illegal practices to cease. By first applying for Letters of Business, the Archbishop took the course of least resistance, and fatally delayed the disciplinary action that was necessary at that time. From that time onwards the Church of England was engaged in the preparation of a new Prayer Book.

As the programme of revision progressed, the aim became far more ambitious than the mere attention to rubrics and ornaments that had been envisaged. The book that was produced for consideration and acceptance by Parliament in 1928 contained two distinct and separate services of Holy Communion, the one having all the characteristics and doctrine of the Church of Rome, the other that of the 1662 Prayer Book. What the revision committee had done was to replicate the situation that Bishop King had tried to impose upon the parish of Clee in the previous century, namely, one service which was legal and the other illegal, except that now it was proposed to make the whole thing legal by Act of Parliament.

The entire tenor of the Royal Commission's *Report* was that an end should be put to the Romeward movement of the Church of England. But now the revised Prayer Book, twenty years later, proposed to take that movement forward, and to introduce all those things which the Royal Commission had declared served to change the service of the Holy Communion from the traditional service of the Reformed Church of England to that of the traditional service of the Church of Rome. The 1928 book introduced Mass vestments, the wafer, the eastward position and the mixed chalice. It also introduced special collects, epistles and gospels for three additional festivals of the

Virgin Mary, not observed in the Church of England, and appeared to give an impetus rather than a check to the growth of Mariolatry. It provided for the reservation of the sacrament, which might be kept in an aumbry or safe in the church itself, which invited worship of the sacrament. It introduced the words, "Blessed is he that cometh..." before the words of consecration. It introduced into the Calendar the "Commemoration of All Souls", a festival from the Roman Calendar which is rooted in the Romish doctrine of purgatory.

A Roman Catholic priest, Father Woodlock, summed up the significance of these changes in the following words:

Let us now examine the changes made in the Alternative Communion Office. These changes are radical and they seem to me to make the new Office a definite approach to the Catholic Mass... certain prayers have been introduced which include elements previously lacking and which seem to me definitely to bring the service in line with the Mass. ... Anglo-Catholics who believe in the Catholic doctrine of the Mass, should recognize how much they have gained in this new Office...¹¹

It is abundantly clear, that what the 1928 Book represented was the determination of the Anglo-Catholic party to change the doctrine of the Prayer Book of the Church of England. Having sought to argue during the 19th century that the Prayer Book and the formularies of the church were on their side and favoured their position, and having signally failed in that attempt, they now abandoned that stance. There can be little doubt that the Church Association had by its actions and polemical literature vindicated the undoubted Protestantism of the Articles of Religion and the Book of Common Prayer. The ritualists had no leg to stand on. J. T. Tomlinson wrote over two hundred tracts for the Church Association and in his time was regarded as one of the greatest living authorities on the history and interpretation of the Prayer Book. At the time of Tomlinson's death in 1921 it could be written:

To him and to Mr. Dimock, more than to any other two men, we owe the changed attitude of the "Anglo-Catholics," who now openly assert that they cannot justify their position by appeals to our formularies, and demand their change to enable them to appear honest sons of the Church of England.¹²

From claiming the formularies of the Church of England, as Newman and his followers had done, the High Church party now turned to changing them.

The 1928 Prayer Book, though approved by the Convocations and the National Assembly of the Church of England by large

majorities, was eventually defeated in the House of Commons under the determined leadership of Sir William Joynson-Hicks, the Home Secretary of the time. There was a wave of popular reaction against it in the country which Parliament could not ignore. Some 300,000 signatures were collected at the time by Bishop E. A. Knox, the former Bishop of Manchester, objecting to the practice of reservation to be permitted under the terms of the new Book.

The failure of this particular attempt by the Anglo-Catholic party to change the liturgy of the Church of England was not the end of the matter. The bishops sanctioned its publication despite Parliament's rejection of it, and following a general conference of bishops towards the end of 1928, they made an official declaration that they could not regard its use as "inconsistent with loyalty to the principles of the Church of England".¹³ To many church people this seemed to border on illegality and to constitute defiance of the clear verdict of Parliament. The considered opinion of two eminent lawyers declared in 1931 that the bishops' action was "neither constitutional nor legal".¹⁴

The rejection of the 1928 Prayer Book undoubtedly saved the Church of England from a serious split. Had Parliament approved the Book many evangelical clergy and laity were prepared to leave the Church of England on the ground that it had seriously departed from the Reformed faith. Church Halls were built and vested in independent trustees against such a contingency, so that the congregation would have some place to meet and worship which could not be claimed as property of the Church of England.

PRAYER BOOK REVISION FROM THE 1960s

We now pass over the intervening years and come to the 1960s, when the theme of Prayer Book revision was taken up again. The failure of the earlier revisers to obtain a legal revision of the Prayer Book in 1928, because of the vexed question of doctrinal change, led their successors to adopt a different approach at this later period. It was claimed that the language of the Prayer Book was out of date. Revision was necessary in order to simplify the form and the language of the services and make them intelligible to modern people. While Series 2 (1967), the first of the "modern services" of the Holy Communion, did not use "you" instead of "thou", the argument ran that words and syntax needed to be streamlined and archaisms

removed. In the revision of 1928, no attempt had been made to use modern idiomatic English. Indeed the whole object had been to keep as close as possible to the style of the 1662 Prayer Book, but to change the doctrine and make it a Roman Catholic-type service. Now it was urged that modern language was needed for contemporary worship, but the agenda for doctrinal change was not in fact abandoned. It was pursued alongside the policy for modernising the language and, indeed, facilitated by it. For many who were ignorant of the doctrinal issues were won over to the cause of revision by the plea that the services must be in modern English. The 1960s were any way a period of iconoclasm generally. The old, whatever its value might be, simply because it was old, was being jettisoned and swept away, and the church's rather radical programme of liturgical revision seemed to fit in with and be sustained by that mood.

EXPERIMENT AND AMBIGUITY

Then again those who might have been critical were disarmed by the word "experimental". These new services, Series 2 and Series 3, were to be experimental. They were not fixed and final, but were to be introduced for a limited period of years, after which the experiment would be reviewed. People were urged to use the new services and to see the whole process as open-ended and provisional. They need not feel that they were committing themselves to a liturgy set in stone, or entering a room with no exit. The psychology of this approach was very effective in gaining initial acceptance of the new services.

Another feature of these new services was the deliberate use of ambiguous language in order to overcome doctrinal differences. The 1928 Book set out two services of Holy Communion side by side, and intended that they should be seen as different. But the use of ambiguous language in the new services was meant to disguise those differences of doctrine and to produce a unifying effect, so that people of different theological views might be enabled to use the same service. This is how Dr. Ronald Jasper, the Chairman of the Liturgical Commission, explained the use of ambiguity in the experimental services. He wrote:

We have..., where matters of Eucharistic doctrine are involved, tried to produce forms of words which are capable of various interpretations.

And he added:

Only by using such language as does not require any one interpretation can

we produce a liturgy which all will be able to use, and which each will be able to interpret according to his own convictions.¹⁵

I find this a most extraordinary statement, and it seems to me self-evident that deliberate, contrived ambiguity ought not to be the basis of liturgy, for liturgy is concerned with the worship of Almighty God. In worship we draw near to the One "unto whom all hearts be open". Worship is man's response to the truth which God has set forth in his Word. As Dr. Packer has put it, "Christian worship must keep within the circle of revealed truth", and the corollary of this is, that Christian worship must "give the clearest possible expression to what it believes about God's grace".¹⁶ This cannot be done if deliberate ambiguity is employed. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). Under the constraint of this Biblical imperative our Reformers strove for ever greater clarity. They did the very opposite of what the modern revisers have done, they sought to remove ambiguity in order to take away any excuse for Bishop Gardiner and other "mis-takers" like him to read into the text of the Holy Communion service the Roman Catholic mass.

The authors of *The Tutorial Prayer Book* describe what was done between the publication of the first and second Prayer Books of Edward VI's reign.

The relation between the two Edwardian books [1549 and 1552] is plain enough... the second is the first with the removal of whatever had been proved by experience to be ambiguous. It is significant that every detail fastened upon by Gardiner as a loop-hole for the Mass, was altered.¹⁷

This to my mind shows conclusively that the Reformers were men of a quite different spiritual pedigree from our modern revisers. Where they sought to give clear and unambiguous expression to the Gospel in worship, these seek to introduce obscurity and equivocation. The rationale behind the new services differed fundamentally from that of Cranmer and others in the compilation of the Book of Common Prayer. And the reason for this lies in the fact that the new services are not so much a response to the revelation of God in Scripture, and therefore governed and shaped by the Word of God, as a response to a human situation, namely, to ecumenism and the desire to effect a union between the Church of Rome and the Church of England. Dr. Jasper himself indeed said as much. "Liturgical revision", he stated, "is now essentially an ecumenical

activity". Note the word "essentially". That is, it is now guided and governed principally by this aim of promoting ecumenical reunion. But that is to subvert worship, and to use it for an end other than its true object, which is the worship and glory of Almighty God. John Owen said, that the will of the creature must not be the measure of God's honour nor the principle of his worship. What God, in Scripture, so severely forbids is the inventing or fashioning of worship after our own understanding of what is fitting and appropriate, rather than according to truth and the way he has revealed that truth in his Word. Believers know what reception such will-worship finds with God: "Who hath required this at your hand?" and, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men".¹⁸

APPROXIMATION TO THE ROMAN CATHOLIC MASS

If we examine the experimental services of Holy Communion, Series 2 and 3, introduced respectively in 1967 and 1971, we shall see that the purpose is to make them approximate to the service of the Roman Catholic mass. This was the object of the 1928 Book, which failed, but here, under the guise this time of modernising the services and putting them in contemporary English, the essential shape and character of the mass is introduced once more. The Gloria which Cranmer placed at the end of the service is restored to the beginning, where it is in the mass. The Ten Commandments are relegated to an alternative place with the *kyries* – a retreat into unintelligibility from the self-examination and edification the Reformers intended. The confession becomes perfunctory, having none of the deep sense of sin that the Book of Common Prayer expresses. The Comfortable Words are made optional, yet for the Reformers they expressed the essence of absolution and forgiveness, pronounced by God himself in his Word. Forms of words are introduced which are clearly intended to approximate to the Romish doctrines of transubstantiation and priestly sacrifice, namely, "grant that these gifts of bread and wine may be unto us his Body and Blood", and, "Wherefore, O Lord, with this bread and this cup we make the memorial of his saving passion". The anthems "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" and the *Agnus Dei* also serve to bring the services into line with the Roman Catholic mass.

LANGUAGE AND DOCTRINE

Thus, under the appearance of updating the services and putting them into the language of the twentieth century, which is what many people were led to think was meant by revision, a profound doctrinal shift in the worship of the Church of England has been brought about. The Alternative Service Book, which was published in 1980, has incorporated and consolidated these changes. It was meant to replace the experimental services, which were published in booklet form, and to give the revised services a more enduring character and feel by being placed in a large book between hard covers. This subtle but significant change of doctrine in the Church of England through the revision of its liturgy was acknowledged by Dr. Habgood, the Archbishop of York, in 1985 in the General Synod, when he said:

I think it is fair to complain that not enough explicit attention was given to doctrine in the last round of revision; and, in particular, we did not really face openly enough the major shift in doctrinal emphasis in the new services.¹⁹

This was an extraordinary admission for the Archbishop to make, but the Church Union was quite gleeful about the change. Father Geldard, its Secretary, said at a gathering in Loughborough in 1980 to launch the renewal of the Anglo-Catholic movement in the Church of England, that the Alternative Service Book was the crowning glory of the Anglo-Catholic movement, and had accomplished what they had sought in the abortive revision of 1928. The Alternative Service Book has done much, it is true, to deface the Reformation in the Church of England and to obliterate its teaching from the services of the Church. However, the work of revision is not intended to end with the ASB. It is to be taken a step further yet with the revision of the liturgy in the year 2000. We may then expect an even closer approximation to the ecumenical ideal and further assimilation to the Church of Rome.

PELAGIANISM IN MODERN LITURGY

Besides this trend towards Romanising the services of the Church of England, we must also notice something else, which runs parallel and yet is not incompatible with it, and that is a growing Pelagianism in the liturgy. Pelagianism is the doctrine that man is not utterly fallen and incapable of any good in the sight of God in his natural state, but that he can in that natural state will to do good works and to please God. The Church of Rome's teaching has always had a Pelagian element in it, because of its doctrine of congruity, that is that man can

in a natural state do that which merits grace, and then further grace may be given to assist the will, so that man, according to this teaching, is not utterly helpless in the matter of his salvation, as the 39 Articles of the Church of England teach. Article 13 is instructive and deals specifically with this point.

Article 13 Of Works before Justification

Works done before the grace of Christ, and the Inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the School-authors say) deserve grace of congruity: yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.

Professor Stuart Hall, formerly Professor of Ecclesiastical History at King's College London, has drawn attention to the presence of this Semi-Pelagian teaching in the revised services in a paper entitled, "Semi-Pelagian Didacticism in the Alternative Service Book". He detects this Semi-Pelagianism in the formula, often repeated in the prayers, "Help us to..." and "may we..." He contends that these have the force of throwing the first responsibility back onto the people, rather than calling upon God to act and do what we ourselves cannot do, which is the emphasis of the Psalmist and of the Scriptures generally. This inculcates a spirit of self-reliance rather than dependence on God. Didacticism, he argues, is to be found in the tendency of the ASB to get at people, to preach at them and to seek to prod them into doing things, not by straightforward exhortation, as is the case in the 1662 Prayer Book, but through the prayers, when they ought to be calling upon God.

The prayers of the ASB 1980 are often weak and jejune, not only because they are Pelagian or didactic, but because they fail to make the confident, robust demands upon God which the Biblical and early Christian writers were prepared to make. The religious and moral experience of the people praying and those they pray for displace the majesty, wrath and mercy of God from the centre of the picture.²⁰

In a word, we can say that not only has the centre of gravity of the ASB shifted Romewards, but it has also become more man-centred. Our age is man-centred and this orientation and spirit of the age invades the new services. The horizon of the worshippers is much more earth-bound in the ASB than in the BCP. The 1662 Book lifts up our hearts to God but in the ASB man is himself all the time obtruding into the picture. The view is circumscribed by a consciousness which is humanistic, moralistic and subjectivist.

Professor Hall gives one telling example of this subjectivism, which must suffice. He says:

Instead of making concrete demands upon our Creator and Saviour, modern piety seeks instead only for internal change in the person praying. It is as though in a scientific world we can no longer expect God actually to respond, and so we must confine our praying to a religious exercise for ourselves

“Almighty God, you have created the heavens and the earth and made man in your own image. Teach us to discern your hand in all your works, and to serve you with reverence and thanksgiving through...” (9 Sunday before Christmas /398).

This starts well, but ends up exhorting the people to interpret the universe religiously. Christ prays that God’s kingdom may come; not that we may have a heightened religious awareness, but that the Creator’s design may be fulfilled.²¹

THE EFFECT OF A REVISED LITURGY

Liturgy is of great significance, because it moulds thinking at a presuppositional level. Since we hear it repeatedly it forms and fashions our minds. If it is a good liturgy, based upon the Scriptures and seeking to give clear expression to their doctrines, as the Reformers strove to make the Book of Common Prayer, then it can have an elevating and spiritually health-giving effect upon those who use it. “Hold fast”, says the apostle, “the form of sound words” (2 Timothy 1:13), literally “healthy words” - the word “healthy” is used figuratively. The spiritual health of a congregation depends to a large extent upon the use of a form of spiritually sound or healthy words. If, on the other hand, a liturgy is based upon unsound, unscriptural teaching, and week by week drops into its ears and hearts the spiritual poison of Roman Catholic doctrine and man-centred thought, the effect upon the spiritual health of the congregation will be profoundly damaging and deleterious. The effects of the almost universal use of the ASB in the Church of England over the last two decades can now be seen in its ever closer movement towards Rome and in the sociologically driven, politically correct, man-centred religion that emanates from the General Synod.

THE NEED FOR THE REGULAR USE OF THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

To conclude: I have tried to show that the process of liturgical revision has been a long one, reaching back, at least in its modern expression, to the middle of the nineteenth century. It is not, as is often

popularly thought, something which has arisen since the Second World War. I have sought to give you the sense of its direction and drift and the principles and motives behind it. In all its manifestations it has been a consistent development and its aim and effect have been to change the doctrine of the Book of Common Prayer, and by so doing to change the character of the Church of England. It has sought to go backwards rather than forwards and to restore the unreformed services of the Church of Rome. Alongside that we have noted that it has also introduced a Pelagian or man-centred emphasis which is inimical to true worship. In its attempt to change the nature of the Church of England it has had considerable success, for the Alternative Service Book is now almost universally in use in the parish churches and the Book of Common Prayer has been banished to the fringes.

The non-use of the BCP has meant not only the loss of its majestic and evocative language, which is so conducive to worship, in exchange for the dull and awkward prose of the ASB. But more importantly, it has meant the loss of the vital teachings which are enshrined in the BCP services. In the Prayer Book service of Holy Communion, Archbishop Cranmer sought to express clearly the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and succeeded, as the words of Dom Gregory Dix testify:

Compared with the clumsy and formless rites which were evolved abroad, that of 1552 is the masterpiece of an artist. Cranmer gave it a noble form as a superb piece of literature, which no one could say of its companions; but he did more. As a piece of liturgical craftsmanship it is in the first rank - once its intention is understood. It is *not* a disordered attempt at a catholic rite, but the only effective attempt ever made to give liturgical expression to the doctrine of "justification by faith alone".²²

In the Prayer Book service of Holy Communion the emphasis is upon the perfect and sufficient sacrifice of Christ once offered on the cross. As we remember that finished work of redemption, we come thankfully to receive the benefits of Christ's death and to feed on him in our hearts by faith. Here is no repetition, no representation by the priest of Christ's sacrifice.

Where the BCP is in regular use, it is a bulwark against false doctrine. Its absence today from the services of the Church of England, generally speaking, has been accompanied by a swift doctrinal downgrade. How else can we explain the resurgence of Romish teachings and practices, the return of the relics of Thomas à Becket to Canterbury Cathedral, the Archbishop of Canterbury's

blessing of the shrine of Our Lady of Willesden, and so forth. The Tractarians were fond of speaking of the English Reformation as a limb badly set and needing to be broken again. That is what has been done by the modern movement of Prayer Book revision. We have been taken back behind the Reformation. Jewel, Bishop of Salisbury in Queen Elizabeth's reign, said of pre-Reformation England, "Every county was full of chapels, every chapel was full of miracles, and every miracle was full of lies". It is to such a condition that many would now seek to return the Church of England. There is remedy and it is in our hands to use it. The faithful and regular use of the BCP, together with the Authorized Version of the Bible and the teaching of the doctrines of the 39 Articles, will ensure a people who are faithfully grounded in true, apostolic Christianity.

Footnotes

- ¹ In 1857 Newman wrote, "I think it is for the interest of Catholicism that individuals should not join us [he was then, of course, a Roman Catholic], but should remain to leaven the mass, – I mean that they will do more for us by remaining where they are than by coming over." *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, XVIII (1968), 70 [Newman to A. Lisle Phillips, 1/7/1857]
- ² This account of the proceedings in connexion with the affair at Clee-cum-Cleethorpes is taken from the *Grimsby Observer*, 19/5/1886 to 17/11/1886
- ³ Quoted in the *Grimsby News*, 15/6/1888
- ⁴ L. Elliot Binns, *Religion in the Victorian Era* (1936), 235
- ⁵ *Minutes of Evidence taken before the Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline* (1906), II, 363
- ⁶ *Church Times*, 28/11/1890. p. 1154, col. 1, and p. 1153, col. 2.
- ⁷ *Report of the Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline* (1906), v
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, § 397 (page 75)
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, § 401 (page 77)
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, § 296 (page 53)
- ¹¹ Quoted at: Sir William Joynson-Hicks, *The Prayer Book Crisis* (1928), 144-145
- ¹² *The Church Intelligencer*, XXXVI (1921), 67
- ¹³ G.K.A. Bell, *Randall Davidson* (1935), 1359
- ¹⁴ *The Times*, 24/1/1931
- ¹⁵ *Alternative Services: Second Series, A Draft Order for Holy Communion* (1966)
- ¹⁶ J. I. Packer, in (ed.) R. T. Beckwith, *Towards a Modern Prayer Book: the new services examined* (1966), 75
- ¹⁷ Charles Neil and J. M. Willougby, *The Tutorial Prayer Book* (1959), 263
- ¹⁸ John Owen, *Works* (ed. Goold), II (1851), 150
- ¹⁹ *Proceedings of the General Synod*, 16, no. 3, 1045
- ²⁰ *King's Theological Review*, IV, no. 1 (Spring 1981), 2
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 5
- ²² G. Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (1945), 672