

# Prayer Book Development to 1662

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It is fitting that on this third centenary of the 1662 Prayer Book we should reconsider its distinctive features in relation to preceding books. It is also appropriate that we should briefly consider possible revision in the light of current needs. The fact that the established book is still the authorized standard of public worship is no small tribute to the enduring quality of this work which consummated the liturgical side of the English Reformation. It raises of itself the question as to the characteristics which have enabled the work to meet the liturgical requirements of successive generations. It also raises the challenge that in any revision undertaken the principles underlying the authorised book should not be lightly abandoned but carefully evaluated and perpetuated.

The 1662 book was the final product of a process of development which belonged essentially to the Reformation period. Luther himself, followed by his own adherents and also by Zwingli in Zurich, set the pattern of providing public worship as well as the Bible in the language of the people, and of revising as well as translating existing services to bring them into conformity with new needs and doctrines. Hence it is not surprising that, once the English Bible was set up and the crisis of the 1539 Act had passed, Cranmer set in hand as his second major task the giving to the English people of revised forms of worship in their own tongue.

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In the early days there is little doubt that the main inspiration was Lutheran. Cranmer naturally made use of English originals and of such medieval and early works as were known to him. But close comparison shows that he had the Lutheran models before him. He also adopted the great Lutheran principles of using services as an aid to public instruction and of preserving the traditional forms so far as they were not inconsistent with evangelical doctrine and biblical precepts or precedents. On the other hand, the delay caused by Henry's vacillating policies meant that in certain vital areas, especially the sacraments, the English leaders were already moving towards a Reformed rather than a Lutheran position when the prayer books came to be drafted and authorized in the reign of Edward. Variations from the work of Luther are thus to be expected as the process of liturgical reform went forward.

Cranmer had been able to make a first cautious step towards an English prayer book with the Litany of 1544, which has survived almost unchanged through all subsequent revisions. But this was, of course, a special service composed originally for a special occasion of crisis. If it later proved a model for the type of work that Cranmer was to execute, it does not of itself give any clear clue to the fundamental principles and nature of the work except in a more general sense. For fuller guidance we have to turn to the early reign of Edward, and more especially to the Communion Order of 1548 and the full-scale Prayer Book of 1549.<sup>1</sup>

The Communion Order of 1548 is obviously a temporary measure, like the first translation of the baptismal order in Zürich twenty-five years before. Indeed, it does not go so far, for the substance of the traditional Latin Mass remains intact. There are added, however, certain

passages in English, namely, the invitation to communion, the exhortation to self-examination, the confession, the comfortable words, the prayer of humble access, and the sentences of administration. The importance of this work is twofold. First, it provides an understandable order for the actual administration of the elements (in both kinds), with an emphasis on communion rather than sacrifice as the true point of the service. Secondly, it refers to the fact that other order is to be taken for the rites and ceremonies which are still left in their traditional form.

This other order was taken, of course, in the 1549 Prayer Book, which introduces in a more Lutheran form the familiar series of services finally known to us from the 1662 revision. The book opens with the well-known Preface: "There was never anything by the wit of man so well devised . . .", which, with the treatise on ceremonies appended at the end, states the principles of simplicity and uniformity which underlie this attempt at a more truly evangelical and corporate, though not legalistically biblical, worship. In general structure and substance the orders which follow do not differ decisively from those which are still the only authorized norm in the Church. There are, however, certain minor differences in many services, and some major divergences in the two sacramental orders, which call for notice.

As regards the minor differences, the first point is that Matins and Evensong (*sic*) are shorter, beginning with the Lord's Prayer and ending with the three collects. The *Quicumque vult* is ordered only for six main festivals. Some of the collects are shorter and one or two of those in the present book are missing. There are no additional prayers and thanksgivings. The catechism does not have the section on the sacraments, and the sign of the cross is used in confirmation. There is no public confession of faith at confirmation, though it is described as a ratification and confession in the rubric. In marriage, gold and silver may be used together with the ring, and communion is obligatory on the day of marriage. At burial the departed are commended into the hands of God, there are some variations in order, and provision is again made for a communion service.

Far more significant differences emerge when we study the baptismal and eucharistic offices. The distinctive feature of the baptismal service is the retention of the ancient symbolical ceremonial after the Lutheran pattern. Thus the sign of the cross comes early in the service, an exorcism is enjoined, trine immersion is practised, and at the end there is the giving of the white robe (returned at purification) and the traditional anointing. It is interesting that the creed is said publicly in addition to its use in the interrogatory. There is also a threefold "forsaking" (not "renouncing") of the world, the flesh, and the devil individually. A form for the monthly sanctifying of water is appended: "that by the power of thy word all those that shall be baptized therein may be spiritually regenerated". In private baptism administration by the laity is clearly permitted.

The order of communion differs even more radically. Although bearing the main titles of "The Supper of the Lord" and "Holy Communion", it is still "commonly called the Mass". The minister is attired in an albe, with vestment or cope, although it is worth noting that according to the rubrics at the end of the treatise on Ceremonies it is enjoined that at other services he should wear only the surplice and possibly a hood. Incidentally, these rubrics leave optional the use of such religious gestures as kneeling, crossing, holding up of hands, and knocking on the breast. A further point at communion is that the table may still be an altar as well as God's board. The eastward position is also laid down. Water is to be mixed with the wine, and unleavened round bread is to be used, although it must not be imprinted. The term "sacrament of the body or blood" occurs, and prayer for the dead is plainly included

in the general prayer, which itself remains within the so-called canon. The canon follows closely the medieval pattern and still finds a place for the invocation of the Holy Spirit: “And with thy Holy Spirit and word vouchsafe to bless and sanctify these thy gifts”. In the communion of the sick, provision is made for reservation of the elements for use on the same day (rather along the lines of the custom described by Justin Martyr). There are no commandments for use in self-examination, and in its whole arrangement the service is closer to the inherited medieval form than to subsequent revisions.

On the other hand, certain evangelical features should not be missed. As there is to be no imprint on the bread, so there is no elevation, and the point of the continued eastward position is to prevent the holding up of the consecrated elements before the people. Again, if the bread is to be put into the mouths of recipients, this is to avoid the superstition of “conveying the same secretly away”. Furthermore, there is a clear statement by the minister that “Christ our paschal Lamb is offered up for us, once for all, when He bare our sins on His body upon the cross”. Communion is, of course, in both kinds, and, while it may be true that Stephen Gardiner could read into the wording a sufficient traditional meaning, the doctrine implied and stated is undoubtedly evangelical at least in the Lutheran sense. In other words, the service embodies the doctrine of the one sacrifice of Christ and of justification by faith. The aim of the authors is to present this rediscovered biblical teaching so far as possible within the familiar ceremonial. In 1549, therefore, the English Church was given a prayer book which achieved much of what the Lutheran orders had done in terms of doctrinal reform, public worship, and edification, but which hardly met the distinctive challenge of sacramental teaching and biblical conformity now being posed by the Reformed churches. The great change which explains the movement from the 1549 book to the radical revision of 1552 is the acceptance by Anglican leaders like Ridley and Cranmer, partly of the need for closer adherence to Scripture, but more specifically of the sacramental understanding which separates the Reformed branch of the Reformation from the Lutheran. Liturgically as well as doctrinally, this development is so important, and it is so frequently misrepresented, that it both demands and deserves closer examination.<sup>2</sup>

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From contemporary accounts it seems that around the very period 1548-1550, Ridley in particular came to a new understanding of the Lord’s Supper through the reading of the early medieval theologian Ratramnus, and that Cranmer was persuaded together with him and possibly through his instrumentality. Some commentators suggest that this was a completely independent view, neither Lutheran on the one side, nor strictly Reformed on the other. Others either enthusiastically or gloomily identify it with the more negative pronouncements of Zwingli in his earlier teaching on the subject. In fact, however, there can be little doubt that, by the reading of Scripture and earlier theologians, Ridley and Cranmer had come to see that the teaching of the Swiss Reformers of their day, for example, in the *Consensus Tigurinus* of Calvin and Bullinger, represented the real truth in relation to the sacraments, especially in respect of the vexed question of the eucharistic presence and efficacy. This is supported not merely by a comparison of the actual statements, but by the very cordial relations with men like Peter Martyr, the interpretations given by Elizabethans like Jewel, and a comparative study of the Anglican Articles, and such Reformed confessions as the Gallican, the Belgic, or the Second Helvetic.

The movement to a distinctively Reformed view could hardly fail to reveal the shortcomings of the 1549 book. Gardiner provided an added spur to revision with his claim that a

traditionalist could quite well use it as it stood. Criticisms from foreign leaders like Bucer, if they were not followed in detail, gave added reason for treating the 1549 book as transitional. The younger men, for example Jewel, were pressing in the direction of a Reformed rather than a Lutheran understanding. Lutheranism was itself discredited to some degree by the extreme elasticity displayed in relation to the Augsburg Interim. Even the aging and cautious Cranmer was making the eucharist a key-point in the later Edwardian Reformation. It was almost inevitable, therefore, that as the opportunity offered, there should be further liturgical revision to provide clearer expression for what had now come to be accepted as “the true and catholic teaching”.

In consequence, the 1552 book is the most radical of all revisions of the English liturgy thus far. This does not mean that it is a completely new work. It is definitely a revision. Much of the previous work remains. The wording is often preserved, even through changes in setting or structure. Yet the changes made are of no little importance. In relation to the sacraments, especially Holy Communion, they have the effect of giving a completely new orientation and significance to what is done.

Among the lesser changes it is to be noted that the treatise on Ceremonies is now put with the Preface, and the Act of Uniformity is also printed. The older vestments are now replaced at all services by the rochet for the bishop and the surplice for the priest or deacon. A penitential introduction is provided for Morning Prayer (*sic*), though not for Evening Prayer, which still begins with the Lord’s Prayer. This penitential opening is obviously designed to replace the discarded penance of the previous age. The prayer of absolution is to be said “by the Minister alone”. The Athanasian Creed now comes into fuller use on twelve occasions in addition to Trinity. The sign of the cross is excluded from confirmation, gold and silver from marriage, reservation from the communion of the sick, and commendation to God from burial. It is perhaps worth noting that in the ordination services only the Bible is now given to priests and bishops, whereas in 1549 the chalice with bread were given to the former and the pastoral staff to the latter. Deacons may still be ordained at 21, however, and the rather abrupt phrase, “Take the Holy Ghost,” remains in the ordination of bishops.

When we turn to the baptismal office, we are struck at once by the wholesale changes, not so much in wording, but rather in respect of ceremonial. Of the older traditional ceremonies, only the sign of the cross remains. The exorcism, the threefold forsaking, trine immersion, the white robe, the anointing-all have gone, together with the public recitation of the creed, which is hardly necessary within the prescribed setting of Morning or Evening Prayer. Similarly, the earlier sanctifying of the water every month is abandoned. In fact, the service has very much the form as we still know it today, apart from some minor changes in wording. The main importance of this drastic revision is to be found not so much in the acceptance of new baptismal teaching as in the application of the Reformed principle that even meaningful ceremonies are to be eliminated or restricted if they do not rest upon good biblical foundation. The remaining exception to the rule, namely the sign of the cross, was obviously to become a main target of later Puritan objections, and it must be admitted that, harmless though the ceremony may be, it does indicate a certain inconsistency in the work of revision. The service of Holy Communion displays even more radical changes. The vestments are now abandoned, as we have already seen. The word “altar “ disappears, and the fair linen cloth comes into use for what is plainly called a table. This table may be placed in the body of the church for communion, and the minister is now to stand at the north side, with no alternative suggestion if the table is left in the chancel. The bread must be “such as is usual to be eaten “, and new words of administration are enjoined : “Take and eat this,” and “Drink this “. In

addition, the so-called Black Rubric makes it plain that kneeling reception does not imply any form of corporeal presence. Nor are these external alterations the most decisive. For the whole service has been rearranged into the form still used by loyal Anglicans. The commandments are used for penitential self-examination. The prayer for the church militant is separated from the canon, which is itself drastically shortened, revised, and re-located. Only by the most extravagant straining of wording can the traditional, Lutheran, or Renaissance doctrines of the real presence be read into the service. The doctrine of the presence is plainly that held in common by Ridley, Cranmer, Peter Martyr, Calvin, and Bullinger, namely, that Christ comes to His people, or takes them up to be with Him, by the Holy Spirit and through faith. And the doctrine of sacrifice is that on the basis of the attested saving work of Christ for us, received in faith and with thanksgiving, we may offer ourselves to Him with the acceptable sacrifices of obedience, gratitude, and praise.

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The 1552 Prayer Book did not continue long in use, but the accession of Elizabeth led to its almost complete restoration in the form of the 1559 liturgy.<sup>3</sup> In fact, only four changes are sufficiently important to call for notice. The first is the omission from the Litany of the petition to be delivered “from the tyranny of the bishop of Rome, and all his detestable enormities”—a petition which still occurred in the Litany and Suffrages of 1558. The second is the new and puzzling Ornaments Rubric. In its fuller form in the Act of Uniformity this provides for the use of ornaments as in the second year of Edward “until other order shall be therein taken”, even though the Act demands at all services the order and form enacted in the authorized book of the fifth and sixth years of Edward. The third is the combining of the 1549 and 1552 sentences of administration at communion. The fourth is a redrafting of the oath of sovereignty to be taken at ordinations. Here the specific reference to the pope is deleted and “supreme governour” is substituted for “supreme head”. None of these changes affects the main liturgical and doctrinal principles enshrined in the work of Cranmer.

Note should be taken of three further developments early in the reign of Elizabeth. The first is a very peculiar Latin translation of the Prayer Book in 1560 for use in colleges, etc. Attributed to Walter Haddon, this is either an inaccurate, a very free, or an intentionally different rendering in many respects. If the editor of the Parker Society is correct, it is in fact a revision of Alesius’ Latin version of the 1549 book, and whether intentionally or otherwise it still retains some of the characteristics of the 1549 work. Secondly, some Godly Prayers “to be used for sundry purposes” were printed together with many earlier Elizabethan books, though it seems that these had already been present in one of the editions of 1552. Thirdly, the habit quickly arose and established itself of using the metrical psalter within divine service, and this finds official recognition in many special services under Elizabeth, for example, that appointed for the anniversary of the Queen’s accession. Though not formally laid down in the Prayer Book, the metrical psalm became just as much a part of the English heritage of worship as of the Scottish until swallowed up in later hymnology.

Puritan dissatisfaction with the 1559 book quickly manifested itself and continued steadily throughout the reign. Indeed, one of the interesting phenomena of the period is that the Puritans were able to bring out their own amended prayer books. Although unofficial, these were apparently printed by those who had the privilege for the authorized editions. Yet when a new opportunity presented itself with the accession of James, the Puritan pressure failed to bring about an official revision of the Prayer Book. The only victory won by the Puritans in 1604 was in relation to lay baptism. A new rubric was now drafted which specifies that

private baptism must be given by a minister, thus ending the lay administration which had been legal under the indefinite provisions of all previous books. Incidentally, the Canons of the same year gave a new ruling on the question of vestments. In substance they reaffirmed the rubrics of 1552, although the then point at issue was, of course, Puritan objection even to the minimal use of the surplice.

The final opportunity for prayer book revision arose at the Restoration, when it had to be decided in what form the services abolished during the Protectorate were now to be re-established. The possibility of wide concessions to the Puritans was very soon ruled out, and in 1662 we have in the main a restoration of the Elizabethan Prayer Book with a large number of minor alterations and additions but with very few substantial changes. In the present context it is hardly necessary or possible to list the various smaller changes, which the interested reader may easily discover either from annotated Prayer Books or from a comparison between the actual editions. There is, however, one change of very great importance in the Ordinal, or rather in the Preface to the Ordinal, to which attention should be directed.

In addition to the small amendment that deacons must now be twenty-three rather than twenty-one at ordination, the main new point in the Preface is that no one is to be regarded as a lawful bishop, priest, or deacon in the Church of England, or to execute the relevant functions, unless he is ordained according to “the form hereafter following, or hath had formerly Episcopal Consecration, or Ordination”. In contrast to the far less definite statements in previous prefaces, this explicitly forbids even those who come from other non-episcopal churches to take cures in the Church of England in the manner practised by certain Puritans from the time of Elizabeth.

The question raised is whether this is a doctrinal statement or a disciplinary provision. If it is a doctrinal statement, then it clearly implies a non-recognition of non-episcopal ministries and the necessity of episcopacy to valid ordination and administration of Word and sacrament. This is the view strongly represented by those of the Anglo-Catholic persuasion. On the other hand, if it is a disciplinary provision, it simply lays down the terms upon which ministry may be exercised in the Church of England, with no evaluation of faith or even of order upon the ministries discharged in other churches.

The weight of evidence inclines strongly in favour of the latter view. First, the Puritan issue had always been a matter of internal discipline which did not affect relationships with other Reformed communions. Secondly, the official doctrinal statement in the article (XXIII) does not stipulate the necessity of episcopalian ordination but simply of orderly admission. Thirdly, the article on traditions (XXXIV) makes it plain that each particular or national church has the right to take order for itself in rites and ceremonies, so that all things be done to edifying, and the mode of ordination was obviously included in these according to the views of the Reformers, and, indeed, of the prayer books themselves. Fourthly, a temporary acceptance of non-episcopal ministry was not excluded in relation to the Scottish Church; if the matter were one of pure doctrine this would be grossly inconsistent. Fifthly, there was no marked change in relation to non-episcopal churches abroad in consequence of this tightening of domestic policy. This cumulative line of evidence, which could easily be substantiated in detail, is surely enough to support the view that what we have in the 1662 Preface to the Ordinal is not the introduction of a new dogma incompatible with the official doctrinal confession, but a tightening of internal discipline in accordance with the right of each church to take order in respect of its own ministrations.

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From 1662 to the present day there have been various minor reforms, more especially in the difficult field of the lectionary. There have also been insignificant modifications of services in accordance with local usage. There have been more flagrant breaches of the established order either in open defiance or under the surreptitious cover of the Ornaments Rubric. Finally, there has been the ill-fated attempt to carry through an official plan of revision whose parliamentary rejection has led many bishops individualistically and anarchically to espouse deviations from the order which it is their accepted responsibility to maintain. After three centuries of usage, may it not be that changes are necessary even though they are unwelcome? And if so, what form should they take?

A first possibility is the initiation of minor changes to bring the work up to date. This would involve the elimination of archaisms, the recognition of changes now established by custom, the introduction of a greater measure of freedom at certain points, and the clarification of matters which are now obscure or debatable. Such revision would entail neither doctrinal change nor, indeed, the radical reconstruction of familiar services. Yet, skilfully done, it might remove some of the difficulties which arise in a conscientious use of the present book and yet retain its almost irreplaceable qualities. The only trouble with this kind of revision, apart from its timidity, is that thus far no liturgical composers have shown evidence of possessing the required ability to weld together seventeenth century forms and twentieth century alterations or additions.

A second possibility is a more serious reconstruction to reflect doctrinal changes, presumably away from the classical tradition of the Anglican Reformation. This might take the form of something analogous to 1928. It might be more in the nature of a retreat to 1549. It might be a more adventurous expedition after the manner of the Church of South India. The problem with this course of action is that it does not have the necessary doctrinal justification, that it necessarily introduces an inconsistency between confession and liturgy, and that it would inevitably carry with it not merely a serious cleavage within the Church, but also an increasing alienation of the Church from the great number of its ordinary adherents, not to speak of the unchurched masses outside. If there are those who wish to introduce new doctrines, they should face their responsibility at the dogmatic level rather than trying to insinuate changes by way of liturgical revision.

In other words, practice should not be a means of overthrowing established confession; it should be kept in conformity with confession.

The final possibility is that of a thoroughgoing modernization in terms of contemporary language and requirements, though with no doctrinal implications. In other words, an attempt might be made to do for the Prayer Book something of what the New English Bible has tried to do for the New Testament. In a broad sense the structure of the services would be retained, though with far greater flexibility than the present book allows. The general liturgical and doctrinal tradition would also remain. But the language particularly would break free from the sixteenth and seventeenth century mould, to be refashioned in the best and purest, but natural, English of the twentieth century. This kind of revision poses great difficulties. Badly done, it could have disastrous results. Much experimentation would no doubt be necessary. The work would have to be informed by sound liturgical knowledge and serious theological conviction as well as by a sense of practical needs and a gift of literary expression. It is worth asking, however, whether this is not the kind of work which ought to be done. It is also worth

asking whether Evangelicals ought not to take the initiative in pressing for this type of revision, or in sponsoring at least the moderate reforms under the first possibility.

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### Endnotes:

- 1) For a detailed study of these, and of the 1552 Book, cf. the Parker Society edition of *Liturgies of King Edward VI*.
- 2) For details, cf. esp. the Parker Society edition of the works of Cranmer, Ridley, and Jewel; Calvin's *Institutes and Tracts*; Schaff's *Creeds of Christendom*, III; Bromiley, *Thomas Cranmer: Theologian*.
- 3) For the various books and services under Elizabeth, cf. the Parker Society edition of *Liturgical Services of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*.