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### The reformed worship of 1552

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By God's grace the accession of Edward VI in 1547 permitted the acceleration of the reformation of the Church of England. Some changes were made almost immediately but it was not until March 1548 that the first new services were issued in the form of an English supplement to the Latin Mass. Ten months later in January 1549 the First Prayer Book of Edward VI was introduced accompanied by an Act of Uniformity. This book took a momentous step away from the errors of the medieval liturgies and did away with most of the unscriptural practices. However, it left several corners unswept and, more importantly, whilst representing a purge of the past it was not a liturgy that had been shaped by reformed principles.

There followed three significant steps leading up to a truly reformed liturgy. First, the order was made to destroy stone altars and replace them with wooden tables. Secondly, Cranmer issued his *Defence of the True and Catholic Doctrine of the Sacrament* in which he set out his understanding of the nature of the sacrament and refuted the errors that had grown up contrary to Scripture. Thirdly, work progressed on the new Articles of Religion which were finally published in 1553.

So it was that the Second Prayer Book was published and authorised for use from All Saints Day 1552. It was not well received by many and with the death of Edward the following year and the accession of Mary the book itself was in use for only a very short time. With three specific alterations, reportedly at the request of the Queen Elizabeth herself, the book was re-instated and authorised for use from May 8 1559. Over the next century the book underwent a number of changes, mostly in the rubrics, and was banned for a while during the Commonwealth. Finally the texts of 1552 formed the substance of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. Undoubtedly there were many who had a hand in the production of the 1552 book but the lion's share of the credit has always gone to Archbishop Thomas Cranmer. He sought to build his liturgy on sound scriptural principles whilst borrowing from what was good in tradition and contemporary practice.

Good liturgy requires both sound doctrine and the eloquent use of language. More recent attempts at liturgy have failed to combine these too successfully. Whilst some modern liturgy does make effective use of language and some of the texts produced in recent decades have proved memorable, often they have been defective in doctrine. In contrast many evangelical attempts at liturgy, whilst admirable in doctrinal content often seem flat and unmemorable as a piece of liturgy. In the goodness of God the two elements were combined in Cranmer's liturgy. It is intriguing that there are many today who love the language of the Book of Common Prayer whilst rejecting its primary doctrinal foundations, whilst others rejoice in its doctrine but would prefer something less archaic in word and phrase. Cranmer's liturgy has been remarkable in the way that it has shaped the doctrine of the Church of England whilst also influencing the English language.