

The Draft Prayer Book of the Canadian Church

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THE Canadian Church has put out a draft revision of the Book of Common Prayer and authorized its use for three years, at the end of which time it will be finally revised in the light of the experience gained by its use. Perhaps an Englishman may be allowed to give his comments and criticisms. The book contains the services of the Book of Common Prayer, with the exception of the Holy Communion have been conservatively revised, and a number of additional services. Several of the latter are exceedingly valuable, specially a form of family prayers. For our *Visitation of the Sick* there is substituted *The Ministry to the Sick*, which is far more scriptural and has provision for the laying on of hands and the anointing of the sick, preceded by a very sensible rubric about the relation of soul, mind and body.

The catechism contains practically the whole of the 1662 catechism, though the exposition of the commandments is put in more modern language. There are some useful additions on the Church, ministry, and the duties and privileges of Church members. It is a pity, however, that descriptions given of the office of a Bishop or a Priest do not correspond with the stress of the ordinal (retained in the draft book). For example, the office of Bishop here does not mention the ministry of the Word, but the consecratory prayer in the ordinal prays that "he may be ready to spread abroad thy Gospel" before it mentions his pastoral functions. Similarly in the draft catechism's description of the office of Priest, to preach God's word comes well down the list. Perhaps a formula of ordination might be brought into the catechism at this point, which would begin, "The office of priest is to dispense the Word of God and his holy Sacraments," and then carry on very much as in the present draft, with the possible addition of a specific reference to the pastoral office of a priest.¹

Having used the revised Psalter almost daily for about two months I was surprised to find that it often improves the unintelligible passages without losing the beauty of Coverdale's translation (e.g. Psa. lxxxvii is almost intelligible). On the other hand this could hardly be said of their efforts to improve the Litany where they often seem to disregard the prose rhythms of Cranmer, fail to call a spade a spade, and, even more serious, to gloss over the sense of sin so apparent in Cranmer's Litany. There is also a weakening of the seriousness of sin in the general confession in the communion service which omits the words, "provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us . . . the remembrance of them is grievous unto us; the burden of them is intolerable". There is of course a case against the adjective

¹ Cf. the Archbishops in the *Reply to Leo XIII*, Sec. 19. "For this reason they (i.e. our Fathers in compiling our Ordinal) especially set before our Priests the pastoral office."

“miserable”, which has now changed its meaning, and also against the phrase, “provoking thy wrath,” which seems to make God in the image of a sinful man who is provoked. I suggest, therefore, that in the Litany the word “pitiable” should be substituted for “miserable”, and in the confession there should be added “deserving most justly thy wrath and indignation against us”. The last clause might read perhaps, “the burden of them is greater than we can bear”.

The marriage service omits the second purpose of matrimony. I admit that the wording of this in 1662 is somewhat crude to modern ears, but something corresponding to it is needed, and the wording of the 1928 version at this point is very satisfactory. A blessing of the ring is given, but I think that a translation of the Sarum blessing would be preferable, as it is virtually a blessing of the couple. “Bless, O Lord, this ring which we hallow in thy name, that he who gives it and she who wears it may abide in thy favour, continue in thy peace, live, go on and grow old in thy love, through, etc.”

The service of Compline, as in the 1928 book, follows more or less closely the Sarum order which does not seem to be based on any theological order and puts the confession in the middle. Much better is the form of Compline (published by Mowbrays) “after the Latin rite”, which puts the confession after the opening responses. It is noticeable that it has almost completely displaced the 1928 form in places in England where Compline is said frequently.

The Communion service has most changes and is, as one would expect, the most contentious. First there are changes which nearly everybody will welcome. (1) Our Lord's two commandments are added to the ten as an addition not as an alternative. (2) In the Nicene creed “the Lord, the Giver of life” is substituted for the 1662 clause, and “Holy” is restored to the marks of the Church. (3) The selection of offertory sentences is better than in 1662. (4) The consecration prayer has a eucharistic opening, “Blessing and glory and thanksgiving be unto thee Almighty God. . . .” (5) The “Gloria in excelsis” is restored to its original form by the omission of the clause inserted in 1552.

But there are a number of other points which are not so satisfactory. To deal first with points outside the Consecration Prayer, the book under review has retained one of the least satisfactory features in the 1662 Communion service in the rubric for a second consecration which makes the word of institution rather like a magical formula. Some prayer is needed, perhaps simply to go back to “Hear us O Father. . . .” A second point where some change might be helpful is the position of the words, “Blessed is he that cometh, etc.” In the Canadian draft they come at the end of the Sanctus, but their original position is thought to have been before Communion.¹ This change would remove the emphasis from our Lord's coming in the consecration (which is an idea offensive to many loyal Churchmen) to his coming to the faithful in communion, an idea on which all can agree. Incidentally, in 1662 it often seems to me that there is an awkward

¹ *Srawley, The Early History of the Liturgy*, p. 98. They certainly appear in this position in the Clementine Liturgy of the Apostolic Constitutions.

pause after the communion of the clergy and before that of the people. An increasing number of clergy hold up a wafer and say, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world"—a custom, which in addition to its illegality and offensiveness to many Churchmen, is entirely contrary to the doctrine and spirit of the Prayer Book. It might check this process if some words were said underlining the point universally agreed by Anglicans that our Lord comes to the faithful communicant. I suggest that the priest before the communion of the people should say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," and people reply, "Hosanna in the highest," and then go up to the rails.

The post-communion prayer of thanksgiving consists partly of quotations from the second post-communion prayer in 1662, followed by the section from the first prayer of 1662 about the offering of "ourselves, our souls and bodies. . . ." It is, however, a pity that the note of assurance is cut down to "assuring us thereby that we are living members of his mystical body. . . ." The prayer altogether omits the words, "thy favour and goodness towards us . . . heirs through hope of thy everlasting kingdom". It is, of course, true that membership in Christ's body implies these other two points. But 1662 underlines the note of assurance by giving in detail the points of which we are assured. If people do not find assurance in the Word and Sacraments they will be left with nothing but their feelings. It is, moreover, the teaching of the New Testament that Word and Sacrament should provide us with assurance.¹

But the crux of the problem is the consecration prayer. It begins with thanksgiving on very much the same lines as in 1928, then continues as in 1662 (except for the not very happy change of "perpetual memorial" for "perpetual memory") until the words of institution. Then comes a sentence in which remembering our Lord's mighty acts and looking for his coming again, "we present unto thy divine majesty this holy Bread of eternal life and this Cup of everlasting salvation; and we entirely desire thy fatherly goodness to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, etc.", continuing as in the 1662 prayer of oblation, but omitting the offering of ourselves, which comes in the post-communion prayer.

There are two problems here, one psychological and the other, which is far more important, theological.

To come first to the theological problem which is centred in the presentation "of this holy Bread of eternal life and this Cup of everlasting salvation", which seems to me thoroughly unscriptural. A friend has justified these words on the ground that it is an offering of "(a) the first fruits of creation and (b) the symbols with which we remember our redemption, but not the offering of Christ's Body and Blood". Much as one would like to accept this interpretation for the sake of peace, it will not hold water. First, while such an interpretation might be possible in an early liturgy, a great deal of water has flowed under the bridges since primitive times. In particular, in the

¹ 1 John 5. 8. See C. H. Dodd, *The Johannine Epistles*, pp. 127-133. Perhaps I may also be allowed to draw attention to my article in *Evangelicals Affirm*, esp. pp. 63-64.

Roman Church consecration has universally and officially been narrowed down to one moment, and is held to be effected by our Lord's words of institution. This has also been held outside the Church of Rome. Indeed, in some continental Reformed rites the words of institution are recited at the heart of the service, quite apart from any prayer. Moreover, the Canadian Church, by its rubric for a second consecration, evidently holds the view that our Lord's words of institution are enough to consecrate. Secondly, the use of capitals in the sentence "this holy Bread of eternal life and this Cup of everlasting salvation" is strongly against it as capitals are very sparingly used in the draft book, and chiefly of words representing the Godhead.

Moreover, this book, unlike 1928, provides no alternative use. If the 1662 service were retained as an alternative use it might be possible to interpret the new service by that which the Church has already accepted. Moreover, whether that could be done or not, those whose consciences could not accept the new service would still have a service which was acceptable to them. I am fairly certain that if the consecration prayer goes through as it is, there will be very few Evangelicals left in the Canadian Church in thirty years' time, as in the Episcopal Church of Scotland or in the Church of the Province of South Africa. I am not proposing that Evangelicals should hold a pistol at the heads of the rest of the Church, like the Annunciation group in this country, and say, "We quit unless. . . ." What I do say is that, if this prayer goes forward, the Evangelical interpretation at a vital point will increasingly be seen to be contrary to the formularies of the Church.

What should Evangelicals do? It is not much use to dig one's heels in and refuse to consider any alteration from the old Prayer Book, specially in a Church which, like the Canadian, has already revised its book once within living memory. In any case the Evangelical party is not, I hope, wedded to the doctrine of the infallibility of the 1662 prayer book. Therefore they should submit their own ideas for the improvement of the Prayer Book, taking into account the views of the rest of the Church as far as these are not contrary to Scripture. One of the ideas which I think we have to take into account is the wish for a long canon. Personally I prefer our present arrangement, but to judge from the present draft and a previous draft put out a few years ago, it seems that the Canadian Church wants a longer canon. Though it has often included unscriptural elements, a long canon *per se* is not unscriptural.

Can we therefore make any suggestions? I suggest that the paragraph might begin, "Wherefore, O Father, having in remembrance the precious death and passion, and the glorious resurrection and ascension, of thy Son our Lord, we thy servants do this in remembrance of him, as he hath commanded, until he comes again, giving thanks to thee for the perfect redemption which thou hast wrought for us in him, who ever liveth to make intercession for us. And we entirely desire thy fatherly goodness, etc." This is almost entirely from the C.S.I. liturgy, with the addition of the phrase about our Lord's intercession, so as to stress both our Lord's finished work and his continuing activity.

In interpreting this it should be borne in mind that, as Pedersen¹ and others have shown, in Hebraic thought remembrance is not merely the entertaining of a thought but is dynamic and effective. If it were desired, earlier on before the prayer that "we receiving these thy creatures . . . may be partakers, etc.", an addition might be made, "Hear us, O merciful Father we humbly beseech thee, and graciously accept these thy gifts of bread and wine which we present unto thee, so that we receiving them according to thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ's holy institution, etc." But personally I am not very keen on this, though I do not see anything contrary to scripture in it.

It may be felt that this is too much off the beaten track. Some have proposed that at the vital point the service should follow 1549, "We . . . do celebrate, and make here before thy divine majesty, with these thy holy gifts, the memorial which thy Son hath willed us to make, having in remembrance his mighty works." But this seems to put upon ἀνάμνησις² and our Lord's words of institution a meaning which they cannot bear. If, however, there was an insistence on something on these lines, I think that I should propose, though with some hesitation, "Wherefore, O Lord and heavenly Father, we thy humble servants, having in remembrance . . . glorious ascension of thy Son our Lord, and looking also for his coming again in power and great glory, do celebrate and make here in the sight of thy Divine Majesty, with these thy gifts, the memorial of the perfect redemption won for us by him, rendering unto thee most hearty thanks for the innumerable benefits procured unto us by the same. And we entirely desire thy fatherly goodness mercifully to accept on high our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. . . ." It will be seen that this proposal does not imply any propitiatory offering to the Father, nor does it attempt to remind him of his Son and his Sacrifice. On the other hand it does not tie the Church down to any one theory which is, in my opinion, a strong point and typically Anglican, provided of course that it does not positively imply anything contrary to Scripture.

Whatever emendation is made to the sentence discussed, there is one small and uncontroversial addition which I think would strengthen and enrich the prayer of consecration, i.e., that after the words "filled with thy grace and heavenly benediction", there should be added from 1549, "and made one body with thy Son Jesus Christ".

To come now to the lesser problem, the 1552 service was meant for all to join in. They were not to make their own individualistic prayers but to join together as one body. Cranmer would surely have approved of the words of Pope Pius X, "You are not to pray at the Mass; you are to pray the Mass". But unlike the Pope he provided a liturgy not only scriptural in content, but also one in which everyone could join because the long canon had been broken up. The new Canadian consecration prayer is not as long as the 1549 canon or some modern ones, but it is certainly too long for the ordinary communicant to be able to

¹ Pedersen Israel I-II, esp. pp. 106-109, 256-7.

² See the important article by Douglas Jones in the J.T.S., October, 1955, pp. 183-191.

³ This is based on a suggestion made to me by the Warden of St. Augustine's College, Canterbury, but altered by me at several points.

concentrate on it throughout its whole length. This problem, which I called psychological, is really theological, because if the congregation cannot join with the priest in the central prayer of the service, priest and people will come to regard it as something done by the priest in isolation for the people, instead of being the offering of the whole body of Christ, each member with his share in the service.

The South Indian Liturgy has a long canon, but solves the problem by including several responses by the laity in the consecration prayer, which seems to me excellent both theologically and psychologically. I realize that there is considerable suspicion of the C.S.I. Liturgy in some circles, chiefly Anglo-Catholic, which are always glancing over their shoulders towards Rome in the belief that we ought to move in that direction. But in an interesting article the Rev. Louis Bouyer (Professor of Theology at the Catholic Institute, Paris, and a leader of the liturgical movement in the Roman Church) admits that great care has been taken to meet Protestant scruples about eucharistic sacrifice, but says, "Let it be said quite frankly that the eucharistic liturgy of the C.S.I. appears much more satisfactory than any of the liturgies drawn up at the Reformation".¹ In fact, a liturgy to command assent has to be drawn up, not by following the supposed or actual ideas of another church as a matter of expediency, but on a satisfactory theological principle. I suggest as a sound principle that which appears to underlie the C.S.I. liturgy, namely, that we should regard ourselves as the heirs of all Christian history and also as free to experiment, but that we should test every form of worship to see whether it is agreeable to Holy Scripture.

¹ *Istina*, French Ecumenical Review, July-Aug., 1955, esp. p. 228. Since the above was written, this Article has been reprinted in *Theology*, Jan., 1956, pp. 3-11.
