

A Turning Point in Prayer Book Revision

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NO, this is not an article about the *Series 3* Communion service. At least, *Series 3* is not its main subject. It is primarily concerned with four new Communion services which are very little known in England, but which deserve to be known and studied throughout the Anglican world. The purpose of the article is to examine the way the four services deal with the crucial points of controversy in eucharistic revision, and in the course of the article a comparison will be made with *Series 3* to see whether that service deals with them in a similarly satisfactory manner. If so, it will of course deserve to be ranked with the other four under the sort of title with which our article begins. If not, a *Series 4* will be seen to be needed.

The four services in question are those of the Church of England in Australia, the province of Tanzania and the diocese of Chile. Australia has two experimental Communion services, one a conservative revision of 1662, published in *Sunday Services Revised*,¹ the other an original liturgy, first drafted by Bishop Donald Robinson of Parramatta, Sydney, and revised three times since, the latest draft being published under the title *Australia 1973*.² Tanzania has a single new Communion service, in Swahili and English, recently published, and aimed at uniting the very diverse traditions and uses of the country.³ Chile has a complete Prayer Book of its own, hitherto published only in Spanish.⁴

That the *Series 3* Communion service is on a par with these must not be taken for granted, simply because of the effort that has gone into it and the claims that have been made for it. Evangelicals who are tempted to view it with complacency (and there seem to be some who are) would do well to ponder the following words of Bishop Donald Robinson, the original draftsman for the Australian liturgy. Bishop Robinson has strong claims to be the leading Evangelical liturgiologist in the world today, not only by virtue of his knowledge of the subject, but also by virtue of his very successful work in practical liturgical construction. He therefore knows intimately the aims that Evan-

gelicals must seek to achieve and the pitfalls that they must seek to avoid when participating in eucharistic revision. He is also able to view the affairs of the Church of England with the knowledge of one who for some years worked in England, but with the detachment of one whose roots and whose present home are elsewhere. His reflections on *Series 3* Communion took the form of a review of the service, printed in the *Reformed Theological Review* for September 1973 (p. 102). They are as follows:

'Anglo-catholic theology scores rather well under the principle of using deliberately ambiguous language. There is a partly ancient, partly novel theory of sacrifice. The bread and wine are offered to God when brought to the table; an invocation prays that "by the power of your Spirit these gifts may be to us his body and his blood"; in an anamnesis, "this our sacrifice of thanks and praise" is apparently Roman in meaning: the archaic "this" has no antecedent other than the performance of the "do this", and the sequence of thought is evidently based on the sacrificial procedure of Exodus 24 where the offering of the sacrifice was followed by eating and drinking in God's presence, a concept which this service takes up in a prayer about eating and drinking "these holy gifts in the presence of your divine majesty". Realistic language about the body and blood ("Receive the body of our Lord . . .") replaces the traditional sacramental language of the Prayer Book. It is permitted to commend to God and to pray for all the departed, faithful and unfaithful. The Decalogue may be read, but only with some extraordinary glosses. Although much of the service is optional, one can only regret this evidence of the declension of the Church of England from its once clear witness to Reformation truth.'

In an accompanying review, not more favourable, of the *Series 3* Funeral Services, Bishop Robinson returns to the subject of prayers for the dead, and draws similar conclusions.

This is a severe judgment, and would be a rash judgment if it came from one who had put his name to services open to similar objections. In fact, however, he has not done so. Though Australia is as mixed in its churchmanship as England, the policy of the Liturgical Commission in Australia has from the outset been different from that of its counterpart in this country. In Australia, as in Tanzania and Chile, Evangelicals have participated in the work of revision from the beginning, and in a sufficiently large proportion to be reckoned with; whereas in England they were appointed to the Liturgical Commission late, after policy was already formed, and their number is still derisory. The earliest publication of the Australian Commission, containing the first published drafts of its Communion services, contained also these significant words:

'Disappointment may also be felt in some quarters that our draft revisions do not apparently take account of deviations from the Prayer Book of 1662 (particularly in the service of Holy Communion) which are widely current in some parts of the Australian Church. The Commission, however, had of necessity to keep its tentative revising to the limits of a

common mind among its members. Otherwise the results of its work would not truly reflect the practical possibilities of Australian revision.' (*Prayer Book Revision in Australia*, Sydney, Standing Committee of the General Synod, 1966, p. vi.)

In England, on the other hand, the Liturgical Commission announced as early as 1957 its view that the 1662 Prayer Book should no longer be regarded as a norm of doctrine or worship (*Prayer Book Revision in the Church of England*, London, SPCK, pp. 35-38); consequently, its manner of dealing with doctrinal issues has been very different from the Australian, and its liturgical productions have caused doctrinal problems from the outset. When it first published the *Series 2* Communion service, it explained its method of procedure with great frankness:

'We have also, where matters of Eucharistic doctrine are involved, tried to produce forms of words which are capable of various interpretations. In the Prayer of Consecration, for instance, we ask that the bread and wine "may be unto us" the body and blood of Christ. This phrase can be used by Anglicans of all schools of thought to express their views of the Eucharistic presence. 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.' (*Alternative Services: Second Series*, London, SPCK, 1965, p. 146; *An Order for Holy Communion*, London, SPCK, 1966, p. viii.)

The chairman of the Commission, Canon R. C. D. Jasper, in an article in the *Church Quarterly Review* (January 1965, pp. 27f., 33f.), expounded the method at greater length, applying it to the whole question of the eucharistic sacrifice and the eucharistic presence, and instancing the request 'accept our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving' as another example of an ambiguous phrase which the Commission ought to make use of, since it can either mean that praise and thanks are offered (as it does in Heb. 13:15) or that Christ is offered in a spirit of praise and thanksgiving (as it does in the Roman mass). Both the phrases mentioned duly appeared in the *Series 2* and *Series 3* consecration prayers.

In a small work published some years ago, *Prayer Book Revision and Anglican Unity* (London, CBRP, 1967), the present writer distinguished three different policies which have been followed by churches of the Anglican Communion when revising their Prayer Books. The first is the exclusive policy, which imposes the fashionable doctrinal innovations (in practice, mainly those of Anglo-Catholicism) as obligatory on everyone. The second is the divisive policy, which operates by alternatives. The third is the united policy, which refrains from doctrinal innovations until such time as they can be introduced by agreement. The Liturgical Commission's policy of deliberate ambiguity claims to be a variation on the third, or united policy, but has been shown by experience to be a variation on the second, or divisive, policy. Since there has been no attempt to prohibit 1662, the policy is not *exclusive*,

but it *divides* those who are conscientiously able to use the Commission's ambiguous services from those who (much as they might welcome revision of the genuinely *united* kind) feel bound in the circumstances to adhere to 1662. Incidentally, deliberate ambiguity is the same policy which failed so disastrously in the Anglican-Methodist union scheme, and there is no reason to doubt that its days are numbered in liturgical revision also.

Whenever Prayer Book revision has been taken in hand, Holy Communion has regularly proved to be the most controversial of the services. There are obvious reasons for this. The most serious controversies in liturgy are not over issues of history, structure or language, but over issues of doctrine, and, as it happens, a greater number of controversial doctrinal issues are raised by the Communion service than by any other; moreover, the other controversial services (such as Burial and the Ordinal) are much less frequently used. The doctrinal issues which the Communion service raises are basically three: thanksgiving and prayer for the dead (should the service give thanks for the faithful departed, or should it make petitions for them, and, if the latter, should it include the lost in its petitions as well?), the eucharistic sacrifice (is it an offering of our thanks, or of the body and blood of Christ?), and the eucharistic presence (is Christ's body spiritually present in the hearts of those who receive the sacrament worthily, or is his body physically present in the bread, whoever may receive it, and for as long as the bread exists?). The first of these issues affects the prayer for the church, since it is here that the dead are mentioned. The second issue affects chiefly the consecration prayer, since it is in the consecration prayer that Roman theology conceives both transubstantiation and the offering of Christ's body and blood to take place, and wishes these to be expressed; whereas the Reformers were concerned to move expressions of offering away from the consecration prayer, so as to make it quite clear that, when they used biblical phrases like 'our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving', they were not talking about an offering of Christ's body and blood. The third issue affects all references to the consecrated elements and their reception, in the consecration prayer and elsewhere, but perhaps chiefly affects the treatment of the consecrated remains, since the reservation of these for subsequent administration, and for worship in between, is a peculiarly vivid expression of the unreformed belief in a localised presence of Christ's body and blood in the bread and wine.

In *Prayer Book Revision and Anglican Unity*, mentioned earlier, the writer chronicled the reintroduction of petition for the dead, sacrificial language in consecration prayers, and directions for reservation, in Prayer Books and experimental services authorised in many parts of the Anglican Communion. The process began in Scotland and the USA, and has greatly accelerated since 1912. Reservation has been more hesitantly introduced than the other two practices, perhaps

because of the intense controversy that it caused in England in the 1920s, leading to the rejection of the 1928 Prayer Book. The story could now be carried somewhat further than it could in 1967, but the purpose of this article is not to list further churches which have since followed suit, but to draw attention to the much more significant fact that three churches have recently decided to stand out against the movement. Two of them are bodies of considerable magnitude (the Church of England in Australia being the second or third largest Anglican Church in the world, and the province of Tanzania a church of middle size), while the diocese of Chile, though small and extra-provincial, belongs to the quasi-provincial Anglican Council of South America, and has made more headway in liturgical revision than any other member-diocese.

Of course, there is much more to a service than its doctrinal characteristics, and a full appreciation of the Australian, Tanzanian and Chilean liturgies (or indeed of *Series 3*) would have to range much more widely. But since the doctrine of a service is the most important aspect of all, and since it is the doctrinal character of the new overseas liturgies which is their most remarkable, though not their only remarkable feature, it is here that our attention will be concentrated. In what follows, we shall look in turn at the three matters indicated above, as they are dealt with in the four new overseas liturgies and in *Series 3*; that is to say, we shall look at references to the dead in the prayer for the church (are they thanksgivings or are they petitions?), at expressions of offering (if any) in the consecration prayer, and at the treatment of the consecrated remains (are they consumed or are they reserved?). Finally, we shall look at any other indications of eucharistic doctrine in the respective services.

References to the Dead in the Prayer for the Church

'AND we also bless your holy name for all your servants who have died in the faith of Christ. Give us grace to follow their good examples, that with them we may share in your eternal kingdom' (*Sunday Services Revised*, p. 36).

'We praise you, Lord God, for your faithful servants in every age, and we pray that we, with all who have died in the faith of Christ, may be brought to a joyful resurrection and the fulfilment of your eternal kingdom' (*Australia 1973*, p. 11).

'Rejoicing in the communion of saints, we give thanks to you for all your elect who have departed this life in your faith (especially . . .). Grant that we may rejoice with them in your eternal glory' (*Tanzanian Liturgy*).

'Accept our thanks for those who have departed this life in your faith; we pray you to give us grace, so to follow their good examples, that with them we may be partakers of your eternal kingdom' (*Chilean Liturgy*, p. 49).

'We commemorate
the departed, especially . . .
Silence may be kept

We commend all men to your unfailing love, that in them your will may be fulfilled; and we rejoice at the faithful witness of your saints in every age, praying that we may share with them in your eternal kingdom' (*Series 3*, p. 13).

It will be seen from the above that all the services, including *Series 3*, give thanks for the faithful departed, and pray that 'we, with them' may share in God's eternal kingdom or eternal glory. The 'we with' phrase comes from the 1662 prayer for the 'Church militant here in earth', where it clearly does not imply petition for the dead (who do not belong to the Church Militant) but only for the living. The phrase was borrowed by the 1662 revisers from the prayer before the collect in the Burial service, as rewritten by Cranmer to replace a petition for the dead in 1552, and only started being interpreted by some writers as equivalent to 'we and' in the seventeenth century: in Elizabeth's reign, this interpretation was indignantly rejected by Archbishop Whitgift as a shameless Puritan slur (*Works*, Parker Society, vol. 3, p. 364).⁸ However, in *Series 3* there is prefixed to these common features a commendation of 'all men', which in context means 'all the departed', and is not limited in any way by the opening of the prayer, which is 'for the Church *and for the world*' (p. 10). The Liturgical Commission's *Commentary on Holy Communion Series 3* (London, SPCK, 1971, p. 16) states that their intention here is 'not invariably to exclude the commemoration of other departed apart from the faithful departed, and we have followed the lines suggested by the Doctrine Commission in their report *Prayer and the Departed* (pp. 53-55)'. A reference to the place cited shows that the model has been the Doctrine Commission's 'Prayer for the Non-Christian Dead'.⁹ Obviously, therefore, despite the characteristic ambiguity of the language of *Series 3*, it intends not just to give thanks for the faithful departed but also to make petition for all the departed, and in this it differs from the other four liturgies, which do not include petition for any of the departed.

Expressions of Offering in the Consecration Prayer

NONE in *Sunday Services Revised*, Australia 1973, or the *Chilean*

Liturgy: only expressions of the all-sufficiency of Calvary (pp. 39, 15 and 53 respectively).

‘Therefore, O Father, we offer you our praise and thanksgiving for the perfect sacrifice of your Son Jesus Christ, who once offered himself for our sakes upon the cross. We thank you for his mighty resurrection and ascension into heaven, where he ever makes intercession for us’ (*Tanzanian Liturgy*).

‘Therefore, heavenly Father, with this bread and this cup we do this in remembrance of him: we celebrate and proclaim his perfect sacrifice made once for all upon the cross, his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into heaven; and we look for his coming in glory. Accept through him, our great high priest, this our sacrifice of thanks and praise; and as we eat and drink these holy gifts in the presence of your divine majesty . . .’ (*Series 3*, p. 22).

Clearly, the two Australian services and the Chilean service have been careful not to have words of oblation in the prayer in which the Church of Rome has been most concerned to have such words, and they thus avoid all suspicion of favouring the sacrifice of the mass. The Tanzanian liturgy has an offering in this prayer, but it says that it is offering ‘praise and thanksgiving’, not ‘*a sacrifice of* praise and thanksgiving’, so this could hardly be taken in the Roman sense, even apart from the following sentence, which interprets ‘we offer you our praise and thanksgiving’ as meaning ‘we thank you’. In *Series 3*, on the other hand, it is ‘*this our sacrifice of* thanks and praise’ that is offered, and the immediate context is not concerned with thanking God but with the bread and the cup. So, although once more the language of *Series 3* is ambiguous, every effort has been made to ensure that the Roman interpretation fits as naturally as a Reformed one; and the very fact that the phraseology has been brought back into this prayer from the place to which Cranmer carefully removed it (the prayer of oblation, after reception), means that the Roman interpretation has the edge on any other.

Treatment of the Consecrated Remains

‘ANY consecrated bread and wine which remain shall be reverently consumed after all have communicated or else covered with a fair linen cloth and then consumed immediately after the blessing’ (*Sunday Services Revised*, p. 46).

‘The consecrated bread and wine which remains after all have received the holy communion is to be reverently consumed before, or immediately after, the end of the service’ (*Australia 1973*, p. 32).

'When all have received, or at the end of the service, what remains of the sacrament shall be reverently disposed of' (*Tanzanian Liturgy*).

'The presbyter shall ensure that all the rest of the consecrated bread and wine is reverently consumed before he leaves the church' (*Chilean Liturgy*, p. 46).

'Any consecrated bread and wine which is not required for purposes of communion is consumed at the end of the administration, or after the service' (*Series 3*, p. 25).

The two Australian services and the Chilean service once again leave the matter in no doubt. Reservation, and all that follows from it, is excluded. The Tanzanian service is almost equally clear. The curious phrase 'disposed of' derives from the East Africa United Liturgy, on which the Tanzanian liturgy is based, and was doubtless chosen to cover other ways of getting rid of the remains (as practised by other Protestant denominations) apart from consuming them. But it is clearly a question of getting rid of them, not of reserving them. The ambiguous *Series 3* language, on the other hand, is a mystery of iniquity. Substantially the same rubric appeared in *Series 1* and *Series 2*, and was not suspected by the Church Assembly of even raising the question of reservation. After these services had been authorised, however, a series of judgments was given in the ecclesiastical courts, to the effect that the *Series 2* rubric changed the law, legalising reservation wherever that service was used.' The phrase 'which is not required for purposes of communion' was interpreted by the judges as meaning, not 'which has not been required on this occasion', but 'which will not be required on some future occasion'. Thus, by an oversight, the practice which was rejected in 1928 even when accompanied by elaborate rubrical safeguards against the cultus of the reserved sacrament, has now been legalised without any safeguards at all. Clearly, the matter cannot be left here. But all that the Liturgical Commission has hitherto done about it, as far as one can tell, is to reproduce the offending rubric in *Series 3*.

Other indications of Eucharistic Doctrine

Sunday Services Revised follow 1662 in having, as the crucial petition of the consecration prayer, 'that we may be partakers of his most blessed body and blood' (p. 39); in using the same words of distribution (p. 40); in having the prayer of oblation after reception (p. 41); in thanking God for 'the spiritual food' of Christ's body and blood (p. 41); and in retaining the Black Rubric (p. 48).

Australia 1973 follows 1662 in using the same words of distribution (p. 16), in thanking God for 'the spiritual food' of Christ's body and blood (p. 17) and in having the prayer of oblation after reception (p. 17). It also provides Matthew 5:23f. as one of the choice of opening sentences for the Communion proper (p. 12), and permits the use of the *Agnus Dei* and *Benedictus Qui Venit* during reception (pp. 16, 22).

The Tanzanian Liturgy follows 1662 in having, as a central petition of the consecration prayer, 'that we may be partakers of his body and blood'; in using at the distribution the exhortation 'feed on him in your hearts by faith'; and in placing the prayer of oblation after reception. It also permits the use of the *Agnus Dei* at the fraction.

The Chilean Liturgy denies the sacrifice of the mass and transubstantiation (introduction, p. 44), stresses that participation of Christ's body and blood is by faith (p. 53, twice); and follows 1662 in retaining the Black Rubric (p. 46), in using the same words of distribution (p. 53), in thanking God for 'the spiritual food' of Christ's body and blood (p. 54) and in having the prayer of oblation after reception (p. 54).

Series 3 has, as a central petition of the consecration prayer, 'that by the power of your Spirit these gifts of bread and wine may be to us his body and his blood' (p. 21); has half of the prayer of oblation after reception (p. 27), the other half being in the consecration prayer, as noted earlier; uses at the distribution the exhortation 'feed on him in your hearts by faith' (p. 24); and allows the *Agnus Dei* and *Benedictus Qui Venit* to be used at any point in the Communion proper (p. 24).

Of all the five services, *Sunday Services Revised* and the *Chilean Liturgy* come closest to 1662 in these remaining respects, and raise no doctrinal problems at all.

Australia 1973 uses the receptionist language of 1662 in its words of distribution and its post-communion thanksgiving, and has its prayer of oblation in the 1662 position, after reception and well away from the consecration prayer. The only questions that might be raised concern its allowance of Matthew 5:23f. as one of the opening sentences for the Communion proper, and of the *Agnus Dei* and *Benedictus Qui Venit* during reception. However, the original context of Matthew 5:23f. is certainly Temple worship, and if applied to Christian worship can only refer to the individual worshipper's 'gift' to God, not to the sacrifice of Christ. The *Benedictus Qui Venit* is quite harmless during reception, since that is when Christ does come, according to Reformed theology, and not during the consecration prayer. The *Agnus Dei* has been reckoned lawful even with 1662 since the Lincoln Judgment, so this option also is far from implying a presence of Christ's body and blood in the elements.

Similar considerations apply to the Tanzanian liturgy, though its receptionist language occurs at different points, and it makes no use of Matthew 5:23f. or the *Benedictus Qui Venit*.

Series 3 uses ambiguous language ('be to us his body and his blood') in the consecration prayer, in place of the receptionist language of 1662. This phrase is derived from the 1549 Prayer Book and the Roman mass. It uses receptionist language only once, at the distribution, and balances it by permitting the *Benedictus Qui Venit* in the consecration prayer, and by its allowance of reservation, discussed above.

All in all, the *Series 3* service has carried out the Liturgical Commission's principle of deliberate ambiguity with great thoroughness and consistency, and, if the doctrinal differences which it so carefully conceals were matters of no moment, it would have to be judged highly successful. In Australia, Tanzania and Chile, however, these differences are still recognised as important, so the new liturgies of those countries use clear language, such as expresses the biblical teaching of the Prayer Book and Articles, and excludes the medieval mistakes which those formularies exclude. Even Roman Catholics are beginning to be ashamed of these mistakes: how long will it be before the Liturgical Commissions of the Church of England and of other Anglican Churches learn to be equally ashamed of them, and to follow the lead which Australia, Tanzania and Chile have now given?

¹ Melbourne, General Board of Religious Education, 1972, 45c (Australian).

² Sydney, Liturgical Commission of the Church of England in Australia, 1973, 40c (Australian).

³ An English text of the service is to be found in *Further Anglican Liturgies*, ed. C. O. Buchanan (Bramcote, Grove Books, 1975), together with an introduction by one of its compilers, J. R. Bowen.

⁴ An English translation of the Chilean Communion service is to be found in the work mentioned in note 3, together with an introduction by C. F. Bazley.

⁵ For further information, see my book *The Service of Holy Communion and its Revision* (Abingdon, Marcham Manor Press, 1972), p. 51f.

⁶ The Doctrine Commission report was published at London by the SPCK in 1971.

⁷ For details, see my articles 'Do the Alternative Services Legalise Reservation?' (in *The Churchman*, Autumn, 1971) and 'Reservation: History and Law' (in *Reservation and Communion of the Sick*, Bramcote, Grove Books, 1972). It is noteworthy that an earlier draft of *Australia 1973*, entitled *Australia 1969*, copied the *Series 2* rubric, but that when the English legal judgments became known, the rubric was altered.