

THE CANADIAN PRAYER BOOK 1959

A critique prepared at the request of the Convenor of the Committee to explore the possibilities of Prayer Book revision, appointed by the General Synod of the Church of England in Australia, 1962.

The 1955 Revision of the Book of SOON Prayer made by the Anglican Church in Canada is the latest of numerous revisions of the 1662 Prayer Book of the Church of England. In assessing it as a form of Christian worship the emotive and all important test is whether its worship conforms to the revealed will of God. In the Old Testament the Israelites were warned NOT to worship in the way that seemed attractive to them, but to be SOFUL to worship in the place where God had set His Name, Matt 25, which His revealed character.

Before examining the Canadian book in detail it is worth asking the question 'why have the Canadians revised their 1918 Prayer Book at all?' Several reasons that might suggest a revision were plainly not the motivations in this revision, e.g. 1. The revision did not have the object of eliminating the unnaturalness of worship LAS from the presence of archaisms; for the archaic language remains, e.g. "Dearly beloved brethren, the Scripture moveth us in sundry places" and "Here endeth the first lesson", etc. 2. Nor did it have the object of eliminating notorious centres of contention and division, e.g. 2. the ornaments rubric remains unaltered. 3. Nor did it have the object of adapting the services for modern conditions, at least not to any extent in advance of the 1918 Canadian revision. Thus Morning and Evening Prayer remain virtually unaltered, (indeed slightly less so) although the community life has been largely swept away. Similarly the requirement that a clergyman should say Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer privately, i.e. with his family, is quite obsolete. However, the rubric remains unaltered.

There are, however, a great many alterations in this revision and there seem to be several different principles which underly them. 1. Theological liberalism underlies some alterations. Thus God's judgment is minimized at almost every point; e.g. the statement is omitted in the exhortation in the Communion Service that our sins, if persisted in, will provoke God to judge us. No doctrine could be truer nor more important to be known, not only of the exhortation but of the visitation to the sick the excellent Bible doctrine that sickness is sent from God for a purpose of blessing, either by way of chastisement for our sins or for testing our patience, is also omitted. Naturally enough we find no reference in the Confession that our sins are intolerable, nor any in the last part that we are miserable sinners. Even less defensible is one theological liberalism apparent in the omission of those parts of the Psalms which refer in a realistic way to God's judgment on sinners. Indeed some Psalms are omitted completely. Moreover we are to please God in our worship we should be willing to worship Him in the fullness of His revealed character and not in only such aspects of it as we prefer. Under the same heading of theological liberalism may be mentioned the omission of the word "one" (for obedience) in all three places in the Marriage Service. No word could have a more abundant New Testament authority. The fact that we don't like it is not a sufficient reason for its omission.

Theological liberalism may also be seen reflected in the expanded Catechism. The traditional doctrine that the Bible is "God's word written" as Article 20 puts it, has been abandoned. In the Catechism we are asked the question "What does our Lord, or the Apostles, or the Scriptures themselves teach about the Bible?" but "What does the church teach about the Bible?" and the answer is "The Bible records the word of God as was given

to Israel and to His church..." This answer is untrue historically, because it is impossible to point to any church teaching (besides the modern generation of theologically writers) which is content to regard the Bible as a mere record. Both the Bible and the teaching of the church as this is expressed in every church confession, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic, regard the words of scripture as the words of God. The refusal to identify the Bible with the word of God is made still more explicit in the question which follows -- "Where then (my emphasis) is the word of God to be found in all its fullness?" And the answer is not, "in the Bible" but "in Jesus Christ", as though these two sources were separate or in contrast. Moreover ordinands are no longer asked "do you unfeignedly believe all the canonical scriptures of the Old and New Testaments", nor are they required to answer "I do believe them". In this way Canadian clergy of the future will be delivered from one falsehood which so many of their brethren in the Anglican communion have been willing to utter at the solemn moment of their ordination and which has brought its own retribution in our denomination, for in spite of the Canadian book, God is a God of judgment.

To adopt an attitude towards the Bible lower than that adopted by Christ and His Apostles is more than the whole Christian church's attitude towards scripture in the past, is not a way forward.

The Catechism contains a good deal of non-biblical teaching. Thus bishops are equated with apostles; but in the New Testament it is bishops and presbyters who are synonymous. Similarly, we may ask what is the biblical ground for the statement of the Catechism "The work of the Church in the world is to offer to God on behalf of all men the worship which is His due"? We ought not to make statements about the work of God's church apart from God's word, and it is groundless to suggest that God is pleased with worship offered to Him "on behalf of" those whom God has given up to His just judgment because they have refused to have God in their knowledge and who hold down the truth in unrighteousness. The scriptures make abundantly clear that God does not accept the worship of the disobedient. The phrase is a loose one covering much more than the scriptures warrant.

The second principle which seems to underlie some of the changes is theological indifferentism which has sprung into prominence in Anglicanism in the last thirty years. Some could suggest that either the Tractarians, or the Evangelicals of a generation ago subscribed to theological indifferentism. It is also a vice constantly shunned in Roman Catholicism. For example, only last week Bishop Nelson, when asked at an ecumenical meeting why the Roman Catholic Church insisted that prayers at united services should be said by laymen, replied, "People ask what the Catholic Church is afraid of in this matter of combined services. What we are afraid of is religious indifference; that some people will come to think that one religion is as good as another". Theological indifferentism characterises modern Anglicanism to such an extent that the word 'heresy' now refers exclusively to something in the distant past. Theological indifferentism comes to light in the new Canadian Prayer Book in several places. For example, in the Calendar we note that on the same page Thomas Moore and William Tyndale are both celebrated as martyrs. True they died within a year of each other and they both died heroically, but one died because he affirmed that the Pope had a God-given headship of the church and the other because he denied it. We can commend the charity which thinks well of both these men, but we cannot commend the theology which thinks them both witnesses to the truth.

11.3. theological indifferentism which has called out the strange language in the prayer for the dead in the Intercessions. It would seem that the intention is that the language should be capable of being taken either as a prayer for the dead or not a prayer for the dead; as though it didn't matter how the worshipper is to think about the state of those who are present with the Lord. A similar example of theological indifferentism is the strange syntax of the prayer of Remembrance. Again the intention would seem to be that the language should be capable of two contradictory meanings, reflecting two radically opposed concepts of the Holy Communion, whether we are primarily offering something to God, or receiving something from God, as though the church took the view that it did not matter what the worshipper believed on this important subject. This is of course in keeping with the ambiguity which is the central feature of the Ceylon scheme of church union commended by the 1500th Conference.

The third principle which seems to underlie the changes is the desire to move in an unreformed direction. This is specially clear in the revision of the Holy Communion. Some of these changes are slight and hardly worth noticing, some more important, but none apparently were introduced to conform to Scripture more closely. However, if there is to be any alteration of our 1662 rite it ought to be to bring it more in line with the Bible, not away from it.

As examples of the movement away from the Bible towards traditional catholicism may be mentioned: 1. The title page for the Administration of the Lord's Supper (This is the only service which is given the honour of a title page) omits the New Testament title of "The Lord's Supper" (which emphasises that the essence of the service is in the eating and the drinking) but it includes the non-biblical, though of course ancient and honourable title of "Eucharist" but which referred originally to the incidental feature of the normal giving thanks for the bread (and which, ironically, has no counterpart in the present service) and not to the essential act of the sacrament.

2. The concept of the offering of a realistic rather than a metaphorical sacrifice is strengthened. (N.B. In the New Testament all uses of the word "sacrifice" apart from Christ's self-oblation of Himself on Calvary are metaphorical. They are the adaption of the Old Testament realistic language of *qorban* to the New Testament situation where Christians worship in the Spirit. In the Christian dispensation material sacrifices are never offered to God directly, but by way of obedience to His command to love our neighbour.) The concept of an objective sacrifice is strengthened in the Canadian book in new ways. &. The prayer of Oblation is brought forward before the communion, so increasing the possibility of ambiguity in the phrase "We offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving". The New Testament origin of this phrase "Sacrifice of praise" makes it clear that it is a metaphorical sacrifice by adding the words "that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to His Name". If this phrase is to be put into a more ambiguous position by placing it before the command "Feed on Him in your hearts with thanksgiving", which accompanies the eating and the drinking, then the biblical addition must be included to eliminate the ambiguity and to keep the meaning of the phrase biblical. An additional point may be mentioned. In the order for a consecration of a church there are two prayers which take the Lord's Supper as their theme. The prayer that "Your sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving which is here offered unto thy divine majesty may be acceptable unto thee" precedes the prayer for a worthy reception, which again strengthens the suggestion already noted that in this book our sacrifice of praise is not the local consequence and purpose of receiving the body and blood of Christ through faith, and so is something other than a thankful heart, which is the essential meaning the phrase has in the New Testament and in 1662.

Perhaps it is also worth mentioning that the words "not worthy to offer unto thee any sacrifice" have been omitted from the prayer of thanksgiving, a disastrous omission if its purpose is not to strengthen the concept that the Lord's Supper is essentially a sacrifice other than the metaphorical sacrifice of ourselves, our souls and bodies with thanksgiving. We are reminded of what the Council of Trent said "If anyone says that in the mass a true and proper sacrifice is not offered to God v. l. let him be anathema ... If anyone says that the sacrifice of the mass is only a sacrifice of praise and of thanksgiving ... let him be anathema!".

b. The rubric directing the ~~bringing~~ of the required bread and wine on the table has a new phrase "present and place". (The adverb "humbly" is not included.) But Christians are not pagan Greeks called upon to offer God bread and wine. yet what else can the word "present" here mean? Presumably it is derived from the rubric which directs that the alms for the poor and other devotions of the people collected by the deacons and church wardens shall be brought to the priest who shall humbly ~~present~~ and place it upon the holy table. Here the Dares "humbly present" is defensible as the collection is not given to God but is made in God's name for the needs of our neighbours. But it has obviously led to the concept that 1% is ~~permanently~~ offered to God bread and wine which is later to be eaten by those who bring it. This is not New Testament worship. The action of presenting the bread and wine and presenting the alms belong to two quite different categories, but because of the confusion reflected in the Canadian book as to what humbly presenting the alms given for the poor implies, it is better that in any future revision of the 1662 book these words "humbly present" in connection with the alms should be omitted. They certainly should not be included with regard to the bread and wine to be used for the Lord's Supper. The Revisers of 1662 rejected the suggestion that the bread and wine should be "offered up", so that we may conclude that any "offerings" at this point contravenes a principle of worship of 1662.

c. The concept of offering is further strengthened by the provision for a formal processional members of the congregation up to the holy table with the bread and the wine which as we have seen the minister is to present to God. In this way the biblical truth that the service depicts God's movement to us, brought out by Cranmer's phrase "we receiving", is effectively obscured by the false notion that the main emphasis of the service is what we offer, offerimus which is the corresponding phrase in the Roman mass.

d. The Benedictus and the Agnus Dei are explicitly ~~included~~ in the order of service but in a place which is entirely out of context with their New Testament meanings but entirely in context with the meaning given to them in the Roman Catholic use of these phrases in this place. They therefore become a burden to a New Testament attuned worshipper, requiring from him mental gymnastics every time they are heard.

4. Prayers for the dead are included as a compulsory part of the Communion service and more explicitly for ~~official~~ use in the burial of the dead, e.g., "Give rest to thy servant". Now and the many injunctions in Holy Scripture about prayer there is no injunction to pray for the dead which is extraordinary, if scripture is given as a sufficient guide "so that the man of God might be completely furnished to every good work of God in truth desired such prayers. Moreover it is impossible for those who believe that at death the Christian believer goes to be with Christ seated in the heavens, and is at rest, to use a Book of Common Prayer containing petitions which suggest the contrary. Article 6, 22 if were observed, would prevent prayers for the dead forming part of common prayer.

5. A most unsatisfactory feature of the Holy Communion service is the anamnesis. It is worth noting that the Reverend Roland Palmer SSJ in an article on the new Canadian Prayer Book (he was a member of a Revision Committee) stated that at one of the first meetings of the Revision Committee the question was asked "On what were the major revisions needed?" Someone at once said the offertory, and someone else the anamnesis. Both these points have been included in the new Prayer Book. The sentence which has been added to the prayer of consecration containing the anamnesis is an extraordinarily difficult one to construe. Doubtless evangelicals thought that they had secured, by the addition of the "in this sacrament" a statement that the anamnesis is the eating and the drinking. Actually in the New Testament the anamnesis is a consequence (i.e. a logical, not necessarily temporal, consequence) of the eating and the drinking. *ἵπο τι* said Christ. That is to say, "Eat and drink"; *εἰς Ἀναμνησιν*, We eat and drink, following our Lord's command, with a view to (to) remembrance. As often as we eat this bread and drink this cup we proclaim (for this is the logical consequence of these actions) the Lord's death. The anamnesis is not the reciting of Christ's actions, let alone the offering of some object to God, nor even the eating and drinking, but it is a logical consequence of this action in the heart of the faithful believers. However a strict analysis of the syntax of the sentences effectively excludes the Evangelical and Cranmerian concept and substitutes the service itself, heading up to the offering "this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving", as the anamnesis. No other meaning can be given to the sentence in view of the subordinate clause "with all thy holy church" which modifies the main clause "we make the offering". This subordinate clause effectively excludes the eating and the drinking from being the thing commanded to be done, as it is in the New Testament, because we cannot be said to eat and drink "with all thy holy church". It leaves, therefore, as the only alternative, the Roman concept that the whole church is present when the mass is offered as a sacrifice to God. Because of this clause alone I judge it is impossible for one trained in evangelical theology to worship God through this Canadian form of the Communion service.

6. The prayer of thanksgiving has had omitted from it some important phrases. For example, the good works which God has prepared for us to walk in. Why the omission? Similarly after "through hope of Thy everlasting kingdom", the important phrase "by the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" has been omitted. Why? It now gives the impression to the casual worshipper that all we need do to inherit Heaven is to hope. But more importantly the words "vouchsafe to" are omitted before the words "feed us", as well as the phrase "who have duly received these holy mysteries". The effect of these omissions is to confuse the sign with the thing signified and thus to overthrow the nature of the sacrament. Moreover, by omitting the reference to the promise of God the truth that faith is the only means whereby we feed on Christ is obscured. This omission moreover makes nonsense of the whole paragraph for it changes the reference of the dependent clause "assuring us thereby of thy favour and goodness towards us". The antecedent of "thereby" in 4068 God's promise, embodied in the sacrament and taken hold of by us by "duly receiving". But now the only antecedent remaining is the invisible action of God in spiritually feeding our souls. To describe this act, however real it be, as an assurance, is a meaningless linguistic absurdity. It is a pity that the Canadian Prayer Book has inserted so many things between the recitation of our Lord's command "Do this" and the doing of it, i.e. the taking and eating of the bread and wine. In 1662 the word "Amen" was inserted and if revision is to be made this should be omitted, but Canada has not only retained the Amen but has inserted a prayer of colation, including the so called anamnesis, as well as a mutual salutation and the prayer of humble access and a short period of silence. The 1552 rite is more excellent,

although less traditional than the 1549 in this respect, and it is a pity to admit.

Another direction away from the 210186 towards Romanism is the lowering of the ~~ex~~ number 9th those who communicate with the minister to one. Modern conditions with increased population and motor cars ~~at~~ should require larger congregations when the Lord's Supper is administered, not smaller. By raising the required number we would prevent sectional communion services, so out of keeping with the character of the church as the body of Christ, and we would impose a moral obligation on every true member of the congregation to be present when the Lord's Supper is administered in order to ensure that sufficient numbers were present.

It may be noted that the minister is given opportunity to make biddings for prayers not provided for in the printed text. It is a pity that the opportunity to experiment in a New Testament direction by providing for members of the congregation to suggest biddings or even to contribute prayers themselves was not taken.

The new Confirmation Service is a most unfortunate document and fulfils the condemnation of the Thirty Nine Articles that Confirmation is a corrupt following of the Apostles. The whole character of the service as defined in 1562 has been changed. The homily "Of Common Prayer and Sacraments" defines the essence of Confirmation as "Confirmation of children by examining them of their knowledge of the Articles of the Faith and joining thereto the prayers of the church for them", and the Preface of 1662 makes clear that the purpose of the service is "to the end that the children being now come to the years of discretion and having learnt what their godfathers and godmothers promised for them in baptism they may themselves with their own mouth and consent openly before the church ratify and confirm the same and also promise that by the grace of God they will moreover endeavour themselves faithfully to observe such things". And the bishop immediately proceeds to ask "Do you here renew the promise and vow made in your name on your baptism ratifying and confirming the same?" But in the new service this purpose has dropped merely into a prior condition, and the purpose of the service now becomes explicitly the laying on of hands which was a consequence rather than the main purpose in the 1662 book. To strengthen this change of meaning of the service the new book drops the word confirm where it is used twice in 1662 in ratifying the baptismal promise and inserts it in connection with the bishop's prayer for strengthening with the Holy Ghost (not in 1662). Moreover, the Canadian Order for Confirmation calls it "the possible site of the laying on of hands" and quotes the Epistle to the Hebrews as describing Confirmation as "one of the first principles of Christ". These bold assertions cannot be supported by honest exegesis of the scripture, nor have the two lections from Acts 8 and 19 which are included in the service any direct relationship to Our Service of Confirmation.

In conclusion it may be asked again which of the many alterations have been made with the object of conforming the liturgy more closely with scripture. After all, scripturalness has been the most distinctive principle underlying our Anglican liturgy. Its scriptural character has been its greatest story.

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A further note on the Calendar in the Canadian
Prayer Book

The Calendar is indeed a strange document. Its compilers do not seem to have understood the principles in which the 1562 Calendar has been formed.

"In the first English Prayer Book of 1549 all the black-letter days of the old Roman Calendar were omitted, as they were not observed in any way, and it seemed superfluous to retain them simply on paper. Some inconveniences did, however, attend the complete omission of all black-letter days, for the simple reason that many of them had a social, commercial or legal usefulness in the reckoning of times and 600891028, as for instance in the observance of "Hilary Term", so called because it commenced on or about January 13, which was St. Hilary's Day in the old Calendar.

"In 1561, therefore, a Royal Commission revised the Calendar and restored a relatively small number of the old black-letter days. It was made quite clear that these days were restored for secular reasons only: they were not days to be "observed" in any ecclesiastical manner. 'We have not done it', said a statement issued by authority in 1564, "because we hold them all for saints, of whom we do not esteem some to be even among the good ... but that they may be as notes and marks of some certain things, the stated times of which it is very important to know, and ignorance of which may be a disadvantage to our countrymen.

"This Calendar was, with three additions, the Calendar adopted in the 1662 Prayer Book. The Table of Feasts which appears in the Introduction to our Prayer Book makes it quite clear that only the red-letter days are 'feasts to be observed in the Church of England. These red-letter days all have a scriptural basis; they commemorate Bible characters or events.

"The black-letter days are not feasts, and they are not marked by any observance. Indeed, the bishops at the ~~Sey~~ Conference preceding the 1662 revision (most of whom were high churchmen) stated that "the other names (i.e. the black-letter names) are left in the Calendar, not that they should be so kept as holy days, but they are useful for the preservation of their memories, and for other reasons, as for leases, law days, etc."

"This secular signification of the black-letter days is well understood by most reliable manuals on the Prayer-Book, as is evidenced not only by what is said in the Tutorial Prayer Book (p. 64 ff.) but by the explanation given in the learned and widely used work of Wheatly (written in 1710) and in the modern Anglo-Catholic Liturgy and Worship (1916).

"Wheatly, who was a Laudian high churchman, is worth quoting.

"After giving various reasons why certain black-letter days should have been restored (as ~~in the~~ the opening of law court terms, national holidays like St. David's Day, in Wales, Wakes and Fairs kept in certain 1068117302 on particular days, and to understand 'the histories which were writ before the Reformation' which 'do frequently speak of transactions hapning upon such a holy-day, or about such a time, without mentioning the name) Wheatly says that our second Reformers thought it "convenient to restore them 'not with any regard of having kept holy by the Church for this they thought prudent to, ~~for~~ for'. One reason for the prohibition was 'that many of these saints they then commemorated were oftentimes men of none of the best characters'; and the accounts given of them 'feigned and fabulous'. Wheatly, with reluctance, gives such information about these 'saints' as was current, promising,

however to invent nothing of his own nor to set down anything but what some one or other of the blind humanists superstitiously believe."

"The Lambeth Conference of 1955 is thus on false ground in supposing that 'the purpose of a Calendar is to increase our thankfulness to God and to strengthen our faith by regularly recalling the lives and examples of men and women who have borne pre-eminent witness to the power of the Holy Spirit, and are with us in the communion of saints' (Recommendation 7; note also the inaccurate ~~summon~~ underlying Recommendation 60 'The Conference recommends that the Church should continue to commemorate the saints in three ways: by Red Letter days, Black Letter days, or a memorial collect alone').'" From the article "Bishop Feetham's May" in an Australian Church paper.

The rubric prefacing the Calendar suggests that the additional names are not enrolled or commenced "saints of the church". A strange phrase (especially as all Christians are saints of God) but when we examine the Calendar we find that only biblical characters have the prefix of "saint", with the exception of the patron saints of England, Ireland, Wales and France - to the latter a nice touch of patriotism! We notice that the saintly yet schismatical Thomas Ken is commemorated, are also the Meccabean martyrs who alone of the great ones of the Old Testament dispensation are singled out for inclusion in the Calendar, though not named in the Old Testament Calendar of Hebrews 11.
