

# The First Prayer Book of 1549

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[The essay offered here is an emendation of an earlier version that was published in *But One Use*, the General Seminary Library's catalogue of an exhibition to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Book of Common Prayer. Copies of this fine 176-page museum-quality catalogue, which includes precise descriptions of 102 items exhibited and 26 color illustrations as well as the earlier form of this and other essays, are still available at the very reasonable price of \$45 plus \$2 postage from the St. Mark's Library, General Theological Seminary, 175 Ninth Avenue, New York 10011].

**T**HE MOST IMPORTANT prelude to the appearance in 1549 of the first Book of Common Prayer, in addition to the repudiation of papal jurisdiction and the establishment of royal supremacy, was the appearance of the Bible in the English vernacular tongue which had clearly matured by the early decades of the sixteenth century. It has well been said that the three greatest literary landmarks of the English language are the English Bible, the Book of Common Prayer, and the works of William Shakespeare. Although not much time can be given to that here, suffice it to say that already William Tyndale's translation of the New Testament, done in 1524 and for which he died at the stake in 1535, was also the source of the earliest English translation of the liturgical Epistles and Gospels, which were retained in 1549 more or less on the basis of the Sarum lectionary. The year 1535 had seen the first complete Bible printed in English (largely the work of Coverdale), and in 1539 the Great Bible (sponsored by Cromwell, and the work of Coverdale, who relied heavily upon Tyndale) was issued by the Crown and set up in every parish church by royal injunction of Henry VIII. Its second edition, 1540, contained the famous preface by Cranmer observing that perusal of the Scriptures tends to enhance, rather than undermine, the power of the monarch under God. Later translations of the Bible would supersede, but Coverdale's version would remain standard for the Psalter. The Edwardian injunctions of July 31, 1547, required every parish church in England to have a copy of the whole Bible in English. And already for nearly a hundred years since the day of Gutenberg, it was possible for Bibles, as well as service books, to be printed. It was now possible, and maybe even desirable, to have a Book of Common Prayer.

The first English Litany had already been occasioned in 1544 by Henry's command for public processions with litanies that could be understood by the people, to be said or sung in English in order to seek divine assistance as he prepared to invade France. (The invasion was a partial, if muddled, success). Composed by Cranmer from materials in the

Sarum Processional, Luther's Litany, and the Orthodox Liturgy of John Chrysostom, it was revised in 1547, omitting the invocation of saints, and in that form went into the 1549 Book. From its beginning, though, it carried the clause "From all sedition and privy conspiracy, from the tyranny of the bishop of Rome and all his detestable enormities" (continued in 1552 but removed in 1559, and never since restored). By the death of Henry VIII on January 28, 1547, the earliest stage of the English Reformation was over, leaving a continuity of traditional Catholic faith and practice, the re-definition of past history in a way that enabled changes to seem like restorations, and the concept of one national commonwealth, both state and church, with a quasi-episcopal king replacing the pope.

Beginning in 1547 with Edward VI (king at the age of nine), the second stage commenced, with reforms in doctrine and liturgy but not so far-reaching or radical as on the European continent, and with English bishops continuing to take the lead in both stages. Early in the new reign there appeared "The Order of the Communion" [of the people], derived both from reformation sources and from medieval forms for communion from the reserved sacrament outside Mass, published in English in 1548 by royal proclamation as the first installment of a program of reform which the nation is urged to accept from the civil power. Just as people were now reading and speaking in English, so also it seemed logical for them to want to pray in their own tongue. To be inserted into the Latin Mass after the priest's communion and before the ablutions, the unusual feature of this "Order of Communion," in addition to the liturgical English and the restoration of the chalice to the laity, was the assumption that the normal communicant could achieve repentance without the sacrament of Penance, which was now optional, and that those who preferred only a general confession were not to be offended by the others nor vice versa. Private auricular confession in preparation for receiving communion was now to be exceptional rather than expected. Back in 1545 private prayers had already been reformed and regulated for the nation under Henry VIII by the "King's Primer"; now the time seemed ripe, under Edward VI, to extend such reform and regulation to public worship itself.

## THE BOOK OF 1549

The chief author of the first Book of Common Prayer was not some rebellious and bombastic monk but the Archbishop of Canterbury, formerly a fellow at Cambridge University. Cranmer had first experienced Lutheran worship in Lent of 1532 at Nuremberg (where he secretly married the niece of Andreas Osiander, a lesser figure in the German reforms), and subsequently he encouraged various continental reformers to seek refuge in

England. In 1533 he became Archbishop of Canterbury, and his liturgical aptitude, linguistic felicity, and reforming tendencies began to be obvious in many endeavors. After the death of Henry VIII in early 1547 and the accession of Edward VI as a minor, Cranmer's ability to cause and direct the course of religious reform was greatly strengthened. In 1548, compilation of a Book of Common Prayer was apparently entrusted to a committee of six bishops and six other learned men under Cranmer's presidency (the membership stacked in favor of the "New Learning" over against the "Old"). Working from a draft previously prepared by the archbishop and clearly not unanimous in their conclusion, in less than five months from September of 1548 to January of 1549 (with perhaps as little as three weeks of actual discussions) they produced the new Book. On January 21 of that year Parliament passed the Act of Uniformity (in which only Cranmer is cited by name) that made it the official Prayer Book of the realm. Replacing the plurality of medieval usages that included but was not limited to the use of Salisbury or Sarum (but exaggerating their minor differences), "but one use" in the English vernacular was henceforth to be observed throughout the realm, and it was contained within this one volume. Hereafter the Church of England would be distinguished, as the most moderate of the churches of the Reformation, not by the writings of some one theologian such as Luther or Calvin, nor by one confessional document such as the Augsburg Confession or that of Westminster, but by one Book of Common Prayer. Taking pride (and overstating the case) that hereafter Anglican clergy "shall need none other books for their public service but this book and the Bible," the Book's Preface protested that previously "many times there was more business to find out what should be read, than to read it when it was found out."

The bishops present in the House of Lords voted 10 to 8 for the new Book, and the tally of the Convocation's action is unknown. It was issued under authority of the King in Parliament, and may have never been submitted to the Convocation of the church. The first printing was ready for sale and distribution by Thursday March 7 of 1549 at the office of the printer Edward Whitchurche in London, subsequent editions coming from his printing house in May and June. Richard Grafton, the King's Printer, also issued editions of the new Book, as did the printer John Oswen in Worcester. All told, there seem to have been some twelve printings of the new book in 1549, all in black-letter Gothic type, all in folio format (about twelve inches high) and thus presumably for clerical use in chancels, except for one printing that was smaller, in quarto (about seven inches high). Clearly, these early printings were intended for the use of clergy in churches, not for the laity to carry around with them, and in fact, by comparison with our standards today, there were very few prayers which the congregation was to say all together. The Act of Uniformity made use of the new book obligatory

in churches, with penalty for disobedience, beginning on Whitsunday which in that year fell on June 9, although it was already being used at St. Paul's Cathedral in London and elsewhere by the beginning of Lent. Cranmer himself officiated at St. Paul's on June 9. Gregory Dix in our century, with some degree of emotional investment, has remarked: "With an inexcusable suddenness, between a Saturday night and a Monday morning at Pentecost 1549, the English liturgical tradition of nearly a thousand years was altogether overturned."<sup>1</sup>

Conservative reaction and revolts, which had been expected, began on Monday June 10, the very next day, and continued for a while. The following petition of protest, together with armed resistance, came from Devon: "We demand the restoration of the Mass in Latin without any to communicate, and the Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament: Communion in one kind, and only at Easter: greater facilities for Baptism: the restoration of the old ceremonies—Holy bread and Holy water, Images, Palms, and Ashes. We will not receive the new service, because it is but like a Christmas game; but we will have our old service of Matins, Mass, Evensong and processions in Latin, not in English." Princess Mary refused to allow any of it in her chapel and simply continued to have the old Mass said by her chaplains. There was confusion about what the new rite meant theologically, and the way some priests celebrated the new English was equally as incomprehensible as the old Latin. Most laity would not have recognized that very much had changed, because they would not have known what the Latin had said in the first place. In London, the Dean of St. Paul's favored the reforms, while the bishop, Bonner, opposed and was finally denounced in public, imprisoned, and on October 1 deprived of his see. On the other side, about the same time in the fall of 1549, the Council ordered the medieval service books to be defaced and abolished. Throughout the country there was much plunder and destruction of church vestments, furniture, and ornaments, many of them beautiful and precious, and frequently now the medieval wall-paintings of church interiors were limewashed and replaced with the royal arms and texts from Scripture. Even more extreme, Bishop John Hooper, a leading English disciple of Zwingli, pronounced the new Book "defective and of doubtful construction," and was imprisoned for refusal to wear the proper vestments at his own service of consecration as bishop of Gloucester. Bishop Nicholas Ridley, transferred to London in April of 1550, led a drive

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<sup>1</sup> Gregory Dix. *The Shape of the Liturgy*. (Westminster: Dacre Press, 2nd ed., 1945), p. 686. One marvels at the thought of the abrupt change at St. Paul's, where for years on Whitsunday there had been the custom for "a great censer, emitting clouds of sweet smoke and sparks, to be swung from the roof," according to Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400-c. 1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 459.

against kissing the Lord's Table, ceremonial washing of the fingers, ringing of sanctus bells, blessing the eyes or crossing the head with the paten, holding up the fingers, hands, or thumbs joined towards the temples, and other practices of traditional ceremonial, which he collectively described as a "counterfeiting of the popish mass."

In order to get an overview of the changes, we now proceed to an enumeration and examination of some of the details, both in general and also with concentration upon the Eucharist. The Calendar contains no commemorations except of the Lord and of New Testament saints (not, however, called "saints" in the Calendar itself) and of All Saints Day. The table of lessons follows the calendar year, not the ecclesiastical year. There is no provision for votive Masses of any sort. The many daily offices of the medieval church were combined into two, Matins and Evensong, and clergy with cure of souls were required to say both offices daily in public with tolling of the bell. Matins on Wednesdays and Fridays was to be followed by the Litany and the Communion (soon reduced to what we now call Ante-Communion). The two offices were each to open with the Lord's Prayer, and then Matins begins with "O Lord, open thou my lips," and Evensong with "O God, make speed to save me." Whole chapters of Scripture were to be read at each service. The New Testament (except the book of Revelation, from which only two chapters were assigned) was to be read every four months beginning with Matthew at Matins and Romans at Evensong. The Old Testament (followed by the Apocrypha) was to be read through once a year (as the Book's Preface desired) beginning with Genesis at Matins and Evensong, and the Psalter once every month in course. Proper lessons were provided for holy days. The Athanasian Creed (from the medieval office of Prime) is to be sung or said six times a year on principal feasts. There is no mention of any creed to be said in Evensong. Baptism is normally to be a public act on Sunday. Its exorcisms are reduced to one. The threefold renunciation is no longer from Satan, his works, and his pomps, but from the devil, the world, and the flesh. In Baptism the child is to be dipped in the water three times, although "it shall suffice to powre water upon it" if the child is weak. The white garment is retained, now to be put on before the unction and not after, but the delivery of the lighted candle is omitted. The anointing is retained, but there was no requirement that the oil should be blessed. At the end of the Baptismal service the godparents are required to see that the child learns the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments; that is to say, the godparents not only make answers on behalf of the infant but also enter into a contract about the child's Christian future. The Catechism (new in 1549 and replacing entirely an earlier one issued separately in 1548) is included along with the Confirmation service, and the latter is tied closely to the ministry of the bishop but without the use

of chrism. The marriage rite is linked to a public celebration of the Eucharist, and the newlyweds are required to receive communion on that day. In its preface, also penned by the first Archbishop of Canterbury to be married, the reasons given for matrimony now include not only the procreation of children and the avoidance of sin but also “for the mutual society, help, and comfort that the one ought to have of the other.” The ring is no longer blessed, but there is now a promise by the man “to love and to cherish” and by the woman “to love, cherish, and obey.” Already the 1979 Book’s words for both partners, “to love and to cherish,” are anticipated. The burial rite was also linked to a public celebration of the Eucharist, and prayers for the departed were retained. Special services are also provided for Ash Wednesday (with a nodding reference to the discipline of public penance in the early church, but without ashes, which had already been abolished by order of Privy Council in 1548), and for the Purification of Women.

## THE 1549 EUCHARIST

The title for the 1549 Eucharist (as we now call it) is “The Supper of the Lorde, and the Holy Communion, commonly called the Masse.” The term “Mass,” it should be noted, is the third alternative permissible title. The terms “altar” (less often “Goddes borde”) and “priest” were retained, and authority was granted only to bishops and priests to absolve, bless, and preside at Mass. A role for a deacon is provided at the reading of the Gospel, bidding the eucharistic prayer, and administering the chalice. Such facts as these, coupled with the reference in the Preface to the role of “the Bishop of the Diocese” in settling disputes, prompt the observation that this first Anglican Prayer Book is in one sense a synthesis of the traditional catholic doctrine of Holy Orders, as applied to the clergy, with a strong reformation doctrine of Justification by Faith, as it will be applied to the Eucharist itself.

The 1549 Book assumes a choral service will be the norm, and the clerks sing the Introit (an entire psalm, not just a portion). Dressed in a plain alb with chasuble or cope, the priest begins the service at the middle of the altar with the Lord’s Prayer and the Collect for Purity, all the other private prayers of the priest having been eliminated. The Collect for Purity had been part of the daily monastic office in England ever since it had been prescribed by the “Monastic Agreement of the Monks and Nuns of the English Nation” in the year 970; now, however, it was revised according to reformed doctrine and made part of the opening of the new Mass in English. Its previous conclusion (“ut te perfecte deligere et digne laudare mereamur”), which would have translated literally as “that we may merit to love you perfectly and praise you worthily,” was now shorn of its reference to “earned merit” and given the form that Anglicans have known ever since. The Kyrie

(ninefold) and Gloria follow, although the Graduals, Alleluias, Sequences, Tracts, offertory sentences and prayers, and post-communion sentences and prayers, were all omitted. There was to be only one collect of the day, crafted invariably with a superior sense of English rhythm and cadence, to be followed by either of two collects for the king (with unmistakable allusions to the royal supremacy). In the Nicene Creed, for curious reasons, the phrase “whose kingdom shall have no end” was omitted from the end of the material about the Holy Ghost, and the word “holy” from the description of the church. Every Sunday “the sermon or homily, or some portion of one of the homilies,” was required (the First Book of Homilies having been released in 1547), followed by an exhortation to worthily receiving the communion. A longer exhortation commended private confession and absolution (but optional, and no longer required) for those who could not relieve their consciences through private prayer or general confession. There is an Offertory but no longer any offertory prayer. The offertory sentences no longer bear any relation to the liturgical season, but are a collection of biblical texts exclusively concerned with the offering of alms, the ceremony they are intended to cover. A series of collects is provided to be said after the Offertory on days where there is no communion. Only five proper prefaces are retained, those for Christmas and Whitsunday being freshly written.

Although the Sanctus is introduced by the Sursum Corda, the 1549 “Canon” (the name by which it was called in that Book in the service for “The Communion of the Sick”) is introduced by a bidding from the priest or deacon to pray for the whole state of Christ’s Church, and much of what later became known as that prayer is included here in the first of the three paragraphs that constitute Cranmer’s Canon. [The medieval Sarum Canon by contrast had six paragraphs, each really a prayer concluded by an “Amen,” with the Lord’s Prayer said after the fifth]. The Canon of 1549 is to be said or sung “playnly and distinctly,” not silently as in the medieval tradition, and it was not to begin until the clerks had finished singing the Sanctus. The King is prayed for by name in the Canon, as are “all Bishops, Pastors, and Curates” (an interesting non-reference to the threefold order, which would later become “all bishops and other ministers”). Reference is made to “this congregation which is here assembled in thy name, to celebrate the commemoration of the most glorious death of thy son,” the resurrection and ascension only later being “remembered,” after the words of institution. There is a commemoration of saints, although only Mary is named, and there is a commendation of the faithful departed. The church is referred to as the “mystical body.” Insertion of the phrase “until his coming again,” not in the Sarum Canon, carried the implication that, just as Christ’s passion was a thing of the past, so his “coming again” would be in the future. Exactly what was happening “here and now” was not precisely specified, and the phrase

“perpetual memory” is in fact very close to the concept of “vital recall” or “anamnesis,” which means more than a mere backward glance. By adding the clause “with thy Holy Spirit and Word vouchsafe to bless and sanctify these thy gifts and creatures of bread and wine,” Cranmer inserted an almost-consecratory epiclesis before the words of institution, specifying and even printing two signs of the cross at “bless and sanctify.”

It was Cranmer’s conviction that humankind can do nothing to move God to forgiveness, for God has already done the one thing that was necessary. In place of our offering of beauty or music or ritual, therefore, all that we can plead is a spiritual remembrance of the one perfect offering of Christ. In an attempt to transform the medieval doctrine of eucharistic sacrifice, therefore, whereas the old Latin Canon had begun with a prayer offering the unconsecrated gifts and then after the words of institution a further prayer offering the gifts now consecrated, Cranmer’s new Canon began with the offering of intercessory prayers and reference to the “one oblation once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world,” in language reminiscent of the epistle to the Hebrews. Then, after the institution narrative, the prayer merely made, “with these thy holy gifts, the memorial that thy Son hath willed us to make.” And whereas the old Latin Canon had begun by asking God to receive “this oblation” and later “to bless, consecrate, and approve this our oblation, to perfect it and render it well-pleasing to thee,” the new English one began by merely asking God “to receive these our prayers.” No “gifts” are offered at all; the one sacrifice of Calvary is re-presented rather than repeated, and the only sacrifice we offer is praise and thanksgiving, ourselves, our souls, and bodies, our bounden duty and service. Near the end, God is asked to bring, not the oblation or the holy gifts that had just been consecrated as in the old Canon, but “these our prayers and supplications,” by the ministry of the Holy Angels up into the Holy Tabernacle in the sight of the divine majesty (with no references to the sacrifices of Abel, Abraham, and Melchizedek or to God’s altar on high, as in the old Latin Canon). In a requirement that tore at the heart of medieval devotion to the real presence in the consecrated Host, the central elevations at the words of institution, whereby the consecrated gifts were then adored, frequently accompanied by bells, incense, and candles, are now prohibited. Common since the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, these were the only ceremonial actions of the priest to be explicitly forbidden. At the words of institution, however, the new Book directed that the priest “must” take the bread into his hands (and “shall” take the cup), as the narration of the prayer itself changed from third person to first person in the words of Christ coupled with the second person of address. In this way, the traditional catholic doctrine of the priest as an image of Christ, acting “in persona Christi,” was retained, as it would be in



subsequent Anglican Prayer Books (except for 1552), a doctrine of priesthood that would not have been so clear if the priest were allowed merely to read Jesus' words from the lectern or pulpit or elsewhere. As Canon Geoffrey Cuming observed of the 1549 Canon, "Its most remarkable feature is its mere existence" for "The abolition of the Canon was an article of faith with all the continental Reformers," for whom "It is normally replaced by the Words of Institution, read as a lesson" and only sometimes facing the altar.<sup>2</sup>

The 1549 Canon was followed immediately by the Lord's Prayer, a typically Cranmerian touch, and then the peace (There is no indication that it was to be done manually). Next comes the text "Christ our paschal lamb is offered up for us, once for all"; the sacrificial implications of this can be variously interpreted, but one must note that the phrase "once for all" is absent in the scriptural verse of I Cor. 5:7 from which the text is taken. There is no fraction or commixture, although one of the final rubrics required that each wafer be divided (it does not say when) into at least two parts. The communion of priest and people is preceded by an invitation, general confession (the only place where the congregation is directed to kneel), the absolution, the "Comfortable Words," and the Prayer of Humble Access, all taken from the 1548 Order of Communion but now placed before the priest's communion and not after it. The general confession was directed to be said "in the name of all those that are minded to receive the Holy Communion, either by one of them, or else by one of the ministers, or by the priest himself" because very few of the congregation would yet have had or been able to own their own copies of the book itself. The rubrics directed that those intending to communicate were to hand in their names on the night before or at Matins on the morrow, and then at communion-time to sit "in the quire, or in some convenient place nigh the quire, the men on the one side, and the women on the other side." With 1549, the emphasis has come to be less upon the change effected in the eucharistic elements during the Canon and more upon the act of communion and the consequent change in the faithful believers who receive. As Luther also had taught, the Body and Blood of Christ are offered not to God but to those who communicate. "The miraculous working of Christ is not in the bread, but in them that duly eat the bread and drink the drink," Cranmer said.

The priest communicates first, and then the "other ministers." Communion is to be in both kinds, and it was specified that the bread be made throughout the realm in the same way, unleavened and round and "without all manner of print" and larger and thicker than before so that it

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<sup>2</sup> Geoffrey Cuming. *A History of Anglican Liturgy*. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1969), p. 77.

could be divided into several pieces. Even though it is acknowledged that “people many years past received... in their own hands, no commandment of Christ to the contrary,” people in 1549 are still to receive the bread into their mouths, in order to prevent theft and superstition. It is specified that “all must attend [this service] weekly, but need communicate but once a year.” Non-communicating attendance is not forbidden, but no priest may “solemnise so high and holy mysteries” unless there are at least some who will communicate. In the words of administration are found the two phrases of the 1549 Book that are most directly traceable to any Lutheran source (and already present since March of 1548 in “The Order of the Communion”): the words “given for thee” and “shed for thee,” which Cranmer derived directly from the catechism of the Lutheran theologian Justus Jonas, personally known to him, which he translated. The threefold Agnus Dei is sung during communion, and afterward there are some sentences from Scripture to be said or sung which are called “the post Communion.” There is a fixed final prayer of thanksgiving, probably adapted from one composed by Cranmer’s chaplain Thomas Becon in 1542 and incorporating the understanding that the church, not the Eucharist, is the “mystical body, the blessed company of all faithful people.” The cryptic “*Itē missa est*” dismissal of the medieval rite is omitted, and instead the blessing begins with “The peace of God” which is probably an adaptation of the phrase “Go in peace.” The priest alone gives the blessing, just as earlier it is the prerogative of the priest to preside at the Eucharistic prayer and to give the absolution. A rubric allows that the Gloria, Creed, Homily, and Exhortation may be omitted at celebrations on weekdays or in private homes. No provision is made for verbal repetition if there is insufficient sacramental species for all to communicate, as there had been in the 1548 “Order of the Communion,” the reason presumably being the view that the recitation of words was only for the benefit of the hearers and had no effect (or change) upon the bread and wine. No instructions at all are given as to what should be done with any of the sacramental elements that remain.

## OTHER MATERIAL IN 1549

The Psalms, being part of the Bible, were not initially printed with the Prayer Book. In August of 1549 the Psalter was published separately, together with the people’s parts of Matins, Evensong, Litany, Communion, and some of the Occasional Offices, and all the portions to be said or sung by the clerks; it was entitled *The Clerks’ Book*. (The Psalter was not bound with the Prayer Book until later, the translation still being that of Coverdale from 1539-40). The Mass of the 1549 Book was conceived as essentially choral, the clerks who led the singing being expected to stay throughout the service even if they did not communicate. The entire Latin musical repertoire had suddenly

been obviated by the switch to English, however, and in 1550 the first musical setting appeared, authored by a minor canon who was organist at Windsor, John Merbecke. This was done with the advice and approval of Cranmer, who is known to have desired a simplification of the ornate melodies. Like plainsong yet sung in tempo, its composition was based on the principle of a note for every syllable; there is little evidence, however, of its actual use. Merbecke's Book did restore the phrase "whose kingdom shall have no end" to the Nicene Creed. The Ordinal was not published until March of 1550, its preface stressing continuity with the time of the apostles. In it the subdiaconate and minor orders were omitted, but an "Oath of the King's Supremacy" was required that included renunciation of "the Bishop of Rome and his authority, power, and jurisdiction." The Ordinal, revised, was annexed to the next official Book, that of 1552, now with the tradition of instruments deleted and priests and bishops given only a Bible and deacons the New Testament. Constant in both versions, however, is the use of the term "priest," a real role for deacons, and the understanding that the church is episcopally governed with ordination the prerogative of bishops rather than a delegation of authority from the local congregation.

At the end of the 1549 Book there were two appendices. That "Of Ceremonies" states that an excess of ceremonies is wrong; hence, some should be abolished and some retained, although it does not specify which or give any clear principle for determination. That of "Certain Notes" states that ministers in parish churches, cathedrals, and colleges must wear a surplice for Matins, Evensong, Baptism, and Burial, the academic hood being optional, but "in all other places" the surplice is not required. Continuation of the customary eucharistic vestments inherited from the Middle Ages is assumed for the Mass, as well as for those services that normally precede it such as Litany, Matrimony, Churching, and Ash Wednesday, although a cope over a "white alb plain" (i.e., without apparel) is an option. The bishop is always to wear a rochet, a surplice or alb, and a cope or vestment (chasuble), and he or his chaplain is to carry his pastoral staff; no mitre is mentioned. In wording that seems to have been supplied by Cranmer's chaplain Thomas Becon, it is also provided that "kneeling, crossing, holding up of hands, knocking upon the breast, and other gestures" may be "used or left" according to individual devotional taste.

## THE GENIUS OF CRANMER

Cranmer's intentions and results have been labeled even in this century by their detractors as duplicitous, inconsistent, equivocating, and shifting, but he has also not been without his admirers even among serious scholars. Thomas Cranmer, even more than Richard Hooker, has been called the definitive

Anglican theologian<sup>3</sup> as well as “the virtual founder of the Church of England” (and Richard Hooker its “defender”).<sup>4</sup> My own view is that the foundations of what has since the nineteenth century been called “Anglicanism” go well back into the early church, even the early third century,<sup>5</sup> nor is it my purpose here to extol the relative merits of Cranmer over Hooker, but rather in this essay to assess the achievement that the first Book of Common Prayer does represent. Just one example of Cranmer’s adroit subtlety, his genius really, in compilation of the 1549 Book can be seen in his alterations to the traditional collect for Palm Sunday as seen in light of what was, in many ways, the central issue of the Reformation, namely the doctrine of Justification by Faith. It has well been said that Cranmer in the first Prayer Book blended the “catholic” doctrine of Holy Orders with the reformed doctrine of justification. The context is the Anglican position on justification that would emerge in writing over the years 1563-71 and was summarized in number 11 of the 39 Articles of Religion: “We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by Faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by Faith only, is a most wholesome Doctrine, and very full of comfort.” Cranmer, already in 1549, took this Anglican middle way that was emerging between 1) what was perceived to be the Roman over-emphasis upon good works as a means of earning forgiveness and God’s merit, and 2) the rejection, attributed to Luther, of any significant role for good works in the life of faith. An example of Cranmer’s craftsmanship to this purpose, which has been highlighted by Professor Louis Weil,<sup>6</sup> can be seen in what Anglicans know as their traditional collect for Palm Sunday at the beginning of Holy Week, which will celebrate the Lord’s suffering, death, and resurrection in the last days of his life on earth: “Almighty and everlasting God, who, of thy tender love towards mankind hast sent thy Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, to take upon him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the cross, that all mankind should follow the example of his great humility; Mercifully grant, that we may both follow the example of his patience, and also be made partakers of his resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.” First Cranmer inserted

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<sup>3</sup> W. Taylor Stevenson, “Lex Orandi Lex Credendi” in Stephen Sykes, John Booty, and Jonathan Knight, eds., *The Study of Anglicanism*. (London: S.P.C.K., rev. 1998), p. 189.

<sup>4</sup> Horton Davies. *Worship and Theology in England: From Cranmer to Hooker, 1534-1603*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. xv.

<sup>5</sup> J. Robert Wright, “Anglicanism, Ecclesia Anglicana, and Anglican: An Essay on Terminology,” pp. 477-483 of *The Study of Anglicanism*, ed. Stephen Sykes, John Booty, and Jonathan Knight (London: S.P.C.K., rev. 1998).

<sup>6</sup> Louis Weil, “The Gospel in Anglicanism” in Stephen Sykes, John Booty, and Jonathan Knight, eds., *The Study of Anglicanism* (London: S.P.C.K., rev. 1998), p. 64.

the phrase “of thy tender love,” thus indicating that it was God’s love that was the motivating energy behind both the incarnation and the crucifixion as well as behind the response that is called from us. Then, in a bold but felicitous stroke Cranmer altered the medieval conclusion that we might “merit to be partakers of his resurrection” by removing the concept of earned merit and instead substituting the petition that by following Christ’s example we might be made partakers [not merit to be made partakers] of his resurrection. [The Latin phrase that he altered was “resurrectionis consortia mereamur”]. Of the 101 collects in the Prayer Book of 1549, some 66 are based upon their Latin originals, and in the latter group the only references to “merit” that Cranmer did not remove were those to “the merits of Jesus Christ.”

Overall then, the new Book of 1549, Cranmer’s Book, seems to have been an honest attempt to produce a single volume in the magnificent English prose of that era that was intended to purge the church in that land of what were perceived to be medieval corruptions in doctrine and practice and would return to what was thought to be a more primitive and scriptural usage. It was to be enforced by a centralized monarchy in full alliance with an established church. It was to be done in a way that synthesized the perceived imperatives of the new reform with the old religion that had been recently familiar, all within a context both governmental and ecclesiastical that was highly politicized. There were severe penalties for non-compliance by priests, and some bishops were deprived of their sees for obstructing its enforcement. In the astonishing ambiguity of this brave new world, the conservative and catholic Stephen Gardiner, bishop of Winchester, who was not even allowed to see the new Book from the time he was imprisoned in 1547 until the middle of 1550, could describe the new Mass as “not distant from the Catholic Faith,” whereas the reformer Latimer could later say that he discerned no great difference between the Communion service of 1552 and that of 1549. The Book was clearly capable of differing doctrinal interpretations, and this is especially interesting since no specific reformed doctrines other than the removal of “some things untrue, some uncertain, some vain and superstitious” were given in the Preface as the reasons for introducing the 1549 Book in the first place. Nevertheless, howsoever mixed this Book’s intentions may have been, howsoever subject to continuing development its author’s theological convictions were, everyone was now expected to follow “but one use” and certain of its legacies were now fixed and would remain. These may be counted as five in number: 1) prayer in the English vernacular, 2) prayer in a language both contemporary and dignified without being commonplace or sentimental, 3) prayer from one book for all the services of the church and all occasions of life, 4) prayer that could be doctrinally comprehensive without causing overmuch offense, and 5) prayer

in common with both clergy and laity as members of the same one mystical body receiving in both kinds.

## THE BOOK OF 1552

Let us now look briefly at the aftermath of 1549. Detailed consideration to all the changes introduced in 1552 and later can not be given here, although a survey of some of them will help the Book of 1549 to be better understood. The Book of 1549 did not go far enough for many reformers, and John Calvin, writing from Geneva, remarked that it contained “many tolerable absurdities” and had already urged removal of holy oil and prayers for the dead. The extreme reformers were especially upset when the conservative and catholic Bishop Stephen Gardiner, writing in December of 1550 his “Explication and Assertion of the true Catholic Faith” as a response to Cranmer’s “Defence of the True and Catholic Doctrine of the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ,” cleverly picked out and affirmed a number of passages in the 1549 Book that supported medieval catholic doctrine over against the assertions of Cranmer. Demand for a more extensive, more radical, more protestant revision was accelerated, and Cranmer’s replies to Gardiner show that he already had the second Book, of 1552, beginning in his mind. With the conservative opposition fairly well suppressed, and the more moderate bishops all imprisoned in the Tower, Parliament (not Convocation) passed the Second Act of Uniformity on April 14, 1552, that ushered in the second Book of Common Prayer, asserting that it had become necessary only because of misinterpretations and doubts, at the same time gratuitously commending the first Book as having been “a very godly order... agreeable to the Word of God and the primitive Church, very comfortable to all good people.” The 1552 Book, also prepared under Cranmer’s aegis but less a matter of his direct responsibility, was to become official on All Saints Day, November 1. Penalties of imprisonment were stipulated for worshipping otherwise than with this new Book.

The first, and very significant, difference appears when the title of the 1552 Book is compared to that of 1549. Whereas the 1549 title had read “The Booke of the Common Prayer and Administracion of the Sacramentes, and other Rites and Ceremonies [of the Churche: after the Use of the Churche of England],” in 1552 the words here set in brackets and italics were omitted and the new title simply concluded “in the Churche of England” thus removing any indication of responsibility to the wider church catholic of which the English church was a part. Again, in the title of the 1552 Eucharist one may also note the dropping of the term “Masse.” The Book of 1552 also witnessed the introduction, by order of the Council and against the wish of Archbishop Cranmer, of the so-called “Black Rubric” (added in black after

the book had already been printed with the other “rubrics” in red). This rubric explained that the requirement for kneeling to receive communion was “not meant thereby that any adoration is done or ought to be done, either unto the sacramental bread and wine there bodily received or unto any real or essential presence there being of Christ’s natural flesh and blood.” [This rubric was deleted in 1559 and 1604, but restored and changed to “any corporal presence” in 1662]. Matins and Evensong are now called Morning and Evening Prayer, and in 1552 they are supplied penitential introductions because the Communion, which included confession and absolution, was now celebrated less frequently. The Athanasian Creed was now to be said thirteen times a year, not just six. On a positive note, the obligation to pray the daily offices was now laid upon all clergy and not just those with cure of souls, and the latter were still to do so in their own churches accompanied by the tolling of the bell.

Whereas in 1549 the priest was to begin the “Mass” at the middle of the “altar” dressed in a plain alb with chasuble or cope, in the “Holy Communion” service of 1552 the priest was to begin standing at the “north side” of the “table” vested in “a surplice only.” Although the word “priest” is still retained in 1552, the word “altar” is nowhere used. “The table” is to stand in the body of the church or in the chancel, covered with a fair linen cloth; most of the old stone altars by then had been destroyed. The Introits have been omitted, the Lord’s Prayer and Collect for Purity to be said aloud. The Decalogue was introduced, its English Kyrie-like response replacing the ninefold English Kyrie of 1549. The first two commandments were divided in the tradition of Zwingli and Tyndale, which subsequent Anglican usage would also follow rather than the medieval usage of Luther that added the second to the end of the first and split the tenth into two. [The Summary of the Law is not found in either 1549 or 1552, but came later]. The Gloria in Excelsis Deo was moved from its ancient position following the Kyrie to the conclusion of the rite, which did add an exuberant and even eschatological note of joy at the end. The Prayer for the Whole State of Christ’s Church was separated from the former Canon and moved much earlier, to a point just after the Offertory. All the 1549 Canon’s references to the saints and prayer for the departed were removed, the beneficiaries of its intercession now being limited to the living portion of the church specified at the end of its new bidding, here italicized: “Let us pray for the whole state of Christ’s Church militant here in earth.” The Prayer of Humble Access was moved from its pre-communion location to an earlier position just after the Sanctus, and its 1548-1549 reference to eating the Flesh and drinking the Blood “in these holy mysteries” was removed.

The former Canon, which now followed, was drastically abbreviated and redistributed in 1552, with the epiclesis entirely removed, leaving only a

thanksgiving for Christ's finished work on Calvary followed by the words of institution. The Strasburg reformer Bucer (who had come to England at Cranmer's invitation) had objected to the outward reverence still shown by some priests as they recited the Canon, and to the presence of the two signs of the cross within the Canon of 1549, which were now removed. The priest was also no longer directed to take the bread and cup at the words of the Lord, and the prayer did not even end with an "Amen." The oblation and final doxology are moved to a position after communion is over. [As early as 1523 Zwingli had urged that the most objectionable feature of the medieval Canon was that communion did not immediately follow consecration]. The Peace and "Christ our Paschal Lamb" were omitted, and the Lord's Prayer delayed to a position after the communion. To avoid any suggestion of transubstantiation, instead of praying that the bread and wine "may be unto us" [the medieval Latin "fiat nobis"] the body and blood, the prayer now merely asks that we "may be partakers of his most blessed body and blood." Both Benedictus and Agnus Dei were omitted for the same reason and also such manual acts as the elevation and fraction. [Earlier on this point, Cranmer in 1550 had replied to Gardiner: "We do not pray absolutely that the bread and wine may be made the body and blood of Christ, but that unto us in that holy mystery they may be so, that is, that we may be partakers..."]. The words of administration from the 1549 Book, "The body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life," were now dropped (as they might be taken to imply transubstantiation or at least a doctrine of the real presence) and superseded by "Take and eat this, in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith, with thanksgiving." [The two sets of words were fused in the 1559 Book]. Bread "such as is usual to be eaten at the table" is to be used, and now to be placed into the communicants' hands. Communion is now required three times a year rather than once. The Curate is to have what remains of the bread and wine "to his own use." With all the changes made, in the rite of 1552 there is no offertory, no consecration, and no fraction; only the communion remained.

In the Baptismal service of 1552, the sign of the cross was retained over the objections of reformers, but the exorcism, chrismation, and triple immersion were all removed. The doctrine of baptismal regeneration was more clearly expressed. In the Confirmation service of 1552, there appears for the first time the beautiful prayer that begins "Defend, O Lord, this child with thy heavenly grace." In the Burial Office, there are no prayers for the dead, the provision for the Eucharist at funerals omitted, and the minister no longer directed to cast the earth's dust into the grave. The sole vestments permitted in the 1552 Book are a rochet for bishops and "a surplice only" for priests and deacons; even a hood or scarf is forbidden, and references to



chasuble, alb, tunicle, and cope, and candles on the altar, are all gone. The 1549 service for Ash Wednesday, with its many public cursings, is now transformed into an even longer “Commination against Sinners” to be used at “divers times in the year” following Morning Prayer and the Litany. The 1549 appendix entitled “Certain Notes,” which provided for a fuller use of vestments and allowed many individual devotional practices on an optional basis, is now omitted entirely. Music was virtually abolished in the 1552 Communion service, with the Introit, Psalms, Kyrie, Creed and Sanctus all said and only the Gloria allowed to be sung as an alternative. Already by the time the 1552 Book appeared, the organ at St. Paul’s London had ceased to be used.

## AFTERMATH AND CONCLUSIONS

The 1552 Book was clearly much more protestant, but if the 1549 Book had been unpopular with the reformers because it did not go far enough, there was even more dissatisfaction from others with the Book of 1552, which seemed to go entirely too far in the protestant direction. That Book lasted officially for only a matter of months, as Edward VI died on July 6, 1553, as Cranmer’s influence waned, and as the Latin Mass was restored (by means of the same royal supremacy of Crown in Parliament, not of Convocation) under Queen Mary on December 20, 1553. The late King Edward, we may observe, was buried by Cranmer from Westminster Abbey using the 1552 reformed English rite on August 8, with the new queen not in attendance, while (in the spirit of Anglican comprehensiveness?) at the same time Bishop Gardiner celebrated a Requiem Mass of the old Latin rite for the dead King at the Tower of London in the presence of the new Queen Mary and her Council. Cranmer was finally burnt at the stake for heresy under Queen Mary, at Oxford on March 21, 1556. Time hardly permits more than passing notice of some of the later Prayer Books—the subsequent Books of 1559 (Elizabeth I, who ascended the throne on November 17, 1558), the first Latin Book in 1560 (*Liber Precum Publicarum*), 1604 (James I), and 1662 (Charles II at the Restoration, the book that is still legally definitive in England), the first Scottish Book of 1637 (representing the liturgical aims of the Caroline Divines, which influenced many rubrical changes in the English Book of 1662 and introduced the term “Prayer of Consecration”), the first American Book of 1789 (which inherited, by the pledge of Bishop Seabury, significant elements of the Scottish 1637 Book as revised in 1764, such as the epiclesis and a prayer of consecration which in shape and contents looked back to 1549), and the subsequent American Books of 1892, 1928, and the present one of 1979. The first American Book of 1789 was produced by the first General Convention of the Episcopal Church, which met in Philadelphia

in September the same year, an earlier Proposed Book of 1786 having in its latitudinarian doctrine seemed too radical a departure from the English Book of 1662. In 1805, soon after the appearance of the first American Book, it would be a young priest named John Henry Hobart, later bishop of New York and founder of the General Theological Seminary, who published what is arguably the first American Prayer Book commentary.

In conclusion let us return to the beginning of the Preface to the 1549 Book: "There was never any thing by the wit of man so well devised, or so surely established, which (in continuance of time) hath not been corrupted: as (among other things) it may plainly appear by the common prayers in the Church, commonly called divine service." If this was indeed the case, it is also true that the first Act of Uniformity in 1549 and the first Book of Common Prayer that it imposed, marked the first time in English history that liturgical uniformity had been imposed by royal supremacy. It has been doubted whether "the people" of sixteenth-century England, if they could have been offered a process of "trial use" such as the Episcopal Church pursued in developing its Book of 1979, would have ever voted for a uniform vernacular liturgy in one single Book. It was certainly the case that the plurality of late medieval service books so disparaged in the Preface of 1549 was hardly many more than the six or so that now became necessary in 1549: the Book of Common Prayer itself, the Bible, the Psalter, the Ordinal, the Book of Homilies, and the musical notation. [Today, by comparison, an even greater plethora is needed in the Episcopal Church: Book of Common Prayer, Bible, usually a Book of the Gospels, Hymnal, a couple of hymnal supplements, Lesser Feasts and Fasts, Book of Occasional Services, Enriching our Worship, Revised Common Lectionary, and a current church calendar]. Likewise in retrospect the plurality of medieval usages that the original Preface cites does not seem to have been any great problem then, for Sarum was used nearly everywhere, and, by comparison, today a plurality of local usages is accepted in most parts of the Anglican world. Nor did the new Book of 1549 itself constitute a "people's edition for pew or pocket," for nearly all of its first printings were of altar size (almost a foot high) for the clergy, and most laity at that time could not yet read so well anyway. In spite of the corruption, confusion, and plurality of medieval books and usages cited in the first Preface, the imposition of reformed doctrine upon the Eucharist, especially of the new understanding of justification by faith and of changed concepts of sacrifice and real presence in the Canon, not cited there, seems to have been the principal aim of the new Book itself. Even this intention can be questioned in its results, for as the eucharistic emphasis shifted from an offering focussed towards God to a change desired in the faithful who received, the foundations were certainly laid for a worship that

could seem more subjective and less objective, more people-centered and less God-centered.

Here then was a liturgical uniformity that was also aimed at doctrinal control, at the measured introduction of reformed doctrine while at the same time regulating its limits, even though that purpose was not indicated nor those doctrines specified in the new Book's Preface (which, curiously, was not written with reference to the eucharistic service anyway, or with reference to the doctrine of Justification by Faith). The situation thus became almost the reverse of the dictum of Prosper of Aquitaine that prayer establishes belief, for now there was a new and reformed *lex credendi*, even if not always clear or consistent, that by numerous verbal changes both subtle and clever was giving birth to a new *lex orandi*. This new approach, treating liturgy as a matter of uniform positive law rather than of diverse traditions regulated by benevolent oversight, was followed only two decades later by a similar development in the Roman Church, the *Quo Primum* of Pope Pius V, which imposed a new uniform Missal, the Tridentine, upon the entire Roman Church in 1570 and must be linked with similar impositions of one uniform Breviary in 1568, of the Roman Pontifical in 1596, and of the Roman Ritual of 1614. There is a striking parallel between the English Prayer Books, which in several copies of the 1552 and later editions display the pertinent Act of Uniformity within the books themselves, and the Roman Missals and Breviaries, which similarly print the bulls authorizing them. In many churches of the west a new era of centrally regulated worship, clearly prizing unity in doctrine more than unbounded pluralism and individual conscience, was beginning.

Was such a liturgical unity any more desirable for the English Church of 1549 in its isolated island location at that time than it is for Anglicans/Episcopalians in the diverse, confusing, and exciting ecumenical world of today? Even if liturgical uniformity enforced by royal supremacy has never been an adequate or credible definition of Anglicanism, is there yet some lasting value for us in the unity that the Book of Common Prayer has come to symbolize? For some Anglicans in 1999, the situation at the third millennium calls for a renewed appreciation of the goal of unity, now symbolized for Episcopalians in the Prayer Book of 1979 and possible revision thereof, while for others the brave new world of 2000 calls for an embrace of worship without binding or boundaries.

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