

The Book of Common Prayer from the Outside:
An Ecumenical Symposium to Celebrate the 350th Anniversary of
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**The Influence of the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* on the Orthodox:
Opening a Can of Worms?**

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I have been asked to speak about the response of the Orthodox to the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*, and some of you may know how impossible that is. Though we are said to be the largest Church world-wide after the Roman Catholics, we have no Pope and no Curia to make pronouncements. Our doctrinal unity is through our acceptance of the 'mysteries', the sacraments of the ancient Church, of the Nicæan-Constantinople Creed and of the decisions of the first seven Ecumenical Councils – and there an end. Every other pronouncement has only local validity or is *theologoumenon* – opinion.

As for organization, there is a joke that is popular among the Orthodox: 'If you are sick of organized religion – join the Orthodox Church!' What links one section of the Church to another is, as it was in the earliest days, the mutual recognition of one bishop of another as being orthodox. Churches are grouped on geographic lines which for historical reasons have tended to be national; but the Orthodox churches in the west, the so-called 'Greek Orthodox', 'Russian Orthodox', 'Serbian', 'Romanian', 'Georgian' and so forth are the product of migration, social groupings that are uncanonical, with their nationalist flavour tending toward the heresy of phyletism, which is church organization on racial grounds.

The five Patriarchates established in Roman times, Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, are larger groupings of bishops with an elected leader, and as you know, our division from Rome is technically because the Patriarch of Rome has claimed to be more than *primus inter pares*, first among equals. In Australia, where I worked for twenty-two years, we cherish the story of our Greek Archbishop Stylianos, finding himself seated next to Pope John Paul II at a dinner to celebrate the conclusion of yet another Roman Catholic-Orthodox dialogue. 'I don't understand' said Pope John Paul. 'It's all gone so well, we agree on so much. What is the problem?' Stylianos leaned across him: 'You, my Lord, are the problem.'

So that is why I can say nothing authoritative about Orthodox responses to the *Book of Common Prayer*. Another reason is that there was (and is) little or no knowledge among Orthodox of the English Prayer Book – maybe there is still a touch of British imperialism in the presumption that there might be. Until the early twentieth century and apart from

the occasional visitor to English domains, knowledge would have been largely restricted to Orthodox hierarchs who had been approached in the sixteenth or seventeenth century by members of the English Church seeking an alternative to Rome as a source of continuity. Other than that, we know in the nineteenth century only of occasional western enthusiasts for a Western Orthodox Church using western liturgies, Roman or Anglican, and their approaches may well have led to scrutiny in the east of English texts.

Only after the Russian Bishop Tikhon of the Aleutians and North America in the early years of the twentieth century considered introducing a 'Western Rite' that drew on the 1892 American version of the *Book of Common Prayer*¹ did Anglican services have any significant impact on the Orthodox beyond that of establishing a liturgical diction by which to translate the ancient services of the Church into English.

It seems that Tikhon may not actually have authorized anything; but that has not stopped a proliferation of texts, examples of which appear on the internet as 'St Tikhon's Liturgy', substantially the *BCP* service of Holy Communion but taking advantage of the fact that Tikhon, when Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, fell ill and died as a consequence of his treatment by the Soviets and so is regarded by the Russian Orthodox Church as a martyr-confessor. The name of the saint has been extensively used (in this case by the American Antiochians) to validate a family of Western rites among American Orthodox that derive ultimately, if with certain modifications, from the 1662 book. Among congregations of the Antiochian Orthodox Western Rite Vicariate, for example, about two-thirds are claimed to use the St Tikhon version, though this figure is highly doubtful (see my Afterword). Because of the provenance of such adaptations of *BCP* among those who have come from other Christian groups, they have been denounced by those who prefer the ancient liturgies of the Church as 'a halfway house for those not yet ready to be Orthodox'.

Hence, the 'can of worms'. To explain it I must retreat into purely personal reflection, with no authority behind me. Like many of those who favour the 'Western Rite', I was steeped in the *Book of Common Prayer* from childhood, and my devotion to it as a literary masterpiece was increased by my secular trade as a university teacher specializing in Renaissance literature. As Principal now of an Orthodox Institute that is short of money,

¹ The response of a committee of the pre-revolutionary Russian Orthodox Synod to questions from Tikhon as to the possible use of Anglican services for Americans making the transition to Orthodoxy was published as Alcuin Club Tract XII, *Russian Observations upon the American Book of Common Prayer*, trans. W.J. Barnes (London: A.R. Mowbray, 1917) and can be downloaded from: anglicanhistory.org/alcuin/tract12.html.

Distinguished by a detailed knowledge of versions of the *Book of Common Prayer* and of its history in the context of western liturgical development, Roman and reformed, and concerned chiefly to make practical suggestions as to how Anglican rites might be brought into line with the eastern liturgies, the response now seems preoccupied with matters of secondary importance: with a less ambiguous formulation of what is believed to take place at the consecration of bread and wine, a clearer expression at Ordination of the sacrificial role of the priest, a firmer declaration of the three-fold ministry of bishop, priest and deacon, a prioritizing of the priest's role in offering the Eucharistic sacrifice over his duty to preach the word.

Important as such matters may still be among the Orthodox, there is no mention of those differing doctrines of God and Man that this chapter presents as crucial. It seems to have been compiled in an age where the substance of Christian faith was not yet recognized to be under threat.

mired in controversy, beset with internal problems, I find myself with collects from the *Book of Common Prayer* echoing through my head:

O God, who knowest us to be set in the midst of so many and
great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our nature, we cannot
always stand upright . . .

(Fourth Sunday after Epiphany)

I am in fact unusual in having 'come over' to Orthodoxy after a life-time of service to the Church of England, serving on the Church of England Liturgical Commission from the age of 29, right through the period of composition of modern language alternatives to the *Book of Common Prayer* that culminated in *An Alternative Service Book, 1980*. After that, I served on the Liturgical Commission of the Anglican Church of Australia for another nine years, from 1977 to 1986.

Yet I might claim to be in a small way a martyr to the *BCP* tradition, despite my involvement as a young Cambridge don in modern language services which made me appear 'a traitor to my subject', according to my former supervisor, the poet Donald Davie, who was a beacon of the Prayer Book Society. I ended up as a Professor in Australia because of my commitment to rendering the Psalms into modern English for what was first called *The Psalms: a New Translation for Worship* (Collins, 1977), but which, after its use and binding-up in editions of *An Alternative Service Book, 1980* became known as *The Liturgical Psalter*, the name under which it went into five national prayer books and was widely used in other Churches. Though eight distinguished Hebraists were behind the translation, its success, I believe, was chiefly because its style was, by design, not a betrayal of the great Renaissance tradition of translation as represented by Miles Coverdale's Psalms in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

Nevertheless, I notice that the President of our Orthodox Institute, Metropolitan Kallistos Ware, a leading writer on Orthodoxy but similarly brought up on and influenced by the *Book of Common Prayer*, also rejects the 'Western Rite'; and I know that the late Father Michael Harper, when Dean of the nascent British Antiochian Orthodox community, discouraged his priests from using it. To explain why three such literate people side with those Orthodox who avoid any rites based on the *Book of Common Prayer*, I must become yet more personal and anecdotal.

You will know that a corner-stone of modern Orthodox devotional practice is silent recitation of the so-called 'Jesus Prayer':

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God,
have mercy upon me, a sinner.

That prayer, ancient and not necessarily silent in its first use, is now an inward repetition, often with accompanying breath-rhythms, over and over, and has been popularized by non-Orthodox writers such as Simon Barrington-Ward, former Bishop of Coventry, who reports it as having been the revivification of his spiritual life.

Yet I found that, from the time of my chrismation as Orthodox in 1997 and nearly to the present day, I could never use the prayer: try as I might, I'd break down after a couple of repetitions. What was the matter with me? I cut out the last phrase, 'a sinner', for I knew that was a later addition, and I have always objected to the redeemed of Christ, whether Orthodox or non-Orthodox, banging on in the presence of God about their sins, when they should be forgetting themselves before the 'Lover of All'. I tried next to add to the opening address: 'Lord Jesus Christ, *light of my life*', 'Lord Jesus Christ, *joy of my heart*', 'Lord Jesus Christ, *centre of my being*' – and that helped me to stagger on for a few more repetitions. But there was something wrong that called for serious introspection.

I was born into a South London family that for at least two generations had tried and rejected different brands of Christianity. Christians were hypocritical, they sided with social and political oppressors, they perverted the teachings of 'a good man', Jesus Christ, and worshipped him in rituals that were absurd. I recall my father, though not an unkind man, kneeling one Christmas evening behind the sofa, party hat on his head, hands clasped, mumbling with eyes tight shut, mocking the parson at his prayers.

None of them attended church, yet they had enough respect for Christianity to send myself and my brother to Sunday School to (quote) 'learn the difference between right and wrong'. They also knew how to exploit the faith as a control-mechanism. If as a child under interrogation I was suspected of fibbing, my mother would administer a solemn oath 'on God's *honour*' that I was telling the truth. Many is the time I've slipped up to my bedroom afterwards to say 'Lord, I'm sorry if I've offended you by lying against your honour, but I was in a tight fix: I'm sure you'll understand'.

The problem for me with the 'Jesus Prayer' was that it roused the image of a monarchical, wrathful God, his princely dignity offended by some wretched underling who could only hope to escape a just penalty by appealing to the royal whim: '*Lord Jesus Christ . . . have mercy upon me, a sinner.*' The narrowness of the connotations of 'mercy' in English may have contributed to my problem: I understand that in Greek '*Kyrie eleison*' feels more like a broad appeal to God's beneficence and grace. But for me, the Jesus Prayer connected straight back to that image of God inculcated at home, in school and as a Boy Scout on church parade, one that was largely derived from the *Book of Common Prayer*.

You will recognize it, though my quotation is in fact from an internet version of that Orthodox 'Western Rite', *The Liturgy of Saint Tikhon*. The passage appears in THE COMMUNION DEVOTIONS as a congregational response to the priest's invitation to 'draw near with faith, and take this Holy Sacrament to your comfort; and make your humble confession to Almighty God, devoutly kneeling.'

R. Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of all things, judge of all men; we acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, which we from time to time, most grievously have committed, By thought, word, and deed, against thy Divine Majesty, Provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us. We do earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings;

the remembrance of them is grievous unto us; the burden of them is intolerable. Have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us, most merciful Father; For thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, forgive us all that is past; and grant that we may ever hereafter serve and please thee in newness of life, To the honour and glory of thy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A side of me still thrills to that. Brought up in a guilt-culture, I still want to binge on self-abasement, followed by the 'high' of unmerited, almost magical release. But long before I became Orthodox, I began to have doubts, especially in an Anglican parish that encouraged frequent communion. How could the sacrifice of Christ be failing to create that serving and pleasing of God in 'newness of life' for which I pleaded each Sunday? Why did I have to come back week after week, making the same old complaints of bad memories and intolerable burdens? When would I, 'reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the Lord', be 'transformed' (as St Paul said happened to all Christians) 'into the same image from glory to glory' (2 Corinthians 3: 18 in the *Revised Version*)?

Returning to my difficulties in reciting the 'Jesus Prayer', I realized that phrases in it – 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner' – had unconsciously triggered that image of the wrathful monarch and his princeling son, whose royal dignity and honour I had offended since childhood, 'provoking most justly' their 'wrath and indignation against me'. Immediately, as from behind a cloud, the Lordship of Christ revealed itself simply as leadership: of the leader I loved and whose commands I sought to obey because I loved him. Any plea for his 'mercy' became an asking for the immeasurable benefits of his grace and for his sympathetic understanding of my shortcomings, together with my acceptance of his generous offer of transformation and new life. And as for the last phrase about 'me, a sinner', that was just an obvious statement of fact. I've been able to use the prayer ever since.

I can sum up what seems to me a major difference between the *Book of Common Prayer* and the ancient liturgies by another anecdote. The late John Bazlinton, one of the seven contributors to our multi-media introduction to Orthodox Christian belief, entitled THE WAY, had for many years attended Holy Trinity, Brompton Road, home of the Alpha course. For reasons he never told me, he and his wife went once to a Liturgy in English at the Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Ennismore Gardens, London. Halfway through, he whispered to his wife: 'Do you hear what I'm hearing?' What he was hearing was the recurrent title of God in Orthodox services, the 'Philanthropos Theos' – 'God, the Lover of mankind'. Prayer after prayer ends with recitation of the ground on which we base our petition: 'for He is a good God and loves mankind'.

Of course, that concept is there in the *Book of Common Prayer*. 'A General Thanksgiving', allegedly added to satisfy those Puritans who complained there wasn't enough thanksgiving in *BCP*, was contributed by Edward Reynolds, Bishop of Norwich, to the 1662 version. It never fails to make me wet-eyed:

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we thine unworthy servants do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for all thy goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all men. We bless thee for our creation,

preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.

There is a prayer that is centrally orthodox, whether you spell 'Orthodox' with a small or a large 'o'. But God as 'the Lover of mankind' is not the dominant image, tone or flavour of *BCP* – and there lies the problem.

When as a young man I joined the Church of England Liturgical Commission, I had to learn very fast what liturgists from various denominations had been saying were the deficiencies of the Communion Service in the *Book of Common Prayer*. Everyone agreed that, in comparison with ancient liturgies, it lacked an essential element, an *epiclesis*, a calling-down of the Holy Spirit upon the gifts of bread and wine. Even the *BCP*-derived *Liturgy of St Tikhon* has had to slip in a remedial *epiclesis*, and I recall the then Chairman of our English Commission, Dr Ronald Jasper, commenting wryly on an early draft of *Holy Communion Series 3* that 'it seemed to be sprouting *epicleses* all over'.

The down-playing of the role of the Holy Spirit in the *Book of Common Prayer* is a further deficiency in its image of God, as the Pentecostals like to remind us. You have only to look at the Collect for Trinity Sunday to see how drily formulaic Trinitarian doctrine had become.

Almighty and everlasting God, who hast given unto us thy servants grace by the confession of a true faith to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity; we beseech thee that thou wouldest keep us steadfast in this faith, and evermore defend us from all adversities, who livest and reignest, one God, world without end.

Where is there a sense of what St John of Damascus called the *perichoresis*, the three-fold divine dance, that interactive participation of the three Persons in One in a continuing relationship of love which is the paradigm for all human relationships? Once again, we might say that the image of God in the *Book of Common Prayer* lacks something.

I recall a further deficiency which the Commission felt bound to remedy. The central prayer of the Eucharist, the Great Thanksgiving, omitted much of what I learned to call 'the mighty acts of God', which were as Bishop Reynolds described them 'our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life . . . the means of grace and the hope of glory'; or as the ancient Orthodox liturgies summed it up, that great plan of God from the beginning that anticipated our falling-away and estrangement after our glorious creation in his image, and so designed from the outset a remedy to make all things new by the death but also by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 'trampling down death by death', as the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom puts it. Other than on special feast days, the *Book of Common Prayer* concentrated narrowly on the atoning sacrifice of Christ for human sin, the 'full perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world'. In contrast, the Orthodox Liturgy of St Basil the Great presents Christ's offering of

himself as a voluntary fulfilment of the whole divine dispensation 'for the *life* of the world'.

In the second half of my response from an Orthodox standpoint to the *Book of Common Prayer* I shall move from the image of God to the image of Man. But let me for a moment consider the medium, the language through which liturgy communicates God to Man and seeks to relate Man back to God. It is undeniable that the *Book of Common Prayer* and the Authorized (or King James) Version of the Bible have conditioned throughout the English-speaking world an expectation of how 'holy talk' should sound. I had one experience of a 'tongue' and its interpretation in a Birmingham Pentecostal church which has attested its genuineness throughout my adult life; yet I smile to recollect how such interpretations, however shattering in their personal application, tend to couch themselves in the language of good King James. Similarly, when in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the liturgies of the east were translated for English-speaking congregations in the diaspora, it seemed only right to couch them in sub-Cranmerian English.

I say '*sub-Cranmerian*' because, as my Antiochian Archbishop in Sydney, Gibran Ramlawi, used to complain, the English versions that he had to use were done by Arabic speakers who had little Greek and not much more English. Even the highly sophisticated versions by Metropolitan Kallistos and Mother Maria of ancient Orthodox texts, translations such as that of the Festal Menaion and the Lenten Triodion, are put into an elegant seventeenth century diction that 'Thee's' and 'Thou's' God without, apparently, any realization that these special pronouns for the deity now have a theological implication quite opposite to their intimate, even familiar connotations in sixteenth and early seventeenth century English, where you 'thou'd' children and the servants, but addressed a respectful 'you' to superiors and betters.

Despite being a lover of Renaissance literature, I have argued throughout my working-life that to create a special language for religion akin to ancient Hebrew or Sanskrit is the characteristic of cults -- and the Christian faith should not be turned into a cult. It is contrary to the practice of the Apostles, for the gospel was communicated in the Greek *koine*, an international trading language whose counterpart today might be internet computer English. Thomas Cranmer, whose magnificent prose has become a kind of museum-language for the faith, always insisted that the paramount concern must be whether language was 'understanded of the people'.

That the people no longer understood was what turned me into 'a traitor to my subject'. Not long after I joined the English Commission a pamphlet was circulated to us by the novelist Richard Hughes, produced for the Church in Wales Liturgical Commission². In it, he demonstrated that it was not just thee's and thou's with their attendant archaisms of 'art', 'hast', 'doth' 'didest', 'wilt', 'wast', 'sayeth', 'doeth' 'thinkest' and so forth that were the problem. The antique Ciceronian style, with its rolling sentences, its affection for balanced doublets and extended relative clauses -- '*Thou who art in everything invisibly present and sustaineth all things by thy mighty power...*' -- that style, which was generally

² Richard Hughes, *Liturgical Language Today*, Penarth: Church in Wales Publications, n.d., but from a paper read to a clergy school for the dioceses of St Asaph and Bangor in 1962.

mocked and abandoned as old-fashioned by the time the 1662 Prayer Book was put together, was what modern Welshmen found difficult to follow. You may know the joke popular among liturgists, about the joint composition of *BCP*. Mr and Mrs Cranmer are settling down after breakfast, the Archbishop to drafting the Confession: 'We acknowledge our manifold sins' - 'Acknowledge *and bewail*, dear,' says Mrs Cranmer, 'and bewail'. The Archbishop tries again: 'We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins. - '*And* wickedness, dear; *and* wickedness'.

Of course, to the problems presented by hierarchic language my Cambridge-educated elder daughter says 'Stuff and nonsense!', in the same way as modern Russians will tell you Church Slavonic is easily comprehensible, and Greek intellectuals will insist that they are entirely at ease with Byzantine Greek. But on the quiet, people like our past Vice-Chairman of the Board, a Greek Cypriot solicitor, will tell you that he went to church all his life yet never understood a word till he attended Institute classes.

To have a substantially different language for worship would seem to contradict the basic message of divine incarnation. When at Christ's crucifixion the veil of the Temple was rent in two, the barrier between sacred and profane was shattered. It is all too easy to erect that barrier once again, and the barrier goes up imperceptibly as language grows old-fashioned and unfamiliar. What's more, in English the archaic Cranmerian language, still current and native in Shakespeare's day, tends now to isolate the faith in a pre-scientific, pre-Enlightenment ghetto: putting it crudely, I don't want to have always to put on my doublet and hose before I join in public prayer.

The greatest danger presented by imitation of Cranmerian English among the modern western Orthodox is that it may become yet another hierarchic, archaic language for worship that can protect and insulate one from its content, just as much as colourful ceremony and fine chanting. We Orthodox cherish an account by a well-known priest of the Russian diaspora, who found one weekday that he had left his Church Slavonic text of the Liturgy at home, so decided to use an English translation he found at the back of the church. At the end of the service an irate Russian woman came up to him and said 'I've been coming to church since I was a child; but if *that's* the kind of nonsense you're teaching, you won't see me here again!'

Turning finally to the problems that the image of Man in the *Book of Common Prayer* presents for the Orthodox, I'll go back for a moment to my critique of the image of God, for what you say about the one is inextricably linked to what you say about the other. A further instance in the *Book of Common Prayer* of the down-playing of the third Person of the Trinity is the absence of an element present in the ancient services of the Church, an initial invocation to the Holy Spirit on rising, which is also used at the outset of a meeting and, especially, at the beginning of the eucharist, and known rather dully as 'the Usual Beginning'

O Heavenly King, Comforter, Spirit of Truth,
Who art everywhere present and fillest all things,
Treasury of blessings, and Giver of life:

come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every stain,
and save our souls, O Good One!

Once again, I'll draw on the reminiscences of my unbelieving family. My father, around the time of my birth, fell seriously ill and when after months of sickness he began to mend, he was sent to recuperate at a Church of England nursing home. Every morning it was the daily beginning of the inmates to be woken early and herded down in their pyjamas to a bitterly cold chapel so as to begin Morning Prayer by confessing their sins:

Almighty and most merciful Father; We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; And we have done those things which we ought not to have done; And there is no health in us. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders . . .

'No wonder we were miserable', Father would snort, 'All of us sick, some of us half dead, freezing on cold paving stones, still in our bed-clothes, and as if we didn't know it already, made to complain there was *'no health in us'*.

No doubt that wasn't the most tactful of recuperative regimes. But what Father hadn't the knowledge to object to, and I do it now on his behalf, is the assertion that 'there is no health in us'. Most if not all of the sick would have been baptized Christians even if some had lapsed; and so would all of those in a seventeenth century congregation at Morning and Evening Prayer. What are the redeemed of Christ doing asserting that there is *'no health'* in them? Where is the Holy Spirit given them at baptism? Is there no presence of Christ within the human soul? Is there not even a spark of regeneration remaining?

The truth is that on this matter the authors of the *Book of Common Prayer* are not thinking as theologians. They are part of the two per cent of the upper classes whose views we know something about, terrified of the uneducated, uncivilised mob - a terror evident even in so humane a dramatist as Shakespeare. You may by law compel church attendance; but true conversion in the Puritan understanding, however much encouraged by ritual infliction of a sense of sin, cannot be guaranteed and is vulnerable to gross back-sliding.

And of course, behind all that (though not all Anglicans would have subscribed to it) lurks the Calvinist doctrine of total human depravity unless redeemed by grace, the bestowal of which is an unmerited and inexplicable gift of God, the apparently arbitrary nature of which it is blasphemous to question. (I know there is a fashion to argue Calvin didn't quite say that; but I have read and taught the *Institutes of Religion* and I am clear that Calvin said just that.)

The problem for the Orthodox as regards the anthropology of the *Book of Common Prayer* is that we do not accept a western doctrine of inherited Original Sin. It is not that we believe in any pre-existent soul before birth that comes from the heavenly realm 'trailing clouds of

glory', to quote the poet Wordsworth. But we do hold that children are born innocent and that their sinfulness develops inevitably as a consequence of existing in a corrupted world. Yet we and they retain a memory, however damaged and distorted, of what we were meant to be: we do not lose our status of being 'made in the image and likeness of God'. A twentieth century Anglican Confession, which I drafted for a rejected version of *Series 3 Holy Communion* but which ultimately found its way into *Common Worship* in a somewhat bowdlerized form³, defines our sinfulness in terms that an Orthodox could consent to, emphasizing God's overriding love and our falling-away from a status which we cannot entirely lose: 'We have wounded your love and marred your image in us' -- 'marred', then, but not destroyed.

However, the 'Publick Baptism of Infants' in the *Book of Common Prayer* subscribes explicitly to the doctrine that all human beings have lost their original nature:

Dearly beloved, for as much as all men are conceived and born in sin; and that our Saviour Christ saith, None can enter the Kingdom of God, except he be regenerate and born anew of Water and of the Holy Ghost; I beseech you to call upon God the Father, through Our Lord Jesus Christ, that of his bounteous mercy he will grant to *this Child* **that thing which by nature he cannot have . . .**

There is the real point of difference: 'that thing which by nature he cannot have', as opposed to the Orthodox position: 'that thing which he has by nature, being created in the image and likeness of God, and which he cannot of his nature entirely lose'.

That is why St Gregory of Nyssa can argue that young, uncorrupted infants have a pure nous which is in a state of illumination. Consequently, they have noetic prayer. If then they have this instinctive communication with God, why do we need to baptize them? The tradition of the Church Fathers is not that we are getting rid of inherited sinfulness, but we are bringing the child into the Body of Christ, the Church, so that he or she may become a member of the body of Christ, and so acquire the power of Christ's resurrection to overcome death, and be equipped by the Spirit to resist the powers of corruption and decay and to recover and purify the natural noetic powers of the soul.

As a creature formed by God for participation in his divine life, which is the purpose for which each child was created, the goal of theosis, to become Godlike, is the natural end for which Man was destined, and any decline from that goal, any loss of knowledge of the divine, is not so much a punishment for sin as an unavoidable sickness as one departs from what one was meant to be.

The result is a kinder view of human nature that perhaps better accords with our instinctive understanding of how things are. Despite Augustine, Calvin and Freud, there is still a strong current in popular culture that maintains the essential innocence of children. That popular perception seems to accord with the attitude of Christ that is

³ See *Common Worship*, Order One, A Form of Preparation, Confession, p.165, Order Two (Contemporary), Prayers of Penitence, p.257, and also among the Supplementary Texts, Confession, p.276.

recorded in the Gospel of Mark, sixteenth chapter, thirteenth verse, which even the Baptism rite in the Prayer Book uses as a Gospel shortly after its assertion of the fundamental depravity of human nature:

They brought young children to Christ, that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased and said unto them; Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.

Now these are not baptized Christians, presumably, but little Jewish boys and girls still under the Law. And yet 'Of such is the kingdom of God'. In the *Book of Common Prayer* the passage seems included as a justification of infant baptism; yet its true import, as seen from an Orthodox perspective, is to contradict the fundamental doctrine of the 1662 baptism service.

Doctrinal differences are not simply trivial, and it is the doctrinal underpinning of the *Book of Common Prayer* that makes it inappropriate for instruction, let alone worship among the Orthodox. The Orthodox have largely sidestepped any controversy over the priority of faith as against works by the concept of *synergy*, of God and Man working together as partners in the salvation of individuals and peoples. God is of course the dominant, initiating partner; but the human being can be his co-worker because he or she has never lost the status of being created in the image of God.

Some years back I was asked to lecture at Canterbury Cathedral in a series of studies of how the different denominations handled the season of Lent. In the Anglican Church, the Lenten observances began with the imposition of ashes: a sign of radical sinfulness that I remember loving as an adolescent when grappling with the problems of nascent sexuality. I went to school with the ash-mark still on my forehead – and proudly told my fellows what it meant! The emphasis was on our human helplessness and guilt, our desperate need of divine grace, on following with Christ the pain of the Cross that our sins had caused, realizing the awfulness of what our wrongdoing had demanded if Christ was to make it right with God on our behalf. We traced in imagination the pain and dereliction, following the route through 'the grave and gate of death' (to quote the marvellous collect for Easter Even) and finally bursting through to life and light on Easter Day.

If not a burden of guilt, the Orthodox Lenten services do have their own sense of anxiety – but is largely an anxiety lest through laziness or indifference or sheer lumpenness we miss out on the glorious victory over death and sin that has already been won by Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection – which is a victory we already have, if only we will lay hold on it. Different doctrines of God and of Man radically affect what we think and do. It is not just that the services of the *Book of Common Prayer* can be 'only a halfway house' on the road to full Orthodox belief and practice; the problem is that from the outset they point in another direction, to very different images of God and Man.

AFTERWORD

In concentrating in my chapter on the main theological implications of the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*, I have argued an inherent incompatibility as regards certain key theological positions, the doctrines of God and Man, that rendered it unlikely to influence the mainstream of Orthodoxy. I did not give much attention to the numerically small number of congregations in the Orthodox Church, especially in the United States of America, that have used services derived ultimately from the 1662 book, though transmitted through successive adaptations.

On 5 September 1995, Archbishop Phillip Saliba, Metropolitan of the Antiochian Orthodox Church of North America, issued under his authority an *Orthodox Missal* 'according to the Use of the Western Rite Vicariate', (published from Saint Luke's Priory Press, Stanton, New Jersey, 1995), which to a large extent met the hopes of successive enthusiasts in the diaspora for authorized rites that derived more from western sources. The volume contained two liturgies, 'The St Tikhon Liturgy', which I have discussed above, and 'The St Gregory Liturgy', derived from Roman Catholic texts, both of them previously in use but now scrutinized and authorized officially by the Archdiocese.

Significantly for the main drift of my chapter, the 'St Tikhon Liturgy' (though still substantially from the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* and expressed in an early Tudor diction), was felt to need modification. By the intervention of Patriarch Ignatius IV of Antioch, a prayer was inserted that immediately preceded the Communion of the People in the ancient rites: 'I believe, O Lord, and I confess that thou art truly the Christ, the Son of the living God . . . and I believe that this is truly thine own immaculate Body, and that this is truly thine own precious Blood . . .' The clear intention was to remove any doubt as to whether the BCP rite might be merely making 'a perpetual memory of that his precious death and sacrifice' and to assert unambiguously that the bread and wine were not mere symbols but were actually Christ's Body and Blood.

Nevertheless, most of what I have argued above, from an Orthodox perspective, to be defects of the *Book of Common Prayer* has not been remedied. The *epiclesis* introduced in earlier versions of the 'St Tikhon Liturgy', the calling down of the Holy Spirit upon 'these thy gifts of bread and wine, that they may be changed' (p.186), is certainly prominent in the central prayer of consecration, but there is still no initial invocation of the Holy Spirit, as at the outset of an Orthodox liturgy. A BCP prayer to 'Almighty God' for 'the inspiration of the Holy Ghost' is tucked away among a number of petitions in 'The Preparation for Mass' (pp.173-74).

Despite improvements, the congregation still invoke, in their 'Confession of Sin' (pp.181-2), the BCP image of an angry and offended Monarch whose 'divine Majesty' is affronted. They still bewail their offences as 'provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us' and they still continue to declare the remembrance of their 'manifold sins and wickedness' to be 'grievous unto us, the burden of them . . . intolerable'. And that is immediately before the universal Christian injunction in liturgies east and west, to 'Lift up your hearts!'

Psychologically, of course the transition is one of the Reformers' coups and I have attested from my youthful experience to the buzz of gross abasement followed immediately by an unmerited 'high'. But if it is a 'high' of the heavenly realms, why do I also recall a recurrent sense of transience, of a passing effect? If BCP has had elsewhere a more than local impact on Orthodox worship in the west, it may perhaps be found (because there is no public penitential confession in the ancient rites) in the introduction, noticeable in English-speaking churches, especially those with a Slavic connection, of the public reading, just before Communion or before the beginning of the Consecration, of those prayers of self-abasement that are printed in some service books as meditations for private devotion before the commencement of the liturgy. There they have a place, but immediately before the consecration they should not be encouraged, being in emphasis too self-regarding: the central part of the liturgy is the place to leave self behind and be taken up in the wonder of Christ's victory over death and sin. We should not there, in the words of Scripture, be 'like a dog returning to its vomit' (cf. Proverbs 26:11, 2 Peter 2:22). Did Peter, who had thrice denied Christ, feel impelled to make a meal of it every time he broke bread?

Accurate information as to the impact of the *Book of Common Prayer* on Western Orthodoxy is hard to come by. The number of parishes using a Western Rite within the Antiochian Archdiocese of North America is small: some 24 of 265 parishes, around 9%. Of these it is reported that some 30-40% use the BCP-based Liturgy of St Tikhon, but some 60-70% prefer the Roman-derived Liturgy of St Gregory (the rubbery figures may be because some churches use both). Rumour has it that the average size of congregations is around 30, but a visiting priest to the Institute from the Western Rite has known one congregation of 400 and reports an average of around 50.

A phenomenon mentioned in the literature is that it is common for bodies who have been accepted into an Orthodox diocese from a church outside and who use some form of the Western Rite to eventually break contact altogether and go independent. Despite the support of Orthodox bishops, it seems difficult for such congregations to achieve general acceptance. An example is the Western Rite Vicariate of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR). There is said to be a long history of 'Western rite' congregations within ROCOR and in 2011 it declared all of its Western-Rite churches to be under a Vicariate (said to be modelled on that of the Antiochians). The website of the Western Rite Vicariate of ROCOR lists 23 churches, missions and monasteries: 19 in the United States, 3 in the United Kingdom, 1 in Germany.

But on 10 July 2013, the Synod of ROCOR removed Bishop Jerome of Manhattan and Fr Anthony Bondi from their positions in the Vicariate, and decided (clause 7): *'To establish a commission to examine the means of integrating clergymen and communities of the Western rite into the liturgical life of the Russian Orthodox Church . . .'*

Clause 8 resolved *'To address an epistle to the clergy and communities of the Western rite regarding the need for them to adopt the order of divine services of the Eastern Orthodox Catholic Church, while preserving, where necessary, certain particularities of the Western rite'*.

The matter has been exacerbated by a division within ROCOR over the 2007 reunion with the Moscow Patriarchate, and some dissident churches from ROCOR have formed an alternative but unrecognized jurisdiction, creating an opposition even within Russian territory. As for those in the west who have been active in the Western Rite Vicariate, the web buzzes with suggestions that the disaffected may preserve their allegiance to a Western Rite by joining the Antiochians.

That appeal to other jurisdictions is unlikely to check the declining influence of the *Book of Common Prayer* amongst the Orthodox. It is not that hieratic, even archaic English is unacceptable: Orthodox are accustomed to hearing their ancient liturgies rendered into Tudor English - after all, it is generally more intelligible than Church Slavonic or Byzantine Greek. But we face the same problem that confronted the Church of England Liturgical Commission when we first attempted, however haltingly, to produce for Series 3 a communion service in modern English: it swept the board overnight, leaving its makers accused of unthinking vandalism. Then as now, it was not the manner but the matter of the *Book of Common Prayer* that clergy and people rejected. Without profound scrutiny of that content, a literary treasure will be reduced to a historical relic.