



Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. (Matt 6:9)

24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. (Heb 10:24-25)

There may be many who read this devotion and are not Anglican and who wonder, "Why are we discussing the *Book of Common Prayer* - what has that to do with the average Christian?" It has much to do with every Christian who considers themselves to be in the Protestant line of descent from the English, or even Continental, Reformation until now. In fact, the line of descent of the Christian faith from the ancient Fathers down to our day since the *Book of Common Prayer* is based upon worship forms from the earliest days of the Church until the present. Many of the prayers and worship format is derived from that of the Ancient Church. The lectionary as well comes into our hands from that early practice.

The Anglican Faith greatly influenced the Founding Fathers of our nation, and many of the Founding Documents are full of the vocabulary, style, and wording of the *Book of Common Prayer*. In fact, four of the first five Presidents of the United States were Anglican. Perhaps the greatest and most influential member of the American Revolution, Patrick Henry, was also Anglican. So there must be something in Reformed Anglicanism and its *Book of Common Prayer* that recommends it to good and honest government in the national and private lives of men and women. Looking inside the front cover, we read that this is the "*BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER, and Administration of the Sacraments and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church.*" So what do we mean by Common Prayer? We do not mean ordinary or usual prayer - we mean prayers offered in the COMMUNITY of believers, and prayers whose meaning and application apply equally to all present in the worship.

Our Lord's Prayer is the best example of Common Prayer since it begins, "*Our Father*" and not MY Father. It is a prayer that we can all say in unison and whose meaning is equally relevant to every worshipper. We say the Lord's Prayer in every worship service in traditional Anglicanism. There are other prayers that have come down to us from the ancient Fathers that are likewise prayers that have meaning to every person who offers the prayers. The forms of worship are also tried and proven forms of worship which were developed during times of tribulation and persecution of the church. In some cases, men have been martyred in their defense. Such faith is rare today except in places in which the sordid religion of Islam is prevalent.

We have all witnessed the Wedding Service in which the ceremony is begun with "*Dearly beloved, we are gathered here in the sight of God, and in the face of this company, to join together this Man and this Woman in Holy Matrimony.....etc*" Though this form has been adopted by many other denominations, its source is the ancient Church and the Book of Common Prayer. The first revision of Common Prayer was made in 1549 when Edward VI was King of England. Its crowning revision, and most Reformed and Godly (in my view), was the revision of 1662 whose language is closely related to Shakespearean English and whose accuracy is totally Reformed. The recent revisions of the Book of Common Prayer are completely without merit and actually undermine the faith of the Church. (I offer the heretical Revision of 1979 as an example)

The forms for Baptism, Funerals and Graveside Services, Holy Communion (Lord's Supper), Morning/Evening Prayer, Family Prayer, Ordinations/Consecrations, Confirmation, Catechism, the Psalter, etc are presented in the Book of Common Prayer. Furthermore, the biblical text for every day of worship is presented in the Lectionary at the front of the Book of Common Prayer. This keeps the minister from limiting his sermons to only those areas with which he is most familiar, and forces him to grow along with the congregation, in the knowledge and truth of the Bible. The worship forms also provide reverential boundaries beyond which the clergy and laity cannot go. We are not allowed to expand our worship into orgies of indignity which we see in many churches today. We cannot speak in tongues not understood by the people, and we must always be reverent, respectful, and prayerful in our worship. We do not adore images or proclaim Mary as the Mother of God (Theotokos). We do not wear peacock-like vestments or spear-pointed miters.

Another strength of Anglican worship as presented in the Book of Common Prayer is that our worship is participatory and not simply a matter of one man lecturing to the people. All participants repeat prayers together; many are involved as acolytes, altar guilds, crucifers, etc. By being actively participants of worship, we learn experientially. We may read every book ever printed on how to fly a helicopter, but we will never learn to fly a helicopter until we get on the controls with an instructor and learn from that hands-on experience. The same is true of biblical faith - it is learned not just by words, but by putting the Words of Christ into action in our lives.

Common Prayer worship is as ancient as the Gospel. It has been tried and proven by devout believers who were often willing to face death in defense of their faith. True Anglican worship does not depend on "market research" or faddism in its worship, but rather relies upon the ancient Landmark of our Faith. We do not irreverently jump about, scream, shout (as if God is deaf), or make long prayers FOR special gifts. We are a Common People in Christ, and our worship is altogether centered on Him. Our pulpits are offset to the right side so as not to preempt the central place of Christ in our worship. We do not presume to be the only church of believers, but we believe our worship is Holy, acceptable, and approved by God. Visit us sometime.