

# THE AMERICAN PRAYER BOOK

Its Origins and Principles

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TO THE MEMORY  
OF  
Charles Lewis Slattery  
DISTINGUISHED ALIKE AS  
BISHOP, SCHOLAR, AND FRIEND

## PREFACE

**T**HIS BOOK was first planned and undertaken by the late Bishop Slattery, to whose memory we have dedicated it. He had written but a few fragmentary sections when his early death brought irretrievable loss to the Church. Later, his papers were turned over to me, to complete the work he had projected. With the help of the Reverend Doctor John W. Suter, the distinguished Secretary of the Joint Commission during most of the long process of revision, and now filling the same office for the Liturgical Commission, the work was outlined and begun. From that point, I have had the collaboration of the Reverend Bayard H. Jones, without whose diligent labors and thorough liturgical scholarship it could not have been completed. The book rightly appears as the product of our joint effort, since it contains hardly a page that has not felt the hand of each of us;<sup>1</sup> but I am making myself responsible for this preface in order to put on record this appreciation of my collaborator.

The reason for the publication of the book is obvious. The American Revision of 1928, and the contemporary revisions in other parts of the Anglican Communion, were not only *literary* revisions. They brought into use again much that in the controversies and crises of the past had been lost. They were influenced by new understanding of the ancient sources;

<sup>1</sup>The discussions of the history of Christian worship, and especially the detailed accounts of the several offices, through much of Part II and nearly all of Part III of this book, represent the contributions in the first instance of my collaborator.

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and on the other hand they introduced much that was thoroughly modern into the worship of the Church.

There was no book of convenient size which treated these old and new factors in a way available to theological students, the clergy, and the interested laity. "Proctor and Frere," for seventy-five years the standard English work of its kind, has had no revision since 1905. *The Book of Common Prayer* by the late Doctor Samuel Hart, which for twenty-five years has been the familiar and admirable textbook of American students, could no longer be sufficient. Doctor Chorley's interesting and accurate study of the 1928 Prayer Book was intended to be only an introduction for the general reader. Something of the scope of Doctor Hart's book was needed. We have followed in the main his plan, but have dealt somewhat more fully with the sources.

This last has seemed necessary in view of the new light which the studies of the last twenty years have thrown upon the earliest periods of the history of Christian worship, and which has involved a general revision of received opinions throughout the whole field of Liturgics. In these as in later periods, we have drawn heavily upon the independent studies of my collaborator. Although limitations of space have made it necessary for him to state his conclusions in the briefest compass, without such documentation and discussion as I trust he will later publish, it is hoped that their value will appear as a rational solution of some immemorial enigmas of liturgical studies.

We have three general comments to make:

(1) It is impossible to combine in one volume the general literary history of the Book of Common Prayer, and the study of the various Offices with their history and *rationale*, without some duplication. We have felt however that the historical background is of such importance as to warrant

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some measure of repetition, and that for intelligent appreciation of the Prayer Book, the literary history is even more important than the detailed exposition.

(2) It is equally impossible to deal with the Prayer Book and its offices without coming constantly upon controversial matters. We have attempted to treat them as objectively as possible. Although here and there our own views are apparent, the fact that we have approached these questions from rather different starting-points has helped, we believe, to make the book available for all schools of Churchmen. We send it out with no label either ancient or modern.

(3) And finally we would wish to record here our belief that in Worship we have one great and essential factor in the movement towards the reunion of the Christian Churches. Worship is after all the supreme function of the Church. Whatever contributes to the better understanding of its nature, whatever reveals the essential unity of the worship of the Christian ages, whatever helps to make worship more worthy of God, must have its place in drawing Christians closer together. The comprehensiveness, the variety, and the unity, which constitute the real Catholicity of our faith, are nowhere more adequately illustrated than in worship. We trust therefore that our work may make some contribution to the great cause of Unity.

We wish to make special acknowledgment of the generous kindness of the Reverend Doctor Burton S. Easton for a careful reading of our manuscript, in order not only to check our statements against the most recent conclusions of the literature of the subject, but to contribute freely many valuable suggestions from the riches of his own profound scholarship.

The number of others to whose work we are indebted is too large to make it possible to mention names; though some

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attempt has been made to give credit to primary authorities in the footnotes throughout the volume. To the saints and scholars of the past, and to our fellow-workers of today, we offer our grateful appreciation, hoping that our modest effort may serve the great cause of Our Lord and His Church.

EDWARD L. PARSONS.

San Francisco,  
California.  
June, 1937

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## Part One

### INTRODUCTORY



## ABBREVIATIONS

- A. C. . . . . *Apostolic Constitutions.*  
 A. T. . . . . *Apostolic Tradition.*  
 Bib. . . . . Bibliography. (N.B.: Footnote citations refer to the classified Bibliography by serial number, for exact edition used.)  
 B. C. P. . . . . *Book of Common Prayer.*  
 CSEL . . . . . *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum.* Vienna: Vienna Academy, in progress.  
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 FUNK . . . . . Funk, F. X.: *Didascalia et constitutiones apostolorum.* Paderborn: Schönningh, 1905-6.  
 H. E. . . . . *Historia Ecclesiastica.*  
 HERÆUS . . . . . Heræus, W.: *Silvia vel potius Ætheria perigrinatio.* Heidelberg: Winter, 1929.  
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 LEW . . . . . Brightman, F. E.: *Liturgies Eastern and Western.* Oxford, 1896.  
 McCLURE . . . . . McClure and Feltoe, *The Pilgrimage of Etheria.* London: S.P.C.K., 1921.  
 P. G. . . . . Migne, *Patrologia cursus completus. Series græca.*  
 P. L. . . . . Migne, *Patrologia cursus completus. Series latina.*  
 PROCTOR AND FRERE. Proctor, F., and Frere, W. H.: *A New History of the Book of Common Prayer.* N. Y.: Macmillan, revision of 1905.  
 WORDSWORTH . . . . . Wordsworth, J.: *Bishop Sarapion's Prayer Book.* London: S.P.C.K., 1899.

## I

## WORSHIP

### I. THE MEANING OF WORSHIP

MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN of late concerning worship, its philosophy and psychology, its meaning and implications for the larger question of the relation of religion to life, and its bearing as a social and communal activity on individual or private prayer. Into the detail of such studies we need not go. This book is concerned only with the development and interpretation of one expression of corporate worship, the Book of Common Prayer. It will be helpful, however, to carry into that study some of the more important conclusions of these investigations.<sup>1</sup>

It is hardly necessary to say that we are considering the whole matter from the point of view of the Christian faith, and assuming the truth of that faith.

Our life begins and ends with God. Worship is the conscious recognition of that relationship. If it is to be adequate in any sense it must have two aspects, or rather, must include two characteristics. The first is the emotional response to the background of mystery in which we conceive the power and majesty of God. All life is enveloped in mystery, and the sense of mystery lies behind all religion. Otto calls it *the numinous*,<sup>2</sup> coining a word which since the appearance of his *Idea of the Holy* no writer on worship or indeed on

<sup>1</sup>See especially Evelyn Underhill, *Worship* (Harpers, N. Y., 1937).

<sup>2</sup>Filled with a mystic recognition of God's presence and response to man's acts of religion; R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, Eng. tr. (Oxford, 1926), *passim*.

religion would venture to omit from his discussion. The word, with Otto's development of its idea, has been of great service. It has illumined many factors in the making of religion. In particular, it has made clear the inadequacy of the purely intellectual evaluation of religion, and emphasized the source of its purely emotional expression. In a very real way it has shown how worship must arise as man realizes this *mysterium tremendum* that surrounds him, intangible, indefinable, but awe-inspiring. *He must do something about it.* What he has done is exhibited in the manifold and varied religious practices of the race from primitive ages to the present day.

Now while his response to the mystery is in the first instance essentially emotional, and what he does is done that he may ease his feeling of awe, there must—since life is more than feeling—be some intellectual and moral content associated with his emotion. Even primitive man figures out some conception of the reality to which he devotes his worship, and takes some sort of action in accordance with that conception. In Christianity, God is not only Creator, eternal background, mysterious and awful power: he is Father, sustaining a personal relationship to each of his children, and is, if we may use the term, concretely revealed in Jesus Christ as the goal of life.

The second characteristic of worship therefore is the recognition of God as controlling life in thought and action. In Christianity, that control is so obvious that there have been times when, for instance, worship has seemed to be exhausted in intellectual formulas, like the chanting of the Athanasian Creed, or to be chiefly concerned with directing conduct, as in some of the Puritan services. Yet Christianity is always ethical. It always intends to guide conduct, as well as thought and emotion. God is mystery; God is Eternal

Idea: but God is also a hard practical concrete reality. He sets a goal and requires standards. No Christian worship is complete unless it brings the whole life into this recognition of God's place in it.

We must make a distinction here between *true worship* and *complete worship*. It is true worship to slip into the nave of some great Cathedral, and, as the light fades to dusk, to kneel and let the strange and awful mystery of God flood one's soul. It may be true worship on the other hand to believe that in reciting the Creed or in listening to the Decalogue one is doing something pleasing to God. Yet either such phase of worship, however sincere, is inadequate. The soul cannot grow on that alone. Christian worship is never complete unless the entire personality shares in it.

If, then, worship for the Christian is the conscious recognition of God as the ultimate source of life, and its controlling power and goal, it is apparent that in all real worship there is a double movement—upward to God, and downward again into human activity. The whole person is lifted into God's presence, in a spiritual happening whose method is hinted in the prayer, "Lift us, we beseech thee, to thy presence, where we may be still and know that thou art God." There is, or may be, the moment of suspense, the "being still," the pause of the soul; and then out of the depths of the unseen the touch of God's love with its appeal caresses the soul. But having won it, the divine love's driving force toward the goal of life impels us again into the world of men. The will to live righteously, to do, to be, hardens into action. The whole man is involved.

It follows that all worship to be thoroughly adequate must endeavor to include these characteristics. It must reach the whole personality of the worshipper. And it must possess this double movement, lifting the worshipper to God, but

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also making him thereby the more effective in the conduct of life.

The history of liturgical worship in the Christian faith is the story of the way in which the Church sometimes consciously, more often through the spontaneous response of Christian experience to God, has tried to meet these fundamental requirements. The special purpose of one office or another will change the balance of emphasis, but the essential objectives remain unchanged. The Catechism is framed as an educational or intellectual exercise, but the Offices of Instruction in the 1928 Prayer Book are worship, because, while their content remains in the intellectual apprehension of religion, their method is that of a personal approach to God.

If worship may be described in some such way as we have attempted, it becomes apparent that the more definitely religion takes possession of life, the more life becomes one continuous exercise of worship. The frequently expressed thought that the end or purpose of life is worship finds its meaning in this fact. Yet, because of our human limitations, there must be a distinction. Though all life might ideally be an unbroken act of worship, practically we must limit the use of the term to those times when the exercise is not only conscious and purposive, but conscious and purposive in the attempt to exclude all the lesser ends of life, and fix the attention upon God alone. Brother Lawrence could worship as he cooked: but few men can worship when they are using an adding-machine in an office which echoes to the clatter of typewriters and the babble of voices.

The answer to those (and they are many) who think that if we are moving toward this ideal of the influence of God in all life, we do not need set exercises of public worship—perhaps not even of private worship—lies just here. It is a

## THE MEANING OF WORSHIP

practical answer. If we do not learn to find God definitely *somewhere*, we shall soon lose the capacity to find him *anywhere*. It is true that God is everywhere available; but it is a fact of experience that we find him more available to us at one time or place than another.

This difference in the subjective capacity of the worshipper may be illustrated by our relation to the air in which we live and move and have our physical being. We can continue to exist without having to think about it. But fully to realize the possibilities of our life we must think about the air: get out into it, on the mountains or by the sea, expand our starved lungs to the measure of their unused capacities.

Precisely the same is true of the normal religious life. God is available everywhere; he is the universal spiritual atmosphere in which our souls live and move and have their being. We cannot exist without him; but we can exist, with some sort of meagre apathetic spiritual life, without thinking of him and reckoning with him. We may say that God makes himself more available to us at certain times and places and in certain ways. If we are to develop our spiritual life, and realize it fully, we must meet God at those times and places. We must meet him when and where every other object of thought and emotion can be banished, and he alone can fill our minds, strengthen our wills, and set our hearts throbbing.

Worship, to sum it up, is the conscious recognition of God as the beginning and end of life. As such, it is in a sense co-extensive with religion. But in our study of its history, we are concerned with it only in the meaning of a conscious recognition, when and where we have, so far as we are able, banished all else, and are determined to set heart and mind on God alone.

2. COMMON WORSHIP

The Prayer Book, like all other liturgical uses, rests upon the underlying fact that private worship of God is inadequate, for the fundamental reason that all man's life is social. Now we may consider religion, in Whitehead's phrase, as "what a man does with his solitariness."<sup>3</sup> This is true in the sense that, if it is genuine, it means man's ultimate stripping of his soul bare before God, and learning what values really control his life. This he cannot do in public: and yet the test of those values which he sets is itself the question of his relation to other persons. His life is a social thing; hence religion, which is his life at his deepest level, must likewise be social. He must share. He cannot possess what is worth while alone. He needs the contagion of the crowd, the help of fellowship, to lift his life out of its own small interests.

This has always been true of all religion; but for Christianity anything else is inconceivable, because of the basic belief of Christians that they constitute a family of God. Their life as Christians is a fellowship. They are bound together by God in Jesus Christ. Therefore worship cannot be a mere desirable addition to their Christian life: it is its supreme moment. Indeed, it is hardly too much to say that in the mind of some, worship is not merely the supreme moment, but the supreme end of the Church's function.

The life of the Church began with worship. The disciples met to pray. The subsequent experience of the Church has revealed the intimate and necessary interrelation of public worship with the power of religion in life. The Sacraments are social. When one turns to the New Testament, one realizes that many of the questions concerning the Sacraments which divide modern men could never have entered

<sup>3</sup>A. N. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (Macmillan, N. Y., 1926), 16.

the head of an early Christian. The thing he sought was to meet with his fellow Christians, the living Body of Christ, before God. In those days "community worship was the very breath of life to a believing Christian."<sup>4</sup>

This brings us to the last point of this brief introduction. If Christian worship is necessarily communal, the development of liturgies is inevitable. This development in the beginning was a mere natural process. There were no Liturgical Commissions or Congregations of Rites in the ancient Catholic Church. But minds move in ruts, utterances become habits. In the least liturgical congregations of today there is an order both of the structure of the service, and the content and expression of what is called *extempore* utterance. "The consciousness of the presence of God," says Heiler,<sup>5</sup> "and the effort after mutual edification by common prayer, demands some order in the conduct of worship." First, as we shall see later, an "order" appears. Afterward, this order or framework is clothed, and the great liturgies take form.

The resulting liturgical forms possess weighty values for the life of the Church. They bring to public worship a dignity and uplifting quality which could be realized in any other way only occasionally. They preserve for the average man, and put into the hands of the average priest, orders and prayers which have stood the test of time. Whatever its deficiencies, the Prayer Book is a repository of the best of the past. It represents not the passing mood of the moment, but the deep experience of the Church of the ages.

Liturgical worship makes available for all at any time the beauties of ritual and ceremonial. It releases the congrega-

<sup>4</sup>A. B. Macdonald, *Christian Worship in the Primitive Church*, 198. [For further bibliographical details see item 58 of Bibliography (pp. 323-327), references hereafter will be indicated in the form "Bib. 58."]

<sup>5</sup>F. Heiler, *Prayer*, Eng. tr. (Oxford, 1932), 307.

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tion from the affliction of individual idiosyncrasy. It affords prayers for all kinds of persons, and for all the manifold issues of life, because it has grown from the common experience of all. It is balanced, stable, conveying by its very form the sense of the changeless strength of God.

Finally, liturgical worship puts the congregation of the day into immediate contact with the Church of the past as well as of the present. In ecclesiastical terms, it keeps fresh the faith in the Catholicity and Apostolicity of the Church. The worshipper who is bid to pray "for the whole state of Christ's Church" can never, if he thinks at all, think of his Christian life as bounded by some small or partial group; nor can he who from week to week repeats the Creed forget that his faith is rooted in the experience of ages.

No actual book of worship wholly fulfills all these ideals. None is perfect in the eyes of every or perhaps any man. Yet each historic liturgy is a product of the same universal Christian experience; each has endeared itself to an innumerable company of the faithful, who have found in it a veritable ladder of heaven; and each has made some characteristic contribution toward the development of a yet more perfect expression of adoration of God's infinite majesty, and of greater confirmation of man's faith, love, and resolution to righteousness of life.

In the light of these principles we turn to the story of the development of the American Book of Common Prayer, and to some comment on the history, meaning, and use of its offices.