

**A REVIEW OF THE BOOK OF  
COMMON PRAYER,  
DRAWN UP AT THE REQUEST  
OF ARCHBISHOP CRANMER**

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A review of the Book of common prayer, drawn up at the request of archbishop Cranmer by  
Martin Bucer

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**MARTIN BUCER**

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BUCER'S REVISION OF  
KING EDWARD'S FIRST BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER.

SUBMITTED TO HIM FOR THE PURPOSE BY CRANMER.

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HE begins with observing that, on his first coming into the kingdom, he was anxious to ascertain whether he could sincerely assent to the ritual of our Church, and minister in connexion with it, and that he had therefore made himself as well acquainted as he could with our Book of Sacred Rites through the help of an interpreter; upon which he felt himself enabled to render thanks to God for the extent to which our ceremonies had been purified; "nor could I find anything in them," he observes, "which was not drawn out of God's Word, or which, at least, if fairly taken, could be considered as opposed to it. For some very few things there were, which, unless candidly interpreted, might appear to be not wholly in agreement with that Word."

He then proceeds, agreeably to the request of Cranmer, to point out what, as it appeared to him, might be scripturally vindicated and retained, what should be removed or amended, and what, again, might be more perspicuously worded.

For the sake of method, he divides the Book into the following heads:—

1. The Forms of Daily Service\* with the appointed Psalms and Lessons.

\* A considerable alteration was made in King Edward's

2. The Communion Service.
3. Of Holy Matrimony.
4. Of the Visitation of the Sick.
5. The Funeral Service.
6. The Purification of Women after Childbirth.
7. Public Supplication for the Pardon of Sins.

With respect to the Communion Office and the Forms of Daily Prayer, he declares that he sees nothing in the Book which is not drawn from holy writ, if not literally so, as the Psalms\* and Lessons,

Second Prayer-book in the formulary of the Morning Service by the addition of the introductory sentences, the exhortation and the absolution. The Evening Service, however, still began abruptly with the Lord's Prayer till the last review in the beginning of Charles II.'s reign, when it was made to begin as the Morning Service. The introductory sentences were, till *then*, from an old version—I suppose from the Bishops' Bible. The first text was then taken from Ezek. xviii. 21, 22, and ran thus:—"At what time soever a sinner doth repent him of his sin from the bottom of his heart, I will put all his wickedness out of my remembrance, saith the Lord." Yet, strangely enough, the corresponding sentence in the Latin Prayer-book of Queen Elizabeth was as follows:—"Si impius egerit penitentiam pro omnibus peccatis suis quæ operatus est, et custodierit omnia præcepta mea, et fecerit iudicium et justitiam, vita vivat, et non morietur. Omnium iniquitatum ejus quas operatus est non recordabor, dixit Dominus." (Vulg. v. 21, 22.) There is something singular in the history of the rubric prefixed to the Absolution in the Second Prayer-book of King Edward. It was then worded, "The Absolution, to be pronounced by the minister alone," and so it stood till the Hampton Court Conference. It was then altered thus, "The Absolution, or remission of sins, to be pronounced by the minister alone." So it appears to have continued till the review of 1661, and then to have been altered to the present formula: "The Absolution, or remission of sins, to be pronounced by the priest alone standing; the people still kneeling." The Puritans in the Savoy Conference requested that the word "minister" might be continued, and the Commissioners of 1689 recommended that the word "priest" might be changed into "minister."

\* I observe that Mr. William Thomas, Rector of Ubleigh, in Somerset, a Puritan Divine of considerable learning, and

yet in substance, as are the Collects.\* He approves also of the way and the times in which the Service is conducted, as agreeable with Scripture and with primitive precedents, and would have them therefore to be religiously maintained.

He dwells much, however, on the importance of the ministers' performing the service—"cum gravitate et

preceptor of Bishop Bull, objected to our Prayer-book version of the Psalter; or, as he expresses it, to "a worse translation when there is a better," especially in that place (Psa. lxxviii. 4) where it was read, "Extol Him in His name, yea," &c., instead of that agreeable to the original, "Extol Him in His name, Jah." It is singular enough that, though the version is retained, an alteration is made in this verse agreeably to Mr. Thomas's wishes. (Vide "Cal. Hist. of Ejected Min.," 592.)

\* The Prayer for the King's (or Queen's) Majesty was added in Elizabeth's reign—the Prayer for the Royal Family in the beginning of James I.'s reign; it then began, "Almighty God, which hast promised to be a Father of thine elect and of their seed;" but this, being thought to savour of Calvinism, was changed by the Arminian divines of Charles the First's days to "Almighty God, the fountain of all goodness." The Prayer for the clergy and people was added in Queen Elizabeth's Prayer-book. The Prayer of St. Chrysostom was in King Edward's Liturgy, and the Prayer of Benediction, "The grace," &c., was added in Queen Elizabeth's. These five prayers stood, however, not as now, at the conclusion of Morning and Evening Service, but at the end of the Litany, until the last review.

Calamy relates a curious anecdote in reference to the Collect for Christmas-day, where originally the words stood, "and this day to be born of a pure Virgin"—so it continued, according to him, till after the Act of Uniformity in Charles the Second's days—and the alteration of the phrase to "and *as at this time*," he attributes to the objection raised against the former phraseology by Mr. T. Trueman, a Nonconformist minister, the antagonist of Bishop Bull, who demurred at it as stating a falsehood; but see the anecdote, which is a curious one, in "Cal.," vol. iv., 694. As late as the year 1663 the alteration above alluded to had not been made, as appears from Spark's "Scintilla Altaris" of that date, who quotes the Collect. The Collect for the twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity, though founded on an old prayer which is found in the Missal, is singularly altered in the last clause.

religione"—with clearness too and perspicuity, and in a place where they may best be heard by the whole congregation.

He then declares it as his opinion that so great a separation of the chancel (*chori*) from the rest of the church, as that that should be the place where the sacramental rites are to be exclusively performed (*ut in eo tantum sacra represententur*), which belong nevertheless to all the laity as well as the clergy, is Antichristian (*hoc Antichristianum est*). He states (what appears to be the fact) that the object intended to be answered by this separation of the chancel was the exaltation of the clergy, as if *they* were a class of men who, irrespective of their characters, and merely by reason of their order and place, were to be regarded as nearer to God than the laity, and able, by virtue of their *opus operatum*, to appease Him\* on their behalf. He would have this abuse corrected with great severity and strictness, as otherwise, says he, the kingdom would be guilty of a treasonable act against the Divine Majesty.

He asserts that, in the most ancient Churches, the clergy officiated in the centre of the building; (the churches being mostly circular,) inasmuch as that was the place where they would best be heard and understood.†

He presses also the strict enforcement of decorum in the congregation.

\* "*Chori tanta a reliquo templo sejunctio eo servit, ut ministri qualescunque fide sint et vita, ipso tamen ordine et loco habeantur quasi Deo propinquiore quam laici, et qui possint his placare Deum vi externorum operum quae faciunt sibi propria cum sint totius populi Christi.*"

† The reading of the Commandments in the Communion Service was first introduced in King Edward's Second Prayer-book.

The words "Glory be to Thee, O Lord!" were directed by a rubric in the First Prayer-book to be used before the reading of the Gospel; but the rubric was omitted in the Second Book.



## ADMINISTRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

Under this head, he strongly approves of the rubrics which order a notification to the minister beforehand of those who wish to be communicants, and the exclusion of notorious offenders from the sacrament, until they have publicly declared their penitence.\* Otherwise

\* In the exhortation to be read if the people be negligent to come to the communion, and which is now, with some change of language, our customary exhortation on the Sunday before the communion, were the following passages, since altered :—

“ And if any man have done wrong to any other, let him make satisfaction, and due restitution of all lands and goods wrongfully taken away or withholden, before he come to God's board, or at the least, be in full mind and purpose so to do, as soon as he is able; or else let him not come to this holy table, thinking to deceive God, who seeth all men's hearts. For *neither the absolution of the priest can anything avail them, nor the receiving of this holy sacrament doth anything but increase their damnation.* And if there be any of you whose conscience is troubled or grieved in anything, lacking comfort or counsel, let him come to me, or to some other discreet and learned priest, taught in the law of God, and confess and open his sin and grief secretly, that he may receive such ghostly counsel, advice, and comfort that his conscience may be relieved, and that of us (as of the ministers of God and of the Church) he may receive comfort and absolution, to the satisfaction of his mind, and avoiding of all scruples and doubtfulness, requiring such as shall be satisfied with a general confession not to be offended with them that do use, to their further satisfying, the auricular and secret confession to the priest, nor those also which think needful or convenient, for the quietness of their own consciences, particularly to open their sins to the priest, to be offended with them that are satisfied with their humble confession to God and the general confession to the Church. But in all things to follow and keep the rule of charity, and every man to be satisfied with his own conscience, not judging other men's minds or consciences, whereas he hath no warrant of God's Word to the same.”

This exhortation was considerably modified in King Edward's Second Prayer-book, and the reading or non-reading of it left to the discretion of the minister. It was then headed thus :—“ And sometime shall this be said also, at the discretion of the minister;” and the passage above quoted was altered to nearly

things holy would be given to the dogs and pearls cast before the swine.

As to the ministerial vestments, he wished them, it seems, to be altogether set aside; not because of any intrinsic impiety in the use of them, but on account of the door they open to superstition, and the occasion which they minister of strife. We should aspire, he observes, at the utmost possible simplicity in all outward matters, and be anxious to attest, in every way we can, that we have nothing in common with Roman Antichrists. The people, he thinks, would be soon reconciled to the withdrawal of the vestments if they were only furnished with enlightened teachers.\*

One of the rubrics subjoined to the Communion Service in King Edward's Prayer-book prescribed that on Wednesdays and Fridays, even when there was no sacrament, the priest should put upon him a plain albe, or surplice, with a cope (after the Litany) and say all things at the altar appointed to be said at the celebration of the Lord's Supper, until after the offertory." This Bucer exceedingly disapproves as *cœnæ Dominicæ*

what it is at present. The invitation to confession was thus worded:—"If there be any of you," &c., "then let him come to me, or some other discreet and learned minister of God's Word, and open his grief, that he may receive such ghostly counsel, advice, and comfort, as his conscience may be relieved, and that, by the ministry of God's Word, he may receive comfort, and the benefit of absolution, to the quieting of his conscience, and avoiding," &c. So it continued till the last review.

These recommendations of our Church (thus amended) seem exactly in harmony with Calvin's sentiments in his "Inst.," lib. iii. c. 4, § 12. "Id officii sui unusquisque fidelium esse meminerit, si ita privatim angitur et afflictorum peccatorum sensu ut se explicare nisi alieno adiutorio nequeat, non negligere quod illi a Domino offertur remedium, nempe ut ad se sublevandum privata confessione apud suum pastorem utatur," &c. (vide locum). So "Abp. Sharpe's Sermon," v. 122.

\* This objection to the simple vestments of our officiating clergy must surely be set down to the account of prejudice. And yet how great a matter did this fire kindle!

simulachrum, and likely to confirm the Romish doctrine of the Mass. He says he had been informed, by pious, grave, and learned men, that some women of noble birth had ventured openly to ask for "memories" at times when there were no communicants.

Another rubric, on the quality, shape, and quantity of the bread, appeared to him capable of misinterpretation, and it was accordingly altered. He also objects to a succeeding rubric, the sixth in King Edward's First Prayer-book,\* which has also been corrected. He would have all who persist in the neglect of the Lord's Supper excommunicated.

The next rubric he approves, with the exception of the order then given to the people to "communicate once in the year at least"—for, as he well observes, how can *he* be a worthy communicant who attends by compulsion, and once only in the year? † He presses a very frequent administration of this sacrament, as was the primitive usage; and laments exceedingly the fact that so many of the congregation turn their backs upon this ordinance after attending all the previous service—"quasi plus signis Christi visibilibus quam Evangelio exhibetur, aut quid plus fidei et pietatis requiratur ad sumendum hæc sacramenta quàm ad reliquum Dei cultum." He complains of men walking about and talking in the churches during the performance of Divine service as then too usual. ‡ And this

\* Wherein the notion is countenanced of taking the sacrament by *proxy*, like the redemptæ missæ of the Romanists.

† The rubrical direction in the Second Book is "at the least three times in the year."

‡ I cannot forbear quoting in this place the following remarkable regulations of a heathen legislator, Numa Pompilius, as recorded by Plutarch:—"Ωετο ὁ Νουμᾶς χρῆναι τοὺς πολῖτας μῆτε ἀκουεῖν τι τῶν θείων μῆτε ὀρῆν ἐν παρεργῶν καὶ ἀμελῶς, ἀλλὰ σχολὴν ἀγοῦντας ἀπὸ τῶν ἀλλῶν, καὶ προσεχόντας τὴν διανοίαν ὡς πράξει μείστη τῆ περι τὴν εὐσεβείαν, ψοφῶντε καὶ παταγῶν καὶ στεναγμῶν, καὶ ὅσα τοιαῦτα τοῖς ἀναγκαιοῖς καὶ βαναυσοῖς ποιοῖς ἐπέται, καθάρως τὰς ὁδοὺς τοῖς ἱερουργίαις παρεχόντας"—a vestige