

Blasts of Vain Doctrine: Cranmer's New Collect for St Mark's Day

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A number of saints' day collects were rewritten for the First Prayer Book of Edward VI of 1549 to replace their Sarum Rite predecessors. This was to avoid the impression, abhorrent to Reformation principles, that the saints themselves were being invoked. This article explores the process of composition of the collect for St Mark's Day, which concludes with an admonition against 'blasts of vain doctrine'. While the collect conforms to the typical practice of basing compositions on the readings for the day, it must be seen in the wider context of current debates on control of doctrine and teaching in the Church. The concluding discussion reflects on the fate of the collect in the Elizabethan Church and especially in modern Anglican revisions. It asks whether the arguably bland style of contemporary renderings marks a division between determination to defend right doctrine, coupled with serious political convictions and their liturgical expression. The discussion concludes by asking whether modern liturgists should now re-examine the challenges of writing liturgy in a political setting.

It is well known that, before the events which led to one mandatory form of common prayer for use in all churches in England, there was some diversity in the Latin rites used in various parts of the country. Archbishop Cranmer refers to the principal uses of Sarum, York, Hereford, Lincoln and Bangor in the Preface to the First Book of Common Prayer of 1549, in the course of urging the advantages of a single use for the whole kingdom :

...And where heretofore, there hath been great diversitie in saying and synging in churches within this realme: some folowyng Salsbury use, some Herford use, some the use of Bangor, some of Yorke, & some of Lincolne: Now from hencefurth, all the whole realme shall have but one use.
(Brightman 1: 36)

The archbishop's account of the liturgical situation prior to the appearance of the 1549 Prayer Book is painted with a broad brush, and with good reason. For the Preface is part of a marketing strategy designed to recommend the new rites to the public. It is interested in promoting a finished article, 'one use' for the 'whole realme', rather than in explaining the manner of its production, and the flourish that accompanies this announcement almost suggests that the 1549 Prayer Book sprang into

being overnight with none of the usual debates and compromises that go hand in hand with liturgical drafting.

In reality, the background to the First Prayer Book was more complicated. A careful and measured programme of revision had begun in the late 1530s and was to continue beyond 1549.¹ This process bore witness to the great number of issues that preoccupied the Reformation churches, and that were finding expression in the working out of vernacular rites.

The present article concentrates the first part of its investigation on one of the projects embraced by the new Prayer Book, namely, the revision of the sanctoral cycle (*sanctorale*) which was the legacy of the late medieval Church. For reasons to be explained, the writing of prayers for saints' days became a significant task in the making of the Book of Common Prayer. That clear principles for composing collects had evolved some time before the book went to press, can be shown from comparisons of its provisions for remembering the saints. I have chosen the collect for St Mark's day to illustrate the use of standard conventions.

There is a further reason for using this example: the collect has a double interest since, as well as illustrating Cranmer's working method, it suggests a starting point for some more wide-ranging speculations about liturgy written in a particular historical setting. The ground is thus prepared for the second part of the paper, which raises questions about the writing of liturgy in response to a precisely defined context, and offers some concluding thoughts on the reasons for thoughtful liturgical revision. First of all, though, something must be said about devotion to the saints at the time when the 1549 Prayer Book was being compiled.

Feast days of the saints had multiplied through the Middle Ages with considerable economic and liturgical effect. Thus, in 1536, Henry VIII abrogated feasts falling from 1st July to 29th September, as well as feasts occurring in Westminster law terms, with just a few exceptions. For ordinary secular purposes, this measure sought to remedy lapses in productivity that resulted when the work force downed tools for celebrations (Duffy 394). In the life of the Church, the appointed lessons and psalms for festivals disrupted the orderly *lectio continua* of the Old and New Testaments, and played havoc with the use of the psalter.

Already, Francisco de Quiñones, the General of the Franciscans, had noticed the bewildering number of festivals in the calendar while revising the Breviary for Pope Paul III in 1535. His solution was to control the number of feasts by excluding superstitious legends, and at the same time, to rationalise the use of the psalter. This meant that psalms were said in course, and were evenly distributed over a weekly cycle of offices (Taft 323). When Cranmer came to draft his own revised daily office, he looked

See Legg for an account of Cranmer's proposals for a revised daily office in the 1530s.

to Quiñones for his model, and his lament in the Preface to the 1549 Prayer Book (Concerning the Service of the Church) is testimony to the Franciscan's influence.

Cranmer pointed out that, whereas the Church Fathers had arranged lections so that the whole Bible was read over the course of the year,

these many yeares passed, this Godly and decent ordre of the auncient fathers, hath bee so altered, broken and neglected, by planting in uncertain stories, Legendes, Responses, Verses, vaine repetitions, Commemoracions and Synodales, that commonly when any booke of the Bible was begon: before three or foure chapiters were read out, all the rest were unread. (Brightman 1: 34)

As for the recitation of the psalms:

notwithstanding that the auncient fathers had devided the psalmes into seven porcions: whereof every one was called a nocturne: now of later tyme a fewe of them have been dailye sayed (and ofte repeated) and the rest utterly omitted.

To correct the disorder, the Book of Common Prayer provided 'a Kalendar'. This was:

plaine and easy to be understood, wherein (so much as maie be) the readyng of holy scripture is so set furthe, that all thynges shall bee doen in ordre, without breakyng one piece thereof from another (35)

Calendrical inconvenience was not the only factor that brought the *sanctorale* under the spotlight, although, as we have seen, it had immediate practical implications for secular and religious life. There was also a serious doctrinal issue attached to the collects for saints' days, since in most cases they invoked the saints' prayers. James Devereux, writing in 1965, placed this objection in the larger context of the Reformers' obsession with justification. If human beings could do nothing good without God, then asking for the prayers of the saints carried a somewhat heretical flavour (49).

Curiously, Cranmer did not mention the doctrinal matter in his observations on commemorations of the saints. Instead, he summed up the difficulty in the discussion 'Of Ceremonies: Why some be abolished and some retained', which appeared at the end of the 1549 Prayer Book, with the disapproving observation that 'the multitude of [feasts] hath so increased in these latter daies, that the burthen of them was intollerable'.

We are thus left to guess whether this was a matter of careful politics, or an enlightened belief in educating the laity by positive instruction rather than by strict prohibition. Whatever the truth, two categories of commemorations emerge from his analysis. Some were 'so farre abused' by superstition and greed that the only solution was to remove them altogether. This immediately saw the departure of all non-biblical saints from the Church's calendar. But others were 'neither darke nor dumme ceremonies' (Brightman 1: 41-42) and could therefore profitably be retained for their didactic and exemplary value in the life of the Church.

In this latter category of edifying celebrations we find the feasts of the four evangelists, Christmas, the Holy Innocents, the Circumcision, the Epiphany, the Presentation, the Annunciation, St Andrew, the Conversion of St Paul, St Mary Magdalene, St Matthias, SS Philip and James, St Barnabas, St John the Baptist, St Peter, St Bartholomew, SS Simon and Jude, St Thomas, St James the Great, St Michael and All Angels, and All Saints. There were concise and businesslike collects in the Sarum Missal for all these days, and we may safely discount the disparaging judgement of the Victorian commentator Goulburn, who found the saints' day collects 'for the most part hopelessly corrupt' and thought that, because the 'petition of the intercession of the person commemorated, usually formed the staple of the Collect', the results were 'exceedingly jejune' (Goulburn 2: 95). Nevertheless, those collects which depended on an explicit request for the intercessions of the saints they recalled undeniably felt the impact of Cranmer's vigilance.

The reasons were doctrinal rather than aesthetic. It was the Reformers' objection to forms of prayer calling upon a saint as intermediary between the petitioners and God which led to new material being composed for all the feasts of saints still in the calendar. Value judgements such as Goulburn offers appear to play no part in the decision to produce alternative prayers. (There were only three days which were not provided with new collects — the feasts of St John the Evangelist, the Conversion of St Paul, and Saint Bartholomew — and the texts of the original forms explain why they persisted.² Certain other days in the calendar were also provided with new collects, and it is generally agreed that the hand at work was Cranmer's, or that of a committee sharing his liturgical opinion (Ratcliff, Cuming). Eventually the number of new collects that appeared in the 1549 Prayer Book came to twenty-three.

It is worth pausing to look at the principles which seem to have guided their production. Very often, Cranmer based collects on the appointed

²In the case of St John, the Latin form is eminently acceptable to Reformed thinking, since it deals with the illumination of the Church by the bright beams of John's gospel. The collect for the conversion of St Paul centres on preaching, and the example of Paul's doctrinal teaching. Bartholomew is honoured as an example of belief and teaching.

readings for the days on which they were to be used.³ An inspection of the twenty-three new collects shows that he went to the epistle to find the kernel of six prayers (Advent I & II ; Quinquagesima; the Second Sunday after Easter; St Matthias; St Mark). Ash Wednesday is loosely associated with the lesson appointed for the epistle (Joel 2), and Lent I combines the thought of the epistle and the gospel. Five are based on the gospel (the Sunday after the Ascension; St Thomas; SS Philip and James; St Peter and St Matthew). Thus thirteen out of twenty-three — just over half — are directly inspired by the day's readings.⁴ Of those remaining, the sources are usually to be found in biblical passages outside of the epistle and gospel for the day.

³On Cranmer's methods of composition, see Ratcliff and Cuming.

⁴See Dudley for a useful table of new and translated collects in 1549.

In the light of these general reflections, I want, now, to spend some time examining the new collect for St Mark's Day. Here, first of all, is the Sarum version:

Deus qui beatum marcum evangelistam tuum, evangelice
praedicationis gratia sublimasti: tribue quesumus eius nos
semper & eruditione proficere: et oratione defendi. per
(Brightman 2: 578-80)

[O God, who for the proclamation of the gospel has raised up
thine evangelist Saint Mark: Grant, we beseech thee, that we
may evermore both prosper through his teaching, and be
defended by his prayers. Through Jesus Christ etc.]

[O God, who raised up thine evangelist Saint Mark for the
proclamation of the gospel: Grant, we beseech thee, that we
may evermore enjoy both the benefits of his teaching, and the
protection of his prayers. Through Jesus Christ etc.]

[O God, who raised up thine evangelist Saint Mark for the
proclamation of the gospel: Grant us, we beseech thee,
evermore to prosper through his teaching, and to be defended
by his prayers. Through Jesus Christ etc.]

This is what takes its place in the First Prayer Book of 1549:

Almyghtye God, which hast instructed thy holy Churche, with
the heavenly doctrine of thy Evangelist Sainct Marke: geve us
grace so to bee establyshed by thy holy gospell, that we be not,
like children, caried away with every blast of vayne Doctrine:
Through Jesus Christ our Lorde. (Brightman 2: 578-580:
1549 text)

The collect's pattern of construction is Cranmerian in the anticipated sense, with the appointed epistle from the fourth chapter of Ephesians (vv.7-16), taken from the Great Bible of 1540, directly inspiring the new composition. What is not apparent, however, unless you have before you the invaluable parallel columns of F.E. Brightman's two-volume *English Rite* and can compare the 1549 Prayer Book with its sources and predecessors, is that the epistle from Ephesians 4 in the first Prayer Book is longer by three verses (Eph 4.14-16) than the passage used in the Sarum lectionary for St Mark's day. Also concealed from the Prayer Book worshipper is the possibility of a choice of readings. The Roman Missal set Ezekiel 1.10-14

— the account of the four mysterious creatures with the faces of beasts — for the festival (Goulburn 2: 249).

It appears, from the evidence, that Cranmer made a series of careful decisions about this day. First of all, he chose the passage from Ephesians in preference to Ezekiel, in this way preferring Sarum over Rome. His next step was to lengthen the epistle in the Prayer Book's provisions for the feast, presumably because he thought the subsequent verses too important to be omitted. I have italicised the additional verses in reproducing the passage below:

Unto every one of us is geven grace, accordyng to the measure of the gyfte of Christe. Wherefore he sayth: when he went up an hie he led captivitie captive, and gave gyftes unto menne. That he ascended, what meaneth it, but that he also descended first into the loweste parts of the earth? he that descended, is even the same also that ascended up above al heavens, to fulfill al thinges. And the very same made some Apostles, some Prophetes, some Evangelistes, some shepehardes and teachers: to the edifying of the Sainctes, to the woorke & minystracion, even to the edifying of the body of Christe, till we all come to the unities of faith and knowledge of the sonne of god, unto a perfect man, unto the measure, of the full perfect age of Christ. *That we henceforth should be no more children, wavering and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the wylines of men, through craftines, whereby they lay awayte for us, to deceyve us. But let us folow the trueth in love, and in all thinges grow in him, which is the head, even Christ, in whom if all the body be coupled & knit together, throughout every ioynte, wherwith one ministreth to an other (accordyng to the operacion, as every parte hath his measure) he encreaseh the body, unto the edifying of itselfe through love.*

(Brightman 2: 580)

Where the Sarum epistle ends with the hope that believers will attain the full stature of Christ, the 1549 reading goes on to the consequences of such spiritual growth. '[K]nowledge of the sonne of god' will help the Ephesians to be 'no more children, wavering and carried about with every winde of doctrine, by the wylines of men, through craftines, whereby they lay awayte for us, to deceyve us'. As a result, the whole ecclesial body will be able to concentrate on building itself up in love, having grown in due proportion from Christ its head. Following from this, we might have expected the final section of the epistle to be reflected in a prayer for the

growth of the body of the church under the influence of love. A collect with this theme as its central concern would have seemed entirely fitting. Instead, Cranmer took a different course and turned to what is surely a lesser issue in the extension — the danger of contagious doctrine — for one of the key points of contrast in his new collect.

At one level, then, we have a consistent piece of Reformation writing, built on explicitly scriptural references. Appropriately for Mark the Evangelist, it concentrates on the benefits of teaching and proclamation in the life of the Church. Specifically, it emphasises the sound instruction of the gospel as a sure means of preventing the people from succumbing to the persuasion of erroneous teaching. This argument is reinforced by the literary sophistication of the collect's composition. It turns formally on an elegant pattern of chiasmus and antithesis, framing the plea that the Church may be so rooted in the gospel as to escape baneful influences. In this way, *instruction* is opposed to the thoughtless state of being *carried away*; the adult status of the *Church* stands in contrast to the frivolity of *children*; and *heavenly doctrine* is offered as the anchor that secures those who might otherwise be swayed by *vain doctrine*.

There is, I believe, a motive behind this exact construction, and we should not fall into the trap of treating it simply as an allusion to the general condition of Christians in a dangerous world, where they will always be vulnerable to 'every wind of doctrine', and to human 'wiliness' and 'craftiness'. Careful analysis must also take into account its manner of acknowledging the anxieties of the theological climate in which it takes shape. Devereux puts it thus:

In St Mark we pray that 'we be not, like children, carried away with every blast of vayne Doctrine.' Unless I am mistaken, these lines once again reflect the efforts of the Church of England to steer a middle course, her fear of divided allegiance in religion and consequently in politics, and her wariness of seditious doctrines on both right and left. (67)

But he might have pursued his speculation to a more relentless conclusion. The Church that would use this prayer was more than simply wary of dangerous doctrines: it was taking action. In this light, I suggest that the collect embodies a direct and polemical address to a contemporary audience, and that we should at least consider reading it in the light of a pressing concern about the dissemination of doctrine in the Edwardine Church.

The most obvious, and therefore the most dangerous channel of instruction at this time was the medium of preaching. For many years before the 1549 Prayer Book appeared, the potential influence (good and

bad) of preaching had exercised the minds of churchmen and politicians. Initially, efforts to control what was emanating from pulpits countrywide had two very different groups in mind: on the one hand, there were the promulgators of Lutheran doctrine, while on the other hand there were those who persisted in their loyalty to the papacy after Henry VIII's rejection of papal authority in the English Church. A middle course between these two extremes seemed most desirable to the King, as well as to Chancellor Cromwell and Archbishop Cranmer. Then there was the matter of popular religion. The legends and miraculous phenomena which played a prominent role in popular piety were a continual source of anxiety, chiefly because they were allegedly being exploited by unscrupulous clergy for financial gain. Whether or not that was true, Cromwell found it expedient, in his campaign to build a Protestant nation, to make these into a public example. Accordingly, he pursued a programme of debunking which included exposing as fakes such wonders as the Rood of Boxley and the Blood of Hailes.⁵ In the later 1530s, publications such as the Ten Articles (1536) and the Bishops' Book (1537) laid down guidelines for the sort of doctrine that was to be preached to the people. During and after the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536, Henry VIII adopted extreme measures, and withdrew preaching licences altogether (Duffy 400).

In 1548, and with a new king on the throne, licences were being withdrawn again. First of all, those preachers who did not hold licences signed by the King, Cranmer, or Somerset were made to desist from preaching. Later in the year, all licences were withdrawn on the evidence that sermons unacceptable to the establishment were continuing (Bond 6). But this time, as a letter to those deprived of the right to preach explained, there were measures in place to protect the people from 'being tossed to and fro with seditious and contentious preaching, while every man according to his zeal, some better, some worse, goeth about to set out his own fantasy, and to draw the people to his opinion'.⁶

A *Book of Homilies* had appeared in 1547, setting out a collection of nine homilies to be used in churches as a means of controlling the content of sermons. These were divided into parts, so that they could be delivered over two or three Sundays and repeated once the cycle had run its course. This was the result of a decision made as early as 1542 under Henry VIII, and recorded in a letter from Stephen Gardiner (the Bishop of Winchester who was soon to be at daggers drawn with Cranmer) to Protector Somerset, dated June 10, 1547:

⁵Duffy gives excellent and detailed accounts of both these objects of veneration (403-04, 412).

⁶Bond quotes Hughes & Larkin 1: 422 (# 303) and Cardwell 1: 32.

... the bishops, in the Convocation holden A.D. 1542, agreed to make certain homilies for stay of such errors as were then by ignorant preachers sparkled among the people. (Griffiths vii)

Gardiner later withdrew his support for the project and tried to dissuade Cranmer from pursuing it.⁷ Nevertheless, the first *Book of Homilies* went ahead, prefaced by a detailed explanation of its objectives. This was very likely written by Cranmer, but it probably does carry something of Edward VI's genuine wish to have a direct hand in spiritual leadership, if tales of the young Josiah's precocious piety are true.⁸

The purpose of the Preface to the Homilies is not so far removed from that of the slightly later Preface to the First Book of Common Prayer. Both, after all, are imposing a compulsory usage under the guise of producing something expressly designed to benefit ordinary people. We do not have to seek very far for reasons. With a minor on the throne, and real power in the hands of Protector Somerset, whose protestant zeal was considerable, strict control of worship and doctrine could ensure that the structure of the Church mirrored and endorsed the obedience of a rigidly stratified society.

The Preface represents itself rhetorically as an expression of Edward's pastoral concern that dangerous doctrine has crept into his realm. It refers darkly to 'the great decay of Christian religion', and worse, to the 'utter destruction of innumerable souls' who have been lured from their devotion to 'the alone true, living and eternal God, unto the worshipping of creatures, yea of stocks and stones'. '[T]rue religion', it claims, has been severely threatened by 'popish superstition' (Bond 3-4).

There are no surprises in the anti-Catholic mudslinging that traces the 'manifold enormities which heretofore have crept into [the king's] realm' to 'the false usurped power of the Bishop of Rome'. They are useful forms of abuse, which manufacture a real enemy against whom a book of 'wholesome and godly exhortations' will provide a defence. What is arguably less plausible is the claim that it is 'the earnest and fervent desire of [Edward's] dearly beloved subjects to be delivered from all errors and superstition and to be truly and faithfully instructed in the very word of God'. Surely this is a polite fiction for an imposed usage, and indeed its underlying motivation emerges soon after, when the writer observes that through sound scriptural teaching, the people will 'learn to honour God and to serve their King with all humility and subjection, and godly and honestly to behave themselves toward all men'.

⁷This seems to have been to do with his sense that Cranmer had shifted his position on justification by faith alone since the discussions in the Convocation of 1542.

⁸Cranmer had coined this term in his coronation address. See Cox 126-27. MacCulloch refers to the address and to the biblical allusion (364-65).

The topic of reliable instruction nevertheless enables the writer at long last to introduce the subject of preaching, and to justify the production of the collection of Homilies. As he points out, the best way of dispelling ‘corrupt, vicious and ungodly living, as also erroneous doctrine’, which are the results of ‘diversity of preaching’, is to attend to ‘the true setting forth and pure declaring of God’s word’.

There was a practical element to this provision: in its final remarks, the Preface appeals shrewdly to the perennial problem of having a sermon ready for Sunday. The writer tactfully mentions that ‘all Curates, of what learning so ever they be’ will find in this book ‘some godly and fruitful lessons in a readiness to read and declare unto their parishioners for their edifying, instruction, and comfort’. One is tempted to interpret this as a calculating gesture towards the weaknesses of ill-educated, or simply lazy clergy. Yet Ronald Bond, who has produced a modern edition of the Homilies, urges a wider view. ‘We misconstrue the nature of the homilies and the motives that lay behind their use’, he argues, ‘if we see them only as surrogates for sermons in parishes unfortunate enough not to have established a true preaching ministry’. ‘[L]earned prelates’ of uncertain sympathies may well have constituted a greater danger in the pulpit than their less competent colleagues.⁹

Thus, in review, we can see a dual purpose in offering the people sound teaching. Good sermons of approved content, and delivered by trustworthy people, would ‘move [them] to honour and worship Almighty God’. They would also encourage their audiences to accept their places in the secular order as instrumental in their orderly worship of God. It was the aim of the Homilies that the people should ‘diligently ... serve God, every one accordyng to their degree state and vocation’ (Bond 5).

This final wish reveals something of the uneasy commixture of religion, doctrine and politics within the Kingdom. Similar concerns would soon extend further afield, and shortly after the Homilies were published, Cranmer began negotiations towards an even larger project. His seventeenth century biographer, John Strype, gives this account of the plans that were then afoot:

In the year 1548 Cranmer propounded a great and weighty business to Melancthon; and a matter that was likely to prove highly useful to all the churches of the evangelic profession. It was this: The archbishop was now driving on a design for

⁹Bond 5. The author does, however, go on to quote John Jewel, who, in the Appendix to his *Apology* of 1563, noted the provision of homilies ‘devised by learned men which do comprehend the principal points of Christian doctrine’ for the use of ‘curates of meaner understanding’ (8).

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the better uniting of all protestant churches; viz. by having one common confession and harmony of faith and doctrine drawn up out of the pure word of God, which they might own and agree in. He had observed what differences there arose among protestants in the doctrine of the sacrament, in the divine decrees, in the government of the church, and some other things. These disagreements had rendered the professors of the gospel contemptible to those of the Roman communion which caused no small grief to the heart of this good man, nearly touched for the honour of Christ his master, and his true church, which suffered hereby; and like a person of a truly public and large spirit, as his function was, seriously debated and deliberated with himself for the remedying this evil. This made him judge it very advisable to procure such a confession. And in order to this, he thought it necessary for the chief and most learned divines of the several churches to meet together, and with all freedom and friendliness to debate the points of controversy according to the rule of the scripture; and after mature deliberation, by agreement of all parties, to draw up a book of articles and heads of christian faith and practice, which would serve for the standing doctrine of the protestants (301-02).

With this dream of a Protestant general council in view, and with an eye to discussions that were already well under way in Trent, Cranmer wrote, between 1548 and 1552, to others besides Melancthon. There are letters to the Pole, John à Lasco, to Albert Hardenberg in Bremen, to Martin Bucer in Strasbourg, to Heinrich Bullinger in Zurich, and to Calvin in Geneva.¹⁰ Over and over, the correspondence expresses the archbishop's desire to '[set] forth in our churches the true doctrine of God' and 'to transmit to posterity a true and explicit form of doctrine agreeable to the rule of the sacred writings' (to Lasco, 421). His proposal was that a body of learned men should meet to agree on the formulation of 'some work, that should embrace the chief subjects of ecclesiastical doctrine and ... transmit the truth uncorrupted to posterity' (to Hardenberg, 426).

As time went on, and the European contingent showed little sign of reciprocal enthusiasm, he became increasingly alarmed at developments in Trent, where the thirteenth session of the Council was sitting. By 1552, he was convinced of the urgency of resolving the 'sacramental controversy'

¹⁰The relevant letters (in Cox) are numbers CCLXXXV (to Lasco), CCLXXXVI (to Hardenberg), CCLXXXVII (to Bucer), CCLXXXIX (to Melancthon), CXCVI (to Bullinger), CCXCVII (to Calvin), CCXCVIII (to Melancthon). I have used Cox's English translation of Cranmer's Latin in each case.

among the protestants, Trent having promulgated a decree on the eucharist in 1551 (to Bullinger, 431). He reminded Calvin that ‘our adversaries are now holding their councils at Trent for the establishment of their errors, and shall we neglect to call together a godly synod, for the refutation of error, and for restoring and propagating the truth [?]’ (432)

Repeatedly, Cranmer stressed the King’s willingness to provide a safe and quiet haven in England where a synod might be held. But responses from other reformers were barely even half-hearted, and nothing ever came of the plan. Strype’s reference to this enormous disappointment is a masterpiece of understatement. He tells us only that ‘the troubles at home and abroad frustrated this excellent purpose, which for two years [Cranmer] had been labouring to bring to some good issue’ (309).

Such, then, is the background to the work of producing the pioneering Prayer Book that would include the collect for St Mark’s Day. What remains to be discussed is how this set of circumstances would have sharpened the liturgical focus of the 1549 Book of Common Prayer. For now that acts of worship were to be entirely in the vernacular, the relationship between prayers and lections could be made so much clearer. Moreover, carefully drafted prayers offered a powerful means for inculcating sound biblical doctrine.

Given the correspondence with European colleagues, and the drafting of legislation related to the control of doctrine in England in the late 1540s, it is easy to imagine Cranmer’s reactions as he reviewed the provisions for St Mark’s day in his new Prayer Book. Indeed, as he read through the verses of Ephesians 4 which appeared in the Sarum missal, he may well have felt that the compiler of the earlier lectionary had stopped too soon. The important concern for his Reformation Church, beleaguered by lingering loyalties to the Church of Rome and still coming to a sense of its own distinctive doctrinal position, was that its members should come to a Christlike spiritual adulthood that protected them from being swept away by ‘every wind of doctrine’. Maturity of this kind would ensure that the faithful could discern good teaching from its more dubious competitors. It is a short step from here to imagine a contrast forming in his mind, between the ‘heavenly doctrine’ of the gospel, expounded by faithful preachers, and the ‘blastes of vayne doctrine’ which he feared from clergy who continued to support the old order.

Even so, the first of the additional verses (Eph 4.14) is only a subordinate clause on the way to a larger proposition. There is a compelling image for a community of faith on the way to maturity in the picture of the Church growing to the stature of Christ, and thus growing in love within itself, in the next two verses, and one wonders why Cranmer did not use it. The merely frivolous notion that he might have succumbed to the attractions of an undeniably winning phrase in ‘blasts of vain doctrine’ may

be swiftly discarded (though it would be satisfying to know how he arrived at ‘blasts’). On the other hand, the claim that he responded to the urgent priorities of the day seems unavoidable. There would be time enough later on, when the Church was stable, for it to look to its internal development in love.

It is impossible to say whether, had events gone otherwise and the Second Prayer Book of Edward VI had taken root after 1552, Cranmer might have looked again at St Mark’s Day. That is only to burden slender evidence with the weight of still more conjecture. It was the business of the Elizabethan Church, probably in the early 1560s, to alter the collect for St Mark to reflect the major and minor themes of the epistle a little more accurately.¹¹ This revised form has persisted in all subsequent versions of the Book of Common Prayer:

Almighty God, who hast instructed thy holy Church with the heavenly doctrine of thy evangelist Saint Mark: Give us grace, that, being not like children carried away with every blast of vain doctrine, we may be established in the truth of thy holy Gospel; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

We need not necessarily assume that, at the time when the change is likely to have been made, ‘vain doctrine’ seemed to have lost its terrors for the Church. The apparent stability under Elizabeth would continue to be threatened by periodic tremors from Puritan and Roman Catholic quarters. What we can say, though, is that the hands behind the new form have followed a different logic of cause and effect. In their view, it is not the foundation in the Gospel that stands as a precaution against doctrinal error. Rather, the important thing is to discern false teaching and avoid its seductions, in order to lay claim to a secure and true sense of the Gospel.

Modern Anglicanism has dealt still more circumspectly with the subject of doctrine in honouring St Mark. To take one example, the Church of the Province of Southern Africa’s *Anglican Prayer Book* (APB), published in 1989, offers this collect:

Lord of Glory
you enlightened your Church
through the writings
of your evangelist Saint Mark:
ground us firmly
in the truth of the gospel

¹¹See Procter & Frere 101 n. 3. The authors believe that the change occurred before 1564.

and make us faithful to its teaching;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. (296)

This is an eirenic composition, retaining the logic and major themes of the Elizabethan revision, but shedding its inflammatory language. It affirms that faith soundly based on the teaching of the gospel is the ideal to be pursued, without issuing warnings about the dangers posed by irresponsible teaching. Reading the collect alongside the opening paragraph of the General Preface to *An Anglican Prayer Book*, however, we might ask whether it might not have lost something by attenuating the relationship between the Church and her contemporary situation:

The creation of this Prayer Book has been a joyful and inspiring task during a period of over twenty years of liturgical experiment and renewal. The same period has been a crucial one for human relations in our subcontinent, with the Church, in spite of its own inadequacy and sinfulness, lifted into a prophetic and pastoral witness to both the perpetrators and the victims of ideology, conflict and violence. (9)

The 1549 collect may have disappeared, but the questions that it raises remain vividly alive for liturgical writers. For better or for worse, liturgy is written in a historical setting. How should worship reflect its place in history? The Church of the Province of Southern Africa insisted that liturgical revision was not ‘an offensive luxury’ in the violent last years of apartheid (9). Could this have been expressed more powerfully in the calendar of festivals than in special occasional prayers for peace? Is there room for a language that speaks forcefully of the Church’s immediate dangers? There is a perceptible divorce between the secular blasts of vain doctrine alluded to in the APB’s General Preface, and the untroubled petitions of the collect.

Out of such puzzling questions it is possible to set down some principles. Chiefly, there is a great deal to be learned from the *process* of writing liturgy, and this is why the 1549 St Mark’s day collect may have taught us more by disappearing than it could have done had it remained in use. The writer of the collect was not composing for generations to come: he was concerned with articulating his Church’s present dilemmas, but using the scriptural foundations and images of her tradition. This is to negotiate the fine line between propaganda and appropriate contemporaneity — and succeed.

As the inheritors of the 1549 Prayer Book recognised, liturgy is not timeless. On the other hand, vain doctrine, in its various guises, certainly is. We fight old enemies on new ground. This is a challenge that those

responsible for the practice of worship must confront in striving towards prayer that illuminates the truth of the gospel.

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Opsomming

'n Aantal kort gebede vir heiligedae is vir die Eerste Gebedeboek van Eduard VI van 1549 herskryf om hulle voorgangers volgens die Sarum-rite te vervang. Dit was om die indruk, verfoeilik vir Reformatoriese begrippe, as sou die heiliges self aangeroop word, te vermy. In hierdie artikel word ingegaan op die skryfproses onderliggend aan die gebed vir St. Markusdag, wat afsluit met 'n waarskuwing teen 'ydellike leerstellinge'. Terwyl die gebed in ooreenstemming is met die tipiese praktyk om die teks op die daaglikse voorlesing te baseer, moet dit gesien word in die breër konteks van huidige debatte oor die beheer van leerstellinge en lering in die kerk. In die slotbespreking word besin oor die lot van die gebed in die Elizabethaanse Kerk en veral in moderne Anglikaanse hersienings. Die vraag word gestel of die moontlik strelende styl van eietydse weergawes op 'n skeiding dui tussen 'n begeerte om die regte leer, gepaard met ernstige politieke oortuigings, te verdedig, en hulle liturgiese uitdrukking. Die bespreking sluit af met die vraag of moderne liturgie nou die uitdaging van liturgieskepping in 'n politieke konteks behoort te heroorweeg.

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