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CRANMER – PSYCHOLOGIST AS WELL AS THEOLOGIAN?

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In the year that we commemorate the 450th anniversary of the Second Prayer Book of King Edward VI it is interesting to note how in his revision of the Communion service Cranmer combined shrewd psychology (though the science had not then been formalised) with sound theology.

The First Prayer Book of King Edward VI, published three years earlier, had retained so much of the structure of the canon of the mass that Bishop Stephen Gardiner of Winchester could claim that it was very little different and that its doctrine was ‘not distant from the catholic faith’. From the Protestant angle the reformer Martin Bucer (in his *Censura*) felt that there were things in the order which he would like to see ‘more fully explained, improved or corrected’.

Cranmer’s revised canon of 1549 consisted of what we now know as the Prayer for the Church Militant, but which included a modified invocation of (more properly a thanksgiving for) the saints together with prayers for the dead. This flowed straight into the Prayers of Consecration and Oblation and the Lord’s Prayer. Then followed the Peace, with the ground of our peace emphasised by an expanded version of 1 Corinthians 5:7b,8a, after which Cranmer inserted the material produced the previous year as the *Order for the Communion*. This had been inserted into the Mass after the communion of the priest, who was now required to defer communicating until after he had recited this material, consisting of two exhortations similar in content to the first and third ones in our Book of Common Prayer, followed by the Invitation, Confession, Absolution, Comfortable Words and Prayer of Humble Access. When this was completed priest and people were to share together in the communion.

For his 1552 revision Cranmer moved this intercessory and penitential sections to the position where we have them in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, so that the Prayer of Humble Access came immediately before the Prayer of Consecration. The Lord’s Prayer and so-called Prayer of Oblation were then re-positioned to follow immediately after the reception of the bread and wine to make the point that while the service commemorates the once-for-all sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross for our sins, the only sacrifice we can offer is one of ‘praise and thanksgiving’, which must come as a response after we have communicated. The reception of the bread and wine thus followed immediately after the recital of the words of institution. Then the positioning of the Lord’s Prayer immediately following the communion made the point that we can call God our Father only through what Christ has achieved for us on the Cross. This was emphasised further in the words of the alternative Prayer of Thanksgiving ‘...Thou doest assure us thereby of Thy fauoure and goodnes towarde us, and that we be...also heys, through hope, of Thy euerlasting kingdom, by the merits of the most precious death and Passion of thy deare sonne’. (*sic*)

So much for the theological element in the revision: Cranmer had now produced what Dom Gregory Dix in his monumental work *The Shape of the Liturgy* once described as ‘not a disordered attempt at a catholic rite, but the only effective attempt ever made to give liturgical expression to the doctrine of “justification by faith alone”’. In a 1982

Grove Liturgical Study (No. 30 – *Luther's Liturgical Criteria and his Reform of the Canon of the Mass*) Bryan Spinks summarised Luther's emphasis by saying that he 'replaced 'We do' with 'He has done'. The same could be said of Cranmer's work in 1552.

What about the psychology? The adjustments in the 1552 order, maintained in the Book of Common Prayer, meant that the communicant was now encouraged to approach the Lord's Table with his or her mind focused on the Lord Jesus Christ, what He has accomplished for us upon the Cross, and how He made provision at the Last Supper for us to remember Him and His sacrifice through this sacramental means. Consequently we are encouraged to act in response the minute we have heard the dominical injunction, 'Do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of Me'. Nothing more is said: the communicants are to rise from their knees and draw near with faith.

One of the reasons for objections by those of Protestant outlook to the Deposited Book of 1928 was because it reintroduced the Prayer of Oblation into the Prayer of Consecration, thus undoing some of the Cranmerian Reformed emphasis and bringing back the possibility of reading into the service some sort of offering to God apart from the responsive 'sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving'. But it can also be argued that this is psychologically bad: just at the moment when their thoughts have been focused on the work of Christ the communicants' attention is turned back on themselves and what they think they are doing.

This is symptomatic of what has been seen in other contexts as a modern malaise in Anglican circles. Over recent decades our church has rightly been charged with indulging in too much navel-gazing. We have spent far too much time and energy looking at our own organization, activities and needs rather than devoting ourselves to the worship of Almighty God and the service of a needy world around us. So we find that most of the modern revisions of the Communion service follow the recital of the words of institution by switching the focus back to the communicants and telling God what we think we are doing in that action, in some cases at considerable length.

The revisers of 1662 who preserved most of the insights of 1552 for us were right in maintaining Cranmer's emphasis, and we must ensure that it remains an important element in Anglican liturgy for the future. Once the worshipper has been reminded of the command of the Lord Jesus Christ to '*Do this...*' the only response to make is to get on and do it! This is not only sound psychology: it is commonsense discipleship.

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