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Luther on Liturgy and Hymns

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The Other Reformers and Christian Worship: Not Quite Lutheran

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When Mary Tudor ascended the throne of England in 1553, it soon became clear that she was going to restore Roman Catholicism as the official religion of the land. This meant that prominent Protestants had three choices: 1) lie low, perhaps even conform, in the hope that Mary's reign would not last long; 2) speak out and oppose the queen, knowing that persecution would soon follow; or 3) leave. Over the course of Mary's reign almost three hundred died for their Protestant faith at the hands of Mary's officials, but several additional hundreds fled to the continent and found refuge in various Protestant cities, where they waited for things to change in their homeland. These Marian exiles kept alive the dream of a Protestant England, and to that end they maintained liturgical communities in which they prayed, sang, heard the Word, and celebrated the Sacraments in the English language. In at least one such community, they also fought—fought about worship—and in their squabbling they offered competing versions of Protestant worship, but neither of them quite Lutheran.¹

This early version of “worship wars” occurred in the refugee community at Frankfurt. Even before the English had arrived, Frankfurt-am-Main had opened its doors to Protestant refugees from France, who formed a little congregation there under the pastoral leadership of Valérand Poullain. When the English arrived Poullain welcomed them as did the town authorities, and under the pastoral leadership of one of their own, William Whittingham, they developed a liturgy that resembled that of their French counterparts rather than retaining the one that their late king had authorized in England just a few years before. Shortly thereafter they chose the Scottish reformer John Knox as their pastor.

But not everyone was pleased. Almost from the start there was a part of the congregation that wanted to retain their English usages in the *Book of Common Prayer*. Nevertheless, after a dispute and an appeal to John Calvin, the Frankfurt church had agreed on a compromise liturgy. As it turned out, however, this decision was not final, for it failed to reckon with Richard Cox, a late arrival in Frankfurt but a man of authority—former tutor to Edward VI and vice-chancellor at Oxford University—and a man of conviction. This authority soon became clear when Cox and his followers announced to the church elders that “they would do as they had done in England, and that they would have the face of an English Church.” But to this Knox answered, “The Lord grant it to have the face of Christ's Church.” The issue was worship.²

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As it turned out, the advantage lay with Cox, not Knox, although it was more a question of politics than it was theology. On the one hand, Cox was willing to surrender practices from the *Prayer Book* that he acknowledged as matters of indifference, but he was unwilling to go as far as the previous compromise liturgy had. The Frankfurt authorities, however, threatened Cox and his group with expulsion if they would not conform to the already established practices of the English congregation. But this changed when one of Cox's supporters informed the city authorities about writings of Knox in which he had attacked not only Mary but also her husband, Philip of Spain, and her father-in-law, Charles V. Regarding the emperor, Knox had written that he was "no less an enemy to Christ than Nero." For an imperial city this was a bit much, and so Knox had to go, soon to be followed by others who had supported him.³

But where to go? Most of them, including Knox and Whittingham, eventually made their way to Geneva, where they formed the nucleus of a sizable community of English refugees, committed to pure theology and worship after the example of their hosts.⁴ Whittingham, for example, took the lead in producing an English Bible that reflected the best of Reformed scholarship as well as theology and that had a remarkable history during the reign of Queen Elizabeth.⁵ Similarly, Whittingham and William Kethe, along with others, prepared a new and expanded edition of the metrical Psalter that was so important in English-speaking worship over succeeding centuries.⁶ Just as in Frankfurt, Knox and the English exiles also prepared their own liturgy and then published it as *The Forme of Prayers and Ministration of the Sacraments, etc., used in the Englishe Congregation at Geneva*. Not surprisingly, in their preparation of this work they used models close at hand and so added to their title, *approved, by the famous and godly learned man, John Calvin*.⁷

Thus, by 1556 there were two competing liturgies for English-speaking Protestants, one more or less homegrown⁸—the second *Book of Common Prayer* from 1552, and another, prepared more directly under continental influences—*The Forme of Prayers*. Both would have significant futures, the first becoming again the official liturgy of the Church of England with the accession of Queen Elizabeth. In spite of a couple of significant changes made in 1559, the Elizabethan book as a whole and in detail remained what Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, and his reforming colleagues in Edward's reign had prepared just a few years before.⁹ As for the Genevan book, it became the official liturgy of the Church of Scotland after Knox's return to his native land in 1559,¹⁰ and for some Puritans in England it became the book they advocated as a replacement for the *Book of Common Prayer*.¹¹

Together, the two books, especially the eucharistic services, illustrate foundational characteristics of Reformed worship in the second half of the sixteenth century. If, then, we are interested in Protestant (not Lutheran) worship during the

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Reformation period, these two liturgies illustrate some of the basic concerns of the Reformed churches when they met for public worship. However, these two works also reveal some of the tensions among the Reformed in England that would culminate in the English Civil War.

The first point, then, is that the two liturgies are both clearly Reformed. This is evident both from what they do not include as well as from what they do. The negative is especially evident in the case of the *Book of Common Prayer*, since it is a major revision of Cranmer's first effort that came out in 1549 and so reveals themes that the English reformers wanted to express even more clearly than in their first book.¹² Although the first edition marked a major step away from the medieval liturgy—after all, it was in English, not Latin—it still retained numerous remnants of the old forms and old theology. In the next year or so, Martin Bucer, exiled from Strasbourg and resident in England, prepared a major critique of the book and offered numerous suggestions for improvement, while the traditionalist bishop, Stephen Gardiner, who would later reconcile with Rome during the reign of Queen Mary, offered qualified support for the new book from his perch in the Tower of London. Obviously, from a Protestant perspective the 1549 book left something to be desired.¹³

Therefore, when the second edition appeared in 1552 it presented a clearer and more substantial departure from the medieval forms. So, for example, the new version eliminated from the first book anointing of the sick and committing of the soul to God in the funeral service. Cranmer and his colleagues also made many changes in the Communion liturgy. Altars, unleavened bread in wafers, and the term "Mass" were out, while Communion tables, ordinary bread, and "Communion" were in. No longer did the Canon of the Mass include a prayer for the dead and a commendation of the Virgin Mary and the saints; and instead of saying, "The body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life" as he distributed the host to communicants, the priest now said, "Take and eat this, in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith, with thanksgiving."¹⁴

Now, such alterations should not obscure the fact that the first book was already a Protestant one and had initiated changes that the second book retained. Already in the 1549 version, the reformers had forbidden private Masses and elevating the host, had mandated Communion in both kinds, and had eliminated the invocation of saints. They had replaced the Mass as a propitiatory sacrifice by the Lord's Supper as a sacrifice of thanksgiving only and as a memorial meal. The second book also retained the formulation of the first book that described the basis of salvation as the unique activity of Jesus Christ, whom the Father had sent "to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption, who made there (by his one oblation once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world." As for the Eucharist, our Lord "did institute [it], and in

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his holy gospel command us, to celebrate [1552: continue] a perpetual memory of that his precious death, until his coming again."¹⁵

Nonetheless, even though the first book contained no direct references to transubstantiation, it did at times employ realistic language regarding the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist that the second book toned down or else eliminated. Besides the words of distribution cited above that are the most obvious indication of this theological shift, there was a slight change in a pre-Communion exhortation. In the first book, in addition to explaining that in the Sacrament, "we *spiritually* eat of the flesh of Christ, and drink his blood," the text also stated that Christ had "left *in those holy Mysteries*, as a pledge of his love, and a continual remembrance of the same *his own blessed body and precious blood*, for us to feed upon spiritually" [emphasis mine]. But in the second book, this has been changed to read, "he [Jesus Christ] hath instituted and ordained holy mysteries, as pledges of his love, and continual remembrance of his death, to our great and endless comfort." The body and blood *in the mysteries* have disappeared.¹⁶

Similarly, in a prayer just prior to the Communion, the priest prayed in the first book: "Grant us therefore (gracious Lord) so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood *in these holy Mysteries*, that we may continually dwell in him, and he in us, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood" [emphasis mine]; but in the 1552 version, the eating and drinking of body and blood are no longer connected to "the Mysteries." Instead, the priest says simply: "Grant us therefore (gracious Lord) so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his most precious blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean, etc." Thus, while spiritual eating and drinking persists in the second book, the communicant is no longer directed to the bread and wine for Christ's body and blood as suggested in the first.¹⁷

In the eucharistic prayer in the first book, the body and blood were closely connected to the elements, for the priest petitioned God that He would "vouchsafe to bless and sanctify these thy gifts, and creatures of bread and wine, that they may be unto us the body and blood of thy most dearly beloved Son Jesus Christ." But in the second book the priest prays: "Grant that we, receiving these thy creatures of bread and wine, according to thy Son our Savior Jesus Christ's holy institution, in remembrance of his death and passion, may be partakers of his most blessed body and blood." In good Calvinist fashion participation in Christ's body and blood is *parallel* to eating and drinking bread and wine, but the sacred elements are not joined to the earthly ones.¹⁸

Here, for example, is how Calvin explained it in his "Short Treatise on the Holy Supper":

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We all then confess with one mouth, that on receiving the sacrament in faith, according to the ordinance of the Lord, we are truly made partakers of the proper substance of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. . . . we must raise our hearts upwards to heaven, not thinking that our Lord Jesus Christ is so debased as to be enclosed under some corruptible elements.

For Calvin, two things are happening in the Eucharist, one physical—the eating and drinking of bread and wine, and the other spiritual—a communion in the body and blood of Jesus by Christians through faith. Clearly, the English reformers changed their *Prayer Book* in 1552 to reflect a theology of the Eucharist similar to Calvin's.¹⁹

An important part of Calvin's thinking in this matter was his understanding of the person of Christ, for if Jesus Christ was and remained a true man after His resurrection, that meant, Calvin believed, that His body had to be in one place—heaven, of course, after the ascension—and not on many altars in Christian eucharistic services. Calvin wrote:

To wish then to establish such a presence as is to enclose the body within the sign [i.e., the bread], or to be joined to it locally, is not only a reverie, but a damnable error, derogatory to the glory of Christ, and destructive of what we ought to hold in regard to his human nature. For Scripture everywhere teaches us, that as the Lord on earth took our humanity, so he has exalted it to heaven, withdrawing it from mortal condition, but not changing its nature.²⁰

This same Christology is reflected in the 1552 *Prayer Book*, not only indirectly in the statements distinguishing bread and wine from body and blood, but quite directly in a final rubric in the eucharistic liturgy, known as the “black” rubric. Not a part of the original text that was passed by Parliament, the King's Council inserted this rubric after Knox had complained in a sermon before Edward VI about the propriety of kneeling to receive Communion as required by the new book. So the black rubric makes explicit what was already the implicit doctrine of the Communion service:

For as concerning the sacramental bread and wine, they remain still in their very natural substances, and therefore may not be adored, for that were idolatry to be abhorred of all faithful Christians. And as concerning the natural body and blood of our Savior Christ, they are in heaven and not here. For it is against the truth of Christ's true natural body, to be in more places than in one, at one time.

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Therefore, although the service continued to require kneeling, the rubric makes it clear that that posture did not constitute a confession of the real presence. It was only intended as a sign “of the humble and grateful acknowledging of the benefits of Christ, given unto the worthy receiver, and to avoid the profanation and disorder, which about the holy Communion might else ensue.”²¹

Obviously, then, the Eucharist liturgy of the second *Book of Common Prayer* is a Reformed service. Although it affirms a spiritual communion in the body and blood of Jesus, it denies the real presence of the body and blood in the bread and wine.

But the same thing is true in the *Forme of Prayers*. Of course, it is almost a tautology to describe as Reformed any liturgy “approved by the famous and godly learned man, John Calvin.” But perhaps it is worthwhile actually to demonstrate, as above with the *Book of Common Prayer*, that this too is a Reformed book.²² So, for example, in the Communion service, the pre-Communion exhortation is in its first several paragraphs the same as in the *Book of Common Prayer* and therefore affirms a spiritual reception. “The benefit is great,” says the liturgy, “if with a truly penitent heart and lively faith we receive that holy sacrament (for then we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ and drink his blood, then we dwell in Christ and Christ in us, we be one with Christ and Christ with us).”²³ Later in the Genevan version of the exhortation, the communicant is warned against seeking “Christ bodily present” in the elements “as if he were enclosed in the bread or wine, or as if these elements were turned and changed into the substance of his flesh and blood.” Instead, the efficacious use of the Sacrament “is to lift up our minds by faith above all things worldly and sensible, and thereby to enter into heaven, that we may find and receive Christ, where he dwelleth”—an activity described by a marginal note as “the true eating of Christ in the sacrament.”²⁴

Besides offering an occasion for spiritually receiving Christ, this liturgy also presents the Eucharist as a memorial meal, “a remembrance of his death until his coming again.” Therefore, at the time of the distribution, the rubrics state that Scriptures are to be read that “lively set forth the death of Christ, to the intent that our eyes and senses may not only be occupied in these outward signs of bread and wine . . . but that our hearts and minds also may be fully fixed in the contemplation of the Lord’s death, which is by this holy Sacrament represented.”²⁵ Clearly, then, a Reformed understanding of the Lord’s Supper has shaped the eucharistic liturgy of the *Forme of Prayers*, just as it has the Communion service in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

Nevertheless, in fairness to these liturgies, one must acknowledge that however inadequate their eucharistic theology from a Lutheran perspective, they both clearly set forth Christ as the remedy for human sin. For example, both liturgies include a confession of sins prior to communing. In the case of the *Book of Common Prayer*, this confession occurs just before the Proper Preface and

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includes four parts: exhortation, confession proper, absolution, and “comfortable words” from the Scriptures. The confession is abject: “we knowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, which we . . . most grievously have committed, by thought, word and deed, against thy divine Majesty. . . . we do earnestly repent, and be heartily sorry for these our misdoings: the remembrance of them is grievous to us, the burden of them is intolerable.” Therefore, the plea for mercy is based solely on Christ, “have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us . . . for thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake.” The absolution is pronounced in the name of Jesus Christ upon those who with “heartly repentance and true faith turn” unto God, their merciful Father; and following the absolution, the priest recites scriptural promises of forgiveness for Christ’s sake in the words of our Lord (Mt 11:28 and Jn 3:16), St. Paul (1 Tm 2:15), and St. John (1 Jn 2:1–2).²⁶

In the *Forme of Prayers* the Sunday morning service begins with a confession of sins, the minister choosing one of two texts. The first text is described as “framed to our time, out of the 9th chapter of Daniel” and the second “for all states and times.” Thus, the first confession makes mention of “our miserable country of England” and sees in England’s current fate evidence of God’s wrath upon both rulers and themselves on account of their sins, punishment designed to move sinners to repentance. Claiming no merit in themselves, they cast themselves upon God’s mercy in Christ: “Wherefore, O Lord, hear us! O Lord, forgive us! O Lord, consider and tarry not over long! But for the sake of thy dear Son, Jesus Christ’s sake, be merciful unto us and deliver us.”²⁷

Similarly, in the second, more generic, confession, the confession of sins is total: “We are miserable sinners, conceived and born in sin and iniquity, so that in us there is no goodness. . . . we continually transgress thy holy precepts and commandments, and so purchase to ourselves, through thy just judgment, death and condemnation.” But so too is the reliance on Christ: “We most humbly beseech thee, for Jesus Christ’s sake, to show thy mercy upon us, to forgive us all our sins, and to increase thy Holy Spirit in us.” Indeed, Jesus is explicitly acknowledged as “our only Savior, whom thou hast already given an oblation and offering for our sins.”²⁸

Later, in the exhortation to Communion, the minister expresses the same thought by urging his listeners to “repent . . . and have a lively and steadfast faith in Christ our Savior, seeking only your salvation in the merits of his death and passion.” Then, just prior to the distribution, the minister offers a eucharistic prayer that is a beautiful example of Gospel-centered eloquence. He begins by magnifying God’s majesty first of all for creation but then:

. . . chiefly that thou has delivered us from that everlasting death and damnation, into the which Satan drew mankind by the mean of sin, from the bondage whereof, neither man nor angel was able to make us free; but thou, O Lord, rich in mercy and infinite in goodness, hast provided our redemp-

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tion to stand in thy only and well-beloved Son, whom of very love thou didst give to be made man, like unto us in all things, (sin except) that in his body he might receive the punishments of our transgression, by his death to make satisfaction to thy justice, and by his resurrection to destroy him that was author of death, and so to reduce and bring again life to the world, from which the whole offspring of Adam most justly was exiled.

The prayer goes on to praise God for His love, which moved Him to show undeserved mercy, to give life where death had been victorious, and to be gracious to those who had rebelled against His justice. It also describes the Sacrament as a confession of faith to the world that by Christ alone “we have received liberty and life; that by him alone thou doest acknowledge us thy children and heirs; that by him alone we have entrance to the throne of grace; that by him alone we are possessed in our spiritual kingdom . . . and by whom our bodies shall be raised up again from the dust, and shall be placed with him in that endless joy” prepared by God for the elect before the foundation of the world. I’m not sure that a Lutheran could say it any better.²⁹

The eucharistic prayer in the *Book of Common Prayer* is not so eloquent but it is equally evangelical, for it sets forth as the basis of its petition, the “tender mercy” of God that moved Him to “give thine only son Jesus Christ, to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption, who made there (by his one oblation of himself once offered) a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world.” Similarly, in a pre-Communion exhortation, the priest admonishes the people to give thanks to God “for the redemption of the world by the death and passion of our Savior Christ, both God and man, who did humble himself, even to death upon the cross for us miserable sinners . . . that he might make us the children of God, and exalt us to everlasting life.” In the Proper Prefaces for Christmas and Easter, the *Prayer Book* also refers to Christ’s redemptive work; and in a Post-Communion prayer, once again there is a petition that “by the merits and death of thy Son Jesus Christ, and through faith in his blood, we and all thy whole church may obtain remission of our sins, and all other benefits of his Passion.” Thus, the Protestant Gospel of justification by faith pervades this English liturgy also.³⁰

It is clear, therefore, that both the *Book of Common Prayer* and the *Forme of Prayers* are Reformed, especially in their eucharistic services. Fundamental to both are these convictions: all men are sinners, but there is forgiveness through faith in Christ’s redemptive work; and the Lord’s Supper is a means by which we remember Christ’s passion while spiritually taking part in His body and blood. However, in spite of these core convictions that characterize both books, there are important differences between them as well—not so much in the underlying theology of salvation but in the theology of worship.

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In the *Forme of Prayers* there is a note “to the reader” that nicely expresses the attitude of the book toward worship. In order to explain how it is that “we follow rather this Order than any other in the administration of this Sacrament,” it refers to the words regarding the Lord’s Supper from 1 Corinthians 11 that are to be read at the beginning of the eucharistic liturgy: “They are read and pronounced, to teach us how to behave ourselves in this action,” i.e., as a set of instructions for carrying out Holy Communion. Indeed, the note concludes “that without his [Christ’s] word and warrant, there is nothing in this holy action attempted.” In other words, at least in this matter, Christian worship must follow the form and pattern laid down in the Scriptures.

The note to the reader also explains how the Genevan exiles constructed their service, in every instance referring to explicit Scripture: “We do first . . . examine ourselves, *according to Saint Paul’s rule*. . . Then, taking bread, we give thanks, break, and distribute it, *as Christ our Savior hath taught us*. Finally, the ministration ended, we give thanks again, *according to his example*” [emphasis mine]. Thus, after the reading of 1 Corinthians 11, the Communion liturgy consists of four parts. The first of these is the exhortation by which the minister admonishes the people to prepare for Communion by repentance and faith. Then the minister and his people sit at the Communion table, and, taking the bread, the minister offers a prayer of thanksgiving. Then follows the fraction and distribution, the pastor “delivering it to the people, who distribute and divide the same amongst themselves, *according to our Savior Christ’s commandment*” [emphasis mine]. Similarly, then, the distribution of the cup; and after this, a prayer of thanksgiving and the singing of a psalm (Psalm 103 is suggested).³¹

This use of the Scriptures as the normative model for Christian worship is known as the “regulative principle” in Reformed worship that was especially characteristic of English Puritanism. The *Westminster Confession* (21.1), for example, states it this way: “The acceptable way of worshiping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited to His own revealed will, that He may not be worshiped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representations, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture.”³²

But the same principle is clearly evident in this English Genevan Communion liturgy. The reformers are trying to replicate what happened at the first Eucharist, neither adding nor subtracting from what our Lord did originally. In their preface to the *Forme of Prayers* they explained why: “We . . . do present unto you . . . a form and order of a reformed church, limited within the compass of God’s Word, which our Savior hath left unto us as only sufficient to govern all our actions by, so that whatsoever is added to this Word by God’s device, seem it never so good, holy, or beautiful, yet before God, which is jealous and cannot admit any companion or counselor, it is evil, wicked, and abominable.” By stay-

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ing close to biblical precedent, they would avoid the risk of offending God while attempting to worship Him.³³

This is undoubtedly also the reason why they employed the singing of Psalms only in their book. Although Reformed worship generally was characterized by metrical psalm singing in the Reformation period, for these reformers, the practice was of a piece with their concern to be rigorously scriptural. Convinced that the Scriptures permit singing in worship (cf. Eph 5:19), they nonetheless restricted themselves to the Psalms “which the Holy Ghost hath framed to the same use, and commended to the Church, as containing the effect of the whole Scriptures that our hearts might be more lively touched.” Better to be safe than sorry, so these English-speaking Protestants sang only what God had given His people to sing in the Scriptures, and they worshiped only as God had laid it out in the Bible. Therefore, worship had to be scriptural in form as well as in content.³⁴

The approach of the *Book of Common Prayer* is different. For Cranmer and his colleagues, the Scriptures provide the content of the liturgy but are not the source of its forms. So, for example, in the preface to the *Prayer Book*,³⁵ they write that one should inquire of the “ancient fathers” regarding the original purpose of common prayers in the church. They do not cite the Scriptures themselves but argue that the *church fathers* created services that exposed the clergy and people alike to the Bible. Through these services the clergy were supposed to learn their Bibles both for their own sakes and for their congregations, and “the people (by daily hearing of Holy Scripture read in the church) should continually profit more and more in the knowledge of God, and be the more inflamed with the love of true religion.” However, over the course of time, these original purposes had been obscured by cutting down on the amount of Scripture read, by additions of liturgical bits and pieces that interrupted the reading, by the introduction of non-biblical materials, and by using Latin. Therefore, the reformers maintain, the Church of England was now offering a simpler, biblically centered, vernacular liturgy after the example of the Fathers, but without deriving specific forms from the Scriptures themselves.³⁶

Although recognizing the Scriptures as the ultimate standard for the church, Cranmer and his colleagues do not employ the regulative principle when dealing with liturgical forms. In a section of the *Prayer Book* entitled, “Of Ceremonies Why Some Be Abolished, and Some Retained,”³⁷ they address the question of how to handle liturgical ceremonies that “have their beginning by the institution of man.” Although they expressly reject some of these ceremonies, there is no sense at all in their remarks that they must limit themselves only to forms explicitly approved by the Bible. Instead, they recognize that for some ceremonies, “although they have been devised by man, yet it is thought good to reserve them still, as well for a decent order in the church . . . as because they pertain to edification: whereunto all things done in the church (as the apostle teacheth) ought to be referred.” In

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other words, the Scriptures supply the standards for judging ceremonies—edification and decent order—but they do not supply the forms themselves, which have to be devised by men.³⁸

To be sure, Cranmer and his colleagues do not present their book as a collection of *new* liturgical forms. In spite of obvious innovation in, for example, the eucharistic liturgy, whereby the Kyrie has been transformed into a recitation of the Ten Commandments, and the Gloria in excelsis has become a Post-Communion Canticle, their discussion focuses on what to do with ceremonies inherited from the past. Rejecting both the strict traditionalists, who “think it a great matter of conscience to depart from a piece of the least of their ceremonies,” and the innovators, who “so do despise the old, that nothing can like them, but that is new,” the reformers argue that the times are right for a reassessment of all such ceremonies from the standpoint of edification and order.

First and foremost is their conviction that ceremonies are not the center of Christianity. “Christ’s Gospel,” they write, “is a not a ceremonial law (as much of Moses’ law was) but it is a religion to serve God, not in bondage of the figure or shadow but in the freedom of spirit.” Therefore, they can also write, “the keeping or omitting of a ceremony (in itself considered) is but a small thing” and that ceremonies “(upon just causes) may be altered and changed, and therefore are not to be esteemed equal with God’s law.” In fact, they insist that what they are presenting is for the English nation only. Other peoples should feel free to “use such ceremonies, as they shall think best to the setting forth of God’s honor or glory, and the reducing of the people to a most perfect and godly living, without error or superstition.”³⁹

Clearly, then, these English reformers remind us of Luther by treating ceremonies essentially as *adiaphora*, neither commanded nor forbidden, but to be employed for good purposes. Luther wrote:

For even though from the viewpoint of faith, the external orders are free and can without scruples be changed by anyone at any time, yet from the viewpoint of love, you are not free to use this liberty, but bound to consider the edification of the common people.⁴⁰

But who should decide what ceremonies to use? In matters of indifference, the English reformers say, it is up to the constituted authorities to make the choices and not every individual Christian: “No man ought to take in hand nor presume to appoint to alter any public or common order in Christ’s church, except he be lawfully called and authorized thereunto.”⁴¹ Somewhat ironically, there is actually a bit more liberty in the Genevan book than in the English book, at least to this extent that the rubrics in the former instruct the minister to pray for the Holy Spirit before preaching “as the same shall move his heart.”⁴² For its part, the *Book of Common*

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Prayer may at times direct the minister to choose from alternatives provided, but it does not encourage spontaneity. Indeed, Anglican clergy could not even preach freely unless they were specially licensed. Therefore, the *Prayer Book* tells them to use one of the homilies set forth by the authorities.⁴³ In fact, under both Edward and Elizabeth, the Church of England published official books of homilies for the clergy to read in their services.⁴⁴

Instead of variety in worship, therefore, the English reformers advocate establishing liturgical unity within England. In this, too, they resemble Luther, who thought that uniformity in worship was a good idea for a region or district though not necessarily for the entire empire. Luther's concern was that ordinary people not be troubled by unwarranted variety and change. Thus, to the clergy of Livonia, Luther suggested that they establish "one uniform practice" throughout their region "instead of disorder—one thing being done here and another there—lest the common people get confused and discouraged."⁴⁵ Cranmer and his colleagues also think that the church is well-served by everyone's using the same book, something that had not been the case during the Middle Ages: "Where heretofore there hath been great diversity in saying and singing in churches within this realm . . . now from henceforth, all the whole realm shall have but one use." For these reformers the worship forms prescribed in the *Prayer Book* would establish discipline and order in the Church of England in obedience to St. Paul's command that everything be done in decency and good order.⁴⁶

As far as the actual choice of ceremonies is concerned, the English reformers advocate a simpler liturgical life than what had been the case in the medieval church, complaining that "the great excess and multitude of them hath so increased in these latter days, that the burden of them was intolerable." Citing Augustine, they argue that the sheer number of ceremonies ran the risk of imposing upon Christians a liturgical "yoke and burden" worse than that of the Jews under the Levitical law. Furthermore, they complain that some of the old ceremonies were "dark," i.e., did not clearly set forth "Christ's benefits," but Christians needed *clear* reminders of these blessings and of their "duty to God." In addition, the Church of England was also abolishing some ceremonies, perhaps originally devised for good and godly purposes, that over the course of time had been corrupted "partly by the superstitious blindness of the rude and unlearned, and partly by the unsatiable avarice of such as sought more their own lucre, than the glory of God."

But what ceremonies should the church retain? Cranmer and his associates are advocates of the tried and true, the old ceremonies that provide order and edification—presumably the ones that made it into the *Book of Common Prayer*. For these men, respect for such ancient forms is more conducive of unity and concord in the church than is innovation, which, they wrote "(as much as may be with the true setting forth of Christ's religion) is always to be eschewed."

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What all this means, therefore, is that in constructing the *Book of Common Prayer*, the English reformers felt free in the matter of ceremonies to use or to abandon what had been practiced previously in the church. The standards for their decisions were order and edification. Order was evident in the requirement that everyone use the same book, and edification in the requirement that the ceremonies clearly set forth the Christian religion. Other nations might make other changes, but this book presented the best of the old in the service of Christ in the Church of England in the sixteenth century.⁴⁷

By the time of Queen Elizabeth, therefore, English Protestants had two models of Christian worship to follow. One of these originated in Geneva, the other in England itself. But what really distinguished them was not their place of origin, but the principles upon which they had been constructed. The *Book of Common Prayer* treated liturgical forms from the standpoint of Christian liberty—not that everyone could decide for himself what forms to use but rather that ecclesiastical authority (the bishops under the monarch) could make its own judgments about what would edify the people and establish good order. In contrast, the *Forme of Prayers* represented a more cautious school of thought. Worship forms were not free; they were regulated by the Bible.

In spite of the fact that the two books were operating with the same basic soteriology and sacramentology, they offered two different forms of Protestant worship that reflected two different theologies of worship. In the years that followed Elizabeth's ascension to the throne, these differences would help divide the faithful in England into Puritans and Anglicans. But it would be a family feud. For in spite of the fact that a Lutheran can find elements in each liturgy that are quite evangelical, neither of them is anything except Reformed.

Notes

1 A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation*, 2d ed. (London: Batsford, 1989), 339–44. The standard treatment of the refugees is Christina Hallowell Garrett, *The Marian Exiles: A Study in the Origins of Elizabethan Puritanism* (Cambridge: University Press, 1938).

2 As quoted in Dickens, 344–49. For a more detailed description of the various proposals, see G. J. Cuming, *A History of Anglican Liturgy*, 2d ed. (London: Macmillan, 1982), 87–89. For a firsthand account of what went on, see Edward Arber, ed., *A Brief Discourse of the Troubles at Frankfort, 1554–1558* (London: Elliot Stock, 1908). Arber attributed the work to Whittingham, but another study of Whittingham's work rejects this conjecture. See Richard Edward Hunter, "William Whittingham: A Study of His Life and Writings with Especial Reference to the Geneva New Testament" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1953), 46.

3 Dickens, 346–47, and Cuming, 89.

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4 For the Marian exiles in Geneva, see Dan G. Danner, *Pilgrimage to Puritanism: History and Theology of the Marian Exiles at Geneva, 1555–1560* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999).

5 See F. F. Bruce, *History of the Bible in English: From the Earliest Versions*, 3d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 85–92; and Cameron A. MacKenzie, *The Battle for the Bible in England, 1557–1582* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 7–24, 111–59.

6 Hunter, 186–206, and Rivkah Zim, *English Metrical Psalms: Poetry as Praise and Prayer, 1535–1601* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 139–44.

7 For the origins of the *Forme of Prayers* and its relationship to other Reformed liturgies, see *John Knox's Genevan Service Book 1556*, ed. William D. Maxwell (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1931), 3–80.

8 This is not to say that Cranmer and his colleagues did not employ continental materials—quite the contrary. But it does mean that the English church authorities prepared the *Prayer Book* for the Church of England without having to worry about whether continental authorities approved or not. For the sources of the *Prayer Book*, see F. E. Brightman, *The English Rite: Being a Synopsis of the Sources and Revisions of the Book of Common Prayer*, 2d ed. (London: Rivingtons, 1921).

9 Cuming, 70–86, 90–92.

10 Maxwell, 8–9.

11 Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 361–64.

12 The first book, like the second, came from a committee. This means that it is often impossible to ascribe responsibility for a specific text to an individual. Nevertheless, on account of Archbishop Cranmer's unique position and role in preparing these liturgies, it is fair to say that they reflect his work and effort more than anyone else's. See John E. Booty, "Book of Common Prayer," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 1:189–92 (this source subsequently cited as *OER*).

13 Dickens, 244, and Cuming, 70–74.

14 *The First and Second Prayer Books of Edward VI*, Everyman's Library, 1968 reprinting (London: Dent, 1910), 225, 389. In English quotations from this and other sixteenth-century texts, I have retained the vocabulary and punctuation but have modernized the spelling. For a more complete description of the changes throughout the book, see Cuming, 75–86.

15 *Prayer Books*, 222, 389. See also Cuming, 47–67, for a more thorough description of the first *Prayer Book's* contents, especially its relationship to its medieval precedents.

16 *Prayer Books*, 215, 386.

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17 *Ibid.*, 225, 389.

18 *Ibid.*, 222, 389.

19 John Calvin, "Short Treatise on the Holy Supper of Our Lord Jesus Christ," in *John Calvin: Selections from His Writings*, ed. John Dillenberger (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1971), 540–41. For the original French, see "Petit Traicté de la Sainte Cene de Nostre Seigneur Iesus Christ," in *Opera Selecta Joannis Calvini*, ed. Peter Barth, 5 vols. (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1926–1936), 1:529–30. For Calvin's eucharistic theology, see also François Wendel, *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought* (Durham, N.C.: The Labyrinth Press, 1963), 329–55.

20 Calvin, "Short Treatise," 530; *Opera Selecta*, 1:521. See also Wendel, 219–25, 348.

21 *Prayer Books*, 393, and Dickens, 278.

22 Danner, 118–23, describes the theology of each of the main portions of the *Forme of Prayers*.

23 Although Maxwell's work includes the liturgical portions of the *Forme of Prayers*, the entire work has been included in *The Works of John Knox*, ed. David Laing, 6 vols. (1855; repr., New York: AMS Press, 1966) 4:141–214. References in this essay are to the latter. For the above quotation, see *Forme of Prayers*, 192, and *Prayer Books*, 385. The wording is exactly the same.

24 *Forme of Prayers*, 194.

25 *Ibid.*, 195–96.

26 *Prayer Books*, 386–87.

27 *Forme of Prayers*, 179–81.

28 *Ibid.*, 181–82.

29 *Ibid.*, 193–96.

30 *Prayer Books*, 389, 387–88, 390. Regarding justification by faith, Calvin described it as "the main hinge on which religion turns" (*Inst.* 3.11.1).

31 *Forme of Prayers*, 192–97.

32 Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 3 vols. (1931; repr., Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1993), 3:646. Without using the term "regulative principle," Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England: From Cranmer to Baxter and Fox, 1534–1690* (1961; repr., Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996), 255–61, discusses it as the approach of the Puritans to worship. According to Iain Murray, ed., *The Reformation of the Church: A Collection of Reformed and Puritan Documents on Church Issues* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), 73, the first statement by an English church that the regulative principle is foundational to liturgy and church government occurs in the preface to the *Forme of Prayers*. See also Robert E. Webber, ed., *The Complete Library of Christian Worship*, 7 vols. (Nashville, Tenn.: Star Song Publishing Group, 1993–1994), 7:61–62.

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33 *Forme of Prayers*, 160–61. Although in general, this reflects the thinking of Calvin, there is a sense in which they out-Calvined Calvin himself. Although the Genevan Reformer likewise insisted on worshipping God according to the Scriptures (*Inst.* 4.10.23), he was more flexible in ceremonial matters (*Inst.* 4.10.27–32). In fact, in Geneva people communed standing and not sitting. See James Hastings Nichols, *Corporate Worship in the Reformed Tradition* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), 49, 69–70.

34 *Forme of Prayers*, 165–66. In their decision to rely on the Psalter, they were in agreement with Calvin who had written, “We will not find better songs [for worship] . . . than the Psalms of David, which the Holy Spirit has spoken to him and made. Therefore, when we sing them, we are certain that God has put the words in our mouth as if they themselves sang in us to exalt his glory.” See John Calvin, “*The Form of Prayers and Song of the Church*, 1542: ‘Letter to the Reader,’” trans. Ford Lewis Battles, *Calvin Theological Journal* 15 (1980):164; and *Opera Selecta*, 2:17. According to Nichols, 36, “Metrical psalmody swept Europe as the most characteristic mark and powerful attraction of Reformed worship.”

35 According to Cuming, 47, the preface derives from Cranmer’s first breviary scheme, which, in turn, depended on the work of Francisco de Quiñones who had published a revised Breviary in 1535. See also Brightman, 1:34–38.

36 *Prayer Books*, 321–23.

37 According to Cuming, 67, this piece is an expansion of two articles from the *Thirteen Articles* that had been drawn up in negotiations with the Lutherans in 1538. See also Charles Hardwick, *A History of the Articles of Religion* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1895), 52–65, 264, 271–72.

38 *Prayer Books*, 324.

39 *Ibid.*, 324–26.

40 Martin Luther, “A Christian Exhortation to the Livonians Concerning Public Worship and Concord,” in *Liturgy and Hymns*, ed. Ulrich S. Leupold, Luther’s Works, vol. 53 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 47 (this source subsequently cited as LW 53). For the original language, see *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger, 1883–), 18:419.7–11.

41 *Prayer Books*, 324. Similarly, Luther insisted that the removal of images be done by the constituted authorities, “our princes, lords, and emperors.” Martin Luther, “Against the Heavenly Prophets in the Matter of Images and Sacraments,” in *Church and Ministry II*, ed. Conrad Bergendoff, Luther’s Works, vol. 40 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1958), 90; and *Luthers Werke* 18:72.20–73.4.

42 *Forme of Prayers*, 182. Similarly, after the sermon, the minister is instructed to pray using either the text provided “or such like.”

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43 *Prayer Books*, 379, 380, 382, 384. As of 1548, all preachers—even parish priests—had to have a license. For the regulation of preaching, see Margaret Christian, “Preaching and Sermons: England,” in *OER*, 3:328–30.

44 See Terence R. Murphy, “Book of Homilies,” in *OER*, 1:194–95.

45 Luther, “Exhortation to the Livonians,” LW 53, 47; and *Luthers Werke*, 18:419.2–6. In the preface to his “German Mass” (LW 53, 62; *Luthers Werke*, 19:73.3–10), Luther also advocated liturgical unity on a local basis: “I do not propose that all of Germany should uniformly follow our Wittenberg order. . . . But it would be well if the service in every principality would be held in the same manner and if the order observed in a given city would also be followed by the surrounding towns and villages; whether those in the principalities hold the same order or add to it ought to be a matter of free choice and not of constraint.”

46 *Prayer Books*, 322.

47 *Ibid.*, 321–26.