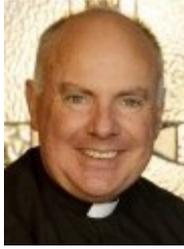


## PRAYER BOOK REVISION BEGINS IN AUSTRALIA

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The 1662 *Book of Common Prayer (BCP)* remained the only liturgical product in use in the Anglican Church of Australia till well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was in the 1920s that moves were made across the Anglican Communion to change the 1662 *BCP* in significant ways.

Liturgical scholarship had recovered many of the liturgies of the early church and these influenced development of new liturgies being proposed by various groups in England and beyond. This was particularly so in the Eucharistic liturgy through the extension of the Prayer of Consecration to include much more ancient material than only reference to Christ's death as was the case in the Prayer of Consecration in the 1662 *BCP*.

The new proposed prayers, finally included in what became known as the 1928 *Book of Common Prayer*, included the invocation of the Holy Spirit over the elements of the bread and wine (the *epiclesis*) to make them holy and so that they might be the body and blood of Christ. The 1928 book therefore prayed:

'Hear us, O merciful Father, we most humbly beseech thee, and with thy Holy and Life-giving Spirit vouchsafe to bless and sanctify both us and these thy gifts of Bread and Wine, that they may be unto us the Body and Blood of the Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, to the end that we, receiving the same, may be strengthened and refreshed in body and soul'.

There was a clear implication of a realist Eucharistic theology in this prayer where the signs (the bread and wine) were linked to what they signified (the body and blood of Christ) in a real but not fleshy manner. This had been the pattern in many early liturgies and so scholars sought to recover not only these words but also the theology that accompanied them.

The 1928 *BCP* also included the recounting of the mighty acts of the Lord, such as the resurrection, ascension and glorification of Christ. In liturgical terms this was called the *anamnesis* (a Greek word meaning remembrance) where the effects of the mighty acts were seen to be powerfully present in the celebration of the Eucharist as an act of dynamic remembrance. The 1928 *BCP* therefore prayed:

'Wherefore, O Lord and heavenly Father, we thy humble servants, having in remembrance the precious death and passion of thy dear Son, his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension, according to his holy institution, do celebrate, and set before thy Divine Majesty with these holy gifts, the memorial which he hath willed us to make, rendering unto thee most hearty thanks for the innumerable benefits which he hath procured unto us'.

Again there were clear realist theological statements where the gifts of bread and wine were linked with the benefits of Christ's works and celebrated anew in the Eucharist in a real but not fleshy manner.

All these prayers were included in the proposed revision of the *BCP* known as the 1928 *BCP* in addition to the *Kyries* (Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy), a new prayer of intercession and the *Benedictus* (Blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord). This expanded Eucharistic liturgy was printed in the new prayer book as an alternative along with the contents of the 1662 *BCP*.

In England any new prayer book for the Church of England needed the approval of the British parliament since it was for the Established Church. Despite being acceptable to the House of Lords it was not acceptable to the House of Commons and so the prayer book failed to pass through parliament.

Many of the bishops were bitterly disappointed by the result and so unofficially authorized the use of the 1928 *BCP* particularly for the Eucharist and in what were considered more appropriate modern forms of marriage and burial of the dead. This was also the case in Australia and many Australian bishops also authorized these additions.

In our own Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn, Bishop Burgmann authorized many of the changes in the Eucharistic liturgy, including the *Kyries*, the *Benedictus* and the new prayer of intercession but not the extended prayer of consecration. The 1928 *BCP* marriage service was also widely used in the Anglican Church of Australia. Burgmann also included other material not in the 1928 book in the Eucharist, such as the *Agnus Dei*. This form of the 1662 *BCP* is still in limited use within the Diocese and known as the Diocesan Rite.

It is interesting to note that these additions, so controversial at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, are normal now in our present prayer book, *A Prayer Book for Australia*, and widely used throughout the entire Anglican Communion and here in Australia.

There had been some liturgical revision at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century but there was much more to follow in the coming years but that's another story.

By Archdeacon **Brian Douglas**