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The key background principles

By Dean Michael Burrows

The Church is again to have *one book* as the normative expression of its worship and doctrine. In this book material in contemporary language and material in traditional language will sit comfortably alongside another and indeed be mutually interpretative. No longer will there be 'black book parishes' and 'blue book parishes'. We trust that 'traditional' parishes will try out some of the new contemporary material in the sure knowledge that the Cranmerian inheritance they love has been safeguarded. Equally we hope that parishes which have been APB dominated in recent years will see the devotional and doctrinal value of re-acquainting people with some of the more traditional material.

Even in these days of desktop publishing and throwaway sheets, the LAC wanted a book which people would *own*. Familiarity with its contents will not only assist participation at public worship; it will ensure that this book, like its predecessors, remains a devotional resource for the private prayer of individuals. Hence our constant desire that the book would be elegant in presentation and user-friendly. We are very anxious that people, even when alone, should align their prayers with those of the whole church.

As this Prayer Book will express authoritatively the doctrine of the Church of Ireland, we have remained ever conscious of the ancient maxim so important for Anglicans: *'Lex orandi, Lex credendi'*. (As we pray, so we believe). We have aspired to live up to the headline set for us by Cranmer, who had such a happy knack of encapsulating a profound theological point in a memorable phrase. The importance of getting the doctrine right has made necessary the careful line-by-line scrutiny of the contents of this book by the General Synod.

In this revision, as perhaps never



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before, we have been keen to keep in step, albeit in our distinctive cultural situation, with similar work being carried on around the Anglican Communion. In former times the words essentially of the 1662 Prayer Book bound us together as a family. Chief among the means by which a family resemblance is preserved in Anglican liturgy today is the work of the International Anglican Liturgical Consultation (IALC), and Ireland's debt to this body will indeed be acknowledged in the Preface to the 2004 Book.

This point very much follows the last one. In many ways the family resemblance between varying liturgies across Anglicanism today owes as much to the shape and structure of those services as to the minute details of their texts. In our work of revision we recognise that certain texts still need to be absolutely defined (the Eucharistic Prayer is an obvious example), but others can admit of a great deal of flexibility.

One service in particular provides an example of not providing a full text at all in the book, but rather a structure which people can fill out as they choose according to the occasion or the season. The Service of the Word is a new departure in Prayer Book texts, in so far as its distinctive character is represented by its skeleton rather than its detail.

In our work of revision we could not sidestep the issue of inclusive language. One of the most glaring problems with the APB is that it came just too early to engage with this issue fully. Naturally we have not altered the language of 'traditional' services in this area. However, in relation to modern language services we have unashamedly taken every possible opportunity to affirm the inclusive character of the people of God, where men and women equally carry the image of the Creator. In relation to language actually concerning God we have been more cautious, and this has been clearly the desire of the General Synod when particular amendments have been discussed there. While stressing that God remains beyond gender, we have not wished to reduce emphasis on the historical facts of the Incarnation or on the portrayal of God as Father which is so pivotal in Scripture.

Finally - and perhaps above all - we have recognised that although words to be used in liturgy demand careful crafting, they are nevertheless at the end of the day only words. Words are not the same as worship, and worship embraces the whole of life. It is our chief end as human beings. Some words from the Preface to the Prayer Book deserve to be written on the hearts of all its users: "We must always remind ourselves that words, however memorable, beautiful or useful are never to be confused with worship itself. The words set out on these pages are but the beginning of worship".

We now move from crafting texts to a period when the formation of the church as a whole in the creative adoption of this book becomes the priority. The Prayer Book is ultimately the common possession of all. We believe that, by encouraging understanding of the principles underlying its gestation, we will enable the Book rapidly to win the affection of all.