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The New Baptismal Services : A Criticism

BY DONALD ROBINSON

“THE palmary criteria of a liturgy are whether it makes sense or not (i.e. whether it has logical coherence) and what kind of sense it makes when measured by the standards of the Bible.” So wrote Canon Charles Smyth in 1947, and by such tests the services for Baptism and Confirmation submitted to the Archbishops by the Church of England Liturgical Commission, must finally be judged.

First, however, one may legitimately wonder whether the step of producing new services for the Church of England at this stage is a proper step. The draft services are not a revision of the 1662 services as was the case with the 1927-28 forms; they draw from 1662, but in structure and content, to say nothing of theology, they are fresh compilations. Why has this been done? Are our present forms, which have served us for four centuries, so defective that there is no remedy but to rewrite them completely? Only a strong conviction of the deficiency of our Prayer Book services can justify the radical step of departing from our traditional Anglican use.

Consider, in this connection, the opinion of the 1954 Anglican Congress at Minneapolis that, since the Prayer Book “is a principal bond of unity between the Anglican Churches . . . the degree of variation should not be such as to disrupt our unity”. In view of this opinion it is strange that the Church of England should at once lead off with brand new baptismal liturgies. Two of the Commissioners are in fact unable to approve the new form for Infant Baptism and the introduction to the Confirmation service on the ground that they involve “too great a departure from the pattern in general use in the Church of England and throughout the Anglican Communion”. It is to be supposed that the Chairman of the Commission, the Dean of Lincoln, would also share these sentiments, for in his address on worship to the Minneapolis Congress he said: “I venture to say that revisions of Prayer Books should be more modest in scope and less revolutionary than they commonly are. It must never be forgotten that the overwhelming majority of those who have to use the Prayer Book services are ordinary lay people. Most of them possess only meagre resources for appreciating the theological or liturgical reasons for alterations of what they have been accustomed to. . . . There is a gulf wider than is commonly supposed between those of us who decide on these questions and the great bulk of those who are affected by them. In a service not everywhere used in the Anglican Communion, there is an anathema which runs: ‘Cursed is he that removeth his neighbour’s landmark.’ This might with advantage appear on the walls of every vestry, and in every conference hall where Church assemblies are gathered. For there are psychological and spiritual landmarks as well as material ones” (*The Anglican Congress 1954, Report, p. 95*).

The actual Report of the Liturgical Commission is very brief, no doubt due to the existence of the three earlier Convention reports on Baptism and Confirmation. Nevertheless this brevity is unfortunate, for the Report is open to some serious criticisms which, one charitably hopes, might have been allayed had certain explanations been given. We are told, for instance, that the work of the Commission is "an attempt to equip the Church with liturgical forms which will prove adaptable to the rapidly changing needs of the pastoral situation". We are not told what these needs are. When a new baptismal form—for adults—was introduced in 1662, four new needs were cited in the Preface as justifying the innovation. Certainly there are needs today which scarcely existed in 1662, such as the need of a ministry to baptized Anglicans who never go to church and the need to remove the barrier caused by the archaic diction of our liturgy; but the draft services do not seem to have such needs in mind. One suspects that "rapidly changing needs" is a cliché. There is more work for the bishop to do in these services, if that is meeting any need, and we do not wonder that two members of the Commission disapprove of two of the services because "in common use they would prove impracticable". In regard to liturgical diction, would it not be wise to defer the composition of new services until there has been opportunity to discover how far the language of the New English Bible may prove an acceptable vehicle for liturgical expression? Since no modern Cranmer has appeared on the scene, the solution of this problem may well wait on the appearance of a generally accepted literary version of the Scriptures. Surely there must be a modern way of saying, "Who hast vouchsafed to regenerate these thy servants."

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The Report is most seriously to be criticized for the principle on which the Commission claims to have based its work. "In setting about its task the Commission has endeavoured to apply the principle admirably set forth in Resolution 74(c) of the Lambeth Conference of 1958: 'A chief aim of Prayer Book Revision should be to further that recovery of the worship of the Primitive Church which was the aim of the compilers of the first Prayer Books of the Church of England.'" Three criticisms of this resolution, and hence of the work of the Liturgical Commission, must be made.

First, the Lambeth resolution fails to define what it means by "primitive". The claim of the resolution might have a certain plausibility if "the worship of the Primitive Church" were intended to mean the worship of the New Testament churches. But an examination of the report of the relevant committee of the Lambeth Conference, and of the Liturgical Commission's Report, shows that "primitive" is certainly not intended to be taken so narrowly. "Primitive" is clearly intended to extend at least to the fourth century. That some of the Reformers may have used "primitive" in this sense, may be allowed, and is an excellent reason why we should not ascribe to them the general aim of recovering the worship of the Primitive Church. For instance, open penance at the beginning of Lent is referred to in the Communion as having been practised "in the Primitive Church". This custom is not known to us earlier than the fourth century. But

however much the compilers of our Prayer Books may have desired the restoration of this particular "godly discipline", it would be fantastic to claim that they were intent on a general recovery of the worship of the fourth century.

The second criticism, then, is one of fact. It was *not* the aim of the compilers of the First English Prayer Books "to recover the worship of the Primitive Church". Certainly the Reformers made careful study of the worship of early centuries so far as they could. But their adoption or retention (and rejection!) of any ancient ceremony or form of words was altogether subject to another and higher test—the test of scriptural truth. They did not assume, as the Lambeth resolution appears to assume, that the worship of the Primitive Church was correct simply because it was primitive; nor do they, in their carefully written prefaces to their Prayer Books, commit themselves to any such principle as the Lambeth bishops attribute to them. Professor E. C. Ratcliff, speaking of the second Prayer Book of 1552 and noting that "it is a habit of liturgists to measure the new by the standard of the old" says: "Yet, in defence of the Second Book, Cranmer would argue that it should be judged in accordance with its success in conforming with an axiom which, upon his view, should control all liturgical expression. The axiom is that of Scriptural sanction. What cannot plainly be seen to possess Scriptural sanction should not be found in a Prayer Book" (*The Liturgical Work of Cranmer*, Journal of Ecclesiastical History, October 1956, reprinted in *Thomas Cranmer 1489-1556*, Church Information Board, 1956, p. 40). Dr. Ratcliff may think this ideal impossible, but at least he recognizes that the test applied by Cranmer was scriptural sanction and not conformity to the worship of the Primitive Church, except in the sense that "the perfect Prayer Book should provide people and ministers with forms of worship which the Apostles and first believers could acknowledge and approve" (*ibid.*).

Finally, whatever the Reformers or the Lambeth bishops may have meant by primitive, the principle enunciated by the resolution is fundamentally erroneous. *Reformed churchmen must protest with all their power against the notion that conformity with the primitive church or any other church is the criterion of worship.* The only true principle of worship is conformity with biblical revelation. The Church, even in New Testament days, was often at variance with that revelation. We are certainly not to emulate the Lord's Supper as we know it to have been celebrated in Corinth at one period. Nor are we to be followers of the prophetess Jezebel who had considerable influence in the church at Thyatira. Are we even to model ourselves on the great and truly primitive church at Jerusalem, observe the law of Moses, religiously circumcise our children, and break bread by households? One wonders if many who have the urge to recover the worship of the early church ever stop to think what it is they desire. It is not what was done at Jerusalem or Antioch or Corinth or Rome that must govern our worship today. Rather, it is what the inspired writers of the New Testament laid upon the churches. Sometimes, indeed, this was in the form of explicit traditions, but more basically it was in terms of general principles of decency, orderliness, and of conformity

with the gospel of grace and the law of love. Particular rites and ceremonies are, as our Prayer Book declares, "things in their own nature indifferent". It is "the gospel" and "the apostle" to which we must submit. How far the Primitive Church actually conformed its worship to this criterion, we simply do not know. But to seek to recover its worship for ourselves, rather than to submit to the Word of God in the Scriptures, is not only a vain, but a mistaken, aspiration.

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Wrong principle leads to wrong practice. The Commission claims that "from every point of view, pastoral, theological, and liturgical, Baptism and Confirmation must be viewed as two parts of one whole, and must further be associated as closely as possible with the Holy Communion". This is apparently an application of the principle about the recovery of the worship of the Primitive Church. No argument is adduced, nor is any historical reference given, to support this claim. Such a conjunction of rites cannot be justified from the New Testament. It certainly cannot be claimed that it was part of the worship of that Church. Confirmation as the Commission understands it simply did not exist in the New Testament, nor is any significance attributed there to a "first communion". The statement of the Bishop of Ripon in an appendix on the use of the term "Christian Initiation" in the report *Baptism Today* (1949) to the effect that "admission into membership of the Church of God, though it begins with Baptism, is not completed until communicant status has been reached", does not correspond to any situation known to us from the New Testament. If no biblical reason can be adduced for conjoining these rites, it is difficult to urge a compelling theological or liturgical reason. If there is a pastoral reason for the suggested procedure, let us be told what it is.

Justin Martyr, our earliest post-New Testament witness, makes no mention of any ceremony except baptism as constituting initiation into the church, unless we are to add the act of bringing the baptized person "to the place where those who are called brethren are assembled, in order that we may offer hearty prayers in common for ourselves and for the illuminated (i.e. baptized) person, and for all others in every place, that we may be counted worthy, now that we have learned the truth, by our works also to be found good citizens and keepers of the commandments, so that we may be saved with an everlasting salvation" (1 *Apol.*, 65). Justin's *Apology* goes on to describe the Eucharist and other aspects of Christian worship, but no mention is made of the recently baptized person in this connection. Tertullian (c. A.D. 200) seems to be the first to tell that, after baptism and anointing with oil, "the hand is laid upon us"—he says not whose. This he mentions in *De baptismo*, 7, though he says nothing of it in *De corona*, 3 when he describes the various baptismal customs which are said to be traditional. The baptismal eucharist of Hippolytus (c. A.D. 225) is probably our first "first communion" considered as part of an initiatory rite, but it is significant that this eucharist has added to it two extra cups, one of water to signify inward baptism, and one of milk and honey to signify entrance into the promised land.

Exceptio probat regulam. The connection between baptism and either anointing or imposition of hands is notoriously confused from the end of the second century onward, and we have discovered no reason why the Lord's Supper should be thought of as part of Christian initiation.

The Commission must demonstrate the theological and biblical ground for forming into "one whole" the dominical sacrament of baptism and the later ecclesiastical rite of confirmation before it can expect Reformed churchmen to approve its draft services. It must also explain why participation in the other dominical sacrament, the Lord's Supper, should be thought necessary or desirable for one's first entry into the Church. There is nothing in the Communion itself which points to initiation. Indeed, it differs from Baptism precisely in this, that it presupposes "the fellowship of the Spirit", whereas Baptism initiates it. There will, of course, always be a first Communion, and like everything else done for the first time as a believer its meaning will be invested with special clarity, but the first Communion, no less than subsequent Communion, is meant as spiritual food for those who have continued with Christ in His temptations (Luke xxii. 28). In Baptism we put on Christ and enter by one Spirit into one Body (Gal. iii. 27, 1 Cor. xii. 13); let us not derogate from this dignity by a misinterpretation of the meaning of the Lord's Supper. The Reformers had a sounder instinct. They were well aware of the rites of early centuries, but they held that Baptism, as the sacrament of regeneration by the Spirit and incorporation into Christ, should stand alone as the sufficient mode of initiation into the Christian church.

Another source of confusion in the Commission's work arises from an insufficient grasp of the background of baptism in the New Testament. "In the New Testament Adult Baptism is the norm, and it is only in the light of this fact that the doctrine and practice of Baptism can be understood". The Commission therefore makes the baptism and confirmation of adults "the archetypal service". (Confirmation, apparently, for good measure. The Commission does not claim that this was the norm in the New Testament.) But what is meant by "norm"? We read of no baptisms in the Jerusalem church after Pentecost; but since its members continued to circumcise their children (Acts xxi. 20f.) it would be rash to assume that adult baptism was the norm there. Elsewhere, some individual adult baptisms are reported, like those of the eunuch, Paul, and "certain disciples" at Ephesus—all, including probably the eunuch, Jews. But generally the norm, if norm can be claimed, seems to have been household baptisms, where the element of normality lay, not in the adult status of the household constituents, but in their relationship to the head of the house (Acts xvi. 15, xvi. 33, xviii. 8 with 1 Cor. i. 14-16). If the Commission's desire to provide an archetypal service is sound, that service, should surely treat the household as a unit. In seeking the New Testament norm, moreover, the Commission has overlooked the important distinction between Jewish and Gentile converts. The truly archetypal character of any baptismal service will be seen, not in the age of the candidate, but in the doctrine of God's covenant which underlies it. Here, the main distinction would appear, not in the candidate's age, but in his background. The Commission's services

take no account of this distinction. Their archetypal service for an adult has Ezekiel xxxvi. 24-28 (God's promise of a new covenant with Israel) for the Old Testament lesson and Mark i. 1-11 (the baptism of John as the beginning of the gospel) for the Gospel. Both passages are highly suitable for the baptism of someone brought up under the old covenant and now experiencing the blessing of its spiritual fulfilment in the new covenant. But is this the kind of "archetypal adult" the Commission has in mind as likely to be coming for baptism in the Church of England? Contrariwise, the service for infant baptism has no Old Testament lesson, reads Galatians iv. 4-7 (Paul's assurance to his Gentile converts that they are no longer servants to false gods) for the Epistle and Matthew xxviii. 18-20 (the great commission to teach and baptize the Gentiles) for the Gospel, and generally proceeds as if the infant had no covenantal antecedents at all. The service would be admirable for a person converted from heathenism; it contains no hint (except indirectly in a final prayer which may be added at the minister's discretion) that the candidate may already be a member of a Christian household and "within the covenant". It says little for the Commission's grasp of covenant theology. Our Lord's blessing of the children has been dropped by the Commission as having "no obvious connection with Baptism". The passage is, nevertheless, an assurance of the promise of blessing which lies at the root of what has rightly been called "the biblical doctrine of infant baptism". An archetypal service which regards adult baptism as the norm is an anachronism in a long-established church.

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This brings us to a consideration of the general character of the draft services, recalling Canon Smyth's dictum that a good liturgy must make sense, and must make good sense when measured by the standard of the Bible.

Let us begin by seeing what sort of "sense" our 1662 services make. Their purposes are clearly set out in the various exhortations. The baptismal service is constructed as a covenant ceremony. The promise of God's blessing is declared, and the due response is then made by the candidate ("wherefore after this promise made by Christ, ye must also faithfully, for your part, promise . . ."). The verbal promises being exchanged, prayer is made that God will set apart the water for its sacramental use, i.e. that He will grant the full blessing of His covenant of grace to the person to be baptized. Baptism at once follows. The candidate receives the sign of the cross and is accepted into the congregation. Thanks are given for the benefits signified by baptism, and prayer is made that the candidate may "walk answerably to his Christian calling".

Baptism is shown clearly to be a sacrament of the gospel. In it, the gospel is proclaimed and believed. Moreover, the *whole* benefit of salvation—forgiveness, regeneration by the spirit, participation in Christ's death, membership in His body and the hope of eternal life—is offered by Christ and accepted by the believer. In all this there is logical coherence, and good sense when measured by the Bible. One may compare the "archetypal" baptism of Acts ii., where first the promise of the gospel (which is the promise of the covenant) is set

forth by Peter, where the people make the response of repentance and faith, are forthwith baptized, and thereby "added" to the church.

The meaning of our confirmation is equally clear. The medieval rite of confirmation had become confused and obscure. The English Reformers might, with good excuse, have discarded it altogether, for it was not a sacrament nor had it direct biblical precedent. But they retained a rite of confirmation—much altered—for a reason which was neither theological nor liturgical, but pastoral. This reason they state in the opening words of the service: "that children, being now come to the years of discretion . . . may themselves, with their own mouth and consent, ratify and confirm" their baptismal vows. The imposition of hands was added in lieu of the medieval anointing. The service indicated that there was New Testament precedent for such a gesture in "the example of thy holy Apostles". The meaning attributed to the act was "to certify them (the candidates) by this sign of thy favour and goodness towards them", and the act was accompanied by the prayer that the candidates might be strengthened in their life and witness by the continuing power of the Holy Spirit. Thus the Reformers did not claim that confirmation as such was a biblical rite—though they rightly claimed that imposition of hands with prayer was a biblical custom—nor did they set out to recover the kind of confirmation which had developed in the church from the time of Tertullian. Professor Lampe rightly says: "Confirmation as envisaged by the Reformers and as practised in accordance with the Prayer Book of 1552 and thereafter, has little in common with the rite that was performed, either as part of the baptismal service or as a separate act, in the Church of the early centuries, and it has no direct Scriptural precedent. Theologically, however, the Reformers were right. Their doctrine of confirmation made it possible to retain infant baptism along with the doctrine of justification *sola fide*. The Christian who was baptized in infancy was now able to make his necessary profession of faith after due instruction, and, on so supplying the deficiency which infant baptism would otherwise suffer, to receive the blessing of the representative leader of the Christian society with prayer for his strengthening and increase in the Holy Spirit" (*The Seal of the Spirit*, p. 314).

The draft services, on the other hand, are inferior to our present services both in their logical coherence (i.e. their "sense") and in their theology of baptism.

First, we find a restoration of the thoroughly medieval idea of "The Blessing of the Water", which, moreover, is regarded by the compilers as "the principal prayer in each service", so that "an attempt has been made to express the whole biblical doctrine of Baptism" therein. The objection to this procedure is twofold. First, the "blessing" of inanimate objects has no biblical basis. The expression is sometimes used as an ellipsis for blessing or thanking God for some object or other (as when at the Last Supper Jesus blessed bread, i.e. gave thanks to God for it), but it has never been customary to offer thanks to God for the water, as such, at a baptismal service. Nor, as a matter of fact, are thanks offered to God for the water in the Commission's "Blessing of the Water". When the rubric says

"the Bishop . . . shall bless the water with the following prayer", it uses "bless" in a non-biblical sense, and restores the Romish notion of sanctifying the water which the Reformers deliberately discarded since it seemed to imply an imparting of mystical properties to material elements. The Reformers frequently maintained that "blessing the water" was not an original or necessary part of the sacrament; "consecration" was for them merely a setting apart for a sacred use. The second objection to "The Blessing of the Water", then, is that it represents a moving away from this Reformed position. (If the words "Sanctify this water to the mystical washing away of sin" are not going to be used in the Reformed sense, Evangelicals should press for their alteration or deletion. As it is, they are practically meaningless to a modern congregation.) That the service is open to this objection is shown by the fact that "The Blessing of the Water" *precedes* any confession of faith or expressed desire for baptism on anyone's part. The water is blessed in advance, with the prayer that all to be baptized in it will be made members of God's church, without any promises having been made, and no occasion for its use having been certified. The "sense" of the service, especially its covenantal character, is weakened by this order. Similarly, the declaration of the bishop: "Know then that God will favourably receive these persons, who truly repent and come to Him by faith": should surely follow, not precede, the promises made by the candidates.

The Commission has endeavoured to express "the whole biblical doctrine of Baptism" in the prayer for "The Blessing of the Water". This being so, one would have expected to find the relation between Christ's death and the forgiveness of our sins clearly stated. Five paragraphs are devoted to the work of Christ, from creation to ascension, but His work of atonement for sin is confined to the statement: "Who was by thee delivered up for the suffering of death, that he might purify unto himself a People for his own possession." This seems an unduly refined statement of the basis of our forgiveness, especially when compared with the statement of the doctrine of atonement in our Communion consecration prayer ("who made there, by his one oblation of himself, once offered, etc."), and even with the brief statement of our present baptismal service: "Who for the forgiveness of our sins did shed out of His most precious side both water and blood."

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The most radical change in the new services, however, is the turning of confirmation into a ceremony for the receiving of the gift of the Holy Spirit. "It is unfortunate," says the reviewer in the S.P.C.K.'s *View-Review* of November 1959, "that . . . the Confirmation rubrics endorse the 'Mason-Dix-Thornton' view that the sending of the Spirit takes place only when the baptized person is confirmed . . . The service of Confirmation for those baptized in infancy goes to extreme lengths in its expression of the theologically impossible doctrines that Christian children live without the indwelling Spirit until they are confirmed." Yet one has the uneasy feeling that this new emphasis is meant to be the *pièce-de-résistance* of the whole

revision. Be that as it may, the result is confusion and contradiction. Most seriously, baptism is no longer a sacrament of the whole blessing of salvation, as it undoubtedly is in the New Testament. There is plenty of stress on being "born again in baptism" and on receiving forgiveness of sins therein. But when we ask does baptism signify the giving of the Holy Spirit? the answer is, at best, equivocal. True, the Bishop assures the congregation that "God will give (the candidates for baptism) remission of their sins and the gift of His Spirit". But it is still necessary for him to say at Confirmation: "These persons have been baptized; they have been instructed in the Christian religion; and they now come with repentance and faith to receive the Spirit." In the archetypal service of Confirmation, instead of our present prayer "Strengthen them, O Lord, with the Holy Ghost the Comforter, and daily increase in them thy manifold gifts of grace", we have "Send down from heaven upon them thy Holy Ghost the Comforter". The confusion is not dispersed when, with studied ambiguity, the Bishop lays his hand on the candidate and says: "Confirm, O Lord, thy servant with thy Holy Spirit, that he may continue thine for ever". The compilers say this wording is designedly equivocal so as to express "two different ways of looking at confirmation". They also "suggest" that these two ways are not mutually exclusive, and hope the wording will satisfy both "those who think of Confirmation primarily as *augmentum ad robur* and those who regard it as *Χρῖσις τελειωτικῆ*." Whether these two parties will be satisfied by the wording, it is for them to say. The people it does not satisfy are those who, with the Reformers, regard Confirmation as primarily a confirming of baptismal vows, with the laying on of hands with prayer a contingent act of blessing. And it is difficult to imagine that anyone can prefer the new prayer "Confirm, O Lord, etc." to "Defend, O Lord, this thy child with thy heavenly grace, etc."

The most exhaustive recent *exposé* of the type of confirmation theology which underlies the draft services and of the attempt to find scriptural precedent for the rite in Acts viii and xix, is Professor Lampe's *The Seal of the Spirit* to which reference has already been made. His thesis has been anticipated, however, in a vigorous passage in James Calphill's *Answer to John Martiall's Treatise of the Cross*. Calphill was Archdeacon of Colchester and in 1570 was nominated by Elizabeth to succeed Edwyn Sandys as Bishop of Worcester, but he died before he could take up office. In his answer to the Fourth Article (Parker Society ed., pp. 216f.) he wrote: "Is Baptism insufficient without Confirmation? Is Baptism available, as the Decree hath, only for them that should die straight; and Confirmation for them that should live longer? Doth Baptism only regenerate us to life, but Confirmation furnish us unto the fight? What is it then that Paul hath: 'We are buried with Christ by Baptism into His death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life . . .?' But, by this their device, they take away half the effect of Baptism; rejecting therein the commandment of God, to establish their own tradition. Wherefore I will reason with you as Christ did with the Pharisees. Is the Confirmation (which you call a Sacrament) ordained to be so from heaven, or of men? If

it be of men, it is no Sacrament. If it be of God, then show the Word. Ye have the example of the Apostles in the chs. viii and xix of the Acts : but no example sufficeth for a Sacrament. But see how well ye follow the example. 'When the Apostles, which were at Jerusalem, heard say that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John : which, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. For as yet He was come down on none of them ; but they were baptized only, in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.' Now, are ye ignorant what here is meant by the Holy Ghost? I will tell you. The gift to speak in divers languages ; to work miracles ; and other particular graces of the Holy Spirit. And although they had received the common grace of adoption and regeneration through Baptism ; yet had they not these other qualities, which in the beginning of the Church were granted, and now be denied. So that laying on of hands served to good use then, when it pleased God at instance of the Apostles' prayers to confer the visible graces of His Spirit ; but now that there is no such ministry in the Church ; now that miracles be ceased ; to what end should we have this imposition of hands ; the sign without the thing ? "

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Finally, we draw attention to certain features in the proposed administration of baptism which differ from the tradition of the Church of England as it has been since the Reformation and, in some cases, from a much earlier period.

The most surprising of these features is the omission from infant baptism of the Apostles' Creed as the test of Christian faith. Its place is taken by a new form modelled on wording from the Catechism relating to belief in the Trinity only. This omission is odd, to say the least, in view of the Lambeth Quadrilateral's stipulation of "the Apostles' Creed as the Baptismal symbol". The compilers say it has been done for "pastoral reasons", whatever that may mean.

Another odd feature, which seems un-eirenic when church union is in the air, is the dropping of immersion as a legitimate mode of baptism for adults, though it is retained for infant baptism alongside affusion. All Christians regard dipping as a legitimate mode of baptism, and it should therefore be retained among the provisions for all services.

The Commission has enjoined, in both its baptismal services, a method of administering the water never before prescribed in the Church of England. The new rubric reads, in the archetypal service : "the minister . . . shall pour water upon him three times, once at the mention of each person of the Trinity" ; and in the service for infants : "The Priest . . . shall dip him in the water three times, or pour water upon him three times, once at the mention of each Person of the Trinity." One is aware that there are clergymen who perform baptism in this way at present, yet never before has the Church of England ordered a triple *affusion*, and never before has it specified that a mode should be repeated "once at the mention of each Person of the Trinity". Why should it do so now, and not as a permissive variation but as an obligation? Triple immersion may have been part

of the worship of the "Primitive" (but not the New Testament) Church, as it is mentioned by Tertullian. Yet more than once in church history it has been considered desirable to discard a triple action, notwithstanding its Trinitarian symbolism. It was relinquished in parts of Europe following the Arian controversy because of its susceptibility to being interpreted as denoting a division in the three Persons of the Godhead. Gregory the Great pronounced against trine immersion and the 6th canon of the Council of Toledo in A.D. 633 ordered single immersion to be practised throughout Spain, which became the rule in that church. Again, the English Reformers deliberately discarded trine immersion—yet another example, despite the recent Lambeth resolution, of their refusal to be bound by "the worship of the Primitive Church". In the first Prayer Book they retained a modified form in which the infant was not wholly dipped thrice but was immersed in three stages: "First dipping the right side; second the left side; the third time dipping the face toward the front." Affusion was allowed if the child was weak, but in this case, contrary to the current Romish custom, one action only was required. The second Book of 1552 quite discarded the triple action. To judge from the writings of Cranmer, Becon, and others who discuss the matter, this was on the ground that such customs (along with unction, giving milk and honey, blessing the water etc.) were not apostolical or necessary parts of the sacrament, and should not be allowed to cause confusion in the mind of the worshipper as to what is essential to the sacrament. Since we acknowledge one baptism, not three, for the remission of sins, and are baptized into one Name of God, not three names, there is every reason why we should prefer the simplest and clearest mode possible for the actual administration of this ordinance ordained by Christ Himself. There is still much to be said for the argument of the fourth Council of Toledo: "And lest any man should doubt of the mystery of this sacrament, why we allow but one dipping, he may see therein our death and resurrection. For the dipping into the water is as it were the going down into the grave; and the coming up again out of the water is the rising again out of the grave. Also he may perceive, that therein is showed the unity of the Godhead, and the Trinity of the persons. The unity is figured, when we dip once; the Trinity when we baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." Bullinger, who quotes this extract, adds: "This I do not allege to stay myself upon man's testimony; but by man's testimony to shew, that it is free to follow that which serveth most to the edifying of the church" (*Fifth Decade*, ch. viii).

A striking and original feature of the Anglican service since 1552 has been the reception of the candidate after baptism, in the words: "We receive this (child) into the congregation of Christ's flock." This reception, which gives liturgical expression to the "adding" to the church of those being saved (Acts ii. 41) and recalls Justin's reference to bringing the newly baptized to the brethren, is now omitted. No explanation of the omission is offered. Canon 30 of 1604 draws attention to an implication of this ceremony of reception: "It is apparent in the Communion Book that the infant baptized is, by virtue of baptism, before it be signed with the sign of the Cross,

received into the congregation of Christ's flock, as a perfect member thereof." The Commission's theology of confirmation obviously casts doubt on whether the infant baptized is a perfect member of the Church, and we assume that the reception "into the congregation of Christ's flock" at baptism has been omitted lest it would appear to "beat the gun".

The signing with the cross is retained, but without the important safeguard of a reference to Canon 30 for "the true explication and the just reasons for the retaining of it". Unfortunately, Canon 30 itself will disappear if the new draft canons are accepted. Draft Canon 33, on the Sign of the Cross, is not an adequate substitute. This being so, Evangelicals might well press for the ceremony to be discarded altogether. It was only retained at the cost of alienating many earnest churchmen in the 16th and 17th centuries. The Commission itself reports, in its Introduction, that it has "caused confusion in people's minds" in modern times. At least it ought to be made optional. This is what the Commission allows in the case of another ceremony, which they have revived, viz., the ceremony of handing a lighted candle to the baptized person. This latter was in the medieval services, but even the first prayer Book of 1549 discarded it as impracticable, though that Book retained the giving of a white robe and anointing as post-baptismal ceremonies. It seems foolish to revive it today, even as an option.

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It would not be fair to suggest that the draft services contain no commendable features. The provision of additional lections and psalmody, for example, should be generally welcomed, especially if baptism is administered apart from other services. The breaking of the interrogatory Creed into sections is also an improvement. Yet the services contain an inordinate number of unnecessary and irritating additions especially in the rubrics. "The Font shall be emptied in such a way as to secure the reverent disposal of the water": this is presumably desirable now that the water is to be "blessed". In the much stressed "Prayer for the sending of the Spirit" in Confirmation, we have the bishop "stretching forth his hands toward those who are to be confirmed". Notwithstanding that liturgical processions are still illegal in the Church of England, a section of the service is labelled, "The Procession to the Font" for which a psalm is provided, and provision is also made for a psalm or hymn to be sung "during the entry of the ministers". When baptism is ministered without confirmation at the Holy Communion, the priest "shall not minister Holy Communion to the newly-baptized", but no indication is given that the newly baptized should withdraw from the service. Godparents are bidden to see that their godchildren "are brought in due time to . . . Holy Communion". This exceeds the function of a godparent; coming to Communion is always a matter for the discretion of the communicant.

The Lambeth Conference committee on the Prayer Book in 1958 made this cautious statement: "While much thought has recently been given to the theology of Christian Initiation, the stage has not yet been reached where the new knowledge can be assimilated and fresh

conclusions can be put forward what would be generally accepted . . . it is to be hoped that an opportunity may be given for a full consideration of the theology of Christian Initiation at the next Lambeth Conference ” (Lambeth Report, 2. 86). The unsatisfactory character of the Liturgical Commission’s draft services underlines the wisdom of this statement, and it is certainly to be hoped that no attempt will be made to implement the use of these services at least until after the next Lambeth Conference has had opportunity to consider the theological issues raised by them. A conservative revision of our present services, especially of their diction, may well be desirable. But neither the Liturgical Commission’s report nor the previous Convocation reports have made out a case—such as Reformed churchmen can recognize—for the need of new services based on new liturgical and theological principles. A close study of the draft services convinces us that “ the old is better ”. The Lambeth Committee’s report, above quoted, goes on to suggest that in any baptismal service twelve specified elements “ need to find liturgical expression ”. Allowing that one of these, “ The Blessing of the Water,” is nothing other than—to quote the report itself—“ a thanksgiving for Christ’s baptism and the benefits of His redeeming work and prayer for the fruits of baptism in those to be baptized ”, we may well take comfort in the fact that every one of these twelve elements already finds liturgical expression in our 1662 Prayer Book services.