The many faces of the service of Holy Communion in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer

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Introduction

I argue that the Eucharistic liturgy of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, properly entitled ‘The Order for the Administration of the Lord’s Supper or Holy Communion’ has over the years projected several faces. Anglicans have worshipped with the same service in distinctly different ways and believing distinctly different things about what happens in the Eucharist: some in the form of a solemn High Mass, with additions to the text, choral music, vestments, incense and bells and others with unchanged text and with limited ritual and ceremony. Some have worshipped using this liturgy and believing that Christ is really present in the Eucharist, in the elements, in the Scriptures, in people and in the priest and that his sacrifice is re-presented in the Eucharistic celebration. Others have seen this service as praise and thankful remembrance only of a past and completed action of Christ in

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which Christ is accessible by faith alone and in which there can be no real presence of Christ or re-presentation of Christ’s sacrifice in the Eucharist.

These differences in theological interpretation arise from an inherent multiformity of theological and philosophical assumptions underlying the Anglican Eucharistic tradition generally and the 1662 service of Holy Communion in particular. The interpretations can be surprisingly different. The noted liturgical scholar of the early twentieth century Walter Howard Frere, in discussing the Prayer of Consecration in the 1662 Eucharist, for example noted that it was ‘more Roman than Rome’ in its emphasis on effecting the consecration through the recitation of an institution narrative or the words of Christ alone. In Frere’s view this was a form of consecration in the narrowest and most partisan way, following the medieval Roman model which insisted on institution narrative alone as the means of consecration. This is sometimes overlooked by those who argue for a distinct Reformation heritage for the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. The recently released Common Prayer: Resources for Gospel-Shaped Gatherings of the Diocese of Sydney for example opts to follow what is described as the pattern and theology of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer arguing, quite differently from Frere, that the 1662 Book of Common Prayer and its Eucharistic liturgy preserve a distinct Anglican Reformation heritage with emphasis on the sacrifice of Christ and justification by faith alone while at the same time overcoming medieval influence. Frere’s comment suggests that a distinct medieval influence persists in the Prayer of Consecration of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. It seems that the Eucharistic liturgy of 1662 is patient of very different interpretations.

The 1662 Book of Common Prayer Eucharist in fact preserves much of the traditional medieval past while at the same time presenting Reformed agendas. It uses a set form of words in a consecratory formula with manual actions by the priest. At the same time it omits other traditional Eucharistic formulae, presumably to satisfy a Reformed tradition. The 1662 Eucharist did not include an epiclesis or invocation of the Holy Spirit on the elements, as the 1549 Book of Common Prayer Eucharist did, where the priest said that the bread and wine ‘may be unto us Christ’s body and blood’. 1662 also omitted in the Prayer of Consecration an anamnesis or the recounting of the mighty sacrificial and salvific acts of Christ, apart from his death, where worshippers are seen to be assured of the continuing effect of these acts re-presented in the Eucharist in the present. There were however those at the time the 1662
Book of Common Prayer was being put together who wanted these included but who in the end did not get their way. Cranmer's use of an epiclesis and anamnesis in the extended Canon of the 1549 Book of Common Prayer were not repeated in the 1552 Book of Common Prayer, in order I guess to lessen any notion of a real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and any suggestion of Eucharistic sacrifice. There were those such as the traditionalist bishop Stephen Gardiner who were quite happy with the Eucharistic theology and practice of the 1549 Book of Common Prayer and this acceptance merely encouraged Cranmer to ditch traditional material he had previously used. Reformed critique from people like Bucer also encouraged Cranmer in this direction. Many Catholic Anglicans throughout Anglican history have hankered for a return to this fuller Eucharistic theology and indeed this has happened in the previous and present Eucharistic liturgies of many Provinces of the Anglican Communion, including the Anglican Church of Australia's A Prayer Book for Australia. Evangelical Anglicans have however not generally followed this pattern. At the same time, the situation is complicated by the fact that the Anglican Church of Australia, through its Constitution, makes the 1662 Book of Common Prayer the standard of doctrine and worship. The situation is quite different in other parts of the Anglican Communion, such as in the United States of America and South Africa. In The Episcopal Church of the United States of America the 1662 service is less important, and a separate stream of Eucharistic liturgies and theology of the Eucharist dating back to the late 1700's was inherited from the Episcopal Church in Scotland and has consistently presented a fuller Eucharistic theology. The 1549 Book of Common Prayer tradition has significantly influenced liturgical development in South Africa. Anglican Evangelicals have tended to be more satisfied with the form of the consecration and particular theological interpretations of the Eucharist they find in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, not I suspect because it is 'more Roman than Rome', but because of a desire to affirm a Reformation heritage, emphasising justification by faith alone and the death of Christ. All this seems to suggest that there have been and continue to be several faces, or as I am calling it a multiformity of Eucharistic theology and practice, in the Eucharistic liturgy of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. I suspect this will continue.

Attempts to change the Eucharistic liturgy and theology of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer to provide other forms are not modern phenomena and have continued from its inception to the present. The liturgical work of
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the Non-jurors from 1688 onwards into the nineteenth century, the Liturgy of Comprehension in 1689 and the Scottish Communion Office of 1764 are some early examples of this process. The contribution of the Tractarians and the Ritualists in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the recovery of a fuller Eucharistic theology and practice was significant in promoting development and change, through a desire for fuller liturgical forms and through the use of various missals and material often borrowing from the 1549 Book of Common Prayer. The attempted revision of the Book of Common Prayer in England in 1928, with the proposed extension of the Canon to include an epiclesis, anamnesis and the Prayer of Oblation in the Consecration, suggest that for some the 1662 Eucharistic liturgy was deficient and in need of reform. Despite its being rejected by the British Parliament many, with the agreement of their bishops, have used the 1928 variations in the celebration of the 1662 Eucharist. The so-called Diocesan Rite, approved by Bishop Burgmann in the Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn, is an example of this practice which still continues. Others of course have not shared this view and have been content to continue with the 1662 Eucharist without additions. Other dioceses in Australia introduced uses in the early twentieth century based on the 1662 Book of Common Prayer but attempting to introduce more Catholic elements in the 1662 Eucharistic liturgy. These included the ‘Brown Book’ of 1939 and the ‘Green Book’ of 1946 introduced by Archbishop Halse in the dioceses of Riverina and Brisbane and the famous ‘Red Book’ introduced by Bishop Wylde in the Diocese of Bathurst in 1942. These books not only presented a more realist and so Catholic understanding of Eucharistic theology, closely associating the signs of the Eucharist with what they signified, but also an extended Canon which included many of the traditional aspects of the Eucharist such as the Benedictus (Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord) and the Agnus Dei (O Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us).

It is also important to remember that as long ago as 1958 the bishops of the Anglican Communion at the Lambeth Conference declared, distinctly different from the emerging constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia, that the 1662 Book of Common Prayer was no longer the basic pattern or bond of unity and doctrine and worship in the Communion. In so doing the bishops encouraged liturgical change and development apart from the 1662 Book of Common Prayer model. In modern times throughout the Anglican Communion the process of ecumenical convergence and
liturgical experimentation has continued. Modern liturgical forms have emerged with a different liturgical shape, language, cultural appropriateness and theology from the 1662 Book of Common Prayer model, as well as with greater variety and choice. This has been the case in the Anglican Church of Australia, resulting, after a long period of experimentation by the Liturgical Commission, in the development and use of the 1978 An Australian Prayer Book and the current 1995 A Prayer Book for Australia.

Development of the Eucharistic liturgy continues in Australia outside the processes of the Liturgical Commission but under the authority of the Constitution in both the Anglican Catholic Diocese of Ballarat with the publication of The Holy Eucharist in 1995 and 2002 and in the Anglican Evangelical Diocese of Sydney with Sunday Services in 2001 and Common Prayer in 2011 and the Better Gatherings web site. Despite the historical and continuing desire by some to reform the 1662 Eucharistic liturgy, with approval by diocesan bishops, under the terms of the Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia, the fact remains that the 1662 Eucharist continues in use. The Anglican Church of Australia in its Constitution, alone in the world, I suspect, ‘retains and approves the doctrine and principles of the Church of England embodied in the Book of Common Prayer’ and more specifically, the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, together with the Thirty-Nine Articles, ‘as the authorized standard of worship and doctrine in this Church’. This may seem a clear directive but it really begs the question since there is multiformity of Eucharistic doctrine and worship without any readily agreed position by all. This makes it very difficult to define such a standard of worship and doctrine when there is such a wide degree of interpretation in practice and theology, or multiformity of Eucharistic doctrine, within the Anglican Church of Australia in relation to the 1662 Book of Common Prayer.

Multiformity is the norm of the Anglican Eucharistic tradition, both now and in the past, and presently applies not only to the development of modern liturgical material but also to the way people interpret and use the Eucharistic liturgy of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. The assumption that Anglican Eucharistic theology is multiform rests not only on recent research but also on the extensive narrative discourse of individuals, parties and their hermeneutic right through the history of the Anglican Eucharistic tradition. Space is not available to go into detailed case studies here but it is perhaps sufficient to say that the discourse of the Anglican Eucharistic
tradition presents a variety of theological and philosophical understandings about what happens in the Eucharist.

Some adopt the sacramental principle based on realism, connecting signs with what they signify in a real way while others reject this principle and its philosophical assumption of realism and adopt a nominalist separation of entities where signs are not seen to be connected in any real way to what they signify but function only in a linguistic manner. Philosophically and theologically, realists argue that sacramental signs are instances of or vehicles of what they signify and as such participate in or instantiate what they signify so that the particular signs really convey what they signify. Hence a realist in regard to Eucharistic theology would argue that the Eucharist as a sign itself and the particular outward signs of bread and wine really convey what they signify, that is, the nature, life and identity of Christ. In the 1662 Book of Common Prayer Eucharist, for example, a realist would argue that when the words from the Prayer of Humble Access are prayed, that is: ‘Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood’¹¹, that the nature, life and identity of Christ is really present and received in the Eucharist and the Eucharistic elements of bread and wine, although this is of course distinguished from any fleshy notions of Christ’s presence. The same realist argument is applied to the words of administration where the priest delivers the elements to the communicant with a formula beginning with the words: ‘The Body of Christ’ and ‘The Blood of Christ’. Realists argue that Christ’s body and blood are really given by the signs of bread and wine. Rowan Williams, using realist assumptions based on an incarnational theology, argues that the signs of the Eucharist are as much carriers of Christ’s life and identity as are Jesus’ literal flesh and blood.¹²

Nominalists deny this realist analysis of sacramental instrumentality and argue that all we have are particular signs which function to remind us to give thanks for a past and completed transaction, that is, Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, without any real participation in or instantiation of what they signify in the present. Better Gatherings in the Diocese of Sydney for example argues that ‘when we pray that we may “eat the flesh” of Christ and “drink his blood”, the reference is not directly to the Lord’s Supper but to faith in the sacrifice of Christ that saves us.’¹³ Nominalist analysis does not deny that Christ is present in the Eucharist in some way but it does deny the realist analysis of sacramental instrumentality.
Realists also argue that Christ’s sacrifice is dynamically remembered in the Eucharist such that the effects of that sacrifice are re-newed and re-presented. Gregory Dix for example speaks of “re-calling” or “re-presenting” in the Eucharist before God the sacrifice of Christ, and thus making it here and now operative by its effects in the communicants.14 Realists interpret the words of the Prayer of Consecration in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer in this way when they say that Christ ‘did institute, and in his holy Gospel command us to continue, a perpetual memory of that his precious death, until his coming again’.15 A perpetual memory’ is seen as one where the effects of Christ’s sacrifice are re-newed and re-presented in the Eucharist. Nominalists deny this analysis and argue that there is no realist connection between Christ’s sacrifice and the Eucharist since they deny that the signs of bread and wine can convey what they signify in any real way. Peter Jensen for example, following this line of thinking, describes the Eucharist as a meal that takes place at millions of places around the world on a weekly basis where the aim is to ‘share a meal in memory of a certain man’.16 This meal is described as ‘a sort of perpetual wake’ which ‘has lasted for two thousand years so far’.17 He also describes the Eucharist as ‘a projectile launched from antiquity into our own time; it constantly turns up amongst us and says, “never forget this man”’.18 Jensen’s central thought here seems to concern remembering and eating and drinking as an act of faith, will and mind alone since, following Cranmer, Christ can only be really present in heaven and never on earth in the Eucharist. He speaks here of ‘remembering’ in the sense of bringing to mind a past event, completed in the past but remembered in the present with thanksgiving but without sacramental instrumentality. For Jensen, the Eucharist is ‘a perpetual and effective reminder of the sheer stature of Jesus Christ’.19 The Eucharist therefore functions principally as a reminder only which serves in its use as the moment of remembering with assurance of a past and completed action and the giving of thanks for the benefits of that action in people’s lives by faith without any realist linking between the signs and what they signify.

A hint of multiformity is given in the Preface of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer where the task of the liturgical reformers is stated as ‘not to gratify this or that party in any their unreasonable demands’.20 Brian Cummings has recently pointed out that ‘when theologians and divines assembled to revise the Book of Common Prayer for new use under Charles II after 1660, they did so with contradictory energies’.21 Cummings contends further that
'while it was proclaimed by parliament to constitute an “Act of Uniformity”, its real effect was anything but.' The contradictory energies of this multiformity of Eucharistic theology and practice expressed in the *Book of Common Prayer* extend beyond mere party spirit and to a multiformity of differing theological and philosophical assumptions.

We now consider two examples of the faces or multiformity of Eucharistic theology in the *Book of Common Prayer*, referring to the Declaration on Kneeling, commonly known as ‘The Black Rubric’, and to the Catechism.

The *Declaration on Kneeling or ‘The Black Rubric’*

The Declaration on Kneeling or the so-called ‘Black Rubric’ is found at the end of the Eucharist in the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*. In the 1552 *Book of Common Prayer* a ‘Declaration on Kneeling’, commonly called ‘The Black Rubric’, is also found at the end of the Eucharist. This declaration, printed in black instead of the usual red for rubrics, was inserted as the 1552 *Book of Common Prayer* was being printed and was an attempt, by persons unknown, without the authority of Parliament, to deny any connection between kneeling and the corporal presence of Christ in the sacramental elements of bread and wine.

The 1552 Declaration read, in part, in relation to kneeling at the time of receiving the bread and wine:

> Lest yet the same kneeling might be thought or taken otherwise, we do declare that it is not meant thereby, that any adoration is done, or ought to be done, either unto the sacramental bread and wine thereby bodily received, or to any real and essential presence, there being of Christ's natural flesh and blood.

The Declaration on Kneeling, having been omitted in the 1559 *Book of Common Prayer*, was reinserted but significantly altered in the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*. This was done, some argue, to avoid any confusion between the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist on the one hand and the doctrine of transubstantiation on the other. In relation to Eucharistic theology, however, such a distinction was made in 1662 between a real presence (not fleshy) on the one hand and a fleshy presence on the other, on the assumption that these were not the same thing. Transubstantiation is specifically rejected by Article XXVIII of the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, however, there is no specific
rejection of the 'real presence' of Christ in the Eucharist in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, that is, where such real presence involves no change in the substance of the bread and wine. The use of the words 'real and essential presence' in the Declaration in the 1552 Book of Common Prayer could be inferred as rejecting any notion of a real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. In the 1662 Book of Common Prayer the Declaration on Kneeling or 'The Black Rubric', some argue, seems to want to avoid such an inference and therefore the Declaration became in part:

yet, lest the same kneeling should by any persons either out of ignorance and infirmity, or out of malice and obstinacy, be misconstrued and depraved: It is hereby declared, that thereby no Adoration is intended, or ought to be done, either unto the Sacramental Bread and Wine there bodily received, or unto any Corporal Presence of Christ's natural Flesh and Blood.28 (emphasis added)

Significantly the words 'real and essential presence' in the 1552 Book of Common Prayer were changed to 'Corporal Presence' in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer thereby proscribing the idea of any corporal or fleshy presence of Christ in the Eucharist but at the same time avoiding the rejection of a real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, which could be a spiritual presence but still one where, as Rowan Williams has argued, the life and identity of Christ are instantiated in the Eucharist. Some argue that the change is merely verbal and not theological, since the words 'real and essential' were no longer properly understood and could be misconstrued to mean the denial of any true form of real presence.29 Others however argue for the change in wording as indicating an affirmation of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.30 Perhaps this depends as much on what is not said as what is said, since while corporal or fleshy presence, I am sure all would agree, is excluded, it could be inferred, although not all might agree here, that other forms of presence, for example, a real presence, are not. Such difference of opinion seems to be based on the distinction between those who accept a realist notion of Christ's presence in the Eucharist and those who do not. It is this very difference that indicates a multiformity of Eucharistic theology in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer.

Some argue therefore that the achievement of the framers of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer in changing the wording of 'The Black Rubric' from
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‘real and essential presence’ to ‘corporal presence’ was that they maintained the protest against transubstantiation and any corporal presence, whilst at the same time removing any risk of the Declaration on Kneeling or ‘The Black Rubric’ being misconstrued as a denial of the real presence.31

**The Catechism of 1604**

The additions to the Catechism in the 1604 *Book of Common Prayer*, continued in the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*, presented for the first time catechetical statements about Eucharistic theology in English prayer books. The additions seem to have been made at the request of the Puritans who attended the Hampton Court Conferences in January 1604 and who had requested more detail about the sacraments.32 Some of these questions added to the Catechism of the Prayer Book in 1604 were:

**Question.** Why was the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper ordained?

**Answer.** For the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and [1662 *Book of Common Prayer* adds ‘of’ here] the benefits which we receive thereby.

**Question.** What is the outward part or sign in the Lord’s Supper?

**Answer.** Bread and Wine, which the Lord hath commanded to be received.

**Question.** What is the inward part, or thing signified?

**Answer.** The Body and Blood of Christ, which are verily [1662 *Book of Common Prayer* adds ‘and indeed’ here] taken and received by the faithful in the Lord’s Supper.

For some the answer to the first question above suggests that the Eucharist is the continuing means whereby the sacrifice of Christ is remembered, although of course the nature of this remembering of the sacrifice has been variously interpreted. Many from the Evangelical tradition within Anglicanism interpret ‘remembrance’ to mean simply ‘in memory of,’ in that the remembering is of a finished sacrifice which can in no way be really perpetuated or re-presented in the present but instead brought to mind in faith with grateful
thanks. This means that the Eucharist cannot be a ‘memorial sacrifice’ but instead only a ‘memorial service’.33 The Sydney Doctrine Commission Report on A Prayer Book for Australia, the most recent Australian Prayer Book published in 1995, has made this point in relation to the idea of remembering as memorial (anamnesis). The danger the Sydney Doctrine Commission Report sees in the use of ‘remembering as memorial’ (anamnesis) is that it may ‘establish the idea that in the Eucharist the death of Christ at Golgotha is being re-offered or re-presented.34 Catholic Anglicans reject this view and argue that while there is no fleshy re-offering or re-presentation, there is a real offering nonetheless where the benefits of the sacrifice of Christ are re-newed in the Eucharist as ‘a continual remembrance’ akin to the ‘perpetual memory’ spoken of in the Prayer of Consecration in the Eucharist. Christ is not killed again but the effects of his sacrifice are known in the Eucharist and continually remembered in a real way.

Catholic Anglicans therefore tend to interpret the first question and answer of the 1604 additions in a realist manner, seeing ‘remembrance’ as meaning not only ‘in memory of’ but also as ‘to plead before God a memorial sacrifice’.35 This interpretation implies more than a mere reminder or act of memory, but a solemn commemoration and pleading of the sacrifice of Christ, that is, what theologians call anamnesis, whereby in the Eucharist in the present, the merits of Christ’s sacrifice are pleaded anew and are present by their effects.36 The nature of Christ’s sacrifice, his life and identity, is remembered or instantiated in the Eucharist such that its effects are made available in the present through the Eucharistic celebration.

The second question in the 1604 additions to the Catechism asks about the outward and visible parts or signs of the Lord’s Supper. The answer states that these signs are the bread and wine and that they are used because of the Lord’s command. The inward and spiritual part or thing signified in the Lord’s Supper is addressed in the third question of the 1604 additions. These are seen to be the body and blood of Christ and they are said to be ‘verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord’s Supper’! Neil and Willoughby reject any realist notion implied by these words, arguing on the basis of Article XXVIII that the body and blood of Christ is:

taken and received ‘only after a heavenly and spiritual manner’. Christ is seen only to be present by his Spirit whom he sent to apply His Sacrifice. Hence to take and receive
the Body and Blood of Christ, is to receive the grace and benefits procured by the offering up of His Body once given and His Blood once shed for sin.37

Daniel, however, expressing a Catholic Anglican view argues that:

The consecrated elements are not mere symbols of the body and blood, nor are they converted into the carnal body and blood; and yet in some mysterious way, which we cannot, and therefore need not, comprehend, but of which we are none the less certain, Christ conveys Himself to the faithful communicant.38

This is similar to the previously cited view of Rowan Williams who speaks of Christ's life and identity being available in a real way in the Eucharist. There is no sense however in which the outward sign is changed in its substance. The outward signs remain bread and wine, but nonetheless, according to this view, are an effective means of communicating the nature, life and identity of Christ, the body and blood of Christ ('verily and indeed') to the faithful in the Eucharist.

**Conclusion**

The 1662 Book of Common Prayer remains an important part of our Anglican heritage. We do need to value it but we must be careful to recognise that its Eucharistic theology and practice is multiform and therefore not gratifying just one party. It is only in recognising and respecting this that we continue to honour the heritage we have received. To claim a Eucharistic theology and practice of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer exclusively for one party and its particular hermeneutic or to claim a pure view of Eucharistic theology is, in my view, to misinterpret and dishonour the heritage we have received.

**Endnotes**


7. Anglican Diocese of Sydney, *Better Gatherings*, http://www.bettergatherings.com (accessed 7 July, 2012). See the section called 'Learning from the Communion Service' where it is stated that 'celebrating every aspect of the Son's redemptive work may lead to a diminishing of the significance of the cross.'

8. This is the practice at the parish of St Paul’s Manuka, ACT, where the author is Rector and where the use of the Diocesan Rite of the 1662 Eucharist continues on a weekly basis and includes the Kyries, the Benedictus and the Agnus Dei but does not include the extended and fuller Prayer of Consecration.


11. See Christopher Cocksworth, 'Eucharistic Theology', in Kenneth Stevenson and Bryan Spinks (eds), *The Identity of Anglican Worship* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Moorehouse, 1991), p. 49. See also the case studies presented
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