

## Anglican Liturgy and the Gospel according to J I Packer

Written by Calvin Fox

Friday, 12 August 2011 21:32 - Last Updated Friday, 12 August 2011 21:38

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Thomas Cranmer designed the movement of the BCP Liturgy (1552>1662) to follow the outline of the Gospel. It is preserved best today in the Reformed Episcopal Prayer Book (1785, 1874 and 1963)

### **Holy Communion by J I Packer**

“Like most masterpieces, the Prayer Book Communion service has a basic structure that is extremely simple; just three repeats of the sin-grace-faith cycle, like three turns of a screw, each going further than the last in fixing the Gospel in our hearts and drawing out our response to it. The second adds to the first a sharpened application; the third adds to the second a sacramental confirmation. The service is built up thus.

“First cycle. The ante-communion: (1) acknowledgement of sin by the collect for purity and the hearing of the law, with the response Lord, have mercy upon us (2) proclaiming of grace by New Testament readings; (3) responsive exercise of faith, in testimony (I believe), learning of God (the sermon), giving to God (the collection), and prayer for the church on earth.

“Second cycle. (1) acknowledgment of sin in the confession; (2) proclaiming of grace, first in the prayer of absolution (God hath promised forgiveness of sins), and then in the comfortable words; (3) responsive exercise of faith, in thanksgiving for this grace (Let us give thanks Glory be to thee, O Lord most High).

“Third cycle. (1) acknowledgement of sin, in the prayer of humble access, confessing our unworthiness to come to the Table; (2) proclaiming of grace, in the prayer of consecration, which expounds the cross (a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world), and the delivering of the tokens of the cross to each worshipper; (3) responsive exercise of faith, in fresh thanks, self-giving, and adoration of God on high and His exalted Son.”

[http://www.stpaulsanglicanchurch.org/~stpauls/holy\\_communion.php](http://www.stpaulsanglicanchurch.org/~stpauls/holy_communion.php)

**Outline: Service consists of 3 Gospel Themes: Sin, Grace and Faith**

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1. Confession of Sins against God and His Law (“Lord have mercy”)
2. Announcement of God’s Grace, i.e.- God’s Promises to pardon and restore the Penitent
3. Response to Grace by Faith and Grateful Acts (Prayers and Hearing the Word)

These three Themes are repeated in three cycles during the Liturgy as follows:

### **A. Ante Communion**

- I Sin confronted by the Law read; Sins confessed; Absolution offered
- II Grace proclaimed through Scripture Readings
- III Faith professed through reciting the Creed, increased through the Word Preached; Offertory given and more Prayers

### **B. The Communion Service begins**

- I Sin: General Confession of sin and Prayer for Forgiveness
- II Grace: Absolution offered
- III Faith: Response of Thanksgiving (sursum corda and sanctus)

### **C. The Great Thanksgiving (Eucharist)**

- I Sin: Prayer of Humble Access
- II Grace: announced and offered in the Eucharist Prayers and the Elements
- III Faith: Prayers of Praise, Thanksgiving and Commitment

I do not think the typical Anglican/Episcopalian realizes or appreciates this arrangement and therefore is not impacted by the Gospel at every Service as Cranmer intended. I think it would make a major difference in the spiritual life of the Church if they did understand it. (In fairness to them, the 3-fold cycles are not very clear in the 1979 BCP)