

## BISHOP CHALLONER'S PRAYER-BOOK

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**R**ICHARD CHALLONER was a man of varied and great achievement, but two things stand out in their significance for all English-speaking Catholics. The first was his revision of the Rheims-Douay English version of the Bible. This revision almost amounted to a new translation; till recently it was the only Bible current among Catholics in Great Britain and Ireland, and was used almost as exclusively in the United States (cf. the preface to the Confraternity New Testament). The second was his compilation and writing of a prayer-book, *The Garden of the Soul*, which was first published in 1740. This book has since gone through countless editions, and is still the best-known Catholic prayer-book in the English language. So great has been its influence that, in the form in which it left the hands of the author, it has given rise to the term 'Garden-of-the-Soul Catholic' to designate one of solid unostentatious piety (combined perhaps with a certain lack of imagination). I do not know, but I suppose that its influence has been scarcely less in America, at any rate for a considerable time.

I have referred to the form in which it left the hands of the author because additions, omissions and alterations in the later editions have been so numerous that books labelled *Garden of the Soul* today—and for long past—are entirely different from the original. Bishop Challoner simply would not recognize them; they would be as unfamiliar to him as his own original work is to present-day Catholics. It therefore seems worth while to examine the contents of his *Garden of the Soul*, not only as a matter of historical interest but also because it is possible to learn from and profit by a holy pastor's ideas concerning what was essential for his flock in the matter of prayer. No doubt English and American Catholics today are in some respects very different from those of the eighteenth century: but we have the same human nature and the same religion. One point on which we differ is that many of Challoner's flock could not read. Yet his prayer-book is far more 'literate', in a liberal sense of the word, than are popular prayer-books today. Nor can this be explained by an allegation that

Challoner's book was intended only for well-educated people. It was a characteristic of the well-educated in the eighteenth century that they knew Latin. Challoner seems to assume that at least some of the users of his book will know none. It is an *English* prayer-book; and on the rare occasions when he uses a Latin phrase he is always careful to translate it—even *Dominus vobiscum*.

The 1740 *Garden of the Soul* was only a small book, some 300 pages, about 6ins. by 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ ins., printed in Caslon small pica, but it contained a great deal. It was not simply a prayer-book. As Canon Burton remarks,

It was designed to be a brief guide to the spiritual life, containing not prayers only, but information, instructions, and much practical advice. . . . There are long sections devoted to the consideration 'of the ordinary actions of the day', 'the necessary virtues to be exercised every day', and 'preservatives and remedies against sin'. This portion of the book . . . is in effect a miniature treatise on the spiritual life.\*

That part of the book has disappeared from many more recent editions, which in consequence may be said not even to embody Challoner's original purpose and idea. We are concerned here principally with prayer, public and private, but we may briefly glance at this forgotten section.

It begins with a summary of Christian doctrine, under the heads 'What Every Christian must Believe', 'What Every Christian must Do, in order to Life Everlasting', and, almost as long as the other two, 'Gospel-Lessons to be Ponder'd at Leisure by Every Christian Soul'—fifty-three short passages from the New Testament, the longest only eleven lines. This biblical quality is characteristic of Challoner's writings—he was indeed a Bible Christian. It is noticeable throughout the *Garden of the Soul* and not least in this part of it, especially in the 'Preservatives and Remedies' against the deadly sins and in the thirty-six aspirations and ejaculations, three-quarters of which are scriptural. The section on the ordinary actions of the day and the spirit in which they ought to be done includes metrical versions of the hymns *Veni Creator* and *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, 'proper before reading or any other spiritual undertaking'. Challoner was a great writer of

\* Quoted from Canon Edwin Burton's *Life and Times of Bishop Challoner* in the Advertisement to the reprint of the original *Garden of the Soul* published by Messrs Burns & Oates in 1916.

meditations; but the ten which he gives here, 'which may serve as examples of this exercise', are from St Francis de Sales's *Introduction to a Devout Life*.

For morning prayer, apart from the recommended meditation, Challoner gives a long prayer embodying the usual 'acts', together with the Lord's Prayer, the Angelic Salutation (he calls these by their right traditional names, rather than 'Our Father' and 'Hail Mary' as favoured today), the Apostles' Creed, the *Confiteor* and the Angelus. For the evening he recommends for family use, not the rosary, but the litany of the Saints in its full form, complete with the psalm and all the prayers at the end. For personal use there are the Lord's Prayer, etc., as in the morning, and examination of conscience, which 'ought never to be omitted by such as desire to serve God in good earnest', to which are added the hymn and prayer from Complin (as he rightly spells it) and a metrical version of *Salve Regina* with its prayer, and sundry invocations, e.g., to our guardian angel.

We may note here 'Other Devotions Proper for Sundays and Holidays', namely: *Te Deum*, the Song of the Three Young Men (*Benedicite*), seven psalms of praise and thanksgiving (94, 99, 102, 116, 137, 148, 150), the Song of Zachary (*Benedictus*), 'an Universal Prayer for all Things Necessary for Salvation', a long paraphrase, or rather expansion, of the Lord's Prayer, and the so-called Athanasian Creed. Then follows 'The Vespers, or Even-Song', with the psalms, antiphons and hymn of Sunday, and commemorations of our Lady, SS. Peter and Paul and for peace; and then Complin—both of course entirely in English.

That list requires no comment; it is sufficient that it must make us think a bit.

Later in the book are several special prayers to be used by the sick; prayers for the dead, consisting of *Miserere*, *De profundis* and twelve collects for various persons, all from the missal; the litany of our Lord Jesus Christ (now called 'of the Holy Name'); the litany of Loreto; and the fifteen mysteries of the rosary, of which the last is given as 'The Blessed Virgin's eternal felicity and that of all the Blessed in the kingdom of Heaven'. It is a pity that the other formulation of the same once common, 'The coronation of our Lady in Heaven and the glory of all the Saints', should also have gone out of use.

There is also in the 1740 edition the first 'text' of Benediction

of the Blessed Sacrament ever to appear in an English prayer-book. It is much as we have it today, except that in addition to the usual prayer there are two others before the blessing: the second is collect No. 8 from the missal, for the welfare of the congregation, and the third collect No. 6, for 'thy servant N., our king'. There are of course no Divine Praises, and no Psalm 116. It would seem that in those days English Catholics were as tongue-tied in church as they generally are today: how else explain the fact that the Latin even of *O salutaris* and *Tantum ergo* is not given?

In the eighteenth century confession and communion were of course much more infrequent than they are now, even among the devout. They also were accompanied by much longer preparation and thanksgiving. Challoner devotes thirty pages to instruction, considerations and prayers before confession, including an examination of conscience, not over-long but including some rather unexpected questions (e.g., 'Have you profess'd any art<sup>1</sup> or undertaken any business without sufficient skill and knowledge? And what prejudice has your neighbour suffer'd from it?'). Three or four questions were modified in the reprint of 1916, as being 'over-explicit according to modern standards'. The same amount of space is accorded to holy communion, including a long meditation which could be spread over the previous seven days.

I have emphasized the scriptural element in the *Garden of the Soul*. It is now clear that it was also liturgical—to use the word in a way that was, I suppose, unknown to Challoner.<sup>2</sup> It is at a first glance then the more surprising that the book does not contain the text, whether in Latin or English, of the ordinary and canon of the Mass, but instead 'Devotion for Mass'.

However, on examining them more carefully we find that these prayers follow the Action much more closely than do many of those in modern prayer-books. The complete English text is given of 'Glory be to God on high', the Nicene Creed, the common preface and *Sanctus*, the memento of the dead, *Agnus Dei*, *Domine non sum dignus* and the last gospel; and the worshipper is particularly adjured inwardly to respond to '*Orate, fratres*' and in like

<sup>1</sup> Art here of course does not mean primarily the so-called fine arts (though presumably they are not excluded) but trades, e.g., plumbing, carpentry.

<sup>2</sup> I am reminded of a venerable priest in the north who asked to have 'dialogue Mass' explained to him. When this had been done, he is said to have exclaimed, 'Goodness me! I have been doing that in my church for thirty years. I never knew before that it had a special name.' ('*Par ma foi! il y a plus de quarante ans que je dis de la prose sans que j'en susse rien*').

manner to join in the Lord's Prayer. Short prayers are provided to accompany the introit, the collects, the gradual, the lavabo and the 'secret', and also for the epistle and gospel 'if you have not the convenience of reading them, or otherwise attending to them'. The prayers at the offertory, from *Te igitur* to the consecration, and from *Supra quae* to the Great Amen are paraphrased. And throughout there are 'rubrics' keeping the worshippers in close touch with the actions and purport of the prayers of the celebrant. Nobody could regularly use these formulas and instructions without acquiring a good knowledge of what is going on at any given moment of the Mass, which surely is antecedent to and more important than the *ipsissima verba* of the missal. There is no question here of 'the priest doing one thing and the people doing another'. In Challoner's own words (*italics mine*)—

'For these ends *both priest and people* ought to offer up the sacrifice of the Mass: the priest as Christ's minister, and in his person; and the people by the hands of the priest; and both the one and the other by the hands of the great high-priest Jesus Christ. And with this offering of Christ's both the one and the other ought to make a total offering of themselves also by his hands, and in union with him.'

No dissection of the original *Garden of the Soul* can give an adequate idea of its flavour. It has that sober piety, fragrant but not 'sweet', that characterizes, for example, the contemporary Alban Butler's *Lives of the Saints* and, earlier, the writing of that venerable monk Augustine Baker. Among the things that can be learned from the book is a sense of proportion. Challoner is concerned with the Catholic faith, the *living* of that faith, and the two chief means to that end, the sacrament of penance and the sacrament and sacrifice of the Eucharist. He continually adverts to our Lord's passion—but he does not refer to the stations of the cross. He reminds us again and again of the Mother of God, with suitable prayers—but there are no artificial devotions in her honour. There is no mention of novenas, of scapulars or medals, of Nine Fridays or Fifteen Tuesdays, of 'promises' or private revelations. Nobody could get the impression from this book that salvation, that 'being a good Catholic', is in the first place a matter of observances. Challoner set down what he esteemed to be necessary in normal Christian life: these other things—good as they are—are not necessary; for some souls they may be superfluous. For

that matter, Challoner himself was probably not conscious of some of them. (It is not surprising, at that date, that there is no mention of the Sacred Heart in the original *Garden of the Soul*, though as he had spent twenty-five years in France Challoner must have heard of that devotion.)

At a time when so many are interested in the English versions of Latin, Greek and Hebrew originals a word about the English of the *Garden of the Soul* may not be out of place. Richard Challoner wrote the formal language of the eighteenth-century English gentleman that he was; and not the least of the differences between the earlier and later editions of his prayer-book is the manner of expression. Much of the new matter that has been put in is translated or adapted from French or Italian, and seemingly by people who, however adequate their knowledge of those tongues, were insufficiently concerned to write English that would come naturally to the tongues of English-speakers. Except when using St Francis de Sales, Challoner is reasonably free from 'Ohs!' and 'Ahs!' and 'elevations' generally, from 'little nose-gays' (a good English word) and 'spiritual bouquets' (a not-so-good French one). Some of his prayers and considerations are very long (he lived in a leisurely age, when there were thirty-six holy days of obligation in the year), but not over-verbose when compared with, say, Alban Butler. But his vocabulary often strikes us as fresh and lively because of his use of now unfamiliar but then traditional words and expressions: he says 'clerk' for 'server' (not perhaps an improvement), 'Evensong' as an alternative to 'Vespers', 'anthem' for 'antiphon', 'chief bishop' for '[sovereign] pontiff', 'decency' for 'good order', 'commonwealth' for 'state', 'burnt-offering' for 'holocaust', and such words as 'frantic' and 'rag or clout' (referring to Luke 23: 64). And he does not stick at writing, 'Look down . . . upon this family, for which our Lord Jesus Christ did not stick to be delivered into the hands of sinners', — though in 1740 this probably had no flavour of colloquialism.

The words of some of our most familiar prayers, litanies, etc., are known to us in the translations of Bishop Challoner. It was he who altered 'Our Father *which* art in Heaven' to '*who* art' and, less happily, rendered some of the positive epithets of the litany of Loreto by the English superlatives that we still use; he also, I regret to say, gave currency to 'Vessel of singular devotion'. But we are his debtors for far more than we realize. I am not insinuating

a plea for a return to Challoner. Far from it. His style was no doubt just right for his own day: for us, two hundred years later, much of it seems stilted, artificial and distracting. But even in the matter of style—to say nothing of the more important things I have referred to—we can learn from him. In our proper anxiety that the language of our prayer-books, missals and sacred writings should be natural and intelligible, we run some danger of toppling over into triteness and banality. Richard Challoner recalls us to dignity.



## ON THE WORD OF GOD

MICHAEL RICHARDS

**I**N his book, *The High Church Tradition*, Canon G. W. O. Addleshaw makes an unfavourable comparison between the scholastic theologians of the Counter-Reformation and the seventeenth century Anglican divines. 'The theology of the Tridentine divines is embalmed in scientific treatises; the High Churchmen were content to expound theirs in sermons delivered to ordinary congregations.'<sup>1</sup> Men like Suarez and Bellamine, when they wrote as technical theologians, were not, however, trying to do the same sort of thing as the Caroline divines, and the comparison is hardly a valid one. The men who should be set beside John Donne, Lancelot Andrewes, or Jeremy Taylor are writers, preachers and priests like Bérulle and Olier, Bossuet, Bourdaloue and Fénelon. Dislike of our scholasticism and legalism is one of the commonplaces of the Anglican critique of Rome; we may think that others see over-clearly in us those things on which they lay least stress. We have our great men in the fields which the Church of England has most cultivated, and would like to set them confidently beside theirs in what the Abbé Couturier has called *émulation spirituelle*, that friendly rivalry in the race which we all run for the same prize.

1 Faber and Faber, 1941, p. 29.