

ANGLICAN ARCANA: The Lord's Prayer

Some folks have noticed in the *Book of Common Prayer* that two forms of the Lord's Prayer are given in the modern-language rite: a version in Elizabethan language and one in contemporary English. At Ascension, we still mostly use the so-called "traditional" version in our public liturgies. On occasion—as at last spring's *Via Media* program—we experiment with the modern text. But where do these two versions come from?

The traditional language has come to us from the first English prayer book of 1549. This, in turn, quoted the Great Bible of 1539 for scriptural texts. This Bible translation is most familiar to Anglicans for its version of the psalter, translated by Myles Coverdale. Here's the 1549 version of the prayer of Jesus, reproduced with all its lovely archaic spellings:

Our father, whyche art in heauen, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kyngdome come.
Thy wyll be doen in yearth, as it is in heauen. Geue us this daye our dayly breade.
And forgeue us our trespaces, as wee forgeue them that trespasse agaynst us. And
leade us not into temptacion, but deliuer us from euill. Amen.

As you can see, the version we call "traditional" has been modified quite a bit since that original! Some of the change came by way of modernization of spellings, and more came through the influence of people like Daniel Webster, who insisted what we use "who" instead of "which" for a relative pronoun referring to beings, rather than things.

What we call "the Lord's Prayer" is, of course, taken from Scripture. In the Gospel of Matthew (6:9-13), Jesus teaches his disciples to pray using this formula. Jesus, of course, would not conclude his prayer with what we now call a "doxological ending," so the bit about the power and the glory—that's a later addition.

The contemporary version (see p.364 of your prayer book) comes to us from the International Consultation on English Texts. These ICET versions are a result of an ecumenical effort to define a single standard for contemporary translations of things like the *Gloria in excelsis*, Lord's Prayer, and other canticles and liturgical texts.

One of the most significant differences in this version is that we pray "Save us from the time of trial" instead of "Lead us not into temptation." For my money, I'd rather pray to a God who will save me from the time of trial than a God who will lead me into temptation—but that's the subject of another discussion! Ω