

**The
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**THE PUBLIC LANGUAGE OF WORSHIP
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Some claims and clarifications from those who believe it is right and proper to use in the third millennium of the Christian era what is usually called "traditional language."

Let it be noted that we speak here only of Public Worship or Common Prayer that is conducted in the English Language and is within a biblically-based, orthodox church. We do not speak of either heretical churches or private prayers and devotions and we do not transfer our principles to prayer/worship in other languages such as German, French or Spanish.

First, the negative. We do NOT claim that:

- 1. God does not hear prayers from his people that are badly composed and/or are grammatically incorrect. The LORD is gracious unto all who call upon him in humility.**
- 2. It is morally wrong and/or sinful to address God in "contemporary English." The LORD hears and understands all forms of language for he is our Creator.**
- 3. Every Christian congregation in the English-speaking world ought to abandon the use of modern "contemporary English" forms of worship immediately. We realize that this would be impossible for the millions of Roman Catholics who are required to use only "contemporary English" or Latin.**
- 4. There are no attractive, reasonable and seemingly persuasive arguments offered to Christian congregations to abandon the use of "traditional language" for public prayer. We realize that the language of evangelism needs to be in forms that the hearers understand immediately and easily.**
- 5. The laws/rules for personal prayer/devotions are identical with those for public worship and common prayer - or vice versa.**

6. The excellence of language is more important than the purity and humility of heart and spirit. God looks first on the heart and then hears the words from there.

Secondly, the positive. We DO claim that:

1. Public worship & Common Prayer ought to be and should be offered to the Holy Trinity, the LORD God, in the best available form of language to make possible the expression of right doctrine, devotion, discipline and ethos.

2. The best available language for worship/prayer ought to be the expression of faithful, obedient and humble hearts and mind. Heart, mind will and voice should be one in a right relation to the Lord.

3. In determining the best available form of language, the history and tradition of usage in the English language should be seen as very important and perhaps decisive. The Church exists through space and time and we are part of a long and wide-ranging story of grace.

4. There is a specific language of worship and prayer within the history and experience of the English-speaking peoples and this is given classic expression in the King James Bible of 1611, The Book of Common Prayer of 1662, in the Hymns of Isaac Watts & Charles Wesley (& others), in Statements & Confessions of Faith (e.g., the Westminster Catechisms and Confession from the 1640s) and in innumerable printed books of sermons, catechisms, translations of Greek and Latin texts, and the like.

5. This long and deep and profound tradition of language for worship and prayer should be seen as the primary idiom of prayer in the English language and be judged to have been created in and by the providence of God.

6. Despite the fact that this idiom of prayer was rudely and widely rejected in the 1960s and with it certain holy books & associations of doctrine and morality, it ought to be kept in use and availability in all Churches that are biblically-based and orthodox. Such classic prayer books as The Book of Common Prayer (1662, 1928, 1962 [Canada] etc.) should be prized, widely available and used; and the King James Bible (1611) should be often read in churches.

July 9, 2002. The Rev'd Dr. Peter Toon