

The Order for the Celebration of Holy Communion.

ONE of many happy results of Union should be enhanced beauty and reverence in the conduct of Public Worship in the Church of Scotland. By accident of different history and circumstances, each branch of the Scottish Church, in the conduct of the services of the sanctuary, has its own excellencies and its own shortcomings. Now the former should be reinforced and the latter reduced—if not eliminated. In the preface of the 'Book of Common Order, 1928,' Dr Millar Patrick remarks that one of the noteworthy characteristics of the Church to-day in almost all its branches is a revival of concern about offices of worship, and that forms, methods, and substance of Public Worship cannot be too carefully considered or planned with too much care, in order that they may be as worthy as possible, and furnish as effective a guide as thought and skill can provide of a congregation's mind and spirit in its approach to God. In the Committee on Worship and Aids to Devotion, the Church of Scotland has a Council of able and keen liturgiologists who will do much to remedy defects and deficiencies, and make the services of the sanctuary beautiful, orderly, and reverent.

An early—if not the first—duty of this Committee should be a review of the office of Holy Communion as the supreme service of worship. This would be an enterprise of great pith and moment, for it would mean a re-examination of sources and authorities with all the difficult questions of readings and elaborate questions of theology and history.

The Service of Holy Communion—*Ἡ θεία λειτουργία*—the Divine Liturgy or Eucharistic office, is the chief ordinance of the Church, and has importance that no other has. It is unique in that it goes back to the appointment of the Lord. Other offices of worship came into existence, and evolved as need arose. This, however, is the one office of public worship ordained by the Lord,

and the closer His actions at the institution are followed, the more correct will be the celebration.

In the Apostolic Church, Holy Communion was celebrated every Sunday, and regarded as the chief feature of public worship. This is evident from the Scripture phrase that the believers came together not to hear sermons or offer prayers, but "to break bread." This long continued to be the practice of the Church, and the Primitive Liturgies are simply forms for the administration of this sacrament. Though obliged to submit to an imperfect order, we should testify for what is Primitive and Apostolical. There is every reason to think that it was meant that the Lord's Death should be commemorated at a Communion Table as frequently and regularly as it had been foreshadowed in the sacrifice of the altar during the former dispensation.

S. Paul shows that he was intensely concerned that the celebration should be correct in form. With care he had mastered the particulars of a Catholic and Christian celebration. Severely he warns members of the Corinthian Church against untidy forms of celebration, and takes pains to impress on them the ritual of what the Lord did on the night in which He was betrayed.

As time went on, Holy Communion became established as the norm of Christian worship. It contained as integral parts the reading of Scriptures and the preaching of the Word, and was the principal service each Lord's Day. It was the service for the people as a whole in their collective capacity. It was developed to meet the needs and impress the imagination of those who had neither time nor disposition for the cultivation of a subjective or inward piety. It represented the "Christ for us" rather than the "Christ in us." After the sixth century the term 'liturgy,' which had included both forms of worship, was restricted to the Eucharist alone. The office of Holy Communion is thus not given its proper place, and cannot be correctly celebrated, when it is regarded as an after service, a mere adjunct or appendage to what has gone before—the usual homiletic service or daily office. The whole service of Holy Communion must be a unity, and every act from invocation to benediction considered and arranged as part of the celebration.

The service of Holy Communion has taken many forms in different Churches and different lands, but in all the varying forms remarkable unity persists. Language

differs, ceremonial differs, theology differs ; but, speaking broadly and generally, we may say that one form for the celebration of Holy Communion survives. Confession of sins, reading of Scriptures, intercession, special thanksgiving, the recital of the Lord's words of institution, invocation of the Holy Spirit, the whole ending with the Lord's Prayer—these, with the actions of the Lord and His disciples in the upper room, have in all ages and with differences in arrangement, expression, and emphasis, constituted the service of the Lord's Supper, whether in Greek or Latin, in Syrian or English.

Here it is necessary to say something about liturgies—especially their anatomy or architecture. *Λειτουργία* was originally the name of a public duty or office which in Athens richer citizens had to discharge at their own cost. It consisted of providing for the benefit of the people generally some form of public amusement, usually of dancing or games. *Λειτουργία* thus became the name of ANY services or functions of public character, and hence in the Septuagint is used of the public service of God and divine worship of the congregation. In ecclesiastical phraseology it was originally restricted specially to the Eucharist as being the highest of public offices. In that sense the word is now used here, and not in the wider later sense, as applied to the whole form of the public worship of a congregation.

All the older liturgies are divided into two main parts—the “Missa Catechumenorum” and the “Missa Fidelium.” The former is directed to instruction, and usually included prayers of confession, intercession, and thanksgiving ; but its essence is instruction, and is best described in the fine Scottish phrase, the Ministry of the Word. Originally there were four lessons from Scripture—Law, Prophets, Epistle, and Gospel. Later these were reduced to two—the Epistle and the Gospel of the Roman Use, followed by the Anglican. The Eastern liturgies retained at least one Old Testament lesson, and the Church of Scotland generally follows this practice. The writer prefers in this the Roman and Anglican use. Holy Communion is completely a New Testament institution, and there is the practical difficulty that there is no Old Testament passage which is relevant. The general Old Testament lesson is Isaiah liii., but its relationship to the ordinance is very doubtful. At this point the

Sermon—if there was one—was preached, but often there was none. When there was one, its aim was didactic—some aspect of the sufferings of Christ or His glory. The confessions vary in form and language, but all contain the ancient Kyrie Eleison. Thanksgiving and petition for pardon are generally fused together in the ancient hymn “Gloria in excelsis Deo.” The intercessions—usually known as the “general intercession,” to distinguish it from the more solemn but short form known as the “great intercession” at a later part of the service—are of great length, and in the earlier form bear traces of extempore utterance.

The second part of the service, the “Missa Fidelium,” is divided into two parts, known as the pro-anaphoral and the anaphoral. The first includes the solemn entrance of the elements (at which all should stand) and the recitation of the Creed. The Creed should not be the Apostles’ Creed, the Creed for use in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, but the Nicene Creed, the Creed for the celebration of Holy Communion.

The second part, the anaphora, shows a marvellous identity in all liturgies. Variation is a matter of words only. The elements in the Eucharistic prayer are the same always and everywhere, and the order in which successive acts follow one another diverges only in the single detail of the great intercession.

First, the people are bid lift up their hearts, and respond that they have lifted them up to the Lord. Then they are called on to give thanks, and respond that it is meet and right to do so. Then follows the prayer of thanksgiving, which in essentials is the same everywhere. “It is verily meet, right, and our bounden duty that we should at all times and in all places give thanks unto Thee.” This thanksgiving culminates in the cherubim hymn of praise, the Ter-sanctus: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Glory be to Thee, O Lord most high.” It is a mistake to add “Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest” at the close of the Triumphal Hymn. It arose from a conflation of texts, and is obviously out of place, and should be omitted. Then follow a brief commemoration of redemption, then the repetition of the words of the institution, and the solemn invocation of the Holy Spirit to consecrate the

elements. Next a tense silence is followed by the great intercession, which is closed with the Lord's Prayer. Then, and not till then, is the bread broken and the cup raised in view of the people; brief prayers of preparation are said; the minister himself communicates and delivers the elements. When all have communicated, the service ends with prayers of thanksgiving.

In brief and incomplete outline that is the framework of the ancient liturgies. The years immediately after the Reformation afforded little chance of careful attention being given to the externals of worship, and the order for the celebration of the Lord's Supper in Knox's Liturgy is meagre and inadequate. This was generally acknowledged, and several attempts at reform were made, but came to nothing. The Westminster Directory is excellent, and if followed would deliver from many of the things that should not be done. It reverts to older and better ways, and, faithfully followed so far as it goes, would result in a celebration more in accord with the spirit of ancient forms.

Some interesting and important points require a few words before going further. One is concerning the cup—whether it should be common or individual. The individual cup is an innovation imported from America, and is unknown to ecclesiastical law, which definitely and distinctly states that the wine shall be in "large and comely vessels." No one can claim that any individual cup yet devised is large or comely.

The stock argument for the individual cup is hygienic, but the only argument that has really any appeal is that of refinement—that we do not care to drink out of a vessel which is used by all. But let it be hoped that some genius will invent something that retains the spiritual symbolism and chaste simplicity that become the Holy Table.

With the individual cup, the difficulty in securing stillness and smoothness of administration is increased. The tinkle of the cups, and the return of the trays to the appointed places, detract from the ordered quiet which is so valuable and means so much. Dr Sclater mentions that to drown these defects soft organ music may be played during the passage of the cups; but that is a poor second-best. In any case, the common cup should always be

on the Holy Table and should be used by the minister, in the consecration.

The other modern innovation to which serious objection can be taken is the use of what is called unfermented wine. Here the stock argument is the lapse of an alleged converted drunkard by the arousing of appetite with a sip of wine. It is difficult to believe that there ever was such a case, and here again we pray that an inventor will furnish some worthier substitute than those at present available.

Another point must be referred to, as it is beginning to be more frequently discussed—viz.: whether Holy Communion is a ministerial or sessional act. There is, however, no doubt what is the Presbyterian doctrine. The act is not sessional, but ministerial. Mair's words are clear and emphatic: "The Holy Communion is an act of worship at which the minister presides as the pastor of the flock, and not as the moderator of the session." The session admits members, but elders do not or should not administer sacraments. This means that the session should be closed at the end of the service for the reception of members, and not adjourned or constituted for the celebration of Holy Communion, as has become the custom in some congregations. The Second Book of Discipline, chap. iv., section 7, says definitely: "Unto the pastors onlie appertains the administration of the Sacraments, in lyke manner as the administration of the Word: for baith ar appointit be God as means to teach us, the ane be the ear and the aither be the eyes and other senses, that be baith, knowledge may be transferrit to the mynde."

This involves a point in the celebration—viz.: the elders should not administer the elements to the minister, as has become common. Again the law is explicit, so explicit that even the fool need not err. The Second Book of Discipline lays it down thus: "If the minister have no other brethren assisting him in the administration from whom he is rather to take the Communion at the next table, he is to communicate himself at the first breaking of the bread and distributing the cup." Sprott is equally emphatic in his lectures on the worship and offices of the Presbyterian Church. His words deserve quotation: "The minister, as in the Primitive Church, is to communicate first. Old Scottish accounts show that the minister always partook of each element before dis-

tributing it." He goes on: "Of all the innovations of the present day—innovations properly so called and not restorations—there is none so extraordinary and so utterly subversive of all the old ideas of the Church as the practice in some congregations, when simultaneous communion has been introduced, of elders giving the elements to the minister. Such a thing would certainly have shocked all Reformed Churchmen in other days. The minister, as representing the Master, gives to all, and what elders do is at most merely to pass on what has been given."

Here I make a digression on a point which is not irrelevant and on which the Church Service Society might give judgment—should a Communion Table be accepted by Church authorities in memory of any person or group of persons? The writer maintains and protests that it should not, because the Holy Table is the memorial of our Lord, and should not be a memorial of anyone or anything except Christ and His Sacrifice on the Cross. In some books of offices an order is given for the dedication of a Communion Table gifted in memory of some person or persons. This gives sanction to a confusive and undiscerning view. The Eucharist is a service of commemoration of our Lord, and should not be associated with the memory of any other.

An outline order in keeping with the traditions and teaching of the Church may be given to conclude this review.

No better beginning can be found than the Invocation in Ps. xliii. 3, "O send Thy light forth," which always inspires a congregation with fine devotional feeling. Then should come the Call to Worship, and a Prayer of Adoration and Confession and of Supplication for Grace. Then comes a Scripture Lesson—say, an Epistle like 1 John iii. Next comes Praise. Then comes another Scripture lesson, which should be some part of the history of the Passion. That is followed by the Prayer of Intercession. Then may come the Nicene Creed or the Te Deum or suitable Hymn. This may be followed by a short Prayer for Illumination. Then is delivered the Sermon, which cannot be too short and simple on such an occasion, and is concluded with the Ascription: "Unto Him that loves us and hath loosed us," &c. Then is said the short Prayer of Access, which is concluded with the Lord's Prayer. Now a Communion Psalm, Paraphrase, or Hymn is sung,

during which the elements, if not already on the Communion Table, are reverently brought in. The Minister takes his place at the Communion Table, and blesses the people with the words: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." Then he may say the "comfortable words," and give Knox's short invitation to the Table: "In the Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, whose voice you have heard in these words of gracious promise, I now invite you who truly repent of your sins and desire to receive the gift of God and to walk henceforth in His holy ways, to draw near with reverence, faith, and thanksgiving, and take this sacrament to your comfort." Next are read the words of Institution in 1 Cor. xi. 23. After that the Minister takes the bread and cup, and says: "Let us draw near to the throne of grace and present to God our prayers and thanksgivings." Then is offered the Prayer of Consecration. Prayer being ended, the distribution is made, and when all have partaken, the Minister says: "The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."

Sometimes a brief exhortation follows, but it is better to follow immediately with a short Prayer of Thanksgiving and Self-Dedication, after which is sung a Psalm or Hymn of Thanksgiving, such as Ps. ciii. 1-5.

Then with "the solemn blessing" the service closes.

After the Benediction it is fitting that the communicants engage in silent prayer, beseeching God that none leaves His Table without a blessing. After a pause, the Minister and elders leave the church in orderly fashion, the congregation standing till they have done so.

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