

Lecterns.

THERE need be little doubt that the Lectern was taken from the Synagogue into the Christian Church. The reading of the Law and the Prophets was never omitted in Jewish worship and for the support of the rolls on which the sacred words were written a desk or desks were provided. The custom of reading the Scriptures was carried over into the Church and Justin Martyr tells us that in his day the "Memoirs of the Apostles" and the "Writings of the Prophets" were read in the assemblies of followers of our Lord. The reading desk which had been found in the Synagogue would also have a place where Christians met for worship. The Ambo or Pulpitum which is referred to some centuries later was not so much a pulpit, as we understand the word, as a desk on which the Scriptures to be read were placed. This desk was also used by the preacher. An early picture of S. John Chrysostom preaching shows him standing behind a desk on which a book is laid.

The pulpit as we know it belongs to about the thirteenth century. Perhaps it was even later in being introduced in Scotland, for we find from the First Book of Discipline that in 1560 there were churches in which there were no pulpits.

In medieval times most great churches possessed at least two lecterns, both of which stood in the choir. The Gospel Lectern stood a little to the north of the high altar and from it the Deacon read the Gospel at Mass. A brass eagle in this position can be seen in the Islip Roll. In the "Rites of Durham" it is recorded that a brass lectern stood at the north side of the altar, having a pelican on the top. Some of these Gospel lecterns were quite simple, and in more than one church in Derbyshire there can be seen a small slab of stone affixed to the chancel wall. This formed the lectern.

Whether there were ever many brass lecterns in Scotland is doubtful. These were not introduced into England until the 15th century and it is likely that only a very few reached our land before the 16th century. One or two churches are known to have possessed such. Paisley Abbey which received one from Abbot Tervas (1445-59), Dunkeld



THE LECTERN.
S. LEONARD'S PARISH CHURCH, DUNFERMLINE.

Cathedral, S. Nicholas, Aberdeen (a pelican), S. Giles, Edinburgh, S. Salvator's College Chapel, St. Andrews, had each at least one, while King's College Chapel, Aberdeen, is known to have possessed three. Probably all these perished in the troubles of the 16th and 17th centuries, when brass was much sought after. Scotland was not alone in this. Only some forty medieval brass lecterns are to be found in England. In the Cathedral of Notre Dame, in Paris, the lecterns date only from the time of Napoleon.

Up to the middle of the 15th century, if not later, practically all lecterns were made of wood or stone. Those on the Chapter seal of the Abbey of Dunfermline are simple wooden desks, and that shown on the seal of the Priory of Coldingham is of similar form. In the Inventory of the Chapel Royal of Scotland, made in 1505, mention is made of two "great desks of wood" standing in the Choir. The "desk by the hye Altar" mentioned as being among the properties belonging to the Collegiate Church of Crail was almost certainly made of wood, as were the "desks" placed by Lord Seton in Seton Church in 1508. These last were not allowed to remain for long. In 1544 the English destroyed the furnishings of the church, stealing the bells and organs and burning "the tymmer wark."

The only Scots medieval lectern known to be still in existence is that which formerly belonged to the Abbey Church of Holyrood and which was carried off by Sir Richard Lee in 1543. He placed the stolen property in the Church of S. Stephen at St. Albans, where it still remains. It is an eagle made of brass and belongs to the 16th century. It bears the inscription GEORGIUS CREICHTOUN EPISCOPUS DUNKELDENSIS, with a mitre. Creichton was Bishop of Dunkeld, 1524-43, and Abbot of Holyrood, 1515-22, so that we are probably right in thinking that he was the donor.

What happened to the wooden lecterns which had been used before the Reformation in Scots churches? When instructions were given to clear the "Kyrk of Dunkeld" of monuments of idolatry, it was expressly stated by Lord James Stuart, afterwards the "Good Regent," the Earl of Moray, that good heed was to be taken lest any of the desks be "hurt or broken." The First Book of Discipline enacted that every church was to have a Bible, and it would seem that such a Bible must have been placed on a desk of some kind. There is every reason to believe that the old desks were put to this new service. Brass eagle and pelican

lecterns might be called "graven images." We have ourselves heard them so described in this 20th century, but no such allegation could be made against the ordinary lecterns. The Synod of Fife enacted at the beginning of the 17th century that every church within the bounds was to have a Bible and that this was to be placed in the church, in such wise that every parishioner who wanted to read it might do so. There seems no doubt that the Bible lay on what was called the Reader's place, and that was furnished with a desk. It is in every way likely that the wooden desks which had been used in pre-Reformation days continued to be so used after that great event.

The Reformers had no objection to either the name or the thing. In the Accounts of the Dean of Guild, Edinburgh, for the years 1561-2, when John Knox was Minister there, we find that the sum of 30/- was paid to a workman for the making of "ane great four square lettrane to the ministers, turneane upoun ane wyce and for troubling of his spreit in the inventing of that consait." One would like to know why it should have been made after this fashion, though four square lecterns were not unknown in the Roman Church. A little earlier Knox had received from the "guid toun" as a gift "ane Frenche lecteroun buk," probably a large French Bible. Some twenty years later payments were made for the "making of the pulpett with the letteroun" in the New Church, which, as is well known, was part of S. Giles. At Stirling in 1621 the "pulpit and letrun" were taken down and "reedified" again. Ten years later, in Aberdeen, some one presented a great "Bybill" to S. Thomas's Hospital in that city. The Master was ordered by the Town Council to "caus chainzie the same to the latrone of the oratorie of the said hospitall." In the records of the Presbytery of Dunkeld there is an interesting reference to the Precentor at Perth (1637) being admitted to office as Reader, "by being placed at the Latrone and by delivery to him of a Bible."

It was from the Reader's place that John Durie addressed the congregation in S. Giles on his return from exile in 1582. In 1601-2 no less than £20 3s 8d was paid at Ayr for a new desk beside the pulpit. In all likelihood this was a new lectern, because a green cloth to cover the Reader's Desk was got at the same time at a cost of £12 8s 0d. Evidently the original one had not been in good condition, for in 1599 five shillings had been paid for repairing the "Reader's place in the Kirk." In 1639, on a Lord's Day during the

meetings of the General Assembly, a large number of the members assembled in S. Giles, but the Minister who was to take the service did not appear. The Earl of Rothes, who was among those present, asked Robert Blair, the Covenanting Minister of St. Andrews, to officiate. "Mr Blair," says his son-in-law and biographer, John Row, "went to the lectern and took the Bible from the Reader, . . . and lectured upon that whole chapter (Isaiah L.I.) most pertinently."

An interesting side light on the continued use of the lectern for the reading of Holy Scripture is provided by some Scottish pulpits which date from the sixteenth century. There are two such preserved in the National Museum in Edinburgh. One of these is said to have been used by Knox in S. Giles and is certainly old enough to have been in the church in his day. The other, which is octagonal in shape and handsomely carved, was presented to the Parish Church of Parton, in Galloway, in 1598. Neither of these pulpits has anything in the shape of a book board, the reason being that the pulpit was used for preaching only, the reading of the Bible being done at the lectern.

In the Chapel of S. Salvator's College, St. Andrews, is another pulpit associated with the name of Knox. It has two book boards, an interesting relic of the days when the Minister took the service in one position and preached the sermon in another. A close examination of the woodwork shows that these book boards did not belong to the pulpit originally, but have been added at a later date. The Reader's Desk is attached to the pulpit and is so placed that the Reader would literally "sit under" the Minister. There was a somewhat similar pulpit and desk in the church of Bo'ness. These had been made in Amsterdam by a party of Bo'ness men, who were engaged as ships' carpenters in that city. The oak pulpit is still in the church, but the desk has gone. A similar fate has overtaken the desk which was formerly used by the reformed congregation which worshipped in Pluscarden Priory. The pulpit is now in S. Columba's Church, Elgin; but the desk, which was a good example of 17th century workmanship, appears to have vanished since 1881.

A new form of "lectern" which seems to have been peculiar to Scotland, was what was sometimes called the "Rondel." This was a space in front of the pulpit enclosed by seats, the lectern proper being a little distance from the base of the pulpit. At Ayr, where it dated from the 17th

century, the Rondel was enclosed with pannelling as well. In the New Kirk, as part of S. Giles was called, there was set up in 1581 "a pulpett with lettoun and saitts about the same." At Kinghorn, in 1647, the Session "thought meet that a new pulpit should be made with a range of seats about it and a new lettern for the exercise, higher and more commodious than this." The fact that the lectern was to be used for the "exercise" points to its being something more than a place from which the Precentor led the praise. A similar arrangement was to be found at Crail, Linlithgow, and other places. At Newbattle, in 1643, when Leighton was Minister, the Session minutes relate that "it was with universal consent both of minister and elders condescended upon, that thair should be built befor the pulpitt ane convenient seat of tymber for the reidar, as in uther kirks, and the elders to sit at the tabill or boord befor the pulpet."

This "lettern," being partitioned off from the rest of the church, had to be entered by a door. At Alyth, in 1675, a new Bible was bought and it was agreed that a new door be put "upon the latron to keep it secure." A reference at Montrose to the "Reader's Door" in all likelihood refers to the same thing. At Kirkwall the lettern was attached to a pillar opposite that which supported the pulpit, the space between being filled with seats for women. In those days the sexes were separated in church, as they still are in the East, and in some Anglo-Catholic congregations to-day. When a visitation was made of the Church of Dunoon in 1676 it was found that among the things needed was "a reader's seat", and the Minister was ordained to furnish the same "out of his session box". A year later it is stated that in the neighbouring parish of "Inverchelain" a pulpit and a "reader's stall" were required.

The Reader's place was used not only for reading the Scriptures but also for the reading of the prayers from the Book of Common Order, or the "Psalm Book", as it was sometimes called. It was from this place in S. Giles that Henderson, the old Reader, read the "ordinar prayers" on the morning of that fateful Sunday, 23rd July, 1637. At ten o'clock on the same day the Dean of Edinburgh took his place at the Reader's seat and began to read the Book of Common Prayer, better known as "Laud's Liturgy", the sequel being the Jenny Geddes riot. In reading prayers from the lectern the Dean was following Scottish custom. In 1633 when Charles I. worshipped in S. Giles we read that Maxwell, afterwards Bishop of Ross, "caused the reader

to remove from his place, set down there two English chaplains clad with surplices and they, with the help of other chaplains and bishops there present, acted their English service". We learn from Spalding that in the churches in the North of Scotland where Laud's Liturgy was used, it was customary to read it from the Reader's desk.

Probably the oldest and most interesting lectern now in the possession of the Church of Scotland is that which is to be found in the Scots Kirk at Amsterdam, if the Germans have not removed it, as they have done with so much more. It is a brass lectern and was presented in 1689 by William and Mary, King and Queen of Scotland and England. It bears their initials on the front as well the letters R.R., which, of course, stand for Rex and Regina. The date also appears, surmounted by a laurel wreath. The foot is shaped like a lion's foot and a beautifully moulded lion salient fills the space between the royal monograms and the top of the lectern. It is still in use, but not according to the original plan. It is affixed to the pulpit and forms the book board.

In 1695 the Kirk Session of Rothesay appointed that the "pulpit be dressed and ane reader's seat be set up". In 1731 the Session at Crathie decided to pay £30 for a "pulpit and latron", and when in 1766 the Church of Dalmellington was built provision had to be made for a "Reader's Seat". The Records of the Presbytery of Penpont show that in 1781 the same was provided for in the Church of Morton. Up to 1729 there was both a Precentor and a Reader in the Abbey of Dunfermline. In the year mentioned both offices were vacant and were then conjoined, though presentation to both offices continued to be made. The old Precentor's Desk in Dunfermline was a special erection quite separated from the pulpit and standing a little to the south of it. This quaint survival was removed in 1889. The practice of the Precentor reading the Scriptures during the assembling of the congregation continued in some places, *e.g.*, Aberdeen, up to the beginning of last century. In 1788 the Session of Mauchline discontinued a special payment of eighteen shillings yearly to that functionary for reading the Scriptures in church, deciding that he should do this without any special payment, he being also the Session Clerk.

The old name persisted, though in the 18th century the lectern gradually lost its original significance and became associated with the raising of the tune rather than

the reading of the Scriptures. What in the South of Scotland was known as the Precentor's "desk" was known in the North as the "lattron". We find, however, an interesting revival of the older usage in the Original Secession Church. There it is customary when an elder takes the service (as often happens owing to the shortage of ministers), for the elder to go to the "desk" rather than to the pulpit. I have heard of the same thing being done over a hundred years ago in an old Burgher Church. The custom of the Precentor wearing a gown, which was at one time more common than it is to-day, is a survival of the older usage which insisted that the Reader should be "gowned" as well as the Minister. As the Reader's lectern became the Precentor's desk so did its form change, and, from being a simple desk, it became a second edition of the pulpit, but on a lower level. Often it was made square, while the pulpit was rounded. Such erections were not unlike the "three deckers," formerly so well known in England, where a few still exist. There was a fine "three decker" in the Parish Church of Inverkeithny, where it dated from the days of Episcopacy. There was another good example at Yarrow, which is now removed.

The revival of the use of the lectern as the place for the reading of Holy Scripture at Divine Service may be traced back to the movement for the greater seemliness in worship initiated chiefly by Dr Robert Lee of Old Greyfriars Church, Edinburgh. Yet it does not appear that Dr Lee introduced a lectern into his church, nor in his book "The Reform of the Church of Scotland" does he make any reference to the place where the Bible should be read in church. Evidently he was quite content that it should be read from the pulpit.

Dr Sprott of North Berwick, another pioneer, in his "Worship and Offices of the Church of Scotland" (1882), has a chapter on church furnishings, but the lectern has no place among them. In the year 1807 or thereby a lectern in the shape of an eagle was placed in S. Andrew's Church, Glasgow, during the ministry of Dr Ritchie, who, it will be remembered, was the first to re-introduce the organ into a Scots Parish Church. The Presbytery made him remove the instrument after it had been used on one Sunday only, and it would seem that the lectern was expelled at the same time. It has been said that this eagle, which was made of mahogany, afterwards did duty as the sign of the Eagle Hotel, Glasgow. Dr Boyd of St. Andrews (A. K. H. B.) in

his book "Twenty-five Years in St. Andrews" tells us that in the beginning of 1871 owing to illness he began to have the lessons read for him when he preached in S. Mary's Church there, which had been re-opened for public worship in September, 1870. The like he says "had not been done in Scotland for ages, except at the beautiful church of St Monan's, fifteen miles off, where Sir Robert Anstruther had thus helped a failing minister". A lectern was soon after set up in S. Mary's, probably the first to be set up during the nineteenth century in the Church of Scotland, for the express purpose of having the Bible read from it. It is said that it was in S. Mary's that a member of the congregation was heard to make the remark that it was a "great set off to the service to have the lessons read by a Baronet", one of the early readers having that rank. The story is also told of St Monan's.

In 1882 among the complaints made against Dr Cooper by some malcontents in Aberdeen, was one that at the Daily Service he used a reading desk. The Presbytery considered the complaint, but, as was to be expected, they could not find anything contrary to the law of the Church in such use. Since then lecterns have become comparatively common in the National Church. That in S. Giles, Edinburgh (placed there after the restoration of 1882-3), is like the pulpit, made of stone. It is shaped like a desk. At S. Nicholas (East Church), Aberdeen, the lectern is a brass pelican, as was the one in medieval times. In the crypt (S. Mary's) is one made of medieval panels, which evidently at one time formed part of the church furnishings. At S. Margaret's, Broughty Ferry, the lectern is a replica of that carried away from Holyrood Abbey. In S. Cuthbert's Church, Edinburgh, there is a massive bronze lectern, the book board being supported by the Angel of the Gospel.

A lectern, like every other part of the furniture of a church, should be specially made for the church in which it is to be placed, and it is a great mistake to assume that what is the most elaborate is the best fitted for any church. Indeed, the eagle lectern was not used for reading the lessons at all but for the Epistle and Gospel at Mass. In a case known to the writer a good type of desk lectern was removed to make way for a factory-made brass eagle, which was hopelessly out of keeping with the building. In another case a fine though plain sketch was made for a well known church in Fife. This was deliberately laid aside, when a sum of money was gifted which enabled a more elaborate

one to be provided. But neither in suitability nor in dignity was the second in any way like unto the first. Among lecterns which have been specially made for the places they occupy may be mentioned that in Gourrock Parish Church. It is a single desk with a canopied front and bears the carved figures of Moses, S. Peter, S. John, and S. Paul. In the restored pre-Reformation Church of Foulis Wester there is a lectern of celti-gothic design with surface carving and pierced cross. At Maryhill, where the church is of the "Adam" type of architecture with mahogany furniture, the lectern has been made to harmonise. All three mentioned were designed by the late Mr J. Jeffrey Waddell. The same architect placed an ambo instead of a lectern in the Church of S. Modan's, Falkirk. The pulpit is of the same form, but is larger.

The lectern in Queen's Park Parish Church (High), Glasgow, was gifted as a memorial to the members of four Boys' Brigade Companies, who fell in the Great War (1914-1918). It was designed by Mr Graham Johnston, Heraldic Artist to the Court of the Lord Lyon, and no lectern in the country has such a wealth of symbolism. The base is shaped like a rock or cairn and bears on the front the Scottish unicorn bearing a S. Andrew's Cross flag. On either side is a lion, couchant-guardant, symbolising the Empire at rest, but at the same time watchful. On the plinth are placed thistles of Scotland and lilies (Fleurs de Lis) of France. From the plinth springs the shaft ornamented with sprays of oak symbolising the King (oak is the Stewart emblem), and thistles symbolising the people. The buttresses symbolise the Christian Church. The treatment of the capital is Celtic in character, and on the book board, which is double, are the badges of the Merchant Navy, the Royal Engineers, the Cameronians, and the Highland Light Infantry. In Lesmahagow Parish Church is a lectern of renaissance type designed by Mr A. N. Paterson. It fits well into the church and is made of oak with inlaid ebony panels. It is a single desk on a pillar which again rests on three carved feet. This lectern was presented by the Rev. Dr and Mrs Gillies in memory of their son who was killed in France in 1916. The lectern in S. Leonard's Church, Dunfermline, is of massive oak, as befits a church of Norman design. On one side is carved the figure of Moses with the Tables of the Law, while in a rondel at the top is the Agnus Dei, the flag bearing, as in old Scots examples, the saltire. On the other side is S. Paul, bearing

the book of his letters and the sword of his martyrdom. The rondel on this side has the pelican in her piety. Between the sides is a latin cross on three steps. The arms of the cross bear the emblems of the four evangelists. On the canopy in front is the "Alpha and Omega", while five coats of arms with their mottoes are carved on the book board. The work was from the design of Mr Andrew Samuel, A.R.C.A., Craft Master, Dunfermline. In S. Machar's Cathedral, Aberdeen, the lectern bears a carving on the front, based on the legend of S. Machar, which relates how, when he required light to enable him to see to finish some writing, a flame sprang out of the top of each of his fingers. In the Parish Church of Torryburn there is an iron lectern designed by Dr Macgregor Chalmers, one of the few made of this material. In Canterbury Cathedral, however, there was in 1563 a "lectrone of ieron". In Crawford Parish Church there is an eagle lectern of oak, which is probably unique in that it was presented to the church by a Lord High Commissioner, Lord Colebrooke, during his term of office (1906).

TABLE LECTERNS.

One often sees brass or wooden lecterns placed on Communion Tables for the purpose of holding a Bible or Psalter. Such were not altogether unknown in medieval days, though it was then more usual to use cushions for the support of the Altar Books, and only such may be used in the Roman Church at the present day. In the Inventory of the Scottish Chapel Royal, in 1505, it is noted that there were "three cushions for supporting the missal books on the Altar". There are, however, quite a number of medieval drawings which show conclusively that in England and elsewhere small lecterns, sometimes shaped like an inverted "V", were used for the same purpose. No such illustration of a Scottish church altar is known to exist, but in the old Church of Kinkell⁽¹⁾ there is a carving dating from 1525. This shows a priest standing at an altar whereon is a chalice and a small desk holding a book. There can be little doubt that all such medieval lecterns were made of wood.

⁽¹⁾ The Parish is now united to Trinity Gask and is remembered in an old rhyme often ascribed to Little Dunkeld, as having had its Minister hanged, its Precentor drowned, its steeple "dung doon" and its bell "drucken". All these allegations are founded on fact.

LECTERN CLOTHS.

It is quite in accordance with both medieval and Reformed usage to have a frontal, antependium or "fall" on the lectern. Again, Scottish medieval evidence is wanting; but at Rochester in the 13th century there was a red and gold cloth for the "lectorium". The Reader's Desk in Scotland seems to have always been covered with green cloth, as was the pulpit in post-Reformation times, and the use of a frontal may be considered to be a following of the same custom. There is no liturgical reason why these decorations should be changed according to the ecclesiastical season.

THE USE OF THE LECTERN.

Opinions differ as to whether a lectern should be used when the Minister conducts the service entirely by himself. Some think it well to restrict the use of the pulpit to preaching and to preaching only, having the devotional part of the service and the reading of the lessons taken at another place or places. Others feel that there is no necessity for moving about and that no good purpose is served thereby. Such, therefore, usually read the lessons in the pulpit and use the lectern only when they have assistance in the service. The first party may claim that their practice is that of John Knox and his fellow Reformers, for there is no doubt that in the earlier days of the Reformed Church the Bible was read from the "lectern" and not from the pulpit. The second party may claim that in those days there was always a Reader other than the Minister, and that the custom of that time required that the Bible should be read by a second person. One has to remember, too, that the dislike of Readers which manifested itself among certain sections of Scottish Churchmen was due to the desire to restrict the people's part of the service as much as possible. Many of our Covenanting divines had such "high" views of the ministry that they objected most emphatically to any person, who was not ordained, taking a leading part in the service at all. In our day such views are not so common and, when the lessons are read by an ordinary member of the congregation, it might be argued that the worship ceased to be such "a one man show", as the Scottish service has been sometimes irreverently termed. The presence of a layman at the lectern may be a reminder that not the Minister

only, but all the members are "priests unto the Lord". It may be noted that among the publications of the Alcuin Club, which is fairly representative of the Anglo-Catholic or "High Church" party in the Church of England, is "A Directory of Ceremonial". In this it is stated that there is no necessity for a lectern in the church at all, "as the lessons may very well be read from the pulpit". Here we have substantial agreement between what would be called "Low Church" views in Scotland and those of the Anglo-Catholics in England.

It is interesting to observe that, while the Anglican Book of Common Prayer allows a layman to read the lessons and, indeed, to take a very large part of the morning and evening services, the Directory for Public Worship has no place for such. There the rule is quite explicitly laid down. "Reading of the Word to the congregation being part of the publick worship of God . . . is to be performed by the pastors and teachers". ("Teachers" here is equivalent to "Doctors", that fourth order of the ministry of which mention is made in earlier Presbyterian standards.) The only exception to this rule allowed by the Westminster Assembly was that Probationers or "such as intend the ministry" might occasionally "both read the Word and exercise their gift in preaching to the congregation, if allowed by the Presbytery thereunto". In the 18th century it was quite customary for the Precentor, who was usually the Parish Schoolmaster, to read the Scriptures from the "lectern" or "dask" to the people as they assembled for worship; but this was considered to be outside the usual order of service, though it was often the only reading of the Scriptures which the people ever heard in church. In at least one Ayrshire Parish the reading was done, when the Precentor was absent, by the grave digger, who was in all likelihood also the Beadle. The late Professor Cooper once informed the writer that he was of the opinion that the neglect of the public reading of the Bible in the services of the Scottish Church, which, as every one knows, became widespread towards the end of the 18th and lasted well into the 19th century, was due to the Scriptures being read not by the Minister himself but by a layman. This certainly put Bible reading on a lower plane than sermon preaching, and, in consequence, the latter flourished while the former decayed.

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