

TRADITION AND CHANGE: WORSHIP IN THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

[In the issue for November 1973 (Vol. 3, No. 2) Rev. Norman Leak, the Convener, made a survey of the last ten years' work of the Committee on Public Worship and Aids to Devotion of the former Presbyterian Church of England. We are happy to follow on with this Lecture by the former Chairman of the Worship Committee of the former Congregational Church in England and Wales, now a member of the Doctrine and Worship Committee of the new United Reformed Church. – Ed.]

My first word must be one of thanks to the Council of the Church Service Society for inviting me to give the 1974 Centenary Lecture. I count it a great honour that a minister of the United Reformed Church should have been chosen for this task so soon after our Church has come into being. We are only just over two years old, though of course our roots lie far back in Reformed Church history. Through the Presbyterian part of our heritage we have very close links with the Church of Scotland. As a former Congregationalist I greatly welcome the new relationship into which we have entered with your Church.

For a long time we in England have been greatly indebted to theologians and preachers of the Scottish Church. Over the last thirty or forty years we have been much influenced by the liturgical researches of your scholars and the liturgical material you have produced; and here, of course, we owe a special debt to the work and influence of the Church Service Society. I am glad of this opportunity of saying so; and I hope that this paper may in some small measure be regarded as a payment of the debt we owe to you.

Two books in particular have influenced our thinking and the forms of worship we use: Dr. W. D. Maxwell's *An Outline of Christian Worship*, which did so much to help us see to the Eucharist as the norm of Christian worship, and *The Book of Common Order* (1940 and 1953), which not only provided a rich treasury of prayers for use in public worship but also an Order for the Holy Communion which was closely followed by orders subsequently produced for use in the former Presbyterian Church of England and on which Congregationalists drew extensively in preparing orders for use in their churches. I recall hearing it said that the book was used more in England than in Scotland. I have no means of judging to what

extent that may have been true; but the comment is an indication of the very considerable use that was made of your book south of the border.

I say 'was made', for the marked change that has taken place recently to the use of a more contemporary style in public prayer has meant that prayers of the kind you have in the Book of Common Order are now widely felt to be too archaic for present use. This is one aspect of the change which has affected our tradition; and so I come to the subject about which you have asked me to speak: 'Tradition and Change: Worship in the United Reformed Church'.

What I propose to do is, first, to say something about the service books which were published for use in English Presbyterian and Congregational Churches; and then, second, to speak about the new material we have prepared for use in the United Reformed Church. It seems worthwhile, at this point in our history, to put on record at least the names of books which have been used and to say a little about them. They have played their part in shaping our tradition and in preparing us for future advance.

1. Presbyterian and Congregational Service Books

Both Churches which came together to form the URC always enjoyed a large measure of freedom in the conduct of worship. They were not, however, left without guidance. A number of service books, official, semi-official and privately produced, were issued and widely used. The revival of interest in the proper ordering of worship, the desire to break free from too great dependence on the sermon alone, a renewed understanding of the place of the sacraments, the influence of the ecumenical movement and the desire to encourage congregational participation all contributed to the demand for such books.

The Presbyterian Church

The Presbyterian Church had the distinction of being the first of the English Free Churches to publish an official service book: a *Directory for Public Worship*, authorized and recommended for use in the services of the Church in 1898. A much revised and expanded book, with the same title, was issued by authority of the General Assembly in 1921. The Preface to this 'larger edition' states that the forms of service provided were not intended 'to interfere with the freedom of our worship, or to be in any sense obligatory', though at certain points, as in the ordination and induction services uniform practice was required throughout the Church.

In 1948 an entirely new book, *The Presbyterian Service Book*, was issued. The reason for the change of title, reluctantly made, was

that this book had been prepared in collaboration with the Presbyterian Church of Wales and contained forms of service for use in both Churches. The influence of *The Book of Common Order* is immediately apparent. The First Order for the Lord's Supper is taken, with only minor variations, from that book; the Second is a revision of that provided in the Directory of 1921.

In 1968 another book with the same title, *The Presbyterian Service Book*, replaced that of 1948. It also contained forms for use in the Presbyterian Church of Wales. Its preparation – to quote from the Preface – ‘has been rather different from its predecessors inasmuch as most of the services were first printed and published in pamphlet form so that the comments of the Church should be received on their shape and content’. Two innovations are referred to: the inclusion of two services, one morning and the other evening, ‘in modern style and using the pronoun “you” in addressing God instead of the traditional “thou”’ and the change in structure of the first morning service so that the prayers of thanksgiving and intercession follow the preaching of the Word. The Orders for Holy Communion are practically the same as those in the 1948 book, except that in the case of the First Order the intercessions – a new and shorter form – have been placed after the sermon.

The Congregational Church

With their traditional emphasis on the autonomy of the local church, Congregationalists never authorized a service book in the way that Presbyterians have done; but they published a number of books of a semi-official character. The first was the *Book of Congregational Worship* prepared by a committee of the then Congregational Union of England and Wales in 1920. It consisted of Ten Orders of Worship for morning and evening services, each providing for the use of set and extempore prayer, together with orders for Baptism, Communion and other services, and a selection of prayers for occasional use. The Ten Orders, all responsive in character, were also printed separately for use by members of the congregation. They were also set to music selected and composed by Walford Davies. Much of the material, such as the General Confession, the General Thanksgiving, collects, versicles and responses, was taken from the Book of Common Prayer.

In 1936 a successor to the *Book of Congregational Worship* under the title *A Manual for Ministers* was published. As the title indicates, it was intended as a guide and source book for ministers and was not designed for use by the congregation. Its theological stance was out of date by the time it was published and it showed little if any perception of those liturgical principles which by then were becoming widely accepted. An original feature was an order of

worship for 'The Opening of a Bazaar or Sale of Work'. It was largely dismay at the publication of this book that resulted in the decision of an unofficial group of Congregationalists to prepare a directory which would express and foster our understanding of worship within the Reformed tradition, a decision which led ultimately to the publication of *A Book of Public Worship*, to which I must refer later.

The next book of a semi-official character, prepared by a more representative committee than the one which had produced the Manual, was *A Book of Services and Prayers*, published in 1959. A revised edition, in which the only significant changes made were in the baptismal services, appeared in 1969. This was the first Congregational book to set out a full order for Word and Sacrament, so making it clear that the Communion was not a second, separate service held once or twice a month after the 'ordinary' service was over.

In 1966 the majority of member churches of the Congregational Union covenanted to form 'The Congregational Church in England and Wales'. In 1970 its Worship Committee issued *An Order of Public Worship*, published by the Oxford University Press. This was not a complete service book but simply the Order of Worship for Word and Sacrament – a single order with a number of alternative prayers (confessions of sin, intercessions, eucharistic prayers) for use at each point in the service. Unforeseen delay in publication meant that it did not appear until three years after the text had been finally agreed by the Committee; and during those years ministers were increasingly using 'you' rather than 'thou' in their address to God. The prayers in *An Order of Public Worship* were in traditional style, though an attempt had been made to avoid the use of archaic verb forms and constructions; and by the time the book was available it was felt to be out of date from a linguistic point of view. It did, however, serve to express our mind on the form and content of the eucharistic service shortly before union.

Privately-produced Service Books

Alongside these books of an official or semi-official character, and often preparing the way for them, a number of privately-produced books helped to enrich the worship of both Churches and to provide ministers with material they needed in preparing their services.

Two books prepared by Presbyterian ministers were *Sacramental and other Services* by Eric W. Philip, published in 1927, and *A New Pulpit Manual* by James Burns, which was not dated but must have been published prior to 1936 (when I bought my copy). Burns' book contains a number of sets of prayers which he wrote for ordinary Sunday services, together with orders for the sacraments and other occasions, and additional prayers.

Congregational ministers produced a larger number of books, many of them designed for use as a 'prayer book' by the congregation.

The first of these, Dr. John Hunter's *Devotional Services*, originally appeared in 1882 and was later issued in revised and greatly expanded form in 1901. It was in use for many years at the King's Weigh House Church, London, of which Hunter was minister. He had previously been at Trinity Congregational Church, Glasgow, and it was no doubt his acquaintance in Scotland with your Society's *Book of Common Order* 'Euchologion' that led him to provide ten orders of worship, morning and evening, for the five Sundays of the month. Of a Matins/Evensong plus sermon type, these provided for fixed, responsive and extempore prayer. The book included orders for sacramental and other services and a selection of additional prayers.

When Dr. W. E. Orchard succeeded Hunter at the Weigh House he felt unable to use Hunter's book, certainly for the sacraments, and the first edition of his *Divine Service* appeared in 1919. A second, revised edition was published in 1926. Orchard followed Hunter in providing ten orders of worship, five for morning and five for evening prayer, which he compiled from a wide variety of sources ancient and modern. In addition he produced an Order for the Eucharist Mass and also an extremely simple order for the observance of the Lord's Supper. While Orchard's Free Catholic position was not shared by the great majority of Congregationalists much of the material he collected and wrote was widely used by ministers who sought to enrich the worship of the Congregational churches.

A number of books of a semi-liturgical character, though none so comprehensive or distinguished as Hunter's and Orchard's, were compiled by ministers mainly for use in their own churches. An example is Harold E. Brierley's ten *Orders of Worship* which he introduced at Immanuel Congregational Church, Southbourne, Bournemouth. In slightly revised form the book is still in use there. A similar book was prepared by Ernest J. Barson for the Congregational Church at Penge. Of a somewhat different character is C. Ernest Watson's *Rodborough Bede Book*, from which prayers, litanies and other acts of worship could be announced by number like hymns from a hymn book. It was published in the early 1930s. A revised form, printed in 1971, is now used at Rodborough.

In the late 1930s the Congregational Church Order Group was formed. One of its first acts was to ask four of its members to prepare a directory for public worship which would express those principles of Reformed Church worship which, among other things, it was the purpose of the Group to promote. The work was much delayed by the war, but in 1948 the Oxford University Press

published *A Book of Public Worship* compiled for the use of Congregationalists by John Huxtable, John Marsh, Romilly Micklem and James Todd. A second and only slightly revised edition appeared in the following year. A companion volume, *Prayers and Services for Christian Festivals*, for which I took responsibility, was published, also by the Oxford Press, in 1951.

I think I can say that the *Book of Public Worship* exercised a considerable influence on the thinking and worship of our churches, especially in establishing the principle that the full service of Word and Sacrament is the norm of Christian worship. When we planned the book in 1938 we discussed the possibility of beginning with a single order for Word and Sacrament, but judged at that time that that would be regarded as going too far and would result in many ministers and churches rejecting the book out of hand. We therefore adopted the device of indicating the point in each order of worship at which the service might continue in the order for the celebration of the Holy Communion. Even so, though not for that reason alone, a committee of the Congregational Union, which had asked to see our work with a view to publishing it, refused, without giving reasons, to go further with it. We were delighted when, after this rejection, the Oxford Press agreed to publish it. I may add that they were encouraged to do so by Dr. Sidney M. Berry, the Secretary of the Congregational Union, to whom the Press sent it as a reader and who had not seen it at the time when the Union committee turned it down. I mention this piece of history as an illustration of the distance we have travelled since that time.

The increasing adoption of contemporary language in public worship makes all the books I have mentioned now appear outdated. Another unofficial group of Congregational ministers produced a book of *Contemporary Prayers for Public Worship*. Edited by Caryl Micklem, whose father had collaborated in the production of *A Book of Public Worship*, this was published by the SCM Press in 1967. A second volume, *More Contemporary Prayers*, prepared by the same group, appeared in 1970. Both did much to encourage the use of contemporary language in worship, not only among Congregationalists, and are still very much in use.

2. Worship in the United Reformed Church

I come now to the second part of this paper: Worship in the United Reformed Church.

Our first full General Assembly, in May 1973, resolved: 'The General Assembly instructs the Doctrine and Worship Committee to prepare material for inclusion in a Service Book for use in the United Reformed Church and to consider the preparation of services for

congregational use.' It seems clear that the Assembly believes that what we need is not simply a directory for worship for the guidance of ministers but a book which members of the congregation can have in their hands. This must not, however, be taken to mean that we are likely to adopt a prayer book which all congregations will be expected to use. We cherish freedom and variety in worship, and above all liberty to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, too much to allow ourselves to be bound by an invariable order.

The 1973 Assembly also authorized the production of a Hymn Book Supplement, for use alongside the Church Hymnary or Congregational Praise. Work on this book, to be called *New Church Praise*, had been put in hand prior to union by a group representative of both churches. In addition to about one hundred hymns, the majority of which have not been published before, the book will include other liturgical material with musical settings, especially the Order of Worship for the Lord's Supper, to which I shall refer.

The first piece of liturgical work for which we were responsible was, in fact, an *Order of Worship for the Ordination and Induction of Elders*, which it was clear that congregations would need very soon after union took place. A draft Order was circulated to District Councils by the end of 1972. Comments were invited by the Assembly of 1973 so that they might be taken into account in any necessary revision. The Order seems to have been well received and very few comments have been submitted.

The major liturgical task of the committee has been the preparation of an *Order of Worship for the Lord's Supper*, which was printed in time for this year's* Assembly under the title *Book of Order for Worship*. This did not receive any official approval or authorization by the Assembly: such action was not asked for. The order has been made available, in what the Preface states to be a 'draft form', for experimental use in the Church. In addition to the full text of the Order of Worship the booklet includes a series of notes on the order, mainly of a practical nature, a selection of seasonal and general sentences, seasonal thanksgivings (proper prefaces) and the two-year Lectionary prepared by the Joint Liturgical Group.

In preparing this Order we had in mind not only the two traditions which came together in the URC and their more recent service books but also the report *Initiation and Eucharist* prepared by the Joint Liturgical Group and published by the SPCK in 1972. A comparison between what is said in that report about 'The Structure of the Eucharist' and the Order we have prepared will show how closely the two are in agreement. It could be said that we have clothed the bare bones of the structure outlined by the

* 1974.

JLG with flesh and blood, and so made an outline into a liturgy. In fact we did not consciously start from what the JLG had said and base our Order on that: we had taken some part in the JLG discussions and there was agreement between us. To quote the conclusion at which the JLG arrived:

The normative structure of the total Liturgy therefore emerges as:

Old Testament Reading
New Testament Reading(s)
Sermon
Intercession
The Thanksgiving
The Communion

(*Initiation and Eucharist*, p. 27)

The first of our 'Notes on the Order of Worship' makes it clear that our Order 'should be regarded as a directory for worship rather than a fixed liturgy'. It goes on to say that 'Ministers should feel free to vary the Order and to substitute other prayers for those provided here, using if they wish extempore prayer; but it is hoped that, especially in the second part, this Order will be followed.' The 'second part' is, of course, that which relates to the actual celebration of the Holy Communion: 'The Thanksgiving and the Communion', the first part being called 'The Word and the Prayers'.

We had to make an early decision about language. We decided to follow the plan we adopted in the case of the service for the ordination and induction of elders. Within a single order of worship we have printed prayers and other texts in more traditional and in more contemporary language in parallel columns, the traditional on the left and the contemporary on the right of each page. We anticipate that it will be the contemporary version that will increasingly be used, but there are still many ministers and congregations who prefer the older form. The text to be printed in *New Church Praise* will be only the contemporary. The more traditional material was drawn mainly from the *Presbyterian Service Book* (1968) and from the *Congregational Order of Public Worship* (1970). The contemporary material was newly written, apart from ecumenical texts like the Gloria in excelsis and the Sanctus, where the ICET text has been used, and one short quotation in the eucharistic prayer from *Contemporary Prayers for Public Worship*.

Now let me speak about the Order of Worship itself.

The first part, 'The Word and the Prayers', begins with Scripture sentences which may be used simply as a call to worship or may serve to proclaim, as an act of worship, the main theme of the day or season. A selection of sentences, most of them seasonal in character,

has been provided. Then a Prayer of Approach is said; or this prayer may follow the first hymn or psalm. The Confession of Sin, which the people may say with the minister, comes next and may be followed by an Assurance of Pardon. The people may respond to the assurance they receive by saying 'Thanks be to God'; and then the canticle *Gloria in excelsis* may be said or sung. The notes state that the traditional *Kyries* may be used in place of the *Gloria* in times of penitence; but they were not printed in the order itself. The committee has, however, decided that they should be included, as well as the *Gloria*, in the text of the service that will appear in *New Church Praise*.

A Prayer for Grace – the collect of the day, a seasonal collect or other prayer of supplication – may precede the reading of Scripture; but if a prayer of approach has been said a further prayer at this point may well be regarded as unnecessary. The traditional collect in the eucharistic service is really the 'opening prayer', and is so called in the Roman Mass today. I have heard it suggested by one Roman Catholic liturgical scholar that this prayer may in time be moved to a position before the confession of sins. You don't really need *both* prayer of approach *and* collect or prayer for grace: the latter may come more usefully later in the service, possibly after the sermon. It can then sum up the thought of the readings and the sermon in prayer.

We are now ready for the Readings; but at this point a rubric states that 'The minister may then introduce the theme of the day's service, speaking in particular to the children, and a hymn may be sung before the children leave; or the minister may speak to the children after one of the readings.' The whole question of children at worship has been exercising our minds a great deal; and I am not suggesting that we have come up with the right answer. The children's address has, of course, come in for a great deal of criticism. There are some who would not consider including it on any grounds or in any form; and I suppose we could all tell horror stories about addresses that have been given. I would, however, say one word in defence of it. It gives the minister the opportunity, which he might not otherwise have, of a personal, pastoral contact with the children of his congregation, just as he has a personal pastoral link with the rest of the congregation when he speaks to them in the sermon. It can help to make the children feel that they are part of the worshipping community, and not just there in church waiting until the time comes for them to go to their own services. So I would not rule out the idea of a children's address. If one is included and the minister can make it the opportunity to introduce the theme of the day's worship, not only to the children but to the congregation as a whole, at least the readings which follow may be more intelligible than they might otherwise be.

The Order provides for readings from Old and New Testaments. We have printed the two-year Lectionary prepared by the Joint Liturgical Group and published in 1967 (*The Calendar and Lectionary – A Reconsideration by the Joint Liturgical Group*, Oxford University Press). Since it was first published some minor adjustments have been made, the most important being in the pre-Christmas period. (We rather over-rated Noah; it was more important to include the Remnant doctrine; and changes were made accordingly). I assume that you are familiar with the Lectionary, which was based on our consideration of the Calendar and which breaks with the tradition of always regarding the Gospel lection as the most important reading for the day.

To what extent the Lectionary is used in our Church would be hard to say. Neither of the uniting Churches was obliged to use a lectionary, though the custom of doing so was growing in both. The more closely the Christian Year is followed, the greater the need for a lectionary. I know that many ministers use this one, at least as a general guide.

The sermon, about which I don't propose to speak, follows closely on the readings. In turn it is followed by the Prayers for the Church and the World. The more traditional language prayer that we have used was taken from the *Congregational Order of Public Worship*; the more contemporary prayer was written for this service, and in general structure owes much to the form adopted in Anglican Series 2 and 3. It may be said as one continuous prayer; or reference to particular concerns and people may be made before each section. A versicle and response may be said at appropriate points. It is particularly in this part of the service that freedom and variety are encouraged.

So far I have said nothing about hymns and psalms, and an ex-Congregationalist could hardly be forgiven for omitting all reference to them in the year that marks the tercentenary of the birth of Isaac Watts. They are very much the people's part of the service and often provide them with their only opportunity, apart from saying the Lord's Prayer, of joining vocally in the service.

In addition to singing three or four hymns Congregationalists were accustomed to including a prose psalm or canticle in their Sunday services. Presbyterians have, of course, always made far greater use of metrical psalms and paraphrases. Chanting was introduced into our churches by Thomas Binney when he was minister of the King's Weigh House Church, prior to Hunter's time; and for close on a century Congregational hymnbooks have been supplemented by or have included a selection of prose psalms and canticles pointed for chanting. The *Congregational Church Hymnal*, edited by Dr. G. S. Barrett and published in 1887, was

quickly followed by a collection of chants and anthems; and both the *Congregational Hymnary*, published in 1916, and *Congregational Praise*, published in 1951 and still in general use, included prose psalms, canticles and passages of scripture pointed for chanting. I should judge that chants are less used in our churches today than they were a generation ago; but they are a regular feature of our worship in many of our ex-Congregational churches. Hymns are more popular than chants, which many people find difficult to sing. An ex-Presbyterian member of my congregation once remarked that he supposed that you chiefly glorified God in chanting by the effort you put in to make the words fit the tune.

The brief note we have included in our book with reference to the choice of hymns and psalms is, I think, important:

Acts of praise sung by the congregation should be so chosen as to be appropriate not only to the season or other occasion but also to their position in the service. The number of hymns suggested in the order may be varied.

If an anthem is sung it should be included at whatever point in the service it is most appropriate. If it is a scripture passage set to music it may even on occasion serve as a substitute for one of the readings.

I would add that what is said in a hymn need not also be said in a prayer, and vice versa. I suspect that we too often choose our praise and our prayers without pausing to ask if they unnecessarily duplicate each other.

I now come to the second part of the service, 'The Thanksgiving and the Communion'.

The minister may give an invitation to those present, to whatever branch of the Church they belong, to share in the Lord's Supper, and some Gracious Words of our Lord Jesus Christ may be read. Then the Peace is given, the minister saying, 'The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.'

We had considerable discussion as to whether we should encourage the use of some physical act in passing the Peace through the congregation. In the notes we suggest ways in which it can be done; but we have not given any special encouragement to the practice. This is not simply because many people find it partly embarrassing and also somewhat unreal if they have been chatting happily to their neighbours just before the service began: we want to encourage a sense of unity in Christ through corporate action at a later point in the service and not unduly to anticipate it here.

I must jump ahead to explain what I mean, to the moment when we share the bread and wine. It used to be the custom in most Congregational churches to ask intending communicants to leave

alternate pews vacant so that the deacons who served the elements could easily reach each worshipper. We are anxious to break down this practice, which tends to encourage a somewhat individualistic understanding of communion, with the much more corporate action of passing the bread and wine from hand to hand through the congregation. Then each serves, each is minister to, his neighbour. If this is done the unity of the people of God at the Table is clearly expressed, and the passing of the Peace at an earlier point becomes unnecessary. We do, however, provide, in the somewhat more responsive form of the service to be published in *New Church Praise*, that in reply to the words of the minister, 'The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all', the people should say 'Peace be with you'.

The Offertory follows the giving of the Peace. The rubric reads: 'The offerings are collected and brought to the Table. The bread and wine are uncovered or may be carried into the church and brought to the Table with the gifts of money. Then a prayer is said.' The carrying in of the bread and wine is unusual in our churches, though the practice is growing. The use of individual communion glasses is almost universal with us for regular Sunday communions and this makes a full offertory procession more difficult than it would be if a single piece of bread and a single vessel of wine were brought forward. In some congregations a compromise is achieved by bringing some bread and some wine, while most of what will be used is already on the Table; but this seems less than satisfactory. I do not know what the right solution is; but as the later action of the carrying of bread and wine by the elders to the people is much more important than the bringing of our gifts to God this is not perhaps something about which we need worry unduly. Congregations can follow their own custom; and there is much to be said for variety where nothing vital is at stake.

We come to the reading of the Narrative of the Institution. In the report of the Doctrine and Worship Committee to the General Assembly of 1973 we said:

A distinctive feature of Reformed Church liturgies in the past has been the placing of the Narrative of the Institution before the Eucharistic part of the service as a 'Warrant'. Some modern liturgies in Britain have put these words within the Thanksgiving Prayer. The Committee would offer the guidance that there should be liberty to vary the practice, but that normally the Narrative of Institution should either retain its place before the Thanksgiving Prayer as Warrant, or be used after the prayer at the Breaking of the Bread. In any case there should be unfailing use of the Narrative of Institution. (URC Reports to General Assembly 1973, p. 24.)

We have printed the Narrative as a warrant, with a rubric that it need not be read at that point if it is to be used at the Breaking of the Bread. In the notes preceding the Order we have referred to the possibility of including it in the prayer. We had hoped that it would have been possible to print in an appendix a canon prepared for ecumenical use and acceptable to all the Churches, including the Roman Catholic, on which the Joint Liturgical Group was known to be working. This text was not available in time; but we allowed the note to stand. Our preference is for the Narrative to be read as the warrant: that is the Reformed tradition, and we think it a good one. Consecration is by the Word and prayer (indeed by the whole sacramental action) and the Narrative is Word rather than prayer. Now that there is widespread agreement among the Churches that it is not a consecration formula its use as a warrant is acceptable to many whose tradition has been to include it in the prayer.

As to the text of the Narrative, we decided, after a good deal of discussion, to use the RSV, both on ecumenical grounds and on those of accuracy of translation. One or two members of the committee expressed a preference for the NEB version, but most of us were unhappy with it. I am not a Greek scholar and would rather not become involved in questions of translation; but NEB's 'on the night of his arrest' in I Cor. 11:25 seems a strange translation of the Greek, which refers to his being 'delivered up', whether the delivering up is thought to be by God or man. I have heard the translation defended on the ground that what we are given here is simply a mark of time – that it happened on *that* night – but if so, why substitute 'arrest' for 'delivered up'? The NEB use of the word 'memorial' in verses 24 and 25 – 'do this as a memorial of me' – was also felt to be less appropriate than the use of the word 'remembrance'. Some felt that 'memorial' suggested a war memorial or a plaque on a wall rather than an act of remembering in the biblical sense of making something in the past effective in the present. So, instead of putting RSV and NEB side by side as alternatives, we came down in favour of RSV.

The main actions of the sacrament follow: the Taking of the Bread and Wine preparatory to the Thanksgiving, and the Breaking of the Bread preparatory to the Sharing of the Bread and Wine.

We distinguish between the Offertory, when the elements are laid on the Table, or uncovered if they have been placed there before the service begins, and the Taking of the Bread and Wine. At the Offertory all is made ready for the actions which follow. Then, as the Lord Jesus took bread and gave thanks, the minister either takes the bread and the cup into his hands or simply touches them to indicate that we are following the example of Christ with

this bread and *this* cup. The minister says: 'In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and following his example, we take this bread and this cup, and give thanks to God.' The JLG Report on the structure of the Eucharist distinguishes between 'Presentation and Taking':

The Church 'provides', and often the people's representatives 'bring', so that the president may 'take' and set apart the bread and wine. (*Initiation and Eucharist*, p. 25.)

The Thanksgiving begins with the *Sursum Corda*, the ICET version being used in the contemporary column. Thanksgiving for creation and redemption follow, with special thanksgivings for use at particular times and seasons, and then the *Sanctus* and *Benedictus*. Again the right-hand column uses the ICET version. Though we have used it, for the sake of ecumenical agreement, we are not at all happy about the ICET version of the *Sanctus*. 'Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might' is the line that troubles us. Isa. 6:3 reads: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.' RSV and NEB are identical. The Jerusalem Bible has 'Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh Sabaoth. His glory fills the whole earth.' The ICET text improperly attaches 'Lord' to the threefold 'Holy' to produce 'Holy, holy, holy Lord'. Then comes 'God of power and might', which is not, as it should be, assuming we are following scripture, a proper name. 'Lord of hosts' or 'Yahweh Sabaoth' is correct.

It is when we come to the *Anamnesis* and *Epiclesis* that liturgical scholars and theologians will look most carefully at the wording we have used. We shall be grateful for comments and criticisms we receive not only from within our own Church but from members of other Churches.

We have not attempted to make the two columns exactly parallel, though they correspond fairly closely. We say that by what we do in remembrance of Christ, 'we celebrate his perfect sacrifice on the Cross, and his glorious resurrection and ascension'. We have preferred 'perfect sacrifice' to 'eternal sacrifice' used in the Book of Common Order ('pleading his eternal sacrifice') as being more scriptural and, we venture to think, theologically more defensible. Christ offered a perfect sacrifice on the Cross once for all: that is what we celebrate. It has eternal significance; but it is more accurately described as a 'perfect' than as an 'eternal' sacrifice. The reference to the parousia which follows is made in slightly different words in the two columns: 'we look for the coming of his kingdom' and 'we prepare for his coming in his kingdom'. 'Prepare for' is perhaps an improvement on the more familiar 'look for', suggesting a more active role for faithful servants who are told to be ready at any moment to meet their Lord.

The lines that follow in the left-hand column:

we set before thee
this bread and this wine
as the thank-offering of thy people

have no direct parallel in the other. They were taken from the first eucharistic prayer in the Congregational *Order of Public Worship*. Practically the same wording is to be found in the Order for the Lord's Supper in *Contemporary Prayers for Public Worship* (p. 82). In the contemporary language column we use the wording:

we eat and drink
at his command;

and that may be regarded as the parallel to the passage I have just quoted. In each case we are using sacrificial language. Whether we speak of setting bread and wine before God as our thank-offering or of eating and drinking at his command – and of course we do both – we are expressing our sharing in that sacrificial action by which we are united to Christ in his perfect self-offering to the Father.

This is possible through the power of the Holy Spirit, and so these words are closely linked to the *epiclesis* in which we pray that by the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, or simply through the Holy Spirit, the bread may be for us the body of Christ and the wine the blood of Christ. He offered himself to the Father and gave himself to the world in his body and blood. In the Eucharist he gives himself sacramentally in his body and blood. This would seem to be in accord with the statement in the Leuenberg Agreement: 'In the Lord's Supper the risen Jesus Christ imparts himself in his body and blood, given up for all, through his word of promise with bread and wine.' Sanctified by the Word and by prayer the bread and wine become for us the body and the blood of Christ; and as we eat and drink at his command we pray that we may be united as one body in him and be strengthened for God's service in the world.

The prayer then asks that God would accept our sacrifice of praise, that is, our recalling before him with thanksgiving and joy the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ which can never be repeated but which continually prevails to take away sin, to make us and all things new and to reconcile the world to God. And so the prayer rightly concludes with a doxology.

We think that a number of positions could be justified for the Lord's Prayer. We have printed it in the most traditional, after the eucharistic prayer. As for the text of the prayer, we have used, in the contemporary order, that modification of the ICET version which was adopted by the Church of England for use in Series

3 Holy Communion and which you have used in the Third Order for the Celebration of Holy Communion in 'The Divine Service' (pp. 37-8). At its meeting in London last April ICET agreed on further changes in the text of their version. In line 2 the previous ICET wording 'holy be your Name' has become 'hallowed be your Name', so bringing it into line with the Series 3 form. In lines 9 and 10 the earlier

Do not bring us to the test
but deliver us from evil

has become

Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.

This is clearly a paraphrase and not a translation, and at its meeting last month the Joint Liturgical Group agreed to recommend to all its member Churches the use of the Series 3 wording:

Do not bring us to the time of trial
but deliver us from evil.

It is, of course, up to each Church to make its own decision; but the JLG is anxious to avoid having more than two forms of the prayer, one traditional and one contemporary, in general use.

We come to the Breaking of the Bread and the Sharing of the Bread and Wine. To avoid repeating the Narrative of the Institution, if it has been used already, as the minister breaks the bread and raises the cup he may say words based on I Cor. 10:16: 'The bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ', 'The cup of blessing which we bless is the communion of the blood of Christ.' Should the minister raise the cup as well as break the bread? We have been accustomed to both actions, whether we were formerly Congregationalists or Presbyterians; but I have heard the practice criticized (from outside the URC) as an aping of Scottish custom. I think I am right in saying that it has always been customary in churches of the Reformed tradition. The people are being invited, indeed encouraged, to receive both bread and wine. It seems fitting that as well as seeing the bread broken they should be shown the cup in which they are to share.

We had considerable discussion about the order in which minister, elders and people should receive the bread and wine: minister first, then elders, then people; or the minister last; or didn't it matter? We decided that it didn't matter, that the important thing is that there should be as little separation as possible between the communion of all who take part. All alike are guests at the Table and share in a corporate act. So we have written this note:

Minister, elders and people share the bread and wine; and it does not matter in what order this is done. The minister may receive first, then the elders and then the people, so that the communion spreads from the Table; or the bread and wine may be taken to the people, so that they are served first, and then the elders, and the minister last. All may eat the bread and drink the wine as they are served; or all may eat, and then drink, at the same time.

What is more important than the order in which minister, elders and people receive communion is that, as far as possible, the bread and wine should be passed through the congregation, so that each person serves his neighbour.

We add that

The sharing is done most simply and meaningfully when a single piece of bread and a common cup are passed.

The prayer after communion is one of thanksgiving, of self-offering to God and of petition that we may do his will. We decided that an act of self-offering should be placed in this prayer, after communion, rather than in the eucharistic prayer, as it had been both in the *Presbyterian Service Book* and in the *Congregational Order of Public Worship*, in close relation to the offering of our sacrifice of praise. I should want to defend either position; but the argument for making it post-communion is strong. Not until we have been united to Christ and to each other in the act of communion are we able to give ourselves fully to God for his service.

After a hymn or doxology the dismissal and blessing follow. Should there be a blessing? Do we need one after we have received communion? What more could God give? It could be argued that a dismissal is all that is required, even justified: 'Go in peace to serve the Lord.' We decided to add a blessing in a form that would not imply any denial of what God had already given: 'the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with you always' – not 'be with you now and always' but an assurance that the blessing God has given will always be yours.

We don't regard this order as a final form; nor do we intend that it should be followed slavishly or used invariably. We prize the heritage of liberty into which we have entered. We believe it to be an abiding principle of Reformed Church worship that the minister should never be so confined to any form of prayer that he is not at liberty to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. But we hope that our worship will always be orderly and in obedience to the Gospel. There are dangers in freedom: there are dangers in fixity of form too. What we have tried to do is to provide our Church with

the text of a service which does justice to the traditions which we have inherited, which takes into account the new liturgical insights by which all branches of the Church are being enriched, and which will enable our congregations to worship God in freedom, with confidence and with joy.

JAMES M. TODD, Leatherhead

Note: The *Book of Order for Worship* is available from Church of Scotland Bookroom, 117 George Street, Edinburgh, EH2, 4YN or from Tavistock Bookshop, 86 Tavistock Place, London, WC1H, 9RT. The price is 20p. *The Order of Worship for the Lord's Supper*, the contemporary language version from *The Book of Order for Worship* is included in *New Church Praise*, a selection of 100 hymns and other liturgical material, published by the St. Andrew Press. Full score music edition £1.80, melody and words 60p.

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Note: Editorial material and Review material have been held over for lack of space. It is hoped to include these in the next issue. – Ed.