

THE REVISED ORDERS OF HOLY COMMUNION: COMPARISONS AND COMMENTS

Revision of the services of Holy Communion has taken place in both the Church of England and the Church of Scotland. I think it is now helpful to have set out four orders, those of *The Book of Common Prayer* (1662), *An Order for Holy Communion, Alternative Series 3* (1971, 1973), *The Book of Common Order* (1940) and *The Divine Service, First Order* (1973). Additional comparison can be made with the 'possible basic pattern' suggested by the Joint Liturgical Group as given on pp. 30f of *Initiation and Eucharist* (1972). The *schemae* are printed as an Appendix to this article.

Comparison of the two Anglican rites reveals the simplifying of the Preparation, with the removal of the celebrant's Lord's Prayer and the transfer of the Decalogue to the section, 'Prayers' in response to the Word. In the 'Word' section the OT lesson is introduced, and the Nicene Creed is the first response to the whole liturgy of the Word. The new Scottish rite is similar, although the Nicene Creed may be said at that point, or, preferably, in the Eucharist section, immediately after the entry of the elements.

A definite section is marked for 'Prayers', both as a response to the Word, and as a bridge to the Sacrament. Intercessions and Thanksgivings are combined, with room for variations, whereas previously these prayers were limited to specific prayers for the church. The Intercessions are plain and direct, with the versicle, 'Lord, in your mercy' and the response 'Hear our prayer', and are thus very similar to the prayer of Intercession in *The Divine Service, Second Order* (pp. 18-20).

The Comfortable Words now precede the Confession of Sins. This place for Confession might be questioned, especially since the Scottish rite has persisted in a tradition that seems to have good theological and liturgical logic for it. It seems right to come from the confusion of the world, and our awareness of wrongness, inadequacy and disobedience to be cleansed and cleared by God at the beginning of worship, so that we may go on to hear His voice and be fed at His hand. The Joint Liturgical Group recognizes this element as part of preparation, for 'a modern congregation is not necessarily composed of prepared people dizzy with the wonders of grace. Some preparation is desirable. . . . Before the God who is presented to us, our own need and the world's predicament are revealed in their true reality. So confessions and penitence are prompted and directed'. Confession thus appears at this point in their pattern of worship.

Yet they do allow the Anglican alternative, 'confession might with equal point become one of the elements which follow the hearing of the Word of God' (p. 28). The phrase 'with equal point' could be questioned. After interceding for others we are immediately brought back to ourselves, our sinfulness and need, and these should have been dealt with much sooner.

Moreover, we are reminded of our own situation by the Prayer of Humble Access at this more suitable place for it. It is similar in style and content to the Scottish rite's Prayer of the Veil, where we approach God praying, 'grant us the assurance of Thy mercy, and sanctify us by Thy heavenly grace; that we, approaching Thee with pure heart and cleansed conscience, may offer unto Thee a sacrifice in righteousness'.

'The Great Prayer', it is interesting to note, is called 'The Thanksgiving Prayer', no doubt with 'Eucharist' in mind. Thanksgiving has been rather thinly represented in the old rite, apart from the *Sursum Corda*.¹ Even the Preface stopped short at 'give thanks unto thee, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty, Everlasting God' without reference to God's mighty works in creation, as in the Scottish rites. The Proper Prefaces concentrated on particular seasonal aspects of God's work in redemption, yet a general thanksgiving, as in the 'Verily holy, verily blessed art Thou' of the Scottish rite, with a rehearsal of Christ's life and actions is missing. In the new *Series 3* rite the work of Christ is given a place in an extended Preface, and the Proper Prefaces are simplified, shortened, but remain dignified. The normal form of the Preface for Easter Day, to my mind, is heavy. The new form is limited to the essential point, omitting the reference to the Paschal Lamb, which must be quite strange and meaningless to most modern ears. It reads: 'And now we give you thanks for his glorious resurrection from the dead. By his death he has destroyed death, and by his rising again he has restored to us eternal life.'

The Words of Institution are preceded by a brief *epiclesis* on the bread and wine, and followed by a short *anamnesis* and *epiclesis* on the communicants.

Therefore, heavenly Father, with this bread and cup we do this in remembrance of him: we celebrate and proclaim his perfect sacrifice made once for all upon the cross, his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into heaven; and we look for his coming in glory. Accept through him, our great high priest, this our sacrifice of thanks and praise; and as we eat and drink these holy gifts in the presence of your divine majesty, renew us by your Spirit, inspire us with your love, and unite us in the body of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The lack of an *epiclesis* in the BCP is therefore now made good.

In general the Great Prayer appears to be adequate, yet dignified, relevant but relatively short, the last an important point.

This English rite has only four items of congregational praise, all rather well spaced out and at appropriate places, whereas the First Order of the Scottish rite allows no fewer than seven, including the *Gloria in Excelsis*, said or sung. The item after the sermon and before the offering could well be removed.

It is difficult to see why the offering should be placed immediately before the Intercessions, unless for the practical purpose of allowing the minister to move from pulpit to prayer desk or table. Since adopting the use of intercessions immediately after the sermon I find no awkwardness in moving in silence to the prayer desk. The offering after intercession is both a response to the Word, and, more clearly, a bridge to the Holy Communion, parallel to, if not part of the presentation of the bread and wine. It should be noted that in *Series 3* both places are allowed. Further, however, the placing of the offering after intercession allows, on a non-sacramental Sunday, of the full use of *Church Hymnary, Third Edition*, in its appropriate and successive parts. At this point the order is then intercessions, hymn, offering.

The placing of the Intercessions before the Sermon was a feature of *The Book of Common Order*, and, before it, *Prayers for Divine Service* and *Euchologion*. This was said to be based formally on the practice adopted in Matins, but there, with Sermon ‘added’ at the end of Morning Prayer, the preceding prayers are rather restricted to the fixed collects for the sovereign, the royal family, and the church.² There may be something to be said for Intercessions as a response to the Gospel, in which Christ is so often presented to us with His concern for many types of people. In earlier years the late W. D. Maxwell and Colin Miller gave support to this practice. ‘The general or “little” intercession is a natural response to the Gospel’, while the ‘great intercession’ comes in the Great Prayer, although very brief.³ Yet when the Intercessions are placed after the Sermon, the Word is concentrated, and the Intercessions can reflect any particular needy people brought before us in the preaching. This is of course in accord with earlier Scottish practice.⁴

The Prayer of Consecration in the First Order is very full and rich, but also very long, and this must be the main criticism. Without the Proper Preface I find that it takes six minutes, and I speak at a moderate and maintained pace in a small church. The prayer in the BCO takes about five minutes, and I always found even this heavy and tiring. It is too much for ordinary people to follow, and six or seven minutes is approaching the length of the sermon, which nowadays must be short when Holy Communion is celebrated.

Many insist, on the basis of ancient practice, on the inclusion of intercessions, probably because at the Lord's Table we should bring others with us before Him, and the same applies to the Communion of the Saints. But intercessions have already been made on a fairly wide range in response to the Word, which also embraces us all, and this should be adequate. The case for including the commemoration of the departed here and not at the end of the service is stronger. The bread and wine have come down the generations to those who have gone before us, and to us, and with them we are now linked through our risen and ascended Lord. However, the Great Prayer is now tending to include prayers of all kinds, and therefore to be very repetitive of themes already used.

Further, the Words of Institution have now been included in the Prayer in conformity with the Roman and Anglican usages, and one is not unaware of the centrality given to the words and actions of our Lord, and of their basis for all we are doing in word, prayer and action. Yet we are turning from the language of prayer, the second person address of prayer, to the third person narrative style. The sense of direction therefore becomes confused. The Warrant immediately after the Prayer of the Veil and the Grace gives initial logical force to what we are about to do. It sets the scene and ushers us forward, aware of why we are doing these particular acts. Further, its use here, said direct to the people, breaks the activity of prayer said to God. In contrast, in the Second Order the Prayers of the Veil are immediately followed by the Eucharistic Prayer without any break, without the Warrant and the beautiful words and action of the Taking. The Joint Liturgical Group gives this as the first of three alternative places for the Warrant. The second is in the prayer, and the third before the act of communion. But the last, again, would take away the force, clarity and beauty of the Fraction, where the bread is lifted up and broken, and the cup raised before the eyes of the congregation. Therefore the original place in the BCO seems best, and this is given as an alternative in the new First Order. But the Second Order, where the Great Prayer is not so long, even with the inclusion of the Warrant, could be used as a variation, or alternative at a second service. In this event I would like to see the insertion of the Taking and its appropriate words.

These comments about the Warrant are made in the interests of greater sharpness, brevity and a sense of movement in the Great Prayer. It must not get weighed down with heavy words. The Salutation, the *Sursum Corda* and the Preface must remain with their soaring words. But the Proper Prefaces could well be shortened and made more pointed as in *Series 3*, and, further, printed in full, either in context, again as in *Series 3*, or as an appendix. *Their*

omission from this book is surprising and inconvenient in practice. The Second Order (p. 23) dispenses with Proper Prefaces, but, in words that take wing beautifully, brings out the essential points of Christ's life and ministry. This allows a very brief *anamnesis* before the Words of Institution (p. 24). The *anamnesis* of Christ's ministry and work in the First Order marches too reminiscently of a creed, and never tends to rise and raise us. The briefer *anamnesis*, *epiclesis* and oblation in *Series 3* are worth consideration (see above). Moreover our *anamnesis* concentrates on 'having in remembrance the work and passion of our Saviour Christ and pleading His eternal sacrifice'. We still tend to put all the weight on the death of Christ. We must also rejoice in his glorious resurrection and ascension (see again *Series 3* p. 22, quoted above). A shorter, lighter prayer would keep the thrust of God's activity in creation, redemption and sanctification clearer and sharper.

While there must be satisfaction that we are shaping a common and rich liturgy, it seems however that our First Order has become clumsier and heavier with the adjustments which have been made, although done with good liturgical and theological reasons. It is to be hoped that with practice and comparison with *Series 3* amendments will be made, to produce a finer, clearer act of worship, that will have a smoother movement to carry us all, celebrant and people, along, and embrace us with greater awareness in the mighty acts of God and of our risen Lord.

NOTES

1. See, e.g., *Reshaping the Liturgy*, by Henry de Candole and Arthur Couratin (Church Information Office, 1964), pp. 28f.
2. Cf. W. D. Maxwell, *An Outline of Christian Worship* (1949), p. 168, cf. p. 134; *A History of Worship in the Church of Scotland* (1955), p. 181; *Concerning Worship* (1948), p. 29.
3. Colin Miller, *Prayers for Parish Worship* (1948), p. xiii; cf. W. D. Maxwell, *Concerning Worship*, pp. 34, 36.
4. Cf. W. D. Maxwell, *Outline*, pp. 123, 130, 131, cf. 168; also *History*, p. 181.

APPENDIX

THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER (1662)

SERIES THREE

Preparation

Lord's Prayer (celebrant)

Collect for Purity

Decalogue

Collect for the Sovereign

Collect of the Day

The Word

Epistle

Gospel

Nicene Creed

Sermon

The Sacrament

Offertory:

Scripture sentences

Collection of alms

Placing of bread and wine

Intercessions ending with commemoration of departed

Exhortation

Invitation

General Confession

General Absolution

Comfortable words

Consecration Prayer:

Sursum Corda

Preface and Proper Preface

Sanctus

Humble Access

Commemoration of Passion with

Words of Institution, manual acts,

Fraction

Communion – celebrant first

Lord's Prayer

Oblation or Post-Communion

Thanksgiving

*Gloria in Excelsis**Agnus Dei*

Peace and Blessing

Preparation

Sentences

Hymn

Salutation

Collect for Purity

Kyries or Gloria in Excelsis

Collect of the Day

The Word

Old Testament lection

Psalm (said)

Epistle

Canticle, Psalm, or Hymn

Gospel

Sermon

Nicene Creed

The Prayers

(Offerings; Hymn)

Intercessions and thanksgiving combined,
with final brief rejoicing in the saints

Commandments, or Summary of the

Law with responses

Comfortable Words

Confession of Sins

Absolution

Humble Access

The Communion

The Peace

(Hymn while offerings taken. Alternative)

Bread and wine brought to Holy Table

with acknowledgement of God's

Providence

The Taking

The Prayer of Thanksgiving:

Sursum Corda

Preface (Creation/Redemption).

Proper

*Sanctus*Commemoration, with brief *epiclesis*

for elements, Words of Institution

Anamnesis, brief *epiclesis* for

communicants

Ascription

The breaking of the Bread

Our Father (all)

Communion, during it singing of

Benedictus qui venit, and *Agnus Dei*

After Communion:

Seasonal sentences

Thanksgiving/dedication

Hymn

Blessing and Peace

THE BOOK OF COMMON ORDER, 1940

Approach

Praise
Sentences
Collect for Purity
Confession and Absolution
Collect (6 after Trinity, *BCP*, or of the Day)
Canticle, Psalm or Hymn

The Word of God

Old Testament lection
Psalm, prose or metrical
Epistle and Gospel
(Nicene Creed)
Intercessions, Communion of Saints
Praise
Collect, Sermon, Ascription

The Sacrament

Offerings
Invitation, Comfortable Words
Ps. 24:7-10, while elements are brought to the Holy Table
(Nicene Creed)

Unveiling of the elements
Prayers of the Veil (=Humble Access)
The Grace

The Warrant

The Taking

Great Prayer of Consecration:

Salutation
Sursum Corda
Preface and Proper Preface
Sanctus, Benedictus qui venit, Hosanna
Vere Sanctus, thanks for redemption
Anamnesis of Christ's work
Brief oblation of elements

Epiclesis (communicants, elements)
Oblation of selves and church
with general intercessory petition
(developed in Shorter Order)

Doxology

Lord's Prayer

The Fraction

Agnus Dei

Celebrant's communion

Delivery and people's communion

The Peace

Prayer of thanksgiving, commemoration
of departed

Praise

Benediction

THE DIVINE SERVICE, FIRST ORDER

The Preparation

Praise
Sentences
Collect for Purity
Confession, *Kyries*, Absolution
Collect (as opposite)

Gloria in Excelsis, said or sung

The Word of God

Old Testament lection
Psalm, Hymn or Anthem
Epistle and Gospel

Psalm or Hymn

Sermon and Ascription

(Nicene Creed)

(Hymn)

Offerings

Intercessions

The Sacrament

Invitation, Comfortable Words
Ps. 24:7-10 while elements are brought to the Holy Table

Nicene Creed

The Grace

Unveiling of the elements

Prayers of the Veil

(The Warrant)

The Taking

Great Prayer of Consecration:

Salutation
Sursum Corda
Preface and Proper Preface
Sanctus, etc., as opposite
Vere Sanctus, thanks for redemption
Anamnesis of Christ's work
Brief oblation of elements
Words of Institution
Epiclesis (communicants, elements)
Oblation of selves and church
Three general intercessions
Communion of Saints

Lord's Prayer

Sancta sanctis

The Fraction

Agnus Dei

Celebrant's communion

Delivery and people's communion

The Peace

Brief thanksgiving and dedication

Praise

Benediction

PATTERN SUGGESTED BY THE JOINT LITURGICAL GROUP

Act of Praise and Adoration

Act of Confession and Assurance of Pardon (this element may come here or after the Intercession)

Collect (this element may come after the Sermon)

Scripture Readings (OT and NT with psalmody if desired)

Sermon

Hymn of Response (or Collect)

Intercession

Presentation (with hymn/psalm if desired)

The Taking

The Thanksgiving (controlled by the Narrative of Institution)

Sursum Corda

Recital of the Mighty Acts of God and *Sanctus*

Anamnesis

Petition

The Fraction

The Communion

Hymn/Prayer

The Dismissal

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