

So here are some recommendations about making the most of the stillness.

Read the last page of the Iona book. Find a piece of the Bible you have not read before. Look through the index of the hymn-book for hymns you might like to know.

Look around you - at what is in the church, at the people with you, seeing in your mind the generations before you, back to St Columba and his singing monks.

Try to look further into yourself and your desires and purposes and anxieties, out into the world. Think what your calling may be in it, out, beyond, and through the world. Try to apprehend what our finite brains cannot fully understand - what can be glimpsed but not seen, heard, but has no sound.

If you are grateful for anything think of it. Think of what you could do with your life.

Make notes if you like - it can be worth it.

There may be only a few minutes left. There is still time - to be still, and suddenly to know: "I am God who made you."

REVIEWS

Bryan D. Spinks, From the Lord and 'The Best Reformed Churches'
(Bibliotheca 'Ephemerides Liturgicae', Subsidia 33;
Edizioni Liturgiche, Rome, 1984); 212 pp., L. 28,000

The scope of this study, by an Anglican who is Chaplain of Churchill College, Cambridge, is clarified by the sub-title: 'A study of the eucharistic liturgy in the English Puritan and Separatist traditions 1550-1633'. (It is presented as volume 1; the companion volume, on English Congregationalism, 1645-1980, is published as Freedom or Order? by Pickwick Publications of Pittsburgh, 1984.) The Separatists make only a fleeting appearance, for they were hostile to all forms of written prayer, and evidence of their practice is scanty. Among the Puritans, the story is predominantly one of the use or adaptation of continental rites, for, with the exception of Knox's 1550 liturgy for Berwick-on-Tweed, they 'declined to compile an original or indigenous English Reformed rite'. But

Mr Spinks is able to show that among the Puritans the Genevan Service Book of 1556 was not as exclusively dominant as earlier studies have suggested. The 1552/1559/1604 Book of Common Prayer was variously amended and adapted, e.g. in the Frankfurt exiles' so-called 'Liturgy of Compromise' (1555), Calvin's Genevan La Forme des Prieres (1542) was translated into English in 1550 by one William Huycke, and the usages of the 'Stranger' Churches in the country - the work of

Valerand Poullain, John a Lasco and Maarten Micron - enjoyed some currency. The volume includes a facsimile reproduction of Huycke, together with its text in modern print but the original spelling, and a new English version of the service in Lasco's Forma ac Ratio (1555).

The author is particularly interested in the relationship between these various orders of service. At a number of points he corrects other commentators, especially W. D. Maxwell. The main Reformed rites were not structured solely on the mass; the early 16th century vernacular Word-service known as prone (pronaus) was not without influence. The Dutch liturgy of Petrus Datheen (1566) was also more important: it was used in the London Dutch Church, left its mark on the versions of the Genevan Service Book known as the Waldegrave Book (1584) and the Middleburg Book (1586), and may well have contributed to the compilation of the Westminster Directory.

This work is, then, a valuable addition to the literature on the subject. Unfortunately, too many misprints are recognizable, which does not inspire confidence in the passages of 16th and 17th century English. The index is also faulty. While the Maxwellian consensus is corrected on several occasions (although

Calvin's greater dependence on Farel is not, to my mind, clearly proven), Spinks' interpretations are not beyond challenge. Did Zwingli view the Supper as 'mere remembrance' and not more (cf. the odd statement that to him the bread and wine were 'a mental reminder' of the atonement)? Did Calvin separate Word and sacrament in the Genevan order? Although John a Lasco's Forma ac Ratio is characterized as a directory for the guidance of the minister, the necessary distinction is not drawn between the BCP and all of the Reformed rites (nor that between written and prescribed orders). Whereas Spinks can refer to 'Classical' (capitalized) forms of anaphora and eucharistic prayers, others will want to judge Reformed patterns of worship from standpoints other than the earlier Western tradition.

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INDEPENDENCE AND NATIONHOOD, SCOTLAND 1306 - 1469, by Alexander Grant

Published by Edward Arnold, London. £6.95

Published in 1984 as Volume 3 of The New History of Scotland, this book uses and presents in a very interesting way the results of many specialist studies of the period. According to the cover "the recent development of a more sympathetic understanding of the late Middle Ages - questioning and qualifying traditional assumptions of general late-medieval decline - has stimulated a new, constructive approach to Scotland's history in that period, which provides the basis for this book." The period is considered under three main headings - Wars of Independence, The People of Scotland, and Government and Politics. The central chapter in the second section is on Church and Religion. Like the book as a whole, this chapter is fascinating, but in this review I should like to draw the attention of readers of the Record to the suggestions made in section IX (pages 116 - 119) of that chapter. Incidentally Dr Alexander Grant is the son of a member of the Church Service Society, Rev G.V.R. Grant.

Let me begin by setting down briefly some well-known points of view with regard to the character and infrequency of Communion in the Church of Scotland. It might be said that the battle-lines are drawn between those who insist that the Reformers wanted frequent Communion, but that this aim was frustrated, first due to the shortage of ministers, and later as a result of the baneful influence of English Puritanism; those who take the view that the Word is more important than the Sacrament, and that infrequent Communion strikes the right balance; and those who, particularly in the Highlands, look on Communion as something only for the spiritually mature, and such a solemn occasion that it would spoil it to have it too often. All who have experienced it would agree that there is something special about the atmosphere in a Scots Communion, a solemn joy and sense of deep fellowship that we don't want to lose: the proposals in the Report "Towards a National Programme for Evangelism" appreciate this.

In my own Classes for First Communicants I have said that normal medieval practice was Communion once a year at Easter, and that the Reformers wanted Communion more frequently, at least once a month. Because of the shortage of ministers, John Knox made temporary arrangements for Communion to be held four times a year in towns, and twice a year in rural areas. What had begun as a matter of necessity had grown to be a custom. In the 18th Century Communion had been even less frequent in country districts, but people had made up for this by attending

Communion in neighbouring parishes. It was right therefore today to move in the direction of more frequent Communion, but we should seek to preserve the Scots tradition of Communion being a special service. In my own congregation I rejoiced to see the number of Communions raised to four a year, and felt that that was something a successor might build upon.

I have to confess, however, that "something in my blood" rebels against the idea of too frequent Communion. I think this is due to the feeling that it breaks the community of believers. My first experience of Anglican Communion Services, in the army, was of short services held after Mattins, attended by a very few people, and I have since been at Anglican services where people got up and left during the Offertory. In the Church of Pakistan, where Communion was monthly, only a small minority of the members took Communion once a month, and so there was a break in the fellowship of the congregation similar to that experienced in a Highland congregation when the adherents who attended church regularly were conspicuously absent at Communion.

Dr Grant's approach to the history of the Scots Communion was to me fresh and novel, and should lead to discussion. He himself admits that "the argument is tentative: whether it could be fully proved is doubtful. But if it is valid, its relevance extends beyond the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries." I'll summarise the points he makes, and illustrate with quotations from his book.

1. In the Middle Ages, the aspect of sin that was most commonly understood by ordinary people was its breaking of community.

The suggestion has been made that during the Middle Ages there was a general belief that 'sinful' actions were condemned by God not because they were morally wrong but because they damaged good neighbourliness within a community. Adultery, for instance, was perhaps a sin not so much for sexual reasons but because it might cause a feud between husband and lover - p. 116.

The sense of collective Christianity was perhaps especially strong in medieval Scotland, because of the importance there of kinship, the frequent correspondence of parish, community and unit of lordship, and the ways in which the religious and secular machineries for settling disputes fitted together - p. 117.

2. People took Communion once a year, at Easter; this was a solemn community occasion, preceded by confession, restitution and penance, and part of the ritual was the kissing of the "paxboard", which was passed from hand to hand.

The Church emphasised that restitution had to be made to the victim of a sinful act before divine forgiveness could be hoped for; without restitution repentance was not sincere. Also, arbitrating in disputes or feuds within the parish community was widely understood as one of the priest's main functions.

This function was ritualised by the introduction into the mass of the congregation's collective kiss of peace, represented from the thirteenth century by the symbolic kissing of the paxboard ... the mass could hardly establish peace with God if the members of the congregation were not at peace with one another. - p. 116.

Moreover, the idea of settling feud between God and man through the mass must have been apposite in Scotland, where ritualised secular feud was common. Henryson's imagery - 'O King most high, now pacify thy feud' - is striking. The concept that all who took communion, or even attended masses, should be in a state of peace with each other, would also have been powerful - p. 117.

3. Since the Reformation, developments in the Catholic Church and in most of the Protestant Churches have made Communion more personal and individualistic.

In Catholic worship, the trend towards individualistic religion diluted community togetherness; the kiss of peace was discontinued, the private confessional box was invented, and individuals were encouraged to take communion as frequently as they wished, making it more a personal than a community practice. Much the same happened in the Protestant Churches ... Lutheran and Anglican communions became individualised and frequent, while in most Calvinist Churches they were simply periodic extensions to the preaching of God's word - p. 118.

4. The Reformers in Scotland wanted more frequent Communion, but Scots Communion tradition was too much for them.

The leading Scots reformers ... saw sin as a moral rather than an anti-social offence, and they demanded punishment rather than compensation for crimes. Also, most significantly, they intended communion services to be more frequent: monthly in the burghs and at least quarterly in the countryside. Their failure to achieve this frequency seems to indicate that the local communities insisted, as far as they could, on retaining their traditional practices - p. 118.

5. The Scots Communion has therefore, in a unique way, preserved the community aspect of the Medieval Easter Mass.

Despite the sweeping changes of the mid sixteenth century, the post-Reformation Scottish Church strengthened its social integration within the local communities. This can be seen in the parishes' 'kirk sessions' and in the parochial organisation of the new poor law and education system. Continuity is visible, too, in the Reformed communion service ... It retained the traditional sense of collectiveness in the communal singing of psalms, and in the liturgy's portrayal of the service as a communal feast, and in the sharing of the consecrated bread and wine (especially when taken from a common cup) ... Also, most significantly, the pre-Reformation practice of taking communion very infrequently, after solemn preparation, continued ... Its communion service was special, infrequent, and used a dramatic liturgy - factors making it an extremely solemn occasion for the whole parish community - pp. 117 - 118. Although modern congregations cannot be said to correspond to their local communities, nevertheless an intense feeling of collective togetherness is still evoked by the Church of Scotland's communion ritual. In this, it may be suggested, we have an echo of the world of medieval Scotland - an echo of that powerful sense of local community within the national framework that was such a prominent feature of late-medieval Scottish history - p. 119.

It is difficult in this short compass to do justice to Dr Grant's argument, and I would strongly recommend that it be considered in the context of his whole book. If his suggestions have substance, they argue for a less apologetic and more positive and appreciative approach to the traditional Scots "Communion Season".

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INTERCESSIONS AT THE PARISH COMMUNION for use at the Alternative Services,
William C Collins, Mowbray, 135 pp, pb, £2.25

This book, the author of which is assistant in the Parish of Newlyn in Cornwall, consists of a cycle of intercessions, based on the two-year ASB Lectionary. The same pattern is followed for each week: prayers for the Church, for the world, for the local community, for those in need, and for those who have died. Those who use these prayers in a non-episcopal context will require to modify the collects which refer to bishops etc., and all who stand within the Reformed tradition will feel it necessary to transform into thanksgivings the intercessions for the dead. These are, of course, observations, not criticisms!

In his preface the author states that "many of the currently available published prayers are carried away by their own rhetoric. They appear contrived, stilted, and riven with clichés and ecclesiastical jargon." He has attempted, by contrast, to keep this collection "short and concise, yet as natural and spontaneous as possible ..."

Many of the individual collects are so closely locked into the appropriate lectionary passages that their meaning would be less than clear were they to be used in isolation. Unfortunately, the language is frequently sermonic, and it is not always clear whether it is God who is being addressed, or merely the congregation. "With the gospel as its text, the Christian community is called upon to teach and exemplify Christ's love and peace in a struggling and violent world." (p 40) And sometimes there is imagery of almost mind-boggling character. "... we confess ... that the compulsion to be popular in the midst of predators often exposes your sheep to mortal danger." (p 66) It is always wrong to turn prayers of intercession into exercises in Christian Education, but this, sadly, is what seems often to be happening in these prayers. One has often the feeling that one is reading, not prayers which have been inspired by the passages for the day, but sentences culled verbatim from the script of the sermon preached on the passages.

Nevertheless, as a guide to carefully-planned intercession this book has considerable merit. Any intelligent and sensitive minister who has the freedom to do so will feel the desire to adapt before use the published efforts of others. This book is no lazy man's guide to effortless weekly intercession, but it does contain a great deal of fresh and imaginative material which could significantly enrich this element of worship.

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