

(M A Y 1 9 4 8)

T H E H O U R O F H O L Y C O M M U N I O N

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In the previous issue of the "Annual", Dr W D Maxwell indicated the doctrinal reasons for a morning hour of celebration rather than an evening, in an article called for by the growing practice of evening celebrations.

The present writer agrees in the main with all that Dr Maxwell has written, but further study has suggested these observations, not in a spirit of controversy, but with a view to guidance for instruction and practice in congregations where evening celebrations might become a substitute for morning observance.

(i) That the Lord's Supper gave the Passover meal a new significance and purpose is admitted; but it is not clear that the time of celebration was thereby changed from evening to morning, except that the earlier hour could be included in the idea behind the phrase: "This do ye, as oft as ye drink it". The Passover was celebrated once a year, Holy Communion much more frequently.

(ii).....Worship on Sunday morning, as distinct from the Sabbath, stresses the Resurrection, and because Christians gathered on that day at an early hour to worship the risen Christ, it was natural that they celebrated Holy Communion, in obedience to the command: "This do, in remembrance of Me". It was the crucified Lord who rose from the dead and manifested his living presence where two or three gathered together, but they did not gather primarily to celebrate the sacrament at the early hour, but to worship at that hour. The celebration naturally followed.

(iii) The Emmaus incident on the first Easter evening has always impressed the present writer as being perhaps the first occasion on which the command was actually carried out.....The conclusion would seem to be, therefore, that the hour of celebration, in itself, is unimportant, but - and this needs stress today - the hour of worship should be morning, because it recalls the Resurrection. The danger of an evening celebration is that God is worshipped solely at an hour convenient for the people. That ultimately puts man's convenience above the claims of God.....
.....The Reformed practice in Scotland was in line with a very early hour of celebration at Geneva (4.00 am).....In Edinburgh

in 1574 Communion was celebrated at 5.00 am. "for the servants and sic others that pleases to come", while at Elgin a 3.00 am celebration was "for servants for the most part". By 1656 the Communion service at Dunfermline Abbey commenced at 8.00 am, a service being held outside for non-communicants at 10.00 am. At that time Communion lasted for two Sundays, and it is thought that in an earlier period where it was celebrated on one Sunday only, the hour was earlier than 8.00 am. Since that date, the practice has grown of celebrating the sacrament at the usual hour of morning worship, in the cities frequently 11.00 am, and in rural parishes 11.30 am or 12 noon. In practice neither in country nor in town are all the communicants served before noon.....

.....Today, there is a growing desire for more frequent celebration of Holy Communion, and a desire that churches of the same denomination at any rate should keep to the same Sundays. A fear has been expressed in some quarters that a more frequent celebration would take away from the solemnity of the occasion, and would lead to a lessening of members attending such celebration. It is interesting to note that where statistics have been kept, such fear are groundless.....

.....A pagan who had never heard of the Gospel would find it strange to discover any reason, apart from purely local tradition, for some of the "second", "third", or "last" Sundays of months apparently chosen at random, for the celebration of Holy Communion in some of our churches. He might, with some instruction, see a reason for celebration on some of the anniversaries of the old feastdays. But it would surely be incomprehensible that in many a Christian Church, as the worshippers gather on Easter morning, they fail to carry out Christ's wishes, and remember him in the breaking of the bread and the out-pouring of wine.

A more frequent celebration would probably clear away some of the practical difficulties for the people; it would certainly give opportunity to stress the doctrinal significance urged by Dr Maxwell, and it would allow the worshippers to avail themselves more often of this means of grace, and raise Christian life to a more sacramental level.

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INVITATION TO COMMUNION

[From "The Order of Divine Service"

The King's Weigh House Church, London - W E Orchard]

O.U.P. 1926

After the Offertory has been made, an opportunity is given for those who wish to retire: but it should be understood that this Table of the Lord is open to all our fellow Christians; and, although none should draw near to these sacred mysteries impenitently or wilfully unbelieving, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we affectionately invite all who are

sincerely seeking him, and who are wearied of their sin and doubt, to come to the Lord's Table, in the assurance that he who is the Saviour from all sin and the Light of the world will in no wise cast them out.

From the Rubric:

For:"The Order for the Celebration

of
THE EUCHARIST or
MASS
or

Sacrament of Holy Communion

"The Holy Table being covered with a fair linen cloth, and bread and wine [and water] being set in readiness, the Service may commence with (THE INTROIT) said or sung, or (A HYMN); all standing.....

.....The Congregation still standing, the Celebrant shall say,
In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

and the Congregation shall respond audibly, AMEN.....

.....Then, all kneeling, the Celebrant and Congregation shall say together:

O Lord our God, we confess that we have sinned against thee.....

Here there may follow, especially in Penitential Seasons, at Solemn Celebrations, or at a Requiem.

THE KYRIE ELEISON

(If the words are sung, the original language of the liturgy may be used:

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison:).....

.....The Celebration not being Solemn, nor falling in a Penitential Season, there may be said or sung by all.

THE GLORIA IN EXCELSIS

(All standing, when sung; the Congregation kneeling, when said)

THE GOSPEL

(The Congregation standing up, the Reader shall say,

THE HOLY GOSPEL IS WRITTEN IN THE - CHAPTER OF - BEGINNING AT THE -
VERSE: at which there shall be said or sung by all, GLORY BE TO THEE, O
LORD. At the end of the reading, there may be said or sung by all,

THANKS BE TO THEE, O LORD, or

PRAISE BE TO THEE, O CHRIST, FOR THIS THY HOLY GOSPEL"

[illegible]

AND W E ORCHARD WAS A CONGREGATIONALIST !