

## Responsive Services.<sup>1</sup>

RESPONSES, in one form or another, have been used in religious services from time immemorial. In the Jewish Temple service, according to Edersheim, the people at one time repeated the Ten Commandments. Later, the custom was to repeat the Shema, containing the essential part of the Law—(Deut., vi., 4-9, xi., 13-21, Numb., xv., 37-41). After the Aaronic benediction—(Numb., vi., 24-6), the people responded, "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting." The Psalm for the day was always sung in three sections. At the close of each the priest blew three blasts from their silver trumpets, and the people bowed down and worshipped. In the Passover service, the service of song consisted of the so-called Hallel (Ps. cxiii.-cxviii.). Every first line of a Psalm was repeated by the people till they came to Ps. cxviii., when, besides the first line, these lines were also repeated by the people,

"Save now, I beseech Thee,  
Jehovah ;

"O Jehovah, I beseech Thee,  
send now prosperity.

"Blessed be He that cometh  
in the name of Jehovah."<sup>2</sup>

The Synagogue service naturally followed the line of the Temple service. The early Christian Church, especially in congregations which were composed chiefly of Hebrew Christians, doubtless borrowed much from the Synagogue. In Acts ii., 42, it is said (R. V.)—"They continued in 'the prayers.'" But gradually considerable modification took place, and free prayer had its place along with other liturgical elements. In the primitive liturgies the response to the prayers offered by the priest is for the most part given by the deacon, but the people have also their place in the service. To the salutation, "The Lord be with you," they answer, "and with thy spirit." At the beginning of the Communion service, the deacon says, "Lift up your hearts," and the people answer, "We lift them up unto the

<sup>1</sup> The substance of a paper read before the Church Service Society at a Conference held in Edinburgh.

<sup>2</sup> Edersheim, *The Temple and its Services*, pp. 137-143, and 191.

Lord." They repeat the Lord's Prayer, or part of it, and sing the Trisagion, and certain versicles are allotted to them,—“ It is meet and just,” “ Lord have mercy upon us,” &c. ; and they say “ Amen ” at the close of each prayer. But the rite varies in different uses.

The Anglican service, modelled on the ancient use of Sarum for the most part, retains these ancient responses, and now in a language familiar to the worshippers.

The other Churches of the Reformation treated the matter of responses variously. The Lutheran Church followed the line of the Catholic services. “ Calvin found the way clear to inaugurate a pure, solemn, and scriptural mode of worship.” His Liturgy “ is distinguished by a plain and logical structure . . . in marked contrast with the other formularies taken from the old Mass-books. The Reformers of Switzerland and Scotland did not, as we often hear, deprive their ritual of a responsive and popular character. They did no more than separate the functions of ministers and people into the distinct duties of reading and singing.”<sup>1</sup> The Scottish Reformers followed the line of the Geneva Liturgy. At the Savoy Conference held in London in 1661 with a view to bringing Presbyterians and Episcopalians into agreement in regard to the prescribed form of worship, the Presbyterians, led by Richard Baxter, “ proposed, *inter alia*, to omit the repetitions and responsals of the clerk and people and the alternate reading of the psalms and hymns, which caused a confused murmur in the congregation ; the minister being appointed for the people in all public services appertaining to God, and the Holy Scriptures intimating the people's part in public prayer to be only with silence and reverence to attend thereunto, and to declare their assent in the close by saying Amen.”<sup>2</sup>

And that was how the matter remained so far as Presbyterians in Scotland were concerned, for about a couple of centuries, with the difference that the people did not even say “ Amen.” Doubtless the attempt of Laud, in 1637, to thrust an Anglican Liturgy on the Scottish Church tended to confirm Scotsmen in their adherence to the *status quo*. Presbyterians, however, have always claimed the right to exercise a certain amount of liberty in such matters, and the fact that no prescribed liturgy is used makes experiments in various directions possible.

<sup>1</sup> Baird, *On Liturgies*, pp. 19-29.

<sup>2</sup> Proctor, *History of the Book of Common Prayer*, p. 114.

The age we live in is a democratic one, and it is not surprising that, in addition to the singing of psalms and hymns, attempts should be made to give the people a larger share in the devotional service as a whole, including some responsive activity in relation to the prayers. On psychological grounds this is held by some to be desirable, first, as giving greater variety to the service; and, secondly, as tending to impress on the minds of the people that the prayer is not merely "a lengthy oration addressed by the minister to the Deity, at which they are passive onlookers," but a service which is theirs, and in which it is required that they should be spiritually alert.

In Mission services, both in Scotland and England, *e.g.*, in meetings of the Salvation Army, ejaculations such as "Praise the Lord," "Hallelujah," "I believe it," "Amen," are freely interjected by the worshippers into the prayer offered by the Missioner or leader. It seems more in accordance with Presbyterian usage that, if responses are to be uttered, they should be made in an orderly way.

In many Scottish churches, the people now join in the vocal *Amen* to all the prayers. They repeat the Lord's Prayer, and the Apostles' Creed, and, in the Communion Service, the Nicene Creed and the Tersanctus, and give the response to the *Sursum Corda*.

The Church Hymnary of itself supplies a certain amount of material intended to be used responsively, *e.g.*, Nos. 720, 721, and 732. There are also certain Litany hymns which may be used responsively, *e.g.*, 468, 469, 755, and the hymns which have a refrain or chorus, *e.g.*, 43, 51, 67.

The finest example of a responsive Presbyterian liturgy for adults known to the writer of this article is that now in use by the Waldensian Church in Italy (published 1912), being a revised edition of an earlier form sanctioned in 1880 by the Synod. The prayers follow the usual line indicated in Reformed liturgies, and the materials are taken from modern as well as from ancient sources. There are five ordinary services, and others for special occasions. The prayers are similar to those in use in Scottish Presbyterian Churches—Invocation, Confession, Thanksgiving, &c.—and there is also an Absolution after the Confession. In the Preface it is indicated that the minister is not required to read any of these prayers, but that they constitute a Directory and may be read if desired. All are printed, however, for the sake of the responses, which consist chiefly of one verse of a hymn sung without announcement, at the

close of each division of the prayers. This responsive hymn-verse, sung slowly and reverently, is a very impressive and beautiful element in the service. "Trust in the Lord, He is our help and shield," is the response in the first service to the call to worship. Then the minister reads verses 1, 2, and 5 of Psalm c., and the people answer by singing the Gloria.

After the confession, the versicles, "Lord, have mercy upon us," &c., are sung, and, after the absolution, Psalm 103, verses 8 and 2. The responses are varied in the other four services. Thus before the Benediction, in the second service, "The Lord bless thee and keep thee," is sung, and, after the Benediction, a two-fold Amen.

Dr Rudolf Otto of Marburg, in *The Hibbert Journal* (October, 1930) gives an example of what he regards as a suitable responsive service leading up to the solemn act of Communion; and he has, in conjunction with others, published a series of responsive services, chiefly for use among the young.

Among ourselves it is chiefly in services for the young that a responsive element in the service has to some extent been adopted. The Sunday School Primary Department is a case in point. There, very young children, from the age of three or four years, are taught to take part in a devotional service of some considerable length, yet in such a way that, instead of being a weariness to the children, the service is a delight from beginning to end. The problem of keeping their attention has been solved by giving them, under the leadership and guidance of the teacher, "something to do."

A number of booklets containing responsive services for the young have been published within the last generation. One, by ministers of the Church of Scotland (Blackwood, 6d), contains fourteen services. It is exceedingly good in substance, but requires the use of a book by the children or young people, as indeed most others of the same type do. Another, *The St Leonard's Book of Common Order*, for use in the Sunday School, by Dr M'Millan, Dunfermline, has a classic flavour, and contains responsive settings of psalms and canticles, and also of certain passages of Scripture, including the Ten Commandments, The Beatitudes, 1 Cor., xiii., and a brief collection of the sayings of Jesus.

There is another useful little book, issued by the Church Service Society (Blackwood, 1917), containing children's

services and hymnal. It has five services, and a litany, and prayers for special occasions, and these are all of a responsive character.

Another, published in 1928, and prepared by the Joint-Committee on Youth of the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church, entitled *Services for the Young* (Oxford University Press), contains brief services of a responsive character for the use in Sunday Schools. Previous experiments in the same direction were made by the Church Worship Association of the United Free Church of Scotland, in *Children's Services for Church and Sabbath Schools* (MacNiven & Wallace, Edinburgh, 1901). For an earlier booklet (Darren Press, Edinburgh, 1897) prepared by a Joint-Committee of the Public Worship Association of the Free Church and the United Presbyterian Church Devotional Association, the present writer was mainly responsible. More recently he has had published (John Cossar, Govan, 1930) a series of devotional services such as he himself is in the habit of using at Church parades and ordinary weekly meetings of Boys' Brigade and other juvenile organisations. No book is required by the young people, and even by the Leader the book can be dispensed with; but a form of approach to the response is indicated under the various headings of Thanksgiving, Confession, &c. This will best be illustrated by example:—

Thanksgiving—For life and health and daily bread,

R. We praise Thee, O God !

Confession —Wherein we have not loved Thee with our whole heart, neither have loved our neighbour as ourselves,

R. Pardon us, O Lord !

Supplication —Be Thou our preserver, from all evil ;  
Keep our going out and our coming in,

R. Hear us, O Lord !

Intercession —For the nations of the world, that the gospel of truth may be everywhere spread abroad among them, and Thy kingdom established among them to endure,

R. We beseech Thee to hear us, O Lord !

There are usually from four to eight sentences under each of the first three headings, and the Intercession, which is longer, can be abbreviated by the omission of some of the petitions, when necessary.

It may be added that this method has fully justified itself in retaining the interest of the young people throughout the whole of the devotional exercises, and that it has its repercussions in relation to the services of the Sanctuary, in accustoming the young people to maintain an attitude of mental alertness in public prayer.

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