

The Liturgical Movement and Reformed Worship

COMING across a certain liturgical monstrosity, a Scottish Churchman asked: "What Irishman perpetrated this?" Greatly daring therefore, the writer, though Irish, because the Irishman turned out to be an American, confines his remarks in this paper to the Scottish Eucharistic Rite, as limitations of space prevent discussion of other Reformed movements on the Continent, in England, Ireland, America, and elsewhere.

The aim of the Reformers concerning the Eucharistic Rite was threefold: (i) Reform of the rite. The earliest Reformed rites were based on the Hagenau Missal, and their lineage through Schwarz, Bucer, Calvin, and Knox is traced by Hubert, Smend, Albertz, and W. D. Maxwell. (ii) That the worshippers should be active participants in the rite. This was achieved principally by the use of the vernacular and the introduction of congregational singing. (iii) Weekly communion. This ideal failed because of medieval legacy and the interference of civil authority, so that quarterly communion became the general practice. Public worship, however, when there was no celebration, was based on the eucharistic norm.

The second half of the seventeenth century, and the eighteenth century, proved to be a period of decline and poverty in worship, and liturgical renewal in Scotland only began in the nineteenth century. This falls into four periods. (a) Prior to 1865, when it was principally the work of individuals. (b) After 1865, when the Church Service Society was founded and the principal leaders were G. W. Sprott and Thomas Leishman, both of whom knew their history. They were the main influence for about twenty years, and the chief work of this period was the first five editions of *Euchologion* (1867-1884). (c) After about 1885 when what may be described as an "anglicizing party" became the dominating force in the Society and editions six to ten of *Euchologion* were published (1890-1919). These men were enamoured with Morning Prayer in the *Book of Common Prayer*, but had little liturgical knowledge; and so from their misunderstanding of Anglicanism, obscured to some extent the eucharistic norm of public worship. (d) Since 1920, when the Committee on Aids to Devotion of

the Church of Scotland has continued the work of the Church Service Society and issued *Prayers for Divine Service* (1923, 1929), the *Book of Common Order* (1940), and *Prayers for the Christian Year* (1935, 1952).

In the Reformed tradition the Eucharist does not consist of a single service, but is considered to be a "season", including a Service of Preparation, the Eucharistic rite, and concluding with a Service of Thanksgiving for the grace and mercies of God. Originally it was a "Fast" season, from noon on Friday until Monday afternoon, when no work was done save that of necessity and mercy. In our modern industrialized society, however, this concept has, to a great extent, become obscured. Further, in the Eucharistic rite, the Liturgy of the Faithful is never considered in the abstract. The whole service (Liturgy of the Word and Liturgy of the Faithful) is a unity, the whole service is the Eucharistic rite; and in the rite, Word and Sacrament are not divided, or separated.

The Service of Preparation need not be discussed in detail. It is sufficient to say that the underlying principle is that, while each individual ought to prepare himself personally before Communion, this service emphasizes the fact that so should the whole congregation as a corporate body.

In the liturgical revival, so far as the Liturgy of the Word is concerned, there has been both gain and loss. To deal with the latter first, three points appear to be involved: (i) Owing to the "anglicizers", the eucharistic norm has been partially obscured in the Order for Public Worship on the Lord's Day when there is no celebration. This has resulted in the Prayer of the Faithful being placed within the Liturgy of the Word, after the Gospel and before the Sermon. The flow of thought is: Adoration, Confession, Pardon and Absolution, Supplication, and Instruction. To place the Intercessions between the reading and the preaching of the Word interrupts this sequence. (ii) Permissive consent is given to the use of the Nicene Creed after the Gospel and before the Sermon, whereas its proper place is in the Liturgy of the Faithful. If not used here, it may be said at the beginning of the Liturgy of the Faithful. The writer understands that the latter is the general custom, and certainly it is the more correct.

(iii) The Prayer for Illumination is placed before the sermon, whereas it would appear that in the early Reformed rites it was placed before the Lessons and Sermon. This is more in harmony with Reformed doctrine that "the Spirit of

God maketh the reading and preaching of the Word an effectual means unto salvation". Surely we need the revealing power of the Holy Spirit in the reading as well as in the preaching of the Word.

The changes in the position of the Creed and the Intercessions were first introduced in *Euchologion* in the sixth edition (1890) ; prior to this the eucharistic order had been followed.

On the other hand, there have been considerable gains.

(a) There has been a deepened knowledge and appreciation of the structure of the Christian Year. Collects for the Christian Year were provided in *Euchologion* from the first edition (1867) onwards. While the Lectionary in *Euchologion* sets out the readings "in course" for the fifty-two Sundays of the year, from the fourth edition (1877) onwards a special table was added providing lections for the major Christian festivals. This was followed in *Prayers for Divine Service* (1923), and since the 1929 edition the Lectionary is based on the Christian Year. In addition to the provisions in the *Book of Common Order*, the Church of Scotland has issued *Prayers for the Christian Year* (1935, 1952).

(b) In the Book of Common Order the Lectionary provides for lessons from Old Testament, Epistle, and Gospel, which is a distinct liturgical advance.

(c) Before reading the lections the minister is to say, "Hear the Word of God", revealing loyalty to Calvin and Hooker who saw the reading also as "proclamation" of the Gospel.

(d) While it owes nothing to the liturgical movement as such, it may be mentioned, at this point, that the sermon is considered to be an integral and essential part in any act of worship in the Reformed Church. Indeed, the sermon may be considered to have a "sacramental" significance, as therein God deals with man as a reasoning being. It is a showing forth of the incarnation, life, and death of Jesus Christ, and the power of His resurrection, that He may be glorified, worshipped, and served.

(e) There has been great enrichment in the language of prayer and a deepened sense of catholicity, because the prayers are drawn from many sources, including Roman, Anglican, Orthodox, Catholic Apostolic, and modern.

(f) Hymnody has been much enriched, and the great hymns of all branches of the Church Catholic now form a part of Reformed worship ; and all the English-speaking

Reformed Churches in the world, excluding Canada, co-operated in the compilation of the *Revised Church Hymnary* (1928).

In conclusion, while the Prayer of the Faithful should be restored to its correct position and the permissive rubric concerning the Nicene Creed should be omitted, we may say that the liturgical revival has deepened, expanded, and enriched the Liturgy of the Word in the Reformed rite.

Let us now turn to the Liturgy of the Faithful. It consists of four actions, Offertory, Consecration, Manual Actions, and Communion. Before discussing these, however, two points must be mentioned, as they are fundamental in Reformed doctrine and practice.

(i) The Invitation: It is interesting to note that this is not printed in the first Order in the *Book of Common Order*, but only in the Alternative Order. As it is, however, a universal practice, it must be mentioned. The wording is:—

“The Table of our Lord Jesus Christ is open to all who are in communion with the Church Universal. We therefore invite members of any branch thereof who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, to join with us in this holy fellowship”.

Reformed doctrine is that the Lord's Table is not a “Reformed Table”, but the “Table of the Lord”. In view of this any member of Christ's Church, divided though she unfortunately is, cannot by us be denied the right to receive the body and blood of Christ. In future revisions the Invitation ought to be printed in the text, as it testifies to the catholicity of the rite.

(ii) While the text of the *Book of Common Order* does not mention it, the Invitation is followed by the lifting of the “Tokens”. Originally these were made of lead, but today they are specially printed cards with texts from I Corinthians xi, and the communicant's name and address. These are distributed by authority of the Kirk Session to members either at the Preparation Service, or by the elders when visiting their districts before Communion. A visitor may also receive one from a member of Kirk-Session on entering the church. After the Invitation the cards are lifted by the members of Kirk-Session. This corresponds closely to the scrutiny of the deacon in early rites. From this, and the wording of the “Invitation,” it is clear that accusations about practising “open communion” and “admitting anyone and everyone”, such as were made at Lund, are quite alien to Reformed teaching and practice.

Let us now turn to the text of the rite in the *Book of Common Order*, prior to the *Sursum corda*. Liturgically this appears to the writer to be the most unsatisfactory part of the rite. It consists of :—

Comfortable Words.

Great Entrance, during singing of Psalm xxiv.

Nicene Creed, if not said earlier.

Unveiling and Prayer.

The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Words of Institution : I Corinthians xi. 23-26.

Taking elements to be set apart to holy use.

The Comfortable Words were introduced from the *Book of Common Prayer*, which took them from Hermann of Cologne, where they have a different significance. His use of them was after confession of sin and before absolution, prior to communicating. They make their first appearance in a Scottish Reformed rite in the *Book of Common Order* (1928) of the United Free Church, and so came into the *Book of Common Order* (1940).

If "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ" were altered to "The Peace of the Lord Jesus Christ", it would be nearer the use of the Kiss of Peace in the early Church.

The reading of the Words of Institution was held, at the time of the Reformation, to be necessary to show that apostolic practice was being followed, and by tradition it might be retained.

The Creed was said in public worship each Lord's Day by Schwarz, Bucer, Calvin, and Knox, but later fell into disuse. In *Euchologion*, right down to the last edition (1919), the Nicene Creed was said in the form : "We believe in one God" In the first edition of *Prayers for Divine Service* (1923) this was changed to the form : "I believe" This minimizes the corporate character of the rite.

The Great Entrance assures the concept of the Offertory as action, as do the Offertory prayer, "Sanctify us that we may offer Thee a sacrifice in righteousness"; and also the self-oblation in the Prayer of Consecration, "And here we offer and present unto Thee ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice."

This section of the rite attempts to put action into words, and needs revision. The primitive rites had nothing corresponding to an offertory prayer at the moment of Offertory, and the meaning of the Offertory was expressed in words in the eucharistic prayer itself. On revision it might follow

either of the following forms, as they bring the action of Offertory and the action of Consecration into close relationship:—

Invitation.	or	Words of Institution.
Tokens.		Invitation.
Words of Institution.		Tokens.
Nicene Creed.		Nicene Creed.
Pax.		Pax.
Great Entrance.		Great Entrance.
Taking elements to be set apart.		Taking elements to be set apart.

The second action, the Prayer of Consecration, opens with the Salutation and *Sursum corda*, Preface (Thanksgiving for Creation and Providence), and Proper Prefaces for the major Christian Festivals and Seasons, leading up to the *Sanctus*, and *Benedictus qui venit* with *Hosanna*. The joining of the *Benedictus qui venit* with *Hosanna* to the *Sanctus* arose through a conflation of texts and ought to be omitted, as has already been done in some Reformed rites. The Propers are based on the Leonine, Gregorian, and Gelasian Sacramentaries, and the Anglican rites of 1549, 1662, 1928, for India and Ceylon, and the Catholic Apostolic liturgy. Here we have a distinct enrichment of the rite.

After the *Sanctus* the Prayer of Consecration continues, consisting of the following elements:—

Vere sanctus (Thanksgiving for Redemption).

Anamnesis.

Oblation.

Epiclesis.

Self-oblation.

Petition that God fulfil in us, and all men, His purpose of redeeming love.

Doxology.

Lord's Prayer.

Dr. Cullman, in "The Meaning of the Lord's Supper in Primitive Christianity", has reminded us of the significance of the Resurrection in the Eucharist for the early Christians, and expression should be given to this. Consequently the writer would suggest that after the recital of the Institution, in the Prayer of Consecration, some words, such as, "and that after His resurrection He was known to His disciples in the breaking of bread", be added.

It has been said that in the Reformed rite in the epiclesis "the descent of the Holy Spirit is invoked not upon the bread and wine, but on the faithful." This may be so in

France, but, broadly speaking, it is not true of the Reformed rite, as a study of the texts would have shown. The epiclesis in the Scottish rite is as follows :—

“ We most humbly beseech Thee to send down Thy Holy Spirit to sanctify both us and these Thine own gifts of bread and wine which we set before Thee, that the bread which we break may be the Communion of the body of Christ, and the cup of blessing which we bless the Communion of the blood of Christ ; that we, receiving them, may by faith be made partakers of His body and blood, with all His benefits, to our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace, and to the glory of Thy most holy name.”

With regard to the epiclesis, it may be pointed out that this is not held to be the actual moment of consecration, but as giving expression to the purpose of the whole prayer. The whole prayer is the prayer of consecration, and consecration is not limited or defined to a particular moment. Owing to the criticism that the petition “ to send down Thy Holy Spirit ” is capable of being interpreted as signifying that the Holy Spirit is absent, the writer would like to see them changed to “through the Holy Spirit.”

The third action, the Manual Actions, follows the Prayer of Consecration as a distinct feature of the rite, a re-presenting of the prophetic action of Our Lord at the Last Supper.

Then comes the fourth action, Communion. The order is *Agnus Dei*, and the celebrant's communion, followed by the communion of the people.

Following upon communion comes the Pax, a Post-Communion Thanksgiving (for the goodness of God, for the Communion of Saints, and for the promise of the Messianic Banquet of the Church Triumphant); a Hymn of Praise; and the Benediction. The emphasis here is correctly on thanksgiving, and it should be noted that thanksgiving is such an important element in the Reformed tradition that it is not limited to this prayer and hymn, but is followed by a complete Service of Thanksgiving.

As in the Liturgy of the Word, so in the Liturgy of the Faithful, the liturgical revival has brought both gain and loss. The latter consists principally in the change from the “ We ” to the “ I ” form of the Creed, and the mode of communicating, to be discussed later. The remainder of the rite has been much enriched, although the section prior to the *Sursum corda* needs revision, as the Great Entrance is too far separated from the Prayer of Consecration. The purpose

of the Reformers was *frequent* communion, as in the early church. Today, although there are weekly or monthly celebrations in some places, the general practice is quarterly. The main defect in practice consequently is that we have not succeeded in overcoming this sixteenth century legacy.

A few further features in Reformed practice require to be mentioned.

(i) The celebrant in the Reformed Church must be a Minister of the Word, and always adopts the basilican position.

(ii) In the British Isles the normal method is for communicants to receive, sitting in the pews. This is a change from earlier custom, because formerly communicants left the pews, singing Psalm 116, "I'll of salvation take the cup", and took their seats at long tables spread in the aisles. This change was received from English Puritanism, through Congregationalism and Anglicanism. Pusey used this form in Christ's Church, Oxford, as late as 1856, and it was still the custom in Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1870. It was first introduced into Scotland in St John's Church, Glasgow, in 1824. Although condemned by the General Assembly in 1825, it appealed to many because it reduced the length of the service, and it is now the general, although not quite universal, practice. This change has to a certain extent obscured the concept of fellowship. On the Continent practice varies. In Holland and Westphalia, for example, they still use the Table in the aisles; whereas in France, Alsace, and Switzerland, the communicants come forward and receive standing, not at an altar-rail, but around the Table.

(iii) As it is customary for the elders to carry the bread and wine to the communicants in the pews, a word of explanation is necessary. The Minister is the celebrant, and the elders are simply the Minister's arms extended. This function, however, may be performed by any communicant member at the request of the Minister, although it is customary for the elders to do so.

Sacramental doctrine in the Reformed Church rejects both an "untenable materialism" and "bare symbolism". The *Scots Confession* (1560) says: "We utterly condemn the vanity of those that affirm Sacraments to be nothing else but naked and bare signs"; and the Westminster Catechisms condemn a "carnal" interpretation. The term "symbol" in Reformed theology is used, not in the popular but in its Biblical sense, as constituting an act of God in the Sacrament. It is, as Calvin says, not a symbol of things absent, but of things present. The real presence of Christ is not defined

simply in terms of the bread and wine. He is personally present throughout the whole rite, and believers outwardly receiving the visible elements do really and spiritually, not carnally, partake of His body and blood. That it is a real reception of the body and blood of Christ is also evident from the words of distribution :—

“Take ye, eat ye ; this is the body of Christ which is broken for you : this do in remembrance of Him ”.

“This cup is the new covenant in the blood of Christ ; which is shed for many unto remission of sins : drink ye all of it ”.

Concerning the bread and wine the *Scots Confession* says : “We confess and undoubtedly believe that the faithful, in the right use of the Lord’s Table, do so eat the body and drink the blood of the Lord Jesus that He remaineth in them and they in Him ; yea, they are so made flesh of His flesh, and bone of His bone, that as the eternal Godhead hath given to the flesh of Christ Jesus life and immortality, so doth Christ, by His flesh and blood, eaten and drunken by us, give unto us the same prerogatives ”.

In conclusion, a word must be said concerning the doctrine of Sacrifice. The Eucharistic prayer says :—

“Wherefore, having in remembrance the work and passion of our Saviour Christ, and pleading His eternal sacrifice, we Thy servants do set forth this memorial, which He hath commanded us to make . . . ”.

The emphasis here is not simply upon “the oblation once offered” on the Cross, though that is included, but specifically upon the eternal significance of our Lord’s sacrifice. Christ’s atoning death and resurrection happened once for all in time, but it belongs to eternity. So also the Eucharist is of eternity ; and when we plead His eternal sacrifice we desire Him to unite our offering and prayers with His, which is eternal, and this memorial in time and space is a part of that eternal memorial. His sacrifice is not repeatable, but it is continually renewed ; the remembering is not mere commemoration, but a real uniting, possible by grace and through faith. This is not mere intellectual assent, but a committal of the whole person to Him, and that not simply as an individual, but also corporately within the Church.

In the Reformed rite, as Calvin says : “the chief end of the whole mystery of the Supper is that we should live in Christ and that He should live in us ”.

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