

THE NEW SWISS OLD CATHOLIC EUCHARISTIC LITURGY¹

The Swiss Old Catholic Church has recently authorised (in 1974) a new form of the Mass as an alternative to the liturgy compiled by its first bishop, Bishop Herzog, and approved in 1880. The course of revision in that Church since its break with Rome after the Declaration of the infallibility of the Pope in 1870 is not without interest to Anglicans, with whom there has been full communion since 1933.

The Swiss liturgy is the oldest of the Old Catholic liturgies and the most radical in that it departs far more from the Roman Mass than the French and Dutch Old Catholic liturgies do, although it is clearly based upon it. This is particularly the case with the Eucharistic Prayer, which was re-written in the light of Herzog's own Biblical studies when he was Professor for New Testament Studies at Berne, and also reveals Anglican and Orthodox influences.

The first attempt at reform by the Liturgical Commission was very conservative. A few phrases were changed or transposed. This revision did not prove popular, and, although still authorised, is little used.

The revision of 1974 was much more radical, both as regards structure and wording. The structure of the new rite gives a very clear shape to the Eucharist and is very similar to that of other modern revisions, although with one or two interesting exceptions. A skeleton of the structure makes this clear:

A. The Entrance Rite

Confession

After 'In the Name of the Father . . .' and versicles and responses drawn from the psalms, a mutual confession of sins by priest and people, followed by a prayer of thanksgiving for God's forgiveness.

Opening Chant

One of three possibilities—

- (i) a Psalm, sung responsorially with a *cantor*, or by a *schola*;
- (ii) an Acclamation of the Presence of the Lord in the congregation, based on the theme for the day or season,

with the response 'Lord, have mercy' or the traditional
6- or 9-fold *Kyries*.

(iii) a Hymn.

Collect for the Day

Gloria

B. **The Ministry of the Word**

Old Testament Lesson

Psalm, Hymn, music or silence.

New Testament Lesson

Alleluia verse, Hymn, music or silence.

Gospel

Sermon

Intercessions

Either (i) a fixed Litany, led by the Priest or Deacon;

or (ii) petitions, read by a layman, to fit a scheme of
intercession, each ending 'Lord, hear us' which
is then repeated by the congregation.

C. **The Ministry of the Sacrament**

Nicene Creed

The Peace

Offertory

During the action at the altar, the congregation sings a Hymn. This is followed by Memorials of the Living and the Dead, including the Saints, ending with a short Offertory Prayer

Eucharistic Prayer

with a variable Preface.

Fraction

After a versicle and response, 'The bread which we break . . .', the bread is broken whilst the congregation sings the Agnus Dei.

The Lord's Prayer

Communion

Post-Communion Prayer

Hymn during the Ablutions

Dismissal and Blessing

One of various forms.

The positions of the Gloria, the Creed, the Peace and the Lord's Prayer are noteworthy. That of the Gloria has been changed for purely practical reasons, so that the Collect is not too long delayed. The new position of the Creed is that of many Eastern rites and has been adopted in other revisions, in the Methodist Sunday Service, for example. The Peace is found before the Offertory in several ancient rites and the Lord's Prayer is believed to have been placed immediately before Communion originally. The position of these last two is, of course, paralleled in Series 2 and 3.

The structure and phraseology of the Eucharistic Prayer deserve separate consideration and this will necessitate comparison with Bishop Herzog's original prayer.

From the Sanctus on, this reads:

Canon.

Consecration.

Pr. O most tender Father, so look down graciously upon these gifts, as Thou wast pleased to look upon the sacrifices of Abel, Abraham, and Melchisedech. In Thy clemency Thou hast given Thine only-begotten Son unto us, that as the Eternal High Priest He should enter into the Holy Place with His own Blood once for all and win salvation for us for ever. Through this Thy Son Thou hast taught us how we shall celebrate the Mystery of His death and partake of the blessing of His sacrifice. SEND US ALSO, WE HUMBLY BESEECH THEE, THY HOLY SPIRIT, THE GIVER OF ALL LIFE AND ALL HOLINESS, AND LET THESE EARTHLY GIFTS BE SANCTIFIED INTO HEAVENLY, GLORIFIED, SPIRITUAL OFFERINGS, THAT THE BREAD WE BREAK MAY BE THE COMMUNION OF THE BODY OF THE LORD, AND THE CUP WHICH WE BLESS THE COMMUNION OF THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST.

(Here the Priest takes the Bread into his hands.)

Who on the evening before His Passion, took bread into His holy and venerable hands, and lifting up His eyes to Heaven, to Thee O God, His Almighty Father, gave thanks to Thee, blessed it, brake and gave it to His disciples, saying: TAKE AND EAT YE ALL, OF THIS, FOR THIS IS MY BODY.

R. Amen.

Pr. (taking up the Chalice) in like manner, after Supper, He also took the Cup into His holy and venerable hands, gave Thee

thanks again, blessed it, and gave it to His disciples, saying: TAKE AND DRINK YE ALL, OF THIS, FOR THIS IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD, OF THE NEW AND ETERNAL TESTAMENT — THE MYSTERY OF FAITH — WHICH FOR YOU AND FOR MANY SHALL BE SHED FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS. THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME.

R. Amen.

Prayer of Oblation.

Pr. Wherefore, O Lord, we Thy servants remember the holy Passion of this Thy Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, as also His Resurrection from the dead, and His glorious ascension into heaven. Look upon the unending love of Thy Sôn, Who came down to us from his heavenly abode, Who was to Thee obedient even unto the death upon the Cross, and Whom Heavenly Father, Thou hast exalted to Thy right hand. On Him has Thou laid our transgressions, and on His shoulders hast Thou laid our sins. He has borne out debt, and on the Cross destroyed the handwriting of ordinances that was against us. Him do we present to Thee as our pure, holy, unspotted sacrifice. He hath had pity on our weaknesses and by ordaining this celebration of His Body and Blood hath established for us an Altar, whereat we ever find mercy and obtain grace from Thee. To bless us there cometh the Interceding High Priest, now present with us and ever standing before Thy face.

Wherefore we humbly beseech Thee, O Lord, Heavenly Father, to grant that all we who at this Altar receive the most holy Body and Blood of Thy Son, may be filled with all heavenly benediction and grace. Through the same Christ our Lord.

Commemoration of the Saints.

United in Christ Jesus our Redeemer and Mediator to all those who have become partakers of Thy mercy, we venerate, O God, the memory of Mary, the holy Mother of our Saviour, the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Evangelists and the Saints. We thank Thee, Heavenly Father, that Thou hast granted them the crown of eternal life. Let their word and example, we beseech Thee, be blessed unto us, and hear their supplications for Thy Church on earth.

Supplication for the Departed.

We commend to Thee, O Lord, all our brethren and sisters who have gone before us in the Sign of Faith, and now rest in the sleep of peace. Regard not their imperfections and weaknesses, but look upon our High Priest, our Mediator with Thee, Jesus Christ the Righteous. For His truth's sake, grant unto all who rest in Christ the place of refreshment, light, and peace. Especially we beseech Thee for N.N. and all those for whom we have desired to pray.

Supplication for the Living.

But to us sinners, also, who hope in Thy mercy, grant a share in the heavenly inheritance with Thy holy Apostles, Matyrs, and all Saints. Lead those also who confess Thy Name into a right perception of Thy holiness, which beams upon us from the face of Christ, Thy Son. Sanctify us in the Truth, as He hath sanctified Himself for us. And as Thy Son is one with Thee, so grant us to be one in Him, that we all may come to the heavenly mansion prepared for us. Sustain, purify, strengthen Thy Holy Catholic Church; guide our days in Thy peace; think especially on Thy servants and hand-maidens, N.N., and all who have besought our prayers. We beseech Thee, therefore, through Christ our Lord, through Whom Thou, Eternal Father, ever createst, sanctifiest, indweldest, belssest, and givest us all these tood things. Through Him and with Him, and in Him be to Thee, O God, Almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honour and glory for ever and ever.²

R. Amen.

and then concludes with a commemoration of the saints, which explicitly mentions 'Mary, the most holy Mother of our Redeemer', and intercessions for the dead and the living.

Bishop Herzog uses very Scriptural language in re-working the Prayer. He draws heavily on the Pauline Epistles — actually incorporating I Cor. 10: 16, familiar to us from its use at the Fraction in Series 2 and 3 — and uses Hebrews, like Cranmer, to stress the uniqueness of Christ's sacrifice, and, unlike him, also to refer to his continuing work of intercession. Unlike Cranmer, too, he also draws on the Old Testament. He retains the reference to the types of the Eucharist from the Roman Canon, the gifts of Abel and the sacrifices of Abraham and Melchisedec, although he puts it in a different place; and he also draws on Isaiah 53 to describe Christ's sacrifice. His major structural changes are two:

the insertion of an Epiclesis before the Institution Narrative, and the grouping together of the intercessions for the dead and the living at the end of the prayer (thus anticipating the new Roman Eucharistic Prayers). The sacrificial language of the Roman Canon is much modified. The Anamnesis could be understood as a mere act of psychological remembrance: 'Wherefore, O Lord, we thy servants remember the holy Passion of this thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, as also his Resurrection . . .'. The bread and wine are unequivocally offered: 'let these earthly gifts be sanctified into heavenly, glorified, spiritual offerings . . .' but it is not at all clear what connection there is, if any, between the offering of bread and wine and 'Him do we present to thee as our pure, holy, unspotted sacrifice . . .'.

The new Eucharistic Prayer, again from the Sanctus on, reads:

Truly holy, truly glorified
is your son Jesus Christ,
our Lord and Saviour,
that you, eternal Father, have sent us,
so that he may reveal your majesty and love
and deliver the world through his obedience
even to death on the cross.

You have given him up for us
so that he, through his sacrifice, once and for all
may break the might of sin and death
and grant new life to the whole of creation.
Through him you have ordained us to celebrate
in this meal the mystery
of his death and resurrection
until he comes in glory.

For on the evening before his suffering
he took bread,
looked up to you, O God,
his almighty father,
gave you thanks, broke it,
gave it to his disciples and said:
Take this and eat of it, all of you;
this is my body
which will be given up for you.

In the same way, after the meal,
he also took the chalice,
gave thanks to you once more,
gave it to his disciples and said:
Take this and drink of it, all of you;
this is my blood,
the blood of the new and everlasting covenant,
that for you and for all men will be shed
for the forgiveness of sins.

Do this in my memory
until the time I celebrate anew the banquet with you
in the kingdom of God.

Therefore, Lord,
we present this bread and this chalice to you,
remembering the saving passion of your Son,
as too his resurrection from the dead
and his ascension into glory.
With his sacrifice we come into your presence and beseech you:
Look down graciously on these gifts,
as you looked favourably down
on the sacrifices of Abel, Abraham and Melchisedec.

Send your Holy Spirit,
giver of all life and sanctification
to bless, sanctify and consecrate these gifts
that the bread we break
may be the communion of the body of the Lord
and the chalice over which we give thanks
the communion of the blood of Jesus Christ.
Fill us all who, from this altar, receive
the body and blood of your Son,
with the power of the Holy Spirit.
Let us become one as members of your people
in communion with your saints
and have a share in the life of the kingdom to come.

Grant us this,
merciful, holy God,
so that we may praise and glorify you
through Jesus Christ, your son, our Lord;
Through him and with him and in him
is to you, almighty father,
in union with the Holy Spirit
all honour and glory for ever and ever.³

Compared with Bishop Herzog's Prayer, it is much briefer and modelled on the non-Roman Western rites rather than the Roman Canon. The brevity is partly achieved by the omission of all intercessions as well as the commemoration of the saints — a feature it shares with the Anglican tradition although it is derived from its Gallican model. This avoids duplicating the Prayers of the Faithful which have been restored in their traditional place, although, in addition, 'Memorials' of the living and departed are now read out at the Offertory. The Epiclesis now comes in the normal Eastern position, after the Institution Narrative and Anamnesis-Oblation paragraphs, and invokes the Spirit on the gifts and indirectly, through the gifts, on the people but it still incorporates the quotation from I Corinthians. The reference to the Old Testament types of the Eucharist from the Roman

Canon is still retained but restored to something like its original position. The Institution Narrative has been simplified and pruned of its non-Scriptural phraseology, including the description of the cup as 'the mystery of faith' which Bishop Herzog surprisingly retained, and, contrary to the prevailing liturgical fashion, there are no acclamations at any point, although Bishop Herzog, himself, had interpolated a congregational 'Amen' after the bread- and cup-words. The Anamnesis-Oblation is of an Hippolytian simplicity. The elements are 'presented' rather than 'offered' but it is through them that the sacrifice of Christ is present to us by means of the action of the Holy Spirit.

The Swiss Old Catholics, then, now have a revised Eucharistic Prayer with a fairly clear theology which owes more perhaps to the Eastern than to the Western tradition, but draws on primitive models whilst showing some continuity with the original reform. Members of the Church of England might well be envious! The task of the Swiss Liturgical Commission was of course simpler than that of the Church of England's in that there was no need for a linguistic and stylistic revolution. The two forms of the second person, singular and plural, are still in use in common speech and the translations of the Gloria and the Sanctus are sufficiently contemporary to have been retained with only minor modifications.

NOTES

1. I am indebted to the Rev. Urs von Arx, the Old Catholic parish priest of Hellikon, Switzerland, for much information and advice in regard to this article.
2. Translation from W. H. de Voil and H. D. Wynne-Bennett, *Old Catholic Eucharistic Worship*, 1936.
3. This translation was kindly made for me by Dr R. J. Parish, Fellow, of St Catherine's College, Oxford.

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