

## The Service of Holy Communion.

- The Divine Service, A Eucharistic Office according to forms of the Primitive Church.* By the Rev. H. J. Wotherspoon. (James Maclehose & Sons. 1893.)  
'Euchologion, A Book of Common Order.' (Blackwood. 1913.)  
'A Book of Common Order' (S. Giles'). (Edinburgh. 1922.)  
'Directory and Forms for Public Worship.' (U.F. Church Worship Association. Macniven & Wallace. 1920.)  
'The Book of Common Worship.' (American Presbyterian, Philadelphia. 1906.)  
'Book of Common Order.' (Canadian Presbyterian, Oxford. 1922.)  
'Service Book and Ordinal.' (Presbyterian Church of South Africa. Maclehose, Jackson & Co. 1921.)  
'Offices for Occasional Use.' (Robert Gibson & Sons. n.d.)  
'Presbyterianism and the Revised Prayer Book.' By the Rev. W. McMillan, M.A., Ph.D. (Dunfermline. 1928.)  
'Prayers for Divine Service.' (Church of Scotland. Blackwood. 1923.)

THE place held by the service of Holy Communion is unique. Other forms of service have been originated and developed by the Church as need arose; the service of Holy Communion goes back to the Lord's own appointment. It is the one form of public worship ordained by Him; it is the Lord's own service. We may assume that the closer we keep to the actions of our Lord when He instituted this thing the more perfect will our observance of it be.

Our first records of the primitive Church show us that men were doing this thing as His Memorial whensoever they met for worship. S. Paul was profoundly concerned over the right observance of it: he had learned of it in detail—it may be directly from the risen and glorified Lord, it may be simply from the Apostles as a thing concerning the Lord which he must know—and he was moved to warn the Corinthian Church against its profanation and to remind them just what the Lord had done on the night in which He was betrayed. As time goes on we find this service established as the norm of Christian worship. It comes to include within its observance, as an integral part thereof, the reading of the Word and the preaching of the Word. Its place remains unchallenged and, as it has been well said, "for fifteen hundred years it never occurred to the Christian Church that her principal Lord's Day Service should be other than a celebration of the Holy Eucharist." It is outside the scope of this article to trace the rise of the type of service now most familiar

to us, the ordinary morning service of the Church of Scotland, the Morning Prayer of the Church of England. Suffice it to say that both those types of service go back ultimately to the daily "Hours"—services of Scripture reading and prayer intended originally for the clergy alone. Such services have abundantly justified themselves as a means of instruction, of meditation, and of common worship. But they must never be allowed to supplant the Lord's own service, and from the point of view of those who are careful as to the right ordering of worship it is of the first importance that they be kept distinct from that service. The Holy Communion is not given its right place, and cannot be properly observed, when it is considered as an "after-service," a mere appendage to what has gone before. The whole service must be a unity, and every act therein should be considered as part of the observance.

What must strike the most casual student of Christian worship is the wonderful unity underlying the multiplicity of forms which the service of Holy Communion has assumed in different Churches and different lands. Language differs; ceremonies differ; theological interpretation differs; but broadly speaking it remains true that from the very beginning until now there has been only one form for the celebration of this service. Confession of our sins, reading of Holy Scripture, intercession, sustained and intense thanksgiving, the repetition of the Lord's own words of institution, prayer to the Holy Spirit, the whole concluding with the prayer of prayers—these, with the actions of our Lord and of His disciples in the Upper Room, have in all ages and with whatever differences of expression, composed the service of the Lord's Supper, whether that service was said in Greek, in Syriac, in Latin, or in English.

The revival of interest in the reverent rendering of public worship which has marked the last half-century in our own land is evidenced by the number of forms for worship which have been issued within our own and kindred communions. The compilers of those forms have, for the most part, assumed rightly that everything in the older Liturgies which is at once beautiful and Scriptural is our inheritance and may rightly be made use of by us. Before we go on to notice certain of those forms it would be well to understand as clearly as may be how the framework of the older Liturgies was composed. All of them

are divided into two main parts, usually known as the "Missa Catechumenorum" and the "Missa Fidelium." As these names indicate, all who desired membership in the Church might be present at the first portion of the service, but the second and more solemn portion might be heard only by those who had received Baptism. The first part usually included prayers of confession, of intercession, and of thanksgiving, but its essential note was instruction. It is best described, as it is described in the alternative form in the Deposited Prayer-Book,—in words with a familiar Scottish flavour—as 'The Ministry of the Word.' Originally there were four lections from Holy Scripture—Law, Prophets, Epistle, and Gospel. (It is interesting to note that these four have been restored recently within the Anglican Communion in a form which the Bishop of London has authorised for the use of an Anglican Hebrew congregation.) Later they were reduced to three, and then to two—the Epistle and Gospel of modern times. But there is much to be said for the retention of a lesson from the Old Testament. If there was a sermon it was preached at this point of the service. The Confessions varied in language, but there usually appeared the ancient "Kyrie eleison." The elements of thanksgiving and of prayer for pardon are here found fused together in the ancient hymn, "Gloria in excelsis Deo," which occupies its proper place only at this point of the service. The intercessions, sometimes known as the "general intercession"—to distinguish them from the more solemn, though shorter, form known as the "great intercession" which occurred in the later part of the service—are commonly of great length, and in some of the eastern forms seem to show trace of an origin in purely extempore utterance.

The second portion of the service, the "Missa Fidelium," is again divided into two parts, known as the pro-anaphoral and the anaphoral. The first includes the solemn entrance of the elements—a custom which the Church of Scotland has always retained—and sometimes the recitation of the Creed. The second is the most solemn portion of the whole service, including as it does the great Eucharistic prayer of thanksgiving, the consecration, the breaking of the bread and raising of the cup, and the communion of Minister and people. In nearly all the old liturgies there is a remarkable identity of order and even of words in this part of the service. First the people are

bid lift up their hearts, responding that they have lifted them up to the Lord. Then they are called on to give thanks, responding that it is meet and right so to do. There follows the prayer of thanksgiving, in essentials the same everywhere: "It is verily meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks unto Thee. . . ." This thanksgiving culminates in the cherubic hymn of praise, the "Sanctus," followed immediately by the "Hosanna in the highest: blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." Then follows a brief commemoration of redemption, then the repetition of the words of Institution, then the solemn invocation of the Holy Spirit, that He may bless the elements. A tense silence is followed by the "great intercession" and the prayer ends with the Lord's prayer. Then, and not till then, is the bread broken and the cup raised in view of the people; brief prayers of preparation are said: the Minister himself communicates, and finally delivers the elements to all. When all have communicated the service ends with prayers of thanksgiving.

Such, in brief and incomplete outline, is the framework of the ancient liturgies. The Roman Liturgy, which was of course that used in our own land before the Reformation, is sharply differentiated from all the many others by the fact that it contains no direct prayer to the Holy Spirit to bless the elements, thereby lending some colour to the magical and unscriptural view that the elements become to us the communion of the Body and Blood of our Lord by the mere repetition by the Minister of the Lord's words. This omission is repeated in the Book of Common Prayer, and one can but marvel when one finds it so stoutly defended by Anglican Evangelicals to-day.

The circumstances of the years immediately succeeding the Reformation in Scotland were not such as to permit of any careful attention being given to the externals of worship, and the Order for the celebration of the Lord's Supper in Knox's Liturgy is meagre and inadequate. It was widely felt to be so, and although the ill-advised attempts to reform our service by Royal authority naturally came to nothing, the 'Westminster Directory' of 1645 gives most admirable directions as to the solemn observance of the Supper, and definitely reverts to older and better ways by prescribing a prayer to God for the effectual working of His Spirit with a view to the sanctifying

of the elements, "that we may receive by faith the body and blood of Jesus Christ, crucified for us, and so to feed upon Him, that He may be one with us and we one with Him." "All which," the Directory proceeds, the Minister "is to endeavour to perform with suitable affections, answerable to such an holy action, and to stir up the like in the people." The Directory further prescribes the words by which the Minister is to deliver the elements to the people. Faithfully interpreted, the rules given in the Directory, though in themselves by no means complete, are in accord with the spirit of the ancient forms.

Our former mode of administering the Communion, however, with its numerous "tables" and its multiplicity of sermons and addresses, was not conducive to interest in, or development of, the form of the service, and it is not until the latter part of last century that we find any real revival of interest in the heritage of beauty and devotion which the ancient liturgies have bequeathed to us. The Church Service Society, building to some extent on the heroic labours of Dr Lee, led the way, and the publication of the first edition of 'Euchologion' in 1867 marks the beginning of better things. From that date there have been constant endeavours to enrich our Communion service, keeping in view three things,—the words and actions of our Lord Himself, the rules of the 'Westminster Directory'—still our official standard of worship,—and the example of the ancient liturgies. It is important to observe here that although our liturgists included within their purview the Anglican Book of Common Prayer—a book which must always be of supreme value to all English-speaking races—they at no time even desired to model our services upon it. In days when it is still possible for a Presbyterian Moderator to refer to those whose ideas of worship differ from his own as "aping Anglicanism," it is well for us to recall Dr John Macleod's reference to the Prayer-Book Communion service<sup>1</sup>: "The absence of a direct invocation of the Holy Spirit in the consecration, the absence, also, of any true oblation as following upon the consecration, the introduction of the intercession for the whole Church militant previous to the consecration, the absence of any true commemoration of the Holy Departed—all these constitute defects so great as to make it impossible to accept the Anglican service in its present form otherwise than as the example of a meagre, disordered,

<sup>1</sup> Scottish Church Society Conferences, 1894.

and defective Eucharistic order." Or Dr Sprott's disappointment that the Scottish Episcopal Communion Service, "after all the attention that was bestowed upon it" should have the "fundamental defect" of introducing the breaking of the bread before the consecration. Any obvious modern influence on Presbyterian forms of service is not Anglican, but rather derives from the "Liturgy" of the "Catholic Apostolic" Communion — a marvellous treasury of devotion which we find it difficult to credit as having been compiled only a few years after the beginning of the Oxford movement.

Turning to modern published forms we take first of all Dr Wotherspoon's booklet, 'The Divine Service.' It is closely and scientifically modelled on Eastern forms. In its careful and distinct arrangement, in the skill where-with ancient usage is adapted to Scottish feeling, in the beauty of its language, in the sense it gives of a complete and solemn unity, it is unrivalled and it remains of immense usefulness. Unlike almost all our other published forms, it incorporates the words of institution in the Consecration Prayer. The only criticism one might pass upon it is that in practice its length would be found excessive.

Next we notice the form in the latest edition of 'Euchologion' and that in the 'Book of Common Order' used in S. Giles' Cathedral. Both suffer to some extent from the fact that they assume the Communion service to begin only after the sermon. In 'Euchologion' confession is introduced, as in the Anglican order, in the anaphoral part of the service, where it has no very appropriate place, and where none of the ancient forms places it. In both, intercession is introduced at the very end of the service, which again is contrary to all ancient practice and apt to be distracting. Both include the Nicene Creed, the Sursum Corda, the Sanctus, the Hosanna and Benedictus, and at the consecration a solemn invocation of the Holy Spirit. In both, the elements are distributed to the people immediately after the Minister breaks the bread and raises the cup, and in neither are the words of delivery of the 'Westminster Directory' used. It is of interest to note that the form in use at the annual Communion of the General Assembly closely resembles these orders. They are not perfect; in several ways they depart from ancient practice; but they are reverent and beautiful; they incorporate much of the language of the ancient forms, and

they have done valiant service in raising the standard of worship throughout the Church.

The Church Worship Association of the United Free Church publishes in its 'Directory' two forms for the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Their language generally is not that of the ancient orders, and their arrangement is somewhat confused, but one of them has a definite invocation of the Holy Spirit, and includes also, albeit misplaced, the Sanctus.

The revival of interest amongst Presbyterians in the decent and orderly rendering of worship has spread far beyond Scotland, and it is a peculiar pleasure to notice the forms for the Holy Communion in the 'Common Worship' of the American Presbyterian Church, in the 'Book of Common Order' of the Canadian Presbyterian Church, and in the 'Service-Book and Ordinal' of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa. In them all, the influence of the ancient forms, particularly those of the East, is marked. All include the "Sursum Corda," the "Vere Dignum," the "Sanctus" and "Hosanna," and an invocation of the Holy Spirit to bless the elements. They differ in certain minor details, and they are at variance with ancient order in the place of the intercessions and the commemoration of the departed, but they are alike in beauty and dignity, and they one and all exemplify the determination of Presbyterians to go back to the best models for the greatest of all services.

We have left until now one of the most interesting and significant of all our modern forms, that in the volume entitled 'Prayers for Divine Service.' This volume is unique in that it bears on its title-page what can without exaggeration be called the epoch-making words: "By authority of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland." It is, of course, issued as a guide to Ministers, not as an invariable form, but that such a guide should appear with the imprimatur of the Assembly is a matter for devout thankfulness. This volume can claim an authority second only to that of the 'Westminster Directory,' and the Church Service Society can take pride in the fact that its private and unofficial labours have at length borne fruit in an official standard of worship. The Communion order here contained is a unified whole. Place is found in it for Scripture lessons and for sermon. Confession comes where it ought to come, at the beginning of the service. Following Eastern precedent, there are two intercessions, one

in the first part of the service, and one following immediately on the consecration. The invocation of the Holy Spirit is of peculiar beauty, and blends with rare skill the words of the primitive liturgies with those hallowed to us by their place in the Shorter Catechism. The fraction and elevation take place after the consecration and as a separate act from the delivery of the elements, which is accompanied by the time-honoured words of the 'Directory.' The Order is doubtless susceptible of improvement: it is arguable whether there is need for more than one intercession, and the place of the "Agnus Dei" might well be altered, but the Church is to be congratulated on possessing so excellent a form of eucharistic worship. It is but right to add that exception was taken to certain elements in this Order and that it was subjected to the scrutiny of a specially appointed committee. It is no small tribute to its compilers that the changes proposed by this Committee were mainly typographical.

The subject of our review has, unfortunately, an adventitious interest just now owing to the controversy raging over the revised Prayer-Book. We may therefore take timely notice of other two publications. One is contained in a most useful little volume, published anonymously, entitled 'Offices for Occasional Use.' It is an Order for Administering the Holy Communion at the Afternoon Service for those who were not present at the Consecration at the Forenoon Service, and is an interesting reminder that the practice of reservation, for the sick and for those otherwise prevented from being present at the Communion service, is not unknown amongst us, and is very frequent wherever there is an afternoon "table." This service commences thus: "Dearly beloved, ye see before you the bread and wine which have already been sanctified by the Word and Invocation of the Holy Spirit, that they may be unto His Church the Body and Blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ; and which have been presented as the Memorial of His most blessed Sacrifice once offered on our behalf. It is now your privilege to be received into the same Communion, that, partaking of these holy things, ye may be nourished unto everlasting life."

The other is a pamphlet by the Rev. Dr McMillan, of S. Leonard's, Dunfermline, entitled: 'Presbyterianism and the Revised Prayer-Book.' It is marked by its author's well-known meticulous accuracy and laborious industry.

Our Anglican friends will find in it much matter of interest. Dr McMillan points out how many of the customs, the proposed introduction of which is raising so much controversy in England, are and always have been current with ourselves. Most important, of course, is the invocation of the Holy Spirit, but he instances also the use as an introit of the 43rd Psalm, the use of the "Hosanna" and "Benedictus" after the "Sanctus," and the occasional reservation of the elements.

We pass now to a brief comparison of the typical Eucharistic worship now current amongst Presbyterians with that of the Greek, Roman, and Anglican Communions. In one respect we differ from all three, in that with us the words of institution are seldom incorporated in the Consecration prayer. They are said by us at the close of that prayer, accompanying the fraction and elevation. In most of the ancient liturgies their position in the prayer seems a quite detached one. They are introduced, in a separate sentence, thus: "For on the night in which He was betrayed, &c." It therefore does not seem of vital importance whether they are said within the prayer or just at its ending, and they could have no more solemn or impressive position than they have in our use accompanied as they are by the very actions of Him who spake them. It should further be noted that in the form given in the Deposited Prayer-Book for the consecration of any needed additional elements the words of institution are said by themselves, not in the prayer of consecration.

In essentials we are in large agreement with the Greek and Eastern forms, so far as language is concerned. But we discard many of their ceremonies, such as the use of incense and lights, though we retain the most moving ceremony of all—the "great" entrance of the elements,—and of course it belongs to the genius of our service that everything is done within sight and hearing of the people, whereas with the Greeks the most solemn portion of the service is celebrated behind closed doors, the congregation seeing and hearing nothing.

We differ, again, from Roman use, in our speaking the language of our people, in our adherence to Scriptural precedent, and in our invoking the Holy Spirit on the elements. From Anglican usage, we, in common with Rome and the East, differ in not a few respects. Confession we place at the beginning of the service; intercession and the fraction and elevation after the Con-

secration. And, like the Greeks, and unlike the Romans, we have the invocation of the Spirit.

Adhering, then, to the principles embodied in the form in 'Prayers for Divine Service'—the form which has the imprimatur of the General Assembly—we in Scotland, when we celebrate the Lord's own service, do these things or the like :

We sing in metre the latter part of the 43rd Psalm :

"Then will I to God's altar go,  
to God my chiefest joy,"

and thereafter, having besought of God the grace of purity of heart, we make humble confession of our sins and pray for pardon, that approaching unto Him with pure heart and cleansed conscience, we may offer unto Him a sacrifice in righteousness. Then, having listened to His word, in Old and New Testament, we make profession of our faith, and remember before Him the needs of our brethren of mankind. After praising Him in psalm or hymn we hear His gospel preached, and then all stand while our gifts of bread and wine are reverently brought in and laid on His holy Table. There is sung the while either the 24th Psalm—

"Ye gates lift up your heads on high ;  
ye doors that last for aye,  
Be lifted up, that so the King  
of glory enter may,"

or else the profoundly moving Paraphrase—" 'Twas on that night when doomed to know the eager rage of every foe." Then is read our "warrant" for what we do—S. Paul's words to the Corinthians concerning this thing. From this point Christ's Minister repeats the actions of the Upper Room—five in number. As the Lord took bread he takes bread and wine and, in these words, sets them apart to this holy use and mystery. As the Lord gave thanks he proceeds to the prayer of thanksgiving, having first called on the people to lift up their hearts and give thanks unto the Lord. We praise God for all His mercies, praise Him for creating us, praise Him above all for His supreme gift in Christ Jesus, praise Him till the mind reels at the thought of His great glory, and we falter out the words Isaiah heard the seraphim chanting to God in heaven mingled with the praises the children sang to His Son upon earth. Then as the Lord blessed, so we

entreat the Holy Spirit to bless our gifts. Then, after a brief pause, knowing that here and now, if anywhere and at any time, our prayers will be heard at the throne of grace, we make further remembrance of those dear to us. Then is said the Lord's own prayer. And now the Minister, having repeated the ancient and awful words—"holy things to the holy"—proceeds to break the bread as Christ broke it:—

“According to the holy institution, example, and command of the LORD JESUS, and for a memorial of Him, we do this: Who the same night in which He was betrayed, TOOK BREAD, and when He had blessed and given thanks, HE BRAKE IT, and said—TAKE, EAT; THIS IS MY BODY, WHICH IS BROKEN FOR YOU: THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME.”

And so with the cup. Finally, the Minister, having himself received, fulfils the last of our Lord's actions by giving the elements to the people, saying: “Take ye, eat ye, this is the body of Christ which is broken for you: do this in remembrance of Him. This Cup is the New Testament in the blood of Christ: drink ye all of it.” There-with there falls gently upon the ears of the people:—“THE PEACE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST BE WITH YOU ALL.” In solemn unbroken silence the congregation receives the sacrament; a short post-communion prayer of thanksgiving is said, a few verses of the 103rd Psalm are sung, and the congregation departs with the peace and the blessing of God.

Such a service is Scriptural, and it is in accord with the purest traditions of the Church in all ages. We regret that foreign writers such as Heiler—as evidenced in his profoundly suggestive book on the ‘Spirit of Worship’—seem to have no knowledge of it—for those of us who can compare our Scottish use with that of other communions grow more and more convinced that our Communion service, when properly rendered, is excelled by none in beauty, in reverence, and in a tense emotion.

JOHN W. BAIRD.

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