

## TRADITION AND RENEWAL

### *Recent liturgical work in the Church of Norway*

#### Part II

### **2. The order of 1977 for the Mass in the Church of Norway**

#### **2.1 An outline of the service**

We shall sketch the five parts, with twenty-two points, of the service order, attempting to give a literal translation of the terminology of the order. (The numbers used are those of the order itself.)

- (I) Introduction: Prayer and Praise
  - (1) Entrance, Prelude, Entrance Hymn and opening words
  - (2) Confession
  - (3) Prayer of Invocation (Kyrie)
  - (4) Praise (Gloria)
  - (5) Collect for the day
- (II) Proclamation of the Word of God
  - (6) First Lesson
  - (7) Hymn for the day
  - (8) Second Lesson
  - (9) Creed
  - (10) Hymn before the sermon
  - (11) Sermon, after reading of Third Lesson
  - (12) Hymn, after the sermon
- (III) Intercession
  - (13) Announcements
  - (14) Prayer of Intercession
  - (15) Offering
- (IV) Gathering at the Lord's Table
  - (16) Hymn before Communion
  - (17) Praise and Words of Institution
  - (18) The Meal
  - (19) Prayer after Communion
- (V) Closing and Benediction
  - (20) Closing hymn
  - (21) Benediction
  - (22) Postlude

As will be seen, this order is in all essentials the traditional Mass as an evangelical church would conceive it, and it could

well be labelled a "restoration" Mass. Nothing much is new here compared to the 1920-order. The Liturgy Commission (hereafter referred to as LC) wanted to preserve the old liturgy for the main service of the church, intending to reserve experiment with new forms of worship for services other than the Mass. We shall now discuss the points where the revision affects the structure of the service.

## 2.2 The opening words

In the 1977 liturgy the minister greets the congregation with the apostolic greeting: "Grace be with you . . .". In the former liturgy the minister's first words were the invitation to the General Confession. In its Final Proposal (FP) the LC suggested as opening words: "In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" (cf. the new Roman Mass of 1969). A majority of consultants did not accept the proposal and the LC was then led to propose in its special Recommendation the present words which the Bishops' Proposal (BP) then confirmed.

This alternative, though, did not turn out to be a happy choice. For already at this point some of the critics from the Church Renewal group launched their attack, holding that the apostolic greeting is misplaced here since it indicates a kind of absolution before confession, or even worse, a Roman notion of infused grace as a pre-condition for worship. The arguments at this point may indeed seem far-fetched. Nevertheless, they have been repeatedly voiced. Perhaps the right people (a redaction committee appointed by the Church Department) will in the end decide that the FP alternative was the best one after all.

## 2.3 Confession

The Experimental Liturgy (EL), Preliminary Proposal (PP), and FP all proposed some form of an "affirmation of grace" after the confession of sins. EL offered a variety of words from Scripture for the various seasons of the year. FP prescribed I John 1: 9 for the whole year. The LC had, however, been divided on this point all the time, some of its members feeling uncertain whether one was about to introduce a kind of quasi-absolution in the service. Following the negative reaction of the consultants, the special Recommendation dropped the proposal.

## 2.4 The Gloria

The *Gloria* was in the 1920-order followed by *Laudamus* only on the feasts, and in the form of a translation of Decius' hymn paraphrase *Allein Gott in der Höh*. The FP offered the choice

between a new hymn paraphrase of the *Laudamus* and two new musical settings of the prose text, one with a refrain to be sung by the congregation. As an alternative it was also suggested that one could use only the refrain of the *Laudamus*. The intention was obviously to make the introduction of this new element in the liturgy a bit easier.

The LC had hardly imagined the outcome. The BP allowed only the use of the *Laudamus* refrain on ordinary Sundays, and the use of a condensed version of the hymn paraphrase (in one verse) on the feasts. It is true to say that this decision was one of the factors which shook the LC. Whether there is any chance that the awaited adjustments will open up a new possibility for a meaningful use of the *Laudamus* remains to be seen. It could also be mentioned that the LC all the time had proposed that the *Gloria* be omitted during Lent. The BP only said that it "can be omitted", thus confirming the arbitrary practice since 1889.

## 2.5 The Readings

The Readings have undergone an essential change in as much as there is now always to be a reading from the Old Testament, one from the Epistles and one from the Gospels, and always in this order. On a few fixed days the minister is to use the Old Testament text for his sermon. This gives the Old Testament a radically new position in our main service. The new two-year cycle of three lessons for each day is to a great extent the result of a common work on a partly Nordic and partly wider Lutheran basis.

It should be of great interest to see how the Norwegian minister will cope with the task of preaching the Old Testament evangelically and on the basis of a sound historical exegesis. Some critics have maintained that the use of Old Testament texts in the main service will endanger the evangelical understanding of our faith. In fact, it is rather the case that since the Sunday Mass service has almost gained a monopoly in our official worship, the Old Testament and Epistles have been much less preached in our churches than they were, for example, at the time of the Reformers.

## 2.6 The Creed

The Creed should, according to the primary wish of the LC, have its place after the sermon, as the congregation's response to the whole proclamation of the Word. Realising that there would certainly be strong objections to such an idea from the bishops

and others, LC proposed that the Creed be placed either after the second lesson or after the sermon. The BP undisturbedly ruled out the latter possibility. It was argued that the Creed should come before the sermon as the norm — a nice thought, but historically hardly more than an argument designed to defend the familiar practice.

Still in its special Recommendation the LC wanted to allow the use of the Nicene Creed, instead of the usual Apostles' Creed, on special occasions, and also to allow the singing of the Apostles' Creed to its familiar plainsong tune. The BP decided, however, that the Nicene Creed and the sung Apostles' Creed should not be allowed when the liturgy is used as the main Sunday service.

## 2.7 The Intercession

In the old liturgy the prayers of intercession were prescribed to the letter. The new order offers a new structure for these prayers, in as far as three of the four alternative intercessory prayers to a varying degree allow for prayer for individual causes and persons.

## 2.8 The Lord's Supper

The LC has, of course, devoted a lot of its time and energy to the work on the order for the Communion Meal. We shall mention some of the points of particular interest.

All proposals since the EL offered eight different prefaces for various times of the year, whereas the former liturgy had only one preface for the whole of the year. For no obvious reason, perhaps except from a general reluctance towards variation, the BP reduced the number of prefaces to five.

The central point of discussion has undoubtedly been the question of the eucharistic prayer. In the 1920-order the *Sanctus* was followed by a prayer directed to Christ, then *Agnus Dei*, the Lord's Prayer, the Words of Institution and the Distribution. The EL and all subsequent proposals of the LC set the Words of Institution within the context of a eucharistic prayer. The Commission considered a reform on this point to be one of the indispensable elements of liturgical renewal.

The reaction of the consultants to the PP showed, however, that it was going to be difficult to get this idea accepted. Therefore the FP offered the order of the former liturgy, slightly revised, as an alternative order for Communion, still giving priority to an order which contained a more complete eucharistic

prayer. The consultants, however, would not hear of more than one order for Communion. So the LC in their special Recommendation proposed the complete eucharistic prayer for the order. Fearing the outcome, the LC asked that this prayer might at least be permitted on special occasions. All the same, the BP barred the eucharistic prayer from the main Sunday service altogether, allowing the use of it only on *other*, special occasions.

The reason for the reluctance towards the eucharistic prayer is obvious. It is the more or less explicit fear of anything that might suggest a "Roman" notion of the eucharist as a sacrifice. It is argued that the introduction of a prayer after the Words of Institution could blur the distinction between our thanksgiving and the essence of Communion, which is our partaking of the body and blood of Christ, distributed for our benefit, or, in other words, mingle an element of our own work with Christ's own gifts.

One could perhaps have expected that the spokesmen of the Church Renewal movement would have been on the side of the LC on the question of the eucharistic prayer. But instead the proposal came under double fire, the more "High Church" people finding the thanksgiving of the proposed eucharistic prayer too meagre, because it did not explicitly mention the Lord's work in creation and the stages of salvation history. And first and foremost the LC proposal was criticised because the anamnetic prayer after the Words of Institution was directed to *Christ*, and not to the Father. This, it was said, implied a heretical deviation from the Church's doctrine of the Trinity, confounding the work of the Father with that of the Son in the atonement. The mentioning of the fact that a eucharistic prayer directed to Christ can be found also in the Old Church, apparently did not make a great impression on the critics. It may be asked whether this latter point of criticism does not in fact arise from a type of sacrificial understanding of the Eucharist which many Lutherans would want to dispute.

Another much debated detail of the liturgy for Communion has been the wording of the *Agnus Dei*. The 1920-order used the past tense of the verb: "Lamb of God, that carried away the sins of the world". The EL used the present tense as a direct Bible quotation and in accord with other liturgies. A number of critics voiced a violent protest against the EL form. The idea was that the introduction of the new form of the *Agnus Dei*, however biblical, at this stage of our liturgical history, would inevitably endanger the understanding of the atonement as a unique, once and for all accomplished act by Christ, and open up for some

kind of sacrificial interpretation of the handling of the elements. Wisely, it would seem, the LC in its later proposals used the form of the *Agnus Dei* which it had in the 1920-liturgy.

The Lutheran fear of any tendencies towards a spiritualising interpretation of the Lord's Supper became apparent in the debate on the words of distribution of the Sacrament. The EL Proposed the words: "The body of Christ, the Bread of Life" and "The blood of Christ, the Cup of Life", whereas the former liturgy, following the tradition dating from 1685, used the words: "This is the body/blood of Jesus". The advocates of the change apparently held that the older form was too dogmatic, rather than liturgical in character.

The opposition was so strong, however, that one had to grant the congregations involved in the experiment permission to use the former words of distribution already during the experimental period. The critics maintained that the new words allowed for a weakening of the belief in the real presence, although such an interpretation was undoubtedly far from the intentions of the LC.

In its PP the LC proposed to use simply the classical words: "The body/blood of Christ". This did not satisfy the consultants either, apparently because they felt that the words were not sufficient to make the presence of the body and blood of Christ indistinguishable from the presence of the elements themselves. So in its FP the LC dropped the new form in favour of the traditional one. All in all it might perhaps be said that the latter does not in fact function only as a dogmatic statement, but is felt by the communicant to be really a proclamation of the saving gift of the Sacrament.

## **2.9 The closing of the service**

In EL the following dismissal closed the service: "Go in peace and serve the Lord with joy". This dismissal was also preserved in the later proposals, and it seemed to be generally accepted. It therefore came as a surprise when the BP dropped the proposal. The somewhat strange argument was heard that the dismissal made the service end with a moralistic note.

## **3. Other features of the service**

### **3.1 Minister, people and liturgical leadership**

The new service order opens up a more active participation by the people in the Liturgy. It may seem a small matter, but the fact that the people are now expected to say the confession of

sins and the Lord's Prayer with the minister helps to remove the congregation's feeling of being just an audience. This has been the intention of the LC ever since the EL.

The intention has also been to give more liturgical leadership to lay persons. It is now recommended that the first two lessons be read by a lay reader. This practice is already established in many churches and functions well in many places. It is only fair to say, though, that not everywhere has it been realised that reading in a liturgical situation is a very difficult task. Since the EL it has also been possible to have a lay person give the announcements, and, what is more important, lead the intercessory prayers.

All in all, these points of renewal contribute considerably to end the tradition of one person speaking to, or on behalf of, the rest all the time.

### **3.2 The revision of the prayers**

People in general will probably feel that the prayers of the 1977-liturgy are phrased in a way which makes them more easily understood and gives them a more contemporary character. And the LC has, indeed, put an enormous effort into the formulation of the prayers. The complete set of collects for the day, for example, has been drafted over and over again, until the latest stages of the revision.

All the same, the prayers have been the most heavily criticised part of the liturgy. Behind the criticism lies a suspicion that, under the cover of a necessity for modernisation of language and forms of expression, a new understanding of basic points of our faith could be smuggled into the liturgy. It was feared that the doctrines of the Triune God, of original sin, of the atonement, and of justification by faith would be endangered, and that a moralistic concept of Christian life would be encouraged. It was also feared that the zeal for the right preaching of the Word of God might disappear from the prayers. Since a similar criticism was already levelled against the EL, the LC has taken great pains to avoid those errors which the critics have feared. Of the orthodox theological intentions of the LC there really should be no doubt. On the other hand, the makers of the liturgy must, of course, be willing to let it be judged by its results.

It might be of interest to mention some of the actual points of criticism, because they shed light on the difficulties in renewing liturgy. First of all the confession of sin: in the General Confession it is stated that we have sinned against God in thought, word and deed, and that we feel in our hearts the

desire for evil. The LC has changed the expression "evil desire" in the 1920-liturgy to the present expression "desire for evil". The reason for this change was mainly the feeling that the Norwegian word for "desire" (*lyst*) had some misleading connotations when used today in the expression "evil desire". Some critics felt strongly that the new formulation questioned the understanding of original sin as habitual, inherent sinfulness, condemning man irrespective of his sinful acts. That the LC had no intention of changing the content of the confession can easily be seen from the fact that the New Norwegian text of the liturgy has retained the expression "evil desire" (*vond hug*), because it was not felt that the New Norwegian word created any problem. (Norway has two official languages, related to each other in about the same way as English and Braid Scots are related to each other, the one being New Norwegian.)

Further the collects, or prayers for the day, have been strongly debated. When reformulating these prayers the LC aimed at making them more simple and pointed, giving them a form somewhat closer to that of the collects of the Missal. At the same time it was not wished to lose any of the themes of the traditional collects of our church, which were originally prayers to be said in connection with the sermon. And in fact the LC gained some compliments for having in the end made the collects theologically more sound than were the much criticised collects of the EL. But the critics were not completely satisfied. The most criticised section of the prayers was the conclusion. In the former liturgy the collects ended thus: ". . . through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one, true God for ever and ever". The new collects end: ". . . through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who, with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns for ever and ever". This new, simplified ending of the prayer is suspected of expressing a kind of tritheism.

The case of the Lord's Prayer has also demonstrated that the task of the LC is not an easy one. The LC wished simply to adopt the new form of the prayer in the Bible translation. The former translation of the first prayer "hallowed be your name" used a form of the verb which is now obsolete, and not easily replaced by anything else. The new Bible translates a bit more freely: "Let your name be kept holy". Here the translators refer to the explanation of the prayer in Luther's catechism. All the same, there has been violent opposition to this new wording in some quarters, the view being that the primary meaning of the

prayer is that God shall himself make his name holy, not that it shall be kept holy by us. This point of criticism may be one which is worth further discussion.

### 3.3 The music of the service

The music of EL for the Ordinary was, to a great extent, an adaptation of plainsong tunes. The order also offered four series of music for various times of the year. The character and variety of the music led some to say that it was difficult and alienating. In 1972, therefore, the LC invited Norwegian composers to contribute to a competition on music for the new liturgy. Among the distinguished contributions was the music which was later chosen for the *Kyrie* and the *Agnus Dei* of the common series of the 1977-order. The *Gloria* of the order is another contemporary composition for the EL, the *Sanctus* is a new adaptation of the *Sanctus* of the former liturgy, originally built on a tune from the *Graduale Romanum*. In the other two series, for Advent and Lent, the musical material is mainly of plainsong origin.

The 1977-liturgy came at a time when it was possible to use different styles of music, old and new, for the Ordinary of the same service. And although many were afraid of the difficulties of introducing new music, it turned out that the ordinary church member soon liked it and got used to it. Those who were rather disappointed with the music were the advocates of the view that plainsong is the only liturgical music which is appropriate and has lasting qualities. In particular representatives of the Organists' Association were highly critical. Their criticism was also directed towards minor musical elements, such as the responses. It seems rather unlikely that there will be any change in the already established music of the common series. The other series have not yet been used to any extent, and some of the songs may perhaps be replaced by other musical material.

### 3.4 The Biblical Psalm

The EL introduced a new element in our worship: a Biblical psalm may be sung instead of the entrance hymn. This meant the prose version of the psalm in a new musical setting. In the psalm settings offered by the order, the verses are to be sung by the choir or cantor, while the congregation repeats the refrain after each verse. In the 1977-liturgy the use of the Biblical psalm is possible only as an introit, but also instead of the Hymn for the Day and during Communion. The order says that the use of the Biblical psalms should be restricted to one in each service.

The musical setting of the psalms in the 1977-liturgy is by the contemporary composers of the *Kyrie* and the *Agnus Dei* of the Ordinary.

The Biblical psalm may not have been widely used in the service until now, but the opportunity to use this kind of psalmody has been welcomed by many and hardly opposed by anybody, apart from some scattered voices who at the early stages maintained that the Biblical psalm in this form was "Catholic" or "Gregorian" and therefore not wanted. Such remarks are hardly heard any more. It seems that the Biblical psalm in this form is welcomed in all circles. The serious but attractive music has been a decisive factor in making this use of the psalms accepted. The ordinary plainsong chant would undoubtedly have been met with greater reluctance. The LC foresees, however, that the new Hymnal will provide us with a number of psalms in a variety of musical settings, new and old, for use in the Mass and other services.

In this connection one would also mention that the LC wishes to include in the new Hymnal a number of new metrical versions of psalms from the Psalter, to be sung to tunes from the Genevan and from the English and Scottish tradition of psalmody. This "Reformed" psalmody has hardly had any place in our liturgy before, and it is now maintained that a Lutheran church should feel free to include values from that tradition as well in its service. It may indeed be appropriate to conclude an article on liturgy in this periodical with mentioning that small ecumenical feature of our work.

ARVE BRUNVOLL, Bergen, Norway.