

CHANGES IN THE COMMUNION SERVICE.¹

BY THE BISHOP OF MANCHESTER.

THE duty of the Convocation, and particularly of this House, to maintain the purity of our Book of Common Prayer is at no point more incumbent than at this part of the service of Holy Communion now under our consideration. Not only is the service itself associated with our own deepest spiritual experiences, but it is both by its character and its history for the Church of England holy ground, a service for which the greatest of all her sacrifices have been made. For the sake of this service she endured a great breach in the continuity of her life, breaking away from medieval traditions to return to simple obedience to her Lord's command. For the sake of this service also she dissociated herself in a measure from other Churches of the Reformation, being determined that her children should receive nothing less than her Lord had provided for them in that Sacrament.

The service, while departing boldly from contemporary forms that it might be a real Communion service, yet bears manifest trace of scholarly care and learning in its construction. The more closely it is examined the more remarkable is its liturgical exactness for its own purposes. It is also, with the exception of the brief-lived service of the First Prayer Book and sundry quite slight alterations, the one Communion office of our Church from the days at least of Queen Elizabeth's accession. The alterations have been very few and very trifling. Our own House also, when it came to this point in the work of Prayer Book Revision, called a halt and determined to make no changes in the very portions with which we are dealing to-day.

AN EARNEST CAUTION.

These words are not a mere preface. They are an earnest caution against making changes for the sake of change. If I am rightly informed the proposals before us did not come from the quarter from which they might have been expected to come, but

¹ The substance of a speech delivered by the Bishop of Manchester in the Upper House of the Convocation of York on Wednesday, February 11, 1920, on the proposed changes in the Communion Service agreed upon by a majority at the Conference called by the Archbishops.

from persons who had no real desire for them, who would have preferred to leave our book as it stands, but were moved to suggest changes that they disliked out of a spirit of compromise. They feared, above everything else, the imputation of a *non possumus* attitude. They tried to go as far as they could in the direction of the rejected proposals of the Canterbury Convocation without sacrifice of their own convictions. The spirit, as an exhibition of brotherly spirit, was laudable, but the result has not proved worthy of that great office which they were handling. I can compare it with nothing so aptly as with St. Peter's Church, Cornhill, where Sir Gilbert Scott was given a free hand to restore a masterpiece of Sir Christopher Wren. Those who know the church will remember the lamentable result—the Gothic patches barbarously affixed to a pure classical style. So these amiable and well-meaning revisers have added to a prayer of incomparable dignity and beauty, breathing the very spirit of our Lord on the great Paschal night, tags and fragments of early Church orders which either mean more than they say, or else in this connexion have very little meaning at all. Against all such work as this, I submit that the only right attitude to maintain is the *non possumus* attitude. Let me justify, if I can, this very severe condemnation of the Report.

THE DISPLACEMENTS.

I will deal very briefly with all that lies outside the Prayer of Consecration. The one redeeming feature of the Report is that it leaves the so-called Prayer of Oblation in its proper place. The proposal to remove it was a liturgical blunder, condemned by thoroughly competent liturgical authorities. It is the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving offered by those who have received the Body and Blood of Christ in faithful obedience to His command. To offer the thanksgiving before the reception was wholly out of place.

But while this displacement is rejected, two others are introduced.

First, the Prayer of Humble Access is placed after the Comfortable Words. The absolved and comforted penitent is thus reminded of his unworthiness just at the moment when his grateful heart is prepared to rise to the Lord Who has forgiven him, and through the same Lord to enter into the holiest and to join in the

angelic hymn. It was a far truer liturgical instinct that placed the worshipper with Isaiah in the act of humiliation after and not before the entry into the glories of the sanctuary on high. This displacement is sheer loss, and not compensated for by passing directly from the "Ter Sanctus" to the Prayer of Consecration.

Secondly, the displacement of the Lord's Prayer and attaching of it to the Prayer of Consecration is contrary to the genius of our Church. As in Holy Baptism and in Confirmation, the children's prayer has its proper place immediately after the reception of heavenly gifts. When consecration of the Elements has to be repeated it will be manifestly out of place, and will probably be omitted. But it owed its position in some old liturgies as part of the Consecration Prayer to the idea that it was by the Lord's Prayer that consecration of the Elements was effected, a conception probably due to a misinterpretation of a well-known passage of Justin Martyr. Our Reformers did well in giving to it its present position. Who has not felt the appropriateness of being recalled from the lofty mysteries of Communion with God by the simple words that he learned at his mother's knee?

TWO PRINCIPLES.

Before examining the proposed additions to the Prayer of Consecration I suggest for your consideration two principles which in the examination of such prayers appear to me to be axiomatic.

1. The words to be considered must be weighed, not by themselves but in relation to the place which it is intended to assign to them. Let me take a very simple but very direct instance—*viz.*, the words "remembering before Thee." They are words often used in prayers of commendation, daily we remember before God our friends, relatives, and others for whom we would intercede. In a conversation about the words the Bishop of Ripon remarked that "all our prayers are before God." All this is very true, but it has no bearing at all on the introduction of this particular phrase at this particular point in the Prayer of Consecration. Similarly, the alleged lack of reference to the Holy Spirit in the Communion Office, if established, would have nothing to do with the Invocation of the Holy Spirit at this point in the Consecration Prayer. No liturgical student could accept any such explanation of the words were they introduced.

2. The second principle of interpretation which I would urge is this : That words in a liturgy must be considered in relation to the history connected with them. We cannot say to ourselves, for instance, that we should like to introduce a thanksgiving in connexion with the Act of Consecration, as though we were the first persons to whom the idea had occurred. Still less can we introduce a highly significant form of thanksgiving, and by merely shutting our eyes to the past divest it of all its antecedent history. Of prayers, as of ceremonies, the very just remark made by the Bishop of Ripon in his most useful book on Elevation ¹ is true :

“ A ceremony which has been used for many centuries and has been associated with widely different ideas must be regarded in the light not only of *what it is now intended to suggest by those who adopt it*, but of the meaning and influence which it has had in the past, and which it is therefore likely to have in the *popular* mind in the present day.”

NOTE.—The italics are the author's.

These forcible words are quite as true of prayers as of ceremonies.

This point is convenient also for dealing with the objection that misuse or abuse of prayer or ceremony does not necessarily involve its disuse altogether. A sound liturgical principle, no doubt, but double-edged in considering the revival of a prayer or ceremony. For, if such a prayer has in the past been connected with erroneous teaching, and at the time of its proposed revival the same erroneous teaching is being sedulously propagated, we are forced by this principle to consider the use which is likely to be made of the prayer ; whether its revival will not be construed as encouragement of the false teaching, whether its words and phrases are not likely to be misconceived. We cannot, in fact, revise our liturgy in entire disregard of the existence of a school within the Church which interpolates the Communion Office with the Mass. I greatly doubt if the moderate Non-jurors, if they were with us now, would not be the foremost antagonists of the suggested changes.

THE PROPOSED CHANGES.

The Report sums up the proposed changes thus :—

(1) An act of remembrance—Anamnesis.

¹ Drury, *On Elevation in the Eucharist*, p. 4.

(2) A thanksgiving.

(3) An invocation of the Holy Spirit—Epiklesis.

The distinction between the act of remembrance and the thanksgiving hardly seems to be well supported in such authorities as I have been able to consult. The act of remembrance is usually associated with a thanksgiving for the Passion, Resurrection, Ascension, and Second Coming of our Lord, and that for a sufficient reason which will presently appear.

The term *Anamnesis* is an allusion to the words of our Lord, "Do this in *remembrance* (anamnesin) of Me." Out of those words misinterpreted, as we contend, undoubtedly grew all the great edifice of sacrificial teaching which now finds its expression in the Roman Mass and the liturgies of the East. Though the word itself, with hardly any exceptions, means simply remembrance, and is constantly used of remembrance of sins, and although there is a wholly distinct word to signify "memorial sacrifice," yet we cannot—having regard to its history—introduce an Anamnesis at this point and say that it has no significance of memorial sacrifice. Curiously enough, there is but little reference in our ordinary text-books to this liturgical use. In this sense it is not to be found in the indices of Procter and Frere, of Scudamore, of Brightman's Collections of Eastern Liturgies, nor in the Prayer-Book Dictionary. The only clear definition of it that I have been able to find is in Cabrol's great encyclopædia, the *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie et de Liturgie*. There it is defined as follows: "The purpose of the Anamnesis is to present the Body and Blood of Christ to the Father. The Son is sacrificed and offered to the Father, and the Spirit comes to sanctify, and perfect the sanctification of, the sacrifice." This definition of the purpose of the Anamnesis and the history of its development are supported by a wealth of quotations from early liturgies. But the article in question does not "base the Anamnesis on its supposed existence in all primitive liturgies; in fact, it is not to be found in the liturgies of Cyril, Athanasius, and Augustine." The support for it, if anywhere, is in the construction placed on the words of our Lord, as reported by St. Luke and amplified by St. Paul.

THEIR LITURGICAL HISTORY.

From these considerations it must appear that we are not at liberty to construe the words which we propose to restore in a

sense of our own. The "remembrance" is a memorial sacrifice, the thanksgiving describes and characterize the sacrifice so offered. The words have a liturgical history of which we cannot deprive them, and the bare fact that no mention is made of a sacrifice does not deprive them of that meaning. They indicate a definite stage in the prayer which has its well-known significance, and that significance is not limited, as in the first Prayer Book of Edward VI, by insertion of the words, "The memorial which Thy Blessed Son hath willed to be made." That restriction, for what it was worth, has been removed, and we must plainly answer this question: "If we did not intend a sacrifice, why did we introduce words which have always had a sacrificial meaning? And if we did intend a sacrifice, why did we not plainly say whether we meant a memorial or a propitiatory sacrifice; and further, if we intended a memorial sacrifice, was it a sacrifice by a priest on our behalf offering to God the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ our Lord?" The amiable desire to meet half-way those who asked for the expression of a memorial sacrifice without saying it in so many words has led us into a position open to the gravest misconstruction.

But we must look beyond the prayer to the ritual which may be used to interpret it. We must remember that there is now no prohibition of elevation of the Sacrament in our Prayer Book. If, then, we restore the words which are historically connected with elevation for the purpose of adoration, what can we expect but that such elevation will be practised and will be defended on the ground that these words have been inserted? At present such elevations and signals for adoration are comparatively uncommon among officiating clergy. But we must expect the revival of the prayer to revive the ceremonial, and the revival of these two to be used to sanction doctrine hard to distinguish from transubstantiation.

THE EPIKLEISIS.

I pass to the Epiklesis.

We may dismiss at once all the less definite uses of the term, and all discussion as to their antiquity. What is proposed for our use is an invocation of the Holy Spirit, as Lord and giver of life, upon the worshippers and upon the elements. It is important to note this, because the vaguer forms are often quoted in defence of the use of this particular form. But the fact remains

that this particular form is admittedly an innovation which cannot be attested earlier than the middle of the fourth century, that it has its own history, carries its own doctrinal significance, and must be treated on its own merits.

In establishment of the late date of invocation of the Holy Spirit upon the elements, let me adduce an argument which I find quite conclusive. I do not rest simply upon the absence of proof of such invocation, since the passage from Irenæus on which an earlier origin was based has proved to be a forgery. But I rest on this: "One Father after another in the Pneumatomachian controversy enumerates in detail and explains the sanctifying operations of the Holy Ghost in the Church in proof and as evidence of his co-equal godhead. Whilst in these elaborate reviews Holy Baptism and its formulæ are advanced again and again, no appeal is made to, nor a word said about, any invocation of the Holy Ghost in the Eucharist, though the opening for it occurs again and again." (E. Bishop, *Journal of Theological Studies*, 1909).

UNKNOWN TILL THE FOURTH CENTURY.

Hence it seems clear that the invocation of the Holy Spirit on the elements was still unknown or little known as late as the second half of the fourth century. As soon as it appears it is connected with new teaching as to the effect of consecration upon the elements. Dr. Swete, in his article on "Eucharistic Belief in the Second and Third Centuries," maintains that "in these two centuries the general belief of the Catholic Church had not gone beyond a simple identification of the Bread and Wine with the Body and Blood of Christ; the reality alike of the earthly elements and of the heavenly gifts is recognized." By identification Dr. Swete clearly does not mean identification effected by change of the elements, natural or supernatural, but by use of terms interchangeably without indicating any transition from one state of being to another. He goes on to say: "In the ante-Nicene monuments there is a singular absence of any reference to adoration of Christ in the elements." He also points out the inconsistency of such adoration with the keeping of the consecrated bread in houses for daily use, a practice not uncommon at that time. But with the fourth century a very rapid development of Eucharistic belief began in the East. Cyril, of Jerusalem, in the middle of that

century, furnishes us with the earliest documentary evidence of an invocation of the Holy Spirit on the elements. He also uses "the word 'change' or 'convert' to denote the effect produced upon the elements by consecration, and he illustrates it from the change of water into wine in the miracle of Cana in Galilee. This sanctification and change is effected by the Holy Spirit" (Srawley on the Eucharist, *Hastings' Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*).

MOMENTOUS CONSEQUENCES.

The consequences of this innovation were momentous. Hitherto the invocation had been an invocation of the Word, either of the Second Person in the Blessed Trinity or the words that He had used. For sanctification by the Word there was Scriptural authority, even for the sanctification of material objects. "Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be sanctified with thanksgiving. For it is sanctified by the Word of God and by prayer" (1 Tim. iv. 4, 5). But invocation of the Holy Spirit on the elements used in the Lord's Supper at once suggested an operation of the Holy Spirit analogous to that by which the Incarnation was wrought and so imparted to those elements a wholly new character. The change was manifested with special clearness in the Syriac Church, where such words as these occur in the Liturgy of Narsai: "Entreat earnestly and make supplication to the God of all in this hour, which is full of fear and trembling." Not that this inculcation of fear and trembling is peculiar to the Syriac Liturgy. It is found in Cyril of Jerusalem and in St. John Chrysostom. It marks a new conception whereby in the popular mind the Sacrament of love becomes invested with sentiments of fear and dread—elements the very reverse of those to which our Office gives prominence when it speaks of holy mysteries "instituted and ordained as pledges of His love, to our great and endless comfort," or again, "Take this holy Sacrament to your comfort."

I submit that this invocation cannot be officially adopted by our Church, even as an alternative, without involving (1) an assimilation of our Eucharistic doctrine to that of the East, (2) our whole relation to the Western Communion. On each of these two points I must dwell, however briefly.

ASSIMILATION TO DOCTRINE OF EASTERN CHURCH.

(1) *The assimilation of our Eucharistic doctrine to that of the East.* It is true, no doubt, that the Easterns repudiate the doctrine of Transubstantiation. But they do so, not because they doubt a very complete change in the elements, but because they do not commit themselves to the method by which the change is effected. As to their belief, it is expressed thus in the official Declaration of the Greek Church (1679): "By the power of the Holy Spirit, supernaturally and ineffably, the bread is changed into that very proper body of the Saviour Christ, really, truly, and properly; and the wine into His living Blood. Which mystery both is, and is called worship, and in it, as is worthy of God, is worshipped the deified Body of the Saviour Christ, and is offered as a sacrifice for all orthodox Christians quick and dead" (Covell's *Account of the Greek Church*, p. 44). Similarly, in response to a request for the modern Eucharistic belief of the Greek Church, I received from our Archimandrite in Manchester—a learned representative of his Church—among other extracts the following from the Professor of Theology in the University of Athens, 1912: "If you ask for the way how [the Sacrament] takes place it is enough for you to hear that it takes place through the Holy Ghost in exactly the same way as our Lord became flesh from the Holy Virgin through the Holy Ghost." Further, he quotes with approval Kritopoulos: "The consecrated Bread and what is in the Cup are really and undoubtedly the Body and Blood of Christ. But the way of the change remains for us unknown and inexplicable." It is true that the Greeks are becoming increasingly careful not to commit themselves as to the manner of the change of the elements, but that a change takes place they do not doubt, nor do they hesitate to compare it with the change wrought by the Incarnation. Such teaching carries us a very long way beyond the Prayer Book.

THE EAST AND THE WEST.

(2) *Our whole relation to the Western Communion is affected.* As between East and West the question of the moment of consecration is of very serious import. Let me quote the words of Mr. E. Bishop: "The exhaustion of the historical question leaves us face to face with the difficulty mentioned at the start of our discussion—namely, that of the two great traditional Christian com-

munions (he meant the Eastern and Latin Churches) one says that by the completion of the recital of Institution the Bread and Wine have become the Body and Blood of our Lord, the other says that they are only Bread and Wine still. . . . This is practical matter among all the people, and vital in the religious worship of every individual person belonging to these Communions. Nor does it seem that the contradictory assertions can be resolved into a common affirmation, but by way of retraction on the one part or the other, explicit or implied, such as cannot but become notorious among the people, etc." (*Journal of Theological Studies*). Mr. Bishop, was, of course, fully aware that the Greek Church believed that by invocation of the Holy Spirit the bread and wine became the Body and Blood of Christ, but from the Greek position it followed that in the Western Church, which does not use this invocation, the change never took place. What is it then? In face of this very acute controversy we adopt the Eastern usage. To the Latin Church we appear to cast doubt, not only on all their consecration, but also on our own in the past. We lay ourselves open to the imputation that having been rebuffed by the Latin Church as to the validity of our orders and Sacraments we are seeking to rectify them by overtures to the East—an appearance of which their skilled proselytizers will not fail to make use. It is, in fact, in this stage of history a very serious step to produce the impression—and we must do so if we are credited with a modicum of learning—the impression that we are plunging into the controversy as to the moment of consecration in the Eucharist. No impression could be more unfortunate or more injurious to our Church in her world-wide relations, often in countries where the strife between East and West is still quite acute. This is not the path along which we shall find that mediating position of which our divines have sometimes dreamed.

THE ALTERNATIVE USE.

In conclusion, let me say a word about the argument that we must make room for different schools of thought in the Church of England. It is, indeed, a difficult position in which we find ourselves—the position, namely, that a type of service which is helpful to one half, let us say, of our worshippers is equally a hindrance to the other half. If it could be secured that each portion should

receive and have a right to that form of ministry which best fostered its piety, toleration of both would be comparatively simple. But that which happens is that members of either school are liable to be refused that which helps them, and to impose in their turn upon the others what they find hard to endure. In this state of confusion to provide alternative services only multiplies difficulties, since we cannot secure how or where either service shall be used, and are not really helped by the prospect of a congregational plebiscite. Even under that minorities will suffer, and we cannot fall back on Mr. Birrell's dictum: "It is the badge of their tribe." How or by what means we shall eventually secure a large and genuine measure of comprising within one Church diverse forms and types of piety awaits the consideration of our National Assembly. But these tamperings with the office of Holy Communion threaten to create a breach which may easily become past healing. As it is we have a service which, by admission of the Bishop of Ripon, is "a complete representation of what our Lord is recorded to have said and done in the same night that He was betrayed" (*Drury on Elevation*, p. 181). We recite what He said and did in a most solemn prayer of invocation. We proceed to obey His command. We believe that we receive what He provided, and that we do, as He commanded, proclaim the Lord's death till He come. We omit all questions, speculations, interpretations of His action round which controversies have gathered. It is conceivable that in this way drawing us to Himself He will keep us in that unity which He willed. But alternative services, in our Church as it is to-day, cannot fail to become badges of distinction and encouragements to disruption. In this matter let us determine, as did the Bishops at the last revision, to leave all unchanged.

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A few words on the debate itself may be useful by way of conclusion.

The Bishop of Ripon in proposing the change relied chiefly on the authority of Waterland, and on Waterland's contention that the Communion Service is a memorial sacrifice. The Bishop did not quote any passage from Waterland suggesting that our service should be altered in order to bring out this aspect. The fact is that when Waterland speaks of the Eucharist as a Gospel sacrifice, he is careful to explain in what sense he uses the words: "The Eucharist

is a Gospel sacrifice, not the material symbols, but the service, consisting of prayer, praise, contrite hearts, self-humiliation, etc. As for any sacrifice of ours, it lies entirely in the *service* we perform, and in the qualifications or dispositions which we bring, which are all so much spiritual oblation, or spiritual sacrifice and nothing else." On the other hand it is quite clear that the *anamnesis* in the Canon of the Mass is something else, and something quite different. It is the "presentation of the Body and Blood of Christ to the Father." Nor do we get rid of this association by varying the words of the Mass. The mischief is in the introduction of words which can be interpreted in the sense of the Mass by those who will so interpret them, and the making room for ceremonies of crossing and elevation, which will give emphasis to that meaning.

In the course of the debate two main objections were taken to my argument.

1. That I had relied too much on sequence of time as proving effect from a cause. It was argued that though false teaching synchronized with the use of the Epiclesis, it did not follow that it resulted from use of the Epiclesis. But it can be shown abundantly that the stereotyping of a materialistic change of the elements took root in the Eastern and especially in the Syriac Church far earlier than in the Western. Even in the eleventh century the Western Church was not fully committed to any doctrine of Transubstantiation. Controversy raged on the doctrine even in that century. Such controversy could not have arisen had the Mass contained the invocation of the Holy Spirit upon the elements with the view of imparting to them some life which was not in them before.

2. It was argued that the element of "awe" and "dread" was due simply to Oriental temperament, and to an exaggerated expression of emotion. But the distance between Greece and Italy, between Greek temperament and Italian temperament is not so great that it will account for the marked element of terror which appear in Eastern Liturgies. It would probably be far more true to say that the element of terror came into the Holy Communion from the Pagan mystic religions, and that it established itself in that service far sooner in the East than in the West. Also that the idea of the Holy Spirit "hovering over" the "Bread and Wine" that they might undergo a change could probably be traced to the mystery religions, if more was known about them.

E. A. MANCHESTER.