

## PREFACE TO THE FIRST AND SECOND EDITIONS OF THE LITURGY

Some brief explanation of the principles which have guided the writing of this Liturgy of the Liberal Catholic Church may help the reader to understand its spirit and aim.

It will be seen that the word Liturgy, as applied to this book, is not restricted to the Order of the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, as in the Eastern Church. It is applied, rather, to the entire order of public worship and administration of the Sacraments, officially authorized—such, indeed, as would usually be described by the adjective ‘liturgical’—as distinct from public or private devotions, services of preaching and praise, extempore worship and so forth, which may be permitted but are not prescribed.

The movement from which the Liberal Catholic Church originated used the Roman Liturgy, but the complete re-organization of the movement upon its present basis of the widest freedom involved a correspondingly drastic revision of the Liturgy. The Roman Liturgy was chosen as the basis for that revision. As all students of the subject are aware, the Roman Liturgy is a composite product, derived from a variety of ancient sources. It appears to have grown up by a process of absorption, and notably by the absorption of a widespread Gallican use, which in its turn had oriental affiliations. It bears all the marks of this antiquity and composite structure. Antiquity, in this case, carries with it both advantages and disadvantages. It carries us nearer to the stream of pure tradition emanating from the Christ Himself—but within what distance we do not know. But it also carries us back to a culture immeasurably more limited than ours. Many of the earlier communities of Christians appear to have been at quite a low level of development, such as those Corinthians to whom St. Paul addressed his Epistle. If we glance critically at one of the earlier liturgies known to history—the Sacramentary of *Sarapion*—we soon discover that the fragments therein preserved reflect an outlook naturally to be expected among a primitive agricultural community. The Roman Liturgy, too, suffers on account of its very antiquity, despite, and maybe in some ways because of, its various recensions.

Rendered in Latin, its frequent crudity of conception commonly escapes detection, but a critical examination of its meaning speedily shows how ill-suited it is to modern use, and this judgement is apt to be heightened by the evident difficulty of translating the well-rounded Latin in which it is cast into the English tongue, and by the uncouth rendering which would seem to have been adopted by its various translators almost of set purpose, as though to emphasize the inferiority of the vernacular as a vehicle of liturgical expression.

The Roman Liturgy, moreover, is full of expressions which indicate fear of God, of His wrath and of the prospect of everlasting hell; and these in their turn evoke other expressions of servile cringing and self-abasement, abject appeals for mercy, even culminating in naive attempts to bargain with the Almighty. The evil is so patent to anyone who pauses to look for it, that a couple of specimens of this language will suffice by way of illustration. 'We therefore beseech Thee, O Lord, to be appeased and to receive this offering ...; grant that we may be rescued from eternal damnation....' 'Hear us, O God of our salvation, and deliver Thy people from the terrors of divine anger, and make them secure by the bountifulness of Thy mercy.' It ought to be impossible for thinking men of our day to have to repeat this crude anthropomorphism. In one sense, of course, all our conceptions of God must inevitably be anthropomorphic. Whatever we think of Him is the product of the human mind; whatever, indeed, has been revealed to us concerning the Divine Nature is set in terms capable of being grasped by our finite minds. Still, it is a fair canon to demand that He shall be interpreted in terms of that which is best and noblest in our human nature, and not in terms of that which is worst and of which we ourselves are ashamed. The Roman Liturgy is the worst offender in these respects, but the Anglican Liturgy also, though much less crude, is far from blameless. The Greek Liturgies are very much less overcast with this greyness of fear and gloom; they dwell more on the love of God.

In this Liberal Catholic Liturgy these disfiguring elements have been eliminated, as derogatory alike to the idea of a loving Father and to the men whom He has created in His own image. If Christians had been content to take what Christ taught of the Father in heaven, they would never have saddled themselves with the jealous, angry, bloodthirsty Jehovah of Ezra, Nehemiah and the others—a god who needs propitiating and to whose 'mercy' constant appeals must be made. Moreover, the knowledge of Eastern religions, and of the faiths of ancient Egypt and Babylon, that has increasingly become available in our times, has entirely dispelled the illusion that the Jews had any monopoly of divine truth, and proportionately lessens the value of the Old Testament as an integral basis of the Christian faith.

On the same principle our Liturgy rejects the imprecations of the heathen and passages of cursing that are so characteristic, unfortunately, alike of the Psalms and of the history of the Christian Church. Their use is totally foreign to the spirit of Christ, and while they may have been less inexcusable in days of persecution and internecine strife, Christianity no longer has place for them. It is, indeed, difficult to pick out more than a handful of Psalms unmarred in their entirety by such passages. Hence, with a view to preserving for our worship language and sentiments that are sublime, and at the same time escaping this difficulty, we have been emboldened to construct psalms, epistles and gospels, by a system of *cento* selection. We are well aware that apologists contend that the passages and sentiments to which we take exception are susceptible of

another and gentler interpretation. Thus the wrath of God means the ill-consequences that inevitably attend a breach of His laws. Such explanations, while they soften the asperity of the original passages, read like the special pleadings of people who are tied to a liturgy or to a view of Scripture that is obsolete; and in any case do not remove the objection that the passages convey a false impression.

The composite structure of the Roman Liturgy is also evident to the student in the overlapping with which it abounds, particularly in the baptismal and ordination services, and in the occurrence of phrases that bear slight relation to their context or accompanying manual actions, or sometimes little meaning at all. These are attributable to a process of what we may call 'telescoping' one liturgy into another, with the result that, for example, when a certain action of the rite has duly been performed, according to the sequence of one liturgy, prayers from another rite then follow, having the effect of reiterating the request for its performance. Some commentators recognize these inconsistencies; others appear to explain them as 'dramatic anticipations' or 'postponements' or as indicating a period of thought when the precise moment of an action was not defined, or even by the simple expedient of remarking that it takes time to say things.

Another recurring element of the older liturgies is that of petition for personal and temporal advantages. Our Lord taught us very definitely the virtue of confidence in the 'Good Law'; that not a sparrow falls to the ground without the knowledge of our heavenly Father. We have sought to interpret the spirit of our age by substituting joyous aspirational utterance for such temporal petition, and encouraging our worshippers to forget themselves—indeed, to find their true selves-in thoughtfulness for others.

It has been a wrench to lay aside many familiar passages, round which have clustered a multitude of happy memories. Yet it is clear that long continued use and happy associations, especially those of childhood, will deaden the mind to sentiments that are indefensible. This is eminently true of popular hymns, where the music also tends to obscure the words. In thus giving the head precedence over the heart, we may find consolation in the fact that we write for a new generation, who have no such associations. Moreover, it is significant that in newer countries, like the Antipodes and the United States of America, where numbers of people have grown up without Bible or Church, the judgement at once condemns such passages. The most conservative among us may wonder how people can gravely sing:

Whatever, Lord, we lend to Thee  
Repaid a thousand-fold will be;  
Then gladly we will give to Thee,  
Who givest all.

In the *Gloria in Excelsis*, the phrase 'Lamb of God' has been eliminated, as such characterization of our Lord does not impress the virgin mind with anything but a sense of the ridiculous. Once in the Canon, where the symbology of the allusion is explained, the phrase has been kept.

We were disappointed to find the Greek Liturgies quite unsuitable for use in our work of revision. To define clearly the element which renders them thus unsuitable is difficult. It is somewhat similar, perhaps, to that which distinguishes the outlook of some nations from that of others. Some poets, for example, may be accused of a tendency to lapse into language that sounds beautiful, regardless of its meaning anything in particular. So in Latin countries one finds people apt to pay more attention to the manner of saying a thing than to the value of the thing said. On the other hand, the scientist will often express his facts in language that is precise and accurate, but with no thought for beauty of utterance or for the larger ideas which in the scheme of things lie behind the minor investigations he has recorded. The Greek Liturgies come before us like a sea of beautiful language, but they do not appear to be constructed on any framework whatever of coherent and consecutive thought. The same applies in a measure to the Roman Liturgy, though the wealth and profusion of language is here wanting. Now, the actions of the Holy Eucharist (and, indeed, of certain other services) are part of a definite scheme of symbolism and efficacy. Beautiful language serves to stir people to devotion, though often that devotion is vague; but if the co-operation of the mind can also be enlisted, the effect will obviously be greater not only on the individual worshipper, but on the resulting process as a whole. We have tried in this Liturgy to present, as it were, a new facet of these things, and while clothing our thought in language that is stately and beautiful, to make that thought correspond with the sequence of action.

Many ceremonies of the older liturgies are interesting from the archaeological standpoint; but it has been no part of our purpose to retain archaeology for the sake of archaeology. As we find a vernacular liturgy to be provocative of an infinitely greater response from our congregations than the use of Latin, so in other respects also we have studied efficiency in preference to archaeological interest, believing that the truest reverence is shown by best helping the people for whose worship the Liturgy is written.

It is intended that the public worship should be 'congregational' in character. The 'priesthood of the laity' is no empty phrase, and expression should be given to the truth which it embodies. There is evidence that originally the Holy Eucharist was more of a corporate act of worship than it came to be in later days when the laity could neither read nor follow the Latin. With the spread of education, the growth of intelligence, and the advantage of a vernacular liturgy, there is no reason at all why the laity should 'assist' at the Holy Eucharist in the capacity of passive spectators only, or be debarred from

following step by step what is taking place at the altar. Liturgy means 'public work or service', not merely in the sense of work done by the public, but also of work for, or on behalf of, the public at large. It is significant, too, that the termination of the word is related etymologically to our 'urge' or 'energy.'

In our conception, worship has a threefold aspect and purpose. It is firstly the offering of 'worthship'—that is, praise and honour—to Almighty God. Secondly, it is intended to help the worshippers. And thirdly—most important of all—it is intended to help the surrounding world at large, through the instrumentality of the worshippers, by pouring out upon it a great flood of spiritual power. We may safely say that God Himself does not need our praise, and certainly would not appreciate anything in the nature of adulation from those who might be expected to know better. We feel and know, on the other hand, that it is good for us to lift up our hearts in praise and aspiration, and to strive to unify ourselves more completely with the divine will. But we may go further and say with all reverence that God does make use of our co-operation, and in His plan counts on that intelligent and energetic co-operation more and more as man grows into spiritual maturity. The Liberal Catholic Church aims at making its members strong and efficient workers in His service. It tries to help them to realize the divine Light in themselves—the Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, but which too often is veiled and hidden by ignorance and wrongdoing—and then to see that Light in the heart of others, and to help them to unveil its divine splendour.

It remains for us to acknowledge indebtedness to other liturgies. As already explained, the Roman Liturgy has been our model. In its passage through the ages it has preserved the dramatic symbolism and manual acts of the various rites with remarkable fidelity. From the Liturgy of St. Chrysostom we have adapted the well-known prayer used in the Anglican Church, and a number of beautiful phrases which have been combined into the prayer in our Eucharist, 'Unto Thee, O Perfect One.' We have availed ourselves of many sentences and collects from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. That book was an attempt like ours, to revise and simplify the Roman Liturgy. Of parts of it we may enthusiastically echo the words of an Anglican prelate who spoke of it as 'our incomparable liturgy', for the stateliness and virility of its English are unmatched. Unfortunately its Communion Office is sadly disarranged, and is shorn of the richness of the older rites, so much so that it has been described as 'the baldest Eucharistic rite in Christendom', and numbers of earnest Anglican Priests find it desirable to re-introduce therein a considerable portion of the Roman rite. The Authorized Version of the Scriptures has for the most part been used for although the Revised Version is certainly a more faithful rendering of the original, it still leaves so much to be desired as not to compensate, in our opinion, for the loss of the majestic English of the King James's version. We have followed Roman precedent in omitting from their context verses not germane to the main purpose of the Epistles and Gospels.

Finally, we are indebted to the beautiful Liturgy of the Catholic Apostolic or so-called Irvingite Church for a few stately sentences incorporated in our rites of Ordination, and for one prayer in our *Consecration of a church*. Two sentences in the Holy Eucharist beginning 'Under the veil of earthly things' come from a source that we are unable to trace.

The rubrics are designed to indicate sufficiently to the people the sequence of the ceremonies that they may follow what is taking place. For the Priest more detailed instructions are issued.

*The General Information and Preface, together with most of the Notes preceding each of the Services in this Book, are the work of our first Presiding Bishop, the Right Reverend James Ingall Wedgwood, to whom The Liberal Catholic Church owes a debt of the deepest gratitude. To his wide erudition and his indefatigable labours the compilation of this Liturgy is mainly due.*

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