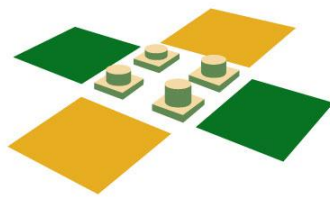


AN INTRODUCTION TO AND OUTLINE OF THE MASS

FROM A BOOK CONCERNING CEREMONIES
TO BE USED IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
WRITTEN C. 1539



THE
EXPERIENCE
OF WORSHIP
IN LATE MEDIEVAL
CATHEDRAL AND
PARISH CHURCH

AN EXTRACT FROM THE MANUSCRIPT TREATISE¹

BOOK CONCERNING CEREMONIES
TO BE USED IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
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This guide to the Mass comes from a book of church practice prepared in circles close to King Henry VIII and Archbishop Cranmer.² The extract presented here offers a helpful outline of the order of the Mass, as well as a point of entry into late medieval religious thinking. It was written at a time when shrines had been abolished, the greater monasteries were being dissolved, and the Great Bible in English was published for use in churches. On the one hand, it reflects the king's wish to retain ceremonies, here strengthened by explanations related to the narrative of Christ's passion, resurrection and ascension. On the other hand, the text shows signs of the early modern thinking that underpinned the liturgical reformation which was to follow a decade later, both in the theological reading of the Mass, and in the number of biblical reference, indicative of emerging Scriptural emphasis within the Church.

The text is didactic: it may have been intended to form the basis of homilies, or it may simply be intended for priests to re-appraise their celebration of the Mass. It was apparently never published.

¹ This treatise was edited by Cyril S. Cobb as *The Rationale of Ceremonial*, Alcuin Club Collections 18, London 1910. This extract comes from pp. 15-28 of that edition. There are two extant MS sources: British Library, MS Cotton, Cleopatra E.v, fos. 259-285 (whose other contents include much in the hand of Henry VIII), and Lambeth Palace Library 1107 (where it forms part of one of Cranmer's personal MSS – see http://www.lambethpalacelibrary.org/files/Thomas_Cranmer.pdf, page 2). although Cobb gives precedence to the Lambeth MS, the reading here is taken from the Cotton MS.

² The treatise appears to be linked to a royal proclamation concerning rites and ceremonies of the church issued 26 February 1539. See British Library MSS Cotton, Titus, B. I. 539 and Wilkins, III. 842. It is calendared as no 374 in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII*, Volume 14 Part 1: January-July 1539, ed. James Gairdner and R. H. Brodie (London, 1894) as follows: A proclamation which, after referring to the previous proclamation of November last (Vol. 13, pt. 2, no. 848) touching the observance of all ceremonies not yet abolished, enjoins the bishops and curates who officiate to instruct the people as to the 'right use and effect' of the ceremony used that day, viz., every Sunday as to the significance of holy bread and holy water, on Candlemas as to the reason for the bearing of candles, &c. Also declaring the King's pardon to all persons, either his own subjects or others, who have been seduced by Anabaptists and Sacramentaries coming from abroad and mean to return to the Catholic Church. Westminster, 26 Feb. 30 Hen. VIII.

CEREMONIES USED IN THE MASS

[This opening paragraph defends the traditional manner of celebrating the Mass: it is not to be regarded as superstitious nor like dumb shows, but a remembrance of the passion of Christ]

For so much as divers goeth about to reprehend the Mass and as much as in them is to withdraw Christ's flock from hearing thereof, taking it as a thing of a little and small value and the ceremonies of the same for a mocking and a momming calling them also dumb ceremonies, therefore to the intent that the Mass may be the more regarded and the mouths of such as caluminate and reprehend the same stopped, it is to be understood that the Mass is a remembrance of the passion of Christ whose most blessed body and blood is there consecrate and the ceremonies thereof be not dumb but they be expressives and declaratives of the same passion, to the intent that by such signs and ceremonies they that be present thereat may the better be admonished and reduced in to memory of the same.

[The nature of the priest in relation to his congregation]

And first it is to be understanden that the priest is a common minister in the name and stead of the whole congregation and as the mouth of the same not only rendereth thanks unto God for Christ's death and passion, but also maketh the common prayers, and commendeth the people and their necessities in the same to Almighty God.

[The significance of the priest's vestments – both in relation to Christ's passion, and the priest's mindset]

The priest therefore when he shall say Mass sayeth it not in his common apparel which he daily useth, but putteth upon him clean and hallowed vestments, partly representing the mysteries that were done in the time of the passion, partly representing the virtues that he himself ought to have that celebrates the Mass.

And first he putteth on the amice which as touching the mystery signifieth the veil with the which the Jews covered the face of Christ when they buffeted him

in time of his passion and as touching the minister it signifieth faith which is the head ground and foundation of all virtues, and therefore he putteth that upon his head first. Second he putteth upon him the alb which as touching the mystery wherewith, signifieth the white garment wherewith Herod clothed Christ in mocking when he sent him to Pilate. And as touching the minister it signifieth the pureness of conscience and innocency the which he ought to have especially when he singeth the Mass.

The girdle as touching the mystery signifieth the whip or scourge wherewith Christ was whipped, and as touching the minister it signifieth the continent and chaste living or else the close mind which he ought to have in prayer when he celebrates.

The phanon [i.e. maniple] which the minister weareth upon his left arm, as concerning the mystery it representeth unto us a cord or a strong bond wherewith the cruel Jews tied our Saviour Christ's left arm, when they had taken him in the garden, and so led him to Annas ; and as concerning the minister it doth admonish him that by ghostly strength and godly diligence he ought to endeavour himself that he may vanquish and overcome all carnal infirmity proceeding from all sinister privity and inclination to sin.³

The stole as touching the mystery, signifieth the ropes or bonds that Christ was bound with to the pillar when he was scourged and as touching the minister it signifieth the yoke of patience, which he must bear as the servant of God, in token whereof he putteth also the phanon [i.e. maniple] upon his arm which admonisheth him of ghostly strength and godly patience lie ought to have to vanquish and overcome all carnal infirmity.

The overvesture or chasuble as touching the mystery signifieth the purple mantle that Pilate's soldiers put on him a after that they had scourged him, and as touching the minister it signifieth charity, a virtue excellent above all other.

³ This paragraph is found only in the Lambeth MS 1107, but seems too significant to omit here.

[The Mass described: the entrance and confession of priest, and by implication people also]

The minister the which shall celebrate, in the beginning cometh forth as it were from some secret place⁴ to the midst of the altar signifying thereby that Christ which is the high priest came from the secret bosom of his Father and virginal cloister of his mother in to this world to offer sacrifice for man's redemption. And albeit that that sacrifice be a sufficient price and redemption for all the world, yet it is not efficient or effectual but only to them which knowledgeth themselves with penance to be sinners whom he came to justify as he saith himself. *Non veni vocare justos sed peccatores.*⁵ Therefore the minister in the beginning teacheth all men by his confession to humiliate and knowledge themselves sinners and to ask remission to the intent they may be the more apt to participate of this high mystery. *Nam justus in principio accusator est sui.*⁶

[Kyrie eleison and Gloria in excelsis]

Then after this followeth Kyrie eleison and Christe eleison which be words of desire and to pray God for mercy which mercy we cannot have of our deserts but of God's goodness and Christ's merits only, and therefore the minister, proceeding to the midst of the altar, rendereth the glory unto God, singing the angels hymn and song, *Gloria in excelsis Deo*, that is to say, Glory be unto God in heaven, whereby we be learned not only to know that we receive all our benefits of God being bound to give him thanks therefore, but also the means whereby we receive them which is by the mediation of Christ, that is both God and man, by whom the Father is pleased, man reconciled, and angels and man agreed.

⁴ The Lambeth MS has also 'as out of the vestry or from the altar's end' – the latter meaning the Gospel-end of the altar, where the vestments might be stored.

⁵ Mark 2.17: 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' Also Luke 5.32. All the biblical quotations are taken from the King James Bible, 1611.

⁶ Based on Proverbs 18.17: 'He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.'

[The Greeting and the Collect]

Then this song done the minister and the people with salutations exhort each other to prayer in which he prayeth as well for the multitude as for himself and therefore it is called Collecta and it is directed to the Father and commonly concluded by these words *per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum* etc which showeth and declareth unto us that we be only heard by Christ and that our prayer is by him valuable and by ourselves without him of no value and when the prayer is ended the people expresseth their desirous minds to be heard and answereth Amen which signifieth, so be it.

[Epistle, Gradual, Alleluya and Gospel]

After that prayer made then the priest as a meet minister to teach the people readeth to them the Epistle which is a lesson taken out of the Old and New Testament and it precedeth the Gospel and prepareth the minds thereunto like as Saint John prepared unto Christ and the old law unto grace; and Christ sent his disciples into divers places to preach before his coming⁷ whereby they should be made more apt to receive the heavenly doctrine of the Gospel and with a true faith believe the rewards and benefits promised in the same [i.e. the Gospel]. Next to the Epistle ensueth the Grail the which teacheth also such wholesome doctrine as was taught before in the Epistle that they proceeding in virtue by degrees may proceed from virtue to virtue until such time as they may see Almighty God in his glory. And therefore followeth a song of gladness called the Alleluia, that is to say, laud ye God both to admonish us to remember God with a glad mind, and with such mind to prepare ourselves to the hearing of the Gospel and the joyful promises of the same.

Then followeth the Gospel, which is a glad message or tidings, for in it is contained the glad tidings of our salvation, the which the angels showed to the shepherds at Christ's coming saying, *Ecce evangelizo vobis gaudium magnum* etc.⁸ and therefore the church with light[s] and other ceremonies of gladness and peace, readeth it to the people standing up diligently to hear the same,

⁷ Luke 10.1: 'After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.'

⁸ Luke 2.10: 'And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.'

declaring thereby their prompt and ready minds that they have to the doctrine of the Gospel.

[Credo]

And forasmuch as faith springeth of the word of a God therefore divers days the church (after the Gospel read) pronounceth with a loud voice the Creed, expressing the faith with her mouth which before she conceived in her heart according to Saint Paul's saying *Corde creditur ad justitiam, oris autem confessio fit ad salutem*.⁹

[Offertory and Secret]

Then followeth the Offertory whereby we be learned to prepare ourselves by God's grace to be an acceptable oblation to him to the sacrifices: intent we may be partakers of the blessed sacrifice, which Christ offered for us upon the cross, at which time the minister laying the bread upon the altar, maketh the chalice mixing the water with the wine, signifying thereby how that blood and water ran out of Christ's side in his passion, and admonisheth us of the inseparable coupling and joining of Christ and his church together.

Then after the Offertory done the priest washeth his hands knowing himself not to be so clean, but that he hath ever need more to be washed according to the saying of David: Wash me Lord more and more from my wickedness and cleanse me from my sin.¹⁰

Then after followeth a prayer secretly said which is called the Secret of the Mass, and that signifieth Christ's secret and privy conversation which he kept with his disciples a little before his passion, for after the determinate sentence of death conspired by Caiaphas and the Jews against him he walked no more amongst them openly but amongst his disciples secretly.¹¹

⁹ Romans 10.10: 'For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.'

¹⁰ Psalm 51.2: 'Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.'

¹¹ John 11.54: 'Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples.'

[Preface and Sanctus]

Next after the secret, followeth the Preface which is a prolocution or prayer going before the most reverent consecration of Christ's body and blood, preparing the minds of the faithful people to the reverence of the same, and moving them to erect their hearts to Almighty God, giving him thanks for his inestimable benefits desiring that their voice joined with the company of angels in one consent of laud and praise, proceeding as well from the church triumphant as militant unite and knit together, may without end sing this seraphical hymn and song, Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, to the laud of the blessed Trinity whose glory replenisheth heaven and earth.

[Canon of the Mass: the prayers for the living]

Then after this Preface followeth the Canon which is said secretly of the priest, not because it is unlawful to be heard, read or known of the people (as some fantasy) but that it is expedient to keep silence and secrecy, at the time of such an high mystery, that both the priest and the people may have the more devout meditations, and the better attend about the same.

Then the priest beginneth to represent in this sacrifice of the Mass, the most painful and bloody sacrifice, once offered for our salvation upon the cross, and prayeth the Father to accept these gifts prepared for the consecration, and inclining his body maketh a cross upon the altar and kisseth it, signifying thereby, the humble inclining and willing obedience of Christ to his Father's will to suffer his passion upon the altar of his cross for our salvation.

And then following the example of Christ, the high bishop, which, approaching the time of his passion, gave himself to prayer, and also according to the apostle's doctrine to Timothy, the minister giveth himself to prayer;¹² First in general for the universal church, of the which he desireth peace and preservation; second for princes and rulers, that govern the same; third, for all Christian and faithful people, remembering specially in his memento such as charity most bindeth and time sufficeth him to do, making an honourable mention also of the saints which be departed, and first of our Lady, the XII

¹² 1 Timothy 2.1: 'I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men'

apostles and as many martyrs which either by their bodily presence preaching or their blood shedding in their life time did bear witness and testimony to Christ's Passion joining them as it were both in one communion and participation of Christ's death and merits which hath deserved as well grace to the one as glory to the other desiring God by their prayers to protect and defend the whole congregation of all Christians.

[Canon of the Mass: the words of institution and the elevation]

And after certain prayers and petitions made for the people and also that the oblation may be acceptable unto God, he proceedeth with all reverence to the consecration first of the bread, taking it in his hands and giving thanks following the example of Christ by virtue and power of whose words the substance of bread is turned to the substance of the body of Christ and likewise the substance of wine into his precious blood which he lifteth up both that the people with all reverence and honour may worship the same and also to signify thereby partly Christ's Exaltation upon the cross for our redemption which was figured by the serpent set up by Moses in the desert¹³ and partly signifying that triumphant advancement and exaltation whereof God the Father because of his passion hath exalted him above all creatures bidding the people to have it in remembrance as oft as they shall do the same. After the which the priest extendeth and stretcheth abroad his arms in form of a cross declaring thereby, that according to Christ's Commandment, both he and the people not only have the fresh remembrance of the passion, but also of his resurrection and glorious ascension.

[Canon of the Mass: the prayers for the dead and conclusion]

And so proceedeth to the second memento – in which he prayeth for them that be dead in the faith of Christ and sleep in peace that it might please God to grant them a place of refreshing, light, and peace. Then he joineth himself with the people knocking upon his breast, thereby teaching them that he and they both be sinners, and have need of mercy and grace purchased by Christ's passion and desireth Almighty God to give them a society with the holy apostles and martyrs, not as an esteemer of their merits, but as a merciful grantor of remission, and that by Christ, by whom he worketh and granteth all these

¹³ John 3. 14: 'And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.'

benefits wherefore all honour and glory is to be rendered to him by Christ and with Christ the Holy Ghost being knit in unity to them, and then expressing with a loud voice how long this honour and glory is due to God he saith *per omnia secula seculorum*, that is to say, perpetually, the church answering Amen, so be it.

[The Lord's Prayer and Sharing of the Peace]

The priest then to the intent he may the more worthily receive the holy and blessed body and blood of Christ both to the comfort and strength, as well of him[self] as of them that be present saith the Pater Noster asking of God this heavenly and celestial bread with deliverance from all evils, and increase of quietness and peace, and so discovering the chalice in tokening that Christ would the fruit of his passion to be opened and manifest to all the world, taketh the host and breaketh it, and divideth it, in tokening of the distribution of it amongst his disciples, at the last supper, and the breaking of his body, the time of his passion, at which supper above all things he commanded to them peace and charity, saying *pacem meam do vobis, pacem [meam] relinquo vobis*,¹⁴ and therefore the minister taketh the kiss of peace from the blessed sacrament and sendeth it to the people, saluting each other in *osculo sancto*, as biddeth Saint Paul¹⁵ admonishing them thereby of the fraternal and mutual peace and concord which they ought to have, without the which peace and concord this communion or sacrament of common union is to them nothing profitable, but rather much damnable.

Then saith the priest thrice Agnus Dei, etc. advertising us of three effects of Christ's passion, whereof the first is deliverance from the misery of sin, the second is from pain of everlasting damnation wherefore he saith twice *miserere nobis*, that is to say, have mercy on us: and the third effect is giving of everlasting peace consisting in the glorious fruition of God, wherefore he saith *dona nobis pacem*, that is to say, give us peace.

¹⁴ John 14.27: 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.'

¹⁵ 1 Thessalonians 5.26: 'Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.' Also 1 Corinthians 16.20; 2 Corinthians 13.12; Romans 16.16

[The co-mixing of the bread and wine – the body and blood of Christ, the Communion antiphon and Prayer after Communion]

Then followeth the commixtion of the body and blood of Christ together, signifying the joining together of his body and soul in the resurrection, which before were severed at the time of his passion; and albeit there be two consecrations yet there is but one sacrament containing under each form the holy body and blood of Christ inseparably.

Then followeth the Communion which is an exciting or a moving to the people to laud and praise God, and because in the primitive church when devotion was fervent, divers used many times to receive it together with the priest, therefore in the prayer called the Post Communion the priest in the name of them all prayeth and rendereth thanks unto God for their spiritual refection, *per Dominum nostrum* by whose passion exhibit, the Mass hath his strength and efficacy.

[The Dismissal at the end of the Mass]

Then the priest eftsoons turning his face to the people, after the salutation, saith these words *Ite missa est* that is to say, go ye the Mass is ended and in that he biddeth them go is signified we ought to follow Christ in his holy life, and always to be going from virtue to virtue,¹⁶ and not to stand and tarry in the worldly pleasures, but diligently to haste us to the life everlasting; and that we may be of the number of them, to whom it shall be said *Venite benedicti*, that is to say, Come you blessed of my Father and receive the kingdom, and so forth,¹⁷ the priest giveth us at our departure sometimes the benediction in the name of the whole Trinity, signifying that last benediction which Christ gave to his disciples in the mount of Olivet, when he ascended to his Father where he sitteth on his right hand,¹⁸ a continual intercessor for us, to whom be all laud and praise for ever. Amen.

¹⁶ Psalm 84.7: 'They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.'

¹⁷ Matthew 25.34: 'Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'

¹⁸ Luke 24.50: 'And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.'

