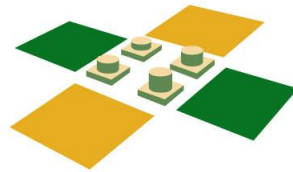


AMERICAN SARUM CONFERENCE II

THE SUPPER OF THE LORD, &
THE HOLY COMMUNION,
COMMONLY CALLED
THE MASS (1549)

PEOPLE'S BOOK



THE
EXPERIENCE
OF WORSHIP

CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST
WASHINGTON, CONNECTICUT
14 OCTOBER 2013

The rubrics printed at the end of the Holy Communion service (1549) direct ‘every man and woman to be bound to hear and be at the Divine Service, in the Parish Church where they be resident, and there with devout prayer, or godly silence and meditation, to occupy themselves.’ There are two categories of requirement here: the first, collective – to be at church and hear the liturgy; the second, personal – to engage in prayer or silent meditation.

These directives form a continuation of pre-Reformation practice: attending Mass, and using the ritual action as a framework for prayer and meditation. What has changed is that the prayers of the priest are now intended to be voiced and heard. What was a private sacrifice offered to God by the priest at the altar on behalf of and in the presence (though not necessarily clear sight) of his people, is now more public through its audibility.

The relatively long silences, especially in the Canon of the Mass, and the prayers unheard under either chant or polyphony, are replaced by a continuum of audible text. In the Latin Mass what the priest was saying and doing was often separate from what the choir was singing, and the points of collective coincidence relatively rare. In English Holy Communion the only directions for the overlapping of music and action occur during the preparation of the elements, and during the communion to the people – the sung Offertory Sentences and Agnus Dei respectively.

However, the people are not expected to participate in the recitation of texts: Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus and Agnus Dei are allocated to the singing clerks; and confession, prayer of humble access, and Lord’s Prayer are recited by the priest or at any rate one person only.

There is another change which must have had an impact on the aural experience of the people: the severe reduction of the Proper chants of the Mass, varying from Sunday to Sunday, from feast to feast and from season to season. The Introit, Offertory and Communion chants are replaced by a chanted psalm, and by an optional but unchanging series of Scriptural sentences.

It is hard to know how individual priests addressed the challenge of celebrating the new form of Holy Communion, since there are few ritual rubrics. This celebration assumes that by instinct a priest would continue to employ those actions, gestures and movements which readily suggested themselves. The challenge for musicians was more extreme: the Latin repertory of chant and polyphony was largely redundant, and there was a movement to make texts audible. However, some tones, chants and polyphony could be adapted. The consequences can be heard in this celebration: simple tones and plainsong melodies adapted from Latin to English; largely syllabic polyphonic settings of new texts (reminiscent of the old improvised faburden polyphony); and an adaptation of an existing Latin Mass (in the relatively new imitative style) to English words.

Few people would have had access to a copy of the Book of Common Prayer: the books were of a size to be used at altar or desk. And at least 10,000 copies would have been required to furnish a single copy for each parish church. Though they heard Holy Communion, it did not prevent their individual engagement in ‘devout prayer or godly silence and meditation’. Thus, only the outline of the service is given here with directions for posture, by way of orientation.

This celebration anticipates the feast of St Luke, and uses the psalm, collect and readings ordered for that day in the first Book of Common Prayer.

The celebration of an obsolete rite is not simply a piece of historical exploration – except insofar as it is a part of our story. It invites each person to consider how their forebears might have experienced this rite, and how it offers new light on present practice. Above all, like all liturgy, this is a celebration in the now; but it is inseparable from the Christian inheritance, connecting the Last Supper in Jerusalem, England and Wales at a period of extraordinary religious upheaval and change, and our own worship today.

The Book of Common Prayer (1549) makes it clear that bowing or making the sign of the cross was acceptable, but not obligatory. Some people would have continued the practice familiar from the Latin Mass; others influenced by new reformed thinking might have actively resisted such actions. Each person is invited to follow their own preference. Some of the ‘key’ traditional actions are indicated here. Many would have instinctively bowed whenever they heard the holy name of Jesus.

It was customary for men to gather on the right-hand side of the nave, and for women to sit on the left-hand side.

INTROIT

*Stand, sit or kneel before the service, and during the Introit psalm (Psalm 137)
Bow when the choir sings ‘Glory be to the Father’.*

KYRIE

Kneel when the choir begins Kyrie eleison.

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS

*Stand when the priest intones ‘Glory be to God on high’, and face the altar.
Bow at the words ‘we worship thee, we glorify thee’, in the petition ‘Thou that takest away the sins of the world, (bow) receive our prayer,’ and ‘Jesus Christ’; and bow to the end from ‘Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high (sign of the cross) in the glory of God the Father. Amen.’*

COLLECTS FOR ST LUKE AND FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

Kneel when the priest sings 'Let us pray'.

It was customary to bow the head through the prayers.

In churches without pews, it was customary to kneel until the end of the Epistle.

EPISTLE

GOSPEL

Stand when the procession assembles for the Gospel, and face the Gospel reader.

After the announcement, join the choir in singing 'Glory be to thee, O Lord'.

CREED

Face the altar. Bow at the holy name of Jesus, and from 'and was incarnate' to 'dead and buried', and in the concluding phrase 'And the life of the world to come'.

HOMILY

Sit. This homily was part of an authorised collection published in 1547. It is abbreviated here.

OFFERTORY

Remain seated. While the ministers prepare take the bread and wine to the altar, the Church wardens or their representatives make a collection for the poor.

SURSUM CORDA, PREFACE AND SANCTUS WITH BENEDICTUS

Stand, facing the altar.

PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH AND CONSECRATION OF THE ELEMENTS

Kneel when the deacon invites all to pray. It would now be customary (by former practice) to kneel until the end of the service)

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Sung by the priest alone.

THE FRACTION AND PEACE

In the old Latin rite, the people would have been offered the Pax Board to kiss. This rite seems to have no place here.

INVITATION TO CONFESSION

CONFESSION

Recited by a single minister or member of the congregation on behalf of all present and intending to receive communion.

ABSOLUTION

THE COMFORTABLE WORDS

PRAYER OF HUMBLE ACCESS

Recited by the priest on behalf of all present, and intending to receive communion.

COMMUNION (AND AGNUS DEI)

The priest and other ministers receive communion, while ‘O Lamb of God’ is sung.

The people go to receive communion as directed. Men and women should receive the sacrament separately, but kneeling.

The Book of Common Prayer directs that the priest should place the consecrated wafer in the mouth (not in the hands), but you are encouraged to do what seems comfortable.

After communion, kneel.

POST-COMMUNION SENTENCE

Sung by the choir.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

BLESSING