

VII

THEOLOGY IN THE EUCHARISTIC RITE

IN THE Apostles' Creed and the Nicene is summed up the doctrine of the Church Catholic. Indeed, the Westminster divines described the former as "a brief sum of the Christian faith, agreeable to the word of God, and anciently received in the churches of Christ".¹ They are based on the Trinitarian formula: "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit".

The first article, on the Father, has been expanded to set forth God as All-sovereign, Creator and Father; the second, on the Son, to set forth the six redemptive acts of Christ: born, crucified, risen, ascended, reigning, and coming again to judge the living and the dead; and the third, on the Holy Spirit, to set forth the three principal works of the Spirit: in the Church, in forgiveness, and in eternal life.

We have now to ask: do the Reformed rites bear witness to these truths? The Irish rite in the ascription of glory certainly places God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, right at the centre of worship as it opens; or, if the scripture sentences are used, the fact that God is the Lord of creation, that Christ was in the beginning with His redemptive purpose, and that the Holy Spirit is creative of the Church is emphasized. The Welsh sentences also emphasize that "the earth is the Lord's" and that He is a saving God, who "is faithful and just to forgive us". On the other hand, the Scottish and English rites emphasize rather God's redemptive purpose with "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us". All four rites in the confession of sin see it as sin against "the Father" and in the prayer for pardon ask a Father's forgiveness. The Welsh rite, in addition, in the prayer of supplication refers to the assembled congregation as "we, thy children".

In all four rites the Christian Year is followed; so in the lections and sermon the mighty acts of God as Creator, Father, Preserver and Up-holder are set forth. The same is true where psalms and hymns are linked to the Christian Year. God's Fatherhood is held forth in the Lord's Prayer. In the prayer of intercession (no text is given in the

¹ *Shorter Catechism.*

THE WORSHIP OF THE REFORMED CHURCH

Welsh rite) God is seen as Father and Ruler of the Church, of the nations, of ministers, teachers, doctors, administrators, of the sick, the young and the aged. The needs of mankind are met only in Him. That He is "Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible" is confessed in the Creed. The Anaphora in the Welsh rite opens,

O God, our heavenly Father, we, Thine unworthy children, praise and bless Thy holy name for the majesty of Thy glory and for all Thy wondrous works,

and the Scottish and Irish rites,

It is verily meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks unto Thee, O Holy Lord, Father Almighty, Everlasting God; who didst create the heavens and the earth and all that is therein; who didst make man in Thine own image and whose tender mercies are over all Thy works.

The same concept, omitting the specific reference to the creation of man, is to be found in the English Anaphora. The post-communions also in all four rites set forth the sovereignty of God, as do the benedictions.

The redemptive purpose of God in Christ is clearly set forth in all four rites, the six redemptive acts being witnessed to in the Creed and in the Anaphora, both in the thanksgiving for redemption and in the anamnesis; and also in the proper prefaces in the Scottish and Irish books. In all, forgiveness is sought "through Jesus Christ our Lord". The same is true of the supplications; only through Christ can grace and gifts be supplied to sinful man. In the lections and sermon His redemptive work is proclaimed. Only through Christ can the needs of mankind be met in the intercessions. The redemptive work of Christ is specially held forth in the Offertory prayers in the Scottish and English rites, and in all in the Creed, the Warrant, the Anaphora, the *Agnus Dei* (omitted in the Welsh), and in the words of distribution. In the Irish rite special emphasis is placed on the second coming in the second post-communion:

Almighty and everlasting God, before whom stand the spirits of the living and the dead, we, who this day have partaken of the body and blood of Christ, rejoicing in the communion of saints, praise Thee for the assurance that we, with them, may be partakers of Thy heavenly kingdom at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in glory; to whom, with Thee, and the Holy Spirit, be all glory and praise, world without end.

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is witnessed to in the Creed, and also in the lections and sermon. Also, it may be assumed that the underlying belief in all prayers for guidance is that they are answered through the Spirit.

The Irish Order opens with the scriptural sentence Acts 2: 1 and 4a, "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost", placing the rite in the setting of Pentecost, and witnessing to the Holy Spirit as creative of the Church. All four rites testify to the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit in the epiclesis. The Scottish, English, and Irish rites contain the collect for purity from the *Book of Common Prayer*, and the last also gives the collect for charity. In the prayer for forgiveness the Scottish and English rites say, "Deliver us by Thy Holy Spirit." The Irish rite contains the words: "Let us pray for the illumination of the Holy Spirit in the reading and preaching of the Gospel." Here the Holy Spirit is seen as the bestower of gifts. The Irish rite in the intercessions refers to the Holy Spirit in connection with the Church's life and the work of healing; in the post-communion, says, "Glory, thanks, and praise be to the Spirit, holy and eternal, the Lord and Giver of Life"; and ends with the apostolic benediction, saying, "the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all".

With regard to Catholic doctrine, therefore, we may say that this is clearly set forth in Reformed rites, but perhaps the *caveat* should be made that, while the doctrine of the Father and that of the Son are adequately set forth, witnessing to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit requires fuller expression.

Without attempting a full outline of evangelical doctrine, as set out in the Catechisms and Confessions of the Reformation period, it may be said that it centred on (a) the sole Headship of Christ in His Church, (b) the primacy of scriptural authority, (c) salvation by grace and justification by faith, and (d) the priesthood of believers.

We have now to ask how far the Reformed rites bear witness to these doctrines. The doctrinal standards underlying worship hold these forth, and they are also proclaimed in the Word read and preached.

(a) With regard to the first, it is hardly necessary to say that in none of the Liturgies is the Pope spoken of as the head of the Church. Neither is prayer made to saints. In all, prayer, praise and adoration are addressed to God "through" or "in the name of" Christ. In the intercessions in the Irish rite the prayer for the Church opens, "Grant, O Lord God, that Thy Church, as it hath one Foundation and one Head . . ." and in the English rite, "O God, who art the hope of all

THE WORSHIP OF THE REFORMED CHURCH

the ends of the earth; we pray for Thy Holy Catholic Church, which Thou hast called. . . ." In the Creed He is proclaimed as a King "whose Kingdom shall have no end".

There is the further point that what is done is done "in the name of Christ"; for example, in the Scottish, English, and Irish rites, the Taking to set apart is "That we may fulfil His institution". Again in the Baptismal service the three books proclaim the candidate is now received into the membership of the Church "According to Christ's commandment". In the Confirmation rites, also, in the Scottish and Irish books the candidate is admitted "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ", the Scottish adding, "the great King and Head of the Church". The same remarks are true of the Ordinal and the Marriage services. Indeed, while the formula may not be specifically repeated, every act of worship is "in the name of Christ, the sole King and Head of the Church".

(b) When we speak of the primacy of scriptural authority, it must not be taken to mean that the Reformed Church gives no place to tradition. The relation of scripture and tradition was expressed by the sixteenth General Council of the World Presbyterian Alliance, as follows:

In liturgy, as in doctrine, the Reformed Church recognizes as normative—as absolutely binding—only what is revealed by the word of God contained in our Bible (*scriptura sola*). In liturgy, as in doctrine, the Reformed Church cannot recognize tradition as a second normative authority alongside the Bible. Therefore she admits variety of liturgical forms in everything that is not fixed by scripture. But, in liturgy as in doctrine, the Reformed Church respects tradition as a consultative authority. Her liberty in all that is not fixed by the word of God permits her therefore to preserve or to recover all traditional elements that are not clearly anti-evangelical. (She is favourably disposed towards tradition, until compelled to dissent by proof to the contrary because her aim is not to be anti-catholic but pro-evangelical.)¹

The centrality of Scripture is evident from the provision of Lectionaries, and the insistence on the reading and preaching (based on the lections) as an essential element in the liturgy of the Word. This is also clearly seen in that scriptural authority is necessary to every Ordinance, and that no Sacrament or Ordinance should be celebrated without reading and preaching of the Word. A further evidence of the witness to scriptural authority is in the use made in the Sacraments of Scriptural Warrants.

(c) That salvation is by grace and justification by faith in Christ

¹ *Report and Proceedings*, 1948, pp. 212–13.

alone is clearly set forth in the catechisms and confessions and is an integral element in the sermon. What has already been stated about witness to Christ under Catholic doctrine is also relevant here. That forgiveness and newness of life come from Christ is clearly set forth in the prayers for forgiveness. The Welsh rite is, "Have mercy upon us, most merciful Father, for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thy Son and our Lord, and forgive us. . . ." The Scottish and English rites have with slight differences in punctuation, "Yet now, most merciful Father, have mercy upon us; for the sake of Jesus Christ, forgive us all our sins . . .", whereas the Irish rite is, "Grant unto us pardon, absolution, and remission from all our sins; confirm and strengthen us in all goodness, and bring us to eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord." In the Creed is proclaimed the truth that Jesus Christ was born "for us men and for our salvation". In the Anaphora in the Scottish and English rites the anamnesis reads, "Wherefore, having in remembrance the work and passion of our Saviour Christ, and pleading His eternal sacrifice. . . ."

(d) The doctrine of the priesthood of believers is undoubtedly set forth in confessional statements and sermons. That the Reformed rites bear witness to this is evident in that prayer is addressed to God "through" or "in the name of" Christ. Commenting on the meaning of this usage, Dr. C. F. D. Moule writes,

Prayer to God in the name of Christ implies that worshippers may now approach into the very presence of the Almighty with new confidence because the death of Christ has torn the separating curtain which hitherto had excluded from direct approach. In this sense, Christ's own "flesh" is a new way into the presence of God—a way which is "alive", for the way *is* the living Christ: incorporate in His humanity our humanity now enters the presence of God (Heb. 10: 20). Or again, it implies that, although personally unworthy, we are able to return into the family of God because of the costly forgiveness offered by God Himself and put into effect in the death of Christ: God in Christ has reconciled us; therefore it is through Christ that we draw near. Or yet again, it is the same Spirit of God who in Jesus of Nazareth cried, "Abba! Father!" (the cry of absolute obedience) who now cries "Abba! Father!" in us; so that it is "through Christ" that the Holy Spirit works in our wills enabling us to draw near to God (Mark 14:26; Rom. 8: 15; Gal. 4: 6).¹

Cursory though this discussion of Evangelical doctrine is, it is evident that the Reformed rites do set it forth in worship.

¹ C. F. D. Moule, *Worship in the New Testament*, 1961, p. 71.