

# UNIT SIX

## CONTINENTAL REFORMATION

### LITURGIES

- Revision of the liturgy was actually at the heart of the Reformation in the sixteenth century.
- Reformers wanted to remove things which were ambiguous or misleading, and instead to express the rediscovered biblical teaching about salvation by grace alone – making sure that every aspect of a service conveyed the truths of the gospel.
- Development of new styles of service was due firstly to the belief that Scripture is fundamental to all Christian thought and practice.
- Rediscovering the doctrine of justification by faith also led to a view of worship as an occasion for recounting the gracious acts of God and responding with confession and with praise.

## MARTIN LUTHER (1483-1546) AND THE GERMAN MASS

- Luther denounced the ideas of transubstantiation, Mass as a sacrifice and withholding communion from lay people, but also valued the historical dimension of the liturgy.
- He declared the need to restore, not abolish the liturgy, and insisted that Christians should not gather for worship unless a sermon was preached.
- Luther's first liturgy, the *Formula Missae*, was still in Latin but turned away from the focus on Mass as a sacrifice and rejected much of the pomp and ceremony.
- Luther had many objections to worship as sacrifice, not least that it involved a denial of Christ's one all-sufficient sacrifice on Calvary – he instead saw worship as a gift of God.
- He stipulated that Mass could be celebrated only with the congregation present, and that people should notify their minister of their desire to take part.
- Christians were to receive communion in 'both kinds', the bread and the wine.
- Luther called for German poets to compose spiritual songs for the services.
- Luther's Latin Mass did not win acceptance, largely due to the many new rites in German, and so in 1525 Luther prepared another liturgy, the *Deutsche Messe*.
- While not wishing to enforce uniformity, Luther did wish to stop the multiplication of new forms – so that people would not be confused and might be able to learn and understand.

- Luther's simplified order of service in the German Mass was:
  - Hymn or Psalm
  - *Kyrie* (Lord, have mercy...)
  - Opening prayer (Collect)
  - Epistle reading, hymn, Gospel reading, Creed
  - Sermon or homily
  - Paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer
  - Recounting of Jesus' words at the Last Supper, leading to Communion
  - Concluding prayer and blessing

## ULRICH ZWINGLI (1484-1531) AND THE ZURICH LITURGY

- Ulrich Zwingli was called to be a regular preacher in the Great Minster in Zurich in 1518.
- Instead of preaching on the set passages for the day, he began with Matthew 1 and worked through the New Testament – enshrining the central principle of the Reformation to heed the divine word of Scripture.
- In 1524, the 'cleansing' of the churches began – statues, gold and silver were removed, paintings whitewashed – the people were to attend to the Word of God only.
- Zwingli's *Liturgy of the Word* took the following form:
  - Bidding Prayer
  - The Lord's Prayer
  - Hail Mary (retained in Zurich until 1563)
  - Bible reading and sermon
  - Announcement of any deaths
  - General Confession of Sins
  - Concluding prayer for pardon
- This was a normal Sunday service – Zwingli restricted the celebration of the Lord's Supper to four times a year (Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and the feast of Saints Felix and Regula (patron saints of Zurich)).
- Before he produced his radical *Action of the Lord's Supper* (1525), Zwingli like Luther had used a more conservative revision of the Mass – both were reluctant to celebrate the Sacrament in Latin rather than German.
- *Action of the Lord's Supper* had a fairly fixed form but allowed much congregational participation.

- Zwingli's order of service was this:
  - Opening Prayer
  - Reading: 1 Corinthians 11:20-29
  - Hymn: 'Glory to God on high' — men and women alternate verses
  - Reading: John 6:48-63
  - Apostles' Creed — again men and women alternate
  - Preparation for Communion, followed by the Lord's Prayer
  - Prayer by 'the server' for faithful Christian living
  - Gospel reading — the Last Supper
  - Communion
  - Thanksgiving: Psalm 112 (men and woman again alternate)
  - Dismissal — 'depart in peace'

## **MARTIN BUCER (1491-1551) AND THE STRASBOURG LITURGY**

- The first German Mass was celebrated in Strasbourg in 1524, before Luther and Zwingli's liturgies.
- Many revisions of that Mass reflected the influence of Martin Bucer — whose early proposals were much more radical than his later teaching.
- In 1524, he proposed that:
  - The preaching of the Word is the constitutive act of Worship
  - The activity of the Holy Spirit must be given precedence over externals in Worship
  - Except for the sermon, nothing should be dictated in the assembled congregation
  - The church is a community of love
- By 1534, Bucer was dismayed by the differences that were appearing and called for uniformity and greater discipline.
- Unlike Zwingli, Bucer held to the weekly service of Word and Sacrament — he also provided for three sermons each day, 5.00 am in each parish church and 8.00 am and 4.00 pm in the Cathedral.
- While providing some freedom for the minister to make changes as necessary, Bucer provided a reasonably fixed form of public worship for churches in the region.
- He also produced an excellent hymn book in 1541, which reflected his conviction that singing evangelical hymns helped the spiritual growth of people of all ages.

- Bucer's order of service was this:
  - Confession of sin
  - Absolution or word of comfort (1 Tim 1:15)
  - Psalm, or hymn, or the Kyrie Eleison and the Gloria, Prayer for understanding of the Word
  - Psalm
  - Reading of Scripture and Exposition
  - Explanation of the Lord's Supper and Exhortation to true faith
  - Creed
  - Intercessions
  - Reading of the institution of the Lord's Supper from the Gospels
  - Distribution of the bread and cup
  - A Communion hymn, or psalm
  - Thanksgiving after Communion
  - Aaronic blessing (from Num 6)

## JOHN CALVIN (1509-1564) AND THE GENEVA LITURGY

- In July 1536, when lodging overnight in Geneva, John Calvin was persuaded to stay and consolidate the Reformation there, rather than heading on to Strasbourg.
- In his first period of ministry (1536-38) he used Farel's *Manner and Fashion*, which was basically the Zwinglian liturgy.
- From what he had earlier written, it was clear that Calvin was concerned to have no divorce of Word and Sacrament, as the Zwinglian practice involved.
- Leaving Geneva in 1538, Calvin went to Strasbourg and became pastor to a congregation of French refugees.
- To provide a form of service, he translated Bucer's German liturgy, and amongst other changes, substituted the singing of the Ten Commandments for the Kyrie and the Gloria.
- He produced a French Psalter in 1539 and having returned to Geneva in 1541, replaced Farel's service with his French liturgy — but continued to clash with the Genevan Council over the frequency of the Communion service.

- Calvin's French liturgy, *The Form of Church Prayers*.
  - Introductory sentence
  - General confession of sin
  - Absolution
  - The first table of the Ten Commandments is sung
  - A psalm is sung
  - A prayer that God's Word may be faithfully expounded and received with humility and obedience
  - Lesson and sermon
  - Intercessions, and petitions about responding appropriately to the Word, which were extended when the Lord's Supper was to be celebrated
  - Blessing based on Numbers 6:24-26 (unless the Lord's Supper follows)
- Calvin's *Manner of Celebrating the Lord's Supper* would precede the blessing at Communion services:
  - Opening instruction or rubric
  - The minister gives a confession of faith
  - Reading from I Corinthians 11:23-29
  - The ministers distribute the bread and the cup to the people
  - A psalm is sung
  - A thanksgiving and concluding prayer follow
  - The Song of Simeon (*Nunc Dimittis*) from Luke 2:29-32 is sung
  - Blessing based on Numbers 6:24-26