

Plain Words about the Communion Service.

The succeeding collect anciently was part of the priest's private preparation for the office, but now the congregation are, according to the arrangements of our Prayer Book, permitted to participate in this beautiful prayer. The collect is attributed to very ancient times, and is said to be the composition of that good Bishop Ambrose, whom God used as such a blessed instrument in the conversion of S. Augustine. Whether this be so or not, we may at least conclude, with Bishop Sparrow, that it is 'an excellent prayer.' It teaches us that purity of heart is the great qualification for true spiritual worship.

To this succeeds the rehearsal of the Ten Commandments, with the insertion of a prayer between each, that we may be enabled to keep God's holy law. This practice is peculiar to our own Liturgy, and the recital of the Commandments in this place was not introduced among us until we find it in the Second Prayer Book of Edward VI. Exception has sometimes been taken to it on the ground of its novelty, and from the idea that the rehearsal of the Law can have no legitimate place in a Christian Liturgy. 'Though I cannot say it is ancient,' writes Bishop Sparrow, 'yet, surely, it cannot be denied to be very useful and pious. And if there be any that think this might be spared, as being fitter for poor publicans than saints, let them turn to the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee going up to the Temple to pray (S. Luke xviii), and then they shall receive an answer.'

There is another reason, too, why the Ten Commandments seem to have an appropriate place in the Communion Service. In the Invitation to the Holy Communion we are directed to the duty of self-examination, and it is specially declared that this examination is to be made 'by the rule of God's Commandments.' The moral law, as interpreted by Christ, is to be the standard, to which our conduct is to be squared. It is well, therefore, that at the beginning of the service the worshipper should be reminded of his previous self-examination, and instructed to pour forth a prayer for grace to keep the Commandments which he has hitherto broken.

A few words, perhaps, ought to be said about this prayer inserted between each Commandment. The title, *Kyrie*, usually given to it, shows its ancient origin, for this title is derived from the first word as it stands in the Greek. The substance of the prayer, as has been pointed out by an eminent liturgical scholar, is derived from Deut. v. 29. It is an expansion of the petition used in what is called 'the lesser Litany,'* adapted especially to the keeping of God's Commandments.

To this succeeds an act of intercession for the Queen, in accordance with the exhortation of S. Paul to Timothy.† These prayers are not found in exact words in any ancient liturgies, but in their spirit they are conformable to them. It is one of the instincts of

* It may be well to remind the reader that the term 'Lesser Litany' is applied to the threefold prayer, 'Lord, have mercy, etc.,' used in the Morning and Evening Services, and in the Litany.

† 2 Tim. ii. 2. 'Though there hath been a prayer for the King in the Morning Service, and another in the Litany, yet the Church here appoints one again, that she may strictly observe S. Paul's rule.'—*Bishop Sparrow*.