

The Injunctions of 1547 and 1559 in Relation to our Traditions of Worship.

THE worship of all historic communions is rooted in tradition. For the Roman that tradition is crystallised in the Canon of the Mass; for the Anglican in the Book of Common Prayer. The Free Church tradition consists in a certain frame-work, undefined but well understood, into which prayers, praises, the reading and expounding of the Scriptures, and the celebration of the sacraments are fitted. Within this frame-work there is a wide liberty of expression. In times past, stress has been laid on what the Anglicans rejected when they cut themselves off from Rome and on what the Free Churches rejected when they became separated from Canterbury. It is perhaps of greater significance to ask what we have retained from the past. The Free Church tradition may claim to have retained some elements of worship which have been obscured in the more restricted and legalised formularies of the Anglican Church. G. R. Owst in his book *Medieval Preaching*, which merits the attention of all historically minded Free Churchmen, claims that the sermon is the part of worship which passes through the centuries of the reformation ferment without any break or sudden change of form or content. If this thesis be accepted then the Free Churches may claim to have been more faithful than their established brethren to the ancient tradition of preaching which has always had a primacy in their worship but is only an extra to the Anglican service.

Some of the early Congregationalists, from whom sprang Baptist as well as Congregational churches, complained bitterly of "innovated injunctions in the worship and service of God" under Archbishop Laud. This charge has been looked upon as a very English form of propaganda but it may have more truth in it than has been suspected. Rome in the time of Charles I was not what she had been one hundred years earlier. The Council of Trent had intervened and Romanism had reacted strongly to the Reformation. If Laud brought the Anglicans nearer to the Rome of his day it does not necessarily mean that he brought his Church more into line with medieval tradition. Possibly those who allowed themselves to be cast out of the Anglican communion

rather than fall in with Laud's "Popish ceremonies," were carrying on a living tradition of no less historic importance than that to which Anglicans have clung.

The forms of worship of the Free Churches at their first emergence cannot have been wholly new or deliberately planned. Our forefathers must have had habits of worship which they had received. They certainly developed them; they cannot have originated them. Evidence of the ways of worship in England at the time of the break with Rome are therefore of great interest to us and as evidence we have two very illuminating documents in the Injunctions of 1547 and 1559. These injunctions are especially interesting as being practical rather than theological documents. England had broken with Rome. The government feared on the one hand reaction in favour of the Pope; on the other wild and unauthorised innovations. The Injunctions therefore describe the situation as it is and give such directions as a government which, though autocratic, had an ear for public opinion, considered to be feasible.

The main body of the Injunctions issued by Queen Elizabeth in 1559 is identical with those put out in the name of King Edward VI by his "most dear Uncle" Somerset in 1547, though Queen Elizabeth made substantial additions and left off a few articles which had ceased to be of practical importance. It is proposed here to pick out from the injunctions what they have to say on matters pertaining to the worship of the Church and in doing so to indicate any divergences between 1547 and 1559.

On the matter of prayer generally we are instructed that all goodness, health and grace ought to be looked for only of God and of none other—particularly not of images or relics. Almighty God is altimes to be honoured but especially in time of common prayer. Therefore in the time of Litany, Collects and common supplications all manner of people shall devoutly and humbly kneel upon their knees and give ear thereunto. Immediately before the Communion the priests and others of the quire are to kneel in the midst of the Church and sing or say plainly and distinctly the Litany set forth in English to the intent that the people may hear and answer.

For the reading of the Scripture a book of the whole Bible in English is to be provided in every church. King Edward VI provides the every Sunday and holy day the parson shall plainly and distinctly read or cause to be read one chapter of the New Testament immediately after the Lessons and at evensong after the Magnificat one chapter of the Old Testament. This injunction is omitted by Queen Elizabeth, the reading of the scripture having, we may suppose, by her time obtained an undisputed place in the services. Besides public reading it is provided that no

man is to be discouraged from reading the Bible in Latin or English. Rather all are to be exhorted to read the Bible as the very lively word of God and especial food of man's soul which all Christian persons are bound to embrace, believe and follow if they look to be saved.

The injunctions have much to say about the sermon, for their compilers clearly recognised that, besides its significance for worship, the sermon might be a potent weapon of propaganda, and were anxious to ensure that its propaganda value should be exploited to the advantage of the national and protestant regime. Edward VI laid down that all parsons should make or cause to be made one sermon every quarter at least wherein they should purely and sincerely declare the word of God and exhort their hearers to the works of faith, mercy and charity prescribed in Scripture, as opposed to works devised by men's "phantasies" as wandering to pilgrimages, offering candles or relics or images or kissing or licking the same or praying upon beads or such like superstitions. Elizabeth's injunctions call for this sermon to be preached monthly. In default of a sermon one of the Homilies prescribed by the Queen's authority may be read. When no preaching is to be had, then the parson is to recite from the pulpit the Pater-noster, the Creed and the Ten Commandments in English to the intent that the people may learn them by heart. Four times a year all ecclesiastical persons are to use the utmost of their wit knowledge and learning, purely and sincerely and without dissimulation to declare that all usurped and sovereign power, having no ground by the word of God, is for most just causes abolished and that the Queen's power in her realms and dominions is the highest under God—in other words they were to preach that the Pope could have no jurisdiction in England.

King Edward's injunctions have little to say upon the service of praise but Elizabeth adds an important section on singing in worship. There is to be a modest and discreet song so used in all parts of the Common Prayer that the same may be as plainly understood as if it were read without singing. For the comforting of such that delight in music it may be permitted that in the beginning or in the end of morning or evening prayers there may be sung a hymn or song in praise of Almighty God in the best sort of melody and music that may be devised, having respect that the sentence of the hymn may be understood and perceived.

The Lord's Supper is referred to by Edward VI as High Mass and by Elizabeth as the Sacrament of Communion. King Edward allows two lights upon the High Altar for the signification that Christ is the true light of the world. By 1559 many altars had been removed. Where this had not yet been done it was to be supervised by the curate or church wardens to avoid riotous

and disorderly scenes. A holy table was to be decently made and set in the place where the altar stood saving when the Communion of the Sacrament was to be distributed when it was to be placed in the Chancel for convenience of hearing and communicating.

There are hints that the conduct of the congregation in those days was not always irreproachable. Queen Elizabeth directs that no man woman or child is to be otherwise busied in service time than in quiet attendance to hear, mark and understand what is read, preached and ministered. Furthermore no man is to let or disturb the preacher in the time of his sermon, or to let or discourage any curate or minister from singing or saying the divine service now set forth, or to mock or jest at the ministers. Incidentally we learn that in those days men wore their hats in church for they are bidden to uncover their heads at the pronouncement of the name of Jesus.

The quality of the ministry too left much to be desired. Many priests, say Queen Elizabeth's injunctions, are utterly unlearned and unable to read. These are not to be admitted to any cure or spiritual function. Even when these have been excluded the standard is low enough. Ministers and readers of public prayers, chapters and homilies are charged to read leisurely, plainly and distinctly and "mean readers" are to peruse over before once or twice the chapters and homilies to the intent that they may read to the better understanding of the people.

These injunctions were really short term instructions indicating the path to be followed when the church of England was separated from Rome. Our Anglican brethren are the direct inheritors of them but it is not unfair to suggest that if the implications underlying them to be logically followed they lead to the Free Church and Baptist position.

Two principles appear in the injunctions which are the very basis of our tradition. The first comes to light in the attitude towards Bible reading. There was nothing controversial in the description of the Bible as the "very lively word of God." This had always been assumed as is witnessed by the medieval sermons which were packed with scripture references and proof texts. What was revolutionary was the exhortation to all men to read it. A year or two earlier the very possession of the Scriptures in English had been an offence which might lead to the stake. This injunction presupposes the right of private judgement. The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers is inherent in it. From it flows the attempt of the Baptists to recover the rites of the New Testament obscured in the medieval church by the accretions of the centuries. The second principle is stated again and again—it is that worship must be with understanding. The medieval church has broken down because its practices had become hope-

lessly divorced from realities. As the injunctions say men had been taught to go wandering on pilgrimages, to offer candles, to kiss relics instead of learning the religious duties of mercy and charity. This weakness had been all too apparent in its worship. The Latin tongue was unknown to the mass of the laity and some of the priesthood could not read their service books with understanding. The makers of the injunctions were emphatic that if there was to be any ornamentation its meaning must be clear—men might sing as long as the words were as well understood as if they had been read. It is a principle we do well to bear in mind today.

Dr. Moffat has said that the ultimate test of a tradition is not that it is being carried on with liturgical precision but rather does it inspire the worshipper? Does deep call deep? If the Spirit of God is manifest in our worship we need not fear changes of form; such changes have been and will be healthy growth following naturally from what has gone before.

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