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THE PRAYER BOOK AND THE DIRECTORY.

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ONE of the most important acts of the Westminster Assembly of Divines was to draw up a "Directory for the Public Worship of God" to replace the Book of Common Prayer. This was an outline to be followed in worship rather than a Liturgy ; it regulated the order to be observed, and laid down subjects of exhortation and objects of prayer and praise, sometimes in great detail ; but did not give fixed forms except at very special points. Thus it was very elastic ; those rich in "the gift of prayer" were not tied down, while weaker men might find help by keeping fairly closely to the words in the book.

There had of course been for many years, ever since the "Troubles at Frankfort" in 1554, Puritan objections to the Book of Common Prayer. These might be only to certain ceremonies, especially to the wearing of the surplice and to the sign of the Cross at baptism ; or they might extend to various phrases, especially to the requirement to use them ; or they might extend to the book as a whole. But we might have expected the majority of the Assembly, moderate men who had hitherto used the Book with, probably, some variations and reservations, to have been satisfied with striking out objectionable phrases and ceremonies, supplying deficiencies and allowing liberty to vary. A practice had already grown up of extempore prayer before the sermon. But all hope of an agreement by consent of moderate men ended when the House of Lords Committee, over which Bishop Williams presided, ceased to meet (1641). It included representative men on either side ; Burgess and Marshall, as well as Sanderson and Hackett ; though naturally neither Laudians nor Independents. Agreement was reached on a number of points ; but the proposals were unacceptable to extremists on either side, and all hope of compromise was ended when the "Root and Branch Bill" was brought in.

There seem two main reasons why the Assembly abolished the Book altogether. First and chief, the dominating influence there was that of the Scotch commissioners. Parliament could not gain the upper hand or even hold their own in the War, without the help of Scotland, and the Scots sold their help dearly. The "Solemn League and Covenant" which they forced upon England sought the religious union of the two countries in doctrine and discipline ; this meant in practice the imposition of the Scotch system upon England with a few possible modifications. No modified Prayer Book would be for a moment admitted by the Scots ; their revolt had been occasioned by Laud's attempt to force one upon them. When we read of the sufferings of the Scotch covenanters after the

Restoration, we should remember that they had previously forced their own system upon the English Church. It was due to them that the Solemn League and Covenant was imposed on all clergy and officials. Also they are responsible for Laud's execution ; his trial did not begin till their ascendancy over the English Parliament.

But there seems also a contributory cause. Laud had with the best intentions done the Prayer Book a great disservice when he insisted upon it being read before every sermon or lecture. He was credited with a desire to diminish preaching, as well as with an exaggerated idea of the value of hearing the service. We can appreciate his desire that preaching should not be exalted above praying, as George Herbert said when in restoring his church at Leighton Bromswold he had the "reading-pew" and pulpit both of the same height ; they are distinguished only by the sounding-board. But it had the bad effect of rendering the Prayer Book service a burden and a grievance. People who came for a sermon did not want to have the service thrust upon them, taking up their time and wearying them. That this action of Laud's had helped to set people against the Prayer Book appears from the preface to the Directory. " Prelates and their faction have laboured to raise the estimation of [the Prayer Book] to such a height as if there were no other worship or way of worship of God amongst us, but only the Service-Book ; to the great hindrance of the preaching of the Word, and in some places, especially of late, to the justling of it out as unnecessary or at least as far inferior to the reading of Common Prayer."

The problem how to find time for both preaching and worship is still with us ; in some respects it is worse now, as singing takes much longer time than reading did. The effect is that on Sundays, when alone the majority of our people come to church, the sermon has often to be very short or very attractive ; and then we find our people, whether educated or not, very ignorant of Christian teaching or of Church teaching. Yet we cannot sacrifice everything else to the sermon. To do Laud bare justice, he insisted on catechizing, which did mean definite teaching, in place of any afternoon sermon. The Puritans also valued catechizing, as is shown by the Assembly's Longer and Shorter Catechisms, a much fuller system of doctrine than our own rather meagre Church Catechism ; but it was difficult under their system to find much time for it. And the present difficulty is that what is required is teaching suitable for adults, not specially adapted to children. One of our troubles is that people have not got beyond childish ideas in religion, and so are easily staggered by difficulties. Till the Act of Uniformity Amendment Act (1867) it was not clear whether a sermon could be preached on any occasion without a full service preceding. It is now possible to detach preaching or addresses from such a service ; but this, while satisfactory on a weekday, does little to help the Sunday problem.

The Directory was under discussion in the Assembly throughout 1644. There were on some points great difficulties in reconciling

Scotch and English practices ; these were solved by the good old method of ambiguity, the Kirk would take the words in one sense, while the English interpreted in another. Thus the Scots did not hold with funeral sermons, whereas the English divines felt that their people would strongly object to their prohibition. The result was a phrase which, while not appearing to sanction them, might yet be so interpreted as to cover them. Another divergence was the Scottish practice of sitting round the Table at the Communion, as against the English one of the elements being carried round to the people in their pews. (Nothing had given greater offence than requiring all to receive at the rails.) Eventually, again, the phrase seemed to accept the Scottish practice without really rejecting the English ; the Table was to be "so conveniently placed that the communicants might orderly sit about it or at it."

The Directory contains much of value. The section on "The Preaching of the Word" is excellent ; it is quoted fully in Bishop Handley Moule's *To My Younger Brethren*. Also it shows clearly how the great bulk of the Puritans, including the Independents as well as the Scotch divines, regarded the Sacraments.

The book begins with "The Assembling of the Congregation," with the subjects for the minister's opening prayer ; then "the Public Reading of Holy Scripture," which is "part of the public worship of God, and one means sanctified by Him for the edifying of His people." Next, "Public Prayer before the Sermon" ; very comprehensive, over thirteen pages. "The Preaching of the Word" occupies nine pages ; then comes the "Prayer after the Sermon."

Next comes the "Administration of the Sacraments." In the case of Baptism, great stress is laid upon instructions as to the institution, nature, use, and ends of this Sacrament, Infant Baptism being specially in view. At the actual baptism, the minister is to say, calling the child by his name, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Pouring or sprinkling water upon the face of the child is not only lawful but sufficient, and the most expedient manner of baptism. No other ceremony is to be added. Subjects of prayer before and after the baptism are given. It is not to be administered privately, but in the place of public worship and in the face of the congregation. The child is to be presented by the father, or in case of his necessary absence, by some Christian friend in his place, professing his earnest desire that the child may be baptized.

Under "The Celebration of the Communion or Sacrament of the Lord's Supper" it is stated that "the Minister is to begin the action with sanctifying and blessing the elements of Bread and Wine set before him . . . having first in a few words showed that these elements, otherwise common, are now set apart and sanctified to this holy use by the Word of Institution and Prayer." The Words of Institution are to be read from one of the Gospels or from 1 Corinthians xi. The direction for prayer runs thus : "Earnestly to pray to God the Father of all mercies and God of all consolation

to vouchsafe His gracious presence and the effectual working of His Spirit in us, and so to sanctify these elements both of bread and wine and to bless His own ordinance, that we may receive by faith the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ crucified for us, and so to feed upon Him that He may be one with us and we with Him, that He may live in us and we in Him and to Him who hath loved us and given Himself for us." Have we not here a primitive and sufficient form of Epiclesis, which might be adopted if the absence of such is really a serious liturgical defect in our service? The book continues: "The minister being at the Table is to take the Bread in his hand and say, in these expressions (or other the like used by Christ or his Apostle upon this occasion), 'According to the holy institution, command and example of our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, I take this Bread and having given thanks I break it and give it unto you.' (Then the minister, who is also himself to communicate, is to break the Bread, and give it to the Communicants.) 'Take ye, eat ye. This is the Body of Christ which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of Him.' " [Similarly with the Cup.]

Sections follow on "The Sanctification of the Lord's Day," "The Solemnization of Marriage," "Visitation of the Sick" (very good), and "Burial of the Dead"—which sets aside all praying, reading and singing both on going to and at the grave, as having been grossly abused, in no way beneficial to the dead, and in many ways hurtful to the living. The final sections are on Public Fasting and Thanksgiving, and on the singing of Psalms.

I have given the contents of this book in some detail, because it is worth while to know what was the authorized service in the Church of England between 1645 and 1660. I believe in the continuity of the Church of England throughout this period, in the parishes and parish churches, as well as in private houses or conventicles.

The first section of the Directory passed hurriedly through Parliament in order that it might be presented as a whole to the King at the negotiations at Uxbridge. It was established by an ordinance of 3rd or 4th January, 1644/5, which enacted the Book of Common Prayer to be abolished, the various Statutes ordering its use repealed, and the Directory to be henceforth used and observed in all Public Worship. Another ordinance of March 13th ordered it to be printed. But as these ordinances provided no machinery for the circulation of the book nor any penalties for neglecting to use it, or for using the Book of Common Prayer, very little came of them at first. Hence another ordinance was passed 23rd August, 1645, providing that the Members of Parliament for each county should send copies of the book, fairly bound up in leather, to their County Committees, who should as soon as possible deliver them to the constables or other officers of the various parishes or chapelries, each of which was to have, and pay for, one book. Prayer Books were to be given up at once to the County Committees. The penalties were: (1) for the use of the Book of Common Prayer in any Church, Chapel or place of public worship, or in any private

place or family, £5 for the first offence, £10 for the second, one year's imprisonment without bail for the third ; (2) for omission to use the Directory, forty shillings each time ; (3) for preaching, writing or printing anything against it, "in the derogation or depraving of the said book," a sum not less than £5, nor more than £50. (In the original draft the penalty for a third offence in this case was imprisonment for life and confiscation of property. The compilers and authorizers of the Directory clearly regarded their work as sacrosanct !)

The penalties for using the Prayer Book resemble those laid down later on by the Conventicle Act. The provision against its use in any private place or family was clearly aimed at conventicles. There was little or nothing to choose between the two parties in this respect ; each sought to force the other into its own form of worship and to punish all variations. But there is one important difference ; a single magistrate could convict under the Conventicle Act, whereas under this Ordinance conviction (at least for depraving the Directory or not using it) could only be by a Jury at Quarter Sessions or Assizes.

I have before me a copy of the Directory addressed to "The parish of Witchampton" (probably Witchampton, Dorset), with a note from the Committee saying who was to deliver it to them and how much they were to pay.

It has been very much questioned whether the Prayer Book was really almost entirely disused in parish churches, or whether any number of clergy still continued to use it publicly. The facts were largely obscured at the Restoration by both sides. Churchmen often exaggerated their own loyalty, or that of their friends, to the Prayer Book ; Presbyterians, making out that *they* had not persecuted when in power, declared that the ordinance against the Book was almost a dead letter. But as far as we can get at the facts, it would seem that the use of the Prayer Book as it stood was almost, if not quite, abandoned in parish churches, at least during the Presbyterian ascendancy and under the Rump. It was too dangerous to retain it, what with Committees and what with soldiers. Known cases of its use seem on investigation (1) to belong to the later years of the Protectorate, when Cromwell showed more tolerance ; (2) to be mostly cases of conventicles, not services in parish churches ; or (3) to relate to occasional offices, not to regular Sunday services. The omission of any Burial Service in the Directory cannot have been popular ; and the Prayer Book service was hardly more illegal than any other. Baptisms were frequently taken privately. Or (4) it is possible that there was just so much variation in the service that it could, if necessary, be denied to be that of the Prayer Book.

Fell, Dolben and Allestree at Oxford, or Gunning in London, to mention the best known cases, did not officiate in parish churches, though, even so, Gunning had trouble from the soldiers. We are told the Prayer Book was used under the Commonwealth in one London church, St. Peter's, Paul's Wharf—see *Newcourt* under

that parish ; also perhaps at St. Gregory-by-St. Paul's. But it is probable that this belongs only to the later years of the Protectorate.

That its use was stopped under the Rump appears from a case among the State Papers a few years later. Early in 1656 Robert Mossom, late schoolmaster at Twickenham, petitions the Protector : " I was sequestered in 1650 for reading the Book of Common Prayer, but for no other delinquency or scandal ; and applied myself to the teaching of school, which I performed diligently and peaceably. I never spake against the government ; yet by your late proclamation I am prohibited teaching and deprived of a livelihood for my wife and six children. I beg a license to teach." Annexed is an order of the Committee for Plundered Ministers of 25th July, 1650, sequestering him from Twickenham for officiating by the Book of Common Prayer in contempt of the authority of Parliament. Cromwell ordered the Major-General and Committee to inquire into the case, and that Mossom might be allowed to teach if his conduct had been satisfactory. This shows how dangerous it was as late as 1650 to use the Prayer Book in any church near London, so that it is very unlikely that it can have been used in churches in London itself. It can only be after this that Mossom, afterwards Bishop of Derry, used the Prayer Book regularly at St. Peter's, Paul's Wharf. The ordinance of August, 1654, included among scandalous ministers to be ejected, " such as have publicly and frequently read and used the Common Prayer Book since the 1st of January last."

We have information of the action of three other men who became bishops at the Restoration : Gauden, Hackett, and Sanderson. Of John Gauden, Rector of Bocking in Essex all through the Troubles, afterwards Bishop of Exeter and then of Worcester, Anthony Walker, his former curate, giving a reason why not he but Bishop Duppa wrote the chapter in *Eikon Basilike* dealing with the prohibition of the Prayer Book, says : "'Tis well known he had forborne the use of the Common Prayer, though 'twas continued longer in his church than in any thereabouts." But the elasticity of the Directory left an opening for a compromise or evasion. Modifications of the language of the Book might pass, if they were said by heart and not read from the Book itself, and if there were sufficient variations from the text. We know that something of the kind was done by both Hackett and Sanderson.

Of John Hackett, afterwards Bishop of Lichfield, who kept his living of Cheam in Surrey though losing that of St. Andrew's, Holborn, his biographer, Dr. Plume, writes, that at Cheam " he constantly preached every Sunday morning, expounded the Church Catechism every afternoon, and read the Common Prayer all Sundays and Holy Days . . . till the Committee of Surrey enjoined him to forbear the use of it, by order of Parliament, at any time, and his catechizing out of it on Sunday in the afternoon. Yet after this order he ever still kept up the use of it in most parts, never omitting the Creed, Lord's Prayer, Ten Commandments, Confession and Absolution, and many other particular collects ;

and always as soon as the Church service was done, absolved the rest at home."

Of Robert Sanderson, afterwards Bishop of Lincoln, Isaak Walton says, "He was advised by a Parliament man of power and note, that valued and loved him much, not to be strict in reading all the Common Prayer, but make some little variations, especially if the soldiers came to watch him ; for then it might not be in the power of him and his other friends to secure him from taking the Covenant or sequestration ; for which reason he did vary somewhat from the strict rules of the rubric." Walton gives the Confession which he used—an expansion of that in the Prayer Book. Thus the last part runs : "Spare us, good God, who confess our faults, that we perish not, but according to Thy gracious promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord, restore us upon our true repentance unto Thy grace and favour. And grant, O most merciful Father, for His sake, that we henceforth study to serve and please Thee by leading a godly, righteous and sober life, to the glory of Thy holy Name and the eternal comfort of our own souls, through Jesus Christ our Lord." The whole form used by Sanderson is, according to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, preserved among the papers of the Dean and Chapter of Windsor. Also among the Rawlinson MSS. in the Bodleian Library is one (D. 217,243) defending such modifications of the Prayer Book. The author's name is not given ; but as the Confession, as far as I have compared it, is practically identical with that given by Walton as Sanderson's, and as the whole line taken suits him well, he must be the author. He says that in his opening address or call to worship, he combined the Exhortation and Absolution. He varied his closeness to the Prayer Book according to the character of the congregation.

We have a similar notice of a younger man, George Bull, afterwards Bishop of St. David's, ordained privately under the Commonwealth by Bishop Skinner of Oxford. As minister of St. George's, Bristol, "though the iniquity of the times would not bear the constant and regular use of the Liturgy," he "framed all the devotions he offered up in public out of the Book of Common Prayer, which did not fail to supply him with fit matter and proper words upon all the occasions that required him to repair to the Throne of Grace with the wants of his people. He had the example of one of the brightest lights of that age, the judicious Dr. Sanderson, to justify him in this practice" (Nelson, *Life of Bull*, Ch. IX). "Those who were most prejudiced against the Liturgy did not scruple to commend Mr. Bull as a person that prayed by the Spirit, though at the same time they cavilled at the Common Prayer as a beggarly element and as a carnal performance." On one occasion, when called upon to baptize a child of a Dissenter in his parish, he used the Service from the Book of Common Prayer, which he knew by heart ; and gave that life and spirit to all he delivered that the whole audience was extremely affected with his performance, notwithstanding that he used the sign of the Cross ; though they were so ignorant of the offices of the church as not to discover thereby that it was

the Common Prayer. The father returned him many thanks, intimating at the same time with what much greater edification they prayed, that entirely depended on the Spirit of God for His assistance in their extempore effusions, than those did who tied themselves up to the prescribed form. Bull then showed him the Office of Baptism in the Liturgy !

The whole account lays stress on the earnestness and fervency with which Bull prayed—the precise opposite to the mechanical reading of the service. It is this mechanical and monotonous reading (or intoning) which goes far to render our service a dead one. The wealth of responses, if properly joined in by the congregation, ought to make it a most lively service. But we have thrown away our advantages for the sake of music—good or bad !

We hear of a few cases where the use of phrases from the Prayer Book was called in question—e.g. that of Edward Pocock at Childray. But he showed that even if all these charges were true they would not affect him according to the ordinance ; and the whole case fell through.

Thus it would seem that in the public services in parish churches the formal use of the Prayer Book was almost entirely abandoned from 1646 to 1650 ; but there was a large amount of informal use, sufficiently disguised, and it was more largely used for occasional services.

At the Restoration the Book returned quickly into use. Some London churches used it the Sunday after the King returned. Other clergy were more cautious ; Symon Patrick of Battersea preached some sermons first on set forms of prayer ; Daniel Mills of St. Olave, Hart Street (Samuel Pepys' church), began to " nibble at the Liturgy " by saying " Glory be to the Father . . ." The Anglican position was as stated in the *Preface* (1662), that the Book was prescribed by the laws of the land, which had never yet been repealed. This was the general line taken up at the Restoration ; Acts of the Long Parliament to which the King had assented were the law of the land ; the Acts or ordinances passed by them after the break with the King were null and void. This of course covered the ordinances setting up the Directory and disallowing the use of the Book of Common Prayer. Even before the Act of Uniformity passed, the disuse of the Prayer Book was not legally sanctioned but only tolerated, and not always that. The Savoy Conference was a ghastly failure ; neither side was prepared to make any substantial concession, and the Presbyterians ignored the feeling of the country as shown in the recent Parliamentary election. Parliament had set them up ; Parliament put them down. On which occasion, if on either, was the voice of the people the voice of God ?