

PREFACE

IT is an assumption commonly made that liturgical worship is confined to the older Communion in the Catholic tradition. It is understood that the Free Churches of England adhere to 'free services'. Such an assumption is no longer valid. Liturgical interest has revived in England, and many Free Churchmen are experimenting with liturgical forms. A scholarly interest in liturgiology is a somewhat new phenomenon in the Free Churches, but it would be wrong to assume that liturgical worship as such is of recent origin. It is the purpose of this book to trace the development of liturgical worship in those Communion always regarded as belonging to the strict Protestant tradition.

At the Reformation the Church of England remained faithful to liturgical worship. The Elizabethan settlement was a statesmanlike compromise, and Elizabeth hoped that the Book of Common Prayer would prove acceptable to all her subjects. The devotion of many Englishmen to the Prayer Book went far to justify this hope. But the more extreme Catholics proved intractable, and the more extreme Protestants remained restive.

Since the time of the great Queen, periodic attempts have been made to amend the Prayer Book, and many suggested revisions have been forthcoming. It is not the purpose of this book to deal with the more conservative and Catholic revisions. These have received the attention of scholars. Rather is it the design of this study to deal with the more radical and Protestant revisions, not only because they are not so well known, but because they are the parent of much liturgical revision in the Free Churches. It will be seen that reforms suggested by Puritans and seventeenth-century Presbyterians have frequently found their way into Free Church prayer books.

Some of the Free Churches came to develop distinctive points of theology of their own. It is the further aim of this study to show how English Nonconformists not only inherited

PREFACE

Puritan ideas but even revised the Prayer Book to suit their own peculiar tenets of belief.

They were not to remain content with this. As time passed and the Free Churches became increasingly strong, the influence of the Church of England and the Prayer Book began to wane. Henceforth the Nonconformists began to produce prayer books of their own, independent of the Anglican tradition. Some of these effusions were, to say the least, unfortunate. But they cannot be ignored. They remain part of the religious heritage of England.

The Prayer Book tradition in the Free Churches had its beginnings among those zealous Puritans who sought to purge the Prayer Book of Romanism. Rites and ceremonies became suspect, and doctrines not authorised by the Holy Scriptures anathema. Events proved that the Church of England was not prepared to become Puritan. But the tradition itself did not die. It survived to bloom anew in the Free Churches.

The Free Churches remained staunchly Protestant. But by the close of the nineteenth century they had lost much of their old dread of the Bishop of Rome. Moreover, Anglicans and Free Churchmen were entering upon a new and happier relationship. Already had the Romantic Movement restored to Englishmen the lost enchantments of the Middle Ages, so that even Free Churchmen were beginning to build Gothic churches.

It is not to be supposed that the Free Churches would countenance an Oxford Movement. But Free Churchmen have shown an increasing appreciation of liturgical tradition, and an increasing disposition to make use of prayers from pre-Reformation sources. Thus the most recent Congregational prayer book, *A Book of Services and Prayers*, contains 'A Treasury of Prayers from ancient Liturgies'.

Occasionally the enthusiasm of individual Free Churchmen for the ancient Catholic piety has given rise to services of a pronounced Catholic character. These are of interest to the liturgist, though they are in truth side-streams only. The remarkable thing is that they should have come into existence at all. Only the revived interest in liturgiology among Free Churchmen will explain it.

Paradoxically, therefore, this book is to end with a brief description of the emergence of Catholic rites and practices in

PREFACE

the Free Churches. But the 'Catholic Apostolic Church' is dying, and the Society of Free Catholics is defunct.

An examination of Free Church liturgical history would seem to suggest the emergence of four main traditions—hence the division of this book into as many parts. This classification cuts across the strict denominational frontiers. But as each denomination maintains a separate, corporate existence, it is treated separately, though grouped with others in a like tradition. Thus the small, but historically interesting, Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion has many links with Methodism. But it is not part of the Methodist Church.

Again, the four traditions do not exist in isolation. They are more like threads which at times are intertwined. Thus, the Moravians, though not in the Anglican tradition, have bishops of their own, and have enjoyed, at various times, close fellowship with the Church of England. Despite these confusions the traditions are real and not arbitrary.

The Methodists (more especially the Wesleyan Methodists) are self-confessedly in the Anglican Tradition. So is the Free Church of England, which lays claim to the historic episcopate. Their revisions of the Book of Common Prayer are Puritan in temper and often in design. They may be understood only by reference to the English Puritans of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. That is why this book begins with the extremely important revisions of the Marian exiles and the Elizabethan Puritans. The liturgical activities of the Elizabethan Puritans, so surreptitious and tortuous, are examined in detail for the first time.

The Moravians, the Congregationalists, the Baptists and Churches of Christ are treated as belonging to the Dissenting tradition. Their liturgical tradition is not Anglican, though influenced by it. The Moravian Church has its roots in fifteenth-century Bohemia, and an attempt is made to indicate the influence of this long history on the British Province of the Church. This arose in England in the eighteenth century. It was then that the Moravians made so profound an impression on John Wesley.

The Congregationalists are the heirs of the Independents who rejected the imposition by the State of a uniform liturgy. But modern Congregationalists are taking an increasing interest in

PREFACE

liturgiology. That this is not an entirely new departure the chapter on the Congregationalists is designed to show. For a hundred years individual Congregationalists have experimented with some sort of liturgical worship.

Not so the Baptists, who have shown little affection for liturgies. But perhaps it is a sign of the times that of late they have made tentative moves in a liturgical direction.

It will be observed that no account is given in this book of the liturgical publications of the Presbyterian Church of England. This Church has very close affinities with Scotland. Thus *The Presbyterian Service Book for use in the Presbyterian Churches of England and Wales* (1948) makes use of Scottish sources. This book is a great advance on a previous book, *The Directory of Public Worship* (published in 1898, and revised in 1921). These books more properly belong to a study of Scottish liturgy.

The third tradition is frankly heterodox. New Church liturgies are of interest because of the determination of the followers of Emanuel Swedenborg to preserve liturgical worship. At times the influence of the Anglican tradition is evident, and these liturgies contain some interesting revisions of Prayer Book services.

A study of Semi-Arian and Unitarian Prayer Book revisions may be found in a previous book.

Somewhat remarkably this analysis concludes with the Catholic tradition. It would appear to be abortive, though Dr. Orchard is still of interest to many people, and the fine liturgy of the 'Catholic Apostolic Church' has received the encomium of scholars.

The truth is that interest in liturgiology would seem to be on the increase in the Free Churches of England. An old love of the Prayer Book still haunts the heirs of the Dissenters. At a time when prayers are being offered for the unity of Christendom, it may be of service to show how general is the desire of Christian people to make of public worship something true and lovely.