

THE PREFACE



“IT is a most invaluable part of that blessed *‘liberty wherewith CHRIST hath made us free’*—that, in his worship, different *forms and usages* may without offence be allowed, provided the *substance of the faith* be kept entire; and that, in every Church, what cannot be clearly determined to belong to *doctrine* must be referred to *discipline*; and, therefore, by common consent and authority may be altered, abridged, enlarged, amended, or otherwise disposed of, as may seem most convenient for the edification of the people, *‘according to the various exigencies of times and occasions.’*”
[First paragraph of the Preface to the “Proposed” book of Bishop White of 1785.]

The liberty of revision was first exercised in 1552—three years after the first publication of The Book of Common Prayer.

This revision, commonly known as the Second Book of Edward VI—the work of Bishops Cranmer, Ridley, Hooper and their fellows, along with Continental Reformers—was in full conformity with the principles of the Protestant Reformation. It was in limited use for only a few months up to the death of the young King. It was never adopted by the Convocation of the Church of England.

Not one of the subsequent revisions in England was made in harmony with the clear teaching of the Word of God as expressed in the doctrines of the Reformed faith.

It is true that on the 13th of September, 1689, “a commission for a further review of the Liturgy, etc., was issued out to a number of bishops and other divines, ‘than whom (it hath been truly acknowledged) the Church of England was never, at any one time, blessed with either wiser or better, since it was a Church.’”

These divines executed their commission thoroughly, and in harmony with Holy Scripture; but their work remained in manuscript until 1854, and then was printed only as a record.

It remained for the infant Church in the United States of America, under the leadership of the revered Bishop William White, to make the second Evangelical

revision of the Prayer Book, in 1785, in which were preserved many of the results of the Evangelical scholarship of the great divines of 1689. Like the second book of Edward VI, this failed of adoption. It is known as the "Proposed" book.

The revision of this "Proposed" book by the founders of the Reformed Episcopal Church in 1874, was the third Evangelical revision, and *the first one in history to be officially adopted.*

This present revision of the historic Liturgy continues the work of the English Reformers and Martyrs of the Sixteenth Century, of the eminent evangelical Divines of 1689, of Bishop White, and of Bishop George David Cummins, in the providence of God founder of the Reformed Episcopal Church, and his colleagues. It has been done by a Commission on the Revision of the Prayer Book, in conference with the Committee on Doctrine and Worship and the General Committee, under the mandate of our Twentieth General Council, in 1912, to make "a complete revision of the Book of Common Prayer, upon the basis of our present Prayer Book, and of all earlier evangelical revisions, with a view to giving the Reformed Episcopal Church the most complete and the best Evangelical Book of Common Prayer that has ever been compiled, and providing the widest possible liberty in its use, consistent with our position, as a professedly liturgical Church."

The Psalter is the Bishop Coverdale translation of 1535, which, as revised in the Rogers 'Matthew' Bible of 1537, and the Coverdale 'Great' Bible of 1539, was adopted in the first Book of Common Prayer, 1549. The alterations in the 'Bishops' Bible of 1568 were later incorporated. This Psalter is now further revised, every altered reading being in the exact words of the 'King James' version of 1611 or the American Standard revision of 1901.

The Epistles and Gospels, which since 1661 have been taken from the 'King James' version, are now somewhat revised in accord with the American Standard version.

For the Commission on Revision of the Prayer Book:

ROBERT WESTLY PEACH, *Chairman*
WILLIAM RUSSELL COLLINS,* *Secretary*

*Deceased