

**ORIGIN OF THE BOOK OF
COMMON PRAYER OF THE
PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL
CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649267217

Origin of the Book of Common Prayer of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America by Various

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Cover @ 2017

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276

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Protestant Episcopal Church
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PRIVATELY PRINTED
FOR THE USE OF THE CHURCHMAN'S LEAGUE
OF THE DIOCESE OF WASHINGTON
1897

Vignand
10-27-30

THIS paper is the result of a layman's reading during his summer vacation this year. In printing it for the use of the Churchman's League of this Diocese, he is aware that it will be found to contain nothing new for the clerical members; but he hopes that some of his lay brethren may find the facts which it presents as novel and as interesting as they were to him.

J. C. BANCROFT DAVIS.

WASHINGTON, November, 1897.

12-24-2001

ORIGIN OF THE AMERICAN PRAYER-BOOK.

When the Bishop of Rome conferred upon Henry VIII the title of Defender of the Faith, a title still borne by his successor and stamped upon every coin issued from the British mint, the Church in England was subject to Italian direction; but its services were conducted according to Uses of its own, as were the services in most countries then recognizing the supremacy of the Pope.

In the preface issued with the first Prayer-book of Edward VI, it is said, "There hath been great diuersitie in saying and synging in churches within this realme: some folowyng Salisbury use, some Herford use, some the use of Bangor, some of Yorke, and some of Lincolne." The act of uniformity of 1549, establishing that prayer-book, also speaks of "divers forms of Common Prayer, commonly called the Service of the Church," and enumerates "the use of Sarum, of York, of Bangor and of Lincoln." It is now generally conceded that the Sarum services were in much the most extensive use. The convocation of 1542 had ordered their general adoption in the province of Canterbury.

Henry VIII contemplated some material changes in these services. In the last year of his reign he directed Cranmer "to pen a form for the alteration

of the Mass into a Communion," but he died before this could be done. His son, Edward VI, succeeded to the throne on the 28th of January, 1547 (N.S.). In the following December his first Parliament enacted that "the most blessed Sacrament be hereafter commonly delivered and ministered unto the people . . . under both kinds"; and an order was issued "for administering the Holy Communion" in accordance therewith. This was in advance of the first prayer-book of Edward VI.

Also, in advance of that prayer-book, the convocation of Bishops and Clergy engaged in its preparation ordered that "before high mass the priests and choir should kneel in the church, and sing or say the litany in English."

The second Parliament of Edward VI, on the 22d of January, 1549 (N.S.), passed the "Act for Uniformity of Service and Administration of the Sacraments throughout the Realm," under which the first prayer-book of that king was issued in the following March. In the next year his third Parliament passed "An Act for the ordering of Ecclesiastical Ministers," under which the Ordinal entitled "The form and maner of makyng and consecratyng of Archbishops, Bishops, Priests and Deacons" was issued. This Ordinal was incorporated in the next edition of the prayer-book; and, as afterwards modified and changed, has continued to form part of it.

As this first prayer-book of Edward VI was the starting-point of Anglican services, let us briefly

consider how far it departed from the Sarum Breviary and Missal; how far it followed them; and how far they are followed in the American prayer-book. In making this examination let us take up the several subdivisions of King Edward's prayer-book in their order.

1. It was entitled "THE BOOKE OF THE COMMON PRAYER AND ADMINISTRACION OF THE SACRAMENTS, AND OTHER RITES AND CEREMONIES OF THE CHURCHE AFTER THE USE OF THE CHURCHE OF ENGLAND." This name, so familiar to us, was then new. It indicated that the prayers were *common* alike to clergy and to laity; to the cathedrals and to the humblest parish churches. This could not be said of any previous book of offices, uses, or services.

It was preceded by a preface, which is still substantially retained, with additions, in the English prayer-book of to-day. The preface to the American prayer-book grows out of the separation of the two organizations. The Sarum missal had no preface.

2. The preface was followed by a "TABLE AND KALENDER, EXPRESSING THE ORDRE OF THE PSALMES AND LESSONS, TO BEE SAYED AT MATYNS AND EUENSONG, THROUGHOUT THE YERE," and an "ORDRE HOWE THE RESTE OF HOLY SCRIPTURE . . . IS APPOINTED TO BEE REDDE."

The Sarum missal has a kalendar of its services, but not of the Psalms. The latter were not read in

the same order in that service that they are in the Anglican service. The Psalter was divided into two unequal parts. One of these, extending from the beginning to Psalm 109, was divided into seven portions, each of which was called a Nocturn. These were read in turn in the services in the mornings of the seven days of the week. The other part, extending from Psalm 110 to the end, was divided in the same way, and the divisions were, in their order, assigned to the middle hours and Compline.

The offices for Matins and Evensong in the new prayer-book, by omitting Compline and other services, were reduced to two; but these were none the less based on material in the Sarum breviary. Everything, however, peculiar to the Roman Church, everything recognizing Papal authority, every offer of worship to the Virgin, every offer of such to saints, all worship of relics, all blessing of holy water, all sprinkling of it when blessed, all blessing of candles, and all similar things were rejected from the Anglican service. In all changes made since that time they have not been restored.

In that prayer-book the order of prayer for Matins began with the Lord's Prayer. The sentences from Scripture with which that service now opens, the general confession and the declaration of absolution were added in 1552, in the second prayer-book of Edward VI. From the Lord's Prayer forward to and including the collect for grace, the service was practically the same that it is to-day. That collect

terminated the Matins service in both the first and second prayer-books.

The order for Evensong in those prayer-books also began with the Lord's Prayer. The sentences, the confession, and the Declaration of Absolution were added in subsequent revisions. From the Lord's Prayer to the close of the Evening Service, it was substantially the same with the modern service as it is in the American prayer-book, except that the Athanasian creed was required to be sung or said immediately after *The Benedictus* on the feasts of Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, and Trinity.

3. Next came "THE INTROITES, COLLECTES, EPISTLES AND GOSPELS, TO BE USED AT THE CELEBRACION OF THE LORDES SUPPER AND HOLYE COMMUNION THROUGHE THE YEARE: WITH PROPER PSALMES AND LESSONS FOR DIUERS FEASTES AND DAYES."

The introits (which were Psalms sung or said immediately before the collect, epistle and gospel) disappeared from the service in the revision known as the second prayer-book of Edward VI, and have never been restored. They differed not very materially from those in the Sarum missal, and may be dismissed without further comment.

That missal also contained Collects, Epistles, — called Lessons when not taken from one of the epistles, — and Gospels, not only for the services retained