

**THE BOOK OF COMMON
PRAYER: THE THREE HUNDRED
AND FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF
ITS PUBLICATION IN ENGLISH**

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The Book of Common Prayer: The Three Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of Its Publication in English by Samuel Hart

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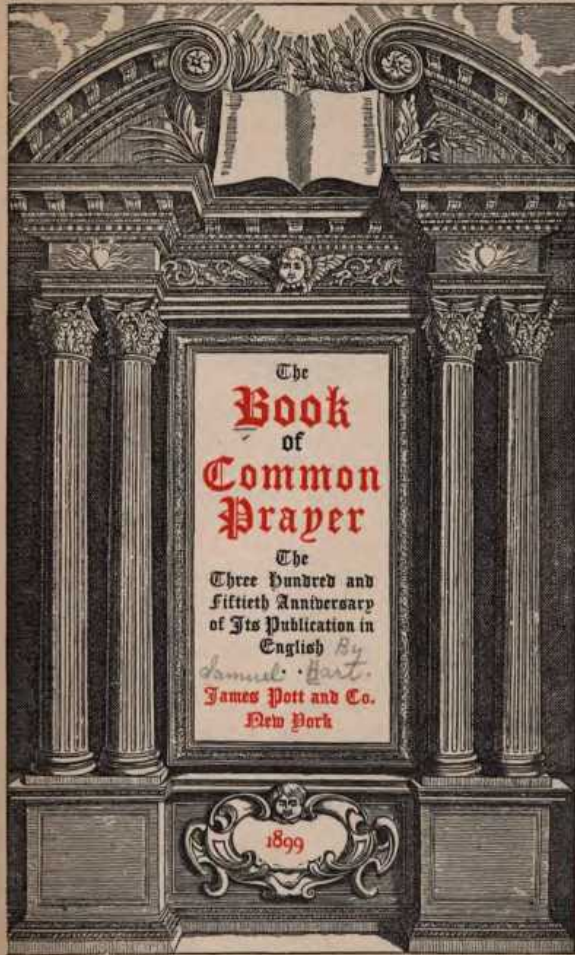
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SAMUEL HART

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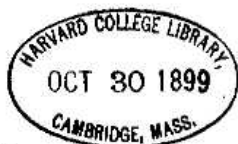
The
Book
of
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The
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Prefatory Note



*A*t the last General Convention attention was called to the fact that the Whitsunday of 1899 would be the three hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the publication of the Book of Common Prayer in English, and that the occasion might be well "employed for the better instruction of the people in the history and meaning of the book." In the House of Deputies, the Committee on the State of the Church expressed the hope that the occasion might be "used to rehearse the history of the Prayer Book and to inculcate the important lessons taught by that history." And the House of Bishops, in the Pastoral Letter, "most earnestly" asked "that the day be observed in our churches as commemorating an event which, more than any other single gift of God, has reversed the confusion of tongues, by giving to the lips of countless worshippers the one mouth in which to show forth God's praise."

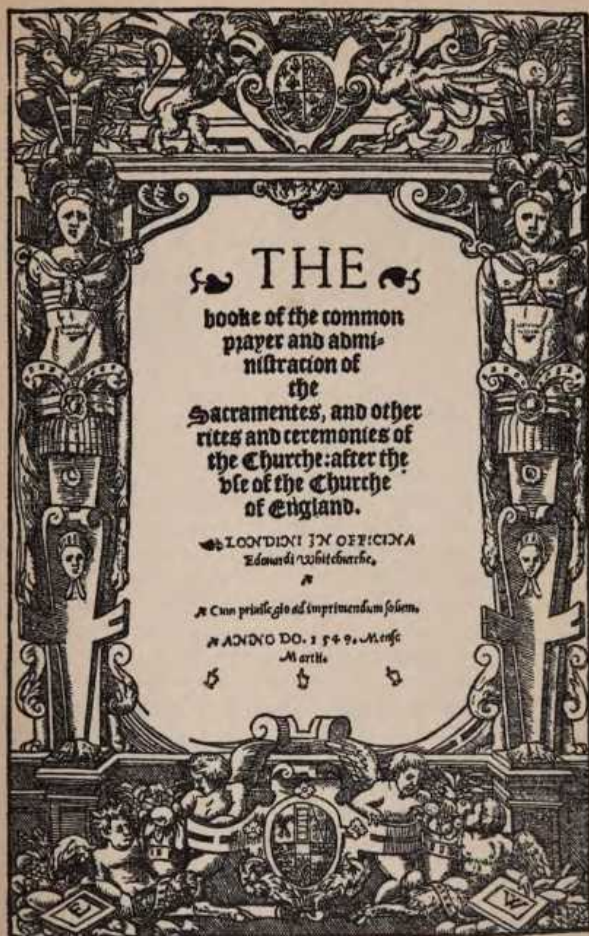
¶ Some of us have been familiar with the Prayer Book, or at least with parts of it, for many years; and others are growing familiar with it as children or youths or more mature men and women. But few of us have studied either the words or the structure or the history of the Book as carefully as we might well do; and sometimes the very familiarity keeps us from asking the questions which we ought to ask or makes it difficult for us to answer the questions which others ask. This brief sketch of the history of the Prayer Book which I have prepared will answer but

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few of these questions; but it may perhaps serve, at this anniversary, to increase the interest in some matters connected with the Book and to encourage the asking of more questions and the search for the answers to them. And certainly it is most appropriate that the New York Bible and Common Prayer Book Society should take this opportunity to remind Churchmen, not only of the value of the Prayer Book itself, but also of the importance of intelligently understanding both the Book and its history.

SAMUEL HART

Whitman-rose, 1899



Fac-simile of the Title-page of the First Edition of the Prayer-Book in English

The Prayer Book in English: A. D. MDCCLIX- MDCCLXXIX



IN Whitsunday in the year 1549, just three hundred and fifty years ago, the English Prayer Book was first used. Three centuries and a half is not a very large part of the nineteen centuries of the Church's history; but when we compare the time with the duration of almost anything on earth except the Church of Christ, we shall say that the Prayer Book has lasted for a long while, so that it has become one of the institutions of the world. In 1549, the boy-king, Edward VI., had been but two years on the throne of England, having succeeded his father, the bluff old Henry VIII.; printing had been invented barely a century before; it was but fifty-seven years since Columbus had discovered the new world, and no permanent English settlement had yet been made on the American continent; the whole of the Bible had been translated into English and copies had been placed in the churches, but sixty-two years were to elapse before the so-called Authorized Version should be made. It was a time of great excitement in both the political and the religious world of western Europe, and politics and religion were strangely confused in that great move-