

## Project Canterbury

## The New American Prayer Book: Its History and Contents

By E. Clowes Chorley, D.D.

Historiographer of the Protestant Episcopal Church

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Chapter V. Additions and Amendments to the Prayer Book of 1789

The Prayer Book of 1789, with sundry additions and amendments, remained the Standard Book until 1892.

The most important additions were a revised Ordinal and the revision of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion. Prior to 1792 the American bishops used the English Ordinal omitting the political references. At the General Convention of that year the House of Bishops revised the three services for the ordering of deacons, the ordination of priests and the consecration of bishops.

The first change was the omission of the Oath of the King's Sovereignty which read:--

I A.B., do swear that I do from my heart abhor, detest, and abjure, as impious and heretical, that damnable Doctrine and Position, that Princes excommunicated or deprived by the Pope, or any authority of the See of Rome, may be deposed or murdered by their Subjects, or any other whatsoever. And I do declare, that no foreign Prince, Person, Prelate, State, or Potentate, hath or ought to have, any jurisdiction, Power, Superiority, Preeminence, or Authority, Ecclesiastical or Spiritual, within this Realm. *So help me God.*

In the ordination of priests there was provided an alternate form of commission which has not the significant words, "Whosoever sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whosoever sins thou dost retain, they are retained." In this alternate form the words, "Take thou authority to execute the office of a Priest" are substituted for "Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a Priest." The new form was not adopted without difference of opinion in the Upper House. It is on record that Bishop Seabury consented to the alteration with "great reluctance," but it was finally inserted. In the *Form for the Consecration of Bishops* a pledge to render "all due reverence and obedience to the Archbishop" was changed to a promise of "conformity and obedience to the doctrine, discipline and worship of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America." The further promise to "correct and punish all such as be unquiet, disobedient and criminous within your diocese" was changed to "diligently exercise such discipline, as by the authority of God's word, and by the order of this Church, is committed to you." With these changes the Ordinal was bound up with the Book of Common Prayer.

The next addition to the Prayer Book was the Articles of Religion. As far back as 1790 the convention of the diocese of New York had expressed its conviction that "many respectable members of our Church are alarmed at the Articles of Religion not being included in our new Book of Common Prayer." In the "Proposed Book" the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England had been cut down to twenty. In the Book of 1789 they were left out altogether. The question of their reinstatement proved to be troublesome. An informal discussion at the convention of 1792 revealed the fact that the bishops themselves were divided in opinion. Bishop White by no means approved of the language of some of the Articles, but felt that without them every minister of the church would be his own judge of orthodoxy and his judgment might well be affected by his particular prejudices. To the general surprise Bishop Seabury doubted the expediency of any Articles at all, believing as he did very strongly that the doctrines of the Church "should be comprehended in the Liturgy." This conviction, however, was counterbalanced by his sense of the necessity for some definite and authorized declaration of the faith. Bishop Claggett was decidedly in favor of their insertion; Bishops Provoost and Madison were in favor of dropping them entirely.

This difference of view, which was reflected in the House of Clerical and Lay Deputies, led to a postponement of the subject in two or three General Conventions. At the convention of 1799 a committee of the House of Deputies reported,

That the articles of our faith and religion, as founded on the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testament, are sufficiently declared in our creeds and liturgy, as set forth in the book of common prayer established for the use of this church; and that further articles do not appear to be necessary.

A vote being taken on a resolution "that the Convention now proceed to the framing of articles of religion for this church" was carried by five to three in the clerical order, and three to one in the lay order. A day or two later the committee charged with the duty of framing the articles brought in its report and recommended the adoption of seventeen Articles as compared with the thirty-nine of the English Prayer Book. The revision was ruthless. Among the Articles eliminated were those on "Christ the Son of God"; "The Descent into Hell"; "Sin after Baptism"; "Traditions of the Church," etc. Fundamental Articles on such subjects as "The Church"; "The Sacraments"; "The Lord's Supper" and "Predestination" were changed beyond recognition. When the proposals were presented to the House of Deputies it was resolved "that on account of the advanced period of the present session, and the thinness of the Convention" the consideration be postponed, but the secretary was directed to transcribe the report of the committee in the Journal. In his *Memoirs of the Church* Bishop White is careful to state that the House of Bishops was not consulted in the matter at all. The bishops never saw the proposals till they appeared in the journal; neither were they adopted by the House of Deputies. They stood merely as the expression of the views of a small committee.

Final action was taken at the General Convention of 1801. Neither the bishops nor the deputies were satisfied with the language of many of the Articles as they stood in the English Book. At the same time the extreme difficulty of framing new Articles became more and more evident. It came to be felt that the old ones were more likely to prove acceptable than any new ones which might be drafted. The diocese of New York instructed its deputies to vote for them as they stood with the necessary political changes. At the Convention of 1801 the Thirty-nine Articles were finally adopted and set forth under the title:

Articles of Religion, as established by the Bishops, Clergy and Laity of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, in Convention, on the 12th day of September, in the year of our Lord, 1801.

As compared with the English Book there were a few alterations. In the eighth Article the inclusion of the Athanasian as one of the three creeds to "be thoroughly received and believed" was eliminated. Article Twenty-one, "Of the Authority of General Councils" was omitted entirely, largely because of its assertion that "General Councils may not be gathered together without the commandment and will of Princes." The twenty-fourth, "On Homilies" was retained with a note recognizing the Homilies as "an explication of Christian doctrine, and instructive in piety and morals," but its order that they should be read in the churches was suspended "until a revision of them may be conveniently made." Article Thirty-six, "Of the Consecration of Bishops and Ministers" substituted the Ordinal of the Prayer Book of 1792 for that of the Prayer Book of Edward VI. The thirty-seventh Article, "Of the power of Civil Magistrates" was omitted and a new one provided. They may be set side by side for comparison.

### *English Book*

The Queen's Majesty hath the chief power in this Realm of England, and other her dominions, unto whom the chief Government of all Estates of this Realm, whether they be ecclesiastical or civil, in all causes doth appertain, and is not, nor ought to be, subject to any foreign jurisdiction.

Where we attribute to the Queen's Majesty the chief government, by which titles we understand the minds of some slanderous folks to be offended; we give not to our Princes the ministering either of God's Word, or of the Sacraments, the which thing the Injunctions also lately set forth by *Elizabeth* our Queen do most plainly testify; but that only prerogative, which we see to have been given always to all godly Princes in holy Scriptures by God himself; that is, that they should rule all states and degrees committed to their charge by God, whether they be Ecclesiastical or Temporal, and restrain with the civil sword the stubborn and evil doers.

The Bishop of *Rome* hath no jurisdiction in this Realm of *England*.

The laws of the Realm may punish Christian men with death, for heinous and grievous offences.

It is lawful for Christian men, at the commandment of the Magistrates, to wear weapons, and serve in the wars.

### *American Book*

The power of the civil magistrates extendeth to all men, as well Clergy as Laity, in all things temporal, but hath no authority in things purely

spiritual. And we hold it to be the duty of all men who are professors of the gospel, to pay respectful obedience to the civil authority, regularly and legitimately constituted.

With these alterations the Thirty-nine Articles Religion have been unchanged in the American Prayer Book for one hundred and twenty-eight years. At the General Convention of 1925 it was voted to remove them from their place at the end of the Book of Common Prayer. Inasmuch, however, as they are part of the Constitution of the Church, this action had to be confirmed at the Convention of 1928. That confirmation was withheld, and the Articles stand at the end of the new Standard Book.

In 1799 there was added to the Prayer Book "A Form of Consecration of a Church or Chapel" which appears to have been an adaptation of the Office generally used in the Church of England. Bishop White states that "it is substantially the same with a service composed by Bishop Andrews in the reign of James I." At the same time there was also added "A Prayer for Convention," reading:

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who, by thy holy spirit, didst preside in the council of the blessed Apostles, and hast promised, through thy son Jesus Christ, to be with thy church to the end of the world; we beseech thee to be present with the council of thy church here assembled in thy name and presence. Save them from all error, ignorance, pride and prejudice; and of thy great mercy vouchsafe we beseech thee, so to direct, sanctify, and govern us in our present work, by the mighty power of the Holy Ghost, that the comfortable gospel of Christ may be truly preached, truly received, and truly followed, in all places, to the breaking down the kingdom of sin, satan, and death; till at length the whole of thy dispersed sheep, being gathered into one fold, shall become partakers of everlasting life through the merits and death of Jesus Christ our Saviour. *Amen.*

In the early days of the colonial church it was the almost invariable rule to induct ministers into the charge of parishes, thus giving them legal possession. In 1799 the convention of the diocese of Connecticut moved to revive this practice by voting "that Dr. Smith [The Reverend Doctor William Smith, of Norwalk, Connecticut. He is not to be confounded with Dr. William Smith, of Maryland, who played so large a part in the compilation of "The Proposed Book" of 1785.] be desired to prepare an office for induction and recognizing clergymen into vacant parishes." This was done and in 1802 the diocese of New York adopted the same office with some verbal alterations and made its use obligatory by canon. Two years later Connecticut formally adopted it. The General Convention of 1804 added to the 1789 Prayer Book "An Office of Induction of Ministers into Parishes." Its use was made obligatory. In 1808, to avoid conflict with some state laws, the use was made optional and the title was changed to "An Office of Institution."

Save for verbal alterations and corrections in punctuation, the Prayer Book of 1789, with the foregoing additions, remained the Standard Book for the American Church until the first revisions of 1886 culminating in the Standard Book of 1892. In 1811, however, it was determined that no alterations in the Book should hereafter be made until proposed in one convention, made known to all the dioceses, and adopted at the subsequent convention. In 1820 it was ordered that the Book of Common Prayer be distinguished from the Psalter, the Ordinal, The Office of Institution, the Articles of Religion together with the Form of Consecration of

Churches and Chapels and the prayer for meetings of Convention. These were declared to be of "equal authority with the Book of Common Prayer; but, when bound up with it, ought not to appear as parts thereof." The General Convention of 1835 moved the prayer for Conventions to a place among the occasional prayers and both Houses concurred in the expression of an opinion "that the Confessions, the Creeds, and the Lord's Prayer in the Liturgy of our Church, should be the joint acts of minister and people, and be confirmed by their united declaration of assent in the word 'Amen'." In 1844 the words "Associated Rector" and "State" wherever they occur in the Office of Institution were eliminated.

In 1863 there appeared in the South the Confederate Book of Common Prayer of which there seem to have been at least three editions. The best known has the title page:

The Book of  
COMMON PRAYER  
And Administration of  
THE SACRAMENTS  
And Other  
RITES AND CEREMONIES OF THE CHURCH  
According to the Use of The  
Protestant Episcopal Church  
in the  
CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA:  
Together with the  
PSALTER, OR PSALMS OF DAVID.

It bears the imprint of  
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA:  
J. W. RANDOLPH.

MDCCC.LXIII.

The confederate books were printed in London and ran the blockade to reach their destination. They differ from the American Book only in the substitution of the words, "Confederate States of America," for "United States of America" on the title page and in the prayers for the President and Congress. In addition to these there were also published for the use of the Confederate army and navy a selection of prayers for private devotion and public services. When the American Church was reunited at the close of the War the Confederate Prayer Book passed into disuse.