

Preface.

IT is but reasonable that, upon weighty and important considerations, changes and alterations should be made in the public Liturgies of the Church; and 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 "according to the various exigencies of times and occasions," the discipline of the Church may, by common consent and due authority, be so defined as may seem best and most convenient for the edification of the people.

And forasmuch as nothing can be so plainly set forth, but doubts may arise in the use and practice of the same; to appease all such diversity (if any arise) and for the resolution of all doubts, concerning the manner how to understand, do, and execute, the things contained in this Book; the parties that so doubt, or diversely take any thing, shall always (in matters spiritual) resort to the Bishop of the Diocese, having jurisdiction in this Church, who by his discretion shall take order for the quieting and appeasing of the same; so that the same order be not contrary to any thing contained in this Book.

And although the keeping and omitting of a Ceremony, in itself considered, is but a small thing; yet the wilful and contemptuous transgression and breaking of a common order and discipline is no small offence before God. As Paul saith, "Let all things be done decently and in order;" the appointment of which order pertaineth not to private men; therefore no man ought to take in hand, nor presume to appoint or alter any public or common order in Christ's Church, except he be lawfully called and authorized thereunto.

And whereas in this our time, the minds of men are so diverse, that some think it a great matter of conscience to depart from a piece of the least of their Ceremonies, they are so addicted to their old customs; and again on the other side, some are so fond of novelty, that they would change anything old for that which is new; it was thought expedient, not so much to have respect how to please and satisfy either of these parties, as how to please God, and profit them both.

And having thus endeavored to discharge our duties in this weighty affair, as in the sight of God, and to approve our sincerity therein (so far as lay in us) to the consciences of all men; although we know it impossible (in such variety of apprehensions, humours and interests, as are in the world) to please all; nor can expect that men of factious, peevish, and perverse spirits should be satisfied with any thing that can be done in this kind by any other than themselves: yet we have good hope, that what is here presented, and hath been with great diligence examined and approved, will be also well accepted and approved by all sober, peaceable and truly conscientious sons of the Reformed Episcopal Church.

It is the duty of Churchwardens to examine the "Letters of Orders," and other credentials of any person representing himself to be a Minister; and no one is authorized to officiate in any Diocese of this Church, or as a Minister thereof, without a license from the Bishop having jurisdiction.

This Book (in its Articles, Liturgy, Services, Preface and Rubrics) contains the Doctrine, Worship, and Discipline of this Church, which are more fully explained in the Constitution and Canons approved, or to be approved, by the General Synod of the same.