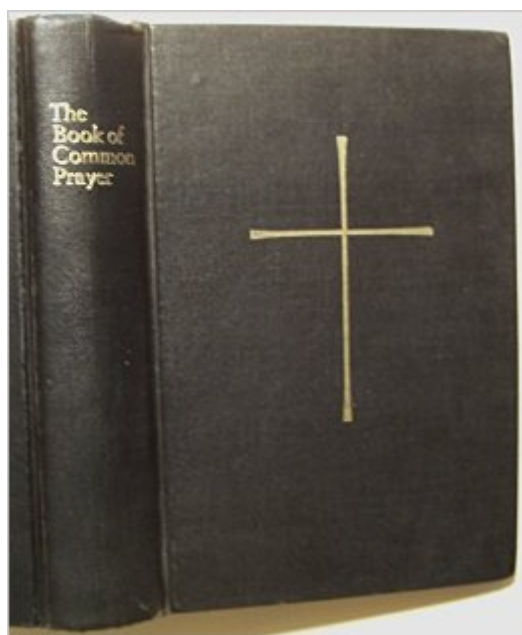


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The Book Of Common Prayer And Administration Of The Sacraments And Other Rites And Ceremonies Of The Church According To The Use Of The Reformed Episcopal Church In North America Together With The Paslter Or Psalms Of David



Synopsis

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Customer Reviews

The still relatively new (2003) Reformed Episcopal Church (R.E.C.) Book of Common Prayer (ISBN 1-893293-00-9, measuring 9 in., i.e. 22 cm., at the covers, in the buckram-hardbound option) is as superb an edition, especially for Low Church use, choral or spoken, as any Book of Common Prayer (B.C.P.) edition ever published. It has returned to many elements of the traditional B.C.P. which in the past the Reformed Episcopal Church had altered or deleted, e.g., the priest's pronouncements of Absolution in the Holy Communion and in Morning and Evening Prayer, some of the articles in the 39 Articles of Religion, and so forth. The 2003 B.C.P. represents more normative Anglicanism than the R.E.C.'s prior Prayerbooks had done so. The R.E.C.'s 2003 B.C.P., in its note "Concerning the Present Edition" (on prelim. p. xii) mentions that it "is based upon the [Church of England's] Book of Common Prayer [of] 1662, incorporating selected aspects of subsequent revisions, including the American [PECUSA's, i.e. Protestant Episcopal Church's] Book of Common Prayer [of] 1928 and the 1963 edition of the Book of Common Prayer according to the use of the Reformed Episcopal Church. The Lectionary is generally drawn from the altar edition of An Australian Prayer Book [of] 1978, augmented by the Sunday Psalms and Lessons from the 1945 [variant] edition of the Book of Common Prayer [of the] PECUSA [of] 1928. The Psalter is the American [usual variant of the] Coverdale version." The structure and sequence of wording of the Eucharist, a matter of much interest to Scots, Americans, and Canadians, are those of the Church of England (in its

1552-1662 Prayerbooks), which prevail in the R.E.C.'s primary Eucharistic liturgy, rather than those of the more catholic-leaning, traditional, and indigenous "Scottish Liturgy" of the Episcopal Church of Scotland (preserving eucharistic options of the Church of England's 1549 B.C.P. options rather than those of 1552 onwards), as reflected in the Scottish-influenced 1928 U.S. and 1962 Canadian Prayerbooks, all displaying the ongoing influence, to some (albeit still limited) extent, of the 1549 (first) B.C.P.'s Eucharist. However, the "Alternate Form" of the Holy Communion, the second form of the Eucharist found in the R.E.C. Prayer Book as revised for publication in 2003, provides a liturgy that conforms to that of the 1928 B.C.P. of the U.S.' Protestant Episcopal Church. This provides the same degree of rather more catholic-leaning order of the American liturgy, and thus, by extension to an important degree, of the "Scottish Liturgy", which, in numerous crucial ways, is more in the 1549 B.C.P. tradition rather than it is in that of 1552. Use of this "Alternate Form", if it become widespread, could lead to greater uniformity of the R.E.C.'s B.C.P. with the Prayer Books of the mainline North American denominations, i.e. the traditional 1928 U.S. and 1962 Canadian Books of Common Prayer. The pride of place accorded within this 2003 B.C.P. of the R.E.C. to the more 1662 English B.C.P.-derived Holy Communion service, no doubt, brings to mind the R.E.C.'s Low Church/Evangelical outright CONDEMNATION (expressed on p. 623 in the 2003 R.E.C.'s B.C.P.) of the concept of the Real Presence in the Eucharist as Luther and others (e.g., the Eastern Orthodox Churches) rightly and literally conceive and teach it. This anti-catholic stance is found in the R.E.C.'s "Declaration of Principles". As the R.E.C. officially states it, "This Church condemns and rejects [among other] erroneous and strange doctrines, as contrary to God's Word ... [that] the Presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper is a presence in [i.e., within] the elements of bread and wine" themselves, reflecting, at best, the Receptionist understanding of Martin Bucer or even, at worst, the purely symbolic and memorial doctrinal attitude of Huldrych Zwingli during the Protestant Reformation concerning the Real Presence or a "Real Absence" (as a Confessional Lutheran pastor, formerly in Montréal, echoing some theologians of the past, sarcastically once put it about Anglican and other non-Lutheran Protestant Eucharistic doctrine). However, the willingness now of the R.E.C. to print an alternative Eucharistic liturgy that conforms in such an important regard to the 1928 (U.S.) and 1962 (Canadian) Books of Common Prayer (and, by extension, to the Scottish Episcopal Church's 1929 B.C.P.) eventually may alleviate some of the quasi-Zwinglian sting of the R.E.C.'s longstanding hostility to more catholic-minded (and hence theologically Lutheran-leaning) Anglican liturgical forms and norms. Of course, in the Daily Office's services of Morning Prayer (Mattins) and of Evening Prayer (Evensong), whether found in relatively more Protestant or more pervasively Anglo-Catholic influenced Prayerbooks and Missals, the services are largely as the

1552 B.C.P. had finalised them. That is so despite whatever minor variants there are which one encounters in the Daily Office services from one of the various Anglican provinces' B.C.P. editions to others of them. The 1552 services prevail among both Anglican camps (of churchmanship) and so they do here in the case (ever more now than in previous R.E.C.'s B.C.P. editions) of the Reformed Episcopal Church. Just to what extent the 2004 R.E.C.'s standard B.C.P., and the R.E.C.'s own variant of it in current English, regarding the Daily Office (of Mattins and Evensong) derive from the 1928 U.S. liturgical standard is something of which Robin G. Jordan discusses (with cavils about the R.E.C.'s B.C.P. that will leave most lay and even clerical readers fairly indifferent, overall), in his rather inadequately titled Internet article, "A Modern Language Version of the Reformed Episcopal Book of Common Prayer: Morning and Evening Prayer" on the WWW site, "Anglicans Ablaze". The tables of readings in this B.C.P. are exceptionally well thought out, especially in providing better, and more uniformly, than most Anglican Prayerbooks tend to do for Psalm readings, rather as the 1929 Scottish B.C.P. had done along in its own way. However, the R.E.C.'s continuing exclusion of public lections from the books of the O.T.'s Apocrypha, even for weekday services (a failing which, on the other hand, the Scottish B.C.P. does not share) remains a regrettable defect. On the other hand, a praiseworthy feature of the R.E.C.'s 2003 B.C.P. is the presence of some auxiliary tables of readings and Psalms for occasions which are not part of the Church Calendar for the Christian Year, per se, but which many congregations, anyhow, may wish to celebrate publicly and of which the layman may desire also to avail himself in his private devotional life. Then there are, additionally, this Prayerbook's "Topical Selections of Psalms", on prelim. p. xv, and "Psalms and Lessons the Special Occasions" in church and national life (citing the running title at the tops of facing pages), on prelim. p. l-li. Unlike, notably, the 1928 U.S. Prayerbook of the PECUSA, this B.C.P. of the R.E.C. provides (as an option) for the use of the Athanasian Creed, found on p. 36-38. At least the very presence of this Creed emphasises the significance of this great statement of Trinitarian faith in the life and in the teaching of the Church, much as the Church of England's 1662 B.C.P. (but even more notably and more emphatically) has done for so many centuries. Traditional Tudor/Stuart Prayerbook English is used throughout in this Prayerbook. (For those who prefer current-day English, the R.E.C. makes separate provision elsewhere.) The book is exceptionally well printed and bound, the typography and layout of its pages easy on, and pleasing to, the eyes. These factors and numerous others make the R.E.C.'s 2003 B.C.P. (which, despite other influences as well, now bases itself more essentially on the 1662 B.C.P. of the Church of England rather than on any former U.S. edition of the B.C.P., Reformed Episcopal or Protestant Episcopal) to be especially fine for use in one's personal devotions at home as well as for public

worship. It is rather a shame, however, that the R.E.C.'s B.C.P. did not provide for Compline and for the "Forms of Prayer To Be Used at Sea" which the 1962 Canadian B.C.P. so admirably provided for and perfected. (The 1929 Scottish B.C.P. also had made provision for Compline, in a service of somewhat greater length and complexity.) To go into further comparisons, albeit the sheer excellence of this publication would warrant doing so, is not something desired to recount here. Certain details, such as the minor changes of wording which have substituted for earlier ones, e.g., the way that occasional word substitutions have been made, within the context of Tudor/Stuart syntax, could be improved, as could other slight aspects of the book. Indeed, no edition of the B.C.P. (not even the very fine 1962 Canadian and 1929 Scottish Books of Common Prayer) is perfect. (See, on this and other Prayerbook matters, this same reviewer's comparative remarks about various Anglican Provinces' B.C.P. editions, within the context of an review of the 1929 Scottish Prayer Book.) Rest assured, however, that the R.E.C.'s 2003 B.C.P. is a real step forward for the continuation of traditional worship in Anglicanism, whether especially in the "Continuing Church" movement, towards which the R.E.C., having forsaken its historic isolation, has oriented itself in recent years more sympathetically than in the past, or, as well, within the "official" Anglican Communion which remains, whether dubiously or wisely be the case, in communion with the Archbishopric of Canterbury.

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