

Book reviews

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The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559 and 1662, ed. Brian Cummings (Oxford: OUP, 2011), pp. lxxiv+822. £16.99/\$29.95 (hbk).

With the exception of the Bible, the Book of Common Prayer (BCP) is perhaps the most important book in the English language. Indeed, Brian Cummings notes that this extraordinary book formed the basis of worship in England ‘from the Reformation to the Beatles’ (p. ix). In one volume, Cummings has accomplished the seemingly impossible: publishing a critical edition of the three most important editions of the Prayer Book. Such a monumental endeavour is no easy task, requiring many difficult choices and decisions on what to include, and what to exclude. This task, however, was completed in just over 800 pages, and done exceedingly well.

In his *Introduction*, Cummings encapsulates the importance and history of the BCP. Considering the volumes which have been written on the Anglican Prayer Book, Cummings’ summary is remarkable in its succinctness. The *Introduction* is followed by a *Note on the Texts*, in which Cummings provides a brief synopsis of the history of Prayer Book printings along with the rationale behind his critical text. A brief but important *Note on Music*, a *Select Bibliography* suggesting further reading, and a helpful *Chronology* round out the preliminary matter.

The heart of this book is a critical edition of the three most important editions of the BCP: 1549, 1559 (which is a slight revision of the 1552 BCP) and 1662. Cummings is careful to present the texts as close to the original as possible, retaining such things as original spelling, while also reproducing the prayers and rubrics in such a way as to make it intelligible to the modern reader. In order to limit the length of the book, only the text of the 1662 BCP is presented in its entirety. This is not ideal, and Cummings admits as much, but including all three Prayer Books in their entirety would have brought this volume to well over 1500 pages. Several sections are therefore omitted in the texts of the 1549 and 1559 Prayer Books, and therein lies the difficult decision of what to delete. Cummings, for example, chose to omit the *Psalter* and *Ordinal* in both the 1549 and 1559; a wise choice, in my opinion, as the *Psalter* and *Ordinal* were never really a part of previous editions of the Prayer Book, but merely bound together with the BCP (often with other material such as the *Sternhold and Hopkins Metrical Psalms*). However, I’m less enthralled with his choice to omit such things as the *Collects*, *Epistles* and

Gospels from the 1549 and 1559 BCP. The 1662 edition not only made some significant changes to the older Collects, but also used a different translation of the Bible for the Epistles and Gospels (the Authorized Version of 1611 was used instead of the Great Bible of 1540). I personally would have preferred to see the Collects, Epistles and Gospels included in Cummings' 1549 and 1552 editions, even if such inclusions would have added to the length of the book.

Explanatory notes, which appear at the end of the volume, are comprehensive yet brief. The notes for the 1549 Prayer Book focus on its creation; notes for the 1559 and 1662 Prayer Books detail subsequent revisions in relation to earlier editions of the BCP. In my opinion, Cummings could have incorporated more of the significant scholarship from liturgiologists such as Colin Buchanan and Gordon Jeanes in his notes. A Glossary and Index complete the volume.

Cummings' edition of the BCP will appeal to those seeking an introduction to the Prayer Book, as well as historians and Prayer Book scholars in need of a reference edition of the BCP. Not only does Cummings offer a fresh edition of the BCP which takes into account some of the most recent scholarship; he was also able to provide the three most important Prayer Book editions in one volume.

Glen Segger

Yale Institute of Sacred Music, 409 Prospect Street, New Haven, CT 06511, USA

glen.segger@yale.edu

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Julian Templeton and Keith Riglin (eds), *Reforming Worship: English Reformed Principles and Practice* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012), pp. xvii+178. \$23.00.

This collection of essays is the fruit of a conference held at Westminster College, Cambridge, in September 2007, and its focus is the United Reformed Church. Formed in 1972, this union church brought together Congregationalists and Presbyterians, and they were subsequently joined by the Churches of Christ, and the Congregational Union of Scotland. Although all were expressions of the Reformed tradition, there were differences, and although these were mainly in polity, they also extended to worship. These essays probe some of the common background and some of the contradictions which remain in the denomination. Historical essays by Ernest Marvin and David Cornick outline the heritage of the Reformed tradition as expressed in Zurich and Geneva, and then via Geneva to Scotland and the Westminster Directory. Some editing problems have occurred in Cornick's essay. He refers to this reviewer's work, *From the Lord and 'the Best Reformed Churches'*,