



THE LAMP



"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Psalm 119)

PBSC TORONTO BRANCH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2:30 PM, Saturday May 24, at St. Olave's Church, 360 Windermere Ave.

Refreshments will be served; the annual President's and Treasurer's reports will be presented, and elections of branch officers for the coming year will be held. These will be followed by an address by Dr. Jesse Billett on his perspectives gained from teaching the Prayer Book at Trinity College, and thoughts on the future of Prayer Book worship and doctrine.

Dr. Jesse Billett is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Divinity at Trinity College, Toronto, where he teaches church history, mediaeval liturgy, and a course on the Book of Common Prayer. He holds degrees in music and history from Harvard University and from Cambridge University, England. It was during his three years as a choral scholar in the choir of King's College, Cambridge, that he had the opportunity to be immersed in daily worship according to the Prayer Book pattern, and ultimately became an Anglican (he was formerly a non-denominational Evangelical). Jesse lives in mid-town Toronto with his wife Jill, who runs a seniors' home care company, and their three small children.



Dr. Jesse Billett

The event will end with a service of sung Evening Prayer at 4:00 PM.

ST. MICHAEL'S YOUTH CONFERENCE, AUGUST 25-30



Now in its nineteenth year, the St. Michael's Youth Conference offers a week-long programme of worship, discussion and relaxation aimed at stimulating and enriching the spiritual growth of teens, and enhancing their knowledge and understanding of the faith. Activities include swimming, archery, canoeing, on-site games, interactive courses on Christianity and Anglicanism, music instruction, and daily Prayer Book worship. The cost of registration, which includes all meals, activities and outings for the full week, is only \$250! For registration forms or further information, contact Diana Verseghy at diana.verseghy@sympatico.ca, or visit the conference website at www.stmikesontario.com.

THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER IS STILL A BIG DEAL

(This article is reprinted from the April 2014 issue of "Christianity Today".)

The Book of Common Prayer (BCP) has had an illustrious and chequered career since Archbishop Thomas Cranmer first introduced it to the Church of England back in 1549, almost five hundred years ago. If you've ever pledged to be faithful to someone "till death do us part", mourned to the words "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust", or hoped for "peace in our time", you've been shaped by Cranmer's cadences, perhaps without knowing it. Alan Jacobs, Distinguished Professor of the Humanities at Baylor University and former professor of English at Wheaton College, has given us a lively recounting of the old Anglican prayer book's history in this new "biography", part of Princeton University Press's *Lives of Great Religious Books* series. Jordan Hylden, a doctoral candidate in theology and ethics at Duke University Divinity School, corresponded with Jacobs about the BCP's global reach and its mixed reception by evangelicals.

The Book of Common Prayer is nearly 500 years old. Does it still make a difference for how we worship today?

I suppose that would depend on who you mean by "we" – there are millions of Christians worshipping in ways unaffected by the BCP, except insofar as they share common roots in Jewish and early Christian worship. But the reach of the BCP is more extensive than one might think. It has relatively direct connections to Methodist and Lutheran worship. And the liturgical scholarship that, in the early 20th century, went into possible revisions of the Church of England's 1662 book eventually made its way not only into modern Anglican prayer books but even had an influence on liturgical developments in the Roman Catholic Church, especially when vernacular Masses were approved at Vatican II.

And then, of course, the BCP's rite for Holy Matrimony has spread throughout the English-speaking world. I was once a groomsman in a Unitarian wedding that used it – though with all Trinitarian references gently excised. So all in all, the BCP's influence on Christian worship is kind of a big deal.

You show how Thomas Cranmer and the evangelicals of his day made some substantial changes to the existing Catholic liturgies. What makes the Book of Common Prayer a distinctively

evangelical form of worship?

Well, I'm not sure it is, at least in its liturgies. Cranmer strove to maintain as much continuity with traditional forms of worship as he could, given his commitments to the Reformation. So in the liturgies themselves there is little that a medieval Catholic Christian could find fault with – except that they are in English, which traditionalists thought would distract the congregation from the private devotions they customarily pursued during Mass.

The key differences, I think, lie in two other areas. First, in what Cranmer took away: for instance, the whole panoply of devotion to the saints was cut back tremendously, leaving the saints' days still in place but emphasizing that they are examples to be followed rather than intercessors.

Second, and for Cranmer most important, is the strong emphasis on a lectionary that took people through the whole Bible – and, if people went to Morning and Evening Prayer, read through the whole of the book of Psalms each month. Cranmer wanted the literate to read the Bible thoroughly and faithfully, and for the illiterate to hear it read every day. (Thus also his emphasis in the prayer book rubrics on the importance of the priests reading the liturgy itself and the Bible readings "in a loud voice".)

Saturation in Scripture was Cranmer's primary goal for the people of England, and I don't think you can get more evangelical than that!

What about some of the problems that evangelicals have had with the BCP over the years? For instance, you show in your book how some evangelicals have viewed the prayer book as a kind of rote formalism that quenches revival and the free movement of the Spirit.

The evangelical suspicions of the prayer book have been varied over the years. Some of them are linguistic: Why do you call that table an "altar"? Why do you call that minister a "priest"? Some involve gestures and objects, even those that are not prescribed by the BCP but are not forbidden by it: Why do you light all those candles? Why do you ask people to kneel to receive Communion? The general suspicion seems to be that if it looks like Papistry and sounds like Papistry and smells like Papistry (e.g., incense), then it must be Papistry.

But many of these people could be satisfied by relatively minor changes in wording in the BCP, some of which were made in various revisions. The more intractable protestors have always been those who prefer “free” (unscripted) worship, who disdain *all* set forms. One of the more hard-core in this group was the great poet John Milton, who not only rejected all liturgy but did not even believe that Christians were permitted to say the Lord’s Prayer (he saw it merely as a template which we should adapt for the needs of our own hearts). For people like Milton, the very existence of any kind of prayer book is offensive.

To take up another issue that people have had, you begin the first chapter of your book by writing that the “Book of Common Prayer came into being as an instrument of social and political control”, and you show that it stayed that way for a long time. Is that all it was, or was there more to it?

Well, certainly Cranmer would have said that there’s more to it, and (being an Anglican myself) I would agree. But it’s easy to understand that those people who were compelled against their will and conscience to worship according to the words and rubrics of the BCP wouldn’t have been inclined to take so generous a view of the matter.

What would you say are the strengths of the historic prayer book tradition? More specifically, speaking as an evangelical Anglican yourself, what do you think evangelicals can learn from it?

In making his prayer book, Thomas Cranmer wanted to make sure that the people of England were constantly exposed to Holy Scripture in a language they understood, working through the whole of the Bible regularly and the Psalms every month, while following a calendar that rehearsed in every church year the whole story of salvation starting with the Fall and culminating in Christ’s unique sacrifice of himself on the Cross and his glorious resurrection, the benefits of which we are not worthy to receive on any merits of ours – “we are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs from under Thy table” – but only through the purest grace extended on the basis of Christ’s unique status as Lord and Savior. How can you get any more evangelical than that?

Shifting gears a bit, part of the story that you tell is that the Book of Common Prayer has often had difficulty serving as a genuinely *common* book of prayer for a church with significant internal differences. For instance, you tell how in the Victorian era, riots broke out and ministers went to

jail over things as apparently insignificant as putting candlesticks on the altar. What led to such passionate struggles?

That’s a tough one to put briefly, but basically it was a very deeply rooted contention between those who saw Anglicanism as Reformed Protestantism through-and-through – for whom, often enough, Catholicism was something frighteningly Other – and those who longed for reconnection with ancient Catholic practices, if not with the authorities at Rome. The former group tended to see every cloud of incense and every candlestick on what they would call the “table” (not the “altar”) as a sign that the Reformation had not been victorious after all, and that English Christianity might well sink into a fog of superstition.

You end your book on a note of soft lament, in essence saying that the Book of Common Prayer may no longer exist as a living book, save for a few. What do you mean by that? What have we lost?

Thomas Cranmer wanted one book and one liturgical “use” for one country. He wanted English folk to be able to go into any church in England on any given day and experience the same worship service in the same words. For a long time this desire of Cranmer’s was indeed realized – and more, it was possible to go into what came to be known as “Anglican” churches all over the world and hear the same beautiful cadences, which was something I doubt Cranmer ever expected. He was making a prayer book for *his* country, and expected that Christian worship in other countries would develop in varying ways according to those places’ liturgical requirements.

And indeed this is what happened. Every Anglican province in the world eventually decided that it needed its own prayer book – and as time went by and the English language altered and took various forms in various places, Anglicans felt that they needed to update those books. I don’t think that any of this would have surprised or even disappointed Cranmer – but it is a little sad nonetheless, because there is for many of us satisfaction in saying the same words that our predecessors in the Christian faith said. Any nostalgia I feel for that old prayer book is closely related to the way many Catholics feel about the old Latin Mass, or many Christians throughout the English-speaking world feel about the King James Bible.

Cranmer himself would, I’m sure, understand this nostalgia. But he would probably urge us to get over it.

ONTARIO REGIONAL CYCLE OF PRAYER, JULY-SEPTEMBER

(Over the coming months, please remember the following parishes in your prayers. You might consider using for this purpose one of Prayer #8 or #9, found on pages 43 and 44 of the Book of Common Prayer, or the prayer "For the Parish" found on page 736.)

JULY	6	<i>Trinity III</i>	St. John's Church, York Mills
	13	<i>Trinity IV</i>	Trinity Church, Cambridge
	20	<i>Trinity V</i>	St. Mary Magdalene's Church, Toronto
	27	<i>Trinity VI</i>	St. James' Church, Guelph
AUG.	3	<i>Trinity VII</i>	St. Peter's Church, Erindale (Mississauga)
	10	<i>Trinity VIII</i>	St. Simon the Apostle, Toronto
	17	<i>Trinity IX</i>	Christ Church, North Bay
	24	<i>St. Bartholomew</i>	St. Clement's Church, Toronto
SEPT.	31	<i>Trinity XI</i>	St. Peter's Church, Scarborough (Toronto)
	7	<i>Trinity XII</i>	St. John's in the Wilderness (Sarnia)
	14	<i>Trinity XIII</i>	St. Matthias' Church, Toronto
	21	<i>St. Matthew</i>	St. Paul's-on-the-Hill, Pickering
	28	<i>Trinity XV</i>	St. Joseph's Church, Brampton

The Prayer Book Society of Canada was founded in 1986 by Anglicans who were alarmed at the erosion of classical Anglican doctrine, worship and spirituality that was proceeding alongside the adoption of new liturgies. The Society's aim is briefly to support the continuing use of the Prayer Book for all who value it as their preferred medium of worship, preserving as it does faithfulness to Holy Scripture and adherence to the orthodox Anglican doctrine of the Christian faith. The Mission Statement of the Society, adopted in 1995, is: "To promote the understanding and use of the Book of Common Prayer as a scriptural system of nurture for life in Christ".

The Society operates on two levels: the national level and the branch level. The National Council is responsible for setting policy and direction for the Society, and for overseeing activities with a national scope. All branch presidents are *ex officio* members of the National Council. The branches are individually responsible for organizing local activities and initiatives in their own geographical areas, in support of the aims and objectives of the Society.

The Ontario Council of PBSC Branches is an informal coalition of branches in southern Ontario, formed in 1994. It serves as a forum for the planning of joint activities, and provides a network of support for the branches. It publishes this newsmagazine, "**The Lamp**", which appears quarterly in the months of March, June, September and December. Opinions expressed in these pages are not necessarily those of the Society as a whole. Contributions of articles and news items are welcome, and should be sent to the editor (see opposite).

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