

The Prayer Book Society of Canada Newsletter

Advent 2013

The Daily Offices and the Pattern of Common Prayer

(This essay, by Aaron James, won third prize in the competition sponsored by the PBSC Ottawa branch last year to mark the 50th anniversary of the Canadian Book of Common Prayer and the 350th anniversary of the 1662 English Book of Common Prayer.)

Since its initial publication in 1549, the Book of Common Prayer (BCP) has provided theological and spiritual formation to generations of Christians, its services creating a common framework in which “the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments [are] duly ministered”.¹ Despite the availability of alternative liturgies in a wide variety of styles, the BCP continues to be treasured not only as a central document in the history of Anglicanism, but as an essential aid to prayer and Bible reading both in public worship and in private devotion. In recent years, Anglican authors have made a powerful case for the continued relevance of the Prayer Book. Sue Careless writes that “the BCP is held in great affection by all kinds of Anglicans. This is not simply because of its beautiful language, but because it carefully reflects both Holy Scripture and the teaching of the early, undivided Church. Prayers that have stood the test of time can still speak with an uncanny freshness today.”² The late Peter Toon echoes these sentiments, praising the BCP for allowing Anglicans “to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness and with spiritual understanding”, and for providing “a well-tested way of praying the Holy Scripture in public worship and in a disciplined manner for the whole Christian year, from Advent to the end of the Trinity Season”.³



Aaron James

¹ Articles of Religion, XIX: Of the Church.

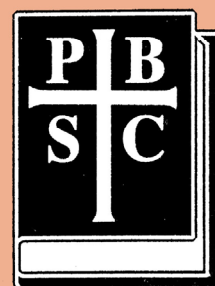
² Sue Careless, *Discovering the Book of Common Prayer: A Hands-On Approach*, vol. 1: *Daily Prayer* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 2003), 24.

³ Peter Toon, *The Anglican Formularies and Holy Scriptures* (Philadelphia: Preservation Press of the Prayer Book Society of the United States, 2006), 26.

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Toon and Careless are among the most recent in a long series of Anglican authors who have defended the value of the Book of Common Prayer. Although the two above extracts take an irenic tone, both authors are clearly aware that their strong advocacy of the Prayer Book is likely to be controversial; after all, there is no need to defend the relevance of a liturgical tradition unless others believe it to be irrelevant. Despite the official canonical status of the BCP, in actual practice the use of the Prayer Book is the exception rather than the rule in the Anglican Church of Canada. A few parishes use the BCP either exclusively or in alternation with the Book of Alternative Services (BAS) or other service books, but in general the Eucharistic rite of the BAS has become the standard form of Sunday worship for Canadian Anglicans. Even when the BCP is made available, "its use is likely to be much abridged and to take place early of a weekday morning".⁴

To encourage wider use of the Prayer Book for the Sunday Eucharist in Canadian parishes is a laudable goal, and one hopes that many Anglicans will be newly inspired by their encounters with the BCP at Sunday worship in this anniversary year. Yet to focus exclusively on the Prayer Book as a text for the public celebration of the Eucharist is to diminish its actual value, as though the BCP were merely an altar missal for the use of the clergy rather than a truly "common" prayer book for the use of all. Indeed, a consultation of the contents of the Canadian 1962 Book of Common Prayer reveals many services that are well suited for use during the rest of the week: rites for the daily Office at

morning, midday, evening and nighttime, forms of prayer for use in families, services of healing for the sick, a service of thanksgiving after childbirth, and a wide selection of prayers and thanksgivings for various occasions. The Prayer Book is not only suitable for public worship in parish churches and cathedrals but, as Martin Thornton writes, "a lifelong companion and guide, to be carried from church to kitchen, to parlour, to bedside table; equally adaptable for liturgy, personal devotion, and family prayer".⁵ To reassert the relevance of the BCP, therefore, is not simply to advocate for a more theologically or liturgically rich Eucharistic rite, important as this is, but to encourage the reclamation of this comprehensive devotional ideal. To quote Thornton again, "The vital principle, tragically missed by both modern liturgists and their critics, is that, like the [Benedictine] *Regula*, the Book of Common Prayer is not a list of Church services but an ascetical system for Christian living in all its minutiae."⁶

Sue Careless has emphasized this aspect of the Prayer Book tradition in her recent series *Discovering the Book of Common Prayer*; the first volume of the series, now in its third printing, is dedicated primarily to the use of the BCP in individual devotions.⁷ She presents the Prayer Book first as a support to daily prayer, proceeding only in later volumes to the sacramental services of public worship. As modern users of the BCP will note, this ordering is

paralleled in the structure of the Prayer Book itself; every edition of the Book of Common Prayer since 1549 has begun with the services of Morning and Evening Prayer. This placement reflects the centrality of these offices in Anglican worship, which are enjoined upon each parish priest to be said "daily through the yere",⁸ just as the old Latin offices had been said each day prior to the Reformation. Nowhere else in the Western Church was there a vernacular-language Divine Office; the continental Reformers, in their effort to "cut themselves off from the historic Church and to make a new start", had abandoned this ancient practice along with the rest of the medieval liturgy.⁹ Only in England was the ancient pattern of the daily Office retained, with its historic components: the regular reading of the complete psalter, Scripture lessons, canticles, and prayers. Richard Hooker, defending this supposedly "Romish" practice against Puritan opposition, writes that "the church of Rome hath rightly also considered, that public prayer is a duty entire in itself, a duty requisite to be performed much oftener than sermons can possibly be made. For which cause, as they, so we have likewise a public form how to serve God, both morning and evening, whether sermons be had or no."¹⁰ For Hooker, the duty

⁸ Rubric of the 1549 BCP, in *The First and Second Prayer Books of Edward VI* (London: Everyman's Library, J. M. Dent and Sons, 1968), 21.

⁹ J. L. C. Dart, *The Old Religion: An Examination into the Facts of the English Reformation* (London: S.P.C.K., 1956), 34.

¹⁰ Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, V, xxviii, 3. In *The Works of That Learned and Judicious Divine Mr Richard Hooker*, vol. 1 (Oxford: At the

⁴ David Martin and Peter Mullen, introduction to *No Alternative: The Prayer Book Controversy* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), ix.

⁵ Martin Thornton, "The Anglican Spiritual Tradition," in *The Anglican Tradition*, ed. Richard Holloway (Oxford: Mowbray and Co., 1984), 74.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Careless, *Discovering the Book of Common Prayer*, vol. 1, op. cit.

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Cranmer Theological Conference - May 14-16, 2014

The Cranmer Theological Conference (CTC) will enter its second year in 2014. After an encouraging start in North Bay, Ontario this past May, we again look forward to quality speakers, worship, and fellowship. The CTC is organized by the Society of Saint Dunstan, and next year's conference will be presented in partnership with Thorneloe University and the Church of the Epiphany, both located in Sudbury, Ontario. The theme of last year's conference was "Is God Good? Why Do Bad Things Happen To Good People?" Next year's theme will be "Do Dogs Go To Heaven? The Afterlife In Christian Thought." Conference attendees will be invited to stay in residence at Thorneloe University, where most of the conference activities will take place. The principal services of the conference will be held at the Church of the Epiphany. Please check for more information as plans for the conference proceed. You may visit us online at saintdunstan.ca or email us at info@saintdunstan.ca.



Participants in the May 2013 conference

of reading daily morning and evening prayer is still binding in the context of a Reformed church, and can even supersede the traditional Protestant emphasis on the ministry of preaching.

Clarendon Press, 1890), 521. Also available online at Project Canterbury:
<http://anglicanhistory.org/hooke/r/5/>

The practice of praying the Office each day, rooted in the ancient traditions of Benedictine monasticism, may seem at first glance to be a poor choice to demonstrate the contemporary relevance of the Prayer Book. To judge from his instructions in the rubrics of the Prayer Book, Cranmer envisaged the Office as being said within the context of a relatively small parish, in which the Curate could "tolle a belle ... a convenient tyme before he begyn,

that such as be disposed maye come to heare Goddes worde, and to praie with hym".¹¹ There are few parishes today where this method of advertising would attract a large congregation. In his

¹¹ This instruction was added to the Preface of the 1552 Prayer Book, perhaps in response to poor attendance at the Offices during the years of the 1549 BCP. See *The First and Second Prayer Books of Edward VI*, 323.

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book-length introduction to the Book of Alternative Services, therefore, Michael Ingham argues that the BCP reflects the presuppositions of closely-knit premodern communities, rather than the “complex web of interrelated interests” that characterizes modern society.¹² Compared to their sixteenth-century predecessors, modern Christians are much more mobile, often travelling long distances to their workplaces, homes and churches. Is it still possible to defend this centuries-old practice in an age where only a relative few can join in the service together?

Such objections stem from a misapprehension of the purpose of the Prayer Book rubrics, and indeed of the Daily Office itself. In inviting parishioners to join the priest for the Office at their local church, the Prayer Book does not rule out the possibility that the same service can be read privately by individuals, by families, or by a small group of friends. Indeed, to rule out the possibility of private recitation of the Office would be to contradict the traditional theology of common prayer, in which even a single person reading Morning Prayer alone “has said it in union with all the faithful on earth and with those who have passed beyond the veil”.¹³ The significance of Cranmer’s instruction for the Curate to ring a bell and invite parishioners to participate in the Office is not that the service is to be reserved solely for use in a parish setting, but rather that laypeople are to be invited to participate in a liturgical tradition previously reserved only for clergy and religious, using a clear liturgical structure through

which “both clergy and laity could drink deeply from the Bible”.¹⁴

In a society where individuals have much looser connections to their local communities and in which churchgoing Christians are a minority, the Divine Office may be among the most timely and practical components of the Book of Common Prayer. Unlike the service of Holy Communion, the daily prayer services of the BCP can be used (with very slight modifications) by any layperson, who can read them silently or aloud, alone or with friends. In an age where historical and theological differences impair Eucharistic communion between Christians of different denominational backgrounds, the Prayer Book offices provide a framework for worship strongly grounded in Holy Scripture and universal church tradition, one that can be used with good conscience by any Christian. In cities when many Christians live far from their parish church and may not see their fellow parishioners during the week, the Prayer Book offices provide a tangible sense of Christian community for those who might otherwise feel isolated. It is hard to imagine a form of worship that more clearly answers the needs of Anglicans who have become a religious minority in a pluralistic culture.

To stress the importance of the Offices in the devotional scheme of the Prayer Book is not to underestimate the importance of Holy Communion. Few Anglicans long for the days of Sung Morning Prayer as the sole Sunday morning liturgy, beautiful as that service is. Rather, the Prayer Book rubrics treat the two services as complementary, with a daily routine of Morning and Evening Prayer punctuated by the

celebration of Communion on Sundays and holy days.¹⁵ Indeed, the same nineteenth-century Oxford writers who insisted on the centrality of Eucharistic worship within Anglicanism were equally adamant about the importance of daily Morning and Evening Prayer; the entirety of Tract 84 is concerned with this subject.¹⁶ The two forms of worship complete each other, with the Office providing the Old Testament and Psalm readings absent from the Communion service,¹⁷ and the reception of Communion providing a sacramental fulfillment to the worship of God in the daily

¹⁵ The rubrics of the 1552 Prayer Book seem to anticipate the possibility that the Eucharist could be celebrated much more frequently than this, since they provide for the reuse of Sunday’s epistle and gospel “all the week after” (*The First and Second Prayer Books of Edward VI*, 329).

¹⁶ Tract 84, “Whether a Clergyman of the Church of England Be Now Bound to Have Morning and Evening Prayers Daily in His Parish Church?”, in *Tracts for the Times: By Members of the University of Oxford*, vol. V (London: Rivington, 1840). Also available online at Project Canterbury: <<http://anglicanhistory.org/tracts/tract84.html>>

¹⁷ Users of the Revised Common Lectionary now hear an Old Testament reading and Psalm in addition to the Epistle and Gospel readings at Holy Communion. Although this development has enriched the scriptural content of the Communion service, it is no substitute for the disciplined pattern of reading inculcated by the daily offices, particularly when the congregation’s only participation in the singing of the psalm is the repetition of a brief antiphon.

¹² Michael Ingham, *Rites for a New Age: Understanding the Book of Alternative Services* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1986), 55.

¹³ Dart, *The Old Religion*, 33.

¹⁴ Careless, *Discovering the Book of Common Prayer*, vol. 1, 143.

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offices. Martin Thornton argues that these two types of service, supplemented by private (non-liturgical) prayer, form a Trinitarian framework, with “the Office objectively ‘given’ to God Almighty, the Eucharist centred upon Our Lord Jesus Christ, and private prayer inspired by the Holy Ghost. And it follows that the three parts of this framework – Office, Mass, private prayer – are as indissociable one from another as the three Persons of the Trinity himself.”¹⁸ Using the services of the Book of Common Prayer enables Christians to more fully realize this ideal of interconnected prayer, since one and the same book provides an order for the Office, a service of Holy Communion, and material to aid and inspire individuals in their private devotions.

In recent years, proponents of the Book of Alternative Services and other contemporary-language service books have criticized the Prayer Book offices as excessively rigid and inflexible. According to the compilers of the BAS, the newly structured offices reflect a scholarly consensus that “the less variable parts of the service do not need to be so inexorably invariable”; instead, worshippers should have the option of choosing from a variety of prayers, canticles, and hymns.¹⁹ Such complaints about the Prayer Book should not simply be ignored, and throughout the history of Anglicanism individual believers have used various devotional resources to supplement the text of the BCP according to their own preferences. The current Canadian edition of the BCP includes some little-used

material, including alternative canticles and simplified orders of service, which might well be of use to individuals or groups looking for more variety in the Office; more recently, Sue Careless has suggested numerous possible varied and simplified orders of service for those who wish to use the BCP offices and have limited time.²⁰ It is interesting to note, however, that such complaints against the Prayer Book, although supposedly based on the “liturgical study and renewal of recent years”,²¹ in fact precisely replicate criticisms of the Prayer Book by late-sixteenth-century Puritans. Thus, Hooker’s *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* responds to complaints that the two-hour Elizabethan service should be reduced to one hour and a half,²² and that the Gospel canticles and the Lord’s Prayer are repeated too frequently in the BCP offices.²³ Summarizing the views of the Puritans, Hooker writes, “‘It shall not,’ they say, ‘be necessary for the minister daily to repeat all these things before-mentioned, but beginning with *some like* confession to proceed to the sermon, which ended, he *either* useth the prayer for all estates before-mentioned, *or else prayeth as the Spirit of God shall move his heart.*’ Herein therefore we hold it much better with the church of Rome to appoint a prescript form which every man shall be bound to observe, than with them to set down a kind of direction, a form for men to use if they list, or otherwise to change as pleaseth themselves.”²⁴

Hooker’s description of Puritan worship could equally well describe the format of the Daily Office in the BAS, which provides a skeletal framework to be filled in with any number of variable elements: the book includes nineteen litanies, eleven responsories, and twenty-seven canticles. In the words of Michael Ingham, these new features offer a “rich daily and seasonal fare for the spiritual gourmet”, in contrast to the “frequently repetitive” nature of the Prayer Book offices.²⁵ Twenty-five years of experience with the BAS demonstrates, however, that Ingham’s evaluation of the new services may have been overly optimistic. The layout of the Office liturgy in the BAS, with canticles, responsories and prayers scattered throughout the book, makes it impossible to pray the service unless each element of the liturgy is carefully “planned and thought out beforehand”, which militates against the private use of the office by busy people with minimal liturgical expertise.²⁶ One is reminded of Cranmer’s complaint that the medieval services were so complicated that “to turne the book onely, was so hard and intricate a matter, that many times, there was more busines to fynd out what should be read, then to read it when it was founde out.”²⁷ Reading through the BAS itself and the writings of its early advocates like Ingham, it is difficult to avoid the impression that the Daily Office was viewed primarily as a service for clergy and liturgical experts, and that laypeople were better off participating in “a worship committee, or liturgy group”,

¹⁸ Martin Thornton, *Christian Proficiency* (London, S. P. C. K., 1959), 18.

¹⁹ “The Divine Office,” in *The Book of Alternative Services*, (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1985), 37.

²⁰ Careless, *Discovering the Book of Common Prayer*, vol. 1, op. cit.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* V, xxxii, 4.

²³ Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* V, xxvii, 1.

²⁴ Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* V, xxviii, 2.

²⁵ Ingham, *Rites for a New Age*, 128.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Preface to the 1549 Prayer Book, in *The First and Second Prayer Books of Edward VI*, 4.

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rather than privately praying the Office themselves.²⁸

As Richard Hooker realized, the Divine Office is of greatest service to the people if it has “a prescript form which every man shall be bound to observe”, rather than an ill-defined form subject to constant modification. Indeed, one of the services most beloved by Anglicans is the brief night office of Compline, a service that is almost completely invariable in its text and music. The “inexorably invariable” Prayer Book offices of Morning and Evening Prayer have earned the affection of generations of Anglicans, while the infinitely flexible offices of the BAS are widely unused. In 2001, General Synod approved a supplement to the BAS containing three completely revamped orders for the Daily Office which correspond much more closely to the structure of the BCP – a tacit admission, perhaps, that the liturgical experiments of 1985 were not successful.²⁹

In the complex environment of postmodern Canada, Cranmer’s ideal of an English Divine Office for the use of all has never been more relevant. Anglicans can no longer rely on a religious establishment, official or unofficial, to guide our conduct; instead, we are forced to define

and redefine our Christian identity for ourselves in an increasingly secular public sphere. Only a consistent routine of Bible reading and prayer can equip Christians for this challenge: a routine that has historically been provided by the common recitation of the daily Office, in which individual

anyone who prays the BCP offices regularly will be ideally prepared to enter and appreciate the complete liturgical life of the Church using the Prayer Book, worshipping “in the beauty of holiness and with spiritual understanding” and with the aid of prayers “that have stood the test of

time [and] still speak with uncanny freshness today”. The words of the Prayer Book are from the sixteenth century, and the devotional ideals behind them much older still, but the needs that they address are still thoroughly contemporary.

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Aaron James is an organist and church musician currently studying at the Eastman School of Music (Rochester, NY), where he is completing a combined doctoral-degree program in organ performance and musicology (PhD/DMA). Previous studies were at the University of Western Ontario, where he received the Faculty of Music Gold Medal. He has received numerous awards for his organ playing, including first prize in the 2011 National Competition of the Royal Canadian

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Detail from the tapestry “Adoration of the Magi”, designed in 1890 by Sir Edward Burne-Jones. Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia.

believers pray and read Scripture in company with the whole Church. After almost five centuries of constant use, the Book of Common Prayer remains the best method of praying the Office in English, with an easily understood liturgical structure that can be used individually at home, congregationally in a parish church, or with a small Bible study or prayer group. Most importantly,

²⁸ Ingham, *Rites for a New Age*, 67.

²⁹ *Eucharistic Prayers, Services of the Word, and Night Prayer* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 2001).

Easter in Advent and Christmas in Lent

*By the Rev'd Gordon Maitland,
PBSC National Chairman*

The Church's calendar - the yearly cycle of feasts, festivals and fasts - has a long and complicated history. The calendar used by Christians actually has its origin in the Jewish calendar regulated by Mosaic Law. In that calendar were prescribed the festivals of Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles, etc. Christians developed an ecclesiastical calendar in which the arrangement of Saints' days and other Feasts of our Lord have a subtle relationship with one another. These interdependent relationships only become apparent over a long period of time spent actually living and ordering one's life around the ecclesiastical calendar. One of these subtle relationships is demonstrated in the fact that the Feast of St. Thomas the Apostle falls in Advent and the Feast of the Annunciation usually falls in Lent.

The feast of St. Thomas always occurs in Advent because his day in the traditional Church calendar is the 21st of December, just before Christmas. On the feast of St. Thomas the Gospel is from the twentieth chapter of John and is, of course, the appearance of the risen Christ to doubting Thomas. The collect for this day also makes reference to the resurrection:

Almighty and everliving God, who for the more confirmation of the faith didst suffer thy holy Apostle Thomas to be doubtful in thy Son's resurrection: Grant us so perfectly, and without all doubt, to believe in thy Son Jesus Christ, that our faith in thy sight may never be reprov'd. Hear us, O Lord, through the same Jesus Christ, to whom, with thee and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and

*glory, now and for evermore.
Amen.*

Thus, one could say that we have a bit of Easter in the midst of Advent when we observe St. Thomas' Day.

The Feast of the Annunciation falls on the 25th of March. It usually occurs in Lent, but if Easter is early the Annunciation might occur in Holy Week or even Easter Week, in which case it is transferred to the week after Low Sunday. The Gospel for the Annunciation is from the first chapter of Luke's Gospel and is about the appearance of the angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary to tell her that she will conceive in her womb and give birth to the Saviour of the World (March 25th to December 25th is exactly 9 months). The Annunciation is generally regarded as a Christmas theme and this gospel scene is almost always a part of Sunday School Christmas pageants. The collect for this day is significant insofar as it refers to the incarnation in relation to Christ's death and Resurrection:

We beseech thee, O Lord, pour thy grace into our hearts; that, as we have known the incarnation of thy Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, so by his cross and passion we may be brought unto the glory of his resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Therefore, we can say that a hint of Christmas in the midst of Lent is provided when we observe the Feast of the Annunciation.

The doctrines of the incarnation (that the Son of God took human nature upon himself in the womb of the Virgin Mary) and

the atonement (that the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross reconciles us to God the Father) can never be separated from one another. If the Son of God became incarnate but did not offer himself for the sins of the world nothing would have been done to save us. If the person who was crucified was not the Son of God, then his death was not a saving event but the unfortunate end of a well-meaning prophet. We can now begin to appreciate the subtle but significant role the Feast of St. Thomas and the Feast of the Annunciation play in the overall scheme of the Church Year. Just before Christmas we are reminded of the atonement, death and resurrection of Christ, on St. Thomas' Day (please note that the death of Jesus is implied in the Gospel from John on this day because Jesus shows Thomas the *wounds* in his hands and side). Likewise, as Holy Week and Easter approach, we are reminded of the incarnation with the Feast of the Annunciation in Lent. Incarnation and atonement are never far apart.

It should therefore be apparent why removing St. Thomas' Day from Advent and moving it (as the BAS and the modern Roman Catholic lectionary do) to July 3, in the middle of Ordinary Time or Trinitytide, is not a neutral change but rather completely destroys the balance the old calendar had in regards to incarnation and atonement. Thus, while the BAS retains the Annunciation on March 25, in Advent there is no longer a hint of the death and resurrection of Christ which was provided by St. Thomas' Feast. It is much to be regretted that for many Canadian Anglicans there is no longer Easter in Advent.

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