

The Prayer Book Society of Canada Newsletter

Lent 2023

Canada's Prayer Book

(Excerpts from a lecture given on November 1st, 2022 at St. Olave's Church in Toronto, by Dr. Jesse Billett, associate professor in the Faculty of Divinity at Trinity College, Toronto. The full text can be found on the PBSC website, www.prayerbook.ca.)

I have been tasked with speaking about Canada's Prayer Book. And it's a delight for me to do so, in this sixtieth year since it was formally adopted by General Synod in 1962. I want to divide my remarks into four sections. First, I want to talk about the Book of Common Prayer as the embodiment of the mind of the Church. Second, I want to investigate the question of whether there can or should be local Prayer Books at all. Third, I want to talk about the history of revision of the Prayer Book in Canada; in particular, the challenge that was faced in reconciling "high-church" Anglicans with "low-church" Anglicans. And then in conclusion, I want to talk about the achievement of the most recent Canadian Prayer Book in terms of a contrast between consensus and compromise.

So let's turn first to the Prayer Book as "mind of the Church". I quite like a summary that was offered by the great church historian, Owen Chadwick, about what Archbishop Cranmer achieved in the original Book of Common Prayer. He said, "The diverse elements upon which [Cranmer] worked, traditional or Protestant, were taken up by his careful scholarship and transmuted into a beauty, at once delicate and austere, of liturgical prose and poetry. Liturgies are not made, they grow in the devotion of centuries; but as far as a liturgy could ever be the work of a single mind, the Prayer Book flowed from a scholar with a sure instinct for a people's worship."

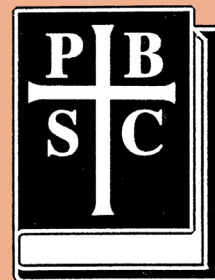
And I think it's important to realize that there was fundamental continuity between what had gone before and what the Prayer Book brought into being. What Archbishop Cranmer said, in effect, was this: "We're going to look at the tradition of the Church. And whatever we can keep, that has not been unfortunately radically misunderstood by our people, we will keep. But the words that we use to talk about that tradition, or to offer our prayers in our traditional rites, will necessarily either be drawn from Scripture, or paraphrased, or compatible with Scripture.."



Dr. Jesse Billett

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There's a wonderful Anglican thinker and writer who died eleven years ago, Father Robert Crouse. This is what he had to say about Archbishop Cranmer's methods: "The clear word of Holy Scripture was to be the criterion; and within that criterion, the Reformers strove for continuity and comprehensiveness. The continuity they sought and effectively maintained was a continuity with the developed and living tradition of their own Church; that is to say, the tradition of Latin Christendom as it existed in the English Church. But within that context, they drew inspiration from a wide variety of sources: contemporary continental, Roman Catholic and Protestant, as well as ancient and Eastern liturgies, of which they had a remarkably precise knowledge."

And he goes on to say, "The Book of Common Prayer is the form of the collective memory of Anglicans – the *Consensus Fidelium* (the common mind of the Church), the principle of authority and cohesion of the institution, and the guarantee of its catholicity. Authority for Christians is fundamentally the authority of the Word of God, expressed in holy Scripture. Anglicanism, in particular, is a certain way of hearing and understanding and living by the Word – an ongoing exegesis [explanation] of God's Word, fostered by and expressed in the tradition of common prayer. In no other church in Christendom does liturgy play so crucial a role. Anglicans recognize no papal *magisterium*; for us it is the tradition of common prayer which elucidates and defends and deepens our memory of the Word

of God. The destruction, or neglect, of that tradition induces a crippling amnesia."

So if that's the case, I want to move on to my second topic and ask, can you actually have a local Prayer Book at all? Because if there is one deposit of faith, one agreement among at least Anglicans about the contents of that faith, can the Prayer Book be different in different places? We are used to the idea of various countries having their own Prayer Books. But perhaps we should stop to consider how that came to be, and indeed whether it ought to be. From the beginning of international Anglicanism this was a concern. Now of course the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States had found it necessary to have a revised Book of Common Prayer at the time of the American Revolution; because the 1662 Prayer Book contained a lot of references to the sovereign of England. And so a new Prayer Book was created on that occasion. But that was the only one for a long, long time. At each of the first three Lambeth Conferences (gatherings of the bishops from the whole Anglican world) in 1867, 1878 and 1888, statements were issued on the importance of maintaining common standards of faith and worship. For example, in 1878: "... remembering that the Book of Common Prayer, retained as it is, with some modifications, by all our Churches, has been one principal bond of union among them, [we] desire to call attention to the fact that such communion in worship may be endangered by excessive diversities of ritual." The background here was the "Ritualism scare", that is, the rise of the Anglo-Catholic movement

in the Church of England, which was also "infecting" other parts of the Anglican Communion. And in 1888: "... inasmuch as the Book of Common Prayer is not the possession of one diocese or province, but of all ... this Conference is of the opinion that no particular portion of the Church should undertake revision without seriously considering the possible effect of such action on other branches of the Church." So the Anglican mind in the 1860s, 70s and 80s was very much against local revisions of the Book of Common Prayer.

Now we finally arrive in Canada. The first General Synod of the Church of England in the Dominion of Canada, as it was then called, met in 1893 at Trinity College. And there they made a Solemn Declaration, which you will still find printed near the front of our Book of Common Prayer, which included the following: "We are determined by the help of God to hold and maintain the Doctrine, Sacraments, and Discipline of Christ as the Lord hath commanded in his Holy Word, and as the Church of England hath received and set forth the same in The Book of Common Prayer ... and to transmit the same unimpaired to our posterity". So this declaration was very much in line with the statements made at the Lambeth Conferences. The trouble is, though, that the world in which Christians live continues to change, and the circumstances and challenges around us change. And that was the situation that quickly faced Canadian Anglicans already in the 1890s. For example, in England it was extremely rare for a new church

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ever to be built, at least up to the 19th century; and so the Book of Common Prayer provided no liturgy for consecrating a new church building. And there was no liturgy for hallowing of a new cemetery, and so on. So in the late 19th century, the idea was proposed that we should keep the 1662 Prayer Book as it was and just add an appendix of all the extra things that were felt to be needed for Canada. It included things like the institution and induction of a minister into a new cure; a service for the acceptance of baptismal vows; the solemnization of marriage in an unconsecrated building; and many others. A draft was duly presented to General Synod in 1905 and it was 260 pages long – quite an appendix! And for various reasons – for it had many enemies – it was voted right down.

So the decision was ultimately made that we would not have an appendix, but we would actually revise our whole Prayer Book; and a committee was duly struck in 1912. And the Anglo-Catholic versus evangelical mutual suspicion that I mentioned earlier, that had surfaced some decades before, presented itself almost immediately, because the evangelicals on the revision committee proposed a motion that said that this committee must not approve any changes that would involve a change of doctrine, or would even *imply* a change of doctrine. So that was a hurdle that had to be got over, and this was done by simply deciding not to touch certain things. The service of Holy Communion, for example, was left almost completely unrevised in the eventual book of 1922. And that

bequeathed a legacy of further strife for the Canadian church, because that was the most argued-over liturgy in Anglicanism. There were Anglo-Catholic clergy who were tinkering with different options such as the English Missal or the Anglican Missal – taking the rite of the Prayer Book, rearranging it to make it look a little bit more medieval, adding all sorts of extra text – and it was just liturgical chaos over the following years.

So within twenty years after that book went out, it was decided that we needed to have another go. In 1943 a new revision committee began to meet. The principles informing their revision were quite straightforward, and they are laid out in the preface to the eventual 1962 book: “The aim throughout has been to set forth an order which the people may use with understanding and which is agreeable with Holy Scripture and with the usage of the primitive Church. And always there has been the understanding that no alterations should be made which would involve or imply any change of doctrine of the Church as set forth in the [1662] Book of Common Prayer.” So the revision process was committed to maintaining the principle of no doctrinal change. But how was that to be attained, given the ongoing tension between high and low? One of the members of the revision committee was Principal Ramsay Armitage of Wycliffe College, representing the evangelicals. To counterbalance his voice on the committee a Trinity man was selected, Father Roland Palmer of the Society of St. John the Evangelist, which had its headquarters in Bracebridge, Ontario. At the first meeting,

Principal Armitage arrived early, and when Father Palmer came in, he said to him, “Father Palmer, come sit by me where I can keep my eye on you!” And at every meeting of that committee, they always sat together; and what’s more, before every meeting, the two of them would get together and discuss the options that had been proposed, and talk about what would be desirable or problematic for Anglo-Catholics or for evangelicals. And they would work out an agreement that was satisfactory to both of them, and then they would bring that to the committee, so that evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics were able to speak with one voice.

What are the characteristics of that 1959 book? I find it remarkable to study. It hews very closely to the 1662 book, but with astute awareness of every other contemporary option in the Anglican world. The annotated books that Principal Armitage has left are colour-coded with marginal notes, indicating the origin of every separate revision and the reason for it. The aim of clarity is reflected in many places, but I’ll give just one example. In the service for the public baptism of infants, in the 1662 and 1922 books, the service had begun with this introduction: “Dearly beloved, forasmuch as all men are conceived and born in sin ...”. Now, that’s just a direct quote from Psalm 51. But it was misunderstood by some people who thought it was saying that the very act of conceiving a child was sinful; which is not the teaching of the Church. And so in the 1962 book this was reworded as follows: “Dearly beloved in Christ, seeing that God willeth all men to be saved from the fault

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and corruption of the nature which they inherit, as well as from actual sins which they commit ...". So it unpacks that scriptural quotation and explains what it means – not changing doctrine one bit, but making it better understood.

I could go on with many other little examples of this kind, but I want to wrap up now with my fourth topic, which is *consensus* versus *compromise*. At the General Synod at which the Canadian Prayer Book revised draft was presented in 1959, the report was read by Archbishop Carrington in his role as chairman, and then according to a pre-arranged plan, the motion to accept the new Prayer Book was presented by a graduate of Trinity College and seconded by a graduate of Wycliffe College – representing acceptance of the book by both “high” and “low” Anglicans. There followed a standing ovation lasting many minutes, concluding with the spontaneous singing of the Doxology, “Praise God from whom all blessings flow”. The *Montreal Gazette* reported (as recorded in Principal Armitage’s notes), “A wildly enthusiastic, foot stamping, hand-clapping, hymn-singing Anglican Synod session took 65 minutes yesterday to approve a revised all-Canadian Book of Common Prayer that was 16 years in the making”. So here we find the high church and the low church folk united; they may have their theological differences, but they can both use this shared liturgy in good conscience because it represents their consensus, their common mind.

Well, as we know, before many years had passed, there

were already restless pleas for change: we must have contemporary liturgies, we must have updated language, we must have more options, we must be more informed by contemporary liturgical science and the discoveries of researchers. That led, of course, to all the trial liturgies of the 1970s and early 80s, and eventually to our Book of Alternative Services. My question is, how much consensus does our way of worshipping today reflect? We had this marvellous consensus greeted with spontaneous applause when our Prayer Book was adopted; now, I suggest, what we have is not consensus but compromise – that is, options are provided to satisfy the liturgical preferences and theological convictions of parties that disagree with each other. To illustrate my point: in 1995, the evaluation commission on the Book of Alternative Services, looking at ten years of use of that book, delivered a report to General Synod which recommended augmenting the book with additional material, especially to satisfy those of “reformed theological conscience”. That resulted in a little gray booklet of supplementary eucharistic prayers and other services, which was published a few years later. And so the Book of Alternative Services now has its own book of alternatives to the alternative services, to address a sincere problem of theological conscience in a portion of the church. That, I suggest, is compromise. And so now our liturgies reflect not a common mind, but a large variety of theological opinions.

And that’s where I think we are immensely fortunate in what

has happened in the Canadian church, which is that we have preserved the Book of Common Prayer, which is, granted, in minority use – although I think making a comeback in many places! – as the official doctrinal and liturgical standard of the church. While we work to renew our common mind, we must preserve this, as the touchstone, as the point of common reference. And part of my mission at Trinity College is to draw our students’ attention to that. I’m going to conclude with a final quotation from Robert Crouse, about the difficulty of consensus in theology and worship, especially since we do not have an authority that can tell us the answers. This is what he says: “The authority of consensus is not easy to live with. It involves learning and deliberation, debate and controversy, when we would prefer, perhaps, the peace of easy compromise. It involves the patience which must sometimes think in terms of centuries instead of months or years. It involves reverent, careful, and humble attention to the past when we are, perhaps, inclined to be preoccupied with the latest findings of biblical criticism or the social sciences or with the latest popular causes. And in the divided state of Christendom, the divided state even of our own communion, it involves, or should involve, the frustration and self discipline of refraining from local decisions which are not clearly justified by the *Consensus Fidelium* as more universally conceived in time and space.” It’s within that continuing, growing, developing *Consensus Fidelium* that I see the meaning and significance of our Canadian Prayer Book.



Work in Progress on the BCP App

(A report by the Very Revd. Chris Dow, the chairman of the BCP App Development Committee.)

After receiving numerous requests over the past two years, we have begun work to add the 1967 Recueil des Prières (RdP) to the app. This is the French-language translation of our 1962 Prayer Book. Since much of the RdP was already available online, our developer was able to copy it into the app quite easily.

The one significant portion of the RdP that is not available in useable Unicode text is the Psautier (the Psalter). However, because it is viewable in PDF graphics, our developer was able to use optical character recognition (OCR) software to scan these images, extract the text, and convert it into Unicode text that we can use for the app. But while OCR is impressive technology and a great time-saving convenience, it does not

produce perfect results. Thus, we have recruited five French-speaking volunteers to comb through the OCR-scanned text of the Psautier, looking for various imperfections: missing words, spelling errors and erroneous punctuation marks. Their task is to compare the OCR-extracted text with the original in the PDF graphic files and make the necessary corrections in the text file. This is painstaking, detail-oriented and time-consuming work.

The volunteers are also adding verse numbers to the Psalms, as one oddity of the RdP is that the Psautier's verses are not numbered. Also, as the RdP Psautier omits the same imprecatory verses as the 1962 Psalter, the app will give users the option to re-insert them, as we have done with the English text. These missing verses will be supplied from the 1958 Bible de Jérusalem, which is the original

source of the entire 1967 RdP Psautier.

We plan to give users the option to select French as the global language in the app. Thus, not only will the liturgy appear in French, but the entire user interface will as well, including the menu items, side-bar tabs, settings, etc. Our volunteers are working collaboratively to translate all these terms into French. I am especially thankful to the Revd. Ben von Bredow for taking the lead in this volunteer effort to edit the Psautier and translate the menu items.

We have received permission from the French Bible Society to access the full text of the 1910 Louis Segond Bible through the Digital Bible Library (DBL). This classic French Bible translation is often likened to the King James and will be the default French version for the First and Second Lessons at Matins and Evensong. Although the Louis Segond is in

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the public domain and available online from various sites, the DBL is the best and most reliable source, and it allows us to download the complete biblical text into the app for offline use. We are thankful for the French Bible Society's generosity in allowing us to do this for free. We also hope to add a more contemporary French Bible version, but a suitable option is proving to be more difficult to find in digital format.

Finally, we approached the Dean of Montreal, the Very Revd. Bertrand Olivier, and asked him to translate the prayer 'For Reconciliation with the Jews' (FRJ) into French. He gladly obliged and we are thankful for his translation, which is as follows:

"O DIEU, qui as choisi Israël pour en faire ton héritage, aie pitié de nous et pardonne-nous la violence et la méchanceté que nous avons commises envers notre frère Jacob; l'arrogance de nos coeurs et de nos esprits nous a trompés, et la honte a couvert

notre visage. Ôte de nous tout orgueil et tout préjugé, et accorde-nous, avec le peuple que tu as fait tien le premier, de parvenir à la plénitude de la rédemption que tu as promise, à l'honneur et à la gloire de ton très saint Nom. Amen."

We may wait until the (hopefully perfunctory) approval of FRJ at this summer's General Synod before adding its French translation to the app.

The RdP has long been out of print and copies are rare finds. This project will make the RdP widely accessible to users for free. We pray that this will be a blessing to French-speaking Anglicans in Canada and beyond, as well as those from other church traditions looking for a French-language prayer resource. The development of this feature will cost the PBSC \$2,500, but the PBSC National Council believes that it will be money well spent.

"VIENS en aide, Seigneur de miséricorde, à nous qui t'implorons: dirige-nous vers le

salut éternel, et dans l'instabilité de ce monde défends-nous sans cesse par le secours de ta grâce; par Jésus-Christ notre Seigneur. Amen." (Collect for the Rogation Days)

Regarding other potential developments, we are planning to add the Penitential Service to the app. The rubrics on page 611 of the BCP allow for it to be used as a stand-alone service or as an addition to Matins and Evensong. The estimated cost for this is \$150. We are also looking at adding the Labrador Inuit Heritage Bible (LIHB) as an option within the app. Some Inuit cherish the classic LIHB in much the same way as many English speakers do the King James Version. I am quite certain the Canadian Bible Society would allow us to use the text of the LIHB from the Digital Bible Library for free.

We welcome donations in support of this work, and we would appreciate your prayers for this ongoing effort and especially for our volunteers.

PBSC ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Prayer Book Society of Canada will be held via Zoom on Saturday, May 27th at 2:00 pm EDT. Further details, the Zoom link and various supporting documents will be posted on our website at this link: <https://prayerbook.ca/agm-2023>. The annual Chairman's and Treasurer's reports will be presented, and the meeting will elect up to twenty National Councillors.

Nominations are invited for the positions of National Chairman, Vice-Chairmen, Treasurer, Membership Secretary and Recording Secretary. Nominations for these positions must be received by April 30th, since these officers are elected by the National Council. Nominations are also invited for the positions of Councillor and Honorary President, and these will be elected at the AGM. Nominees for all positions must be members of the PBSC, and nominations require a mover and a seconder, both of whom must also be members of the PBSC. Nominations are to be sent to the national Recording Secretary, Ronald Bentley, at 737 Hot Springs Way, Gloucester, ON, K1V 1W8 (rwbentley@sympatico.ca).

Update on the Old Testament Lections Project

(By the Revd. Benjamin von Bredow, rector of the parish of Shelburne, Nova Scotia, and the chairman of the committee undertaking this work.)

In the Prayer Book Society's Michaelmas newsletter, I described how National Council had blessed the work of a committee to prepare a list of Old Testament readings to supplement the traditional one-year lectionary of the Western Church, as found in the 1962 Book of Common Prayer. The rationale for this project is pastoral. We aim to make it easier for priests to transition their congregations from the Revised Common Lectionary to the traditional lectionary, by providing an option for avoiding the criticism that the one-year lectionary is inferior because it lacks an Old Testament reading.

The work has continued steadily from December 2021 to the present, and I am pleased to say that in the coming months we will have a complete draft of Old Testament selections for all the Sundays of the year. At that point, we will turn to Holy Days and special services such as weddings and ordinations. We will develop and implement a review process, and then discuss publication options. Although we do not have a date for publication, it seems likely that it will appear first as a simple chart on the PBSC website, but

we will also explore physical publication of a complete lectionary book, ready for liturgical use. Our concluding work may also include a preface and/or commentary to the resource we have produced, but it is too early to say what shape that will take.

In recent months, one of the most striking aspects for me of our research into the existing lectionary has been to see how the relationship between Epistles and Gospels is not the same throughout the year. Before undertaking this project, I assumed that the Epistles and Gospels related through mutually identical intertextuality, "mingling" together on every occasion to determine dominant themes without privileging one or the other. Now I realize that reading the lectionary often requires assessing which of the two is the dominant voice. In turn, this can require looking at the shape of the lectionary over the course of several weeks at a time and looking critically at its historical formation.

For example, harmonizing the Epistles and Gospels is notoriously difficult in Trinity Season, especially using the common assumption that the Gospel reading is always dominant. However, a critical reading of the lectionary which takes a broader perspective on the season will see that the "backbone" of the season is in

the Epistles, which beginning at Trinity 6 are read in canonical order. Introducing the assumption that the Epistle determines the theme of the Sundays after Trinity, one can look in the Gospel for a point of connection to it, one which is often quite specific and which amplifies the Epistle by illustration or extension. This process has led to much greater clarity about the shape and meaning of the season than I had previously had when I relied on generalizations like "Trinitytide is about sanctification". This clarity makes the (admittedly still difficult and inexact) work of providing Old Testament supplements possible.

The project has been a deeply enriching experience for me, and, I trust for the other members of the committee as well. I would like to thank the members who have been with us from the beginning, Dr. Daniel Driver (Atlantic School of Theology), Fr. David Butorac (Diocese of Saskatchewan), and Fr. Ted Williams (Diocese of Saskatchewan); as well as our new members this year, Fr. Gavin Dunbar (Diocese of Georgia, President of the Prayer Book Society of the USA), Fr. Derek Neal (Diocese of Algoma), and Mr. Geoff McLarney (Diocese of Montreal). May God bless this work as it continues.

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