

# The Book of Common Prayer

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## Session 5

### **The Bible in the Prayer Book**

Trinity Episcopal Church, Longview, Texas

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# Welcome to Session 5

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In today's final session of this class, I will present how the Bible is used in *The Book of Common Prayer* of The Episcopal Church, both in the text of prayers and statements, and in the readings found in the Revised Common Lectionary and the Daily Office Lectionary.

# The Bible in the Prayer Book

- Most Episcopalians know that the texts of liturgical services in the Prayer Book is shot through with quotations and allusions from the Bible.
- There are too many examples to list them all. In the next few slides, I will give some examples from the “Proper Prefaces” which are to be inserted in the Preface to the Eucharistic Prayers in Rite I and in Eucharistic Prayers A and B in Rite II.

# Proper Preface of All Saints

“For in the multitude of your saints you have surrounded us with a great cloud of witnesses, that we might rejoice in their fellowship, and run with endurance the race that is set before us; and, together with them, receive the crown of glory that never fades away.” (*BCP* 380)

➤ Hebrews 12:1-2

➤ 1 Peter 5:4

# Proper Preface of Lent (I)

“Through Jesus Christ our Lord; who was tempted in every way as we are, yet did not sin. By his grace we are able to triumph over every evil, and to live no longer for ourselves alone, but for him who died for us and rose again.” (*BCP* 379)

➤ Hebrews 4:14-15

➤ 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

# Proper Preface of Epiphany

“Because in the mystery of the Word made flesh, you have caused a new light to shine in our hearts, to give the knowledge of your glory in the face of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”  
(*BCP* 378)

- John 1:14, 18
- John 2:11
- 2 Corinthians 4:6

# Proper Preface of the Lord's Day (1): Of God the Father

“For you are the source of light and life; you made us in your image, and called us to new life in Jesus Christ our Lord.”  
(*BCP 377*)

- Genesis 1:3
- Genesis 1:11-31
- Romans 6:4
- 2 Corinthians 5:17

# Eucharistic Prayer D

- The phrase “patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs” (BCP 375) reflects the history of salvation in the Bible, in order. The patriarchs were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Genesis); the prophets were Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Prophets; the apostles were called and commissioned by Christ (gospels and Paul’s letter to the Romans); and the martyrs (Acts: the stoning of Stephen).
- This phrase is repeated in the second prayer on p. 504 of the *BCP*.

# The Lectionary

- A lectionary is either a table of readings to be done in liturgical worship, or is a book which contains the readings printed out.
- Until the 1979 Prayer Book, the lectionary readings for Sundays and “Prayer Book Holy Days” was in the back of the *BCP*. Now that the King James Version is the “historic” Bible of this church, rather than the “official” Bible of this church, we have our choice of 16 different English translations of the Bible. (That choice is made by the Rector.)
- The Episcopal Church has never authorized paraphrases to be used in public worship, such as *The Message* or the one by Dr. J. B. Phillips.

# And then there were lectionaries . . .

- The first and arguably most important document of the Second Vatican Council was *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, known in English as the “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.”
- The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy mandated many changes in how the Roman Catholic Church worldwide did liturgy. Most of these changes are agreed with by the majority of Christians of other traditions as well.
- The normative liturgy of the Eucharist was ordered to be put into vernacular languages—the languages that people actually speak and understand.

# The Three-Year Lectionary

- The Roman Catholic lectionary which was formulated after Vatican II was in a three-year cycle rather than in a one-year cycle, as it had been (and as all other liturgical churches had been).
- The way the R.C. lectionary was structured was that most gospel readings were from Matthew in Year A, Mark in Year B, and Luke in Year C. There is a good bit of John in Year B after Easter as well, since Mark lacks resurrection appearance stories.
- This three-year lectionary was widely adopted and adapted by other Western churches.
- This has been widely hailed as a real ecumenical breakthrough! We can all agree on this.

# The Three-Year Lectionary

- One very important feature of the new lectionary was that it mandated reading a larger portion of the Holy Scriptures in the Sunday worship of the churches.
- **For the Episcopal Church and the Roman Catholic Church, this new lectionary mandated using lessons from the Old Testament (except in Easter Season) as the first reading at the Eucharist. It also recommended using the Psalms at the Eucharist.**

# *Services for Trial Use*

## 1970

- ❖ “The Green Book” printed and used this three-year lectionary, and so Episcopal Churches have generally been using it since the General Convention of 1970 in Houston.
- ❖ It became part of *The Book of Common Prayer* when it was approved on first reading in 1976, and on second reading in 1979. It is found on pp. 888-931 of the 1979 book.

# Consultation on Common Texts

- ✦ The liturgical churches of the West have a history of working together, at least at the level of national church staff, as far back as the mid-1960s. They include most of the mainline Christian churches in the United States and Canada.
- ✦ *Prayers We Have in Common: Agreed Liturgical Texts* was published by this group in 1970. Many of these prayer texts found their way into the 1979 *BCP* of this church. They included the *Gloria in excelsis*, the Nicene Creed, the *Sanctus*, and the *Agnus Dei*. These were done in consultation with the Roman Catholic International Consultation on English in the Liturgy (ICEL).

# Revised Common Lectionary (RCL)

- The Episcopal Church as well as other churches using the three-year lectionary experienced the fact that our Sunday readings were not identical but were quite similar. In the Season after Pentecost, we Episcopalians were reading lessons that were often two weeks different from the Lutherans' readings.
- So the question became, "Why not have exactly the same readings?" There was (and is) no good reason not to have the same readings.
- The *Common Lectionary* of 1983 was revised as the *Revised Common Lectionary* and published in 1992.

# Revised Common Lectionary, Episcopal Edition

- The General Convention allowed the use of the RCL at earlier conventions, and some congregations did use the RCL.
- In 2006, the General Convention adopted the Revised Common Lectionary as the lectionary of this church, replacing “The Lectionary” in the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*.
- There were a few adaptations of the RCL by our church, and this lectionary was published as *Revised Common Lectionary, Episcopal Edition* in 2007.
- This is the big book you see on the lectern in our church. Your interim rector also has a smaller copy of this book on his desks at the church and at home. (I can order one for you for \$25.00).

# The Daily Office Lectionary

- The other lectionary in the *BCP* is the Daily Office Lectionary, on pp. 933-1001.
- This lectionary is in a two-year cycle. It is for those who say Morning and/or Evening Prayer on a daily basis.
- Year Two began on the First Sunday of Advent preceding the year we are in now, 2018 (which is an even-numbered year). Year One will begin on the First Sunday of Advent, December 2, 2018, which precedes an odd-numbered year.
- This lectionary gives a morning and an evening Psalm, an Old Testament lesson, a New Testament lesson, and a gospel reading. You can read either one, or two, or all three lessons in any of the forms of the Daily Office.
- Most Anglican seminaries around the world say Morning and Evening Prayer every day.

# Ah, yes, the Apocrypha!

- Biblical scholars are often asked about the Apocrypha of the Old Testament.
- These are the books that were written “between the testaments,” namely in the Hellenistic period of Judaism.
- A few of these books were written in Hebrew, but the majority were written in Greek. 1 Maccabees was originally written in Hebrew, but a complete Hebrew text did not survive, so we read a translation of the Greek Old Testament, which is known as the Septuagint.

# The Apocrypha

- Tobit
- Judith
- The Greek Additions to the Book of Esther
- Wisdom of Solomon
- Ecclesiasticus / Sirach
- Baruch
- The Letter of Jeremiah
- The Greek Additions to the Book of Daniel
- 1 Maccabees
- 2 Maccabees

# The Apocrypha

- These books were written during the time after Alexander the Great, when “Hellenization” was taking place. This was the imposition of Greek culture on all the many conquered lands in Alexander’s empire.
- The whole Jewish religion, with its synagogues and its Bible, had to be translated into Greek (or it would have died). This translation, the Septuagint, was done in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BCE.
- When the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek, the Apocrypha was added to the Bible by Greek-speaking Jews.
- The books of the Apocrypha were never considered authoritative in that part of Judaism which continued to use the Hebrew language. Hence they are not part of “the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings,” which is the Hebrew term for the Bible.

# In Anglicanism

- In Anglicanism we treat the Apocrypha in a separate category from the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament.
- Article VI of the Thirty-Nine Articles says: “And the other Books (as Hierome saith) the Church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners; but yet doth not apply them to establish any doctrine . . . .”
- So we read them in liturgical services, just as we read other biblical books. We do not make a distinction when we read them in liturgy. There are things in them that are hard to interpret, but that is true of all writings from antiquity.

# In Anglicanism

- An important part of Anglicanism is the high view that we have of the Bible. In Article 20 the Bible is referred to as “God’s Word written.”
- Here is the full sentence: “The Church hath power to decree Rites or Ceremonies, and authority in Controversies of Faith; and yet it is not lawful for the Church ordain any thing that is contrary to God’s word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another.”

# Title III, Canon 9, Section 6

(a) (1) The Rector or Priest-in-Charge shall have full authority and responsibility for the conduct of the worship and the spiritual jurisdiction of the Parish, subject to the Rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer, the Constitution and Canons of this Church, and the pastoral direction of the Bishop.

(b) (1) It shall be the duty of the Rector or Priest-in-Charge to ensure all persons in their charge receive Instruction in the Holy Scriptures; in the subjects contained in An Outline of the Faith, commonly called the Catechism; in the doctrine, discipline, and worship of this Church; and in the exercise of their ministry as baptized persons.

# Richard Hooker on the primacy of Scripture

“What Scripture doth plainly deliver, to that first place both of credit and obedience is due; the next whereunto is whatsoever any man can necessarily conclude by force of reason; after these the voice of the Church succeedeth. That which the Church by her ecclesiastical authority shall probably think and define to be true or good, must in congruity of reason over-rule all other inferior judgments whatsoever.”

(Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, Book V, 8:2;  
Folger Edition 2:39,8-14)

# My own views

1. **Just because you or I have heard the Bible read during a liturgical service, we as Christian adults are not done with the Bible! Far from it.**
2. The whole reason that there are English or Spanish or other vernacular translations of the Bible is so that the people of the church will be able to **read and study the Bible.**
3. The clergy of the Episcopal Church who serve in parishes have a special responsibility to teach the Holy Scriptures to the people. God forbid that we fail in this.

# My own views

4. We have spent a huge amount of time and energy debating the proper administration of Baptism and Confirmation. It would make sense if we would spend the same amount of time and energy dealing with the proper **formation** of people, both before **and after** we baptize and confirm them!
5. For the church simply to baptize and/or confirm people without paying proper attention to their formation as Christians is irresponsible. The big question should be this: **Now that this person has been initiated, how are we going to get this person involved in age-appropriate study and formation, so that he/she can exercise his/her ministry as a baptized person in this church?**

# My own views

6. As wonderful and enjoyable as well done liturgy is, liturgy is not the whole work of the church. As I said above, **formation** has to be a big part of what we do as church. We screw up when we do not do it well.
7. **This formation of our fellow Christians needs to have a purpose.** It is not just about learning trivia from the Prayer Book or church history or the Bible. The purpose of formation is to enable us and free us to recognize the work that needs to be done in this world which God has entrusted to us. And then, once we recognize it, we need to do it in effective ways.

# For further reading

Several books are of great interest:

- Vicki K. Black, *Welcome to the Book of Common Prayer* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2005). This is a well-written, generally non-technical book written by a permanent deacon. “Regular people” can easily understand it.
- Marion J. Hatchett, *Commentary on the American Prayer Book* (New York: Seabury Press, 1981). This is the classic reference book about the 1979 *BCP* of the Episcopal Church. Dr. Hatchett taught Liturgy at Sewanee for many years and participated in the revision of our current Prayer Book.

# A classic revised

- Leonel L. Mitchell, *Praying Shapes Believing: A Theological Commentary on the Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Winston, 1985; revised and updated by Ruth A. Meyers, New York: Church Publishing, 2016). Leonel Mitchell taught liturgics at Notre Dame and Seabury-Western, and Ruth Meyers was his successor at Seabury-Western before she became Hodges-Haynes Professor of Liturgy at Church Divinity School of the Pacific.

# “Old Chestnuts”

- Massey H. Shepherd, Jr., *The Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950). The definitive reference book on the 1928 *BCP*, by a distinguished scholar and teacher who became a major framer of the 1979 *BCP*.
- Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (Westminster, UK: Dacre Press, 1945). The most classic of all Anglican books on liturgy. It focuses on the early liturgies from the patristic period as well as medieval and Reformation developments. Dix was an Anglican Benedictine monk of Nashdom Abbey, England.