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SACRIFICIUM LAUDIS

*The Anglican Breviary and
the Ancient Western
Orthodox Divine Office*

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INTRODUCTION

The Anglican Breviary (AB) is the fruit of a long process of the rediscovery of Western Catholic roots within Anglicanism. It provides English speaking, Catholic and Orthodox minded Christians with access to a complete, accurate, beautiful and practical rendering of the *sacrificium laudis*, the "sacrifice of praise," the ancient Western Divine Office, in substantially the same form and content which was prayed by generations of Western Saints including Ss. Benedict and Gregory the Great.

The AB was originally published in 1955 by the Frank Gavin Liturgical Foundation, based in New York, and devoted to the creation of liturgical resources for High Church and Catholic-minded members of the Anglican Communion. The Frank Gavin Liturgical Foundation was best known for its production of *The Anglican Missal*, which set forth a very beautiful interweaving of the traditional Prayer Book Liturgy with traditional English renderings of elements from the *Missale Romanum* (the pre-Vatican II Roman Missal). Just as this Missal intended to restore the rich fullness of the ancient

Western Rite to the rather bare Prayer Book Liturgy, so the AB was created as an immense enrichment of the Daily Office of Catholic-minded Anglicans.

Many High Churchmen and Anglo-Catholics had produced similar Daily Office books long before the publication of the AB. Some of these publications were rather eclectic in their compilation, drawing from medieval English, continental Roman (Tridentine), and Eastern Orthodox usages. Most of these books were actually diurnals – containing seven "day hours" and excluding the eighth, night vigil office of Matins. These publications provided the translators and compilers of the AB with models and inspiration.

The AB, however, was the first complete Anglo-Catholic Daily Office book, containing all seven of the day hours as well as the vigil office of Matins. The AB is a careful, accurate and beautiful rendering of the prayers, lessons, antiphons, and responsories of the *Breviarium Romanum*. The translation of the Psalter is that of the enduringly beautiful Coverdale Psalter of the *Book of Common Prayer*. Likewise many of the Collects are the versions which derive from the *Book of Common Prayer*. Most of the Scriptural lessons, antiphons and responsories are taken from the *Authorised Version* translation of 1611 ("King James") (except for certain instances where the Vulgate and Septuagint reflect a more traditional catholic and orthodox interpretation). The AB contains the entire intricate year-long cycle of Western Rite daily prayer in one amazingly compact volume.

Given the general abandonment of the traditional Western Rite by both Roman Catholics and Anglicans alike in the 1960's and 70's, the AB had been out of print for many decades until 1998 when a young Anglo-Catholic lawyer, Daniel James Lula, took it upon himself to acquire a pristine copy of the original printing and organize a large reprint. The reprint, financed with Lula's own funds, was beautifully done, complete with two-color red and black printing, durable black leather cover, high quality thin "bible" paper, and gilded edges. The AB has proved itself to be a precious treasure for all Catholic and Orthodox minded Christians who desire worship in the traditional daily prayers of ancient and medieval Western Christendom, translated into the reverent traditional English idiom of the *Book of Common Prayer*. In order to fully understand the immense significance of this volume, one must be familiar with the definition and content of a traditional Breviary, its history, and its practical use and application within our contemporary Western Orthodox church life.



WHAT IS A BREVIARY?

The Breviary is a volume essential to the Western Rite spirituality and praxis, as it contains the entire text of the Divine Office (psalms, canticles, antiphons, lessons, responses, hymns and prayers) with rubrical directions, as well as other helpful elements. A *Breviary*, as distinct from a *Diurnal*, contains all of the texts necessary for the recitation of the Vigil Office of *Matins*, as well as the seven other hours of *Lauds* (morning praises), *Prime*, *Terce*, *Sext*, *None* (first, third, sixth and ninth hours), *Vespers* (evening office), and *Compline* (bed-time office).*

The compilation of all of these texts under one cover is a relatively late medieval invention. Formerly the books required for the celebration of the Office were numerous – including, but not limited to, the *Psalterium*, *Antiphonale*, *Collectarium*, *Hymnarium*, *Lectionarium*, etc. Originally, within monastic and other communities, these books were divided up among the clerics who were serving different roles in the celebration of the Office (Officiant; Precentor; Cantors; Lectors, etc.).

The Breviary came about as an experimental attempt to bring together, or comprehend, all of the various constituent elements of the Divine Office into a “brief” format – one, or more, volumes, wherein the different elements were woven together in a rational, sequential manner. We find the first Breviaries compiled by Benedictines at Monte Cassino in the X and XI centuries. While some early Breviaries included musical settings of certain elements of the Office, generally Breviaries were meant only to contain the text of the Divine Office (musical notation for the Office continued to be found only in books such as the *Antiphonale*). The widespread compilation and proliferation of Breviaries was due to two major developments in the history of the medieval Western Church – the simplification of the Office’s celebration by the Roman Curia (the papal court) and the rise of the mendicant orders, such as the Franciscans (who required a portable form of the Office to carry from place to place in their travels).

The AB itself is a very large volume of around 2,000 pages. It is divided up into four basic parts – (1) The *Common of the Season* (including the forms common to each hour; the Ordinary parts of each of the hours; and the Psalter, arranged in order of recitation in the hours); (2) The *Proper of the Season* (containing all of the elements proper to Sundays, ferias, and other observances traditionally contained in this section); (3) The *Proper of the Saints* (containing all of the elements proper to unmoveable feasts of our Lord, our Lady, and the Saints throughout the year); And, (4) the *Common of the Saints* (containing all of the elements common to different classes

* Originally the Vigil Office was prayed at midnight, but S. Benedict ordered it to be said around 3 AM. Lauds immediately followed, or at least followed with little delay, so as to be prayed under the rising sun. Prime was recited sometime in the early morning, around 6 or 7 AM. The little day hours of Terce, Sext and None were recited at 9, 12 and 3 PM. Vespers was celebrated at sun-down, around 5 or 6 PM. Compline was recited around 8 PM.

of Saints and observances; as well as the Office of the Dead and Saturday Office of our Lady). Learning to maneuver the Breviary with skill and ease means learning exactly where to find common and proper elements within these four sections with the help of the rubrical directions and a liturgical *Ordo Kalendar* (such as that published by the Western Rite Vicariate). This is not a simple feat, and must be learned through experience and devoted usage.

HISTORY OF THE BREVIARY

Western Rite Orthodox Christians should be comfortable with the AB because it preserves substantially the form and content of the Western Divine Office as used by the early medieval Orthodox Saints of the West. Furthermore, the Western Divine Office has its basic roots in the worship of the Old Testament Jewish Church as well as in the primitive New Testament Church of the Apostles; and thus it has a common origin and kinship with the Divine Office of the Byzantine East.

The old Jewish Temple, as we see from the Scriptures, had fixed times of liturgical prayer and sacrifice. Pious Jews and Christians alike participated in these times of prayer both publicly and privately. These times of prayer included midnight, and the third, sixth, and ninth hours. We see the Apostles participating in this Jewish horarium in Acts x. 3, 9 and xvi. 25. The Synagogues in Palestine and the Diaspora inherited these morning and evening times of prayer directly from the Temple, and they adapted them accordingly to their usage.

The late I century Christian document known as the Didache witnesses to the primitive Christian adoption of the Judaic times of prayer. The Synagogue service, joined to the celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy, became the Christian public “*Synaxis*.” Western Orthodox have a remnant of this primitive Eucharistic *Synaxis* in the great Paschal Vigil as well as in the Ember Day Liturgies. The *Synaxis* takes two different roads of later historical development within the Church. Parts of the *Synaxis* develop into the so-called “Mass of the Catechumens” (the first part of the Divine Liturgy), while other parts develop into Vespers, the Night Vigil (Matins) and Lauds in the Divine Office. Thus, by the III century, the number of hours in the Christian Divine Office increases to six – the Vigil (Matins), early morning prayer (Lauds), the third, sixth and ninth hours (little hours of private prayer), and evening prayer (Vespers).

After the conversion of the Emperor S. Constantine and the peace of the Church, we see the public emergence of Christian ritual, a moving into the grand basilicas, and consequently an immense development and elaboration in the ceremonial of the Divine Office. Vespers and Lauds become the main public times of prayer (the so-called “Cathedral Office”), composed of psalms (thematically selected, not according to a regular cycle), canticles, hymns, long scriptural lessons, litanies of supplication, and concluding prayers.

The influence of monasticism (both Eastern and Western) is crucial in the final shaping of the Western Divine Office. The hours of Prime and Compline, for instance, are entirely of monastic origin, which found their way into the usages of Benedictine monasticism and from thence into the official prayer life of the Western Churches. S. Benedict in his Rule for monasteries gives us the very first, detailed description of the Western Divine Office – in which each hour is a well-defined, balanced, harmonious unit. He takes the essential structure of the Office from the Church of Rome, but he generously borrows from both Eastern and Milanese (Ambrosian) usages. Benedict devised his own scheme for reciting the Psalter, in which all 150 Psalms are recited in one week. Rome, in turn, was later greatly influenced by the shape of the Benedictine monastic Office and his Psalter scheme. The disciples of S. Benedict, including S. Gregory the Great and the various Apostles of the barbarian lands of Western Europe, are responsible for the spread and pre-eminence of the Romano-Benedictine Office.

The essential, structural development of the Western Divine Office ends with S. Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome, in the VI century. He provides the final defining forms and structure of the ancient Roman Rite, and establishes the uniformity of the Western Divine Office. Among his greatest achievements were the arrangement of the Office Lectionary of scriptural, historical and patristic lessons at Matins, the arrangement of texts, and the compilation of chant manuscripts for the antiphons and responsories.

It is important to emphasize, from the time of S. Gregory to the Second Vatican Council, that no *substantial* changes were made to the Western Divine Office as found in publications such as the AB. Accidental changes occur to be sure – enhancements such as the early medieval addition of the *Nunc dimittis* to Compline, the addition of the Chapter Office to Prime (VIII c.), the composition of festive Offices (such as those for Advent, the Dead, and Corpus Christi), and the addition of the Final Anthems of our Lady (XIII c.). There were also problematic developments and unfortunate accretions, such as the inadvertent overtaking of the ferial (regular, weekday) cycle of the Psalter by the sanctoral (festal) cycle, the addition of fanciful and grotesque legends of the Saints, and the constant appending of extra devotional materials to the authentic hours. The various attempts at reform of the Breviary undertaken from the late medieval period to the early XX century were attempts on the part of the Popes to bring the Divine Office back to its proper, pristine form in the time of Ss. Benedict and Gregory. The AB represents one of the last major reforms of the Breviary, under Pius X.

WHY PRAY THE BREVIARY?

Why should Western Rite Orthodox Christians become interested once again in the traditional Western Divine Office, as found in the AB? Because it is our rich heritage, being the ful-

ness of the Divine Office as prayed and chanted by our Fathers and Mothers in the faith, having its primitive roots in the worship of the venerable Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles, being given its distinctive form and content by the holy Fathers, Martyrs and Confessors of the Orthodox Western Churches. This is the Faith of our Fathers, expressed according to the particular genius of the Western Latin mindset, in the traditional English idiom of prayer and worship that we hold dear.

How, practically, can we as Western Orthodox Christians living in the world, make use of such a seemingly monastic and clerical volume? It would seem that the complex and time-consuming nature of the traditional Hours makes the AB nearly impossible for ordinary clerics and laymen to use. While it may not be possible for Christians other than monks and celibate clerics to experience the Breviary in its fulness and entirety, nonetheless ordinary Christians can tap into the ancient prayers of Western Orthodoxy by *supplementing* their own prayer and devotional life with certain elements of the Breviary. For instance, parishes which use the simplified parochial Western Rite Offices of Matins and Evensong can supplement these rather simple and austere services in a number of ways. For instance, the proper Antiphons on *Benedictus* and *Magnificat* can be easily added, and a skilled cantor can set these texts to the simple and solemn tones of the canticles. Likewise, the Breviary contains an absolute treasure-trove of proper Collects for any feast or observance imaginable. The “Little Chapters” (short scriptural tidbits) of the various hours can be employed as “Opening Sentences” to Matins and Evensong. The beautiful hagiographical, historical and patristic lessons of Matins often serve as material for an appropriate *third lesson* (after the second canticle, and before the creed). It is very edifying indeed for the faithful at Matins to hear the commentaries of Ss. Augustine, Ambrose, Jerome, Gregory or Chrysostom on the Gospel to be read at the morning Mass, or hear of the virtues and exploits of the Saint of the day.

Hence, Matins and Evensong can once again become a vehicle for a fuller expression of the Orthodox Catholic faith through the restoration of these ancient didactic and doxological elements (akin to the rich didactic, poetic tradition of Byzantine hymnody). Likewise, individual Christians or Christian families can incorporate such elements into their private domestic prayers, devotions, and meditations, as the Breviary provides a deep and profound connection to ancient Western Orthodox piety and spirituality.

The Orthodox Western Rite must reclaim its authentic, ancient heritage and patrimony of patristic theology, devotion and piety – and until we are able to compile and publish a fully Orthodox Benedictine Breviary, *The Anglican Breviary* is an essential tool to this ongoing process of restoration, growth and maturity. §

[EDITOR’S NOTE – Lancelot Andrewes Press has ordered 40 copies of *The Anglican Breviary*, \$60 each. Please see Fr. John or Rdr. Benjamin if you are interested.]