

Holy Trinity REC: Adult Catechism Class Week 5: Prayer and Common Prayer

Prayer and the Angels

If it is true that angels have their continual intercourse between the throne of God in heaven and His Church here on earth, where would we find this more verified than in those two spiritual exercises: the one doctrine, the other prayer? For what is the assembling of the Church to learn but the receiving of angels descending from above? And what is it to pray but to send angels upward? God's heavenly inspirations and our holy desires are like so many angels of intercourse and commerce between God and us. As teaching leads us to know that God is our supreme truth, so prayer testifies that we acknowledge Him to be our sovereign good.¹

Prayer: the beginning and end of the Christian Life

Our religious life begins and ends with prayer. We on earth have little knowledge about things done in heaven but we know that the saints in heaven pray. Because prayer is something common to the Church triumphant and the Church militant, and is a work that we share with the angels, we think that much of our lives can be celestial and divine to the extent that we spend them in the exercise of prayer.²

Two sorts of prayer—private and public

- Private prayer is good. You should do it!
- Hooker says **public prayer** is greater, because:
 - God promises to be with people when they gather to pray (when 2 or 3, Matthew 18...Hooker's example—St. Paul and 2 Corinthians...)
 - We have assurance when groups of people pray together, that God hear us, because of the common consent of the people.
 - We can support each other! (i.e., the zeal of one helps the others, etc...)
 - This means **what we pray** is important!
 - There is benefit to praying all together—it helps all of us.

So when we pray, it's good to have:

1. A good place.
 - a. We talked about this two weeks ago!
 - b. *Out of respect for common prayer and to assure its continuance, Chrysostom, the gravest of the ancient Fathers, believed and often clearly taught that the house of prayer is a court beatified by the presence of celestial beings and that, as we stand and pray and send forth hymns to God, His angels are intermingled with us as our associates in prayer* (St John Chrysostom, c. 347–

¹ Richard Hooker, [Richard Hooker on Anglican Faith and Worship: Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity: Book V](#), ed. Philip B. Secor, A Modern Edition. (London: SPCK, 2003), 97.

² Richard Hooker, [Richard Hooker on Anglican Faith and Worship: Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity: Book V](#), ed. Philip B. Secor, A Modern Edition. (London: SPCK, 2003), 98.

407, Bp of Constantinople, *Homilies*, 15, 24). *In the same connection, the Apostle Paul required great decorum in the sanctuary out of respect for the angels* (1 Corinthians 11:10).³

2. A proper minister.

- a. *Even as the location of common prayer is a condition of its outward form that can help to promote devotion, more important still is the person around whom God's people form themselves in prayer—the one who stands and speaks to God on their behalf. The authority of his position, the fervour of his commitment, the piety and seriousness of his whole demeanour must grace and promote the exercise of his worship of God.*⁴
- b. Hooker says ministers must live virtuous and godly lives so as to not cause a scandal, and so as not to interrupt this life of common prayer.

3. A proper form.

- a. *Of all the aids for proper performance of common prayer the greatest is the very regularity and prescription of both form and content in the service. No doubt our service of worship came from God and we must acknowledge it to be the result of His special care and generosity that the Church would for ever have a prescribed form of common prayer—though not the same in all respects everywhere, nevertheless for the most part having the same general form. If the liturgies of all the ancient churches in the world were compared with one another, it would be easily seen that all of them had the same original model and that the public prayers of God's people never employed the voluntary prayers devised by any one man's extemporaneous wit.*⁵
- b. This is to prevent ministers from prattling on about nothing, saying things that are heretical (intentionally or accidently), or speaking irreverently.

Biblical Responses to Objections to Set Prayers:

1. Jesus taught a set prayer.
2. Moses
3. The Psalms
4. Jesus and his disciples the night he was betrayed

Some said, yes, a set form of Prayer—but the BCP is bad. They had a list!

The first objection: The BCP is too Roman Catholic.

Hooker's response:

*Whereas Rome retains what is ancient and better, we see others leaving these practices for new ones and changing things for the worse. We would be better off following the perfection of those whom we do not like than resembling the errors of those we love.*⁶

³ Richard Hooker, [Richard Hooker on Anglican Faith and Worship: Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity: Book V](#), ed. Philip B. Secor, A Modern Edition. (London: SPCK, 2003), 101–102.

⁴ Richard Hooker, [Richard Hooker on Anglican Faith and Worship: Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity: Book V](#), ed. Philip B. Secor, A Modern Edition. (London: SPCK, 2003), 102.

⁵ Richard Hooker, [Richard Hooker on Anglican Faith and Worship: Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity: Book V](#), ed. Philip B. Secor, A Modern Edition. (London: SPCK, 2003), 103.

⁶ Richard Hooker, [Richard Hooker on Anglican Faith and Worship: Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity: Book V](#), ed. Philip B. Secor, A Modern Edition. (London: SPCK, 2003), 108.