

Commentary on the Daily Office Lectionary (DOL)

The Rev. Ben Jefferies, Editor, Lent, A.D. 2016

The Sources

Thomas Cranmer's vision for the daily reading of Scripture was that it would cover "the whole of Holy Scripture (or the greatest part thereof)". That vision has been upheld. The lectionary submitted here is essentially *an expanded version of the lectionary within the 1962 Book of Common Prayer (Canada)*. A great debt is owed for the careful and wise selection and ordering of readings that was created by the Canadian church. The present lectionary is 92% identical to the 1962 DOL. Three substantial amendments were made to it.

The first: When the greater part of an Old Testament book was included, the readings were expanded so that the *entire* book will be read, with no omissions. Mary Ann Masters and Jane Masters (sisters of Bishop Charles Masters) provided an invaluable service in listing and identifying what was omitted in the 1962 DOL, and those omissions were in many places inserted inside parentheses, to indicate the optional nature of their inclusion. This system means that a shorter reading may be maintained, but for those who wish to read through whole books of the bible in sequence, it is now much easier to do so. (Other than the addition of the genealogies of Jesus, the New Testament readings in the 62 DOL did not need any expansion, since these books were already included in their entirety)

The second: There are two readings for Sundays in the 62 DOL, on a two-year cycle, even though the week-day readings are only on a one-year cycle. For clarity's sake, and since readings for Sunday are further supplied by the separate Eucharistic lectionary, the two-year cycle was distilled into a single set of readings for Sundays in the DOL. Readings which were not found anywhere else in the lectionary were kept (again, thank you to the Masters sisters for their surveying work), then the Gospels were given precedence, as were OT books not read in their entirety elsewhere in the year.

The third: The Song of Songs, which in the 1962 lectionary has only one appearance, has been introduced into the evening lessons of Easter Week. The reasons for this are several. In the first place, as one of the Megillot, the Jewish lectionary reads it at the feast of the Passover. This indicates that the book is to be interpreted first and foremost *allegorically*. There is even a rabbinic legend that the Song of Songs was whispered in the wind and through the waves as Israel passed through the Red Sea. Indeed, until the Modern Era and the advent of critical scholarship, the Church has always understood the book as an allegory. By placing the Song of Songs in Easter Week, the reader and listener will be forced to ask the question, "why are we reading this *now*?" and the allegorical interpretation – that it is a tale of the love between Christ and his Church – will demand one's attention, God's people having just been freshly reminded of the love Christ showed them on the Cross.

The Results

The result of this work, built on the 1962 Canadian DOL are as follows:
In the course of one year,

The Following books are read through in their entirety TWICE:

John	Titus
Acts	Hebrews
Ephesians	James
Philippians	1 Peter
Colossians	1 John
1 & 2 Thessalonians	2 John
1 & 2 Timothy	3 John

The following books are read through at least ONCE in their entirety:

NT

Matthew
Mark
Luke
Romans
1 Corinthians
2 Corinthians
Galatians
Philemon
2 Peter
Jude
Revelation

OT

Exodus
Deuteronomy
Ruth
1 Samuel
2 Samuel
1 Kings
2 Kings
Esther
Job
Ecclesiastes
Song of Songs
Isaiah
Jeremiah
The Twelve Minor Prophets
Daniel

Substantial portions of the following books are read:

Genesis
Numbers
Joshua
Judges
Ezra
Nehemiah
Proverbs
Lamentations
Ezekiel

And from the Apocrypha:

1 Maccabees
Baruch
Ecclesiasticus
Wisdom

Small selections are read from:

Leviticus
1 & 2 Chronicles

The sections that are omitted in these books fall into two categories: (1) Those that do not lend themselves to immediate public edification, such as genealogies, detailed descriptions of the sacrificial system, or lengthy detail about sinful exploits. (2) Those that are repetitious of content already presented. For instance, there are a few sections omitted in Judges and Proverbs that only repeat nearly identical things in previous readings.

The only books that have large omissions (here, and the 1962 lectionary) are the books of the Chronicles, because their material is mostly duplicated in Samuel and Kings, which are read in their entirety.