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**The Use of York:
Characteristics of the Medieval Liturgical
Office in York**

by

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Professor Andrew Hughes, among his manifold kindnesses, provoked an enduring need to explore ‘general impressions’, and made preoccupation with such explorations acceptable.

St Everild’s Day, 2008.

Abbreviations

Manuscripts to which frequent references are made

Full details of all manuscripts are in the first part of the Bibliography.

Arundel	Arundel Castle Archives	York Antiphonal (s.n.)
BLAdd.30511	London, British Library	ms Additional 30511
BLAdd.34190	"	mss Additional 34190 & Egerton 2025
BLAdd.38624	"	ms Additional 38624
Burney.335	"	ms Burney 335
CAdd.2602	Cambridge, University Library	ms Additional 2602
CAdd.3110	"	ms Additional 3110
Cosin	Durham, University Library	ms Cosin V.I.2
Gough.lit.1	Oxford, Bodleian Library	ms Gough liturg. 1
Gough.lit.5	"	ms Gough liturg. 5
Harley.2785	London, British Library	ms Harley 2785
Lat.liturg.f.2	Oxford, Bodleian Library	ms Lat. liturg. F.2
Laud.misc.84	"	ms Laud misc. 84
Laud.misc.299	"	ms Laud misc. 299
Rawl.C.553	"	ms Rawlinson C. 553
Rawl.G.170	"	ms Rawlinson G. 170
Sion	London, Lambeth Palace Library	ms Sion College 1
Wollaton	Nottingham, University Library	the Wollaton Antiphonal (s.n.)
Wood.C.12	Oxford, Bodleian Library	ms Wood C. 12
XVI.O.9	York, Minster Archives	ms XVI O. 9
XVI.O.23	"	ms XVI O. 23
YAdd.68	"	ms Additional 68
YAdd.69	"	ms Additional 69
YAdd.70	"	ms Additional 70
YAdd.115	"	ms Additional 115
YAdd.383	"	ms Additional 383

Reference works

<i>CAO</i>	Hesbert, <i>Corpus Antiphonarium Officii</i>
<i>LCS</i>	Bradshaw, ed., <i>Lincoln Cathedral Statutes</i>
<i>MMBL</i>	Ker, ed., <i>Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries</i>
van Dijk	<i>Handlist of the Latin Liturgical Manuscripts in the Bodleian</i>

Liturgical items are often referred to in the following format: **A3 MR3.8g**
= the third responsory, in mode 8 beginning on G, of Matins for the third Sunday in Advent

A1, 2, 3, 4	First through fourth Sundays in Advent
Thu, Fri, Sat	Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday
ML, MR, MV	Matins lesson, responsory, or verse; accompanied by a number indicating the order of the item

The Use of York: Characteristics of the Medieval Liturgical Office in York

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Describing the Use of York: A new agenda for an unsolved problem

The state of liturgy in Britain before the Prayer Book is often described in the words of the well-known Preface:

And whereas heretofore there hath bene great diversitie in saying & synging in Churches within this realme; some folowing Salisbury use, some Herford use, some the use of Bangor, some of yorke, some of Lincoln; now from henceforth all the whole realm shal have but one use.¹

The passage implies the continued existence of established local rites, although the author may have overstated their diversity. It has long been accepted that in later medieval England the use of Sarum, which had developed from the customs of Salisbury Cathedral, eventually superseded most of the other local patterns. At least one significant regional use did remain at the English Reformation: that of York, a counterpart to Sarum used throughout the northern province. The origins and survival of the use of York in spite of the ascendancy of Sarum demand explanation. But in order to discuss such matters it is necessary first to determine what was meant by York use and to consider the properties by which York liturgy differed from the dominant pattern.

It has not been possible to carry out such work since the distinguishing characteristics of York use, and indeed those of Sarum use, have suffered from a lack of attention and consequently a lack of definition. Although the *idea* of a use seems well understood, at least by the frequency of its application, those who have worked most closely with the sources have pointed out that the parameters of specific uses remain largely undefined. The late David Chadd

observed that despite the number of extant Sarum sources the wider context of the use remains unclear.² Nigel Morgan has pointed out that the dearth of recent work on Sarum has meant that modern scholars now rely on editions produced over a hundred years ago which contain ‘misinterpretations’ on the part of the editors.³ Work seems to have stalled on the analysis of the Sarum use — perhaps because the task is so challenging — but it continues to be a point of reference for many who cite it, unaware of these ongoing problems of definition.

The situation is even worse for York. To date, nearly all scholarly works involving York use have referred to the liturgy presented in editions produced for the Surtees Society at the end of the nineteenth century. These are the only modern texts of the York pattern that are available; but to Richard Pfaff, they ‘leave something to be desired by late twentieth-century standards’.⁴ In the case of the office, with which this paper will be concerned, the edition produced by the Revd Stephen Lawley in 1880 is a transcription, more or less, of the first printed breviary of York, produced in 1493.⁵ References in Ker’s *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, then, to some breviary with ‘deviation in its lections from *Brev. Ebor*’⁶, indicate only that the text in the manuscript deviates from the text of a single printed edition. Reliance on this edition is far from rare.⁷

Little if any serious work has been done with the manuscripts of the York office, beyond elementary descriptions for catalogues. Such catalogues, too, suffer, because assignments to York have so far been based on deficient methods: first, a reliance on comparison with the unrepresentative edition; second, and more importantly, the assumption that certain entries in a liturgical calendar are peculiar to a given use, within which all calendars are more or less consistent. A combination of these questionable methods has meant that a number of manuscripts have been mistakenly assigned to York, and their several properties confused with those of the sources more reliably assigned to the use. The unique characteristics of the York tradition, then, not to mention any insights about its origins or longevity, or how properly to identify it by recognizing such properties, remain unknown.

A first step towards a more definitive discussion of York use must be to identify the liturgical features that were characteristic of its sources. This paper attempts, through the first comparative analysis of York office manuscripts, to identify those features by framing and applying a set of methodological techniques that are effective for such work. Based on the most telling

characteristics of the use, it will be possible to make some suggestions about its origins and its relationship with Sarum.

In the course of this study, it will be necessary first to re-assess the manuscripts presently associated with York. An established method of comparing liturgical patterns will eliminate a number of manuscripts whose connexion to York is tenuous. With the remaining sources, identified as a coherent group validly assigned to York, we shall compare liturgical contents to determine what distinctive properties they share, which, with some reservations, we shall accept as characteristics of the use. The result is more complex than that provided by a simple comparison with the printed breviary: while certain aspects of the use are uniform, others diverge in different ways in every manuscript; still others are linked to Sarum. All indications point to a more varied use of York, obscured by simplistic reliance on the 1493 breviary, and suggest complex relations between York and the other regional English liturgies.

* * *

Much editorial and comparative work dealing with medieval liturgy, including the use of York, needs to be treated with caution, and some of it should be disregarded entirely. Studies tend to eschew manuscripts and to rely heavily on editions of English service books from the several main uses, many of which were produced as historical models for Church of England ritual or to prove the relation of late medieval English liturgy to Anglo-Saxon and Roman patterns.⁸ Liturgical scholarship has often been concerned with tracing the history of modern rites back to antiquity; Paul Bradshaw has written that some have even ‘tried to arrange the evidence so as to suggest that a single coherent line of liturgical evolution can be traced from the apostolic age’.⁹ The resulting volumes have never fallen out of favour, perhaps owing to a reluctance to do more work when the rites had apparently been so clearly described in print. Yet a number are deficient; some, like the Surtees edition of the York breviary and its well-known Sarum counterpart edited by Procter and Wordsworth, were simply transcribed from a single source of no particular authority by their editors’ own admission. The editors of the latter believed that a transcription was a ‘more manageable undertaking’ but did look forward to a critical edition in the future,¹⁰ a task whose eventual necessity was quickly forgotten, perhaps because of the convenience of the existing version. Many editors of liturgical texts were clerics of the Church of England with antiquarian interests, and

Pfaff notes that their work was invariably coloured by ‘the presuppositions of those who worship according to printed liturgical books’ i.e., the assumption that liturgical books of a certain pattern, whatever their age or provenance, ought not to vary.¹¹ The preference, then, for the single printed edition as an exemplar for the Surtees volume, rather than multiple manuscripts, may have been dictated not so much by mere laziness as by an assumption that it was an accurate representation of the York liturgy, manuscript or otherwise, in the year 1493. The term used by these scholars to describe their own work — ‘liturgiology’ — is useful to compartmentalize such studies.¹²

The school of liturgiology is not dead. A more recent work by Philip Baxter with a promising title summarizes the familiar scholarship on the descent of Roman forms to Britain, speaking approvingly of a ‘drastic and efficient Norman reorganization’, and a Sarum use that ‘gained increasing value as an authoritative reference and source of proven … liturgy’.¹³ Perhaps Baxter’s most perceptive observation is that Sarum was ‘taken up again [in the 19th century] by churches of the Anglo-Catholic party’.¹⁴ The editors of a retrospective on the work of Walter Howard Frere describe some of the difficulties of liturgiology and neatly summarize some of its problems: it is a field ‘where the power of convention and the queer desire for “mumbo jumbo” are apt to be all powerful’.¹⁵

Liturgical research has not, of course, been restricted to observations defined by presumption or piety. The present study relies on methodological principles, successfully applied by several modern scholars, which are reliant on the amassing of quantitative data. An important work by Anton Baumstark, *Comparative Liturgy*, forbade the researcher to ‘accept any preconceived ideas’ and argued, as if speaking directly to liturgiologists, that:

the history of Liturgy occupies [a position] in the totality of the sciences … it is only by setting out from exact results and precise observations that right conclusions will be reached. The scrupulous establishment of the factual data underlying the problems should precede every attempt at explanation.¹⁶

The ‘establishment of the factual data’ in immense quantities was an essential element of liturgical research in the second half of the twentieth century. Among the most prominent contributions was the six-volume *Corpus antiphonalium officii* of René-Jean Hesbert, a work that supplied partial contents of 798 manuscripts and attempted to trace the descent of the distinctive

patterns they contained.¹⁷ Hesbert collected series of Matins responsories and verses with the intention of producing, through comparison by shared variant, a ‘restitution critique de l’Archetype de la tradition’.¹⁸ Though his objective is now deprecated, Hesbert’s methods for collecting and comparing data, and the corpus he produced, remain useful means by which an unknown source can be compared with a great many others. Based on the contents of twelve manuscripts, Hesbert edited the responsory texts for Sundays in Advent and assigned a unique number to each text. It was then possible to draw up a ‘responsory series’ for a manuscript by collating the numbers corresponding to each of the nine responsories for each Sunday in Advent. These series could then be compared by hand or by computer, and relations between sources highlighted. The *CAO* corpus is now ‘the best-known tool for supra-regional comparisons’.¹⁹ In similar fashion, responsory series for the Triduum were first collected by Raymond le Roux and reorganized by Pierre-Marie Gy.²⁰ Gabriel Beyssac collected some 1275 responsory series for the office for the Dead from manuscripts across Europe, and claimed to have been able to identify the liturgical tradition of a manuscript solely from its responsory series for the Dead.²¹ His work was supplemented by Victor Leroquais, Pierre-Marie Gy, and Michel Huglo, and computerized and studied in depth by Knud Ottosen.²² The present study utilizes the method refined by all of these scholars, and it will be shown that the responsory series that they have associated with York are valid indicators of the use.

Rather than beginning with an historical supposition (e.g., that Anglo-Saxon liturgy was linked to Rome) and determining the parameters for study of the sources based on that premise, liturgical research in the later twentieth century became focused on first collecting the contents of the sources before proposing any reasons for the trends observed. I speculate that this preoccupation with data may have convinced some researchers that the presence of some given element, for instance a feastday associated with a certain region, could be an indicator of use.

Janet Backhouse’s edition of the Madresfield Hours illustrates the most popular means for assignment to York use, the presence of the feasts of certain saints associated with York in the calendar: generally these are Paulinus of York (10 October; d. 644), Wilfrid of Ripon (12 October; d. 709), John of Beverley (7 May, transl. 25 October; d. 721), and William of York (8 June; d. 1154). For Backhouse, their presence suggests that ‘the York connection is ... in no doubt’.²³ Van Dijk’s catalogue of liturgical manuscripts in the Bodleian also

relies on the contents of calendars to assign a book to a use, but seems less likely to trust evidence without question. My recent collaborations with Andrew Hughes have also considered evidence from calendars to assign manuscripts of unknown use to York.²⁴ Nigel Morgan's database of liturgical books is also based partly on evidence from calendars.²⁵

But calendars were functional — indeed many were the most well-thumbed leaves in a manuscript — and easy to modify, and their contents may therefore not reflect the original contents, or indeed the surviving contents, of the rest of the book. In this study, it will be established that most calendar entries common in York books are not found exclusively in sources of that use. Summary assignments, particularly to York, based solely on the presence or absence of such a small set of items must now be distrusted, and a wider range of liturgical contents must be consulted.

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Liturgical Analysis

Given several existing lists of manuscripts assigned to York, Hesbert's method of summarizing liturgical contents has been adopted here in order to assess the validity of each assignment. Based on their responsory series, certain of these manuscripts were found to contain distinctive patterns associated by *CAO* and related works (those of le Roux, Gy, and Beyssac) with York; these sources will be deemed the 'York group'.

Other manuscripts from the existing lists contain some material, mostly calendar entries, that might be associated with York, but their responsory series follow the Sarum pattern. These manuscripts were not selected as representative Sarum sources; indeed, they might be better categorized as 'York rejects'. However, they are associated with Sarum just as securely as their counterparts are associated with York: both groups contain the responsory series established by *CAO* as unique to each use.

To determine the common features of the York manuscripts, several aspects of each source will be studied, beginning with the calendar, moving to the Sanctorale and Litany, and ending with an analysis of a number of plainsong melodies. Where manuscripts are incomplete or damaged, and where their contents may be difficult to interpret or even contradictory, it will be shown that data derived from several components of a manuscript will help to