

Does Daily Prayer Still Have a Place in Modern Government?

Leftist members of Parliament in the U.K. have introduced a formal push to eliminate the centuries-old tradition of daily prayers from the House of Commons.

Labour MP Neil Duncan-Jordan put forward the motion, according to The Mirror, arguing prayers in the chambers of government are “not compatible with a society that respects the principles of freedom of and from religion.”

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“Having prayers at the beginning of the day feels like an outdated and outmoded practice,” he reportedly said. “In a modern workplace, it doesn’t really make a lot of sense. We now have quite a diverse group of parliamentarians with different religious beliefs, and people like myself, who have no religion at all. They have to wait outside waiting for the prayers to end.”

The tradition of opening sessions with prayer dates back to 1558, but that could be upended soon.

Backed by the National Secular Society, the pending motion was crafted to ensure “no religious beliefs or practices have undue influence on how you live your life”—to include opening prayers.

In part, the motion reads:

That this House recognizes religious worship should not play any part in the formal business of the House of Commons; believes that Parliamentary meetings should be conducted in a manner equally welcoming to all attendees, irrespective of their personal beliefs; further believes that Parliamentary Prayers are not compatible with a society which respects the principle of freedom of and from religion; and urges that prayers should not form part of the official business of Parliament; and calls on the Modernization Committee to consider alternative arrangements

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The motion has been signed by three Labour MPs, three Liberal Democrats, two Green MPs, and one politician from the Scottish National Party.

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