

Scottish Presbyterian Worship: Proposals for Organic Change, 1843 to the Present Day Bryan D. Spinks, Edinburgh Saint Andrew Press, 2020. xx + 299pp. £25 paperback ISBN 978 1 8008 3000 4

On 17th October 2015 in New College, Edinburgh, Bryan Spinks, an Honorary President of the Church Service Society, delivered to the Society its Sesquicentennial Lecture. It was entitled ‘The Nineteenth Century Liturgical Revival: Evolution and Devolution of Worship in the Kirk’. This theme he has enlarged and developed that theme in this, his latest book. His publisher claims that it ‘fills an important gap in the history of the Church of Scotland and of Scottish worship. It offers an in-depth narrative of a neglected liturgical legacy and a perceptive analysis of the Church’s evolving patterns of worship from the middle of the 19th century to the present day.’ Members of the Society will discover on reading the book that that claim is not an idle one: it is magnificently substantiated and richly honoured.

Like the lecture, the book’s key words are ‘evolution’ and ‘devolution,’ and Spinks dilates on the creative challenges these present for liturgical development. In the Introduction he chooses ‘organic growth’ as an analogy for liturgical evolution because he thinks it a ‘helpful lens for viewing the changes in Scottish Presbyterian worship from the time of the Disruption.’ He points out that modern evolutionary theory identifies two causes which give rise to mutation and change, internal and external, and he applies this analogously to the development or evolution of Scottish Presbyterian worship. The book focuses largely on the Church of Scotland but happily includes the other Presbyterian Churches in Scotland.

The first chapter offers contemporary accounts of traditional worship patterns at the time of the Disruption as well as examples of the sacramental theologies that lay behind them. I am particularly pleased that Spinks traces the appearance of ‘printed ministerial aids’ back to Dr Harry Robertson of Kiltarn’s *The Scotch Minister’s Assistant*, Inverness 1802, for Kiltarn was my first parish and I used the book there from time to time. The collections he cites reflect both ministerial and parochial preferences, and are good examples of liturgical devolution. These ‘forms were, of course, traditional, but what was traditional would come to be regarded by some leading churchmen of the established Church as being a liturgical species that needed to adapt or else would become extinct’.

The innovations at Greyfriars and the resultant tussles in the General Assembly are more than adequately dealt with, and Lee's publications from *Prayers for Public Worship* to the *Order of Public Worship* are given, in chapter two, their due place in the progression from what had been traditional to what Dr John Lamb called, in another connection, 'a higher level of order and decency.' Whatever else may be said of Lee, he opened the way for a readier acceptance and use of books prepared for use in church, and with what Spinks calls his 'liturgical disruption' made it easier for the *Euchologion* and its aims to be acceptable. 'Lees work provided the DNA from which a better adapted species of liturgy could evolve.' (p. 43)

Chapter three tells the story of the Church Service Society and the *Euchologion*. The tale of the meeting of the 'three conspirators', R. H. Story, Cameron Lees, and George Campbell, on 31 January 1865 at The Religious Institution Rooms in Glasgow at which they founded the Society will be well known to members of the Society. Spinks gives a clear account of the successive editions of *Euchologion* and helpfully lays out specimen Orders as he goes along. He also records that the Editorial Committee issued a guide as to the use of *Euchologion*, the aim of which seems to have been to remind ministers that by the law of the Church they were perfectly free to use material from any source so long as they did not violate any legal rule of the Church. What mattered was that the value of the holy and reverent character of common prayer should be supreme in the conduct of public worship. A. K. H. Boyd's *A Scotch Communion Sunday* 1873 is an example of how this disciplined liberty could be exercised: the details of a full service are given, including the fact that one of the prayers included within it the Apostles' Creed!

The next chapter takes us away from the Church of Scotland for a look at the Nineteenth Century Public Worship Provisions in the United Presbyterian Church, the Free Church of Scotland, and a Communion Service of the Free Presbyterian Church. The two smaller but significant Presbyterian Churches were both influenced by the same catalyts that required some 'genetic' change in worship forms and style. No one was more aware of this than William Bruce Robertson of the United Presbyterian Church in Irvine. He sometimes went further than the *Euchologion*, as he did in 1868 when he held a service on Christmas Eve, not without controversy. But it was clear that there was a feeling abroad that as times changed, so should worship. At the meeting of the United Presbyterian Synod in 1882 the United Presbyterian Devotional

Service Association was formed which, with a view to fostering interest in the history and literature of public worship, produced papers under the general title of *Devotional Services of the Church*. In 1891 the Association compiled *Presbyterian Forms of Service*, some of which Spinks usefully lays out in detail. Meanwhile, the Free Church of Scotland was experiencing a similar disaffection with current form and practice and, in spite of the fairly vociferous opposition of men like James Begg, the Public Worship Association was formed in 1891 'to promote the ends of edification, order, and reverence in the public services of the Church in accordance with Scripture principles, and in the light especially of the experience and practice of the reformed Churches holding the Presbyterian system' (p. 76). In 1898 *A New Directory for the Public Worship of God* was published of which Spinks offers a lucid account of both the liturgies and theological ideas underpinning them. To all this is added a record of a Communion service held outdoors at Ferintosh, at which thousands attended.

Chapter five gives a fascinating account of the introduction of the pipe organ, the widespread use of hymn books from official hymnals, and the formation of choirs to lead the praise. As Spinks points out, this flowering was not a peculiarly Scottish Presbyterian trend. 'In the Church of England, at the same time, the old metrical psalmody of Sternhold and Hopkins, and Tate and Brady, gave way to hymns, particularly *Hymns Ancient and Modern* 1861, and although many churches had musical accompaniment in the form of west-gallery parish bands, these gave way to the organ and a robed choir that sat in the chancel.' (p.97). He might also have pointed out that choirs were not entirely new in Scottish Presbyterian Worship. Millar Patrick's *Four Centuries of Scottish Psalmody* records the rise of the choir movement, beginning in Aberdeenshire in the second half of the 19th century, and spreading rapidly throughout Scotland. It would have been good too if a nod had been given in Andrew Carnegie's direction: after 1883 the Carnegie grants for organs played a large part in the proliferation of organs throughout Scotland.

In chapter six, Spinks marshals some of the 'worthies' of both the Church Service Society and the Scottish Church Society and assesses their contributions. James Cooper occupies the limelight in this revue, but William Milligan, H. J. Wotherspoon, and James Cromarty Smith are given their due place too. The Barnhill Case (T. N. Adamson) and what were seen as the excesses of John Charleson at Thornliebank are elucidated, but the thrust of the chapter shows

how the various members of the Church Service Society attempted to be loyal to the Church of Scotland's wider and older traditions, and gave the liturgical renewal a doctrinal underpinning. They made significant contribution by publishing older liturgies, creating new ones, and encouraging more regular celebrations of Holy Communion.

Spinks argues, in chapter seven, that the aesthetic tastes and developments in Victorian society and culture, epitomised by the Romanticism of the time, was one of the main external causes giving rise to the changes and developments in Scottish Presbyterian worship. The most obvious signs of this were the building of Gothic-type churches in all the three denominations, concern for liturgical furnishings and decoration, and the crafting of liturgical services printed by and for individual churches. Noteworthy contributors to these developments included architects such as Honeyman, Anderson, Pilkington, and Leiper; ministers such as David Arnot, John Macleod, David Watson, John Service at Hyndland; such movements as Ecclesiology, and Arts and Crafts Movement. The creative optimism of this Romanticism, however, would soon be under threat by the ravages of the First World War of 1914-18.

The move from Romanticism to Modernism is engagingly introduced by an excerpt from Virginia Woolf at the beginning of chapter eight. The work of the Churches during this period is seen against the backdrop of the First World War, the Russian Revolution and rise of Communism, the Great Depression, and the Second World War, together with the unions of the United Presbyterian Church and the Free Church of Scotland 1900, and the United Free Church of Scotland and the Church of Scotland 1929. By then, hymns had become firmly established, as evinced by the publication of *The Church Hymnary Revised Edition* in 1927. Before the Union, the Churches had been involved in the production of a wide variety of liturgical material and in scholarly Eucharistic thinking, culminating in the publication by the united Church of Scotland of *The Book of Common Order*, 1940. Spinks highlights the work of Millar Patrick, Wallace Williamson, Lachlan MacLean Watt, Charles Warr, J. G. Grant Fleming, Oswald B Milligan, W. D. Maxwell, and William McMillan, all names well known to members of the Society.

Some (many?) of our members will themselves have walked over the ground covered by this chapter and the next. While there may not therefore be many

surprises, there are many friends to encounter and delights to enjoy. Chapter nine begins by marking the social and cultural changes which took place in this period: an ever-growing secularism where religion was regarded as outmoded and irrelevant; a shift from identity in a 'Christian country' to a pluralist society; and a Church which began to have less and less place in the nation's political and social life. It is against this background that George MacLeod and Iona Abbey and Iona worship made their distinctive mark. Other places, like Canongate Kirk, made significant contributions to what might be seen to be the consolidation of the theology and ethos of *The Book of Common Order* 1940. It was a time, too, of a growing optimism about the progress of ecumenism, especially in the wake of the Roman Catholic Church's Second Vatican Council, and of an enlivening interest in liturgical revision and sacramental theology. The formation of the Joint Liturgical Group was encouraged and supported by the Church of Scotland, and the Baillie brothers, Donald and John, won for Scotland a prominent place in the development of sacramental theology. Towards the end of this period, *The Church Hymnary: Third Edition* 1973 and *The Book of Common Order* 1979 were published, not to universal acclaim.

The main components of Chapter 10 comprise a fairly full critique of *Common Order* 1994/96, a commentary on *The Church Hymnary: Fourth Edition* 2005, and an account of worship material provided by the Iona Community and the Wild Goose Group, about which Spinks wryly remarks that 'like certain Scottish whiskys (sic), much of the material seems to have a greater market abroad than at home.' (p. 239) The Church of Scotland's continuing interest in ecclesiology as indicated by the publication of *The Setting of Presbyterian Worship* 2014 is also noted. A section entitled 'Sacramental Reflections' surveys the contemporary debates and conclusions on Holy Baptism and records the appearance of several publications, including a CD, on Holy Communion. After a series of 'snapshots' of what Spinks calls 'Devolution of liturgical services,' the chapter ends with an illuminating account of worship in Presbyterian Churches other than the Church of Scotland.

In the final chapter Spinks returns explicitly to his metaphor of organic growth and evolution/devolution which he has been using throughout to delineate the developments in worship in the Scottish Presbyterian Churches in Scotland. His sub-title for the book is 'Proposals for Organic Change, 1843 to the Present Day' and he has accomplished with skillful dexterity and winning clarity his

task of marking these changes as they have successively presented themselves. His book should be in the hands of all the members of the Society: it is a valuable exploration of 'the rock whence we are hewn'.

Charles Robertson