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DAILY WORSHIP IN THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

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I have been asked to set the scene for the theme of our conference, *Daily Worship*, by giving a brief resume of the history of *Daily Worship in the Church of Scotland*. I take it that, in introducing the subject of daily worship, I am not expected to sketch an *apologia* for an activity whose roots go back into Judaism, with its rhythm of devotion that sustained generations of devout Jews - public services on the one hand with morning and evening sacrifices, and psalms and prayers at mid-morning and mid-afternoon; and private prayers on the other hand, in the evening, in the morning, and at noon.

Nor am I expected to tell how the early church continued and elaborated this pattern, adapting the daily prayer experience to a peculiarly Christian understanding, so that the Psalms became a prophetic witness to Christ, and the hours of the day set for prayer reminders of the story of Christ's suffering and death.

Nor need I rehearse how, by the time of Benedict,¹ the faithful were offering prayers seven times a day, at what became known as the Canonical Hours, and how every priest was expected to say these *Hours*, using material that was provided in the Breviary. That pulse of daily prayer was, of course, echoed in the Celtic Church. Adamnan tells us of a book of hymns for the office of every day in the week, penned by the hand of Columba himself,² and each of the ordinary days and the festival days had its own office or service of prayers, psalms, hymns, and versicles to be offered, sung and read at the Hours of Prayer.³

Daily worship, however, was not exclusively monastic. The monastic element was woven together in a variety of configurations with a congregational element, and the people were able to participate in responses and hymns, particularly at what they saw as the principal times, morning and evening. But the discipline of daily worship eventually came to be carried almost exclusively by the clergy and those in religious orders, and was no longer followed by the people: the paradigm of prayer had become too complicated, daily worship too cumbersome, and Divine Service too impractical.

At the Reformation, something simpler was desired. Liturgists like Cranmer and his colleagues used *Hours* as the basis for, say, Morning Prayer (drawn from Matins, Lauds, and Prime) and Evening Prayer (drawn from Vespers and Compline). But they reached back beyond the medieval Church to the primitive Church and to the Scriptures. Reformers, particularly in Germany, attempted to revive a congregational use of morning and evening prayer, being firmly committed as they were to daily prayer as essential in the life of the Church. Prayers were offered in the language of the people instead of Latin; psalms and biblical songs were translated and arranged for singing; Scripture was read in continuous fashion, chapter after chapter, straight through the Bible; and morning and evening prayer became the daily norm.⁴

In Scotland, the influence of both England and the Continent was vital. In 1557, the Protestant Lords in Council resolved that

*the Common prayers be read weekly on Sunday and other festival days publicly in the parish kirks, with the lessons of the Old Testaments, conform to the Order of the Book of Common Prayers.*⁵

That book was the Second Book of King Edward VI, and it remained in use in Scotland until 1559 when it was superseded by the Genevan Service Book, which in turn was modified, enlarged, published as the *Psalms Book* which we know better as *The Book of Common Order*, and ordained to be used by the General Assembly in 1564.

Daily worship was a feature of all of these books, as indeed it was a feature of *The First Book of Discipline* which in 1560 enjoined that

*in great towns we thinke expedient that every day there be either sermon or common prayers, with some exercise of reading of scriptures.*⁶

Sprott offers an extract of 14 August 1597 from the kirk-sessions records of St Andrews as a typical example of what happened in many places:

Mr Robert Zuill (Yule) ordained to read every morn and even, except the days of public teaching, a chapter of the New Testament and another of the Old before noon, beginning at Genesis and Matthew, with a prayer before and after; and evening some psalms, with a prayer before and after.

Daily services were held in country parishes as well as in the towns. In 1661, for example, the Earl of Callendar asked the Synod of Lothian to arrange for the revival of daily services in towns and villages according to the former practice of the Church.⁸

It is clear that by the time the Earl made his request the daily service had fallen into disuse. Certainly, by 1645 when the *Directory of Public Worship* came into force, the focus had shifted from daily prayers in church to family prayers at home, and such week-day services as continued had shifted their emphasis from praise and prayer to catechizing. From 1645 onwards, exhortations to family worship are frequent, in both the records of the General Assembly and of individual kirk sessions, and references to daily worship gradually disappear.

A compensating factor for the fading away of the daily service may well have been the *Exercise*, which though it later became absorbed by the presbytery began its life, in Scotland at least, as a weekly meeting for all the people, laymen as well as clergy, at which Scripture was read, the passage chosen by the ministers of elders; someone spoke about it; then a second speaker added a contribution, confirming or correcting or further explaining; then possibly a third, but no more, in case of confusion. This period of exposition was followed by a discussion of questions and doubts.⁹

Parish kirks could be busy places in the first century of the Reformation. In addition to the daily services and the *Exercise*, there were also the Fasts before Holy Communion, the Days of Humiliation and Fasting on particular occasions, both local and national, and other services held to mark specific events such as thanksgivings for victory of battle or deliverance from pestilence or other calamity.

On top of all this, there was the provision that

*in large towns one of the churches was kept open for private prayers. In 1619 "the (Glasgow) Session appoints the New Kirk door to be opened from 5 in the morning and closed at 9 at night for the summer half-year, and for the winter from 7 in the morning till 5 in the evening,"*¹⁰

and Wodrow tells us explicitly that this provision of an open church daily was for particular persons praying in the kirk.¹¹

Most of this church-centred activity disappeared after 1645, and you may well think that the greatest losses were the daily service and the daily opening of the kirk. Attempts were indeed made to maintain the daily service, particularly by people like Archbishop Leighton; and the daily service was conducted for example, in St Machar's Cathedral Aberdeen, where Henry Scougal's form of daily morning and evening prayer was used. A copy of this service, edited by Dr J Wilson Baird, is available in our own *Church Service Society Annual*.¹²

But it was not until well on in the nineteenth century that daily services on any practical scale became possible in the Church at large. Perhaps as influential as anything else in this field was the *Book of Common Prayer for Sunday and Weekday Services*, written and compiled by Dr Cameron Lees of St Giles, and used in the cathedral from 1884 onwards, a year after it was restored. Other books appeared, notably that of Dr John Macleod of Govan, and in 1893 our Society published a volume of *Daily Offices for Morning and Evening Prayer*. *Euchologion* itself included a *Table of Daily Lessons for a Year*, and it may be assumed that members of this society were eager to recover and to use in their own churches the ancient offices of daily morning and evening prayer. The richest provision of material for daily worship was more recently supplied by *Prayers for Every Day (Sundays and Weekdays throughout the Christian Year)* by J G Grant Fleming of the East Church, St Nicholas, Aberdeen. The Iona Community, too, has done much to rehabilitate the practice, and indeed the habit, of daily service, so that it no longer has the appearance and character of the stranger in our midst but is seen to be what it really is, a vital part of our liturgical inheritance.

With this background in mind, the Panel on Worship decided to include in *Common Order* both a *Daily Service* and an *Order for Daily Devotion*. The *Daily Service*, as the name implies, is intended for us in church. It follows what may be seen as a traditional pattern with one or two idiosyncrasies of its own. It begins with a responsive Scripture Sentence, a responsive Prayer of Invocation, a Hymn and a Prayer of Confession. Then follows the ministry of the Word: a Psalm, a Canticle, and Bible Readings. The response to the word is in the form of the Apostles' Creed, a Hymn, Prayers of Intercession, Collect of the Day, Free Prayer concluded by a General Collect, one for each day of the week, and the Lord's Prayer. The service ends with what we have called *The Tryst*, and the Dismissal and Blessing. The service is so constructed as to be able to be used at home or elsewhere than a church, but its main purpose is to provide an Order for daily use in the parish kirks.

The *Order for Daily Devotion* is really an Office for Morning and Evening. Indeed, we intended calling it *The Daily Office*, but the name seemed

strange to the ears of some members of the Panel, and it was felt better to call it something that would not put people off! I think that was wise, though I regret it myself. The name Office, after all, comes from the Latin *officium*, and it simply means a duty or service required. St Benedict called the Daily Office *opus Dei*, the work of God, and there is something about that business-like description that is appealing, since it conveys, to me at least, a feeling at once at once both of duty and delight. But no matter, we have the thing, and that is what counts.

The order of the Office is straightforward: a Scripture Sentence, Collect of the Day, Song of Praise; Psalms, Scripture Readings, Silence, Song of Praise, Apostles' Creed, Thanksgivings and Intercessions; Final Collect, and the Conclusion which may be a Prayer or a Blessing. The Office may be said alone or in groups, probably at home or in hospital, but it could be said in church; and perhaps in our day of small and often noisy houses, to have the opportunity day by day of saying your prayers in church would be seen as a godsend. After all, our churches used to be open to the people for that very purpose, and it would be wonderful if we could recover the practice.

I have said nothing of the influence of covenanting on the pattern and practice of daily worship at home, or of the impact of family worship on church life, or of the effect of personal (or private) devotion as typified by such people as Robert Murray McCheyne. These were all powerful in their day, and they enriched the devotional life of the church beyond measure. But they do not, I think, belong to my introductory remit, and so I leave them, with a bare but honourable mention, to turn to the business of the day.

REFERENCES

- 1 see *Christian Worship* Mgr L Duchesne SPCK 1827 (5th edition) ch XVI *The Divine Office*
- 2 *The Public Worship of Presbyterian Scotland* C G McCrie, Blackwood & Sons, Edinburgh 1893 p.15
- 3 *ibidem* p.15
- 4 *Daily Prayer in the Reformed Church of Strasbourg 1525-30* H O Old in *Worship* vol.52, No 2 (March 1978) p.121 ff
- 5 *Worship and Offices of the Church of Scotland* G W Sprott William Blackwood & Sons 1882 p.3
- 6 *The First Book of Discipline* ch.XI
- 7 *A History of Worship in the Church of Scotland* W D Maxwell, Oxford University Press 1955 p.64
- 8 *The Worship of the Scottish Reformed Church 1560-1638* W McMillan, Lassodie Press 1931 p.141
- 9 *The Burning Bush* G D Henderson, Saint Andrew Press 1957 p.42
- 10 *ibidem* p.65
- 11 *supra* W D Maxwell p.65
- 12 *Church Service Society Annual* 1936-37 pp.47-56