



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

[Review of] Bryan D. Spinks, *Scottish Presbyterian Worship: Proposals for Organic Change, 1843 to the Present Day* (Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 2020), pp. xx + 299. £25.00/\$40.00

Citation for published version:

Jack, A 2022, '[Review of] Bryan D. Spinks, *Scottish Presbyterian Worship: Proposals for Organic Change, 1843 to the Present Day* (Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 2020), pp. xx + 299. £25.00/\$40.00', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol. 75, no. 1, pp. 70-71. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930621000284>

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1017/S0036930621000284](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930621000284)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

Scottish Journal of Theology

Publisher Rights Statement:

This article has been published in a revised form in *Scottish Journal of Theology* [<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930621000284>]. This version is published under a Creative Commons CC-BY-NC-ND. No commercial re-distribution or re-use allowed. Derivative works cannot be distributed. © Alison Jack.

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



Bryan D. Spinks, *Scottish Presbyterian Worship: Proposals for Organic Change, 1843 to the present day* (Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 2020), pp.xx + 299. £25.00/\$40.00

Bryan Spinks's overview of worship traditions in Presbyterian churches in Scotland from 1843 to the present day is a detailed and fascinating narrative. He offers 'evolution' as his guiding metaphor for the shifts and changes he notes, with 'devolution' a secondary and sometimes synonymous descriptor. Causal links between cultural shifts and liturgical innovations are appropriately suggested rather than asserted, and the focus is very much on an analysis of the evidence provided by the published writings of the people involved. The result is an enjoyable, scholarly and wide-ranging discussion of worship as Scottish Presbyterians have experienced it since 1843.

In the first chapter, the inherited patterns of worship are explored at the time of the Disruption and immediately afterwards. The point is effectively made that the Disruption was not about forms or theologies of worship, and that in both the Free Church and the Church of Scotland there was some variation of practice at a local level around orders of service, communion and baptism. Liturgy in its widest sense was a topic for discussion at the time and Spinks argues there was some dissatisfaction felt, particularly around the practice of extempore prayer.

The 'disruptive' influence of Dr Robert Lee of Old Greyfriars, Edinburgh is then considered in detail, and Spinks concludes that 'in a sense, Lee's work provided the DNA from which a better adapted species of liturgy could evolve' (p. 43). The establishment of the Church Service Society in 1865 is offered as a significant evolutionary force, and the publication of its *Euchologion* is highlighted as a resource on which change-makers were to draw for decades to come. In Chapter 4, Spinks discusses public worship in the Free Church tradition as it developed through the Nineteenth Century, and sensitively charts the differences between urban and rural, lowland and highland contexts. The place of music and communal singing is the topic of Chapter 5, and the speed of change is perhaps most noticeable here. The founding of the Scottish Church Society in 1892 and the contribution of the 'High Church Party' is described and Spinks acknowledges the 'theological underpinning' (p. 123) both bring to liturgical renewal.

The focus in Chapter 7 is on the influence of Romanticism, particularly on church architecture and the experience of worship, and case studies such as the restoration of St Giles' in Edinburgh and the rebuilding of Govan Old in Glasgow are presented. This is followed by a discussion of the shift to modernism, the effect of the First World War and the unions of the 1920s. Spinks highlights the new significance of theological debates about referring to the dead in prayer; and notes that liturgies for the dedication of war memorials (and of the dedication of 'Church sisters' and other missionaries), are found in the revised *Directory and Forms of Worship* published by the United Free Church in 1920. The publication of the *Book of Common Order* for the united Church of Scotland in 1940 is discussed, and the ongoing significance of the phrase 'pleading his eternal sacrifice' in communion liturgies as a marker for liturgical change is assessed.

Spinks considers the close connection between the rise of ecumenism and liturgical revision in the same chapter as he covers the establishment of the Iona Community, the Tell Scotland campaign, and the writings of theologians Donald and John Baillie, David H. Cairns and Thomas F. Torrance on the sacraments. Spinks offers a brief analysis of the influence of postmodernism on Presbyterian churches in Scotland, and then assesses the introduction of more inclusive language, Celtic forms and the Revised Common Lectionary in the 1994/96 editions of *Common Order*. He offers reflections on the services he attends while in Scotland in 2015, and concludes with some 'Final Thoughts' on more recent liturgical developments, including the innovations driven by Sanctuary First, liturgical responses to the Coronavirus pandemic, and the deeply change-averse approach of some in the Free Church tradition which he labels 'petrification'. There is an appendix by Iain Torrance detailing the role of the Chapel Royal in Scotland.

Spinks draws on a huge range of primary sources and allows the key characters in his narrative to speak for themselves in his generous use of quotations. He is fulsome in his assessment of the influence of the Church Service Society. His overview is careful to take account of dissenting voices and to mark the different experiences of worshippers across Scotland. His focus on sacraments, music and architecture offers a broad and deep perspective on liturgical change across a period of intense cultural shifts. The tiny details he presents are telling, such as the observation that the publication of *Children's Services for Church and Sabbath School* in 1901 by the Church Worship Association of the United Free Church offered services for special occasions including the birth of Christ, his crucifixion and resurrection. As Spinks notes, 'Interestingly, the compilers felt unable to name ...these as Christmas, Good Friday and Easter' (p. 157). The pervasive influence of the Catholic Apostolic Church on liturgical developments in Scotland is a further fascinating detail.

The assumption that evolution is relentlessly positive might be questioned in, for example, Spinks's presentation, without further comment, of two quotations from Ronald Selby Wright describing the changes he had overseen in Canongate Kirk in Edinburgh. In the first, Selby Wright describes somewhat dismissively the 'fluctuating...adult and largely female choir' (p. 197) which led the singing before the improvements he and others introduced in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In the second, Selby Wright describes the opening service of the renovated church, with its impressive choir of 'fifty boys and young men' (p. 198). Possibly the women of the original choir were involved in the sewing of the scarlet cassocks with which this new choir is robed, 'nearly all of which', Selby Wright tells us, 'have been made, from a pattern, by members of the congregation' (p. 198-99). The gendered implications, both positive and negative, of these evolutionary changes might have been considered more fully in what is otherwise a comprehensive and engaging overview.

Spinks's charting of the direction of change across the centuries in the worship of Scottish Presbyterians strongly argues that innovation should not be resisted and is an inevitable aspect of life. Those of us who are members of this tradition might have hoped for more 'proposals' for organic change designed to promote flourishing in the face of ongoing decline. But all should be thankful for this book, which puts our current situation in firm historical and theological perspective.