

## Daily Prayer in the Reformed Church of Strasbourg, 1525–1530

By Hughes Oliphant Old

The Reformed Church of Strasbourg had inherited from the Middle Ages an elaborate discipline of daily prayer.<sup>1</sup> In the graceful, flamboyant gothic Cathedral of Saint Lawrence, every morning was greeted with services of prayer and every evening with songs of praise. In the various religious communities, so important in the life of one of the leading cities of the Empire, the traditional hours of monastic prayer, matins, lauds, prime, tierce, sext, none, vespers and compline, were celebrated with their elaborate music and the infinite variety of the liturgical year and the calendar of the saints. At the threshold of the Reformation, however, many had lost sight of the beauty of this discipline of daily prayer. It was regarded as a heavy burden, barely held up by endowed choirs and a secularized clergy which had lost its spiritual fire.<sup>2</sup>

A remarkable team of Reformers led the Imperial Free City of Strasbourg into the Reformation. At its head was Martin Bucer, schooled in the best traditions

of Dominican theology, and expert in the new philosophical studies of the Christian Humanists. There was that gentleman scholar, Wolfgang Capito, who was not only doctor of theology, but doctor of law and medicine as well. Capito was one of the leading Hebrew scholars of his day but he was also a man of deep personal piety. His gentle reasonableness and fairness made him one of the most irenic of the Reformers. He was so obviously a man of God that his personal support of the Reformation did much to establish its reforms. There was Caspar Hedio with his wide knowledge of the Church Fathers and his deep concern for works of charity. It was Hedio

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Finally, we have an order for daily prayer in *Psalmen gebett und Kirchen Übung, wie sie zu Strassburg gehalten werden*, Strasbourg, 1530, to which the English title has been given, *Strasbourg Psalter of 1530* (G).

The texts of these documents have been edited by Friedrich Hubert, *Die Strassburger liturgischen Ordnungen im Zeitalter der Reformation*, Göttingen, 1900; hereinafter referred to as *Strassburger liturgischen Ordnungen*.

2. The Reformers of Strasbourg were very critical of the institutional setting of the liturgy of the hours. They often complain that the daily prayer services were in the hands of endowed choirs and that the canons and monks who sang the offices did so with little understanding and less devotion. Bucer's German version of the *Confessi Tetrapolitana* contains a good summary of the criticism which he and his colleagues had of the manner in which the daily office was celebrated: "Welche gsang dann gar groblich von dem ersten brauch der h. vätter abkhommen ist, wie das nyeman leugnen mag. Dann Auss der vätter schrift vnd Hystorien gneugsam bewysst, das die allten in solcher Christlichen kirchen vebnung ertlich wenig psalmen mit hösster andacht gesungen haben vnnd darauff ein Capitl vss der schrift verlesen vnd Ausgelegt vnd demnach in gemein gebettet, vnd diss alles dermassen, das nicht allein, die solichs furnemlich yebten, in der schrift verstendiger vnd in allweg gepessert wurden, sonder auch das ander gemein volckh. Nun singet man wol vyl psalmen, aber on verstand vnd Andacht, Liset ettwan zwo oder drey zeylen Aus der schrift, das muess das Capitl heyssen welches doch mit kheinem wörtlin Ausgelegt wurt." *Martin Bucers Deutsche Schriften*, vols I, II, III and VII, ed. Robert Stupperich (Gütersloh, 1960–). Hereinafter BDS. BDS, III, 146.

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1. The actual text of several daily prayer services has come down to us in four liturgical books of Strasbourg. The first of these books is *Ordnung und yndhalt Teutscher Mess und Vesper so Yetzund im gebrauch haben Evangelisten und Christlichen Pfanherrn zuo Straszburg*, Strasbourg, c. 1524, to which the English designation *Strasbourg German Mass* (B) has been given. This book contains an order for *Teutsch Vesper*.

A second book is *Teutsch Kirchen ampf mit lobgesangen und goetlichen psalmen wie es die gemein zuo Straszburg singt und halt gantz Christlich*, Strasbourg, 1524. To this book we have given the title *Strasbourg German Church Service of 1524* (C). This book contains an *Ordnung der Vesper*.

A third liturgical book which contains an order for daily prayer is the *Psalmen gebett und Kirchen Übung wie sie zu Straszburg gehalten werden*, Strasbourg, 1526, to which the English title has been given, *Strasbourg Psalter of 1526* (F).

who most often led the church in the development of its social concerns. Several leaders of the Strasbourg church were specially gifted as poets, musicians and devotional writers. At the head of the list we should mention Catherine Zell, who edited one of the first Protestant hymnbooks. Matthias Greiter and Wolfgang Dachstein were leading church musicians. Perhaps in observing how people of such ability set about to reform the practice of daily prayer we may gain some insight into how the spirit of prayer can be restored today.

First, a few general observations should be made. The Reformers reaffirmed the basic insight of the daily office, that daily prayer is an essential service of the whole body of the Church. The Reformers did not dissolve the daily prayer services into private devotions as pietism was to do in following centuries. The very term, “the daily office” implies a public responsibility. The Reformers knew from such passages of Scripture as Acts 4:23–31 that the apostles maintained daily services of prayer, and the Reformers intended to maintain the daily prayer of the Church as well. Daily prayer was to

be a corporate service of the whole Church. It would have been easy to have dismissed daily prayer as simply another monastic tradition and to have let it fall into disuse with the closing of monasteries and convents. Rather the Reformers tried to restore the daily prayer services to the people. Daily prayer was no longer to be celebrated primarily by those in religious vocations but rather it was to be celebrated by the whole Church. It was to move from the monastery to the parish.<sup>3</sup>

If this was to be done, several reforms were immediately necessary. To begin with, daily prayer had to be celebrated in the common language rather than in Latin. That, of course, was a basic liturgical reform of the sixteenth-century Reformation, and little comment needs to be made except that translation of liturgical texts is a rather difficult undertaking. This is especially the case when these texts must be sung to traditional music. Besides that, the music had to be sufficiently simple for the people to sing. The Reformers of Strasbourg were just as committed to getting the people to sing as Luther was. The reform of the daily prayer services would have been much simpler if the Reformers had not been so committed to singing the psalms, hymns and canticles of daily prayer. Finally, it was recognized that an ordinary congregation of people who were not engaged in religious vocations could not maintain all the hours of prayer which the cathedral chapter and the monastic communities were accustomed to maintaining. Consequently, the Reformers limited themselves to morning and evening prayers.<sup>4</sup>

There were several transitional orders which were used starting as early as 1524, but by 1526 a fairly regular order for morning and evening prayer had been established. The *Strasbourg Psalter of 1526* (F) gives an order for vespers which is fairly typical of the order used in Strasbourg both for morning and evening prayer. Various other documents brought together in *Martin Bucers Deutsche Schriften* enable us to give the following picture of a daily prayer service in the Church of Strasbourg during the Reformation.<sup>5</sup> The service began with the invocation, “Be pleased, O God, to deliver me! O Lord, make haste to help me,” and was followed by the singing of several metrical psalms. At morning prayer, a chapter was read from the New Testament, while in the evening a chapter was read from the Old Testament. The readings were selected according to the principle of the *lectio continua*, that is, books of the Bible were read through in their entirety from beginning to end. The Scripture lesson was briefly explained, after which a canticle or psalm was sung. In good medieval tradition, the Magnificat was sung at vespers and the Benedictus

3. It is not evident in our documents that there was a recitation or singing of the daily office in the parish churches of Strasbourg. Certainly we find no evidence that it was common practice before the Reformation for parishioners to join the clergy in singing the office. There is evidence that laymen attended the offices (BDS, II, 466 and 471). It is interesting to notice that the Strasbourg Reformers first attempt to get “the people” to participate in the offices was to get them to say “Amen” at the end of the prayers. “. . . demnach die Pfarher oder ein Priester dem volck die Offenschuld vor und daruff ein Christlich absolution sprechen, daruff das volck, so zugegen, Amen sagen soll” (BDS, II, 466). With this proposed reform, amusing to say, they had little success. The documents speak only of the daily prayer services taking place in the cathedral and in the *Stiftungen*, the endowed communities of choristers. These communities had their own chapels which often served as the neighborhood church. While in some of these religious communities the people may have attended these services, our documents make clear that it was the Thumhenn and Vicarien who sang the offices (BDS, II, 466).

4. To what extent there may already have been a certain telescoping of the hours is not clear. On the one hand, Bucer speaks of the seven times of prayer (BDS, I, 274). Doubtless, Bucer has in mind the traditional hours. On the other hand, the Reformers would probably not have made such a point of arguing against the “binding” of prayer to particular hours if the hours were rearranged (BDS, I, 274–275). In the first suggestions for the reform of daily prayer, an early service at five in the morning is proposed. This is to be followed by another service at six or seven. This service is specifically said to be in place of prime, tierce, sext and none. Finally, there is to be a service at two or three in the afternoon. This may imply that matins and lauds had already been combined as well as vespers and compline. The document mentions neither matins, nor lauds, nor compline by name (BDS, II, 466–467).

5. BDS, I—II. Information on the daily prayer services is found particularly in four documents.

at morning prayer. This was followed by a collect or some other prayer and the Lord's Prayer, after which the people were dismissed with a blessing and reminded to give alms to the poor. One immediately recognizes that the order is essentially that of a typical Latin office. The only thing missing is the antiphons to the psalms and canticles. One notices that the Scripture reading has become a more vital part of the service than the *capitulum* had been in the Latin office. Its newfound importance is underlined by the fact that it is expounded. For those who took part in the service, the singing of the metrical psalms and canticles was undoubtedly the most attractive part of the service.

Now let us turn to a consideration of the various elements of the service to get an even clearer idea of what was at work in this reform of the Church's prayer life.

#### INVOCATION

For some reason, the order for daily prayer found in the *Strasbourg Psalter of 1526* does not specify the use of this invocation, but several other documents speak of the service beginning with the *Deus in adiutorium*.<sup>6</sup> This invocation which is the first verse of Psalm 70 is the counterpart for the daily prayer service of the invocation of the dominical service, "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth." With both these invocations the point is, for the Reformers at least, that the service is begun by calling on the name of the Lord. With this invocation we remember the promise of Jesus, that whenever two or three are gathered in his name, he will be present. One also remembers that Christian prayer continues the intercession of Christ. It is at his bidding and therefore is in his name. It is the responsibility of the Church, the body of Christ, to continue his work of intercession begun on the cross and to continue it until that day when all things are put in subjection under his feet. The earliest record we have of a Christian daily prayer service is that found in the fourth chapter of Acts, which says very specifically that the prayer of the Church was in the name of Jesus.<sup>7</sup>

#### PSALMODY

The Reformers gave great attention to providing the Church with versions of the psalms which the people could sing and understand precisely because they understood psalm prayer as an essential part of the prayer of the Church.<sup>8</sup> They had a high understanding of the psalms as the prayers of the Holy Spirit.<sup>9</sup> Their whole understanding of prayer was based on the perception that prayer is essentially the work of the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ to the glory of the Father. For those of

us who were brought up to understand prayer primarily as man's response to God, it is rather sobering to realize that the Reformers saw it from a much more theocentric perspective. It was first of all an act of divine inspiration rather than a work of individual human creativity. That was why the Reformers of Strasbourg put such a strong emphasis on the use of psalms in their daily prayer. The use of psalmody in time became characteristic of Reformed worship. Calvin's classic statement on psalmody in the introduction to the *Genevan Psalter* was homage to the practice of Strasbourg.<sup>10</sup> It is to the same source that we trace those two classics of Reformed prayer, the *Huguenot Psalter* and the *Scottish Psalter*.

For Reformed theologians there was no problem with using the Old Testament psalms as Christian prayer. Following in the tradition of Saint Augustine, they saw a strong continuity between the Old Testament and the New. It should, however, be pointed out that the willingness of the Strasbourg Reformers to use the psalms as Christian prayer was in no way because of any naive lack of knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures. It should be remembered that Martin Bucer was an innovative

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*Grund und ursach aus gotlicher schrift der neuwerungen an dem nachmal des herren, so man die Mess nennet, Tauff, Feyrtagen, bildern und gesang in der gemein Christi ... 1524* (BDS, I, 185–278).

*Dr. Bucer's Rathschlag, c. 1525* (BDS, II, 470–482). This work is a handwritten suggestion presented to the city council. It is of particular interest in that it suggests the importance of revising the daily prayer services so they would be suitable to the faithful as well as to those in religious vocations.

*Vnser herrn Meister und Rats Bedacht, welcher gestalt ein gotgevellig dinst im tag gehalten möcht werden. Solcher Radtslag den vier stiften ubergeben uff Sambstag prima Julij durch Zorn, Jac. Sturm, Jac. Meyer und Diebolt Gerbott anno 1525* (BDS, II, 466–467).

*Der Predicanten Ordnung eines Gotgevälligen gesangs, leda Sabato nach Cantate anno 1528* (BDS, II, 528–531). This is a five week plan for morning prayer and vespers. Psalms, canticles, Scripture lessons, antiphons and collects for each day are selected. Unfortunately the editor of BDS has chosen to give us only the introduction to this manuscript and the plans for each of four services of worship.

6. BDS, II, 466, 529.

7. The Reformers developed a very profound understanding of the invocation of the divine name as part of the worship service. On this subject see the author's book, *The Patristic Roots of Reformed Worship* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zurich [TVZ], 1975), 219–222. On the subject of the variety of the divine names used in their invocations, see footnote 2, page 221.

8. As early as 1526, the Reformers of Strasbourg began to call their liturgical books psalters. This fact alone should make clear the importance of the praying of the psalms to the early Reformed Church. The exact title of *Strasbourg Psalter of 1526* (F) is *Psalmen Gebet und Kirchen Übungen*, which might be literally translated as "Psalm Prayer and Church Exercises."

9. H. O. Old, *The Patristic Roots of Reformed Worship*, 251–269.

10. John Calvin, *Opera selecta*, ed. Petrus Barth and Guilelmus Niesel, 5 vols, 1926–1962; II, 12–18.

commentator on the Psalms.<sup>11</sup> His commentary is one of the first Christian commentaries to treat the Hebrew text. He shows an amazing interest in problems of textual criticism. He deals with the variant readings in the Hebrew and the Greek and Latin versions. He makes use of the works of leading Jewish scholars. Bucer is particularly fond of David Kimchi, a renowned rabbi of the twelfth century, and of Abraham Ibn Ezra, a Spanish rabbi of about the same period. In all, Bucer quotes from about a dozen rabbinical writers. Bucer is quite familiar with the controversy between Paul of Burgos and Nicholas of Lyra on the Christian interpretation of the psalms.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, Bucer does not hesitate to follow the traditional Christian interpretation of the psalms, especially those whose Christian interpretation is already suggested in the New Testament. While Bucer follows the typological interpretation of the psalms, he does not engage in allegorical interpretation of the psalms. If the psalms are to be used as Christian prayer, one must be very clear about this matter and indeed Bucer took pains to be clear. It was because the psalms were so important as Christian prayer that Oecolampadius, the highly venerated Reformer of Basel, spent so much time on scholarly exposition of the psalms.<sup>13</sup> Today Calvin's commentary on the psalms is regarded as his greatest commentary.

11. *Psalmorum libri quinque ad ebraicam veritatem versi et familiariter explanatione elucidati* (Strasbourg, 1529). There was also a posthumous edition, *Psalmorum libri quinque ad hebraicam veritatem traducti* (Geneva, 1554).

12. The Franciscan, Nicholas of Lyra (c. 1270–1349) was one of the few Christians of the Middle Ages to learn Hebrew. With the revival of interest in the study of Hebrew, which was led by the Christian Humanists, the commentaries of Nicholas of Lyra became popular: *Postilla Fratris Nicolai de Lyra cum additionibus pauli episcopi Burgensis*, Nuremberg 1493. Paul of Burgos (1351–1435), a Spanish Jew who was baptized in 1390, and later became bishop of Burgos, felt that Nicholas of Lyra had been overly influenced by the literal exegesis of rabbis such as Rabbi Schelomo Jizchaki, called Raschi (1040–1105). He wrote a series of *Additiones* to the commentaries of Nicholas in which he defended the “Christian interpretation.” These *Additiones* were usually printed with the *Postilla*.

13. Ernst Staehelin, *Das theologische Lebenswerk Oekolampads* (Leipzig, 1939), 443–446.

14. BDS, II, 466, 529.

15. On the evolution of Church music in the early Reformed Churches see the author's *The Patristic Roots of Reformed Worship*, 251–269.

16. The *Teutsch Vesper* of 1524 gives the number of three psalms, “... syngt man den CXXIX psalmen de profundis: Auss tieffer nott.... Darnach syngt man den CXII psalmen laudate pueri dominum: O jr knecht loben den herren.... Darnach syngt man den XI psalmen saluum me fac.... Ach, got vom hymmel, sich daryn....” *Strassburger liturgischen Ordnungen*, 115.

17. BDS, II, 466–467.

As a matter of course, the Gloria Patri was sung at the end of the psalm.<sup>14</sup> The Gloria Patri was usually written into the metrical psalm as the last stanza. Again we see that the Reformers did not blush at christianizing the psalms.

As regarding the selection of the psalms for the daily prayer services, it should be remembered that in the earliest years of the Reformation, the number of psalms available in German meter was limited. *The Strasbourg German Service Book of 1525* (C) has a collection of about a dozen psalms put into German meter by Strasbourg poets and musicians.<sup>15</sup> *The Strasbourg Psalter of 1526* (F) has increased the collection to about twenty-five. About this time numerous smaller collections of German metrical psalms were published by various individual Strasbourg poets. Needless to say, the metrical psalms of Martin Luther were used with enthusiasm. It is not until *The Strasbourg Psalter of 1537* (J) that we have the majority of the psalms available in German meter. While early in the Reformation Bucer announced the intention of singing the whole psalter through from beginning to end, he was prevented from doing so simply because German metrical versions of all the psalms were not yet available. The great spiritual masters of the past had devised systems for the reciting of the whole psalter in a given period of time. The Strasbourg Reformers were familiar with the systems devised by Saint Basil and Saint Benedict and also knew the systems used by the Fathers of the Egyptian desert. The Reformers were particularly fond of a work by Athanasius which carefully outlined the use of the psalms in the Christian devotional life. The Reformers evidently would have liked to have devised a similar order for praying the psalms, but in matter of fact, favorite psalms seemed to have been translated first. (Ludwig Ohler's attempt to translate the psalms straight through was ambitious, but did not get past the twentieth psalm.) In the course of time, it was undoubtedly realized that not all psalms were of equal value as Christian prayer and they did not persevere in the original intention of singing the psalms in a *lectio continua*.

The number of psalms to be sung at each service was originally three.<sup>16</sup> During the Middle Ages the number of psalms at each office might range from twelve at matins to three at the little offices. The metrical psalms tended to take longer to sing than the chanting of the psalm had taken. Consequently, the number was reduced to two or even to a single psalm if it were particularly long.<sup>17</sup> It was not at all unusual for a metrical psalm to reach a dozen or even two dozen stanzas. While at times the Strasbourg Reformers were willing to devote

an hour to each prayer service, they usually settled for half an hour with fifteen minutes of that time devoted to psalmody.<sup>18</sup> The point which comes out quite clearly as one studies the reform of the daily prayer services in Strasbourg is that the restoration of popular psalmody was at its very heart.

#### SCRIPTURE LESSONS

The lectionary for the Reformed daily prayer services was quite simple and quite classical. At morning prayer a chapter of the New Testament was to be read and at evening prayer a chapter of the Old Testament was to be read.<sup>19</sup> The chapters were to be read in the order of a *lectio continua*, reading through whole books of the Bible one at a time.<sup>20</sup> There was nothing either magical or legalistic about this. If the sense of a passage might better be conveyed by reading half a chapter, then that was perfectly in order.<sup>21</sup> The Scripture lesson was read with the purpose of edifying the congregation and the readings were to be divided up in such a way that they made sense.<sup>22</sup> The Scripture lesson was to be explained, particularly when difficult or obscure passages were read.<sup>23</sup> The reading of the lesson and its explanation was to take about ten minutes. The Reformers of Strasbourg did not intend the service of daily prayer to be replaced by a preaching service. To be sure, there was also a tradition of daily preaching at Strasbourg, which the Reformed Church of Strasbourg also inherited from the late Middle Ages, but that was something else.<sup>24</sup> The prayer service was to be devoted primarily to prayer.

The burden of reform at this point in the daily prayer services is to be found at two points. Since the twelfth century, the Scripture lessons read at the daily office had become mere vestiges of the older practice.<sup>25</sup> In the patristic age, the practice was to read the whole of the Bible through in the course of a year. Certain books were traditionally chosen for particular liturgical seasons, but the whole of Scripture was covered. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, the lessons were sometimes so reduced that only a single verse was read.<sup>26</sup> The Reformers were well aware that the *lectio continua* had been the former practice and it was the ancient practice of the Church which they understood themselves to be restoring. Not only were the Reformers concerned to restore the length of the lessons, they were concerned as well to restore the order of the lessons, that is, the *lectio continua*. The calendar of saints had become so highly developed that only traces of the old *lectio continua* were to be found.<sup>27</sup> Oecolampadius, for one, saw value in referring to the exemplary lives of the saints from time to time in the course of explaining

the Scriptures, but he did not want to see the lectionary dominated by the calendar of the saints.<sup>28</sup> For Holy Week and the major Christian festivals, appropriate passages of Scripture were read, but the church year did not substantially shape the lectionary.<sup>29</sup>

#### CANTICLES

Again the tradition of the Western Church of the Middle Ages is followed in a very simple use of the canticles in the office. The Benedictus continues to be sung at morning prayer and the Magnificat at vespers.<sup>30</sup> The function of these canticles is to rejoice in the fulfillment of God's promises, "For he has helped his servant Israel in the remembrance of his mercy as he promised

18. BDS, II, 471, 529.

19. BDS, II, 529.

20. "... ouch die biblischen biecher noch ordenung werden gelesen. Also doch, das der usslegung noch im singen und lesen werde fůrgeschritten, uff das es alles ussgelegt und nichts on verstand wie biss her gelesen und gesungen werde." BDS, II, 472.

21. BDS, II, 467.

22. The Strasbourg Reformers were very much impressed by the words of the Apostle Paul, "I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also. I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also.... When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification" (1 Cor 14:15–16). The most obvious point was that worship should be in the language of the people, but that was not all that they drew out of the Apostle's words. It was not enough that the psalms be sung and the Scriptures read. They needed to be understood. It was not that the Reformers wanted worship to be didactic rather than doxological. It was far more that they believed that the Christian should praise God with his mind as well as with his feelings. They believed in doxological thinking and doxological understanding. BDS, I, 274–275; II, 472.

23. BDS, II, 481.

24. *Strassburger liturgischen Ordnungen*, 118.

25. The rubric of the *Strasbourg German Church Service* (C) implies considerable criticism of the Chapters of the Medieval office: "Darnach anstatt des Capitels liest der pfarrher ettwas aus der heyligen geschriff des neuwen oder alten testaments und legt das kurzlich uss dem volck." *Strassburger liturgischen Ordnungen*, 115.

26. Dom Hilaire Marot, "La place des lectures bibliques et patristique dans l'office latin," in *La prière des heures*, ed. Botte (Paris, 1963), 151–154.

27. BDS, I, 262–268, 274–275.

28. Old, *The Patristic Roots of Reformed Worship*, 66–67.

29. BDS, II, 530.

30. The rubric in the *Teutsch Vesper* of 1524 is: "Nach dem volgt das lobgesang Mariae, welches man nennet das magnificat." *Strassburger liturgischen Ordnungen*, 115. In *The Strasbourg Psalter of 1526* (F), the rubric is: "uff disse singt man das magnificat oder sunst ein psalm." *Strassburger liturgischen Ordnungen*, 117. In *Der Predicanten Ordnung eines Gotgevälligen gesangs...* 1528, we find the direction: "demnach morgens das 'Benedictus' und nach Mittag das 'Magnificat'..." BDS, II, 529.

A German version of the Magnificat appeared in the first printed

unto our Fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever.” God is recognized as the one who fulfills his promises and answers the prayers of his people. The canticles in general, but especially those two used most frequently in the Evangelical prayer services fulfilled the function of balancing the psalms of repentance or lamentation which so frequently are part of the psalm prayers. They often balance the petitions and supplications of the Old Testament psalms that God be gracious to his people by his coming with the New Testament assurance that he has indeed come.

One could regret that we do not find a more highly developed use of the canticles; especially one can regret that more of the Old Testament canticles were not used, such as the Song of Moses, the Song of Jonah and the Song of Hannah. The gospel canticles, particularly when supported by the singing of the proper antiphons, often brought the poetic beauty of the office to its climax. The antiphons interpreted the canticles so as to emphasize the principal events of salvation history remembered in the cycle of the Christian year. Unfortunately, the beauty of the whole system of intercollating the antiphons with the canticles was precisely its intricacy

and subtlety. No doubt, it was just exactly this subtlety and intricacy which hindered the Reformation from a more extensive use of the canticles and antiphons. Such a high musical culture required well-trained people who kept in practice. That is, it required monks or perhaps the professional singers of a royal chapel. To expect a congregation of a local church to maintain such sophisticated music was unrealistic. There was much in the old daily office which had developed because the daily office had been more and more developed with a view to its use in the monastery, the priory, or the cathedral. The constant changes of the church calendar brought a welcomed variety to a monastic community which spent several hours in prayer each day. The Reformers of Strasbourg adopted a much more simplified church calendar suitable to the devotional life of the neighborhood church. The evangelical festivals, Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension and Pentecost, were put in high relief. The major feast, however, was the weekly celebration of the Lord’s Day. With *The Strasbourg Psalter of 1537* we begin to find the place of the antiphons taken by a growing collection of hymns for Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension and Pentecost.<sup>31</sup> Some of these festal hymns have remained as classics down to our own day. One need only mention a few of the authors and composers to get an indication of the beauty of what the Reformers had found to replace the antiphons. One remembers, of course, the Easter hymn of the Protestant *Meistersinger von Nuremberg*, Hans Sachs. The matchless hymn tune of the Strasbourg organist Matthias Greiter, “O Mensch Bewein dein Sunde Gross,” is still remembered in the setting of Johann Sebastian Bach. The festal hymns of Ambrosius Blarer and Johannes Zwick, both pastors of the Reformed Church of Constance, are still to be found in German and Swiss hymnbooks.<sup>32</sup> The most memorable of these festal hymns are, to be sure, the Christmas carols of Martin Luther.<sup>33</sup>

Something else needs to be said about daily prayer and the calendar of the church year. One might say that the dynamic of daily prayer, or perhaps the movement of daily prayer, had been a cyclical observance of the calendar. It was for good reason that it had been called the prayer of the hours. In regard to it, Gregory Dix can quite appropriately speak of “the sanctification of time” as the seasons of the Christian year fit into the rhythms of nature. While the Reformers did have hymns for the evangelical festivals, the calendar was not the central dynamic of their prayer. While the Reformers did have hymns for morning and evening, the services of daily prayer were not dominated by any kind of light

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order for vespers in 1524. This version was by the Strasbourg pastor, Symphronius Pollio, “Meyn seel erhebt den Herrn.” A satisfactory German version of the Benedictus was a while in coming. It was not until sometime between 1527 and 1529 that the Strasbourg pastor, Johannes Englisch, published a small collection of his metrical psalms and canticles. *Der sibend und dreyssigst psalmen Davids, noli emulari in malignanibus, ... Das lobgesang Zacharie, Benedictus, Luce j. Das lobgesang Simeonis, Nunc dimittis, Luce ij* (Strasbourg, s.d.).

31. *Psalmen und Geystliche lieder, die man zu Strassburg und auch die man inn anderen Kirchen pflagt zu singen. Form und gebet zun einsegn der Ee dem heiligen Tauff, Abentmal, besuchung der Kranchen und begrebnis der abgestorbenen. Alles gemert und gebessert* (Strasbourg: Wolf Köpphel 1537).

32. For example, *Gesangbuch der evangelischreformierten Kirchen der Deutsch-sprachigen Schweiz* (Winterthur, 1965) contains Ambrosius Blarer’s Pentecost hymn, “Jauchz, Erd, und Himmel, juble hell.” Johannes Zwick’s two Ascension hymns, “Auf diesen Tag bedenken wir,” and “Ich glaub an Gott, den Vater mein”; and Zwick’s Christmas hymn, “Aus des Vaters Herz geboren.” The original texts of these hymns can be found in the third volume of Philipp Wackernagel, *Das deutsche Kirchenlied von der ältesten Zeit bis zu Anfang des XVII Jahrhunderts*, 5 vols. (Leipzig, 1664). Hereinafter, Wackernagel. The four hymns mentioned above are numbered, respectively, 656, 682, 683, and 779.

In addition one might mention the Easter hymn of Thomas Blarer, “Christ ist erstanden von dem tod.” Wackernagel, 669.

33. Luther wrote three Christmas Carols, all of which are still popular in Germany, “Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ,” Wackernagel, no. 9; “Vom Himmel hoch da komm ich her,” Wackernagel, no. 39; and “Vom Himmel kam der Engel Schar,” Wackernagel, no. 49. The first of these is found in American hymnbooks as, “All praise to Thee Eternal Lord.” The second is translated as “Ah dearest Jesus, Holy Child.”

mysticism.<sup>34</sup> The dynamic of the Reformed services of daily prayer, as we shall see, is to be found elsewhere. It is to be found far more in the movement from promise to fulfillment, in the balance between thanksgiving for God's saving acts in the past and the intercession for the coming of his kingdom in the future. To put it in theological terms, prayer is a movement from anamnesis to epiclesis.

#### THE COLLECT

At the beginning the collect was simply translated from the Latin office.<sup>35</sup> Very quickly, however, this short form of prayer was expanded. The rubrics of *The Strasbourg German Church Service of 1524* (C) gave a German collect but allowed that a prayer "given by God's Spirit" might be used in its place.<sup>36</sup> *The Strasbourg Psalter of 1526* gave a German collect, but the rubrics specified that other collects could be used.<sup>37</sup> The people were then admonished to pray that the word which had just been heard might have its effect in their lives. This was followed with a period of time for silent prayer which was probably concluded by the Lord's Prayer said by the whole congregation.<sup>38</sup> It would seem that considerable liberty was allowed at this point in the service. After a few years the practice developed of using this part of the service for the prayers of intercession.<sup>39</sup> Bucer tells us that during the daily prayers the civil authority is remembered as well as the needs of the Church.<sup>40</sup> This prayer began to develop in the same way the general prayer of intercession had developed. Under the influence of the various New Testament admonitions to pray for the Church, the ministry, all men, the civil authority, and those afflicted with any kind of suffering, the prayer became a comprehensive prayer of intercession.<sup>41</sup> The fact that this prayer was to be concluded by the Lord's Prayer brings the prayer into eschatological focus. The Lord's Prayer is, after all, a prayer for the coming of the kingdom.

With these prayers of intercession for the Church as it was in the beginning of the sixteenth century, for the people of Christendom as they confronted the Turkish invasion, for the heathen and infidels as yet unenlightened by the gospel, for the civil authority of the Imperial Free City of Strasbourg, for the sick and suffering of each neighborhood church and finally, the prayer for the coming of the kingdom of God, the service of daily prayer struck the other pole of Christian prayer. In the psalms, canticles and Scripture lessons, we found the anamnesis. The anamnesis is the thankful remembering of God's mighty acts of creation and redemption, the covenants, the promises, the commandments and

the judgments given (Ps 105:1–11). This is the one emphasis. In the prayers of intercession and supplication and the Lord's Prayer, we find the epiclesis. The epiclesis is spreading out before God the needs of our day and calling upon him in the midst of that need. This is the other emphasis. Christian prayer moves between anamnesis and epiclesis, thanksgiving and supplication, promise and fulfillment, memory and hope. It is for this reason that the Apostle Paul tells the Philippians to "make their prayers and supplications unto God with thanksgiving" (4:6). Even more beautifully we find this movement in prayer exemplified in the prayer of Jesus during his passion. At the celebration of Passover

34. Johannes Zwick's two morning hymns are still sung today: "Du höchstes licht, Ewiger Schein," Wackernagel, no. 694, and the ever popular "All morgen ist gantz frisch und neuw," Wackernagel, no. 693. His evening hymns, strange to relate, first appeared in the *Strasbourg Psalter of 1537* (I): "Nun wil sich scheiden nacht und tag," Wackernagel, no. 687, and "So wir yetz sind den tag am end," Wackernagel, no. 688. Johannes Zwick should be ranked as one of the fathers of Reformed hymnody. Cf. Bernd Moeller, *Johannes Zwick und die Reformation in Konstanz* (Gütersloh 1961) 204–210.

35. *Der Predicanten Ordnung eines Gottevälligen gesangs* gives as the following collects to be used in the week following Pentecost: "Deus qui corda fidelium," "Deus Innocentie restitutor," and "Deus qui apostolis tuis." BDS, II, 530. All three of these collects go back to the ancient Roman sacramentaries. The editors of the BDS report they were not able to locate the collect "Deus Innocentie restitutor." It is found, however, as far back as the *Sacramentarium Gelasianum*, LII.

36. The following collect appears in *Ordnung der vesper of The Strasbourg Psalter of 1530* (G): "O herr gott, ein stercke aller deren, die in dich hoffen, biss gnediglich zugucken allen denen, die dich anrufen, und dieweil nit vermag todlich blodigkeit, so sende und verlihe uns dein gnad und barmhertzigkeit, das vir im glauben erfüllen dein gebott und dir mit Willen und Wercken mügen ewiglich gefallen durch Christum Jesum, unsern herren, Amen." *Strassburger liturgischen Ordnungen*, 116.

37. The rubric in *The Strasbourg Psalter of 1526* (F) is: "... oder ein ander collect, so auff der gethonen predigen inhalt sich besser artet und schickt." The corresponding rubric in *The German Church Service of 1524* (E) had been: "... oder ein andere, wie jn der geyst gotes ingibt und ermant oder lernet." *Strassburger liturgischen Ordnungen*, 116–117.

38. The admonition to silent prayer in *The Strasbourg Psalter of 1526* (F) is as follows: "Ir wöllen auch, lieben schweester und bruder, gort, den herren, bitten, das er das gehörte wort in uns lebendig mache und behüte ins ewig leben, darumb so sprech ein yedes ein vatter unser!" *The Strasbourg Psalter of 1530* (G) includes the rubric, "Hie wirt eyn spatium zum gebett gehalten." *Strassburger liturgischen Ordnungen*, 117.

39. One evidence that this became the usual practice of the Church of Strasbourg is found in the morning prayer service of the Reformed Church of Augsburg. This service developed many of the best insights of the Strasbourg Reformers. *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des XVI. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Emil Sehling (Leipzig, 1902ff), vol. XII, 35–38.

40. BDS, II, 555.

41. Old, *The Patristic Roots of Reformed Worship*, 240–250.

in the Upper Room, praying the Hallel, Psalms 113–118, Jesus remembered God’s redemption of Israel. But also in the celebration of Passover he prayed the high priestly prayer of intercession for the Church (John 17). On the cross he cried out Psalm 22; also on the cross he interceded, “Father, forgive them.” He remembered the mighty acts of God in the past and prayed for the mighty acts of God in the future. Being the High Priest as well as the Lamb of God, he prayed for the people of God in all ages that they might be one that the world might believe. The prayer of the Church today should continue the prayer of Christ.

#### THE BENEDICTION

The Benediction gradually developed into a very important part of Reformed worship. The earliest orders for daily prayer had a very simple blessing at the end

42. The rubric in *Teutsch Vesper* of 1524 reads: “Darnach wünsch der priester jnen den segen und spricht: gen hyn! der fryd des herren sey mit euch. Amen.” *Strassburger liturgischen Ordnungen*, 116. See BDS, II, 467.

43. “Lond euch die armen leut befolhen sein!” *Strassburger liturgischen Ordnungen*, 116.

44. For a general presentation on almsgiving in New Testament times see Billerbeck’s excursus “Die altjüdische Privatwohlthätigkeit (zu Mt. 6, 2–4),” in Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommen-tar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, 6 vols. (Munich, 1922–1961), IV–1, 536–558. More recently Arlo Duba of Princeton Theological Seminary has been working on this subject.

45. Gerard Roussel, disciple of Jacques Le Fèvre d’Etaples, and a leading exponent of inner-church Christian Humanist reform, wrote of the liturgical reforms of Strasbourg in a letter to a friend. This letter has come down to us and gives us a description of the reform of almsgiving: “Et ne credas, sine fructu hactenus fuisse Verbum. Pauperes ita suscepti sint, ut ex aere communi alantur, et nullus negligatur qui agnitus fuerit indigens. Sic tarnen negocium geritur, ut validis non liceat ociosis esse, nec ulli liceat per domos stipem quaerere; qui vere pauperes sunt a deoque alendi communibus sumptibus suum habent signum, quo internosci queant. In hunc usum designatae sunt per singula templa arculae, in quas suum quisque pro arbitrio congerat symbolum; facies quaedam videtur esse apostolicorum institutorum;...” A. L. Herminjard, *Correspondance des Réformateurs dans les Pays de langue Française*, 9 vols. (Geneva, 1866), I, 413.

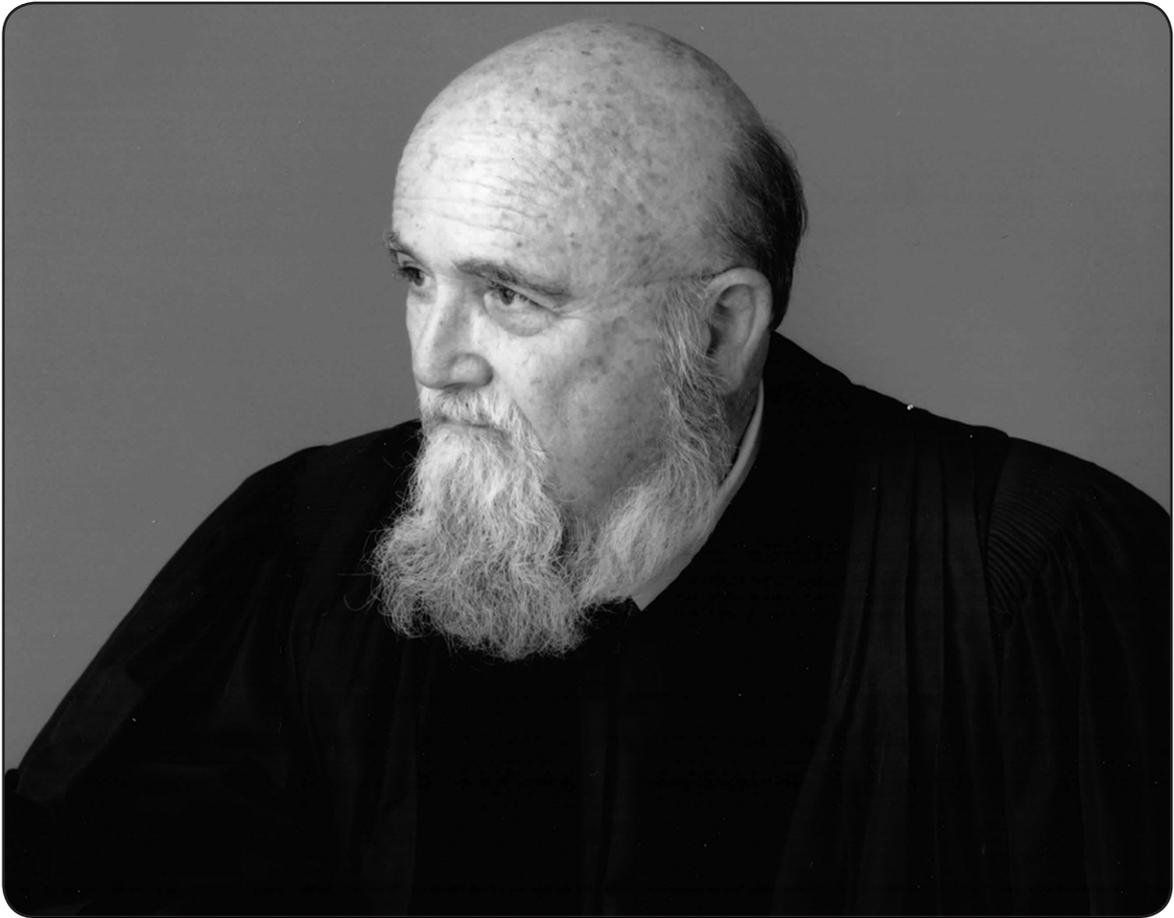
46. As has already been mentioned Caspar Hedio was largely responsible for establishing and maintaining the charitable institutions of Strasbourg. Hedio was also an important translator of patristic literature. Hedio’s German translations of the sermons of John Chrysostom on the Gospel of Matthew filled a large folio volume. These two facts are not unrelated, for the golden tongued patriarch of Constantinople was also one of the great alms preachers of history. The following passages from John Chrysostom’s commentary on the Gospel of Matthew treat almsgiving: Homily XV, 12–14; Homily XDC, 1–2; Homily XLVII, 5; Homily L, 5; Homily LII, 5–6; Homily LXVI, 1–5; Homily LXX; Homily LXXVII, 5–6. The subject is treated with similar frequency in series of sermons on other biblical books. See Charles Spindler, *Hédion, Essai biographique et littéraire* (Strasbourg, 1864).

of the service, “Now depart in peace. May the Lord be with you.”<sup>42</sup> It soon became almost universal practice for the minister to raise his hands in the gesture of blessing and give to the people the Aaronic benediction. For contemporary Protestants who harbor Anabaptist tendencies, this may seem unbearably sacerdotal, but it must be remembered that the Reformers of Strasbourg had a very strong doctrine of the ministry. As ministers of Christ, they gave Christ’s high priestly blessing to the people, just as the high priest had done when he came out from serving God in the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. Not only does the use of the Aaronic benediction indicate a high doctrine of the ministry, it indicates a high doctrine of prayer as well. The use of the Aaronic benediction at the end of the services of daily prayer suggests that the prayer just completed is the spiritual sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving which succeeded to the daily morning and evening sacrifices of the Temple.

#### THE GIVING OF ALMS

Before leaving the church the people were reminded to give alms to the poor as they left.<sup>43</sup> During the Middle Ages it had been the practice of the poor to beg for alms at the door of the church and the pious usually undergirded their prayer by giving alms either on entering or leaving the church. This was an ancient practice as we are reminded by the story of Peter and John meeting the cripple at the gate of the Temple when they went up for evening prayer.<sup>44</sup> The Reformers of Strasbourg introduced very important reforms in the practice of almsgiving which unfortunately have received too little attention. They organized a considerable number of institutions for the care of people in different kinds of distress. A great chest was put at the door of each church to receive alms and the money was used by the deacons to support the diaconal ministry of the Church. Interestingly enough, this was one of the liturgical reforms which most favorably impressed visitors to the city of Strasbourg.<sup>45</sup> The point which we would underline, however, is that the Reformers of Strasbourg clearly understood that ancient biblical principle that almsgiving is an important auxiliary discipline to prayer.<sup>46</sup> The Reformers evidently believed that prayer and social concern were inseparable.

From our study of the daily prayer services of Strasbourg two things stand out as being of interest to those who are concerned for a revival of prayer. First, the Reformers very clearly committed themselves to continuing a discipline of daily prayer services as an integral part of the life of the Church. Just as they continued to



Hughes Oliphant Old, Th.D. (c. 1999, Pryde Brown Photographs).

celebrate the service for the Lord's Day, so they continued to celebrate daily prayer. These daily prayer services were considered a normative part of the regular worship of the Church, just as preaching, or the celebration of baptism or the Lord's Supper. Recognizing that morning and evening-prayer is a natural part of the life of the Christian community and reestablishing its observance may well be one of the best ways of recovering the gift of prayer for our own generation.

Second, the Reformers exerted great effort in recovering for the Church of their day one of the most classical traditions of Christian worship, the use of the psalms as Christian prayer. They developed an outstanding psalter. With all the new philological tools at the disposal of the sixteenth-century scholars they delved into the rich meaning of the psalms and found them still to be, what they had been for generations of Christians before them, the prayers of the Holy Spirit. They both learned from the psalms how to pray and used the psalms as their prayers. In this we would do

well to emulate the Reformers. We need a new psalter for the contemporary American Church! This should be a cardinal concern of those looking for liturgical renewal in the Reformed tradition.

For those who would set their eyes on the future and who are concerned that liturgical practice be meaningful for people of our century, it is perhaps of special interest to know that Dietrich Bonhoeffer urged much the same thing. In his devotional classic, *Life Together*, he leaves us an eloquent appeal for the recovery of both daily prayer and psalmody.<sup>47</sup> He tells us that we should recover the praying of the psalms because when the Church prays the psalms, it is Jesus Christ himself who intercedes with the Father. Because the psalms are in the last analysis the prayer of Christ we can be sure that when together, as the body of Christ, we pray the psalms, our prayer is heard. ■

47. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954) 44–50.