

BELL ROCK LIGHTHOUSE PRAYERS

* * * * *

The Revd A W Macdonell, MA BD

* * * * *

A beautifully-preserved, leather-bound copy of the Bible, together with the Bell Rock Lighthouse Flag, were shown to the writer in the bowels of the offices of the Commissioners of the Northern Lighthouse Board in George Street, Edinburgh.

The following excerpts, in the hand of Mr Robert Stevenson, Chief Engineer for over 50 years, give the background to the holding of 'Devotional exercises on the Sabbath Day' during the erection of the Bell Rock Lighthouse.

Reference is made to the Honorary Chaplain to the Commissioners, Revd Dr Alexander Brunton, who composed both the weekly and Occasional Prayers.

Wider use of the Prayers, suitably amended, for weekly service in all Lighthouses is also noted. In particular, one addition sentence, composed by Sir

Walter Scott as the Lighthouse Tender lay off Iona, is carefully recorded.

*ORDER OBSERVED FOR PRAYERS ON
BOARD OF THE TENDER AT THE
ERECTION OF THE BELL ROCK
LIGHTHOUSE*

At 10 am The Steward is to apply to the Captain or Officer in command to appoint the hour for Prayers: who according to the state of the weather will appoint the hour of 12 noon or any other according to the circumstances of the Ship, and say whether they may take place on deck or below. The arrangement will immediately be intimated by the Steward fore and aft that all on board may be apprized of it.

In the event of Prayers taking place the Steward at the appointed hour will apply to the Officer in command for authority to toll the Bell for Prayers.

If the Service is to be on deck, the Watch agreeably to directions will prepare the deck with an awning or otherwise according to the state of the weather, and the Steward will lay the Lighthouse flag and Bible upon the Companion. The Officers of the Ship and the Foremen of the

Works take the Starboard and the Ship's company and Artificers the Larboard side of the deck - the Steward stands behind the Reader at the Companion and the Apprentices attend the Flag laid on it.

If the Service takes place below, the Steward will set a table at the after part of the Artificer's Berth on which the Flag and Bible will be laid and at which the Foremen and Officers will sit, the Reader occupying the principal seat, the Artificers and Ship's Company being disposed of in the most commodious manner. All are expected to appear in their best clothes.

The Engineer or other Chief Officer takes the place of Reader.

In commencing the Service the Reader says: "Let us pray", all standing, and reads 'The Lord's Prayer' from the VI Chapter of the Gospel according to St Matthew. He then says "Let us read the Word of God", all being seated, and reads from the marked Chapters in the Old Testament, in the Gospels and in the Epistles of the New Testament. He then says "Let us again pray", all standing, and reads the Prayer composed 'For the use of those employed in the erection of the Bell Rock Lighthouse', with which the Service

concludes: Unless circumstances call for any of the Occasional Prayers being read; in which case the Reader makes allusion to the cause for the use of additional Prayer.

R.S.

A PRAYER FOR THE USE OF THOSE
EMPLOYED AT THE ERECTION OF THE
BELL-ROCK LIGHT-HOUSE

ALMIGHTY and ever blessed God! Thou are not confined to temples made with man's hands: The temple most acceptable to thee is the heart of thy worshipper: Thou hast promised, that, wherever thy servants are assembled, thou wilt be with them, to bless them and to do them good. Unto us, O our Father! may the promise be fulfilled. Even here, where no temple invites us, we beseech thee, while we meet in thy presence; and strengthen us to discharge the duties of thy holy day.

The Sabbath was appointed to celebrate thy creating power; And here, where the magnificence of thy works surrounds us, where we see thy wonders in the deep, where we behold every morning thy Sun arise from the world of waters, to spread, as at the first, light and beauty over Nature, shall not our souls pour forth

abundantly the tribute of adoration to thee, whose word alone spake the Universe into being! # Here also where we are placed within view of the first Temple erected to the name of Christ, by the hands of our forefathers, let us devoutly acknowledge the blessings which have followed the preaching of Thy Word.

The Sabbath commemorates that Providence which watcheth continually over the works of thy hand; And shall not we, whom dangers so often threaten, and whom difficulties so often alarm; shall not we, conscious of our frailty, and removed far from human aid; shall not we raise the voice of thanksgiving to God, who alone protecteth us, and who, even in the midst of danger, causeth us to dwell in safety!

The Sabbath was appointed to commemorate the triumphs of redeeming love: And shall not we hail it with delight, whose earliest infancy was hallowed in the name of Jesus; on whose opening minds the doctrines of his faith were poured; who, even in this remote abode, are permitted to call upon thy holy name in prayer, to read the Oracles of everlasting truth, to speak one to another of the God who hath loved and blessed us!

This additional sentence to the Prayer was written in pencil by Mr Erskine to Sir Walter Scott's dictation immediately before Prayers, on deck, in the Bay of Iona on Sunday 28th August 1814.

Our souls do magnify the Lord, our spirits rejoice in God our Saviour; for he that is mighty hath done great things for his people, and his mercy is on them that fear him. We bless thee for the doctrines which our Master taught, for the example which he set before us, for the atonement by which he relieves us from the load of guilt, for the hope which he hath restored of grace and glory. We bless thee for the institutions which thou hast appointed for enlightening thy people in religious knowledge, and for training them to lives of usefulness and purity. With shame we remember how often we have abused our Christian privileges, how often we have neglected the exercises of private devotion, how often we have failed to study thy holy word, how often, while yet it was in our power to go up to the house of God, we have forsaken the assembling of ourselves

together, how often we have worshipped thee with our lips, while our hearts were far from thee. Visit us not, O God! in anger, for our transgression; but do thou enable us to lament and forsake it. Let not the circumstances in which we now are placed, be permitted to wean our affections from thy worship. But, while the service of humanity calls us to labour even on this day of rest, save us, O thou, who wilt have mercy and not sacrifice! save us from temptation which might lead us to forget our God, and the duties which we owe to him. Rather, while we are deprived of thine ordinances for a season, do thou give us grace, through prayer and holy meditation, to compensate the loss; that we may, with delight, look forward to the time when the courts of thy sanctuary shall be opened to us again; when we, and those whom we love and value, shall again take sweet counsel together, and walk in company to the house of God: Give to us, even now, O God of our salvation! those pious and holy dispositions which will prepare us for the nobler worship, offered to thee by the Angels of Heaven, and by the Spirits of just men made perfect.

We pray to our common Father in behalf of all mankind. May the day-spring from on high arise on those who now sit in

darkness; and, where the light of the Gospel already shines, may its influences be felt reviving and purifying.

We pray especially for our native land; for her peace, her prosperity, her liberties, and her honour. We pray for our King and for our Queen, and for all who are in authority over us. We pray particularly for those by whose command we are engaged in this arduous work. Bless them in their persons, in their families, and in the discharge of their official duty. Prosper, we beseech thee, the work itself in which we are engaged. May it remain long after our eyes have ceased to behold it. Long after our hearts are cold in the dust, may he that was ready to perish have cause to bless the memory of those by whom it was reared.

We pray for the people of our land. Purify them unto thyself a peculiar people, zealous of good works: Bless them in their commerce, and in their harvests: Bless them in the pursuits of honest industry: Bless them in the relations of domestic life: Bless them, above all, with spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.

May the sons and daughters of affliction be enabled to profit by the bitter lesson with which thou hast seen it meet to visit them. Restore the sick to usefulness, or prepare

the dying for judgement and eternity. May the living lay it to heart that they must die, and act as it becometh those who know not how soon they shall be called hence.

Our friends and families, from whom we are separated for a time, we commit to thy protection, O God of love! Unspeakably precious is the thought, that thou carest for them, that thine eye is upon them continually, and thine everlasting arms around them. Grant that, in thy good time, we may meet them in peace: Grant that we may be united hereafter in that land where separation and pain are unknown for ever.

Our enemies we beseech thee to forgive and bless. Bless us, even us also, O our Father! Give us thy grace in every season of trial; Give us thy protection in every hour of danger. Prepare us for the dispensations of the Providence; Prepare us for the discharge of duty; Prepare us for the inheritance of the just.

And may grace, and mercy, and peace, from the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be with us for ever. Amen.

Composed by the Rev. A. BRUNTON, one of the Ministers of Edinburgh.

NOTE written by Mr Robert Stevenson and engrossed on the foot of two pages of the Prayer, to commemorate the Service held in the Bay of Iona, attended by Sir Walter Scott.

"At Iona, the ship being in a quiet place, Prayers were permitted to be gone about in a deliberate manner, and upon the quarter deck which was screened around forming an awning with numerous Signal Flags. The Bell Rock Lighthouse Flag was spread upon the Companion, in which the Bible was laid and at which the Reader stood. On either side the Officers and Crew of the ship were ranged in their Lighthouse uniforms, and strangers were dressed in their long coats. There was something more than usually solemn in the Service of this day, with the Ruins of Iona in view. Mr Erskine took the office of Reader, and in his emphatic manner, following the Order of the ship, said "Let us pray", reading the Lord's Prayer from the VI Chapter of St Matthew with Sir Walter's note, and then in succession turned to the 107th Psalm, 25th Chapter of St Matthew and 3rd Chapter of the Epistle of James. After reading these, he

said "Let us again Pray", and read the comprehensive and excellent Prayer composed by the Rev. Dr Brunton as Honorary Chaplain to the Lighthouse Board."

R.S.

MEMORANDA

These Chapters were chiefly used by me in public reading on board of the Lighthouse Tenders and at the Lighthouse Stations on my annual voyage of Inspection, as Engineer to the Commissioners of the Northern Lighthouses - during the long period of nearly half a century. The selection was afterwards revised and the number of Chapters extended by the Minister at the Tron, Edinburgh (formerly Ballan and now Greyfriars) Moderator, General Assembly 1823, DD, 1814. Also Professor of Oriental Languages, Edinburgh University - a Chair laid in conjunction with his charge. Died 1854., Rev. Dr Alexander Brunton, one of the Ministers of Edinburgh, and ordered by the Lighthouse Board to be printed along with the Prayer which (as Honorary Chaplain) he composed in the year 1807: "For the use of those employed in the erection of the Bell Rock Lighthouse".

That excellent Prayer, with "Occasional Prayers" the Doctor afterwards accommodated to the Lighthouse Service generally, to assist the Lightkeepers and Mariners at their respective Meetings on the Sabbath Day, for devotional exercises.

R. Stevenson

A Selection of Chapters of the Bible usually read at Prayers, in the Lighthouses and on Board of the Shipping belonging to the Commissioners of the Northern Lighthouses.

Genesis, - 6th, 7th and 8th	Judges, - 6th
Nehemiah,- 9th	Job,- 14th
Psalms,- 107th	
Proverbs,- 1st and 2nd	
Ecclesiastes,- 12th	
Isaiah,- 5th	
St. Matthew,- 5th, 7th and 10th	
St. Mark,- 6th	St. Luke,- 12th
St. John,- 1st	
Acts,- 1st and 24th	
Romans,- 5th	
I Corinthians,- 13th	
Galatians,- 3rd	
Ephesians,- 4th	
James,- 3rd	

I Peter,- 1st
Revelation,- 3rd

OCCASIONAL PRAYERS

ON A BIRTH

We desire to offer thanks to thee on behalf of that Family in our brotherhood, whom thou hast lately blessed with a Child. May this Child be spared for usefulness on earth, and sealed as an heir of thy heavenly kingdom. May the parents be enabled to lay their duties to heart. May the Father, by faithful self-examination and earnest prayer, prepare himself for the vow under which he is laid when he presents his Child for baptism. May the Mother faithfully devote to thy service, and to the right discharge of her domestic duties, the life which thou hast been pleased to spare in danger.

IN SICKNESS

We pray especially for that member of our own company on whom thy chastening hand is laid. Bless thou the means which are used for his (her) recovery. Restore him (her) if it be thy good and holy will, to health and usefulness. But if thou hast otherwise determined, and if this sickness

must be unto death;- O do thou prepare our brother (sister) for his (her) awful change: Be thou with him (her) in the valley of the shadow of death; and when that dark and narrow vale is travelled through, receive him (her) to everlasting life and glory, for thy mercy's sake in Christ.

AFTER A DEATH

O Lord, since last we met before thee, thou hast seen it meet to remove by death one of our number. Teach us to humble ourselves under thy mighty hand; to say "It is the Lord,- let Him do what seemeth good unto him;" "The Lord giveth,- the Lord hath taken away,- blessed be the name of the Lord." Sanctify this dispensation to the relatives of the departed. Fill their hearts with the consolations of thy grace. Sanctify it to us all. To-day, while it is called to-day, may we mind the things which belong to our peace, since we know not what a day or an hour may bring forth.

AFTER A STORM, OR SIGNAL ESCAPE FROM DANGER

Thou, in whom alone we live, and move, and have our being, we desire to offer unto

thee humble and hearty thanks for that signal instance of thy protecting care which we have been permitted to experience. When human aid availeth not, thou art mighty to save. O may we render unto thee alone the glory and the praise.

May the danger to which we have been exposed, stir us up to greater earnestness in our preparation for eternity. May the deliverance which hath been vouchsafed to us,- while it fills our heart with gratitude, and our tongue with praise,- establish the more our trust in the living God; and make us the more willing to meet danger again, when the discharge of our duty demands it.

* * * * *