

REVIEW - WHAT HAPPENS IN WORSHIP. JANIE WALLACE

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In this booklet we see the influence of the liturgical movement in the Baptist Church and the way in which one Baptist minister seeks to present his understanding of worship within his own tradition. This short study is a spin-off from a thesis being undertaken by the author in the Department of Practical Theology at Glasgow University and it is refreshing both in its presentation and its content.

Mr. Wallace, who is minister of College Street Baptist Church in Northampton, draws attention to the danger of the "levitical" approach to worship, and he freely admits to being a Levite, one who is dedicated to leading people in worship, and its liturgy, study, practice and love. We must beware, however, of too professional an approach to worship. We need to remember that Jesus spoke out against the hypocrisy of the scribes and the pharisees, and against the man who thinks he is worshipping God but is really worshipping his own devotional posture.

Worship, says the author, is not just a "sacred concert" which we attend if we are suitably entertained, but which we avoid if the performance is not to our taste. Worship is a transaction between God and man, an uneven transaction, for man receives far more than he can give. All is of grace - man cannot manipulate God by worship. It is only by God's grace that the relationship of worship is possible.

Mr Wallace is particularly interesting when he discusses Baptist worship. He identifies several common ingredients in the Baptist tradition, and as presbyterians we can recognise similar influences which have been at work within our own church. There is the "puritan streak" which suspects the material element and strives for a spiritual worship. There is the distrust of the use of books in favour of worship "from the heart" and what is amusingly described as a "cussed agin the government" attitude, the view that we will not be limited by the instruction of men (even fellow Christians), in a sphere where we should be free to obey the promptings of God. There is also an ambivalent attitude to the place of holy communion.

Mr Wallace shows that order in worship is not merely a human notion imposed through the church but a gift of God which will help us praise him truly. Order does not destroy freedom but preserves it and prevents it from descending into chaos. He looks at order in three ways. There is the pattern of worship which can be discerned from scripture and from the church's tradition. But a pattern without

life would be nothing, and under the heading of "scenario" he emphasises that worship is something in which we are all involved together as God's people. Finally, as an attempt to bridge the gulf between those who favour liturgical direction and those who do not, Mr Wallace looks at worship as "reasonable behaviour" (of Romans 12:1), and human behaviour" seldom falls neatly into patterns and scenarios. He identifies certain movements in worship for which there are no specific slots and which permeate the service: approach, family awareness, offering, intercession, commitment and petition. The author feels that this approach enables us to distinguish "between the unstructured worship which partakes of spiritual order though innocent of liturgical orthodoxy, from that allegedly free worship which is merely pious chaos."

There is much thought-provoking and original material in this booklet which it is hoped Mr Wallace will develop at greater length in future. On the evidence of this fresh, lively, and entertaining study, he will have much more of importance to say about the relationship between liturgical development and the free church tradition.

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CHILDREN AT COMMUNION

In the first three chapters of his letter to the Colossians, St. Paul outlines the life of the Christian within the cosmic setting of God's plan to unify all creation in Christ, who is seen as being the author and reconciler of creation by his death and resurrection and also the head of the church which is the place where this reconciliation has already been made visible.

Each Christian, united to Christ in baptism, forgiven by the death of Christ, freed from bondage to the evil cosmic powers whom Christ defeated, is called to become what he already is - one for whom Christ died and raised to newness of life. Our temptation is to live as if it was not true but in so doing we live a lie (3.9.). The ways we are tempted to live this lie are self-righteous legalism (2:16-23); living as if Christ were not the risen Lord (3:1-8); and disunity in the Body of Christ. (3:9-11). The Lord's Supper by contrast shows that we are indeed united to Christ and therefore the wicked folly of living these lies,