

## RECENT BOOKS ON WORSHIP

Douglas Galbraith

**Hymns for All Seasons: The complete works of James Quinn SJ**, ed. Paul Inwood (Oregon Catholic Press, 2017; hard cover c. £30). The hymn texts of the Scottish Roman Catholic writer James Quinn SJ, who died aged 90 in 2010, are valued both within and beyond his own Church, with eight examples in *CH4*. This new collection has 230, with an account of his life by the editor. In an interview I was privileged to have with him not long before he died, he spoke of hymns as ‘a rich scriptural quarry’, their purpose ‘to convey the words of Christ memorably’. Language must be ‘clear but not banal, and above all simple’. His was a preaching order and he saw his hymns as fulfilling that commitment: ‘Hymns form a catechism in song’. Fr. Quinn’s first hymns were written as a challenge. He was assisting in an Edinburgh parish at the time of the Second Vatican Council, when it was made possible for the Mass to be said in English. Should not hymns also be in the vernacular? was his question. He found he had ‘volunteered’ but had no idea how to begin. It was only when a headmaster colleague brought him a book of hymns and tunes to examine that he put pen to paper. His hymns are characterised by a limpidity and a directness that can be quite moving. His gift was not so much to draw attention to or illumine Scripture but to enable Christ to speak to the heart. There is art there, albeit invisible to the naked eye, in that the true medium is not the writing but the life of devotion. You do not miss rhyme, the absence of which, for Quinn, allowed greater fidelity to the scriptural original, provided there were compensating cadences – and, we might say, when words are set down with such precision that you are taken inside their meaning, or where repetition, whether of words or grammatical structure, places an idea where you cannot look past it.

**The Meaning of Christian Liturgy: Recent developments in the Church of Sweden**, ed. Oloph Bexell (Eerdmans). The Church of Sweden is the largest Lutheran church body in the world, with 6.5 million members that represent about 70% of the Swedish population. *The Meaning of Christian Liturgy* illuminates and explains the changes that have occurred in the liturgy of the Church of Sweden from 1980 to 2000. However, the book, edited by the Emeritus Professor in Church History at Uppsala University, addresses

also much more general questions that are applicable throughout the church. How does participation in a liturgy make clear what 'church' is about? What does liturgical participation say about who or what God is and about the community's encounter with God? How have churches lived with the changes and renewals introduced in the twentieth century? and How does the church building shape worshippers' ideas of God and of church?

**Growing through the Church: A practical and theological vision for all-age worship**, Russell Herbert (Kevin Mayhew). Dr Herbert is a Methodist Superintendent minister, currently serving on the team at Christchurch, Clevedon, a vibrant and fast-growing ecumenical church in North Somerset. He is concerned about the many who 'grow out of' church membership and wants people rather to 'grow through' the church. To assist with this, he gives practical guidance for engaging the imaginations of all ages through music, prayer, 'presenting a message', and enabling responses to be made. It is reported that he has been using puppets, 'gospel magic' and multi-media to communicate with all ages in churches and Primary and Secondary schools for over twenty years.

**Songs for Suffering: Praying the Psalms in times of trouble**, Simon P. Stocks (Hendrickson). There has in recent years been a growing number of books on how the psalms can give a name to our experiences, not least the adverse ones, and how by their intensity, their language, and their deep vein of spirituality they enable us to pray through these experiences. The book covers issues such as: despair and loss of faith, giving voice to anger and complaints to God, the ideas of changing God's mind and of moving God to act for justice, regaining a right perspective on issues of personal safety and security, and the passage from lament towards praise and confidence.

**Daily Prayer for All Seasons: A contemporary Benedictine prayer companion** (Canterbury Press, £17.99). The book has been characterised as 'providing succinct and yet powerful bursts of prayer'. It follows the monastic pattern of daily prayer, and the prayers are accompanied by a helpful commentary on how monks approached the task. Thematic headings for each 'hour' of prayer help to focus the act. Whether slipped into the pattern of an ordinary day or acting as a pattern itself for a retreat-in-daily-life, the book contains a refreshing mixture of the familiar and the newly-crafted.

**Wrestling with the Word: Preaching tricky texts**, eds. Kate Bruce and Jamie Harrison (SPCK, £12.99). This is a book of sermons interspersed with helpful reflection. They remind the reader that avoiding the ‘difficult’ text can be a missed opportunity and that engaging with such themes can stretch the preacher in directions which refresh one’s preaching generally. Reviewers vote two of the best sermons as those by John Bell, a member of this Society, and Jolyon Mitchell of the University of Edinburgh. The book is a vote for the continuing validity of the sermon even in the face of multiplying and clamant new media.

**English Cathedral Music and Liturgy in the Twentieth Century**, Martin Thomas (Ashgate, £65). Musician, theologian, and cathedral precentor, the author charts the development of English cathedral music in the twentieth century and asks if this has issued in a new distinctive style. There is also polemical material about the shortcomings, as he sees it, of conservatism in cathedral musicians (and he includes the RSCM in this) which has led to a divide between ‘cathedral’ music or ‘church’ music (designations he disapproves of) and the new music emerging in the concert halls. In his argument, liturgy has been a straitjacket, to the detriment of aesthetic quality. The author may be criticised, perhaps, for situating church music alongside the open music world with its highly expert executants and generous funding (albeit never enough). In worship, the parameters are different; liturgy *does* have restrictions, albeit to be a better channel of worship, music-makers may not be highly trained, financial resources are shared with other imperatives, and church goers, unlike those who flock to concert halls, have other reasons than love of music for being there and also different experiences of music.

**Embodied Liturgy: Lessons in Christian ritual** Frank C. Senn (Fortress Press, £22.99). This book grew out of a course in the body in worship, taught in a faculty of performing arts in a Lutheran university in Indonesia. He derives a starting point from earlier writers who, seeing metaphor as integral to language, show that the sharpest metaphors are spatial and grounded in bodily experience. The author here traces this through concepts such as truth and morality and doctrines such as those of sin and salvation. A comprehensive approach to the arts in relation to liturgy is taken, both in theory and practice, in the course of which the author develops the idea of yoga-based physical meditation.

**Contemporary Worship Music and Everyday Musical Lives**, Mark Porter (Routledge, £95). It has become more common to apply the principles of ethnomusicology to church music, with the purpose not only of musical analysis but testing what effect the music on offer might have on the formation of the church and its worshippers (individual spirituality, the nature and quality of congregational life, resourcing mission). This is a very substantial academic study which, although based in a particular church setting, St Aldate's in Oxford – a well-known centre for charismatic worship, challenges generally the view that music is neutral and argues that those responsible for its choice need to understand the variety of musical experience and taste in a congregation.

**Encountering Vineyard Worship, John Leach (Grove Books)**. Leach is currently the Developing Discipleship Adviser and Trainer for the Diocese of Lincoln. (He lays claim also to having been IKEA's only ordained truck driver.) In this volume, he explores the phenomenon of the Vineyard movement which has had a profound influence in some Anglican churches. In so doing he assesses the quest for intimacy in their characteristic style of worship, both its value but also how it may displace other important elements in worship. However, his aim is not to eliminate but to restore, showing how some of these elements can be re-accessed. It is a volume which might assist not just those congregations who consciously derive from the Vineyard movement but churches which enjoy charismatic styles of worship generally as well as the many congregations today where there are elements of this style cheek by jowl, often without deliberate choice, alongside a congregation's own traditions.

**Evaluating Worship: How do we know it is any good?** Mark Earey (Grove Books). Earey is Co-Director of the Centre for Ministerial Formation and Tutor in Liturgy and Worship at the Queen's Foundation, Birmingham, and a frequent writer and commentator on Anglican worship. (To keep up sides with the previous author, we may mention that his initial training was as a Civil Engineer at Loughborough University, and for a short while worked in sewage, which leads him to comment on the link between liturgy and sewage – the both rely on good flow!). Grove Books are an excellent and comprehensive (and by now large) set of concise volumes, easy to read and generally punchily written. In this one, Earey offers models which enable us to critique the worship we make and lead, finding these in such areas

as: encounter with God; how worship edifies and informs; how it enables growth; duty and service; and offering.