

RECENT BOOKS ON WORSHIP

Liturgy on the Edge: Pastoral and attractional worship, ed. Samuel Wells (Canterbury Press £16.99); 978-1-78622-039-4. At the ‘cutting edge’ of contemporary society, St Martin-in-the-Fields finds itself with opportunities for worship far beyond the regular Sunday services. The book does not offer ready-made liturgies for use by others; its greater value lies in the account of how a particular church has gone about its recognition of and response to these opportunities. Several arise through approaches from outside agencies, relating to specific pastoral needs and situations; others may mark such events as anniversaries of key acts of Parliament. There is its own direct response to those who pass through its buildings (St Stephen Wallbrook is a partner church) such as brief reflections and meditations for city workers repeated throughout the necessary two-hour period, and there are its own takes on other forms of worship: sacred music and hymns with commentary (offering a bridge from their concert venue function), contemplative Taizé-style services, community carol services, events to mark festivals, prayers for healing. In these times when there is an obligation on the church to go out and find the people who need it, in leading us through their experience the book offers to open up the way for churches with opportunities (and surely that is most of us) to read their own situation and respond liturgically.

Liturgical Worship: A basic introduction, Mark Earey (Church House Publishing, £14.99); 978-0-232-53357-6. This is a revised and expanded edition of an earlier book designed for those who plan or lead worship, written by one who is responsible for training ordinands and lay readers in the Church of England at Queen’s College, Birmingham. Earey has a high profile among those who provide materials for worship, both orders for use and books which reflect and teach. He chairs GROW, the group behind the very useful Grove Worship Booklets. In this volume he writes about how liturgy works as ritual, how it is employed in different traditions, the shape of the Christian year, patterns of reading Scripture in worship, using music and song, words and silence, truly an introductory book for ‘practitioners’. He is good at putting and answering the basic questions people have, and, although this is directed towards one particular tradition, fellow travellers will find much to sustain them. Earey trained as a civil engineer and for a short while ‘worked in sewage’. He is wont to ask: The link between liturgy and sewage? – both rely on good flow!

The Language of Liturgy: A ritual poetics, David Jasper (SCM Press, £30); 978-0-334-05571-6. David Jasper is well known to us in Scotland, having recently retired from the chair of Literature and Theology at the University of Glasgow. Like the previous book, this is bedded in the liturgy of the Church of England but it treats what is a burning topic in any branch of the church and takes us behind debates about whether or not the language of worship ought to be truly contemporary or retain features from the tradition of liturgical prayer. To answer the question, What kind of liturgical language can be *more than* merely accessible? Jasper takes us on a journey, often technical, including back to the seventeenth century, its poets and the earliest books of common prayer. This is not to play down modern language in worship but rather to identify what we are searching for that does not reduce prayer to ‘what we can understand’ but rather what will stretch the imagination, place us in the flow of Christian devotion and practice, support us with theological insight, and through which we may find ourselves taking part in a divine dialogue. It will be no surprise to readers that Jasper finds in David Frost’s post-communion prayer, ‘Father of all, we give you thanks and praise’, an example that achieves all of these things.

Visual Arts in the Worshipping Church, Lisa J DeBoer (Eerdmans £18.99); 978-0-8028-6951-7. This volume may seem far from home in that it is about an exploration undertaken in an American context. However, there are points which might ring bells for us, like the need for shared sensitivity between artist, minister, and people. Challenging for us, too, is the account of the setting up by the archdiocese of Chicago of a panel of people, regardless of denomination, with artistic and architectural expertise. There is an interesting account of summer camps where younger people are enabled to explore faith through art. Another project recorded is one that breaks out of the sanctuary to confront social injustice.

Grasping the Heel of Heaven: Liturgy, leadership and ministry in today’s Church, ed. Aidan Platten (Canterbury Press, £22.99); 978-1-78622-002-8. This Society will remember an excellent paper given by Michael Perham to their annual meeting of 1995, the title of which bore a resemblance to the title of this book. It is to honour Perham, the late Bishop of Gloucester and one of the principal architects of *Common Worship*, that the editor has brought together a number of authors including Mark Chapman, Paul Bradshaw, and Paula Gooder to reflect on some of the themes which were important to him, a

wide embrace that included liturgy, the ministry of women, church structures, and unity. This is therefore a book about a number of things, with worship only a part. However, as regards the latter the focus – on how liturgy transports and transforms, and is enabled to do so – is a subject that is featuring more and more in the conversation in all parts of the church today.

A Diary of Private Prayer, John Baillie, updated and revised by Susanna Wright (Scribner, 2014); 978-1-4767-5470-3. The recent death in Edinburgh of Rev Dr Robin Boyd, whose own writing embraced missionary theology and ecumenics and included the definitive history of the SCM, brings to mind a publication, now four years old, which he did much to encourage. The famous *Diary* sold more than a million copies in its heyday and remains a classic. The project to update its rich and insightful spirituality has been approached conservatively but sufficient to open up the volume comfortably to a modern user. Professor David Fergusson, in his commendation on the first page of the new edition, speaks of the *Diary's* 'breadth of subject matter, felicity of language, and simple piety' and avers that this updated edition 'admirably preserves all these qualities', ensuring that it continues to be accessible to another generation. Professor Kenneth Boyd has extended its reach making it into an audiobook downloadable from Amazon for £12.70 (free for first month).

Words that Listen: A literary companion to the Lectionary, eds. J. Barney Hawkins and Ian S. Markham (Canterbury Press £60); 978-1-78622-064-6 (two volumes). Hawkins and Markham are from Virginia Theological Seminary; consulting editor Mark Oakley, Dean of St John's College, Cambridge, earths the admirably wide ranging material in a British context. This double volume provides readings from world literature to accompany every Gospel passage of the Revised Common Lectionary for Years A, B and C. For each Sunday it offers four extracts, with commentary, from fiction, nonfiction, poems, great speeches and sacred texts, to plays, television and film scripts, social commentaries, and theologians past and present. There are writers from the classical Christian tradition, from Origen to Rowan Williams; great authors like Dante, Shakespeare, Emily Bronte, Oscar Wilde; poets such as Seamus Heaney; among the novelists are P D James and Stephen King; one of the film makers is Steven Spielberg. Included also are Leonard Cohen, U2, Led Zeppelin and Lady Gaga; and there are paintings.

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