

5-25-2003

Early Christian Worship

Don Neville

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus>

Recommended Citation

Neville, Don (2003) "Early Christian Worship," *Consensus*: Vol. 29 : Iss. 1 , Article 25.

Available at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol29/iss1/25>

This Book Reviews is brought to you for free and open access by Scholars Commons @ Laurier. It has been accepted for inclusion in Consensus by an authorized editor of Scholars Commons @ Laurier. For more information, please contact scholarscommons@wlu.ca.

with their larger contexts of immediate community and successive generations.

There are a few additions to this book that this reader would have appreciated. These homileticians do not refer to a single preaching book. The suggested readings do provide a helpful list of books based on the four frames of culture plus communication but the conspicuous absence of related books in the field is puzzling. Along with a substantial bibliography, there is the need for notes to substantiate and provide direction for future study. Also, I wish to read full sermons and know how the preacher attempts to integrate cultural sensitivity. Then I would like to hear the listeners' responses to those sermons and how the sermons connected and spoke to them.

Preaching to Every Pew is a needed addition to homiletical literature. It is part of the pioneering work in the area of preaching and culture. It leads us down the adventurous and exciting pathway to preach the Word faithfully in our modern world.

Daniel L. Wong
Tyndale College and Seminary
Toronto, Ontario

Early Christian Worship

Paul Bradshaw

Collegetown MN: The Liturgical Press, 2001

96 pages, \$19.29 Softcover

Anglican scholar Paul Bradshaw has established himself as an eminent liturgical scholar on both sides of the Atlantic, first in Britain, and now at Notre Dame University in the USA. This book comes from a third direction. It began as an undergraduate text at the University of South Africa. Well known for his more scholarly endeavours, here Bradshaw takes a stab at writing a short book on a broad topic. He succeeds partially. His book has three chapters: Christian Initiation, Eucharist, and Liturgical Time (by which he means Daily Prayer, the Office, and the Calendar).

In his discussion of initiation, he traverses familiar ground, concluding that there was no uniform rite in the sub-apostolic church. He goes through the many images in the NT: enlightenment, union with Christ, sealing, putting on Christ, anointing. Taking us rapidly through early baptismal practice in Syria, Egypt, Rome, and North Africa, he moves to "the fourth century synthesis." Here he explains the delay in baptism that many sought at that time, and explains the elaboration of baptismal ritual in terms of symbols borrowed from the host culture. Conversion, he points out, was no longer expected before baptism, but as a result of baptism, the consequence of mystagogical teaching. He refers to a more homogenous rite of initiation in both east and west after the fourth century, which we are familiar with now. Finally, he repeats the traditional interpretation for the origins of confirmation as the result of the distancing of bishops from the places where the baptism of children and infants occurred.

In his treatment of eucharist, he deals with the issue of whether or not the Last Supper was indeed a Passover meal by implying that, whether or not it was an actual celebration of this festival, it took place in a Passover context. He places it in the context of Jewish meal customs and of the messianic banquet, which at this time are related. He revisits the idea of eucharistic sacrifice, tracing its development and presenting various views of sacrifice held in the early church. He contrasts the ideas of the eucharist as meal and event. Both themes, he says, were present in the early church. He reminds us that the seeds of the later unfortunate debate between the monks Ratramnus and Radbertus, and even later, among the various Protestant and Roman theologians and churches over the eucharist, were present in the early church.

He blames the decline in reception of eucharist in the late medieval church on the introduction of the attitude of the numinous, tying this to the absence of any kind of conversion experience among the faithful at this time. The consequence of this was that the late medieval church found it necessary to introduce more and more drama and emotion into the Mass, to convince and influence the people.

In discussing liturgical time, he takes us back to the *Didache*, the earliest source of evidence for daily prayer outside the scriptures. Here we find prayers offered thrice daily. This, he says, was not so

much a reflection of Jewish custom as it was of waiting for the Lord's return. He contrasts the "Cathedral Office" (prayers offered twice daily in the parish church for the world) with that of the desert fathers (who prayed ceaselessly for their own salvation), and sees a synthesis in the monastic office (prayers five times daily, for world and self). In speculating on the origins of the Christian Sunday, he goes against much scholarly opinion in debunking the idea of Sunday as a replacement for the Jewish Sabbath.

Bradshaw's writing is concise and accurate. He provides copious quotes from the early Church Fathers and other documents. This is cumbersome, but it reminds us that this is our source material for our knowledge of early Christian worship, rather than speculation on customs and practices at the time of the reformation. At times Bradshaw is quite revisionist, especially in his discussion of initiation. He is sensitive to the development of infant baptism, but makes no absolute theological claims for this.

Is this a suitable introduction to early Christian worship? Perhaps so, but Bradshaw presents nothing transparently, and does not back away from the difficult issues of liturgical history. This results in many tentative conclusions, and illustrates the complexity of his subject.

Don Neville
Highland Lutheran Church
Calgary, Alberta

The Unnecessary Pastor: Rediscovering The Call

Marva Dawn and Eugene Peterson
Vancouver BC: Regent College Publishing 2000
256 pages, \$22.99 Softcover

At the opening of the clergy study conference, the pastoral leader for the day included this petition in her prayers: "Gracious and loving God, we live in a competitive world that measures worth and fulfillment far too readily by success and numbers and by a daybook crammed with appointments upon appointments. Help us, O God, by