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# For all God's worth: true worship and the calling of the Church

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are. Wogaman's call needs to be heard and heeded – the church needs to stop accommodating to culture and begin transforming it through its preaching and the changed lives of its members.

Through ten chapters (100 pages) Wogaman gives pointed tips and names pitfalls to avoid: “All ethical issues must be interpreted and preached theologically, not just humanistically” (chapter 1); “increase your pastoral skills and people will not be as upset when you preach on a controversial subject” (chapter 2); “preach on specific issues (use of money, sexuality) not just broad ideas of social responsibility” (chapter 4); “deal fairly with the other side of the issue and kindly with those who disagree” (chapter 5); “always offer hope; do not just preach against an issue” (chapter 8), “don't fear and avoid criticism, welcome it as a constructive opportunity to deepen the dialogue over an issue” (chapter 10). Wogaman even gives suggestions about how to deal with high-profile people in your congregation who are closely tied to an ethical issue – in his case, this involves President and Mrs. Clinton.

His thirteen sermons serve as decent examples of how to preach on racism, politics, the economy, sexuality gender equality, and homelessness. They are mostly topical, rather than exegetical/expositional, yet all are based on a biblical text. Each sermon begins with a description of the context in which it was preached (date, purpose, state of the church or nation). Some of them are so rooted in and suited to his American context, that Canadian pastors will have to “translate” as they read. The sermons struck this reviewer as being good, but not outstanding. A few less (six to seven sermons) would be enough with more space given to explaining how his theory in part one influenced the shape and content of the sermons.

Still, there is not much written in homiletics on this topic of prophetic-social preaching. Wogaman's volume is well worth the read.

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### **For All God's Worth: True Worship and the Calling of the Church**

N.T. Wright

Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1997

144 pages, \$15.99 Softcover

Tom Wright, a British Anglican, is the dean of Litchfield Cathedral. He appears, according to some of the comments in this little volume, to have served

some of his career in Montreal. He has recently made a name for himself as the writer of several contributions in the current spate of publications exploring the nature and identity of Jesus.

Both the title and subtitle of this book seem to promise a discussion of worship and its relation to the church's task today. The title alludes to the etymological source of our word worship in the term "worth-ship", and the subtitle specifically refers to "true worship". This is misleading, for in fact the books says very little about worship, and indeed appears to be a series of re-worked sermons delivered at his cathedral.

There are fourteen chapters, all about the same length, each one introduced early on by either a scripture text or a reference to a season or festival on the Church Year. These fourteen chapters are divided into two sections of seven chapters each, headed by the themes, "The God who is worthy of praise", and "reflecting God's image in the world". But these two subsections tell us nothing important about the content which follows them.

The sermons/chapters present these themes: eucharist, pastoral installation, Trinity, Advent, Good Friday, Palm Sunday, Easter, Exodus, Ascension, Ecumenism, Anti-Semitism, and the Beatitudes.

If these are indeed sermons, then Wright is a good preacher. The tone is pastoral and chatty, perhaps slightly condescending in the style of Anglican divines, but nevertheless biblically sophisticated without being iconoclastic. His process is inductive and experiential. He proclaims orthodox Christian truth in a simple and transparent manner. Yet he is also a clever theologian, as we should expect. He is able to push at the edges of the acceptable and orthodox, but always in a persuasive way, in the best tradition of Anglican theologians who are not bound by confessionalism, yet manage to stay within the fences of what is expected.

There is nothing startling here, though Wright's New Testament scholarship is everywhere in evidence. He provides clever insights into many of the texts he discusses. My favourite is "The Older Brother", where he uses the familiar parable of the prodigal son to look at Christian anti-Semitism and provide a way for Christians to accept contemporary Judaism without relinquishing belief in Jesus as messiah.

In sum, a good homiletical read, but not much here about worship!

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