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## Wainwright, DOXOLOGY: THE PRAISE OF GOD IN WORSHIP, DOCTRINE, AND LIFE

James W. McClendon, Jr.

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(2) Following F. R. Tennant, Reichenbach claims that the world must be run mainly by natural laws, rather than by God's direct actions, if there are to be free moral agents. His argument is that if God constantly intervened to prevent natural evil, then we could never calculate the probable consequences of our actions. Reichenbach appears to be thinking here about a world which, though governed by natural laws, is subject to God's frequent intervention. And what he says about *that* world may well be right. But now what about a world which is *entirely* governed by God's direct action? Why couldn't God make such a world at least as predictable as our own? It is no doubt true that if God, in the course of directly governing a world, did not give any of his creatures a capacity for doing what is morally wrong, then *a fortiori* free moral agency would be impossible in that world. But, given that free will defenders are right about the importance of free will, why *wouldn't* God give some of his creatures that capacity? Why can't the envisaged God-governed world contain at least as much free moral agency as our own? And if it can, then why isn't this world superior to our own, in that it would contain no natural (as opposed to moral) evil? Perhaps Reichenbach will want to reply here that, not only must any law-governed world contain natural evil, but this is true as well of any worlds which are run by God's direct action. But it looks very much as though that claim is incompatible with God's omnipotence.

## NOTE

1. Also, the essence of Reichenbach's argument on pp. 70-73 can be found in my "An Examination of the Soul-Making Theodicy," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, April, 1970 and "Plantinga on the Free Will Defense," *The Review of Metaphysics*, June, 1971.

*Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine, and Life*, by **Geoffrey Wainwright**. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980. Pp. 609. Cloth, \$35.00.

Reviewed by JAMES WM. McCLENDON, JR., CDSP/GTU, Berkeley, CA 94709.

The major problems facing Christian theology in the Western world at the present time—problems neither new or transient but persisting since the Enlightenment or earlier—may be summarized under the headings of *relevance* (the gap between the modes of thought available to theology and those prevailing in the wider society), *pluralism* (the conscious plurality of world religions, but also the ongoing plurality within Christianity itself) and (inclusive of these two) *truth* or *truthfulness* (the question, whether any existing theology may be judged true by

standards of truth acceptable in general, or even in the Christian community). These persistent problems have led to strenuous, if only partly satisfactory, theological moves in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: the attempted rapprochement between theology and empirical science, the (contrary) effort to rest theology on its own proper bottom, the attempts at new (or newly restated) metaphysical beginnings. These main lines of endeavor have yielded at best partial success. They have not shown ways to overcome the dominant cultural indifference or to surmount the astounding religious variety of our times; no theological synthesis has appeared corresponding to the medieval one.

Amid this complex of persistent needs and apparent difficulties, the appearance of any new approach to theology arouses hope, but may bring disappointment instead when it provides no alchemy to transmute the elements of modernity into faith. Theology has for this reason if no other proved to be a frustrating discipline to many intelligent Christians, who perceive its standing problems and deplore its lack of headway despite its many changes of method or angles of approach.

Against this briefly recalled background, what is to be said of the Wainwright work presently under review, *Doxology*? Its distinguishing feature is an approach to the whole of Christian theology by way of reference to Christian worship. Its author is a British Methodist scholar whose disposition seems more typically Anglican. After a time at Union Theological Seminary he is now at Duke University's Divinity School.

Worship implies, expresses, and sometimes even creates doctrine; by taking account of all these relations in rich detail, Wainwright is able to make three successive moves in this book. He (1) assesses historic Christian doctrines (Image of God, Christ, Spirit, Church), (2) examines the "traditional means" by which the church ("one, holy, catholic, apostolic") has conveyed these doctrines, and finally (3) raises certain "contextual questions" (under the headings of Ecumenism, Revision, Culture, and Ethics) that bring doctrinal doubt and change, but perhaps relevance and truth, into the restatement of the ancient symbols. All this fills nearly 600 pages, being buttressed with 1,141 scholarly notes that add fact, bibliography, and discerning judgment to the text. Therein Wainwright touches most major Christian doctrines and illuminates them with selections from a wide variety of (but not all) ways of Christian worship. The qualifiers ("most," "not all") are important, as we will see.

Consider a chapter of the book's first part, the 42 pages on "Christ." Wainwright plunges immediately into modern controversy, the effort by British theologians Wiles, Hick, and Lampe to back off, in the name of coherence and economy of expression of truth, from the high trinitarian claim for the divinity of Christ. To oversimplify their view, Wiles and company recognize that historic Christianity has come to hold that Christ is God, but they argue in unitarian fashion that this

was a late development, that it was based on popular devotion similar to that later addressed to the Virgin Mary, and that the resultant 'development' of the doctrine of Christ's deity was not binding or necessarily right.

Wainwright responds by retracing, often in Wiles' footsteps, the ways in which in ancient and medieval Christian worship Christ is addressed in prayer and worshipped as the second person of the Trinity. He then raises three argumentative questions: Has Wiles license to be a trinitarian in liturgy while a unitarian in the academic study? Does the worship of Christ constitute idolatry if he be not the Athanasian true God? Do Christians, in worshipping Jesus, worship a 'mere' man? As these are explored, Wainwright's christological tendency discloses itself as neither so high, it would seem, as Athanasius', nor so low (as Wainwright says, so "religiously unsatisfactory") as Wiles'. He answers the first question by urging that "integrity requires a movement toward congruity" (p. 58) between liturgy and personal conviction. He answers the second by proposing that Christ be understood as *mediator* between ourselves and God, taking his clue from the role of saints and images in (Catholic) worship—Christ the focus of Christian devotion to God. And he answers the third by evoking a kenotic christology equally compatible with traditional incarnationalism (which Wiles rejects) or with a version of adoptionism.

So Wiles and his allies are answered, not by refutation, but by nuanced disagreement, as Wainwright locates himself just a bit to Wiles' christological right. Yet that requires less than half the "Christ" chapter; in its remainder Wainwright, ever the learned liturgist, first traces again the role of Christ as "mediator" ("through Jesus Christ our Lord") in the prayers of the churches, from the second century *Didache* to the British Methodist service book of 1975 (which one imagines Wainwright helped write!). Next he applies the "mediator" theme to a *doctrine* of sacraments and worship (thus passing from practice to theory to practice again). He then ends the chapter by offering some speculative-metaphysical remarks on "God's presence and action in the world." And in a later chapter ("Lex Credendi") meant to illustrate the power of dogma over worship—the converse of his usual theme—Wainwright returns again to christology, reporting on the interesting christologies of McIntyre and Bonhoeffer, Schlink and Pannenberg, in passing, while again rebutting *The Myth of God Incarnate*.

Along the way in these chapters there is much to admire, much to learn from, and now and again much that challenges—or must be challenged. My sympathies are certainly with him as against Wiles on christology, though my own stance would be still farther toward Athanasius and (I believe) toward the high New Testament doctrine. On the sacraments Wainwright is ethically sensitive and liturgically pervasive. With many modern liturgists, for example, he opts for believer's baptism and against infant baptism (pp. 73f, 84, 139-42, 308-23),

because "the freedom which is an essential characteristic of [Christ's] kingdom is best respected and most clearly signified by a baptism freely decided on by its subject" (p. 142).

Yet these moves in the two chapters (out of 14) here described do not answer our introductory questions. Is it ever possible on the basis of close attention to liturgy, even when undertaken by an expert, to solve theology's persistent problems? On the evidence presented in *Doxology*, I would judge not. Focusing on Christian liturgy may even be a handicap to one who seeks the clue in practice (or 'praxis' as some would have it) to Christian theoretics. An illustration of such a handicap appears in the "Christ" chapter just surveyed. One key to the argument there is the assumption that God alone is to be worshipped. But what underwrites that assumption? Certainly not the history of Christian worship, into which pagan and idolatrous elements have all too frequently been introduced. A more likely source is the Old Testament prophets. Yet these cannot justly be subsumed under Christian any more than under Hebrew *worship*: Often the prophets from Elijah on stand over against the practices of worship as its critics, even opponents. Yet it is they who tell us that doxology belongs to one God alone; the prophets thus form one deep root of the doctrine of the deity of Christ! Yet by his choice Wainwright must not make the witness of Scripture central, so that argument (which he must nevertheless presuppose) is foreclosed to him.

Again, Christian practice is more than liturgy. We may if we please use the word "worship" to refer to all of the believers' life, but Wainwright has rightly avoided this diluted use of the term. Instead, he concludes with two thoughtful but not central chapters, on Culture and Ethics. Yet ethics might have stood alongside worship as a font of doctrine. Had it done so, since ethics is the sphere in which the believers' life engages the wide world, this work might have had a *relevance* hard to find in one instead focused upon internal questions of liturgy and its modes.

And then, what about inclusiveness, in face of the *pluralism* of Christian life? Wainwright is far too sophisticated to suppose that the canon of Vincent of Lerins ("everywhere, always, by all") can take us far in either doctrine or liturgy. Yet this reviewer feels keenly the absence from these pages of the Anabaptists and their heritage, which, as Ernst Troeltsch has shown, has so richly shaped Christian life in England and America. In *Doxology*, though, we find no *Ausbund* selections (though that collection antedates the Wesleys' by two centuries and is still in use), no consideration of the necessity of conversion in the Christian life, no '*Nachfolge*' focus upon Jesus' earthly life and its modeling of the believers' way, and thus only a partial though genuine appreciation of a believer's baptism which is meant to witness to all these.

Professor Wainwright has shown us one richly informed way to think about Christian doctrine. His way does not overcome the standing difficulties of modern

theology but yields to them: it conquers neither the charge of irrelevance to the world nor that of partiality within the church, and therefore has only a dubitable relation to the truth. Yet this is a wise, sensitive, and graceful book, beautifully written (and beautifully manufactured by Oxford University Press), well worth reading, a storehouse of learning, a mine for the student. While it does not break through to a new age of theology perhaps in its birthing, it displays elements that the new age, if it comes, cannot well neglect.