RODNEY WALLACE KENNEDY & DEREK C. HATCH (EDS.). *GATHERING TOGETHER: BAPTISTS AT WORK IN WORSHIP*. EUGENE: PICKWICK, 2013. (VII + 194 PP.) [ISBN: 978-1-61097-758-6].

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Liturgical theory and practice has not typically been the *forte* of Baptists, or more generally the Free Church tradition. However, there is a growing number of publications seeking to reverse this trend, of which *Gathering Together* is a welcome addition (see also Christopher J. Ellis, *Gathering: A Theology and Spirituality of Worship in Free Church Tradition*; Alexis D. Abernethy (ed.), *Worship That Changes Lives: Multidisciplinary and Congregational Perspectives on Spiritual Transformation*; James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*). From the editors to the contributors, this is a marriage between practical thinkers and thinking practitioners. The American context from which this comes will not hinder Baptists (and others) around the globe from being assisted toward the stated goal to "consider how we might worship God more fully and become the people of God more faithfully" (p. xii). The appendices will be particularly useful, which 'borrow' into one collection various worship resources (orders of service, prayers, creeds, special service orders) from local Baptist congregations and wider church history, organised and themed according to the Christian Year.

In the opening chapter, Kyle Childress gives an autobiographical account of patiently leading the church he pastors from a warm-yet-too-casual posture to a warm-and-intentional ethos characterised by responsive readings, hand—holding benedictions, more frequent Communion and even permitting Childress himself to wear a robe and stole. For those simply wishing to read and recapitulate his journey, the narrative form of this chapter will not yield the desired points of application—nor should it. Indeed, his wise pastoral advice for *how* to implement change is just as important as *what* those changes are.

Michael D. Sciretti, Jr. provides a thorough reintroduction to the Christian Year. He recounts how the ÅJewish festivals of *Sukkoth, Pesach* and *Shavuot* were transposed into Christian key in Advent—Christmas—Epiphany, Lent—Easter, and Pentecost, which he frames as three seasons of 'light,' 'life' and 'love' respectively. For him, the Christian Year serves as a tool for the formation of a 'High Priesthood' (under Christ the High Priest) which is called into "three primary arenas: time, nature, and people (p. 31)."

In light of modern individualism and narcissism, Amy Butler sets forth a discussion of "tangible opportunities for connection" (p. 40) such as: connecting voices (corporate singing), connecting bodies (hugs, handshakes), committed belonging (public recommitment), collaborative experiences (learning a new song), participative rituals (passing the peace), and shared expressions of conviction (reciting a prayer). The various example stories of what we 'might' do would have been strengthened if accompanied by warnings of the *costs* of not doing so. For example, yes, listening to one another singing undoubtedly binds us together, but what assumptions or practices around corporate singing actually hinder us from even *hearing*, let alone appreciating one another's voices?

Sharlande Sledge, herself an avid writer of prayer (*Prayers and Litanies for the Christian Seasons* [Smyth & Helwys, 1999]), effectively frames pastoral prayers as a representative collection of the aspirations and anxieties of the people, which follows the collective 'our,' 'us' and 'we' pattern seen both in the Lord's Prayer and various liturgical prayers. Before offering a selection of prayers written by her and others at her church, she commends *preparation* that is slow and reflective, *language* that is orderly, imaginative and poetic, and in a *form* that is rhythmic and at times responsive. The only weaknesses would be that readers could have been taken further into related literature, and like the previous chapter the points would have been enriched by some exploration of the assumptions and habits that prevent, oppose or dilute this recommended practice.

In the chapter perhaps most challenging to modern Baptist practice and ecclesiology, Phillip E. Thompson (co-editor of *Baptist Sacramentalism* and *Baptist Sacramentalism 2* [Paternoster, 2003 and 2009]) composes his *apologia* for the use of creeds in worship. Looking at Baptist history, he finds both approval of and dependence on the creeds (i.e. Nicene, Athanasian or Apostles') especially among the early Baptists, who did not see them as replacing or being more binding than Scripture. He also deconstructs a tendency in later Baptist ecclesiology to see the church as "logically and theologically subsequent to the free individual" (p. 74) and their right to "unfettered private judgment" (p. 70). The Early Baptists understood human freedom within the ultimate divine freedom of God, and were able to appreciate creeds as faithful summaries of the biblical vision of gospel faith and life. His closing proposal for baptism as the most natural place to recover use of the creeds might not suit contexts where baptismal services are highly attended by unbelieving family and friends.

Rodney W. Kennedy brings a passionate plea for preaching to be tied to the worship of the Church, both through the week and in the corporate gathering on Sunday. He calls for more public reading of Scripture on Sunday and more wrestling over it with others through the week. He commends higher intentionality in crafting sermons to persuade the congregation rather than tickle their ears with preacher—centric stories and suggestions. For Kennedy, preaching is a third—equal sacrament along with Baptism and the Eucharist. Aside from a handful of passing provocations, this chapter fits very well the tenor and trajectory of the overall book.

Scott W. Bullard (Judson College) leads us through a reconsideration of Baptist understanding and practice of the Eucharist. Allegiance to Scripture over tradition does not necessarily support viewing it as 'mere symbol', let alone celebrating it as infrequently as Baptists tend to. Significantly, he argues cogently that debates over what happens to the blessed bread and cup have overshadowed the theologically rich and pastorally crucial reality of the 'transubstantiation' of *the community that partakes in them*. Indeed, in an individualistic and consumer culture, "the body of Christ spends much of its time being "dismembered' throughout most weeks" (p. 105), thus making regular corporate 're—membering' through celebration of the Eucharist all the more urgent. My only complaint for this excellent chapter would be that such compelling arguments could have warranted a stronger recommendation than "*perhaps* more frequent practice" (p. 109, emphasis mine).

In another compelling chapter, Elizabeth Newman (Baptist Theological Seminary) affirms that baptism of believers by immersion "most fully displays the gospel witness" (p. 110), and yet she challenges what she sees as an "impoverished theology of baptism" (p. 111) among modern Baptists. Like the Eucharist, Baptism is neither a 'mere symbol' nor itself saving, but rather a 'grace—filled sign'. Individual baptisms each unite us with the baptism of Jesus, the central point of God's redemptive entry into the world. As documented in the language, art and practice throughout church (and Baptist) history, the water is no more 'magic' and yet no less a vehicle for salvation than the water in the flood, the Red Sea or from the wilderness rock. For Newman, this vision of baptism as "an ordinance with sacramental significance" (p. 120), leads us to the proposal (unfortunately both awkward and difficult) that infant baptism can be seen as "genuine, albeit not as fully scripturally performed as believer's baptism" (p. 123).

C. Randall Bradley is a professor in Church Music (Baylor University) and author of *From Memory to Imagination: Reforming the Church's Music* (Eerdmans, 2012) making him well qualified to illustrate in his chapter the inherent potency of music and to call for more considered liturgical integration of music. He unfortunately overstates the former and under—delivers on the latter. An introductory quote from a popular Christian novel sets up a questionable silence—speech—song hierarchy, which many contemplatives among others would strongly critique. The praise of music continues: "Nothing is more effective in welcoming the stranger than music" (p. 132)? Really!? What of sharing possessions or a meal? Or what kind of 'fact' is it that "music *may* be the church's best hope for Christian unity" (p. 134, emphasis mine)? Such statements obscure Bradley's insightful and needed observations; for example, that incongruent combinations of text and tune will equate to the text's meaning being overridden (p. 130), or that the misuse of music by politicians and advertisers can be recapitulated in "manipulative and coercive ways" in the church (pp. 131–2).

This volume finds a rousing missional finish in the chapter by Cameron Jorgenson (Campbell University Divinity School). A concise discussion of the *Missio Dei*, followed by an excellent comparison of themes in Hebrews and Revelation sets up his proposal that in mission as well as worship, we participate in and with realities that transcend us (p. 140). Further, both worship and mission are not only ways of participating in God's works, but also ways of co—sharing in God's own tri—personal self—loving nature. Reflecting on Jesus' prayer in John 17, Jorgenson concludes, "God's intent for salvation is that the world would be drawn into God's own inner life of love" (p. 142). Worship is "the proper end and goal of mission, and worship has an inescapably missional character" (p. 142). A fitting final trajectory indeed for a book that will be an important part of the wider Baptist and Free Church rediscovery of the importance of taking worship seriously.