

The Society for Ecumenical Studies

For our salvation – Two Approaches to the Work of Christ

Geoffrey Wainwright, SPCK-Eerdmans, 1997

Worship With One Accord – Where Liturgy and Ecumenism Embrace

Geoffrey Wainwright, OUP, 1997

Reviews by David Carter, January 1998

For Our Salvation consists of two self-contained parts. The first, 'Senses of the Word' looks at the role of all the senses in the sacramental and worshipping life of the Church. The author states, 'Given this utterly corporeal character of the human life lived by the Word of God for the redemption of the world, it is entirely congruous that he should choose to keep coming to his Church by material means for the sake of our salvation'. The second section deals with the traditional 'three' offices of Christ. It is a masterly piece of concentrated Christological writing.

In the first section, Wainwright frequently quotes from the most recent Roman Catholic-Methodist international dialogue report, *The Word of Life*, and, to a degree, the section acts as an expanded commentary on the Report. One hopes it will aid its reception. Certainly, this is an excellent and accessible book and one to put in the hands of anyone who wants to explore the possibilities of doing theology in either liturgical or ecumenical mode.

Wainwright's second book is more specialised. It consists of fifteen papers given on various liturgical and/or ecumenical occasions. In a particularly interesting essay, 'Tradition as Liturgical Act', Wainwright inverts Bossuet's thesis that the 'principle instrument of tradition is the Liturgy' and argues, in a manner consistent with his own Wesleyan tradition, that the traditionary process takes its origin and finds its goal in

the experience of worship. Wainwright elsewhere reinforces a favourite theme of his, the absolute centrality of Trinitarian doctrine to the integrity of Christian worship and identity.

Recently, I was asked how 'representative' Professor Wainwright was of Methodism. I think the appropriate answer is that like any good creative theologian, he is simultaneously both in line with his tradition and yet ahead of it. In his unfolding thinking, he is, necessarily, ahead of most of his fellow Methodists. At the same time, however, the trajectory of his thought remains profoundly Wesleyan, and he remains especially a true son of the Wesleys in his ability to learn from and assimilate from other traditions. I commend both these books very warmly; they will be reviewed at greater length in *One* in Christ.