



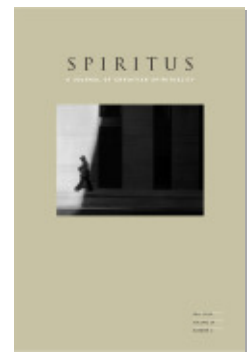
PROJECT MUSE®

The Place of Christ in Liturgical Prayer: Trinity, Christology, and Liturgical Theology (review)

Bruce T. Morrill

Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality, Volume 8, Number 2, Fall 2008, pp. 241-244 (Review)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press
DOI: 10.1353/scs.0.0030



➔ For additional information about this article

<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/scs/summary/v008/8.2.morrill.html>

interprets the oft-quoted line from *The Dry Salvages*, “The hint half-guessed, the gift half-understood is Incarnation” (V, line 215), as applying both to the Hindu divinity Krishna and to Christ (130). The upper case “I” in Eliot’s use of the word argues against what Kramer proposes as the poet’s effort to “balance” the two. The centrality of Pentecost and the imagery of fire in *Little Gidding*’s fifth movement emphasize the Holy Spirit. Christ’s presence—both as Word and Incarnation—weaves throughout the poem. To what extent do Trinitarian allusions in *Four Quartets*’ relate to contemporary retrieval and renewal of the Christian Theology of Trinity? Finally, the presence of Julian of Norwich and the Annunciation to Mary in *The Dry Salvages* (along with marriage and the dance metaphor in *Burnt Norton*) bespeaks a feminine presence in the poem. Why does Kramer neglect to analyze the dialogic motive vis-à-vis the masculine and feminine in the poem? A hefty seventy-seven pages of endnotes (almost one-fourth of the book) overwhelm but nonetheless guide readers to further analysis and critical literature on Eliot and *Four Quartets*. An extensive index makes this text user-friendly and accessible.

GEORGE KILCOURSE
Bellarmine University

The Place of Christ in Liturgical Prayer: Trinity, Christology, and Liturgical Theology.
Edited by Bryan D. Spinks. Collegeville: Pueblo/Liturgical Press, 2008. 378 pp. \$49.95.

A collection of papers delivered at a 2005 Yale Institute of Sacred Music conference under the same banner, this volume borrows its title verbatim (albeit in English translation) from the highly influential 1925 book by Austrian liturgical scholar, Joseph Jungmann, SJ (1889–1975). The first paragraph of the introduction betrays a certain ambivalence about the project’s theme and subject matter. The editor opens with the syntactically awkward, insider-type comment, “It was never a great mystery that the title of this conference is that of the English title of Josef Andreas Jungmann’s groundbreaking book . . .” going on to explain, “This conference was never intended to be about Jungmann, but rather to center on the important subjects raised by his title,” only to proceed to make Jungmann’s scholarship the object of critical review for the remainder of the introduction.

The book is and is not about Jungmann, his theories, and legacy. It is insofar as Jungmann stands as both a key contributor to and archetype of the liturgical theology that achieved official authority for Roman Catholicism at Vatican II, whose Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum concilium*) also had an immediate and enduring impact on the liturgical reforms and renewal in other Western ecclesial bodies. The volume, on the other hand, is not about Jungmann insofar as many of the contributors do indeed take the question of Christ’s status and function in the liturgy amidst the Trinitarian missions as a topic for exploration in a certain historical tradition and/or ecclesial-cultural context, but without any recourse to Jungmann.

Peter Jeffery’s essay stands chronologically and substantially at the center of the book, a veritable *tour de force* cogently assessing Jungmann’s work through

description and analysis that shed penetrating light on what was and still is at stake in the liturgical reform the Austrian Jesuit helped engineer. As if that were not enough, Jeffery goes on to demonstrate the problems he perceives with the modern reform by means of one liturgical unit, executing a full-blown exegesis (philological, ritual, literary, historical, etc.) of the *Kyrie eleison* in the current Roman Missal. At sixty-eight pages, Jeffery's text comprises nearly 20 percent of the entire volume. The massive chapter, disproportionate to the other fourteen (15 to 30 pages each) concludes the first of the book's three parts, "The New Testament and Classical Worship Traditions" which, although one of three sections of the book, nonetheless amounts to half the total pages. This is not surprising, given the fact that since its inception in the latter part of the 19th century the scholarship of the Liturgical Movement has focused on ancient texts as the key to returning the Church's rites—and with these, liturgical theologians would argue, the Church itself—to "sound tradition" (*Sacrosanctum concilium*, no. 4). The subsequent turmoil or malaise, as some Roman Catholics insist, in the Church's liturgical life has been due in no small part to how scholars and pastors have understood the meaning and function of history, a point Jeffery makes in spades as he debunks Jungmann's project.

As do others in both this new book and the wider field, Jeffery acknowledges the sizable number of ancient liturgical, homiletic, and epistolary texts available to current scholars that postdate Jungmann's work and, thus, help excuse what virtually all now perceive as major shortcomings in his arguments and conclusions. Jeffery, however, presses Jungmann more critically on the methodology (and behind that, the modern Jesuit ideology) governing his use of the texts:

But there was also a fatal flaw in Jungmann's conception of what he was doing. Jungmann saw himself as engaged in "historical theology." As he practiced it, this meant that one reads liturgical texts with an eye toward discerning the underlying theological principles. By definition these principles are timeless; only their historical expression is subject to variation across time and culture. . . . By themselves, that is, the historical data amount to minutiae: what is really important is the "theological purpose" (139).

That is a devastatingly apt critique of the modern, rationalistic biases inherent in much of the liturgical theology up to the 1980s and, sadly, persistent in certain (hopefully shrinking) circles of the discipline to this day: an exclusive attention to texts—perhaps most notably anaphoras or eucharistic prayers—driven by the untenable conviction—untenable on cultural-anthropological grounds—that getting the presiding celebrant to proclaim certain words within one normative pattern of prayer could result in all participants (anywhere!) hearing and embracing the exact same content and practice ("understanding") of the faith.

Jeffrey provides one of the most cogent explanations to date of how such textual positivism fundamentally misapprehends and thus manipulates liturgy by utterly denying its ritual nature, marginalizing (in Jungmann's case, utterly dismissing) the symbolic actions, spatial elements, and music that in fact are the primary mode of its existence in the bodies of its living practitioners/participants: "It was because the reformers of Jungmann's generation could not 'read' the non-semantic languages of ritual that they produced a liturgy so top-heavy with theological

verbiage that it is very difficult to perform effectively” (143). Hence, one might observe, the overly didactic character of the post-Vatican II liturgy as actually performed in North America to this day, as well as clergy and laity’s near-universal dread of liturgists, with their characteristically rigid, doctrinaire positions on elements of the rites that for the people have a much more organic, corporeal role in their faith-lives.

Not surprisingly, then, much of this new volume is comprised of historical studies seeking to disabuse late-modern liturgy enthusiasts of any misguided quests for *the* pristine text, primordial form, or universal principle at the origins of Christianity that should govern all rites today, including Jungmann’s overstated claim that liturgical prayer is only properly addressed to the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit (as opposed to also being addressed at times to the Son, for example). Paul Bradshaw, a contributor to the present book, has been at the forefront of elder liturgical historians rethinking the modern biases behind the claims they made in the first half of their careers. His thorough revision of *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship* (2nd. ed., Oxford University Press, 2002) is an outstanding comprehensive introduction to the current state of the sources (their dating, redactions, contexts), topics (calendar, baptism, eucharist, and so on), and exciting interpretive issues arising from historical scholarship open to the great diversity evident among the corporate prayer of the early churches. The stellar lineup of historical liturgical scholars also contributing to the book’s early-church section includes Larry Hurtado, Robert Taft, Baby Varghese, and Gabriele Winkler.

Two of Bradshaw’s former students from the doctoral program at the University of Notre Dame, Maxwell Johnson and John Witvliet, likewise make notable contributions to Part 2 of the book, “Piety, Devotion, and Song.” Drawing on his broad and fruitful research on Marian devotions, Johnson deals a devastating blow to the methodological biases of contemporary doctrinal (systematic) theology with the opening salvo, “Thanks in large part to Joseph Jungmann, treating the question of the *Theotokos* as a christological-doctrinal issue with little or no attention to its wider context or possible pre-history has become common” (243). Johnson combs historical evidence of early liturgical and other “popular” prayer practices to conclude: “. . . devotion to Mary *Theotokos* did not spring up out of thin air, or merely fall out of heaven, at the council of Ephesus. Nor did it simply ‘spread like wild fire’ only after the Council of Ephesus. Rather, such devotion is rooted in piety and devotion from at least the third century” (266). Johnson is quoting and paraphrasing here Elizabeth Johnson’s 2003 book, *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints*, thereby demonstrating how modern rationalistic bias toward texts and councils as the primary sources of belief and practice lead to untenable historical claims within widely-touted contemporary theological arguments.

In his “Prism of Glory: Trinitarian Worship and Liturgical Piety in the Reformed Tradition” Witvliet articulates what is at stake in the concern that genuine trinitarian belief be practically functioning in the people’s liturgical worship:

If Jungmann was concerned about a theological “farsightedness” that did not perceive the “nearness” of God in Christ, Calvin was concerned about a spiritual “depth perception” in which the faithful did not perceive the heavenly reality “behind” or “above” their liturgical participation. . . . Superstition here is not reli-

ance on a wooden god. It is a sin of the mind or spirit, the failure to perceive the trinitarian cartography of liturgical action (277–78).

The laudatory concern for both these ecclesial and liturgical reformers, Witvliet demonstrates, is that worship be practiced and reflected upon as experiences of grace, of the humanly unwarranted and utterly generous favor of the God who raised Jesus from the dead, whose Spirit is now active in believers through the human, heavenly intercession of Christ. Among the best systematic theological work in this vein, by a Roman Catholic scholar who wrote his doctoral dissertation on Calvin, is that of Louis-Marie Chauvet, whose method places symbol, language, and ritual performance at the center of a comprehensive understanding of sacramental liturgy (see, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body*, Liturgical Press, 2001).

244

Inevitably, space limits a reviewer from explicitly discussing all entries in a book of collected essays. Suffice it to say here that Spinks has orchestrated a volume of top-level ecumenical liturgical scholarship replete with information, insights, and implications for the theory and practice of Christian prayer, singular and corporate, popular and official.

BRUCE T. MORRILL
Boston College

Christianity Looks East: Comparing the Spiritualities of John of the Cross and Buddhaghosa. By Peter Feldmeier. New York and Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2006. v +166 pp. \$18.95 (paperback)

One of the great puzzles in comparing the writings of a particular Christian thinker of old with those of an even older Buddhist thinker is to give the contemporary reader a sense of why she or he should care about a conversation that never happened and, without the author's imaginative reading, was unlikely ever to have happened. The answer one typically finds among scholars of religion (and there are many engaged in such work) is that, first, such comparisons are conceptually illuminating and even mentally titillating when done well (that is, they provide an internal service to fellow scholars). Second, such comparisons contribute to an enlightened sensitivity among religions; moreover, one may legitimately hope that if these comparisons transmigrate to the lives of religious persons, they will reduce those particular misunderstandings which take on violent expression (that is, they provide an external service to civil society in a time of increasing inter-religious tension). Of course, no scholar can quantify and track how her or his work renders this external service, and so much of it remains hopeful speculation. Perhaps the greatest contribution of Peter Feldmeier's *Christianity Looks East* is that he illustrates through his brief yet illuminating comparison just how different the stakes are for a Christian theologian puzzling through imagined conversations, even if he never gets around to providing a full answer about why we should care about an ancient conversation that never happened when there are so many conversations among Buddhists and Christians that are happening now.