

decision to start with the positions of the secular world (in this case, the theoretical tradition of Habermas) is that references to the tradition can end up looking like citations of proof texts, rather than genuine attempts to engage with the tradition in such a way as to enable it to speak to the present.

One striking feature of this collection is something else that is absent. Not merely is the Christian tradition largely absent, but so is another dialogue partner whom the title might have led one to expect to be present. The dichotomy between heavenly and worldly that is such a feature of Marx's thought on religion, and its importance for his theory of the secular state, might have been thought to make him (and by extension the Marxist tradition) an obvious dialogue partner. While it is clear from the various contributions to this collection (in the unlikely event that anyone might have thought otherwise) that there are no simple answers for either the Church as a whole, or religious orders more specifically, to the challenges posed by society, whether secular or post-secular, one may reasonably think that a two-year research project could have looked somewhat beyond the categories of the flourishing field of secularism studies. For those interested in that field, this will be a thought-provoking contribution to discussion, but for those outside it I suspect that more bridges will need to be built if the analysis that has gone on is to be fruitful in everyday Church life.

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**READING THE LITURGY: AN EXPLORATION OF TEXTS IN CHRISTIAN WORSHIP** by Juliette Day, *Bloomsbury, T&T Clark, London, 2014, pp. x + 179, £16.99, pbk*

The first word of this book's title is deliberately ambiguous. The author is concerned with the role that written or printed texts and their proclamation play in public worship; she also seeks to 'read' worship from this perspective, to see what such texts and their use can reveal about the worship-event as a whole. As for 'the liturgy', the definite article indicates a focus on a particular pattern of worship, in this case that of the Anglican Communion. The birth of Anglicanism followed hard on the invention of printing, and the two phenomena are intertwined. When it became possible to create many identical copies of a single text easily and cheaply, successive monarchs were able to insist on public reading without deviation of the *Book of Common Prayer* and the *Authorised Version* of the Scriptures. Although those books are now outdated, the attitudes that produced them and sustained their use remain powerful. The author is regularly exposed to them from her 'participation in national liturgy committees' advertised on the cover of the book.

Dr Juliette Day brings to her study the insights of Barthes, Derrida, Ricoeur and others on the nature of text and the act of reading. A chapter on 'Genre' shows the usefulness of their approach. When a reader decides that a text belongs to a certain genre, certain expectations follow. We would not rely on a novel for factual information, or expect fiction in a biography. Similarly, we have certain expectations of a Collect. This was illustrated when second-person relative clauses ('O God, who . . .') were introduced into the recent English re-translation of the Missal, and greeted in some quarters with fury.

The critics whose work Day uses were themselves born in the age of print: their primary focus is on the lone reader silently perusing a printed book. Such readers, when they attend church services, bring with them their experience of texts other than those put into their hands as they enter the building. Day's chapter on 'Intertextuality' offers interesting insights into this situation, particularly

when the worshipper involved is a 'scripturally competent reader', who will be constantly challenged to interpret or reinterpret familiar biblical texts that have been incorporated into the liturgical one. The *Sanctus* is an example.

But anybody who enters the church in which I myself celebrate will find other helps for understanding the *Sanctus*. I have never managed to count the number of angels depicted in glass and stone around our altar, some strumming harps, some waving thuribles, many gazing silently, all inviting us to imitate them as the Eucharistic Prayer begins. Many Anglican churches also are similarly decorated, having deserted the plainness enjoined by Cranmer. This iconographical tradition dates back to long before printing, to a time when few could read, and owed their knowledge of the scriptural narrative more to such aids than to the perusal of texts.

Moreover, for many centuries, worship was conducted in a language not understood by most of those present. Vernacular services are now ubiquitous in the West, but recent experience in the anglophone Catholic community has shown that concern for intelligibility is less that might have been predicted. When inaccuracies or infelicities in the new texts are pointed out, many people – and many prelates – merely shrug their shoulders. There is a widespread feeling, usually unspoken, that the sacred text need not be intelligible, and that if any text promulgated by competent authority is uttered, religious obligations have been satisfied and all is well. This in fact robs texts of their authority, for they cease to be a channel for the transmission of Church teaching. An example is the conclusion to the Collects in the new Missal, which seems to call the Second Person of the Trinity 'one God'.

In the centuries before printing, liturgical texts were less uniform. I used to attend Mass in a Carthusian house, where I was tickled by the phrase '*gloriam tuam magnam*' in the *Gloria*, contrasting with the '*magnam gloriam tuam*' of the Roman books. I assumed that this came from Grenoble, whence the Carthusians derived their liturgical customs. When I came to study the Orations of the Roman Rite, I found much greater variation among the manuscripts. This led me to question whether printing had had an entirely benign influence on the Roman Rite. A single book universally imposed does not offer the most fertile soil for liturgical growth. It is like a field treated with chemical weedkiller and then again with artificial fertiliser. This was true in 1570 and again in 1970. To thumb through the Veronese or Gelasian sacramentary, by contrast, is like wandering through a meadow where weeds and flowers grow, some demanding to be collected and others better left. Such was the soil that nurtured the prayers for the printed missals and many of those incorporated after translation into the *Book of Common Prayer*.

When the Catholic community began to develop vernacular liturgy, it adopted a much more laissez-faire policy than Anglicanism. Clergy, even of high rank, felt themselves at liberty to change the texts, which themselves were often only loosely translated. This seems to be an interesting return to the looser discipline of the earlier centuries. It is assisted by authority, both Roman and local, which has tolerated the coexistence of several versions translated from Latin. Electronic means make it easy to circulate these versions. It would be good if the blogosphere acted as a forum for discussion and criticism of them, leading to a rise in standards of improvisation.

Liturgists know that the books only tell part of the story, just as the text of a play gives little clue about how it might be produced. There is more to be said about the role of texts in worship than we find in this book. But it is valuable as a study of a particular liturgical corpus from a particular angle.

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