

## REVIEWS

**LITURGY: A CREATIVE TRADITION** Edited by Mary Collins and David Power  
English Language Editor, Marcus Lefebure

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This book, price £2.95, is Volume 162 of Concilium, Religion in the Eighties, "a multi-volume library of contemporary religious thought". Almost all the contributors to it are Roman Catholics, and their main purpose is "an examination of creativity as a constituent element" of the Church's liturgy. There are three essays on "Foundations" (Part I), three on "Historical Investigations" (Part II), and five on "Experiences Since Vatican II" (Part III).

It took your reviewer some time to understand the jargon of this book. The meanings of "Christologisation", "Inculturation of the Liturgy", "Creative Improvisation", even "Liturgical Creativity", are not simple. Definitions of terms were better and more quickly given in some places than in others. However, once what certain writers mean by their language (or even by the titles given to them) is grasped, there are stimulating thoughts in these articles.

In Part I, Charles Perrot in his essay on "Worship in the Primitive Church", sees the foundations of liturgical creativity to lie in the creative deed of God in Jesus Christ, and in the resultant action of the Early Church which increasingly put the person of Jesus Christ at the centre of their prayers, and of their Baptismal and Eucharistic liturgies. Mary Collins writes on "Obstacles to Liturgical Creativity" in the Roman Catholic Church, and has interesting things to say on "Creativity as Cultural Value: Two Views", on the individual within the community as the agent of such creativity, and on the criteria for judging it - "is the new element intelligible to the community? is it valuable for its life?". In Joseph Gelineau's "Tradition-Invention-Culture", the attempt is well made to reach down to the foundations for good liturgical order in the context of today's culture. Such foundations are to be found neither in the rigidly prescribed rites of pre-Vatican II nor in modern spontaneous invention, but in what he calls "the operational model", a kind of "re-play, which can draw on a wealth of memory but is open again to the grace of the moment, which has a stable basic pattern but is performed with freedom".

Gelineau wants to see "the operational model" used in particular in relation to the eucharistic prayer. "By its very nature this prayer cannot be read as one reads Scripture ... It has, therefore to reconcile the traditional and the new in its very enactment - as what is called "improvisation" doubtless did in the very early Christian liturgy".

In "Historical Investigations" (Part II) Pedro Scherer has a good essay on "Creative Improvisation, Oral and Written, in the First Centuries of the Church". I found his definition of terms particularly helpful. The second essay in this section, on "Liturgy, Culture, and Society: The Example of Rome at the End of the Ancient World (Fourth-Fifth Centuries)", is also illuminating, though it will probably be of most interest to Roman Catholics who may well be more familiar with the numerous Popes mentioned. The last of the "Historical Investigations" is concerned with "Creativity: The Free Church Tradition". Though the dominant tradition in the context of American Christianity, it yet "remains the least studied by liturgical scholars and it is frequently ignored altogether". James White, a United Methodist minister, gives some general characteristics of Free Church worship, and then sets out five opportunities for creativity in this tradition, the order of worship being "the most important", and the sermon being "the most obvious". He sees the Free Church Tradition as facing "The challenge of developing liturgical scholarship and teaching resources in order to liberate its clergy". That challenge is certainly urgent, if it is true, as White says, that the "Sacraments are viewed as pious memory exercises, commanded by Scripture, rather than as means of grace".

Most of the essays in Part III, "Experiences since Vatican II", deal with the very important issue for liturgical thought and practice today, of what is called the "Inculturation of the Liturgy". Herman Wegman points out in his essay "Significant Effects of Insignificant Changes" that what seem like small changes in the liturgy - for example in Roman Catholic practice the new emphasis on the taking and breaking and passing of the bread - can have important results, and can help enmesh the celebration of the liturgy into the culture of the day. The same crucial issue of relating worship to modern culture is dealt with in other essays in this section; for example in the "Cultural Rooting of the Liturgy in Africa since Vatican II", by Anselme Sanon, in the "Inculturation of the Liturgy in India since Vatican II" , by Paul Puthanangady, and in

"Liturgy Should Learn from the Young", by José Aldazábal. This last is a good summary of "The Attitude of Young Christians to the liturgy and especially the attitude that the liturgy - the celebrating community - ought to take to the young, and the lessons it needs to learn from them".

This book is worth buying for the final section alone (Part III), and for the fascinating way it deals with the attempts in different continents to engage Roman Catholic liturgy since Vatican II with modern culture.

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## REVIEW

**"P T FORSYTH: The Man, The Preachers' Theologian, Prophet of the Twentieth Century":**

Edited By Dikran Y Hadidian. Pickwick Press, issued in Britain by T & T Clark, 500pp Paperback £12.25.

This volume is described as a "contemporary assessment by Donald G Miller, Browne Barr, Robert S Paul. Containing a reprint of P T Forsyth's 'Positive Preaching and Modern Mind' ." A reader already familiar with this Forsyth work would know in advance that it would occupy about three quarters of the 500 pages, and that the "contemporary assessment" would necessarily be of limited scope. But even so, it is disappointing to discover 38 pages of detailed bibliography, writings both by and about Forsyth. Such a thing is, of course, of great value to those who may wish - as it is to be hoped that many shall - to explore as widely as possible the thought of this great and often neglected man. But the inclusion of such detailed bibliographical detail within what is described as a "contemporary assessment" is surely a carrying of the 'do-it-yourself' principle to extremes!

Forsyth's writings commend themselves so magnificently that he scarcely needs an apologia or an elucidation. Nevertheless, it is always a welcome thing when a fresh assessment is offered of a giant from the past who "being dead yet speaketh", even if what is offered is tantalisingly brief - as it most certainly is in this case.

There are 29 pages by Donald G Miller on "P T Forsyth: The Man", recounting in most readable fashion his Aberdonian birth in 1848, his impoverished childhood, his life-long frailty of health, his relentless perseverance at school and university, his 25 years in the pastoral ministry of the Congregational Church and his appointment in 1901 to the Principalship of Hackney College (later New College) in London. He died in 1921, totally worn out in body and mind, but bequeathing to the theological world a vast array of publications, the most substantial of which, apart from the one contained in this volume, are: "The Person and Place of Jesus Christ", "The Work of Christ", "The Principle of Authority", "The Justification of God" and "The Church and the Sacraments".

Forsyth combined with his deep interest in Christology and Soteriology, a passionate concern for social and ethical issues, and all with a profound awareness of the fact that, as the mentor of preachers and pastors, he had a responsibility to equip them with what they needed (and still need

today) faithfully to minister to the flock of Christ. The second contribution of the "assessment" affords a personal illustration of the unique value of "Positive Preaching", for Browne Barr recounts the providential discovery of this work right at the outset of his first pastorate, and how it delivered him from the arid moralism into which his college training had moulded his mind.

The third and most weighty contribution to the "assessment" is by Robert S Paul: "P T Forsyth: Prophet for the Twentieth Century?" The central emphases of Forsyth's theology are brought to the surface in a manner that is far from exhaustive, but which should give the reader a strong desire to explore Forsyth for himself. "His call was not to bigger and better evangelistic campaigns, or a retreat to the doctrinal positions of the sixteenth century, but to what he called a "positive theology" - a theology that recognized the centrality of God's absolute holiness and grace in Jesus Christ's cross-sovereign grace. The liberal theology that was becoming popular was totally inadequate, because only a gospel of holiness and saving grace could meet the reality of human sin, and unless this basic human condition was recognized and met, there was no real gospel and there was no real hope of social justice. To "ethicize" the gospel meant not merely adding an ethical dimension to the Church's social consciousness, but it meant putting the Holy God and his action for us on the Cross at the very center. He insisted that an objective expiatory idea of Atonement "is necessary to do justice to the idea of God as love, and to the closeness of His identification with us," not because he was anxious to defend sixteenth century orthodoxies but because he was anxious to do justice to twentieth century realities."

Forsyth has much to say to us today, and it is to be hoped that this re-issue of one of his major works will stimulate further examination of his fresh and prophetic insights. It is sad, however, that he remains largely out of print, and that even this paperback reprint costs so much.

WILLIAM G NEILL

## REVIEW

**NUPTIAL BLESSING** by Kenneth Stevenson: Alcuin Club SPCK 1982  
pb 258 pp, £10.50

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This scholarly, well-documented survey of the marriage rites of all Christendom is detailed and comprehensive. It shows acumen in its critical analysis. It will be indispensable to all who wish to understand how betrothal and blessing, at first a domestic ceremony at which a cleric did not need to be present, evolved through countless local variations into a solemn rite in which consent and pronouncement of marriage by a cleric became the universal basis of the rite whether incorporated in the Eucharist or not. It will also provide essential guide-lines for future liturgical development in an age when all the churches are being compelled to unite in defining and expressing liturgically what they believe to be basic in the face of denial of the Christian faith and rejection of the Christian interpretation of sexuality.

Particularly interesting is the full account of the varying marriage customs in different countries (which even the Council of Trent encouraged). Regrettably the evidence provides no conclusive picture of the general practice of the Early Church. The section on the rites of the Eastern Church is rich in suggestion regarding symbolism and euchology. The Byzantine rite shows insight into the spiritual significance of marriage far in advance of the corresponding Western rites. Here is a frank acceptance of the enjoyment of the things of the flesh when blessed by God. Here is joy among the saints and martyrs at the wedding. Two rings appear for the first time. Both bride and bridegroom are crowned and blessed, instead of the veiling and blessing of the bride only which prevailed elsewhere. The gospel reading is St John 2, 1-11. Members of the Church Service Society will be interested in the author's acknowledgement of the influence of Euchologion: 'The Euchologion tradition, starting with the first edition in 1867, tries hard to enrich Knox's rite with prayers from many sources, official and unofficial, and by the sixth edition in 1890 has a ponderous exhortation, including biblical material along the lines of the ill-fated 1629 revision. The vows become slightly altered, and the ring appears at last, but only optionally and it is described as a "token of fidelity to these vows". The couple are declared man and wife, with the Matthean pronouncement, as in Baxter, and the United Methodist Free Churches' rite of the same year. The last part of the rite is made up of psalmody and

prayer, the latter ingredient indirectly influenced by Baxter, in a beautiful composition looking to the Marriage of the Lamb at the end of time.'

Discussing modern Presbyterian rites the author says: 'Scotland's Book of Common Order (1979) is by comparison a dull collection, but it marks considerable advance from 1940..... One senses an anxiety to preach Christian marriage to a secular age, rather than to "liturgize" and "modernize" a Christian community. In the first order the lofty reasons for marriage in Euchologion are simplified but omnipresent. In the second form there is an attempt to begin with prayer, in a fine epiclesis: "Father eternal, send forth the Spirit and we shall be remade...." The vows can be active or passive, and the prayers in the second part of the service have an engaging lilt and simplicity! The author considers the 1975 Methodist Service Book provides the best of modern adventures in reconstruction of the marriage rite.

This fine compendium gathers lucidly together the wealth of theological thinking and liturgical writing of the Church, whose understanding of Christian marriage inevitably starts with the presence of our Lord at the marriage in Cana, blessing an unknown couple.

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INVERNESS

