

Alcuin of York († 804) is sourced to *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, 2007). Similarly, it seems that all the texts analysed are read and reflected upon in English, even when their original was in another language, and this can cause confusion (cf. the ‘optative’ discussion on p. 215). Again, whilst these are jarring, they rarely seem to wound the author’s arguments fatally – though if a ‘new subfield’ is indeed to be born, they do represent a threat to future analysis. One interesting by-product of such criticisms, however, is the realisation (not discussed by the author, but perhaps implicitly understood) that – perhaps for the majority of congregations and for the major part of the time – liturgical texts are *heard* in this ‘disembodied’ way in our churches. They spring from nowhere, are used, and disappear again. Whilst liturgical scholars may be more finely attuned to the history and development of liturgical language and its meaning, Professor Wolterstorff’s approach may be highlighting another area for future Christian formation – and even hints as much in his chapter on God’s liturgical activity (p. 220).

One last niggle. The focus on ‘what is done’, on the *performative* dimension of the liturgy, is genuinely fascinating. What seems to be missing, however, is any sense of a ‘performative trajectory’ within a liturgy – that is, that the various elements together (rather than being analysed singly) have a direction and a purpose for both the individual worshipper and a Christian community. This is particularly obvious in the chapters on ‘Liturgy and Scripture’ – which have some truly interesting insights, but where what might be termed the ‘goal’ of proclamation or commemoration seems to have got lost. Perhaps, though, that is a question for another book.

A singularly attractive facet of the author’s style is that – every now and then – he runs into a question he cannot answer, and honestly confesses the fact. If imitation, then, is the sincerest form of flattery, I would finish thus. Does the author succeed in the challenge he sets himself? I don’t know. Is everything in this book correct? I doubt it. Is it a book worth reading? Absolutely.

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VON BALTHASAR & THE OPTION FOR THE POOR: THEODRAMATICS IN THE LIGHT OF LIBERATION THEOLOGY, by Todd Walatka, *Catholic University of America Press*, Washington, D.C., 2017, pp. xii + 249, \$69.95, hbk

There is an ongoing tension in the churches between the proponents of beauty and the proponents of liberation for the poor. Those who promote high liturgy with associated art and music are often accused of just providing spiritual entertainment for the educated rich and ignoring the poor, while the liberationists are accused of ignoring humankind’s spiritual

needs and producing a horizontal, anthropocentric religion. Hans Urs von Balthasar is of course a key resource for anyone concerned with beauty and the Christian Faith: indeed, Balthasar more or less reintroduced beauty to theology. But for many people, Balthasar belongs to a world of wealthy, sophisticated European culture, as inaccessible as it is glittering. And he was often very critical of liberation theology. So Todd Walatka's book is all the remarkable in bringing Balthasar's *Theodramatics* and liberation theology together, and could thereby provide materials to resolve this current tension in Christianity. He is honest that Balthasar said relatively little about solidarity with the poor. But strikingly, Walatka argues that *on its own terms* Balthasar's *Theodramatics* implies and requires solidarity with the poor, so Walatka seeks to develop the *Theodramatics* in this direction, taking it 'beyond the letter'.

Walatka's starting point is a Christmas sermon of Balthasar's, one of striking simplicity. Insisting – as he always did – that one must attend to the details in Scripture, Balthasar points out that after the vision of angels, the shepherds set off in the darkness – to a visit a child who looks very ordinary, in poverty – 'except for the fact that this is the promised sign, and it fits'. So the shepherds find God really present in ordinariness and poverty. As the book develops, we see this as in fact rooted in the tradition of St Ignatius of Loyola, with which Balthasar was not completely imbued during his Jesuit years: you meditate on the gospel and your place in it, you are purified from attachment to evil in the world: then you are sent out on mission to the world. Indeed, as Walatka shows, Balthasar's philosophical anthropology and aesthetics emphasises receptivity, so this demands (more than Balthasar says) a receptivity to the reality of the poor and oppressed, a receptivity to God's presence in them – a theme brought out well by the liberation theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez.

Walatka's concise introduction to liberation theology highlights the need for its insistence on a preference for the poor – given history shows that Christianity can kill (Balthasar himself was well aware of the murderous oppression of nominally Christian regimes of Latin America in his own time). And Balthasar's *Theodramatics*, borrowing on dramatic theory, offer a praxis of the gospel whereby God (put very simply) is the author or a play which is the battle of good and evil, and Christians are God's actors. So *Theodramatics* is structurally suited to a practical theology of liberation. What is key is that Balthasar is eschatologically focussed, and this makes his criticisms valuable for liberation theology. Assessing liberation theologians' use of Marxist critique and evolution theory (Balthasar has no problem with evolution in itself) he is worried that even if a perfectly fair and just society were realised, this would not solve the problem of justice for the dead – who might be regarded as little more than expendable contributors to glorious 'progress'. Whether Marxist, Hegelian or Gnostic, Balthasar rejects 'epic', totalising theories that leave no room for freedom –

especially, no room for God's freedom to *act*. He also recognises the problem of a fallen world: liberators too easily become oppressors in their own right (compare George Orwell's *Animal Farm*). This is the problem with utopias, as Sobrino acknowledges – they ignore the reality of personal weakness and sin, the need for each person to accept God's gift of healing salvation. Admittedly, Balthasar's emphasis on personal sin and conversion leads him to dismiss the liberationist idea of structural sin: sin is committed by individual people. Walatka responds very well to this – he highlights in Chapter 5 the anti-Black racism in the USA which is so ingrained as to be often unconscious. Perhaps a three-way dialogue would be useful here between Balthasar, Liberation Theology and the concept of the 'sin of the world' in St John.

Walatka believes that Balthasar's apocalyptic needs to be more developed, especially given the latter's strong argument that the danger of evil is in its 'counterfeit' nature (the wheat and the tares). We are, as Sobrino says, constantly faced with the forces of the 'Anti-Kingdom', but, as Kathryn Turner says, the transcendent present of God rules out a complacency which would relegate justice to the next life.

I suggest that Walatka's book succeeds primarily because it is a shining example of intellectual charity, bringing reconciliation between conflicting positions through drawing out more from what their proponents already offer. In a world where debate has turned increasingly uncharitable and hostile – something which has also infected the Church – Walatka's approach is especially welcome. As he says, one must 'dialogue with as many voices as possible and in openness to the presence of the Spirit as one seeks to explore the revelation of God and to transform the world in accordance with God's final Kingdom' (p. 215). Indeed, the possible typo on p. 88 – 'Ignatian Biblical *mediation*' rather than 'meditation' – may be prophetic. It would be interesting to put Balthasar's aesthetics and *Theodramatics* and Walatka himself in dialogue with the community activist turn in contemporary art. It would also be very timely: when the West is experiencing social breakdown and a widening gap between rich and poor, parallel with mass secularisation, Christians might offer a Christ-centred, eschatological and beautiful theology of liberation.

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'BREATHING THE SPIRIT WITH BOTH LUNGS': DEIFICATION IN THE WORK OF VLADIMIR SOLOV'EV by Jeremy Pilch, *Peeters*, Leuven, 2018, pp. x + 249, €78.00, pbk.

Jeremy Pilch's research investigates the concept of 'divine-humanity' in the thought of the great Russian philosopher Vladimir Solov'ev (1853-1900). Pilch sets out a triple objective: first, to show how deification