

Dom Jean-Eric tells me he has now completed work on the Commentary on Galatians, for which Père Torrell will provide the chief introduction, while establishing a working text for the Commentary on Ephesians proceeds apace. Once again English-speakers realise how indebted they are to the world of Francophone Thomasian scholarship, with its profound sense of the belonging of these medieval biblical aids — and Thomas's writing generally — to the cordial, prayerful, intellectual project of *la vie théologique*.

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CHRISTIAN SYMBOL AND RITUAL: AN INTRODUCTION by Bernard Cooke and Gary Macy, OUP, Oxford, 2005, £26.99, pp. 189 hbk.

In this comparatively short work, Cooke and Macy have set themselves the rather large task of introducing the uninitiated to the nature and practice of Christian rituals throughout the past two millennia. With over 130 years of Catholic life and experience between them (p. viii) they doubtless felt well equipped to the task. Whilst they provide a helpful introduction to many elements of Christian ritual, they do not, understandably, succeed in explaining everything.

It is clear from the outset that this is a book written by teachers. Their preface sets this out explicitly, as it also makes clear their aim in writing the book. Having realised that the modern student cannot be assumed to have any background or basic knowledge of the nature or purpose of Christian rituals, they set out to explain them, and also to introduce the reader to Christian ritual in general (p. viii). The explanatory approach is also evident in the first words of the introduction (p. 3), which ask the reader how they approached this (or any other) book for the first time, and points out that we all have rituals with which we approach new books. This is a book designed for those wanting (as far as reading a book allows) to interact with a teacher.

The introduction, which discusses symbolism as the root of ritual, is a helpful one, explaining the nature and purpose of ritual and symbol, and the contextual, cultural and historical limitations of most symbols. Cooke and Macy are also right to point out that rituals train us to see the world in a certain way. Although it is never explicitly stated, diverse influences lie under the surface of this theory, such as a modified, less extreme form of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (that language shapes our perception of culture). Given the introductory nature of the work, this is understandable, although the occasional footnote explaining sources for ideas and pointing to further reading, would greatly enhance the book as a whole.

One of the main points they appear to want to make is that modern usage of the term *sacrament* is too narrow and constricted in usage. They argue that the first Christians did not think in terms of a set number of sacraments, whether two or seven or any other number. Rather a *sacramentum* (or *mysterion*) referred to any thing or action or person that mediated the presence of God to humans (p. 39). They prefer the term ritual as being less loaded and less tightly defined, since sacrament 'originally just meant any symbol or ritual that God chose to mediate salvation to humans,' (p. 38), an argument that is not wholly convincing. Having said that, the five elements of a ritual that they identify, and frequently use throughout the book, are quite helpful. They state that every Christian ritual: 1. provides a hermeneutic of experience (i.e. a means through which the Christian community interprets the world); 2. offers the possibility of further maturation and growth in the image of Christ; 3. is empowered by the presence of the risen Christ; 4. is embodied in service; and 5. is a celebration of friendship (pp. 52-53).

The bulk of the book then discusses a number of types of Christian ritual. These are rituals of friendship; rituals of initiation; rituals of prayer, worship and

the Eucharist; rituals of reconciliation; rituals of service and ministry; and rituals for healing suffering and death. In each case the aim appears to be to give a general, introductory description of the ritual followed by an evaluation, which concludes with the five elements of a Christian ritual outlined above. For the most part they succeed in doing this. The basic format is to introduce a few key New Testament texts, then elements of the Patristic witness, followed by a discussion of some modern practices. Often the discussion is simply a high speed, highly general discussion of the relevant Church history, but there is also a reasonable focus on how these rituals are practised in the modern Church. Unfortunately the chapter on rituals of service and ministry appears to be primarily a lesson in church history and a defence of why the Church should be organised. At this point the authors appear to be bound to a tradition that insists that the ordained priest is the primary if not sole possible functionary and officiant in acts of corporate worship, a conviction that this reviewer does not share. If they are convinced by their own statement that 'Christian ministry is fundamentally the attempt by Christians to get things done that are worth doing: proclaiming the word of God, performing Christian rituals, managing the finances, providing education for those interested in joining the community and for the young, as well as for the continuing education of the membership' (p. 143), one wonders why they don't have anything positive to say about people getting on and doing it, or any suggestions as to how this might come about.

In the conclusion Cooke and Macy also discuss a number of other areas that pertain to Christian ritual, viz. the Quince Años coming of age ceremony, the role of images, sacred places and clothes as well as the Bible and private prayer. These are also helpful for explaining more of Christian practice, and the insights offered are valuable for understanding the whole of the Christian life as a ritual. The notion of the creative function of ritual is also employed in the closing section of the book, as the authors urge the reader to 'act like the person you wish you were, and the chances are you will become that person . . . let the risen Christ shine through you. For those so blessed, every breath is a sacrament' (pp. 168-69).

Overall *Christian Symbol and Ritual* succeeds in fulfilling the role its subtitle gives it, viz. that of being an introduction. Occasionally the author's idiosyncrasy may hinder that goal. After all, if they were attempting to introduce the reader to modern Christian practices, would it not have been more helpful to introduce the seven Catholic sacraments (perhaps having explained to the reader that the modern usage of the word is slightly anachronistic)? In regard to its aim of being accessible to all Christians, it is less successful, but that is not surprising given the range of practices they would need to describe. There is much that would be familiar to those from other liturgically based traditions, but little in common with the more charismatic or low evangelical Protestant church traditions. However, since members of such traditions are unlikely to read this book, it is not much a loss. Cooke and Macy succeed in their aim of providing an introduction for someone with no background understanding of Christian rituals, and so for those teachers that find themselves in need of such a tool, it would be a valuable addition to their bookshelves. But other readers looking for a more detailed discussion would be best advised to look elsewhere.

TOM WILSON

JEWS AND HERETICS IN CATHOLIC POLAND by Magda Teter, *Cambridge University Press*, 2006, Pp. 272, £40 hbk.

Years ago, looking at books from libraries of heterodox Presbyterian churches in Dublin, among other gently decaying volumes, I noticed several weighty tomes