

Tércio Bretanha Junker. *Prophetic Liturgy: Toward a Transforming Christian Praxis*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014. 159 pages. \$18.90.

Professor Tércio B. Junker, a Brazilian American liturgist and theologian, reorients the Christian practice of worship based on the perspective of Latin American liberation theology. For him, Christian liturgy should be a “prophetic praxis” that “foster[s] the community’s transformative vocation towards freedom, equality, justice, and peace” (4). Junker understands the nature and function of liturgy as the agent of transformation of socio-political and economic life for all and reinterprets the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist as means of such transformation. According to him, both sacraments are not merely an individual personal experience of the presence of God but a transforming praxis of the church, a “prophetic community,” in its particular historical context.

Chapter One focuses on defining such foundational concepts as “prophet” and “praxis,” and Chapter Two explores the meaning of the prophetic praxis of the sacraments as “the ultimate means of transformation” (39). For Junker, “the fullness of the baptismal meaning” is a call to the involvement “in the communal struggle for human rights where they are thwarted by oppressive regimes, unjust economic systems, distrustful political power, and unbalanced ecology on earth” (47). The Eucharist, states Junker, is also a transformative praxis in the sense that “the gesture of taking, breaking, blessing, and giving the bread has in its foundation the imperative political claim to resist hunger, oppression, violence, and unjust socio-economic order” (51). In Chapter Three, Junker grounds the theological foundation of prophetic liturgy in the prophetic image of the Triune God: “God, as Prophet of prophets; Jesus Christ, as Incarnated Prophet; and the Holy Spirit, as spirit of prophets” (63) and reminds the church of its identity as “a vehicle of transformation in society” (75). The last two chapters concentrate on how the worshiping community can experience the ultimate level of “total sacramental rituality” through prophetic liturgy. Junker suggests that the three levels of ritual communication— theology (spiritual/transcendental language), culture (cultural/contextual language), and ethics (socio/political/economic language)—should be foundations for the “matrix of total sacramental rituality” and explains how the matrix can be built, through which the community of faith may experience and live out the “transformative prophetic dimension of Christian liturgical praxis in the world” (143).

Throughout the book, Junker rightly emphasizes the significance of the “concreteness of political consciousness” in the particular socio-cultural, economic context and suggests that interdisciplinary studies with social sciences, such as sociology, anthropology, political science, economics, and so forth, should be used as “critical and analytical tools” for “a responsible theological discernment” (81). For the readers in North America, such a practical theological approach to the liturgical study is insightful. Yet, it is their responsibility to critically analyze their *Sitz im Leben*, since the book does not provide them with concrete assessment of the North American context for prophetic liturgy. It would have been more reader-friendly if Junker had elaborated such confusing terms as “militant Christian praxis” (xxiii), “unconditional life” (53), “a ‘prophetic delay’ and ‘non-identical repetition’” (99), and “grace . . . nurtured by praxis.” In addition, some of the descriptive statements in the book imply serious debatable issues. For example, Junker simply states that “Rituals have the power of transformation” (110). This statement is, however, disputable because not every practice of rituals has the power of transformation but rather some have the power of maintaining the status quo.

Despite these concerns and notions, this book seems to be a good resource for teaching fundamental courses in liturgics, for it not only provides the readers with rudimental knowledge about the theological concept of Christian liturgy based on biblical and historical information but also challenges them to stretch the understanding of Christian liturgy from the practical theological perspective. Most of all, the book encourages readers to practice Christian worship as a prophetic praxis for the transformation within and beyond the Christian community.

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