

Albert Gerhards and Benedikt Kranemann, translated by Linda M. Maloney. *Introduction to the Study of Liturgy*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, A Pueblo Book, 2017. 400 pages. \$44.95.

The modest title of this book may mislead the reader. “Introduction” is an understatement; a better description would be a “foundational text” for the field of liturgical studies. This ascription was offered first by contemporary German colleagues, and now, thanks to Linda Maloney’s deft translation, is seconded by English-speaking liturgical scholars. The breadth of this book is best rendered in the authors’ introduction: “The forms of faith expression that are the object of scholarly interest include the whole spectrum of linguistic and nonlinguistic liturgical sign-actions throughout history and in the present, in various confessions and cultures” (xiii).

The book’s primary reading audience will be those charged with the task of teaching liturgics in academic settings, particularly those interested in historical developments and new patterns of interpretation. The extensive bibliography and the concise definitions of terms such as liturgical theology and ritual make this a valuable textbook. The inclusion of the cultural and human sciences in practical-theological liturgics is welcomed as part of the lived human experience. The goal of this interdisciplinarity of linguistics, sociology, semiotics, and psychoanalytic considerations of worship as an action-field is to reflect on tradition “transmitted experiences” and situational “empirically perceivable and describable experiences” for the sake of the continuing reformation of worship (71). Since the pastoral practice of liturgy holds a central place, this book also belongs in the hands of a pastor/scholar of a worshiping community.

The authors are quick to point to the “confessional limitations” of a Roman Catholic German perspective, and their citations favor contemporary German liturgical scholars, yet their work serves as a witness to the ecumenical liturgical life that is shared in many faith communities. The range of their attention can be seen in this partial listing: Christology, liturgical space, church music, the dimension of memory in worship, theological structures of Jewish-Christian methods of prayer. Of note for *Homiletic* readers is the material on the role of scripture in worship: “The liturgy recalls the biblical history of salvation, but not as something in the past; it does not read the text simply as an ancient and venerable record. Rather, the proclamation of the word in its many forms is subject to the demand that what is proclaimed from Scripture has a present-day character and is bound up with the hope of a future consummation” (249).

The book opens with the notion of liturgy as the history of an idea and moves to the recovery of its ritual dimensions in the post-Vatican II context of faith communities. The clarity of this history of the developments of the study of liturgy can also illuminate current shifts in seminary curriculum and faculty positions. The narrative sketch of the Roman Liturgy could easily serve as a teaching model for other traditions to locate their own story in the flow. It is also helpful in overcoming an inclination to misappropriate Jewish/Christian origins or overlook significant contributions of the medieval church in the formation of the Reformation.

One case in point is the account of the two Benedictines, Paolo Giustiniani and Vincenzo Quirini, authors of *Libellus ad Leonem X*, 1513. Their primary goal was Christian education of the congregation. To achieve this would require better preaching, and that requires better biblical and theological training for clergy. One solution: Pope Leo X should open the Vatican libraries to all believers, and have the scriptures translated into the vernacular. Liturgy would then become a force of moral reform and ethical life expressed as doxology. “The idea of modernity

that speaks throughout the *Libellus* lies in the discovery of the significance of the word, behind the phonetic and syntactical structures of language” (132).

It is the theology of the liturgy that works as a lodestone, drawing the separate elements toward the book’s center. Liturgy as assembly in the presence of God is one of the critical principles that can be traced from the early church to its recovered significance in Vatican II and beyond. The anthropological perspective is outlined; this is a gathering of humans for particular purposes, with distinct purposes, forms, and the use of established symbols and actions (170). Theology is partnered with anthropology in this analysis. But God is the “gatherer” and Christ is both agent and subject of the transformative encounter: “The liturgical assembly neither exists for itself nor is concentrated on itself; it is directed to God, who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ” (175).

The section on pneumatology begins with a confession. Western theology suffers from a long-term failure to recognize the work of the Holy Spirit in liturgy, the work of the people. The authors offer a corrective: “And yet prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit is one of the elementary aspects of every liturgy: pneumatology is an essential foundation of liturgical theology” (204). This theological consideration of liturgy as Spirit-event leads to an examination of the practice of doxology, epiclesis, invocation, anointing, and the laying on of hands. The congregational “Amen” is seen as the people’s affirmation of the epiclesis, perhaps better recorded as “Yes!!” to the priest’s calling on the Holy Spirit (207). The theological attention they pay to the significance of sign-actions such as the laying on of hands can be read in the following: “This can on the one hand indicate the transfer of power; on the other hand, both anthropologically and theologically, it can indicate care, protection, healing, and encouragement but also taking possession or identification” (210). Here then is a sign-act that effectively communicates both the Holy and the human.

To conclude, this is a too-brief introduction to *Introduction to the Study of Liturgy* that ends with an invitation: take up and read.

Heather Murray Elkins, Drew Theological School, Madison, NJ