

James White. *Introduction to Christian Worship*. Fourth Edition. Edited by L. Edward Phillips. Nashville: Abingdon, 2023. 378 pages. \$41.99.

Since the publication of the first edition in 1980, James White's *Introduction to Christian Worship* has become a classic, whether for practitioner, celebrant, teacher, or student of worship. *Introduction* offers a comprehensive overview of key aspects concerning worship, such as meaning of worship, theology of baptism and eucharist, liturgical time and space, sacraments and sacramentality, liturgical arts, music, architecture, daily prayer, and liturgical books. It is ecumenical in scope, and it is didactic in tone and style of writing. Now, the fourth edition of this classic manual includes welcomed updates and stylistic revisions.

The *raison d'être* for this edition is clearly stated in the preface: the fourth edition seeks to address significant changes that the world of worship practice and scholarship has witnessed since the previous edition published in 2001. All mainline Christian churches have revised and published new liturgical books in the past two decades, thereby changing the way people worship. A significant change occurred when the COVID-19 pandemic introduced a drastic shift in the use and meaning of technology in worship. Scholars of liturgy have gained significant awareness and sensitivity toward pluralistic culture and history of communities of worship around the globe. But, as the general editor Edward Phillips states in the preface, the true spirit of publishing a new edition lies not so much in the need to add new content but in following, therefore honoring, White's own rigorous commitment to continuously revising and expanding his own scholarship in response to the changing world.

Thus, the editor and the contributors, some of whom are White's students, kept most of the text from the older editions and, at times, wrote entirely new sections. Whether for readers who are familiar with the previous editions or for whom the fourth edition is their first encounter with White's *Introduction*, this edition features many didactical benefits. It includes boldface type for key words and liturgical documents that teachers, students, and ministers of worship should know. Readers can quickly browse and access the topics that interest them. The book also includes diagrams, charts, and tables to visually showcase the information. These features are especially helpful for making comparisons between historical periods or understanding how different denominations relate to one another. Each chapter provides a historical overview of the given topic from early Christianity to Reformation and modern. The book is an excellent source for teaching.

Reading any written text is an encounter with the author who is behind the text. Readers of White's *Introduction* will encounter an author who possessed an enormous breadth of knowledge and who presents it in a lively and accessible language that would appeal to anyone. Readers will find that they can almost hear White's voice throughout the book. For example, while explaining that the word "cult," from the Latin *colere*, indicates a relational responsibility, White shifts to describe feeding and watering his chickens and weeding the garden, without which he would not have eggs and vegetables (13). Readers will be delightfully caught off guard by White in this way throughout the book.

Being caught off guard is not always as welcomed, however. Although the editor clearly states that entirely new texts were written by the contributors, it is nevertheless jarring when, for example, the reader is immersed in thinking with White about early Christian church architecture and suddenly they read in the next paragraph about COVID-19 and online worship, which is obviously an added text by a contributor.

A new chapter titled, “Christian Worship in Global Context” is written by Deok-Weon Ahn, who suggests seven proposals for how one might think about worship in consideration for the younger, culturally pluralistic ecclesial bodies around the globe. It is an important chapter, not because it encapsulates worship practices of the non-west in its entirety, but because it offers concrete methodological approaches for recognizing and embracing worship in the global church. Ending the book with this chapter will entice a reader inclined to creative imagination to ask: Could there be a textbook of this sort that places global contexts as the departure point rather than the current dominant model of expansion narrative that sees worship originating in the west and being received by the non-west? Perhaps a book of that nature will not be a fifth edition of *Introduction*, but like any good teacher, the fourth edition, with the added content, could inspire the future generation of scholars to imagine the next step forward.

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