

of Rome. Paul Gunter explores the more diverse situation of the manuscript era, during most of which there was no one book that contained everything needed for the celebration of Mass – different participants had their own books.

The separation of the Lectionary from the Sacramentary in 1970 returned to an earlier situation, but a contrary trend was also at work, as is apparent in a fascinating contribution by Sven Leo Conrad. He shows how a modern collectivist tendency influenced the revision of the opening rites of Mass. From the earliest records, such as the *Ordo Romanus Primus*, it is clear that more than one thing would happen at a time – the priest would pray silently while the choir would sing, for instance. However, the practice also grew of the priest repeating what the choir sang, but quietly, with the aid of his *Missale Romanum*. The 1970 remodelling further diminished the distinction of roles by abolishing the celebrant's mumblings, and making him do what everybody else was doing. This had a disastrous effect on the Church's musical heritage, obliging the celebrant to stand still and silent for minutes on end while the choir executed a polyphonic or baroque Mass-setting. The alternative was to abandon that heritage entirely, as happened in many places. William Mahrt's contribution to this book describes that process, offering advice and justification for reversing it. His article can serve as a useful introduction to his much fuller treatment in *The Musical Shape of the Liturgy* (2012).

The long process of collectivisation that this book records led also to the rise in popularity of the word 'liturgy', which was barely used of the Western Christian rites before the twentieth century. Previously, each participant was understood to have a distinct liturgy, like Zacharias in *Luke* 1:23 or Christ himself in *Hebrews* 8:6. Now we are all encouraged to take part in the one 'liturgy', and pressure arises against any distinction of roles, for instance between clergy and laity or between men and women.

Any liturgical book is only a rough guide to what actually happens in church. Vernacularisation has made it much easier for celebrants to change the text, and many of them do, not only priests but bishops and cardinals, sometimes well, often badly. Now that we have electronic text to supplement the printed page, and perhaps eventually to supplant it, the era of Wikiliturgy has begun. Already, in the final stages of preparation of the new official translation, many variant texts were circulating on the web. Electronic communication could be used to share ideas that raise the standard of liturgical performance.

Pope Ratzinger has often insisted that it is a mistake to entrust the liturgy to a few powerful hands. It needs to grow slowly and naturally. Perhaps the internet is beginning to provide a soil for it to do so.

BRUCE HARBERT

APPROACHING GOD: BETWEEN PHENOMENOLOGY AND THEOLOGY by Patrick Masterson, *Bloomsbury*, New York and London, 2013, pp. 204, £19.99, pbk

'The title ... is ambiguous. Do we approach God or does God approach us?' (p. 1) One or the other, both, or neither? For Masterson, the answer is both: 'In the case of metaphysics, it seems clear that it is a case of us approaching God through natural reason exploring the ultimate metaphysical implication of our affirmation of being. Likewise, it seems clear, that in theology we have a case of God approaching us through the Revelation of his love for us' (p. 117). Too quickly read, that may mislead. In both we seek what is true using our natural

reason; in the former, the truth we seek is within the limits of natural reason; in the latter we ask of the meaning of what we believe to have been revealed but which we cannot discover by natural reason.

Masterson's philosophy, his 'metaphysical enquiry' (p. 34), is concerned primarily to clarify the mind-independent character of what is known: 'Our primary awareness of anything is an intuition of its independent being, an intuition expressed in the concept 'being' and affirmed in the judgement 'this exists' (p. 34). Some phenomenological approaches 'bracket' the independent existence of what is seen or thought; they do not, certainly need not, affirm the non-existence of the object of thought as being distinct from the thought but put the question, at least temporarily, aside.

So, for example, we can and usually do, understand and use the number expressed by the numeral 0 without asking whether or not that number exists other than as an object of thought. Socrates in *The Meno* did not draw a square in the sand; he drew a diagram that led to boy to know what they were talking about. A square cannot be drawn; it is the object of understanding. Plato's later question – and Frege's – was in what respect does a triangle exist independently of being thought. Some phenomenologists have inclined not only to 'bracket' the question of mind-independent existence but to deny such existence. Others hold that the reality of the other person is given in the meeting itself. That is evidently ambiguous. Does it mean that the other's reality *depends* on being met or that the person meeting at once recognizes the *independent* reality of the other. Marion, whose work Masterson engages, in his *God without Being*, does not deny the mind-independent existence of God: 'Under (that) title . . . we do not mean to insinuate that God is not, or that God is not truly God'. And yet, 'God saves the gift precisely in as much as he is not, and does not have to be' (pp. 2 and 3). For Marion the idea 'Being' is a misleading distraction. Here is the crux of Masterson's argument. For Masterson when one approaches God in prayer and ritual – the basic and universal religious actions – the object that is envisaged and prayed to (in whatever manner prayer and ritual occur) is other than the prayer; nor is that object thought to be constituted by the prayer although the idea of the object is so constituted. It is obvious that the one prayed to is present in thought because prayed to; God depends on us not to be, but to be present to us. Similarly, a spider is seen by me only if I see it; to be seen the spider depends on something seeing it. Those who pray bring God to mind; they would cease to pray were they to be convinced that the God to whom they prayed depended on them to be. 'Prayer calls to this Other by which conscious feeling is affected and this Other which affects it is apperceived as the source of the call to which prayer responds' (p. 14 referring to Ricoeur).

That God, the one prayed to, exists, is in prayer taken to be true; central to Masterson's enquiry is whether or not it is true. For all could be illusion. Judgements may be right or wrong, may reveal what is true or deceive. In the Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions, and not in them alone, the philosophical question as to God's existence has arisen in thinkers who lived among people who already believed and who themselves believed. Avicenna (*ibn Sīnā*) whose *Metaphysics* concerns the existence and nature of the Necessary Existent and how contingent things emanate from it, opens his work with the epigraph: 'In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Blessing be upon his prophet Muḥammad and on all his descendants'. The metaphysical tradition in which Masterson writes and which he develops in his second chapter has emerged in fact, if not necessarily, among believers who have tried to discover what in their belief can be known. Christian theology enquires into what cannot be known but is believed: that God exists can be known; that God is a Trinity cannot be; that Jesus was a Jew who lived in Palestine can be *known*, that he was the Word cannot be; that God created the universe can be known; that He is love perhaps

cannot be. Theology, then, is the effort to understand what one holds by faith. What faith is is itself a theological question but one believes before one asks what faith is. The questions, (for the believer) will I continue to be believe?, and (for the unbeliever) will I believe?, are not themselves theological questions.

Here Masterson's deliberately ambiguous title becomes urgent. One cannot that Christ was the Word made flesh for one cannot have sufficient evidence to affirm that judgement. So familiar is it – or, perhaps, so familiar used it to be – in Western culture that its utterly extraordinary, intrinsically unlikely, indeed, almost absurd character became almost unnoticed. '*Credo quia impossibile*' may be mistaken but deserves reflection. Why would anyone believe it? To one who does believe the question as to why they do so can, and sometimes does, arise. The answer must be that it is revealed not simply to others in the past but to oneself. But notice that acceptance of revealed faith requires either the implicit orientation towards, or explicit natural reasonable judgement that affirms, the existence of God, and so Masterson's 'metaphysical approach unfolds as an enquiry into the nature of being . . . it seeks to determine the objective ontological structure of finite being, to establish its created dependence on God identified as infinite being, and to develop an account of their coexistence . . . a comprehensive discussion of creation cannot bracket out or ignore these metaphysical assertions . . .' (p. 160). The third chapter, 'Theology' (pp. 69–91) is the heart of the book. It brings together the implicit orientation, that is made explicit and examined in, but not invented by, any, philosophical approach; the attempt to say what God is in so far as God can be naturally known; the revelation that goes beyond what is naturally known; and the attempt to go some way towards greater understanding of that revelation.

In the Conclusions (pp. 159–177) Masterson expresses an unusual – I think correct – judgement that warrants careful reflection: '... natural reason is able to understand the meaning of what is adhered to as true by faith... Faith does not disclose a new dimension of meaning which is inaccessible to the non-believer... Faith involves an assent to the truth of what without it one can understand but not assented to' (p. 176). Put more crudely, a non-believer may read and understand a treatise on the Trinity or on the Incarnate Word without believing it. For this there is a simple but not immediately obvious reason: such treatises, however illuminating, do not yield an understanding of the Trinity or of the Incarnate Word; they yield, or move towards, the best that humans can do. At the end of his life St Thomas is reported to have said that what he had written was straw compared with what had now been revealed to him. (p. 173 n.15) Similarly, the English mystic: 'By love is he gotten and holden but by thought never'.

Approaching God is eminently worth reading.

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