

Joris Geldhof. *Liturgy and Secularism: Beyond the Divide*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press Academic, 2018. 158 pages. \$29.95.

In *Liturgy and Secularism: Beyond the Divide*, Joris Geldhof examines the relationship between Western Christian liturgy and secularism in conversation with Western philosophical, theological, and ecclesial sources, sketching a liturgical diptych in which the reader's gaze repeatedly shifts between the concepts of "the liturgy in the world" and "the world in the liturgy." The author's primary goals are to: 1) examine the relationship between the liturgy and secular culture; 2) widen our understanding of the nature of the liturgy; and 3) to do so in an interdisciplinary and ecumenical manner that contributes to ongoing liturgical discourse. In keeping with the structure of a diptych, throughout the work Geldhof intentionally holds in tandem what he argues are the too frequently opposed concepts of liturgy and secular culture, and he presents a non-oppositional vision of liturgy and secularism in which liturgy and secular culture are distinct yet interconnected.

The first section, "Positioning the Liturgy in the World," examines the socio-cultural, political, and ideological secular context of the liturgy. In the first chapter, Geldhof lays out a theoretical foundation for engaging modernity and secularism, and he attempts to defuse perceived tensions between liturgy, modernity, and secularization. This is accomplished through a brief construction of a topography and chronography of liturgy that upsets an epistemological approach to liturgy. Here, Geldhof attempts to shift our gaze from the epistemological to the soteriological, a theme that he unfolds throughout book. This is accompanied by a shift away from the epistemological question of "What is the liturgy?" to the topographic question, "Where is the liturgy?" and the chronographic question, "When is the liturgy?" (13). He uses this soteriological emphasis to briefly examine the relationships between church and world, heaven and earth, cult and culture, and religion and politics. The second chapter examines the relationship between religion, ideology, and politics. He proposes that the liturgy is susceptible to ideology and has the potential to de-ideologize problematic secular discourse. In the third chapter, Geldhof examines the relationship between the sacred and the profane, reframing the conversation around salvation, reflecting his sustained soteriological emphasis. By reframing liturgy as holy and soteriological, Geldhof attempts to avoid language of the sacred which he argues inaccurately divides liturgy and secularism.

The second section, "Positioning the World in the Liturgy," examines the world through the lens of the liturgy, arguing that liturgy has something to contribute to secular culture. In the fourth chapter, he engages Schmemmann's and Congar's interpretations of secularism and argues that the eschatological dimensions of the liturgy result in the liturgy "inviting, embracing, and including" the world "in the grand sanctifying dynamic which is rooted in God's revelation and redemption" (95). The fifth chapter engages key voices from the twentieth-century European liturgical movement in order to support Geldhof's claims and to show that the European liturgical movement's theology promoted liturgical solidarity with the world. The sixth chapter casts a liturgical vision in light of the decline in attendance at the Mass, and it ends with key suggestions for liturgical faithfulness.

The conclusion reiterates Geldhof's argument, "In other words, there is a severe incommensurability between liturgy and secularism, which is why it is so important that Christians in the West, but by extension everywhere, get beyond the divide between both. The divide between liturgy and secularism is a construction of secularist thinking not supported by a

thorough reflection about the liturgy itself” (149). He ends with a call for future work, “...liturgical theologians, incited by “an exuberant enthusiasm for the supernatural life,” are invited to develop a veritable metaphysics: not just an explanatory sacramental ontology, but an exploratory, profoundly soteriological, eschatological, and doxological Christian realism” (152).

The author’s primary goals, which were previously listed, can quite reasonably be said to have been achieved. The book is a bricolage of sorts comprised of both previously published essays and new content, and its primary conversation partners are scholarly. That being said, the sixth chapter and the conclusion provide brief but winsome practical suggestions for the liturgy that might have broader appeal to laity, clergy, and seminary students. Sources are predominantly limited to European and Euro-American voices. In pressing against a dominant European and Euro-American epistemological perspective focused on knowing and cognition, Geldhof’s pursuit of a more holistic soteriological perspective may be enhanced with engagement of non-Western sources and perspectives within non-Western liturgical movements, i.e. non-European and non-Euro-American.

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