

chapter of the book reviews the evidence for interpolations in the Corinthian correspondence (chapter 16).

While a methodological explanation of how Murphy-O'Connor approaches historical reconstruction (including determining 'Corinthian slogans') might have strengthened the volume, the collection, nevertheless, draws attention to key difficulties which remain unresolved in the interpretation of 1 Corinthians. Moreover, Murphy-O'Connor's careful attention to the text and the clarity of his writing demand attention.

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Paul F. Bradshaw, *Reconstructing Early Christian Worship* (London: SPCK, 2009), pp. viii + 151. £16.99.

At the 2008 meeting of the North American Academy of Liturgy, liturgical scholars celebrated the work of Paul Bradshaw, who has devoted his career to critical study of early Christian worship. The celebration included a litany with solemn verses outlining common assumptions about worship practices in the early centuries of the Christian church. In response to each verse came the repeated verdict that Bradshaw has been reciting for decades: 'We just don't know'.

Bradshaw's scepticism is not simply contrarian. From his own careful assessment of the sources, he raises fresh questions about the ways in which historical scholars have generalised early Christian practice, and therefore challenges the ways in which contemporary liturgical practitioners should shape worship. This book continues in that trajectory.

Reconstructing Early Christian Worship has three sections, each with three chapters. The three major sections address eucharist, baptism and prayer, and the subsections take on such major issues as whether Jesus instituted the eucharist at the Last Supper (chapter 1), how to understand the role of the creed at baptism (chapter 5), and how penitential prayer emerged in the early centuries (chapter 9). In each case, Bradshaw lays out the common consensus which developed among twentieth-century scholars, and then proceeds to poke holes in it, suggesting that there is far less uniformity than previously assumed.

For instance, chapter 3 traces what can be known about patterns of eucharistic praying prior to the fourth century. Bradshaw notes that 'scholarly consensus that emerged during the course of the twentieth century was that Christian Eucharistic prayers had developed out of the Jewish grace after

meals, the *Birkat ha-mazon*' (p. 38). But he points out that this Jewish text could not have existed in definitive form at the time that early Christians were developing their patterns of prayer, so it is better to see earliest eucharistic praying not as adaptation of existing prayer texts, but as a 'natural development within a Jewish-Christian milieu' (p. 44).

In the same chapter, he undermines the twentieth-century consensus that the so-called *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus represented the official liturgy of Rome in the early third century, and is therefore one of the earliest eucharistic prayers which should shape contemporary practice. Summarising the research which he presented (along with Maxwell Johnson and L. Edward Phillips) in scholarly commentary on this text, Bradshaw here analyses the *Apostolic Tradition* as a composite text with elements from the second through fourth centuries, which probably does not represent the practice of any single community at all. This historical analysis leads Bradshaw to the following conclusion:

[T]he quest for the earliest pattern of Eucharistic praying reveals diversity more than commonalities, and the existence of prayers that for a considerable period of time were much less developed and explicit as to their Eucharistic theology than were the beliefs of those who used them and preached about them. Thus they provide less than satisfactory models for modern liturgical compilers to imitate than do the more fully formed examples from later centuries (p. 52).

In later chapters, Bradshaw offers pungent and persuasive critiques of other assumptions, including the 'conventional picture' that early catechumens always remained in public worship during the reading and exposition of scripture (p. 55); a 'single, unified picture of a liturgical practice . . . of baptismal anointing in early Christianity' (p. 85); and the classification of 'cathedral' and 'monastic' patterns as the two basic forms of daily prayer in the first four centuries (p. 101).

This book will delight readers with interests in early church history, liturgical theology and practice. Bradshaw is uncompromising in his scholarly precision and presents the fruits of his labour with clarity and good humour. Here is the best kind of liturgical scholarship: engaging, provocative, speaking to both academy and church and, through it all, seeking to honour the God who overturns all of our conventional assumptions.

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