

The postcommunion thanksgiving occupies Chapter VII with a detailed analysis of the simple rite of consuming the gifts that developed into a ritual with concomitant hymnody and action to accompany it. Taft then presents Excursus III regarding the Skeuphylakion (sacristy building) and processions in Hagia Sophia in order to contextualize the return of the gifts as well as the recession. He presents the original dismissal and recession in Chapter VIII and then deals with the Prayers behind the ambo (opisthambonos) in two chapters addressing the Constantinopolitan tradition as well as the Byzantine liturgical practices on the periphery of the Byzantine world. He analyzes the Antidoron ritual (the distribution of the blessed bread that is non-eucharistic) at the end of the liturgy in Chapter XI. He then concludes this work with two chapters: Chapter XII presents a brief analysis of the consummation of the gifts, in some places even by incineration, and Chapter XIII concludes the work with a basic analysis of the actual final rites in current vigor.

This sixth volume in Taft's series on the History of the Liturgy of John Chrysostom contains a treasure trove of facts and detailed analysis. This research work will serve as the basis for scholarly endeavors for years to come as this encyclopedic volume serves as a valuable resource. Taft's study certainly impacts the scholarly world, but it also sets the stage for informed pastoral decisions taken on ecclesial levels. A lengthy volume on a relatively small part of the liturgy may seem ironic, but as Taft observes: "Liturgies, like lives, do not like to end" (565).

*The Catholic University of America  
Washington, DC*

*Mark M. Morozowich*

*Immersed in the Life of God: The Healing Resources of the Christian Faith: Essays in Honor of William J. Abraham.* Edited by Paul Gavrilyuk, Douglas Koskela & Jason Vickers. Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing 2008. Pages, xi + 209. Paper, \$30.00. ISBN: 978-0-8028-6396-6.

This festschrift largely coheres around its honoree's diagnosis and healing protocol for what one contributor representatively avers is the "desperate" situation of late-modern Christianity (44), a "crisis of authority," in the words of another (123), afflicting the churches, along with a methodological malaise pervading seminary education. In the course of his theological career William Abraham coined a term, "the canonical heritage of the church," to express the full range of the means of grace available to correct the "narrow and inadequate piety" (20) afflicting the circles of Christians in which he, a professor at Southern Methodist University, has moved and taught.

## Book Reviews

The majority of the contributors join Abraham's effort at delivering the notion of canon from its reduction to biblical lists, warrants, and rationalizations to entailing "theological ideas, sainted exemplars, moral practices, sacred objects," along with Scripture, to comprise the "standard by which the content of what a community believes or how its members behave is measured . . . with catholic scope" (53). Jason Vickers's lead essay lays out what he describes as the "spiritually disastrous" forms of Christian piety that have resulted from a narrow, individualistic, and positivist theology and practice of conversion based on "a severe truncating of no fewer than five of the loci of systematic theology" (5): sin, human nature, atonement, salvation, and the Holy Spirit. Vickers's and several of the ensuing contributors reflect the growing evangelical-Protestant interest in patristic sources and this, more specifically for many of them, as a return to the course set by John Wesley. The ensuing six essays (including Orthodox and Roman Catholic contributions) elaborate, at times with keen insights and helpful syntheses, on the shape Christian lives centered on worship take through such practices as sacramental initiation, biblical interpretation and application, Eucharist and other rites, and growth in virtues.

Two chapters should be of particular interest to those engaged in liturgical theology. With several of the other contributors only sketching the importance of various aspects of liturgy (often with seeming unfamiliarity with even key authors in the field), Geoffrey Wainwright provides solid information and commentary that fill liturgical and ecumenical gaps in the overall book. Starting from Wesleyan passages on the means of grace Wainwright "selectively" constructs a "liturgical paradigm for faithful cooperation with the healing work of God in all its salvific aspects: a) the reading, hearing, exposition, and absorption of Scripture: b) the prayer of the congregation; c) the exercise of mutual discipline, help and encouragement; d) the celebration of the Eucharist, or the Lord's Supper" (74).

Ellen Charry likewise answers her fellow-contributors' repeated assertions of Christianity as a social, and therefore ritualized, undertaking by producing a remarkably lithe yet loaded explanation of the nature and value of public ceremonies for humanity in general and then specifically, of liturgy and sacraments for the Church. "Christian ceremonies, because they march to a different drummer, do things that civic ones cannot. They make people living members of the life and work of God and they restore persons and relationships that suffer damage to that identity and the high calling that abiding in communion with God establishes." No me-and-Jesus religion here; rather, "the whole point of the Christian enterprise is to heal a perishing creation" (92). Charry analyzes ceremonies as pedagogical, confessional, consecratory, and covenantal.

The last three essays in the collection break from the preceding ones' coherent, thematic attending to the ecclesial, comprehensive notion of

canon as means of grace and deification. Their common thread seems more along the lines of fundamental theology, questioning the conditions and resources of a Church now situated in a culture ambivalent, at best, about confessing faith in anything, struggling with universal human rights, and needing an adequate “ontology of outrage” (188). May mutual sharing of healing resources for Church and world continue to grow as our current century unfolds.

*Boston College*  
*Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts*

*Bruce T. Morrill S.J.*

*Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries.* By Everett Ferguson. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmanns 2009. Pages, xxii + 953. Cloth, \$60.00. ISBN: 978-0-8028-2748-7.

Everett Ferguson’s *magnum opus* is a remarkable achievement, the fruit of many years of labor, providing what will surely become a standard reference work on the early rites and theology of Christian initiation for some time to come. And there is certainly a great deal to commend it as such. It is a veritable encyclopedia of knowledge treating in detail almost every reference to baptism and/or ritual washings all the way from Greco-Roman paganism through Judaism through the New Testament and patristic period in East and West all the way up to, and including, the *Gelasian Sacramentary* and *Ordo Romanus XI* in Rome and Gaul in the West in the early Middle Ages and the earliest Byzantine manuscript *Barberini Greek 336* for the Christian East in the same time period. In addition, baptismal architecture is treated with detailed description and with clear photographs of fonts provided from various locations both in East and West.

The book is organized into seven major parts: Part One — Antecedents to Christian Initiation, which covers the Greco-Roman context, Greek baptismal vocabulary, Judaism, and John the Baptist; Part Two — Baptism in the New Testament; Part Three — The Second Century, which includes not only the expected *Didache*, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Clement of Alexandria, but also Pseudepigraphal and Apocryphal writings, the Apostolic Fathers, Marcionites, and other Apologists; Part Four — The Third Century, including sections on the Re-baptism controversy in North Africa and Rome and on the origins and development of infant baptism; Part Five — The Fourth Century, is organized according to ecclesiastical geography, including sections on the church orders and “The Delay of Baptism: Sickbed Baptism, Believers’ Baptism, and Infant Baptism”; Part Six — The Fifth Century, continues in the same manner, beginning with Cyril of Alexandria in Egypt and culminating with Augustine of Hippo; Part Seven — Baptisteries; and, finally, a conclusion that draws the

## Book Reviews



#### Copyright and Use:

**As an ATLAS user, you may print, download, or send articles for individual use according to fair use as defined by U.S. and international copyright law and as otherwise authorized under your respective ATLAS subscriber agreement.**

**No content may be copied or emailed to multiple sites or publicly posted without the copyright holder(s)' express written permission. Any use, decompiling, reproduction, or distribution of this journal in excess of fair use provisions may be a violation of copyright law.**

This journal is made available to you through the ATLAS collection with permission from the copyright holder(s). The copyright holder for an entire issue of a journal typically is the journal owner, who also may own the copyright in each article. However, for certain articles, the author of the article may maintain the copyright in the article. Please contact the copyright holder(s) to request permission to use an article or specific work for any use not covered by the fair use provisions of the copyright laws or covered by your respective ATLAS subscriber agreement. For information regarding the copyright holder(s), please refer to the copyright information in the journal, if available, or contact ATLA to request contact information for the copyright holder(s).

#### About ATLAS:

The ATLA Serials (ATLAS®) collection contains electronic versions of previously published religion and theology journals reproduced with permission. The ATLAS collection is owned and managed by the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) and received initial funding from Lilly Endowment Inc.

The design and final form of this electronic document is the property of the American Theological Library Association.