

R.'s prophetic and biblically-grounded argument contains cogent evidence and examples, and exhibits admirable knowledge of economic theory (which he explains lucidly). Yet he does not fully appreciate that the market economy has lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty in, for example, Eastern and Southeastern Asia. Nonetheless R. provides a compelling challenge to Christians to understand their religion's complicity in sustaining a global economic system that does not "lift all boats." His book goes a long way toward explaining how and why this is the case, including his crucial and often overlooked insight that power and class are deeper problems than economic inequality. Yet he leaves other intriguing questions unanswered, such as how the deleterious ways of economics influence Christian theology and belief, and how economics functions akin to theology and belief in a transcendent reality. R.'s book will be useful in graduate and advanced undergraduate courses and should be read by all who want to understand the relationship between faith, theology, and economics.

Saint Joseph's University, Philadelphia

GERALD J. BEYER

THE MYTHOLOGICAL TRADITIONS OF LITURGICAL DRAMA: THE EUCHARIST AS THEATER. By Christine Schnusenberg. New York: Paulist, 2010. Pp. xx + 359. \$44.95.

Charles Magnin coined the expression "liturgical drama" (or *drame liturgique*) during a course on the origins of modern theater given at the Sorbonne during the academic year 1834–1835. Magnin's course galvanized the incipient community of Parisian medievalists and literary scholars. French drama, he argued, did not originate *ex nihilo* during the 14th century, as his predecessors had maintained, but developed from earlier forms of drama born within, and borne by, the ritual of the medieval church. Thus the development of modern drama, he argued, had followed a path similar to that of ancient, classical drama; each had progressed from "ecclesiastical" to "aristocratic" to "popular."

In the first two parts of her book Schnusenberg has now taken a further step by demonstrating that the origins of liturgical drama are found within the mythological traditions of the ancient Near East, beginning with the royal theaters of Egypt, Babylon, and Syria, rather than the usual starting point of Greece or Rome. The title of S.'s concluding chapter (12) says it all: "In the Beginning There Was Theater"; she contends that theater was worship and worship was theater in which participants enacted the mimetic repetition of the drama of cosmogonic myths. Building on the fundamental works of her mentors at the University of Chicago, Mircea Eliade and Paul Ricoeur, she argues that Christian theater was embedded in the cosmogony of the Christ-event and developed out of the same mimetic cosmogonic stream as other, more ancient manifestations of theater. Exploring the polemics of the patristic age against the Roman theater, she demonstrates that the subsequent developments of Western liturgical drama were a continuation of the Roman theater up to the ninth century.

For students of Christian theology and liturgy, S.'s part 3 will be of particular interest, as she explores the incarnation as a cosmogonic event, placing developments in the Christian celebration of the Eucharist against the backdrop of pagan Roman theater. According to S., the Last Supper, which originally took place in the context of Jewish domestic worship, resulted later through a process of symbiosis, conflict, and transformation into majestic liturgical dramas that represented a theater of God. Thus the cultural context of the *theatrum Romanum*, which had expressed Roman culture in general, later provided the cosmogonic universal drama of Jesus Christ and the subsequent development of the theater of the church. The drama of the Last Supper, with its origins in the Jewish Passover, was extended beyond that original base by the similar conflict that the Christ faced with Jerusalem and Rome, symbolized by the dramatic trial of Jesus first before Caiaphas (representing Judaism) and later before Pontius Pilate (representing Roman pagan culture). With the expansion of the religious context from Judaism to the imperial stage of Rome, the Christ-event then could take on cosmological proportions. The Church Fathers, so critical of Christians who visited the Roman theater because of the sacrifices made to pagan gods, found themselves in a dilemma that they, like their pagan counterparts, were involved in mimetic activity, now with Jesus at the center of the drama. From the humble origins of imitating the Last Supper grew the sumptuous liturgies of Syria, Alexandria, Constantinople, Gaul, and Spain, until it finally blossomed in the Carolingian period under the direction of Amalarius of Metz. According to S., the theater of God created by the Fathers of the early church was in direct continuity with the *theatrum Romanum* from which they hoped to distance the early church. The key for the continuity, according to S., was the *plot-muthos* of each religion with its respective cosmological Sitz im Leben that served as the common denominator, the springboard, and the matrix of the various theaters (in Egypt, Babylon, Hattusa, Canaan-Ugarit, ancient Israel, ancient Syria, Greece, Alexandria, and Rome). But the Christian liturgical drama that developed in the Middle Ages belonged to a new double structure to the degree that it represented a New Passover that overlaid the Jewish Passover. Thus, for example, the appearance in the Carolingian period of the *Quem quaeritis* tropes into the liturgy, which was already a cosmogonic drama, represents a play within a play.

This scholarly, well-researched, and well-written book will be of great interest to liturgists and dramatists, cultural historians and anthropologists, biblicists and theologians, and those interested in comparative religions. Each of the three principal parts has a helpful and extensive selected bibliography. Two minor criticisms can be leveled against this masterful book: the absence of any indexes makes quick consultation difficult, and the insufficient number of images and diagrams to which the text refers leaves the reader somewhat perplexed.