



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

Walter Kasper, Die Liturgie der Kirche

Citation for published version:

Grumett, D 2011, 'Walter Kasper, Die Liturgie der Kirche', *Reviews in Religion and Theology*, vol. 18, no. 4, pp. 629-632. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9418.2011.00933.x>

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1111/j.1467-9418.2011.00933.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9418.2011.00933.x)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

Reviews in Religion and Theology

Publisher Rights Statement:

This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Grumett, D. (2011), Die Liturgie der Kirche [The Liturgy of the Church]– By Walter Kasper. *Reviews in Religion & Theology*, 18: 626-629, which has been published in final form at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-9418.2011.00933.x>. This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving.

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



Die Liturgie der Kirche [The Liturgy of the Church], Walter Kasper, Gesammelte Schriften [Collected Works] vol. 10, Herder, 2010 (ISBN 978-3-451-30610-5), 544 pp., €32

As President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity until last year, Cardinal Walter Kasper has been a leading ecumenical figure over the past decade. This seventh volume to be published in a projected 17-volume series of his collected works addresses a topic that is evidently key to ecumenical discussions and divisions. The texts assembled span a long period, from the *nachkonziliaren* ferment of the later 1960s through to the present, and include several previously unpublished writings, on which this review will focus. Also included are two pieces already published in English translation as *Sacrament of Unity* (Crossroad, 2005) and *Theology of Christian Marriage* (Seabury, 1980).

The collection opens with a new manifesto „Aspekte einer Theologie der Liturgie. Liturgie angesichts der Krise der Moderne – für eine neue liturgische Kultur“ [‘Aspects of a Theology of the Liturgy: Liturgy in View of the Modern Crisis – Towards a New Liturgical Culture’]. Liturgical renewal, Kasper argues persuasively, must be theologically grounded and pursued in critically constructive dialogue with the spirit of the times. Kasper opens his own dialogue by grounding liturgy in the theology of creation. All liturgy, he argues, is a Sabbath celebration in which a restless world is blessed by entering into the rest of God. But this has political implications. Contesting interpretations of the Exodus as about fundamentally political freedoms, Kasper presents Israel’s dispute with Pharaoh as a confrontation over freedom of worship and of belief. Israel could not rest on the Sabbath if they were enslaved and forced to labour. This point is lost if one assumes that the Passover (*Paschafest*) was instituted to commemorate the Exodus. Rather, the Passover continued existing patterns of nomadic family worship, formalising and historicising these within the contexts of the Exodus and later exiles in Assyria and Babylon (pp. 28–9). Thus is formed a typological understanding of history in which the identity of God’s people emerges from worship and in which freedom to worship and to believe are foundational. Hence the importance of recognising the historical character of liturgical development, in which memory (*Erinnerung*) and repetition (*Wiederholung*) are key. Only with these might Christians escape secularism, or in Kasper’s words „die babylonische Gefangenschaft der Gegenwart“ (‘the Babylonian Captivity of the present’) (p. 39).

Kasper proceeds to develop his reconception of the place of sacrifice in the liturgy sketched close to the end of *Sacrament of Unity*, implying that recent interpretations of the tradition have afforded this classic trope insufficient attention. Worship is rightly regarded as a sacrifice of thanks and praise, with Christ’s sacrifice of himself a literally crucial model for all human relationality. Present-day unease with the concept of sacrifice is manifested in society in widespread poverty and other unmet basic needs, which mirror a parallel liturgical unease displayed by a decline in kneeling, genuflection and adoration. Following creation and sacrifice, a third key image is that of „die beiden Tische“ (‘the two tables’) of Word and sacrament. Kasper draws a distinction between the congregation of the faithful (*congregatio fidelium*) and the sacramental community (*communio sanctorum*) that has considerable ecumenical and missionary import. All Christians should feel able to gather around the Word if not yet around the sacrament, in which Word is accompanied by sign and condensed into sign. Furthermore, newcomers may feed on the Word as did catechumens anciently, before departing for instruction. This is just one instance of a wider need to reassess the significance of past liturgy for the present. Kasper acknowledges the variety of beautiful rites still in use (Ambrosian in Milan and Mozarabic in Spain, as well as variations in Dominican and Carthusian friaries and monasteries) as legitimate inculturated forms, suggesting that the trend in recent decades towards a single liturgical blueprint worldwide will not be the final word on a unified liturgy (p. 69).

Some of these themes are reiterated in „Der Weg der eucharistischen Ekklesiologie in der katholischen Kirche“ (‘The path of eucharistic ecclesiology in the Catholic Church’). Kasper seeks to demonstrate the strong formative influence on this ecclesiology of the Parisian School of Russian Orthodox *émigrés* like Afanasieff and Zizioulas, despite also acknowledging the prior work of Henri de Lubac, especially *Corpus Mysticum*, which developed largely independent of that school (p. 318). Indeed, Kasper echoes de Lubac at many points, such as specific examples of liturgical practices and

interpretations, pointing to his wider implicit assimilation of de Lubac's ideas. Yet Kasper is clear that eucharistic ecclesiology remains a work in progress, recognising the need to broaden and deepen eucharistic worship as well as to press further the difficult questions surrounding the relationship between universal and local churches. This, he states, will require further reflection on initiation rites and the consequences of the asymmetry between the historic separation of confirmation from baptism in the West, and their preservation by the Orthodox as a single sacramental act.

De Lubac is present again in „Die Eucharistie: Zeichen und Symbol des Lebens“ (‘The eucharist: sign and symbol of life’), in which Kasper applies his idea of the four senses of scripture to scriptural interpretation of the Eucharist. Literally, the Eucharist as the shared meal of a concrete community contests the atomised dining frequent today. Allegorically, bread and wine reinterpret Old Testament views of sacrifice, while their transformation images personal spiritual transformation. A third ‘transsymbolic’ or tropological dimension points to how the Eucharist constitutes the Church and binds together local and universal churches, just as the bread and wine consist of numerous grains and grapes. Finally, the Eucharist’s eschatological dimension draws Christians and their communities beyond themselves into adoration and a vision of the entire cosmos transformed in Christ.

In a speech delivered to Lutherans in Ulm Minster, „Gottesdienst nach katholischem Verständnis“ (‘The Catholic understanding of worship’), Kasper demonstrates willingness to pursue theological debates across denominations. Reflecting on shifting Lutheran attitudes to the Eucharist, Kasper argues that Luther’s own objection to the Catholic understanding of the mass as sacrificial was that this amounted to a denial of the once-for-all sufficiency of Christ’s self-sacrifice on the Cross. Drawing on his own interpretation of sacrifice already discussed and placing this in the context of the modern rediscovery of Eucharist as memorial, which he describes as an ‘ecumenical sensation’ (p. 134), Kasper commends Lutheran and Reformed churches for their own revivals of eucharistic practice in recent decades. Kasper rightly recognises eucharistic renewal in many churches, finding in it great ecumenical hope for the future.

This collection reveals the willingness of a leading Catholic churchman to address pressing issues in his own tradition without losing ecumenical perspective. Kasper’s tone is judicious and measured, and it is unclear what changes to current liturgical practice he would himself propose if not speaking on behalf of an institution. Given the book’s subject, some readers might also be surprised to find little engagement with Anglicanism, despite Kasper’s appreciation of liturgical beauty, music and eucharistic ecclesiology and his well-known admiration for the Oxford Movement. Perhaps this omission is also for reasons of polity. On the other hand, there aren’t many Anglicans in Württemberg or Rome for him to worship with—at least, not yet.

David Grumett
University of Exeter