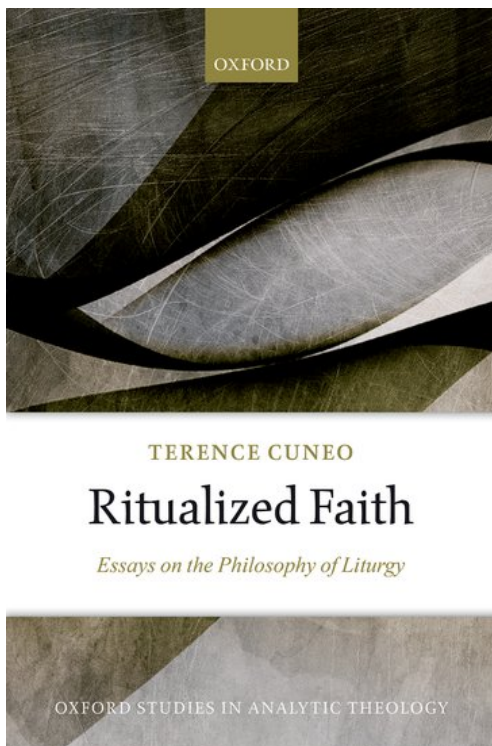


**Terence Cuneo, *Ritualized Faith: Essays on the Philosophy of Liturgy*. Oxford Studies in Analytic Theology. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016. ISBN 978-0-19-875775-7.**

*Reviewed by:*

*Father Stephen Sharman, PhD*



Dr Terence Cuneo is Marsh Professor of Intellectual and Moral Philosophy at the University of Vermont in the United States of America. His other publications include *Speech and Morality: On the Metaethical Implications of Speaking* and *The Normative Web: An Argument for Moral Realism*, and a number of essays on the theme of this book, the philosophy of liturgy. This volume contains a selection of his essays on the philosophy of liturgy to a total of eleven. These essays originally appeared in a number of scholarly publications such as *Theology Today*, *Faith and Philosophy*

and *Journal of Analytic Theology*. This volume appears in a series published by the Oxford University Press. The series is called Oxford Studies in Analytic Theology, which is described thus on the dust cover: “Analytic Theology utilizes the tools and methods of contemporary analytic philosophy for the purposes of constructive Christian theology, paying attention to the Christian tradition and the development of doctrine. This innovative series of studies showcases high quality, cutting edge research in this area, in monographs and symposia.”

The introduction sets the stage for the book and describes its methodology. Cuneo states that in his book he intends to “think philosophically about liturgy” (p. 3). This reviewer confesses that this is the first time that he has been asked to think of liturgy in this way. He is more familiar with other ways of thinking about liturgy such as those practised by authors such as Maximus, Germanos, Cabsilas and Fr Alexander Schmemmann. Cuneo is fond of Fr Alexander Schmemmann and refers to him twenty times in this book. It needs to be stressed that the liturgy which Terence Cuneo analyses is that of the Eastern Orthodox Church. He defends this choice in his introduction. He writes: “to state this explanation even more sharply, the chapters in this volume are mostly philosophical explorations of the liturgies of a specific Christian tradition, namely, the Christian East, and almost no one in professional philosophy works on the liturgies of the Christian East” (p. 1). Later in the introduction, he adds, “I take this approach not simply because these liturgies are most familiar to me but also because I believe that the best way to make progress on the topic of liturgy is to speak not of liturgies in the abstract but particular liturgies, offering thick descriptions of them and drawing out their implications” (p. 15). In the course of his book, he is successful in his task of describing and analysing his chosen liturgy. His focus on Orthodox Liturgy makes the book interesting for Orthodox Christian scholars, and those scholars who are interested in the study of Orthodox liturgy. One wonders what would have happened if Cuneo had applied his philosophical analytical tools to the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church both before and after the second Vatican Council or to the Book of Common Prayer liturgical tradition of the Anglican world.

The chapters in this book cover a wide range of themes. A list of the chapter titles suggests the depth of his analysis of liturgy: Love and Liturgy, Protesting Evil, Another Look at Divine Hiddenness, Liturgical Immersion, Liturgy and the Moral Life, If These Walls Could Only Speak: Icons as Vehicles of Divine Speech, The Significance of Liturgical Singing, Ritual Knowledge, Transforming the Self: On the Baptismal Rite, Rites of Remission and Entering Death, Living with Doubt. This reviewer found the chapters on the Sacraments of the Church to be particularly valuable as they increased and deepened his own knowledge of the theology of the Sacraments. In his chapters Cuneo provides interesting insights. Here is one example. In “Protesting Evil” (pages

37 to 51), he discusses the miracles of the feeding of the multitudes and the relationships of those miracles to the Eucharist (pages 38 to 39). He then argues, “that context is one in which the assembled eat in the shadow and recognition of vast evil” (p. 39). Here he is referring to the evil expressed in King Herod who had ordered the execution of John the Baptist at about the same time that the miracles of the multiplication of loaves took place. This is also the context of the Last Supper and the Institution of the Holy Eucharist which took place on the night in which Jesus was betrayed with the evil of that event hanging over the participants. This is also the context of the celebration of the Eucharist throughout the history of the Church in times of persecution such as the persecutions of the Church in the Roman Empire and the Soviet Union. The persecuted Church served the Divine Liturgy in the joy of their risen Lord with the threat of imprisonment, torture and death hanging over them. A second example appears in his chapter “Love and Liturgy” (pages 20 to 36) where he presents another important insight: “so, in what follows, I will narrow my focus and limit myself to a discussion of the ancient liturgies of the Eastern Orthodox Church, exploring the ways in which participation in these liturgies is a way to fulfil the second love commandment” (p. 20). He explores this theme thoroughly in this chapter and refers to the theme of liturgy and love in other places in his book. The Liturgy nourishes the love of its participants and grants to them a way of living in love. These are but two examples of the many insights which prompt the reader to think more deeply and philosophically about the liturgy. These insights add greatly to the value of the book.

As to the question, should one read this book? This reviewer thinks that Dr Cuneo’s book is worth careful reading and rereading. It is a book in which one will always find something more to stimulate philosophical thinking about the Liturgy of the Church. It is not an easy read but most certainly a rewarding one.

*About the reviewer:* Father Stephen Sharman is a priest at St. Nicholas parish in Narol, Manitoba. He received his PhD from the University of Wales Trinity Saint David in 2013. The title of his dissertation was *Visions of Light in the Writings of the Venerable Bede*.