O'MALLEY, John W., *Four Cultures of the West,* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2004): pp. 261. ISBN 0674014987. (Hardcover) $24.95.

I am inclined to describe this book as a "eureka experience." I use the term because John W. O'Malley seems fond of it (he uses it four times in the first quarter of the book, though, alas, from that point it disappears). A eureka experience is the joyful sensation one has at suddenly hitting upon something new and exciting. This was my experience in reading this book, as I hope it will be for other readers. It struck me as a new and refreshing way of reading the history of the Christian Western world.

The book provides interpretative categories for responding to the question that looms over its entire content (a question first posed by the brilliant, eccentric Latinist of the second-third century, Tertullian): "What does Athens have to do with Jerusalem?" By relating four cultures to Tertullian's question, O'Malley provides a road map through areas of Western history, with religion as the central highway. The author contents himself with identifying "four cultures," not ***the*** four cultures. Cultures, the author describes as "configurations of symbols, values, temperaments, patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving, and patterns of discourse" (p. 5). There is an introductory section offering a general discussion of all four under the rubric of "Athens and Jerusalem." This is followed by a separate section on each of the cultures. A final brief section invites the reader to think of culture in terms of her or his own experience.

Culture one is the ***Prophetic Culture***. It is the culture of protest, of reform. It is a Jeremiah for whom the Word of God is a fire burning inside that he cannot hold in. It is the culture that must speak out. It is about protest, decrying the present times, yet promising better times to come. Its language is the imperative. It cannot compromise or go to the negotiating table. This culture embraces such disparate figures as Tertullian, the monks of the desert, Pope Gregory VII and the monumental Gregorian reform, Martin Luther ("Here I stand. I can do no other"), William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolitionist Movement; Martin Luther King Jr. and his dream of a better future. Prophets are not easy people to live with; yet we need them. They shake us out of our complacency, our gradual-

ism, our tendency to put things off. They insist that we look at NOW and deal with it.

Culture two is the ***Academic Professional Culture***. Its methodology is that of the question, with one question inevitably leading to another. The style of this culture is analytical and logical. Its quest to understand is relentless. Highest honor is given to sound argument. Plato and Aristotle are its bright luminaries and the medieval universities its "monumental turning point." Scholasticism found a home in culture two. In fact, this culture represents the triumph of the philosophers and the scientists: Descartes, Galileo, Kant, Freud, Einstein, etc. "To probe beyond the status quo is the essence of culture two and the source and expression of its dynamism. Why, otherwise, do lectures always end the same way: 'Are there any questions?'" (p. 125).

Culture three is the ***Humanistic Culture***. This is the culture of literature and rhetoric (oratory). Where culture two has a special zeal for the Truth, culture three's yearning is for the Good; Culture two delights in ***good argument***, culture three in ***good literature***. The style of culture two is linear, moving from point to point. Culture three's style is circular and meandering and many-layered. Its classical antecedents are the glories of Greece (Homer, Sophocles, Euripides, Demosthenes, Hesiod, etc.) and Rome (Virgil, Cicero, Quintilian, etc). These were ***adapted*** by early Christian writers, such as Origen, Ambrose, Augustine and others and ***recovered*** in the Renaissance of the mid fourteenth century, the "eureka moment" of culture three. That moment witnessed an outburst of literary creativity; at the same time it marked a return to the sources (pre- Christian and Christian).

It shone with such geniuses as Petrarch, Dante, Boccaccio, and Chaucer. Inevitably Renaissance humanism locked horns with Scholasticism. In the early sixteenth century, Erasmus in the ***Praise of Folly*** directs his strongest invectives against academic theologians. He anticipated the biblical movement of the 20th century by producing a critical edition of the Greek New Testament with a Latin translation. Moreover, he offered as an alternative to Scholasticism a return to the more literary and rhetorical style of the early Church Fathers. In the seventeenth century there was an explosion of geniuses writing in the vernacular: Cervantes, Montaigne, Moliere, Shakespeare, Milton, etc. In the schools "Latin remained a staple in the program, but its piece of the curriculum pie became ever smaller as vernacular works cut out for them-

selves more and more of it" (p. 171). The most significant religious and theological expression of culture three in the twentieth century were the documents of the Second Vatican Council. They are written in a style never before used in any previous church council: a style that is rhetorical rather than dialectical, a style that invites dialogue and seeks understanding. It is easy to see how a style of this sort bewilders people who are used to looking to councils for definitions and condemnations. This is a good example of one of the theses of O'Malley's book: the difficulty one culture experiences in understanding another.

Culture four is the artistic culture. This is an intensely visual culture, expressing itself in dance, painting, sculpture, music and architecture. It was a culture highly evident in the Greco-Roman world—with its temples to the gods, its sculptures, gladiatorial contests, chariot races—into which Christianity was born. Because it was visual and had no need for words, it readily reached a population that was largely illiterate. For Christians, especially after the time of Constantine, culture four found expression especially in worship—church architecture and art (icons, frescoes, statues, altar, ambos) and the ritual of the Mass. The Iconoclast Controversy that lasted through the eighth century generated much image-smashing but also a rich volume of literature that in the light of the Incarnation justified and encouraged the use of images. Monastic communities—with their churches, illuminated manuscripts, and ornate vessels for liturgy—made their contribution to culture four. An even greater contribution came with the revival of cities and the building of huge cathedrals. Liturgy involved not only churches and cathedrals and the accoutrements of worship, it also included performance: the ritual action of the Mass and sacraments with the accompaniment of the art of music. Music is the only verbal manifestation in this culture that is otherwise mute. In our day, works of art have also found a place, apart from liturgy or special occasions, in museums and concert halls where people go to visit and enjoy. The art of Leonard Bernstein, Alvin Ailey, Georgia O'Keeffe, Frank Lloyd Wright—and, yes, pop stars—are at home in culture four (cf. 233).

This necessarily inadequate summary of O'Malley's "four cultures" will offer some inkling at least, of the rich treasures stored in this book. In a valuable insight, he offers a caveat about the approach he has taken to the history of the Western world. The "four cultures" have their limitations. No one of the cultures, not

all of them taken together, tell the whole story. In a helpful comparison, O'Malley writes: "If you imagine Western civilization as a vast ocean, you might imagine the four cultures as four Gulf Streams flowing through it. The streams help us to understand many phenomena, but they are not the ocean" (p. 6). Hardly any of the cultures exist in pure form. They are by no means sealed off from one another. Sometimes partners, sometimes rivals, they may blend with one another or borrow, complement or contradict. Some people are imbedded in all four cultures. Liturgy is an excellent example of the way in which one culture may use another or even take it captive. Most properly liturgy belongs to culture four, yet is coveted by all the other three. "Culture one wants it as a bully pulpit, culture two as a classroom for instruction in orthodoxy, culture three as an expression of religions or religious political solidarity within a given milieu" (p. 25).

If there is anything I would like to see added to this book it would be a section discussing more explicitly, and in more detail, the interaction of these four cultures with one another. This is offered as a comment, not a criticism, as examples of this intermingling do appear in various parts of the book.

I found this book a delight: an enlightened and enlightening approach to the history of the Christian Western world. It is eminently readable: a trait one would expect in a book that clearly belongs to culture three.

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