

## Reviews



**Martha Moore-Keish & James W. Farwell, eds., *T&T Clark Handbook of Sacraments and Sacramentality* (London: Bloomsbury, 2023), pp. 584, ISBN 978-0567687647. £150.00**

This collection of 37 essays is refreshing in its ecumenical scope of contributors. The book both widens and deepens understanding of sacrament, particularly by injecting holistic understandings of sacramentality. Inevitably, perhaps, there are elements of overlap and repetition but the strength of this is that each essay is a free-standing unit. I would anticipate that this book will be a useful source of learning and encouragement for clergy and the academy. I can only devote a few lines to each contributor, all of whom deserve more; but I am actually distilling from something of a theological treasure-trove. The Orthodox tradition is sadly under-represented, but female, Queer, planet and Global South are gloriously present.

The book was written during the Covid-19 Pandemic, and for Frank C. Senn, there is a longing that ‘Sacraments will return to their fullness [...] when applied to living bodies’ (p. 21), which he explores in biological, ecological, phenomenological, social, and cultural terms. Gordon W. Lathrop discerns a sacramentality of Hebrew Bible archetypes and traces the New Testament origins of sacraments. Lathrop’s view, from Schillebeeckx, of Christ as *Ursakrament*, initiates much of this anthology’s creativity. Karen B. Westerfield Tucker provides a useful overview of the early history of *mustérion* and *sacramentum*, up to Augustine. Lizette Larson-Miller offers an understanding of sacramentality as something much wider than ‘the sacraments’, and this, too, opens the door to the pervasive strand of sacramentality, the book’s real strength. J. Neil Alexander sees a sacramentality of time, in cycles of observance but also as history, eschatology and ethical imperative in our use of time. The book itself becomes sacramental, at this point. James T. Hadley’s consideration of post-Newtonian ideas of space takes a phenomenological approach, passionate in his eschatology, imbuing space with moral/sacramental agency, and offers architectural optimism. Jyoti Sahi affirms creativity as sacramental element, so that Hindu-Christian inculturation is a meeting of



sacred worlds to create a new sacramental reality. Dorothea Haspelmath-Finatti's approach to sacramentality and music is to dialogue with neuroscience and social sciences, demonstrating the benefits of music which can be seen as sacramental. Lisa M. Weaver sees a sacramentality of the Word in the sense of the divine *fiat*, drawing both on Patristic and contemporary Christian viewpoints. Philip E. Thompson explores how sacramental theology has waned in the 'Gathered' churches, namely denominations which emerged from Puritanism, arguing for a recovery of apocalyptic thinking which would restore sacramental theology. Ruth A. Meyers' careful survey of practice and theology of baptism, catechesis, confirmation – 'a rite in search of a theology' (p. 173) – and first communion, is attuned to the requirements of the Church in a post-Christian Western culture. Joyce Ann Zimmerman uses the metaphor of 'one root, many tendrils' to argue for baptism as a sacrament which unites different churches despite differences, drawing on Vatican II and the 1988 WCC document *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* as grounds for optimism. Andrew Wymer addresses the elephant in the room of baptismal theology with the phrase 'you can go down a dry devil and come up a wet devil' (p. 188), in a reading of the history of colonial abuses of baptism as a tool for control from the fifteenth century until the present, an open wound which has not healed. With a similarly perceptive ethical dimension, Julia Gatta is an advocate of contrition, confession, and forgiveness as fitting into a 'robust theology of baptism', which is 'the interpretive key to human experience' (p. 205). Timothy Brunk's chapter on Ecumenism and admission to Eucharist uses rather daring pandemic-language of dogmatic contagion and social distancing, emphasising the pain, however, of such distancing. It is an uncomfortable read, perhaps necessarily so.

Marcia W. Mount Shoop describes how the pandemic gave her church a much-needed experience of brokenness after its prior blindness to Eucharist's potential as a tool for white domination. Eucharist is revived as subversion and liturgy is subject to power analysis. Ángel F. Méndez Montoya dares to ask how we can become Eucharistic people, bringing the C word (Capitalism) under the scrutiny of the Beatitudes. God is envisioned as gloriously queered and queering, in and beyond the agape and eros of the Trinity as polyamory. Kimberly Bracken Long overviews the evolution of the customs of marriage, before giving contemporary Protestant examples including liturgy for same-sex marriage. Marriage as a sacrament of greater significance than for merely procreation is a



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narrative given also from the Roman Catholic perspective, post-Vatican II, by Jaya Therese Vasupurathukaran.

Bruce T. Morrill's approach to the sacrament of anointing the sick traces how Vatican II sought to rescue it from abuses. Surveying contemporary culture's market-driven obsession with perfect health and youthfulness, Morrill outlines a holistic movement where liturgy is tied to a model of health embodied in meaning, value and well-being rather than a commodified cure. Thomas O'Loughlin approaches the *skandalon* of footwashing as a 'pious mime': if we think of sacrament in terms of *res* and *signum*, are we really capable of the *res* of the inversion of power structures which would then be signified (*signum*) by footwashing? Benjamin M. Stewart makes interesting observations about the eco-funeral movement and a Genesis 2 theology of earthy sacramentality which is also Johannine in the metaphor of the seed which falls into the ground. James F. Puglisi's approach to the sacrament of ordination is a plea from origins in the Book of Acts for ecumenical, reciprocal recognition of ordained ministry, drawing on Pope Francis' model of the polyhedron which refracts light across a spectrum of colours. Joris Geldhof examines the place of sacraments in a post-Christian society and argues for their desirability when understood as resisting twin evils of extreme subjectivity and extreme objectivity; a *Shekinah* cloud, balancing both. For Kristine Suna-Koro, sacramental sensibilities have been 'mutilated during the colonial modernity' (p. 366), but a sacramental ontological turn might embrace an 'earthy' sacramentality, invoking Orthodox theologian John Chryssavgis.

I read Susan A. Ross's incisive essay with a heavy heart; the abiding need for heteronormative and patriarchal control outweighing the dignity of women and LGBT+ people who might aspire to administer 'the sacrament', except in some Protestant churches. (And yet, as I write, the Roman Catholic World Synod is bringing together bishops with laity, including women and LGBT+ people). W. Scott Haldeman's contribution is at its strongest when he invokes the nameless dance of the Trinity known ultimately only as Love. His use of serious parody makes me wonder about the apparent typo on p. 398 – 'Hosea 19.11' does not exist! His audacious queering of the sacraments, like Montoya's, may offend some conservative readers but is redolent with gospel love if accepted. Sebastian Madathummuriyil's bold contribution sees sacrament as a locus of presence which can be compared, in Hindu Sri Vaishnavist theology and



practice, with both Rahner's work and Richard Kierney's anatheism. Glenn P. Ambrose, similarly, drills down into sacrament with radical theology which makes possible a genuinely humble hospitality across faith traditions, for the discernment of revelatory substance in other religions.

Rebecca F. Spurrier afflicts the comfortable, bringing disability theory to the table. Her 'anti-ableist pneumatology of presiding' crystalises issues of access and embodiment (p. 448). Peter C. Phan addresses our 'Age of Migration', with its causes, in a lovingly informed way (p. 452). His sacramental theology is of God as Primordial and Paradigmatic Migrant with the sacramental power of migration. E. Byron Anderson argues for a speculative quantum paradigm as analogy for sacrament in a strongly Christological way, in a refreshing dialogue with contemporary physics. At the time of reviewing, post-Pandemic, James W. Farwell and Martha Moore-Keish's survey of arguments for and against 'virtual Eucharist' now seems almost humorous; at the time, they were not, and will doubtless be all too real again. Thomas H. Schattauer's vision for sacraments as mission and mission as sacrament seems initially at odds with essays on religious dialogue, in its totalising impulse. However, mission and Eucharist are unpacked as the rule of God in terms of eco- and social justice, in harmony with Carvalhaes and other contributors.

It is Kevin W. Irwin who, bringing Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* into the arena, envisions a full sacramentality: 'Sacramentality is a worldview [...] living life fully on this good earth with each other and with all creatures on the earth where even now we are immersed in God. [...] The act of sacrament always leads us beyond the here and now [...] when we will see God face-to-face' (p. 490). From there, we are perhaps ready to hear Carmel Pilcher and Donato Kivi's chapter on 'First Peoples' and the earth; and Cláudio Carvalhaes' hand-grenade, thrown into our illusions that we can celebrate the body and blood of Christ without seriously engaging with the poor of the earth.

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