

p. 71 f.). The disadvantages are of course that using someone else's sermons is a bit like wearing someone else's underpants – they never quite fit! However, in an age where 'communion seasons' and the idea of preparing to receive the Lord's Supper have all but departed from the scene this volume of sermons could function as a useful prompt to ministers as to how they might open up the significance of the sacrament in direct and personal ways. The sermons are relatively brief and each one has a companion prayer attached. Personally, I found the title sermon "The Weakest Link" one of the least satisfying of those offered in this book – though it is by no means a weak sermon, but others, I think, are better – notably "The Darkness of the Cross", a sermon for a Good Friday communion service. However, others will find their own personal gems in this thoughtful and insightful book.

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**The Eucharist: Bodies, Bread and Resurrection, Andrea Bieler & Luise Schottroff, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, pp. viii, 248, 2007, ISBN 978-0-8006-3867-2. £12.99**

This work could hardly be more different from MacLeod's populist approach to the subject. Learned, radical and revisionary would be the most appropriate descriptions of this important work by two notable feminist thinkers from Germany. The book begins with a description of a Eucharistic advent service in which the execution of Stanley Tookie Williams by the state of California is remembered, and it concludes with a description of the Chapel of Reconciliation in Berlin. The book concludes by saying, 'Places such as the Bernauer Strasse in Berlin can inspire us to leave our churches from time to time and celebrate Holy Communion at places that embody sacramental permeability and Eucharistic life for us, places that do not seal or cover up the wounds of violence and at the same time reveal how God's reconciliation is at work among us.' (195) From this you will get a flavour of the approach of this work – it is engaged, experiential

and embodied – in all the best senses of those words. As the authors say, ‘we seek to develop a theology of the Eucharist that holds together the materiality of bodies and ordinary things as they are lifted up and shared in liturgical practice and the eschatological horizon of the holy meal in which we celebrate the Eucharist as resurrection meal and await with eager longing God’s coming.’ (3) That is not to say that the book is light on classical Eucharistic theory or scholarship. Bieler and Schottruff are very well informed on the Jewish context of the New Testament meal and the later developments of the theological tradition. Using ritual and feminist theory they seek to bring fresh insights to Eucharistic practice; however, theory is never allowed to stray too far from actual practice and again and again we are brought back to ‘actual’ celebrations of the sacrament in people’s lives. I found their attempt to overcome the feminist critique of traditional accounts of Christ’s sacrificial death via a retrieval of the Jewish notion of martyrdom from 4 Maccabees particularly fascinating. (146 f.) Here, Cavanaugh’s *Torture and Eucharist*, with its discussion of the disappeared in Pinochet’s Chile is usefully and insightfully used to develop an account of how the authors ‘seek to sketch an embodied Eucharistic practice that understands itself against this background as a resisting response to the body politics of the state: Practicing Eucharist makes the tortured body visible.’ (144) The links with Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib are obvious – and made.

This is not an easy, nor an uncontroversial book, but if you want to be stirred again in your thinking about the potentially radical and world-transforming nature of the Eucharistic practice of the Christian Church then this is the book you should read. Some indication of the scale of this book’s ambition can be gleaned quite simply from the title of another of its subsections – “The Bread of Death: Dieting America and Global Food Politics”. If you do read it then I doubt that a douce quarterly parish communion service will ever feel quite the same again – and that might be no bad thing!

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