

new methods in configuring the data, and suggestive models for future work in their own fields.

Fr. Jan Michael Joncas
University of St. Thomas
St. Paul, MN

Louis-Marie Chauvet. *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2001. xxv + 204 pages. Paper. ISBN 0-8146-6143-2. \$29.95.

Liturgical theologians are fond of asserting that the *lex orandi*, the law of prayer, establishes the *lex credendi*, the law of belief, even as they continuously debate just exactly what this patristic principle, as crystallized in Prosper of Aquitaine's famous sentence, means in the life of the church. Louis-Marie Chauvet has, in *The Sacraments* (French original, 1993), produced a wonderfully coherent, systematic treatment of why and how sacramental liturgy is essential to Christian faith. Liturgical theologians largely tend to approach the topic on the basis of the history and elements of the Christian rites, whereas Chauvet, while continuously affirming and drawing from the irreducibly ritual nature of the sacraments, does so in the genre of a fundamental theology. Fundamental theology methodologically reflects on the nature of divine revelation as conveyed through scripture and tradition, as well as on the conditions that dispose people to receiving that revelation. The methodological beauty of the book lies in the way in which this highly theoretical work constantly refers to actual liturgical practice such that pastoral insights and implications abound. The beauty of its content emerges as Chauvet argues for the bodiliness of our redemption in Christ (chapters 1 to 3), the particularity of that divine Word as the Spirit writes it on the universal body of the church through the ritual activity of the sacraments (chapters 4 and 5), the human ethical imperative inherent to that divine self-gift (chapters 6 and

7) and, finally, the grounding of this sacramental ethics in the biblical revelation of the crucified God (chapter 8).

The theological concept repeatedly refreshing such a demanding, thoroughgoing argument is Chauvet's elucidation of *grace*. Of utmost importance for a Christian sacramental anthropology and ethics (a life of justice, mercy, and sharing) is the thankful recognition of the utter gratuity of God's saving presence to humanity. By means of a symbolic-language theory (so very French in its structuralism), Chauvet argues that the divine gracious presence is only possible because of the *risks* the triune God has taken in the death and resurrection of the Son and continues to take as the Spirit reveals the "humanness" of the God of Jesus Christ in sacramental liturgy, enabling our daily lives to be liturgy, a spiritual sacrifice glorifying God. The heart of such a God and such a redeemed human existence is grace, the unmeasured, unearned favor of God to which the sanctifying human response is lives likewise characterized by generosity and justice.

The Christian faith is fundamentally structured, then, by three poles: Scriptures, Sacraments, and Ethics. What sets this structure in motion, what keeps these three elements constantly informing one another, is the process of gift-exchange. Here Chauvet draws on French anthropologist Marcel Mauss's famous analysis of the symbolically based socio-economic structures of traditional, pre-industrial societies, wherein networks of obligatory and generous sharing make mutual communication and presence of primary importance. The necessary economic exchange of goods is secondary. In such systems the ongoing commerce of life is less about "having" than "being." The logic of such an order is one of "subjects exchanging themselves," an order profoundly different from that of the modern society of economic exchange, with its logic of value, profit, production, acquisition, and consumption. Both logics are operative in any exchange among humans; the question concerns which is primary. Chauvet perceives in the system of gift-exchange a fundamentally symbolic, non-utilitarian order of life that reasonably articulates the graciousness of God biblically revealed and sacramentally shared in Christ.

That latter, signature move in Chauvet's theory points toward what he is arguing *against* as he constructs his fundamental sacramental theology. It is the non-utilitarian logic of the symbolic order that has drastically diminished in both the modern (Roman Catholic) church and modern capitalist society. The church struggles to shake the utilitarian scholastic theology of grace and sacraments, fundamentally flawed in its sign-and-cause approach. This regnant instrumentalist understanding is mired in a metaphysics that aids and abets not only a practical theism among modern Christians but also an individualistic, object-acquisition practice of the sacraments. Unless the church shakes this metaphysical theology, with its denigration of body to mind/soul, in both the academic and pastoral spheres, its mission holds little promise of evangelically challenging the lives of believers immersed in an increasingly global capitalist, consumerist culture. The church is at risk (*au risque* is the recurrent phrase not only at the climax but in the very title of the French original), but so is – and herein lies the scandal of the gospel – the very honor of God. Such is the passion of this beautiful book.

In *The Sacraments*, Chauvet has done a fine job of paring down his earlier magnum opus, *Symbol and Sacrament* (1995; French original, 1987). This does not, however, make this leaner book an easy read. It is nonetheless eminently worth the effort. My own recommendation is for the reader to begin with Chapter 6 (the pivotal chapter on symbolic gift-exchange), which Chauvet himself acknowledges adds nothing by means of theoretical content to what has come before in the first five chapters. By engaging the economic order that shapes the common worldview today, the sixth chapter enables the reader to get at what Chauvet perceives to be at stake for the current practice of faith and life of the church. Having read through that chapter once, without bogging down in the details, one can then go back to the beginning and study Chauvet's fundamental sacramental theology as it unfolds. There are undoubtedly many points for ecumenical and even inter-religious dialogue along the way, which, in addition to the numerous pastoral implications, rewards the effort. That

this reader concluded reading with a deep sense of gratitude is probably the highest compliment one could pay to Chauvet's work.

Bruce T. Morrill, S.J.
Boston College
Chestnut Hill, MA

Maxwell E. Johnson, ed. *Between Memory and Hope: Readings on the Liturgical Year*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000. 454 pages. Paper. ISBN 0-8146-6025-8. \$39.95.

Twenty-three essays, most previously published (as long ago as 1978 and as recently as 1999), are gathered into one volume intended primarily as a "supplementary textbook for seminary and graduate level courses on the evolution and theological interpretation" of the year (xiii). Evolution tends to outweigh theology in the overall content. The lion's share of articles (fourteen) is by Roman Catholics; six are by Episcopalians/Anglicans, one is by a United Methodist, and one is by a Lutheran (the editor). Most are brief, but the collection does include a "mini-book" of fifty-six rather daunting pages tracing Greek, Syriac, Armenian, and Latin sources for the theme of light in early baptismal liturgies and the development of Epiphany.

After two introductory essays, the articles fall under these headings: "From Sabbath to Sunday," "From Passover to Pascha," "From Pascha to Parousia," and "From Pascha to Persons." An introductory overview and a subject index complete the volume.

Several of the essays are pastoral in tone and are readily accessible to clergy and seminarians that do not have a strong background in the field of liturgics. Among these are Boone Porter's article on the Day of the Lord as a day of mystery, Mark Searle's article on Sunday as the heart of the liturgical year, and James F. White's history of the Protestant liturgical treatment of the saints.

Of quite a different nature are issues addressed in a large number of the essays concerning the historical development of the