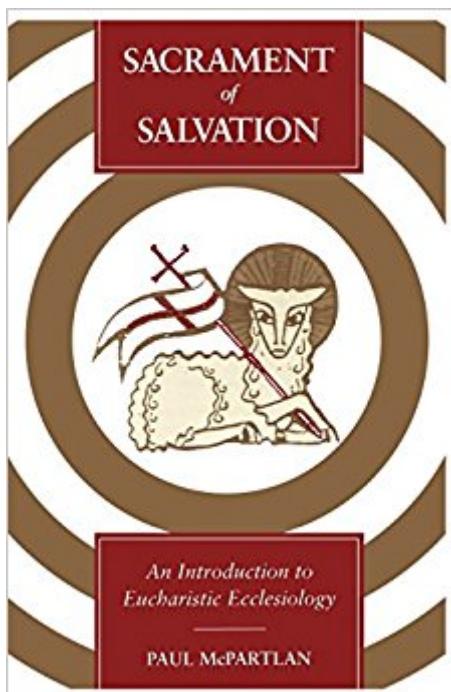


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Sacrament Of Salvation: An Introduction To Eucharistic Ecclesiology



Synopsis

For all who wish to develop a eucharistic understanding of the Church and its application to issues of current debate.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

'McPartlan's book is written in a straightforward, uncomplicated style. This is an important achievement given the nature of the subject and the obfuscation one sometimes encounters in an area of this kind. Sacrament of Salvation is a book written by a teacher (helpful diagrams included), with plenty of footnotes to serve as tutorial in the sources quoted or referenced. The text is especially useful for seminarians and other newcomers to the theological scene, such as those in programs of ministerial formation. The eight chapters of even length keep the book moving and provide a solid, practical text for group reading and discussion. This book makes a fine contribution to the ongoing concern for church unity and ecumenical dialogue.' Gabriel B. O'Donnell OP, *Antiphon, A Journal for Liturgical Renewal*

Using the Eucharist as an interpretative key, Paul McPartlan surveys the entire sweep of Church history, from its roots in the Old Testament through the foundation and unfolding of the Church over the last two millennia. This century's great renewal is examined through the eyes of Henri de Lubac, who reintroduced the idea of the Church herself as the great Sacrament 'which contains and vitalises all the others'. This is an understanding profoundly traditional but at the same time capable

of generating consequences of extraordinary power and originality. The book makes significant contributions to contemporary thinking on ecumenism, evangelisation and ecology. Concern for unity with other churches arises from the recognition of a common Christian mission to the whole of humanity - and furthermore to all creation. How the ecumenical movement has reflected upon the Church is examined here, in connection with major ecumenical statements on the Eucharist.

Dr McPartlan's work not only explains the ecclesiological aspects of the Eucharist (a critical and often neglected topic) but provides very original, fascinating treatment of New Testament texts in the eucharistic context. For example, McPartlan's explanation of Hebrews 18, and the relation to the parousia and Eucharist, and his treatment of the Lamb and multitude in Revelation, make for superb reflections, meditation, or topics for group discussion. The only reservation that I would have about that last is that, since later chapters defend the Vatican position and admit only Roman Catholic and Orthodox Orders as valid, the book may not be suited for group discussions in other sister churches. It nonetheless would be a valuable contribution to the library of anyone interested in sacramental theology and ecclesiology. McPartlan quotes extensively from documents of Vatican II, which makes it an excellent reference for a correct understanding of these (this often sadly lacking elsewhere - my stress was on 'correct.') It is notable that there are many references to the books of the New Testament and earliest Christian texts, and the setting of these in the context of worship and Church fills a most important need.

I found this book very informative overall, but it was quite uneven, and could have used a better editor. McPartlan does an excellent job of explaining the basics of Eucharistic Ecclesiology, and he also shows how the entire New Testament must be read in a eucharistic setting (something most people today don't even consider). His analysis of sections of the Letter to the Hebrews is especially enlightening. However, there are a number of instances, entire sections even, in which McPartlan goes off into areas that seem to have no connection to Eucharistic Ecclesiology. For instance, he recaps the history of the councils of the patristic age, but never attempts to connect that history with his main thesis. Also, his enthusiasm for Vatican II-inspired changes seems to be uncritical. For example, he emphasizes the importance of the vernacular in the Mass, without ever recognizing that this has at times also led to a lack of reverence and a "performance" mindset by the presiding priest. The book also seems a bit dated already, even though it was written in 1995. He talks of how distribution of the chalice should become more widespread, even though it seems to be universal these days. Overall, I would recommend this book as a very basic introduction to the important topic

of Eucharistic Ecclesiology, but it would be nice to see a more tightly-edited version come out to replace it.

So much good liturgical theology brings in ecclesiology (I think immediately of Schmemann's Introduction to Liturgical Theology), and so much good ecclesiology hinges on the liturgy (I think of Ratzinger's Called to Communion). In Sacrament of Salvation, Paul McPartlan explains why. The liturgy and the Church are almost one and the same. If my conception of one excludes the other, I have an incomplete conception of both. The first millennium Church saw that the Eucharist makes the Church. In the second millennium, we forgot that, but knew that the Church makes the Eucharist. Both are true. Both make us. This is the wisdom of the Catholic faith. It is distilled and presented in a clear and stimulating manner in McPartlan's short book. I'm sure I'll refer to McPartlan's work for a long time.

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