

movable tent that functions as a visible sign of God's presence in the midst of Israel as it traveled through the wilderness (Exod 25-31, 35-40). Indeed, the climax of the book of Exodus comes in Exodus 40:34 when the divine "cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle." This settling of the divine presence upon the tabernacle fulfills God's purpose in delivering Israel out of its slavery in Egypt: "that I might dwell among them" (Exod 29:46).

THE SACRAMENTS AND LEVITICUS

In the present shape of the Pentateuch, the laws of Leviticus provide order and structure to the community so that it is protected by radiating zones of holiness and the service of priests who mediate between the intense and dangerous holiness of the divine presence and a sinful and impure community. The death of Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron the high priest, illustrate the threat of sinful individuals coming into direct contact with the divine (Lev 10:1-3). Leviticus divides into two parts: (1) laws concerning sacrifices, purity, and the Day of Atonement focused on the holiness of the priests and the tabernacle (Lev 1-16) and (2) laws that concern the holiness of the whole community and the land of Israel (Lev 17-27).

One feature of purity in Leviticus that forms some of the background to New Testament baptism is the repeated reference to cleansing oneself, washing one's clothes, and bathing in water as part of becoming ritually clean after experiencing some ritual impurity or in preparation to coming near the divine presence. Rituals of bathing or cleaning of garments may apply to priests (Lev 8:6; see Exod 30:18-21; 40:12, 30-32; Num 19:7), Levites (Num 8:6, 21), or to all members of the community (Lev 14:7-9; 15:5, 10, 13, 27; see Exod 19:10, 14). In the priestly symbol system of clean and unclean, an individual may become ritually impure through such things as contact with a corpse, the involuntary flow of bodily fluids (for example, blood or semen), certain skin diseases, or the eating of prohibited foods. Becoming impure or unclean from various causes was a common occurrence for most people (simply attending a funeral, unintentionally eating unclean food, menstruation, and the like). Thus rituals of purification were readily available and involved some combination of ritual washings, the passage of time, or specified offerings.

Purity and cleanness often had nothing to do with moral sin; they simply involved a ritual condition of certain boundaries being crossed or confused (boundaries of life and death, bodily fluids that abnormally transgressed boundaries of skin, animals with characteristics that did not fit into their perceived class of animals, and the like). One set of laws in Leviticus does treat both ritual impurity and moral sin in the community on the annual Day of Atonement. This annual ritual had a two-fold purpose. First of all, the purification offerings purge the tabernacle or place of worship from uncleanness (Lev 16:16-19). Secondly, the priestly confession of sin, the blood of the animal sacrifices,

the setting free of the scapegoat which carries away the sin of the community, and the people's refraining from work and food all participate in purging the sin of the people (Lev 16:21-31).

THE SACRAMENTS AND THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

God's positive and gracious provision of manna earlier in Exodus 16 has a negative counterpart in the later wilderness narrative of Numbers 11. The Israelites continue to receive the manna daily, but they are tired of the same diet of manna day after day and complain to Moses. Moses is extremely frustrated to the point of wanting God to put Moses to death to end his misery as a leader of the Israelites. God ends up punishing the people but also constructively redistributing the burdens of leadership on a group of elders so that Moses remains the chief leader but shares many of the duties with other elders (Num 11:16-17, 24-25). Moses even celebrates the coming of God's Spirit on two individuals who are not officially authorized as leaders but nevertheless "prophecy in the camp" (Num 11:26-30).

One other interesting feature of the Numbers 11 narrative is Moses's implied description of God's provision of food using feminine and maternal imagery for God. Moses asks God why God has placed the burden of leadership of the Israelites on Moses: "Did I conceive all this people? Did I give birth to them, that you should say to me, Carry them in your bosom, as a nurse carries a sucking child" (Num 11:12). The implied answer is that God, not Moses, is the one who has conceived, given birth, and breast fed the people of Israel. One finds similar maternal imagery of divine nourishment in Deuteronomy 32:13-14 (Claassens 2004: 4-9).

How does one discern when a material object or element serves a positive role in a sacrament versus when the object or element becomes an idol and an object of worship? The story of the "serpent of bronze" (Hebrew *nechash nechoshet*) in Numbers 21:4-9 recounts the Israelites complaining about the lack of water and the lack of variety in their diet with only manna every day. The LORD sends poisonous snakes among them in judgment against their murmuring. The people confess their sins to Moses who then intercedes to God on their behalf. God instructs Moses to erect a "serpent of bronze" on a pole. Anyone who had been bitten by a snake and who looked at the bronze serpent would be healed and not die. Later in Israel's history, however, King Hezekiah renovated and reformed the Jerusalem temple. Part of the religious reform of the temple involved tearing down and destroying what was alleged to be Moses's bronze serpent called "Nechustan." The sacred object had become an idolatrous object of worship because "the people of Israel had made offerings to it" (2 Kgs 18:4). One person's sacramental element may become another person's idol.

THE SACRAMENTS AND DEUTERONOMY

The laws of Deuteronomy are among the most strongly aniconic of the Torah, strongly resistant to any material object or element being associated with the presence of God on earth. Earlier we noted traditions in Exodus in which certain leaders of the people "saw" God (Exod 24:10-11). Moses saw the back but not the face of God (Exod 33:23). Deuteronomy resists such claims, arguing instead: "Since you saw no form when the LORD spoke to you at Horeb [Deuteronomy's alternate name for Mount Sinai] out of the fire, . . . do not act corruptly by making an idol for yourselves in the form of any figure." Indeed, God's presence dwells in heaven so Israel experienced God only through the divine fire on Mount Horeb and "his words coming out of the fire" (Deut 4:36). The prayer accompanying the offering in Deut 26:15 asks God to "look down from your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless your holy people Israel." Unlike Exodus where the tabernacle is the site of the visible presence of God on earth and in the midst of the community of Israel, Deuteronomy allows that it is only the "name" of God, not the full presence of God, that dwells in a temple at "the place that the LORD your God will choose" (Deut 12:5; 14:23). At the same time, Deuteronomy affirms the intimacy and closeness of God to God's people: "For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is whenever we call to him?" (Deut 4:7; see Deut 30:11-14).

In Exodus, the "ark of the covenant" is an ornate, gold-plated box with a mercy seat and two statues of cherubim that function as a footstool or throne for the divine presence within the tabernacle: "There I will meet with you" (Exod 25:22). In Deuteronomy, the "ark of the covenant" is an ark made simply of wood and functions only as a container for the covenant tablets of stone with the words of the covenant on them which are to be read aloud to the people at regular intervals (Deut 10:1-5; 31:9, 25). God's presence remains in heaven, and the focus is on the words of God and the name of God with resistance to any material object or element being attached to the presence of God. In this disagreement between Exodus and Deuteronomy on the topic of the presence of God, we see some of the origins for later debates regarding God's presence and action in various Christian theologies of the sacraments.

One other notable feature in Deuteronomy's theology is its commitment to God's name being attached to the one place that God would choose. This centralization of worship in one city and temple (presumably Jerusalem, although the name of the city is never mentioned) is an expression of Deuteronomy's commitment to a unifying vision of one God, one people, one land, and one law for the chosen people of Israel. Thus, for example, Deuteronomy requires all Israelites in the land to celebrate key festivals together in one city that the LORD would choose (Deut 14:22; 16:2, 9-11, 13-16). In contrast, the instructions for the three major annual festivals (including Passover) in Exodus 23:14-17 seem to imply that the festivals could be observed at different local shrines near people's hometowns rather than everyone coming together in the single city of Jerusalem. The Passover law in Exodus 12:3-7 goes further and implies that

Passover should be celebrated by each family in their own home, not even at a local sanctuary. Deuteronomy significantly revises these festival laws, mandating that all Israelites are to come to the one place that the LORD will choose for the three annual festivals. In Deuteronomy's program, the gatherings become national pilgrimage festivals that unite the whole nation as one people in one place. This includes the observance of Passover (Deut 16:1-17; see the centralization program of King Josiah in 2 Kgs 23:21-23). This requirement that all Israelites celebrate Passover together in Jerusalem provides background to Jesus and the disciples being in Jerusalem when they celebrate the Passover where Jesus institutes the Last Supper (see also Luke 2:41; John 2:13, 23; 11:55). Deuteronomy's program resonates with the apostle Paul's concern to maintain the unity of the one body of believers in Christ expressed through the proper celebration of one baptism in Christ (1 Cor 12:12) and the visible unity of the body in the eating of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 10:17).

CONCLUSION

Our survey of the books of Genesis-Deuteronomy has unearthed a rich tapestry of images, themes, narratives, and laws that provide important background and resonance to Christian understandings and practices of sacraments in the life of the community of faith. Baptism's associations with water, cleansing, initiation into a new covenant relationship, death and resurrection, judgment and new life, vocation and identity, and promises that reach far into the future echo throughout the texts of the Torah: the breath or spirit of God moving over the waters of "the deep" in creation (Gen 1:2), the story of Noah and flood (Gen 6-9), the ritual of circumcision that linked identity and promise (Gen 17:9-14), Israel's crossing through the waters of the Red Sea (Exod 14-15), God's provision of water in the wilderness (Exod 17), the inauguration of the Sinai covenant in which Israel receives both identity and vocation from God (Exod 19:5-6), laws about rituals of bathing and cleansing (Lev 8:6; 14:7-9; 15), and the vision of unity expressed in one people coming together to worship one God, with the "circumcision of the heart" signifying obedience both as divine gift (Deut 30:1-6) and human calling (Deut 10:16).

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is also deeply rooted in the Pentateuch's story of God and God's people Israel. Abraham and Sarah extend lavish hospitality and a generous meal to "strangers" and receive a gift of divine promise in return (Gen 18). Jesus ate a Passover meal with his disciples on the eve of his death on the cross. He did so in obedience to the Torah's command that all Israelites celebrate the annual Passover meal (Exod 12-13), a meal that includes a story about unleavened bread, the saving blood of the lamb, a connection with the near-sacrifice of the beloved son Isaac (Gen 22), and the remembrance that the story of being slaves in Egypt rescued by God is the defining story of God's people. God's gift of manna or "bread from heaven" in the wilderness (Exod 16:4), the people seeing God as "they ate and drank" at Mount Sinai (Exod 24:11), the maternal images for God's feeding God's people (Num 11:12; Deut 32:13-14), and