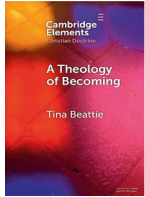


Catholicism must reclaim the authentic voice of Christianity in the UK. When 30 per cent of Catholic ordinations over the past three decades have been of former Anglican clergy, that time is now!

*Fr Kevin Robinson, retired priest, Archdiocese of Southwark*



**A Theology of Becoming: Body, Blood, Birth, and Sacrament**  
**Tina Beattie**  
 978-1-009-53556-4  
 Cambridge University Press 2026  
 Paperback 80pp £18  
 PR bookshop £16.20

Every now and then something comes to light, a subject, a person perhaps, or an aspect of human life, that for reasons obvious or not has not received the attention in theology or indeed in the life of the Church that perhaps it deserves – a topic one could say that has been hiding in plain sight. One such subject is that of human birth, both being born and giving birth, becoming a mother. Bearing in mind that one of the axioms of Christian theology is the incarnation, God himself being born as a human being of a woman, this is quite astonishing really, and thus Tina Beattie's short imaginative theological intervention in the Cambridge Elements in Theology series, is most welcome.

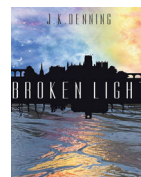
Beattie identifies the reasons for this elemental oversight – theological approaches to birth (such as there have been) have been filtered through an androcentric lens, have focussed more on the ethics of non-birth (contraception, abortion etc.) than on the significance of birth for what it means to be human. The power of naming has been usurped by male doctors, theologians and institutions. And then there is plain old fear – of the human body and of women's bodies in particular.

Much of this is not new, though necessary to spell out again. Much has been written about the body by theologians of course, even about women's bodies, by feminist theologians and also by others. What makes this book so extraordinary and remarkable is the way in which Tina Beattie, mother of four children and a Catholic theologian who has researched and written about gender, sexuality and sacramentality for several decades, rises to the challenge: in a radical challenge to

mainstream theology's inability to respond to the 'emergence of women's voices out of domesticated silence into theological speech', she renders her own body, her experience of becoming a mother – matrescence –, a theological text: 'my purpose is to write (as) the maternal body, to scavenge among the discarded remnants of language and rehabilitate them in writing differently, in writing *différance* by allowing language to be unsettled through the articulation of bodiliness, desire, and desolation'. What emerges is not 'neat and tidy' or 'systematic theology' (let's face it, being born or giving birth never is), nor is it an abstract reflection on 'natality' or a simple recourse to experience; rather Tina Beattie beautifully interweaves theology, experience (her own and that of other women past and present) and voices from the Catholic tradition and her research on gender and sacramentality: 'I engage in a playful mimesis of maternal feminine language in the quest to break open sclerotic theological systems and open fertile incarnate possibilities'. What is at stake here is nothing less than the life of the Church in the world and this imaginative, deeply faithful and creative theological intervention liberates discussions about the full participation of women in the life of the Church from the many and varied traps of recourse to discussions about equality, tradition or even ecumenical neighbourliness: 'Only the full incorporation of the female body into the graced sacramentality of the life of faith, including the sacramental priesthood, will allow for the development of an incarnational theology capable of providing a credible response to the challenges of our times.'

This book may take its time to find its way onto reading lists, but there is something profoundly life-giving here, 'for our good and the good of all his holy Church'.

*Natalie K. Watson, Peterborough*



**Broken Light**  
**J. K. Denning**  
 978-1-78959-352-5  
 Sacristy Press 2023  
 Paperback 282pp £14.99  
 PR bookshop £13.49

This is a book which has many unique qualities. The writing has been, quite clearly, a labour of love for the author and so much imagination and