

Matthew Salisbury, ed. *God in Fragments: Worshipping with Those Living with Dementia*. London: Church House Publishing, 2020. 152 pages. \$23.99.

How does worship work when the relationship between words and cognition is disturbed? What value are sacraments if those who receive them have lost their memory of what sacraments are? How can we worship with those whose sense of God is at best fragmentary, if not entirely absent? These are just some of the questions that *God in Fragments*—the result of a conference held in 2017—seeks to address. Speaking to the growing number of Christians with various forms of dementia and a society that is increasingly older, this volume charts a path forward for how Christian communities can design worship services that are inclusive of those experiencing dementia.

As a resource for constructing worship services hospitable to those experiencing dementia, the structure of the book is straightforward. The volume begins with a chapter that makes explicit the issues surrounding dementia as it relates to the life of the church and Christian worship. This chapter names the challenge posed by dementia for conceptions of personhood that depend on cognitive capacities for their meaning. In doing so, the chapter points a way forward in our conceptions of person that do not remove that personhood when cognition is lost. The next chapter focuses on spiritual awareness and dementia, noting again how often our understandings of spiritual awareness and growth depend on high levels of cognitive awareness. Pointing to the difficulties of such understandings, this chapter poses an alternative conception that points towards non-cognitive forms of spiritual awareness and the various ways in which those experiencing dementia can also be spiritually aware, even as the dementia runs its course. The third chapter offers a theology of worshipping with dementia that argues each member of the community, no matter their level of cognitive function, is part of the Body of Christ, and this reality calls for alternative forms and understandings of member “participation” in the life of the body. Following these first three chapters, the remaining chapters each take up some aspect of the church’s corporate life—worship, music, and community life—both naming some of the issues for those with dementia and making suggestions for how we might include them in our worship and also learn from their presence in our gatherings.

While discussions around dementia and Christian theology have been taking place for some time, this volume is a helpful addition to those conversations, for several reasons. First, it continues to emphasize that those with dementia only strike our churches as a “challenge” when we fall into the trap of believing worship is something we do, rather than something God does to us. Thus, by raising up the experiences of those with dementia, the authors actually call us all back to faithfulness in our corporate life together. And this is perhaps another helpful component of this volume: the authors remind us that worship that would “work” for those with dementia would also work for those without dementia, and this only reveals our reliance on overly-cognitive forms of worship. Thus, one consequence of this volume is a call back to our bodily engagement with worship. This is not to say I had no questions after reading this volume. Given that the authors come from a highly liturgical tradition, I was left wondering how the large number of Christians who come from free-church traditions that are not as highly liturgized might use this book as a resource. One consequence of the authors writing from and for their own tradition is that it may be difficult for others to know how to use this resource within their own traditions. But despite these questions, there is much within the volume to recommend, and ministers and other church leaders will find it a welcome resource for their congregations.

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