Samuel Wells and Sarah Coakley, (Eds)
Praying for England
Priestly Presence in Contemporary Culture
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This book represents a conscious effort on the part of the 'Littlemore Group' to correct and expand current popular perceptions of the priestly vocation. Far from being a random anthology of loosely connected bright ideas, it is clearly a carefully planned catena and issues from a conference at Littlemore in August, 2005, in which all the contributors were participants.

What awaits us within this arresting cover design? The scene is set in Sarah Coakley's Introduction: Prayer, Place and the Poor. Stephen Cherry reminds us that the parish priest is still looked to as a spokesperson and representative for a community in trauma - of 'unspeakable horror'.

Peter Wilcox portrays the cultural and imaginative power of the beautiful game, (return to the cover!) Sam Wells explores the consequences of the vicar's abdicating the throne on which he/she is placed by most Anglican congregations who are only too delighted to have a monarchical presbyterate, and enrolling the talents of worshippers in the planning and execution of what happens in church.

Edmund Newey, in a chapter called 'Presence', tells us about the continuing significance in 'secular' society of the church's being there at times of bereavement, or, of celebration. Jessica Martin writes courageously about her private life, in order to emphasise that all priesthood is exercised by a person, sometimes through that life's crises which can make ministry problematic.

In 'Honesty' Andrew Shanks looks at Anglican history with its many betrayals of honesty, and sketches a possible future vocation for the Church of England. Grace Davie expands this vision into a European and global setting.

This book gives its readers hope for the church. Archbishop Rowan Williams' epilogue should be read as a preface!

Anselm SSF