

Review

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## THE FURROW

symbol, the Liturgy will give true expression to who we really are as a Christian community, a community that seeks to reach out to everyone, a community where there is 'breath-taking respect for difference and diversity in gender and sex, performance and achievement, poverty and possession, being and doing, as the pilgrim people of God inches closer to that total equality that death alone confers on all our beings at this time' (105).

*From Despair to Hope* indeed offers a truly Christian perspective on the tragedy of suicide in the 'today' of modern Ireland. This very fine, well researched work is universally accessible to those from all Christian denominations who wish to deepen their understanding of this painful reality, while never letting go of the conviction that Christ, the incarnate Son of God, is the one who holds the key to the mystery of human suffering and death and not least, to the mystery of those whose suffering in life brought about their death by suicide.

DWAYNE GAVIN

*Navan, Co. Meath*

**The Church: The People of God.** London and New York: Burns & Oates (a Continuum imprint). Pp. 167. Price €22.50

William Henn, a Capuchin, is professor of theology at the Gregorian University, Rome, and known for his work in ecclesiology and ecumenism. This book is not an academic treatise on the Church but is rather aimed at a wider and more popular audience, so references and footnotes are kept to a minimum.

In his introduction he describes the Church as 'fundamentally a community of persons who believe in and love God, who share their faith with others, who celebrate in worship and sacraments the new life and hope they have found as disciples of Christ, who mature in an amazing variety of ways as children of their Father in heaven through cooperating with the grace of the Holy Spirit poured into their hearts, and who serve one another and all persons, especially those in need, with generosity and in solidarity and love' (p. 4). The text is effectively a meditation on these dynamic aspects of ecclesial life. While this meditative approach is indeed helpful, the text lacks any real sense of connectedness with the concrete struggles people experience in their ecclesial membership. This unfortunately gives a blandness to the text that may disappoint some readers.

The opening chapter addresses, in a fairly general way, the question 'Why do we need the Church at all?' His answers will be helpful and reassuring for those who are already committed, less so for the doubtful. The following six chapters are arranged in pairs. Chapters 2 and 3 deal with the beliefs of the community and how these are transmitted. These chapters explore the relationship between Church and scripture and then the various teaching roles within the Church. Chapters 4 and 5 deal with worship, especially the Eucharist, and how Christian growth and maturity are effected in relation to the sacramental system of the Church. Chapters 6 and 7 explore the call to service, or ministry, both within and

outside the Christian community. The final chapter, which is rather brief, is a reflection on the beauty of the Church.

While this is not a handbook of ecclesiology it is a very rich meditation on the mystery of the Church. It is deeply rooted in the scriptures and it reflects the profound love which the author obviously has for the Church. It conceals a wealth of scholarship which allows the text to be accessible to a wide readership. Those involved in ecclesial ministry might find this book a source of enrichment as they seek to ground their efforts in ongoing work of Christ in the world today.

EUGENE DUFFY

*Galway*

**The Liberation of the Laity: In Search of an Accountable Church.** Paul Lakeland. NY: The Continuum Publishing Group, Inc. Pp. 311. Price \$28.95.

Having twice read Paul Lakeland's wonderful *The Liberation of the Laity*, I find it a difficult book to review. The many things this book does so well all cry out for lengthy treatment. The book offers an in-depth exploration of the theological developments that led up to Vatican II, not just of individual theologians like Rahner, De Lubac and Congar, but of the wider communities of discourse of which they were part. These matters are laid out in the first chapter, 'The Road to Vatican II'. Lakeland's narrative is first rate, omitting extraneous clutter for a coherent and interesting account of theology in the forty years before the Council assembled. Those years were ripe with work among lay people: workers and youth struggling to make gospel sense of their world, on the streets and in the factories. Not all the questions raised were answered, which led to the quiet excitement that characterized much of the writing done during this period, and here carried on in Lakeland's prose. This one chapter will be a treasure to those wanting graduate students (and undergrads too) to get the theological thinking that flowered in the Council. Lay readers of whatever background will find everything here accessible and thought provoking.

Another treasure in Lakeland's trove is his careful account of the work and theology of Yves Congar, not only, but especially, in Chapter 2: 'The Achievement of Yves Congar'. Lakeland's account of Congar's work in the laity captures the importance, and even the excitement, of Congar's ideas. This retrieval of Congar's ideas, now that more and more of his writings are becoming accessible in English, is fostering a quiet renewal after 'The Great Renewal' sparked by the Council. Lakeland's proficiency in French has made possible his probing of French theology leading up to and after Vatican II. What seems especially convincing here is the fact that Lakeland is not arguing a point; he is simply laying out how converging insights led to a reconceptualization of the role of lay people. Despite occasional takings back with the left hand what was given with the right – as in the John Paul's flawed *Christifideles Laici* – the re-imagination of the role of laypersons in a renewed Church will continue to flourish, in part, thanks to this book.