

attention paid to ancient writers however is very refreshing, particularly in a book on ecclesiology, which represents a challenge to the myopia of modern ecclesiologies.

Furthermore the book clings tenaciously to its roots in living worshiping congregation and community. Evidence from Owens' own church, where he is co-pastor, and from the specific history of his Methodist tradition, informs and elucidates what participation in the life of God looks like with regard to the concrete practices of the church. This rooting in a real community will make this book revitalising for ministers and priests. Those with an interest in ecumenism will find less here than may be expected from a book on ecclesiology but may find other sources within that will broaden their horizons.

On the whole this is a constructive, instructive and well-developed piece of theology. The thought worlds that have dominated this area of theology have been successfully brought into question and the subject has been reconnected with roots in the ancient church and Chalcedonian thinking that is the benchmark of all Christian speech and practice. There is more work to do in this area, more than this text could attempt, particularly attention to the relationship between the church's participation in God and the rest of creation, but the debate has moved on considerably from where it was. Other theologians would do well to investigate the fields of enquiry opened up by this book because they impact on all areas of theology, given that it is concerned fundamentally with how God is in the world.

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**LEARNING THE LANGUAGE OF FAITH** edited by John Sullivan (*Matthew James Publishing, 2010*) £14.95

"To live is to change," writes John Henry Newman, "and to be perfect is to have changed often." This may appear to be a challenging declaration but, in proposing that faith is to be regarded as a dynamic, evolving, and vigorous virtue that is open to change, it would be consistent with the sentiments of this book. In subscribing to the view that faith is a journey, the reader will, I think, come to appreciate how, as one seeks a greater understanding of God, faith will thrive, not on inflexible adherence to rules, but on one's openness to change.

This is a welcome book that should appeal to a wide readership. It includes a variety of perspectives from both Roman Catholic and Church of England contributors. Thus, whilst the title of the book refers to 'faith', its primary interest is in the Christian faith. It brings together, in both an eclectic and an ecumenical way, a broad collection of views that will be of interest to families, parishes and schools. Ostensibly, its scope would appear to be too diverse to satisfy the professional scholar, yet, paradoxically, in its range, it offers a stimulating exegesis of the place and nature of faith development.

Implicit in such a wide-ranging book, are contradictions and conflicts, but these serve to provide a comprehensive and inclusive picture of the language of faith in a variety of contexts. Within the Catholic tradition, of course, there are inevitable tensions at the interface between the teaching church – as represented by the office of the *magisterium* – and the learning church. Significantly, learning is a key recurring theme that runs through the book.

Throughout, Sullivan, in conjunction with the other contributors, provides a discriminating exploration of concepts such as evangelisation, catechesis, and religious education. With a refined discernment, he elegantly elaborates upon their similarities and differences. He skilfully and convincingly argues that, whilst

there may be tensions between education and evangelisation, there is an overlap where the two are in harmony. He proposes that, whilst inherently there is a complex and multi-faceted relationship between them, there is also a great deal more coherence and compatibility than is often assumed.

Identifying different languages of faith, Sullivan distinguishes between subjective and objective dimensions. Thus, there is also a place here for personal reflection in both family and pastoral contexts, illustrating the importance of communication in the development of faith in the experiences of people in everyday life.

In a globalised, post-modern world, characterised by moral relativism, secularism, consumerism, and materialism, these are challenging times for those of faith. In the light of rapid social and technological change, there is dissatisfaction and impatience with the educational *status quo*. It is pertinent, therefore, that this book should address the need for a radical review of faith learning. One implication of these developments is the compelling assertion that education should be regarded as a lifelong activity. Within this context, it seems to me, schools, colleges, and universities are challenged to adapt to the notion of life-long learning, in which, in the language of the Second Vatican Council, “we journey toward the consummation of human history” (*Gaudium et Spes* 45).

The range and quality of the discourse is impressive. Daniel O’Leary’s characteristic enthusiasm, for example, is inspirational. His homely language is a fine counterbalance to the more erudite musings of other contributors. His approach is intuitive rather than cerebral: his is a language of celebration. For O’Leary, God is a God of love and compassion. One should not neglect to mention also Peter Shepherd’s timely and welcome chapter, which explores the complexities of communicating faith not only in Church of England schools but also in other Christian (including Catholic) schools.

This book is recommended for all those who are engaged in learning and teaching faith. The term ‘discipleship’ may be construed in a variety of ways but, essentially, a disciple is a learner, a pupil of a teacher, one who submits him or herself to a discipline of learning. We are reminded, too, that as disciples of Christ we have a duty to give witness.

The book is concerned with the pedagogy of faith, which is informed by the communication of God’s revelation. Thus, the Christian disciple sets out to ‘follow Christ and learns more and more within the Church to think like Him, to judge like Him, to act in conformity with His commandments, and to hope as He invites us to’ (*Catechesi Tradendae* 20).

Although at times Sullivan can be over-wordy, protracted, and prolix, there is much in this book to be commended. For the pedant, however, it would have been appreciated if the book had been subject to a more rigorous proof-reading so that words and phrases such as ‘practicing’ (p. 20), ‘comprised of’ (p. 21), ‘an inbuilt crap detector’ (p. 30), ‘fulfill’ (p. 151), ‘it’s also and amphetamine’ (p. 213) and ‘some many month after it actually happened’ (p. 267) could have been revised.

Overall, though, these are minor blemishes in a very enjoyable book. It makes a clear statement that there is no such thing as a value-free and neutral perspective. It demonstrates that communicating faith is a complex process that is subject to development and formation. The conversation is conducted with poise and balance. Predictably, Sullivan is thoughtful, reflective, and studious. Affirming a faith perspective in the face of contemporary challenges, he displays his scholarship with a modest humility and the book is informed and “underpinned by prayer and attentiveness to God’s holy spirit” (p. 180).

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