

**FAITHFUL AND LAITY IN THE CHURCH: The Bases of their Legal Status**, by Alvaro del Portillo. *Ecclesia Press*, Shannon, Ireland, 1973. 200 pp. £1.50.

For a variety of reasons the existing canon law (based on the *Codex* of 1917) gives inadequate expression to the central affirmation that all the baptized faithful together constitute the visible Church and it distorts the nature of the apostolate of the laity, an apostolate exercised alongside that of religious and clerics. The present study is an attempt to remedy these defects. The proposals are important but much can be learned from the very method employed; we are offered the rare convergence of a sound legal technique and an informing theology alive to both Scripture and tradition. Canon law can thus appear for what it is—applied ecclesiology.

The present inadequacies seem to be due partly to historical circumstances and partly to the cramping effects of etymology on the expressions *laici*, the laity, and *christifideles*, the faithful, (dictionary addicts are, however, likely to be less startled than most to read the commonplace '*idiotam autem dicit laicum*'). The Church tended to gravitate towards becoming a clerical preserve and, worse still, the pursuit of Christian perfection ceased to be the norm for all the faithful and risked becoming the exclusive domain of a few. Vatican II dramatically changed all this and its documents provide the main impetus for the ongoing reforms; the extent of the changes required can be seen simply by comparing, say, Canon 682 with *Lumen Gentium*, 37.

A new start can be made from the fact that baptism gives to the faithful a common, basic status as members of the Church and assigns to all of them without exception the task of personal sanctification and an apostolate. It is this fundamental equality and solidarity that makes possible a functional diversity and a hierarchy. In Augustinian terms there is one *nomen gratiae* common to all the baptized and another *nomen officii*, with its traditional tripartite division of lay, religious and clerical. The canonist's work is to implement the doctrine that baptism is not a private, individualistic event but the entry into brotherhood and the undertaking of a mission.

There are excellent proposals to safeguard the subjective rights each Christian possesses; personal dignity, freedom, equality and so on. Abuses do occur and to argue against taking protective measures on the ground that canon law has 'peculiar characteristics' is spurious and harmful. Throughout, the relation of person to community (ecclesial and otherwise) is handled with a sensitivity one does not often credit lawyers with, and the merits of Chapter III stand out even in this generally good book. It is there that the rights a fundamental legal constitution might embody are examined and the exposition deserves serious consideration whether or not one accepts the need for a constitution as such. The sections on 'Education' are the ones least likely to connect with British experience (itself a warning against legislating too rigidly) but the remarks on the administration of dioceses and parishes do have an immediate relevance to local conditions; a parish 'is not a territory, but a community and a community which is part of the People of God. That is to say, a parish is not a community of lay people over which and above which a parish priest exercises the function of caring for souls, but a community made up of members of the faithful—lay and clerical—each of whom has his own particular mission within it' (p. 129).

The chapter on the non-baptized and canon law has the widest perspective and also a certain urgency as Vatican II has decreed that the legal status of catechumens must be clearly defined. In any case some explicit sense should be given to the belief that the Church is the *universal* sacrament of salvation. Not only has she to preach the Good News to all men but she must also safeguard as far as possible the right of non-Christians to hear that message and to associate themselves with the Church to the extent that they want.

A last thought. If any one book is going to redeem canon law in the eyes of the faithful, this is it.

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'ACTIVE AND PASSIVE POTENCY' IN THOMISTIC ANGELOLOGY, by Howard P. Kalnz. *Martinus Nijhoff*, The Hague, 1972. vii and 104 pp. Guilders, 16.50.

It is not immediately clear where the author's interest in Thomistic Angelology lies. There is plenty of material in this book, that could form the basis for interesting discussion, but it is

presented in a manner that makes it hard to appreciate for anyone not already well-acquainted with the angels. This weakness could be connected with what seems to be the