

sonal community to have a superior at all as part of their 'environment'.

I rather hope, too, that neither of these

books becomes part of any convent environment, at least not without a warning sticker: 'Reading may be dangerous to your health'.

SR MADELEINE, O.S.A.

**THE DEACON IN THE CHURCH: PAST AND FUTURE**, by Edward P. Echlin, S.J. *Alba House*, New York. Pp. xiii + 139. \$3.95.

Appearing, as it does, immediately after the ordination of England's first permanent deacons in modern times and just prior to the first wide-scale ordinations of permanent deacons in the United States, this is a very timely book indeed. And Fr Echlin, who served as chairman from 1970 to 1971 of a special committee of the Catholic Theological Society of America on the theology of the permanent diaconate, has special qualifications to write it. There will be many who, not knowing the long and diverse history of the deacon in the Church, will wonder what this 'new' thing is, who will want to get some idea what a deacon is and where he came from in the first place and what he is supposed to do. This book has been written to provide answers to just such inquiries.

Judging correctly that the present role, and even the future tasks, of the diaconate must be seen in the light of its past, the author traces its history in four main stages: the Early Church's recognition of the need for men and women to provide services of liturgy, word and charity and its initial attempts to structure just such ministries; the golden age of the male diaconate from Ignatius of Antioch to Nicea; the gradual decline until the reformation; and the restoration, both the inchoate attempts of Trent and the movements in the fifties, that eventually led to the full restoration by Vatican II.

The methodology is textual and historical rather than theological, with brief interpretations of much of the available evidence. The history receives its fullest treatment in those sections dealing with the roles or possible roles of deacons within the pluralistic confusion of

early Church order, with many of the major texts being cited in full. In contrast with this variety, a unified picture of the present-day deacon's task is given in a summary of Paul VI's *Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem*.

But the author becomes especially daring when he surveys the possible future role of the deacon in a very brief epilogue. The importance of the deacon is seen not in what he does but in what he is, and for the author, the deacon is an intermediary—between the hierarchy and mankind, between the clergy and the married, between the world and the Church. In this intermediate role, he is seen to have almost unlimited opportunities of service. Even such items as liberating men from the effects of advertising or the 'tyranny of the automobile', lobbying for public transportation, technological sharing with the third world, and the important problem of reconciling man with his environment are not seen as being outside the deacon's portfolio. There are priests who might be envious to see the deacon's role so widely extended, while their own in the author's view is simply that of prayer, study and the preaching of the word.

Readers of this book may wish at times to disagree with the interpretations or the arguments that are presented, but they will often have to base their alternate conclusions on information and evidence that the author himself has provided for them. At other points further information may be required, yet may have been omitted in the interests of simplification or to confine this slender volume within its chosen limits.

PETER J. FENNESSY, S.J.

**BREAKTHROUGH**, by Mark Schoof, O.P. *Mercier Press (Logos Books)*; 275 pp. £1.50.

The *Breakthrough* is of course the way in which Roman Catholic theology has freed itself from the dead and deadening language, categories and style of the manuals of scholastic and neo-scholastic theology. How did it all happen? How did it come about that the Second Vatican Council, particularly in its documents on The Church, Revelation and The Church in

the Modern World, laid much of this old-style language to rest, and at least opened the way for genuine creative theology? For many, the answer will be seen in the startling and enspirited initiative of Pope John in calling the Council. But of course the answer is much more complicated, much less dramatic than that, as this book shows. And perhaps for this reason

the word 'Breakthrough', while certainly eye-catching, is too dramatic a description: it was more the slow, painful erosion of a granite-like edifice. For the history has been one of slow, stuttering painful progress; and at times the participants must have been close to total gloom and despair. A slow, painful and complicated history then; and the story is well told by Mark Schoof to whom we should be grateful for giving us the fruits of his obviously considerable scholarship in such a light, easy, lucid and often humorous style; my only niggling complaint is the quite astonishing frequency of the word 'concrete'; though whether this is the fault of the author or the fine translator, N. D. Smith, I don't know.

We also owe a debt of gratitude to the participants in the story, for their learning and scholarship, their profound faith, their originality, their humility, and certainly their tenacity and courage in the face of the most impossible and often shameful opposition of the 'Roman theologians'—men like Newman (of whom it is encouraging to know that his opponents said of him that 'he had an infinite capacity for not reading important books'), whose original thinking about the historical development of dogma was to play such an important role later on, and who yet was regarded with suspicion well into the twentieth century as a forerunner of Modernism.

In the German tradition there were people like Karl Muth founding the highly influential journal *Hochland* at the end of the nineteenth century; and Schell, who lived until 1906 after doing pioneer work on apologetics, only to find to his horror and disbelief that his major work on that subject had been placed on the Index in 1898. Between the wars there was the work of the German school who introduced into theology the phenomenological method of Husserl, Scheler and Heidegger. There was Romano Guardini, to whom Conciliar theology owes a considerable debt in ecclesiology,

liturgy and the whole question of Christianity in the modern world; and, of course, there was Karl Adam at Tübingen, who was the first to introduce Karl Barth to a wider circle of Catholic readers through his articles in *Hochland*. In Germany, too, there was the work of Odo Casel on liturgical renewal, Jungmann on catechetics and, of course, Karl Rahner who has been one of the most important theologians up to and beyond Vatican II.

In the French tradition the list is too long to elaborate in a review, but mention should be made of the Catholic literary revival with its roots going back beyond the First World War, and of one of the most powerful forces leading to renewal in French Catholic life from the 1930s onwards—The Young Christian Workers, together with the efforts of Cardinal Suhard in the *Mission de France* and the Worker Priest Movement. Then there was the work of the Jesuit Theological Faculty at Lyons, Fourvière, and the Dominican centre of Le Saulchoir. The work there is almost personified in M.-D. Chenu, who had done such brilliant work on St Thomas and yet found one of his books put on the Index as late as 1942. Chenu cannot be mentioned without noting the work his fellow Dominican, Yves Congar, who suffered more than most at the hands of the Church from 1939 almost up to Vatican II. Nor can we leave out of the list that other illustrious Dominican and colleague of Mark Schoof, E. Schillebeeckx.

The Second Vatican Council provided the story with a much happier ending than could possibly have been dreamed of twelve years ago. That this is so is largely due to the courage and deep faith of these and many other men. Our thanks are due to Mark Schoof for unravelling such a complicated history, and not least for providing us with a quite massive bibliography to document it all.

ALBAN WESTON, O.P.

**THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE OF MANKIND**, by Ninian Smart. *Collins*, 1971. 735 pp. Hardback £2.10. Fontana 75p.

From any point of view, this book is an impressive job in its compression of a vast number of facts into a relatively small container without undue distortion. For anybody who wants to 'take up' comparative religion, or who would wish to have a little encyclopaedia of religions at hand, this book will be most valuable. Professor Smart, however, has

succeeded in being more than a compiler; he seeks to note, briefly though it be, the strands of experience and insight which are the links between, or the boundaries of, the great world-views (for Marxism and Humanism are accommodated here). In doing so, he reveals a not inconsiderable degree of empathy, which avoids the rocks of rigidity and the shoals of