

Susan Lucas (ed.). 2020.

God's Church in The World: The Gift of Catholic Mission.

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ANGLICAN POLITY AND MISSION remain heated topics if arguments on social media and articles in the press are anything to go by, sometimes reaching fever pitch among the adherents and opponents of movements such as “Fresh Expressions of Church” and “Save the Parish”. A book seeking to elucidate a distinctly Catholic missiology for the twenty-first century seems, therefore, highly relevant. This book’s chapters are largely drawn from a 2018 conference resulting from the “improbable” collaboration between representatives of Forward in Faith and Anglican Catholic Future (p. ix).

That the book is seeking to engage these ongoing debates is made clear in that by the second page of the introduction, it has already critiqued *Mission Shaped Church* (2004), a publication criticized by many prominent voices from

the Catholic wing of the Church of England. The book seeks to argue for a distinctively Catholic understanding of mission “in a language in which Catholics of all ‘tribes’ in the Church of England would feel at home” (p. x). The book does offer useful perspectives on mission, particularly the final chapter, “Catholic Mission in Historical Perspective”, which traces the history and identifies some useful core principles. I would, however, argue that the book does not reach the potential of its proposal to represent mission from “the breadth of Catholic integrities in the Church of England today” (as the back cover claims).

Organized into a clear structure, the book offers chapters on a variety of important aspects of mission from a Catholic Anglican perspective, including prayer (Ch.1), the Trinity (Ch.2), the Sacraments (Ch.6), Social Justice (Ch.7) and more. These chapters give practical perspectives on mission through exploring the history, theology and practice of the Catholic movement in the Church of England. Largely argued succinctly and clearly, the book offers a useful introduction to mission in this tradition. Contributions and conversations from either side of the big “divide” over the ordination of women weave well together and don’t feel forced.

The book’s greatest weakness, I would argue, is its claimed *breadth* of “Catholic integrities”. Simply representing both those for/against the ordination of women is just not enough. An example of this is that the authors are all exclusively white, and are all clergy (with the exception of one professed religious contributing to Ch.4). This seems highly problematic given the diverse make up of Catholic Anglicans, especially for a book entitled “God’s Church in the *World*”. A second major issue related to the first, is that there is absolutely no engagement with the relationship between Christian mission and the ongoing legacy of racism and colonialism. This lack of breadth and engagement is highlighted through some particularly problematic passages which fail to intelligently engage missiology in the diverse, postmodern and multi-faith context of twenty-first-century Britain. References to “tough black boys from estates” (p. 63) and “harder to reach estates and people groups” (p. 109) feel decidedly distasteful in a book written by elite-educated white people. Indeed, the general tone of the book seems to fail to engage with a twenty-first-century English context where the Church must learn to accept a very different place in society and national life. I would suggest, therefore, that this leaves room for further published work on Catholic mission in the Anglican tradition which engages a broader and more critical perspective.