

The Vows Book: Anglican Teaching on the Vows of Obedience, Poverty, and Chastity. By Clark Berge. Mt. Sinai, NY: Vest Pocket Publications, 2014. Pp. 141. \$15.95.

This practical book, written in the thin-column style of Peter Maurin's *Easy Essays*, shows how the vows of obedience, poverty, and chastity can shape lay and religious life. The six brief chapters detail the nature and purpose of the vows, describe various prayer practices, and contend that vowed life is best expressed in loving service of God and neighbor.

In Berge's view, obedience involves listening and responding to the Holy Spirit, who speaks through Scripture, tradition, others, conscience, and the natural world. Poverty is the voluntary choice to follow the example of Jesus, which frees one to serve others (especially the poor) with joy. Chastity helps married and celibate people live distinctively, love rightly, and further the kingdom of God. The vows take root and transform one through prayer and acts of service.

The book has three main strengths. First, it appeals to personal stories and the lives of exemplars to show how the vows form character, foster spirituality, and encourage social action. The result is a concrete account of the vowed life. Second, each chapter includes a number of exercises—topics to pray about and discuss—which would be useful in an examination of conscience. This, then, is a guide to spiritual formation that should be practiced. Third, the straightforward writing style helps make B.'s views easy to understand and apply to one's life. At times, however, this style leads to amusing expressions. For example, the chapter on chastity has a section entitled "What about sexy thoughts and feelings?" If one lets the direct language disarm rather than distract, this is an effective book to promote reflection on one's calling.

B.'s Anglican spirituality is influenced by Franciscan ideas and practices, making it relevant to a wide audience—among others: spiritual directors, those discerning a call to ordained ministry or religious life, students in a course on spirituality, and parishioners interested in deepening their spiritual practices.

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Humble Confidence: Spiritual and Pastoral Guidance from Karl Rahner. By James J. Bacik. Collegetown, MN: Liturgical. Pp. xi + 185. \$19.95.

After more than 50 years of reading Karl Rahner, I would not hesitate to call Bacik's book "the complete Rahner," as it covers every major and minor aspect of Rahner's monumental achievement—except his thesis that the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity, and vice versa. It is a must-read for those seeking a lucid, nuanced, jargon-free, synthetic overview of Rahner's philosophical, theological, and spiritual writings.

The book's structure illustrates B.'s long fascination with Rahner's method of correlation, a method as significant as, for example, Origen's baptism of Greek philosophy, Augustine's infusion of Western theology with Latin categories and Roman habits