

Overall, this is a remarkable book from one of the busiest pastors in the contemporary Church. It reveals the man Vincent Nichols: he frequently makes reference to his childhood and the influence of his mother; he is passionate about justice and is moved almost to tears in Gaza; his life is centred on Christ and his theology is Trinitarian; his respect for the human person is born of his conviction that everyone is created in the image and likeness of God and has a transcendent nature and end. As a literary work, *Faith Finding a Voice* is of the highest standard. End notes are thorough and informative, and show a sensitivity to the non-specialist reader. The main sources of reference are the recent popes, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and Scripture. The author's familiarity with the Old and New Testaments is most impressive. The indices are excellent, except for the bibliography which is scant and does not take cognizance of the main contemporary works on, for example, priesthood or inter-religious dialogue but, then, this book is not a theological treatise. The book is intended to give a bounce to the step of the missionary disciple. It certainly does that.

Maynooth

NOEL O'SULLIVAN

Love's Doorway to Life: An Alternative Biography of Patrick Kavanagh. Una Agnew and Art Agnew. Éist Audio Productions. 2017 (www.eist.ie). Price €25.

This triple CD on the life and poetry of Patrick Kavanagh is a real gem – the fruit of a lifetime's study by Sr Una Agnew, ably assisted by her brother Art. Not only does the publication present us with nearly 50 of Kavanagh's poems, but there is a wonderful commentary on each poem. The three CDs follow the life of the great man from his beginnings in Inniskeen, where he first began to write, on to Dublin where he never really fitted in, and yet culminating in the flowering of his verse there in his latter years, before his untimely death in 1967 at the age of 63. Una and Art hail from the drumlin landscape of Kavanagh country, and their local knowledge adds further spice to the fascinating commentary. Art is the local expert in guiding visitors around Inniskeen and its hinterland, while Una has made Kavanagh and his spirituality the love and study of her life, as evidenced in her book, *The Mystical Imagination of Patrick Kavanagh* (1998). Kavanagh has reached a level of popularity that was unforeseen at the time of his death, and he is now mentioned in the same breath as Yeats and Heaney; the latter indeed had great admiration for the man from Inniskeen, praising his genius and saying that he 'chiselled his poetry out of a literary nowhere'. For a man who stopped formal school at the age of 13, Kavanagh was remarkably well-read. He preferred 'dramin' to farming, jotting down his verses as he went about the chores of farming life. His father said he broke everything on the farm except the crow-bar, 'and he bent that'!

After the death of his father he headed off for Dublin, in 1939, in an attempt to make a living from his verse. He was not well received

among the literati of Dublin. He was, of course, gauche and uncouth in his personal habits, and could be very rude in his behaviour, and yet beneath this crude exterior there was a great beauty of soul, and this comes through in many of his poems. Of his 253 extant poems, no fewer than 138 include explicitly religious themes, images or allusions, and God is mentioned over 100 times. He found God "in the bits and pieces of every day". He had a Hopkins-like love for nature and a keen sense of the divine presence in creation, of the 'beautiful, beautiful, beautiful God breathing his love by a cutaway bog' (The One). He looked on the commonplace as a visionary. And he saw his role as a poet 'to smelt in passion the commonplaces of life'. (After Forty Years of Age). 'For we must record love's mystery without claptrap/Snatch out of time the passionate transitory. (The Hospital). Naming places was important for him – it gave them a kind of immortality. Otherwise, who would have heard of Shancoduff or Cassidy's hanging hill, or Inniskeen Road?

All this, and much more, is beautifully illustrated in this production, in which there is a seamless weaving of Kavanagh's life and poetry. Sr Una detects the underlying autobiographical thread in many of the poems so that, to a large extent, we have Kavanagh's own words charting the development of his life, up to the point where he found his 'hegira' or rebirth by the banks of the Grand Canal, 'pouring redemption for me'. That serenity persisted up to the time of his death in the Merriem Nursing Home, off Baggot St., a few years later. When he died, his wife of less than a year, Katherine Moloney, was heard to remark: 'There goes all I know of God'.

This triple CD is beautifully produced by Éist Studies. Its library format makes it a delight to handle while the selection of rustic images and photos chosen to illustrate the work are perfectly suited to Kavanagh's poetry. Its accompanying booklet contains a wealth of scholarly reference material while the musical excerpts woven into the fabric of the production, through the hands of Pauline Johnson, make of these CD's a thoroughly pleasurable and spiritually enriching listening experience.

Dublin

VINCENT O'HARA, ODC

The Wisdom of Love in the Song of Songs. Stefan Gillow Reynolds, (London: Hikari Press). Pp. 355. Price: £25.00. ISBN: 978-0-9956478-2-4

For fifteen hundred years, from the second century to the seventeenth, the Song of Songs was read by Jews and Christians as a sacred text. It seemed on the surface to be about the love of a man and a woman, but it was, in fact, about the love of God for humankind. The human story was a metaphor for the divine. This reading of the biblical book inspired, among Christians especially, a rich mystical literature: in the third century the commentaries of Origen; in the twelfth, the sermons of Bernard of Clairvaux; in the sixteenth, the poetry and prose of John of the Cross. But in the seventeenth century the tradition faltered. The Song came to