

Eamon Duffy.  
**Walking to Emmaus**  
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*Burns and Oates, London, 2006, £9.99*

The title 'Walking to Emmaus' refers to the sermon which the author preached on Easter Day 1990 in Westminster Abbey, on the theme of Jesus opening up to the disciples their own past as he interpreted the Scriptures. The 'opening up the Scriptures' is the underlying theme of the whole book.

Eamon Duffy is a devout Roman Catholic layman and an eminent Cambridge Professor. His subject is Church history, and he is probably best known in the wider world for his monumental work entitled 'The Stripping of the Altars'. 'Walking to Emmaus', is a selection of his sermons, most of which were preached in Anglican churches and college chapels. In his introduction, he expresses appreciation for the service of choral Evensong, which formed the setting of many of the sermons in this book.

Books of sermons can be very dull. The spoken word can lose much of its freshness when committed to print. But this book is stimulating and inspiring, and is recommended both for devotional reading and for serious Bible study. In fact the complex arguments and cross-references are such that one can profit most by reading and pondering upon them.

The sermons do not always bring comfort and solace, and they are not intended to do so. The author is outspoken and challenging. In his Remembrance Sunday sermon at Oxford, he speaks of the danger of "instant canonization", whether it be of soldiers who died at war or popular figures like Princess Diana. He pleads for much more realism and discernment, though few would agree with his own verdict that Dr. Johnson is "the greatest and wisest" of all the saints of Anglicanism.

He challenges the increase of secularisation in society, quoting Pope Benedict XVI's words about Christ showing us the highway through the wilderness, but balancing this concept by quoting Cardinal Martini's words: "We travel in hope, not in certainty".

One can read, and then read again, this remarkable book, finding in it a great deal of food for thought.

Martin SSF