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The Dictionary of Historical Theology

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Christ For All People, simultaneously published in New Zealand, the United States, Canada, and Switzerland, was produced under the auspices of the World Council of Churches. It was inspired by the success of *The Bible Through Asian Eyes*, published in 1991 by the Asian Christian Art Association. A few of the images in *Christ For All People* appeared in the earlier WCC publication, but most are new. The editor, Rev. Ron O'Grady, is a former Associate General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia and one of the founders of the Asian Christian Art Association.

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The Dictionary of Historical Theology

Trevor A. Hart, Ed.
Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000
619 pages, \$77.00 Hardcover

The Dictionary of Historical Theology intends to serve “as a ready reference to scholars, students, ministers of religion and informed lay people alike,” by “drawing together the best of contemporary scholarship on the key figures, movements and texts in the story of Christian theology from the early church to the present day.” (xix) Assessing the success of such a massive undertaking entails no mean feat and this reviewer is most certainly *not* in the position to play judge. I can assure the reader, however, that in this dictionary I have found a resource that I am certain I will use for years to come. The articles (ranging from 500 to 15,000 words) are, by and large, engaging and concise treatments that also provide helpful suggestions for further reading.

In order to review this dictionary, I gave myself the task of reading it from cover to cover. I realize, of course, that few readers would approach a dictionary in like manner. I am now convinced that there is a great benefit to be gained in such an exercise. The task of reading through this dictionary has proven serendipitous. My mind has been stretched, in a helpful way, by sequentially reading, for example, the entries “Leontius

of Byzantium”, “Liberal Protestantism” and “Liberation Theologies.” I was intrigued by patterns that emerged both within and across various eras and noted a repetition of themes, authors and developments that unfold across the generations and genres of writing. As one would expect, thinkers and theologians such as Aristotle, Plato, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Kant, Hegel, Schleiermacher and Barth are nearly ubiquitous; but I was surprised by the number of articles referencing “Coleridge,” for example. The host of theologians on my “must read” list has expanded exponentially as a result of this text. I highly recommend this dictionary as both a “ready reference” and as a testimony to the eccentricities, drama and drudgery that make up Christian theology.

Every reviewer, of course, will have her own queries about entries that ought to be included, which have not, and vice versa. It struck me as curious, for example, that there were no entries treating Spenser, Herder, William James, Womanist Theology or Radical-Orthodoxy. I am certain that most, if not all, Gifford lecturers have been included, which may or may not be helpful. In my estimation, however, most of the significant thinkers and movements from antiquity to post/modernity have been treated directly, if not tangentially. There is a balanced treatment of Roman Catholic, Anglican, Protestant and Orthodox theologians and movements.

Lutherans will want to know that David S. Yeago of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, South Carolina wrote fine articles on “Luther”, “Lutheran Confessions and Catechisms” and “Lutheranism.” Yeago pays special attention to Luther’s treatment of sacramental theology and its relationship to the centre of Luther’s mature thought in justification by faith alone. Curiously, he does not relate Luther’s sacramental theology to his theology of the cross, as Yeago does elsewhere. He provides a superb summation of each of the confessional documents and locates them historically in a manner that provides readers with a concise introduction to key themes. His treatment of Lutheranism relates major movements and disagreements within Lutheranism.

A number of theologians representing Canadian universities provided entries. Among them, I found Joanne McWilliam’s “Augustine of Hippo”, Joseph L. Magina’s “Ecumenical Theology” and George R. Sumner Jr.’s “Wolffhart Pannenberg” to be especially helpful. Gary D. Badcock of Huron College wrote stellar articles on “Hegel”, “Hegelianism” and “Richard of St. Victor.”

I heartily recommend *The Dictionary of Historical Theology*. It will prove an indispensable source for those needing an introduction and orientation to unfamiliar names and movements that they encounter in footnotes in other texts. For the ambitious reader, here is a spade for deeper digging.

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Inspiration and Authority: Nature and Function of Christian Scripture

Paul J. Achtemeier
Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999
166 pages, \$16.50 Softcover

For Christians who are grappling with the “nature and function” of the Bible in the modern world, particularly with a way to think about how Scripture relates to God’s activity in believers’ lives, Achtemeier provides a solid, accessible starting point for consideration. Unconvinced by the doctrine of “factual inerrancy,” but from an admittedly conservative point of view, Achtemeier evaluates both the “liberal” focus on the human origins of Scripture and the “conservative” insistence on God’s role. He questions the assumptions driving each view. In a thoughtful, intelligible and pragmatic manner, he demonstrates how the benefits of critical scholarship can contribute positively to a contemporary Christian understanding of the inspiration of Scripture. Yet, he confirms that Scripture always points beyond itself to the reality of the living God.

Achtemeier develops a model in which the locus of inspiration, rather than being in several inspired individuals or in the words themselves, is in a dynamic, long-term, Spirit-led *process*. In the ancient world, the process involved God’s interaction with the community of faith, which led to the development of Scriptural texts and the formation of the canon. The process of inspiration continues into the present because the content of the Bible offers a transformative experience to