
Reviewed by Patricia Lamoureux
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There is no dearth of commentaries, guides, companions, workbooks, introductions, primers, supplements, reflections, and summaries on the universal Catechism of the Catholic Church. These materials provide the “indispensable mediation” to interpret the doctrine on faith and morals for different cultures, for people’s diverse developmental levels, and in light of distinctive aspects of the multiform local churches. What has been missing from this plethora of resources, however, is a book that explains the essentials of its moral teaching in a comprehensive and comprehensible way. Thus, the importance of this present contribution of Kevin J. O’Neil and Peter Black, distinguished moral theologians who have a knack for translating complex concepts and theories into clear, concise language. Here the authors focus on “Life in Christ,” the third part of the Catechism, which is devoted to the corpus of moral teaching.

The book is divided into three sections that cover the main themes treated in the Catechism. The content is creatively organized and references are provided in the text to help readers easily locate corresponding material in the Catechism. Section One focuses on the foundations of the moral life—the Triune God, freedom and responsibility, virtue, the moral act, conscience, sin, and conversion. In Section Two the authors examine tradition, Scripture, natural law, and the magisterium; those “avenues to moral truth” that help contemporary disciples become good and live rightly. In Section Three the authors explicate the Catechism’s teaching on bioethics, sexual ethics, social ethics, and environmental ethics. While the entire book is written clearly with good examples, this section is particularly commendable. The complexities of these subdivisions of moral theology are explained lucidly and succinctly. Further, O’Neil and Black show how certain “umbrella” goods such as human life, human dignity, human sociality/relationality, and creation ground the Catholic tradition’s approach to these moral issues. In addition, the authors provide helpful and insightful questions to guide readers in examining these issues in light of the fundamental values at stake. The book also includes a selected bibliography of church teaching for each issue and a glossary of key terms.

This handbook is a valuable resource for teachers, RCIA candidates, parish study groups, and others interested in understanding the moral teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. I have used it in an introductory course in Catholic moral theology that prepares students for entry into a Master’s program. Read alongside the Catechism, this book was instrumental in
helping students to grasp the fundamental concepts of moral theology and to see implications for their personal lives and pastoral ministry. This is truly an essential handbook for all those seeking to live in Christ.


Reviewed by William A. Durbin
Macon, North Carolina

After decades of developing an influential Christian theology of nature, Jurgen Moltmann turns his attention more directly to the relation of theology and science. The book is not a sustained analysis of this relation, but rather a collection of essays drawn from Moltmann’s contributions to various interdisciplinary conferences. Long convinced that theologians “can learn something about God . . . from the ‘book of nature,’” he offers a “profile of theology which is turned toward [the scientist].” His aim, he says, is not to produce a “special theology,” but to offer “a general teaching of wisdom” (xi–xiii). As with most essay collections, the result is a bit disjointed and somewhat repetitious. Nevertheless, Moltmann’s call to consider wisdom as a joint aim of science and theology is eminently worth considering.

In section one, Moltmann analyzes the separation of theology and science/philosophy in the modern age: a “frigid schism,” he says, that has involved, from the theological perspective, limiting salvation to the individual soul rather than the whole of creation. Meanwhile, the sciences, freed from theology and moral philosophy, have operated upon an instrumental reason intent upon gaining power over nature. Moltmann sees an opportunity now to redress the breach. He describes the provisional character of both scientific and theological truth in a world open to the future. He sketches the historical nature of reality, arguing for mutual responsibility for the whole of a reality realized only in time—a responsibility for a future “either won or thwarted” (18). In the shared uncertainty and responsibility, scientific and theological reflection on the world must interact to “further life”—on the level of “an all-embracing wisdom” which the Greeks called phronesis (26–27; 147).

In section two, entitled “theology and cosmology,” Moltmann considers “the whole.” He sketches a natural theology cognizant of scientific theories of open systems, but more directly reflecting his eschatological doctrine of creation. He offers an extended meditation on time and space—including the meaning of their origin and end—in a world open to the future. He focuses the theological discussion on a loving God who is the source and fulfillment of the possibilities in an open creation. Along the way, Moltmann provides a rich reading of the religious tradition, drawing upon biblical texts from Genesis to Revelation, along with patristic, medieval, and modern sources. His reflection takes on an interreligious character, too, when, for example, he relates the idea of kenosis, or God’s self-emptying in the act of creation, to the Jewish concept of Shekeniah, God’s indwelling, and the Orthodox view of God’s suffering patience.

In section three, Moltmann turns to ethical themes in his argument. Actually, he treats a mix of issues here under the heading of “the wisdom of the sciences.” He explores “the ethos of biomedical progress” in which he calls for an ethic of “peace in existence” to replace the modern ethos of a struggle for existence. He examines the natural theology of Giordano Bruno whose vision of God as Spirit of an
infinite universe, Moltmann argues, deserves attention today. He concludes with a comparison between the Chinese idea of the Tao and the biblical idea of wisdom, arguing that both wisdoms point to “the mysterious nature with which we seek to find a harmony through the way we live” (193). Arranged among these reflections is a chapter on “science and wisdom” in which Moltmann explicitly defines wisdom as “an ethics of knowledge” (147).

There is much of value in this short and challenging book. On the one hand, as a collection of essays, it remains preliminary; it lacks a sense of connection among the chapters and a concluding chapter to tie together its various elements. On the other hand, the author does propose a distinctive approach to the science-theology relation with a focus on wisdom as a common ground for dialogue.


Reviewed by Anthony J. Gittins
Catholic Theological Union

This is another volume in the Modern Spiritual Masters Series, which introduces and showcases such luminaries as Bonhoeffer, Merton, Main, and Mother Teresa. Looking forward to it with relish, I read it straight through (over two days), finding it sometimes touching, often enlightening, yet rarely really satisfying. I came away wondering why.

Chesterton was a gifted stylist, of course, a prolific writer, and a man with an opinion on almost everything. This selection provides us with some entertaining ephemera and even real insights. There are excerpts from his journalism as well as portions from his more weighty works. Sometimes the surprise is that an expected plum—from Orthodoxy, say—turns out to be something of a prune; at other times, what at first glance looks like an out-of-place “filler”—such as the transcription of a debate between GKC and GBS—is revealed as quite entertaining, perspicacious, and educational. Chesterton and Shaw must have made a wonderful pair.

The long editorial introduction by an evident aficionado and Chestertonian proves a rather wordy warm-up to the verbal virtuosity that is to follow. An editor’s lot is not, in this instance, altogether a happy one. The offerings that follow are gathered into half a dozen sections, conveniently titled Habits of . . . and in turn, Heart, Mind, Soul, Observance, Discernment, and Belief. Nevertheless, the actual contents, though given titles redolent of spirituality in some sense, and each prefaced with an editorial key to recurring Chestertonian themes (paradox, hilarity, humility and Scripture), are often perfectly worthy reflections but not convincingly describable by the word spirituality. The series title—Modern Spiritual Masters—is stretched a little thin, one may feel.

At the end of each selection there are notes intended to explain obscurities or textual allusions; often, though, they explain the rather obvious while avoiding the obscure. For example, and verbatim, we read “Jacobinism: radical or revolutionary principles. St. Simeon Stylites (d. 459): an ascetic who spent the last thirty years of his life on top of a seventy-two-foot pillar, ably assisted by a rotating staff at the bottom” (117). More on the etymology of Jacobinism (it relates to the Dominican church of St. Jacques in Paris) and less on exact dimensions and rotating staff would perhaps help. There are many more such instances.
Nevertheless, Chesterton comes through loud and clear—bombastic and magisterial, deft and inspired, stylish and intelligent. Not always the epitome of the Spiritual Master perhaps, he is certainly worth reading, a century after his rise. His writings certainly need no recommendation from me. But, above and beyond their intrinsic literary and philosophical merit, I would recommend them to contemporary students of English style. Whatever else he may be, Chesterton is always a model of grammatical correctness, impeccable clarity, and pithiness of expression. There was also a little boy inside the overweight adult, and he had a delightful sense of fun. The concluding debate with the septuagenarian Irish Fabian, George Bernard Shaw, is as fresh as a daisy!

Perhaps this book is better taken in small doses rather than read straight through, and I certainly have a number of passages marked for future reference. Still, some readers may be irritated by a degree of too much editorial presence. But if you do read it straight through, you will have actually read and benefited rather than left it as "something to come back to." The road to hell is paved with such things.


*Reviewed by Vincent Cushing*

*Washington Theological Union*

As a church we are now entering the fifth decade since the beginning of Vatican II. Scholars and church historians are increasingly situating the Council in a helpful historical perspective. This book, inspired by the late bishop of New Ulm, Minnesota, Raymond Lucker, and brought to completion by Dr. William McDonough, of the College of Saint Catherine in Saint Paul, continues that valuable exercise by examining the role of Vatican II’s Dogmatic Constitution on Revelation, *Dei Verbum,* for its theological and pastoral import. In the category of “what could he have been thinking,” it is a rare event that a book inspired by and substantially contributed to by a bishop is first and immediately criticized by that bishop’s successor, but that is the case with this book. Bishop Lucker’s work was criticized by his successor as doctrinally insufficient. Later, church authorities who had been requested to offer an official review indicated they found no problem with this work. The interested reader will need to form his or her own judgment. This reviewer found it to be sound, creative, and noteworthy.

The central focus of this work is the contemporary understanding of revelation and its multiple relations with science, history, and the church. In a provocative and engaging essay Terence Nichols explores both the complexity and beauty of the relation of evolution to Christian revelation. His remarks on “non-reductive physicalism” reflect a sophisticated understanding of contemporary science and the theological problematic of the free response of the human person to God. In addressing revelation as both dynamic and developing, essayists point up the transformative effect of the Word of God for the believing community. The essay entitled “A Growing Understanding of the Bible” provides an excellent summary of advances and then later regression (as exhibited in *Liturgiam Authenticam*) in Catholic biblical scholarship. Susan Wood’s thoughts on the teaching role of a bishop in his diocese are noteworthy for their theological depth and
the evident appreciation she had for Bishop Lucker. An original and engaging chapter explores, for the first time, I think, the theological import of the Pope's apologies for the sins of the church in millennial liturgies. The authors see this profound action as advancing and developing the tradition of the church.

This volume provides a sound basis for discussing issues of revelation, the relation of Catholic teaching and science, the role of the bishop as teacher, the church as Communion, and the liturgy. As such it will provide for spirited discussion in adult education forums. Individual articles will provide excellent material in graduate school curricula on such subjects as the church as a Communion or the role of the local church vis-à-vis the universal church. The authors are to be complimented for the careful and progressive development of the essays. Lastly, the thoughtful and sensitive ministry of Bishop Lucker to his church in New Ulm stands as a marker against which to measure sound and pastoral episcopal ministry in the church in these United States.


Reviewed by Donald W. Buggert Washington Theological Union

Rausch, Professor of Catholic Theology at Loyola Marymount University, clearly states the purpose of his work: “to survey the best of contemporary Christology, in order to develop a competent introduction to the discipline” (ix). The audience of this introduction seems to be the college student or college-educated adult. This purpose and audience of necessity limit the use of materials and choice of issues. Hence the book excludes dealing with christological issues from perspectives such as those of liberation theology, feminist theology, and religious pluralism.

In his christology, Rausch steers a middle course between a mere “Jesusology” or low christology and a christology which is so “high” that it is guilty of “practical monophysitism,” i.e. the denial of the true, historical humanity of Jesus. Following the lead of Walter (now Cardinal) Kasper’s “Christology of complementarity,” Rausch calls his approach a “dialectical Christology” (p. 7), i.e., one rooted in both historical-critical research and the faith and life of the church. In taking this approach, Rausch is very much in the mainstream of Catholic christology today.

The book’s controlling question is: “Who is Jesus?” Eight of the eleven chapters address this question from the perspective of contemporary biblical christology. Hence these chapters deal with topics such as the three quests for the historical Jesus (Old, New, and Third), methodological issues involved in historical-critical Jesus research, the Jewish background for Jesus and his movement, a historical-critical reconstruction of the pre-paschal Jesus (his life, ministry, and death), the resurrection, and post-paschal New Testament christologies. One chapter is devoted to the development of patristic-conciliar christology up to the Council of Chalcedon in 451. Two chapters are concerned with Christian soteriology, its history and its needed reinterpretation today.

The eight chapters dealing with biblical issues in christology fall within the mainstream of contemporary biblical scholarship, which itself allows a somewhat wide spectrum of opinions. I wish here that Rausch had developed more thoroughly and more clearly his own understanding...
of the Easter experience, which seems to be moving in the direction of that of E. Schillebeeckx and B. McDermott. The chapter on patristic-conciliar christology is, I believe, too short and underdeveloped. The beginner in christology will definitely need a pedagogue to assist him/her through these pages. Here I wish Rausch had shown more clearly the underlying soteriological concerns which drove the christological councils. I also wish he had given more analysis of the Council of Ephesus’ doctrine of the hypostatic union. This doctrine, though not the term itself, which is repeated at Chalcedon, is of crucial importance for the contemporary discussion of “multiple saviors.”

In his two chapters dealing with Christ as savior, I very much appreciate his “soteriology from below,” i.e., one based on the reign of God ministry of Jesus, culminating in his death and resurrection, as well as one which talks about salvation not only as a totally eschatologized and privatized reality but also as a reality which is experienced (in part) now and which affects the historical-social-political sphere. However, I wish that Rausch had developed more his explanation (over and against Roger Haight) of how Jesus is constitutive of the salvation of all and not just one “normative” savior among many others.

After questioning with the Enlightenment the many traditional explanations of Jesus’ saving work (e.g. an expiatory sacrifice, a work of satisfaction), we are then challenged today in our dialogue with the world religions to explain how Jesus can be the cause of the salvation of all. Rausch seems here to be going in the direction of Rahner’s (not Haight’s) sacramental or symbolic causality. Thus he writes: “Jesus is the symbol of God’s presence—understanding symbol in its full and deepest sense” (203). What is this “full and deepest sense?”

This is a good introductory text in christology. Despite a few minor reservations, I highly recommend its use for a college or adult education course.


*Reviewed by Theresa Koernke*
Washington Theological Union

If Vatican II enriched our theological concepts by saying that “the Church is the people of God” and that, by the working of the Spirit, we all share in the mission of Christ in virtue of baptism, it did not significantly address their implications for structures of authority and mutual accountability between the members of the church. Among the unhappy consequences of this lacuna is the often felt distinction-onto-polarization between what we have known as ‘ordained ministry’ and the expanding, publicly recognized ministries of the laity.

Authored by ten theologians, this anthology of contemporary theologies of lay and ordained ministries flows from the Lilly Endowment-sponsored Collegeville Ministry Seminar in August 2001. Contributors are Michael Downey, Zeni Fox, Richard R. Gaillardetz, Aurelie A. Hagstrom, Kenan B. Osborne, David N. Power, Thomas P. Rausch, Elissa Rinere, R. Kevin Seasoltz, and Susan K. Wood.

Each of the papers in the section “Ministry and Ministries” probes the “common baptismal matrix” of all ministry within the church for the sake of the mission of Christ in this world. Michael Downey names the implications of initiation: active receptivity to the Word evidenced in witness;
sacramental worship as expression of our common identity; and service to God's people in mission. Downey calls for the recognition that “the Church is always coming to be.” In keeping with this dynamic image of church, Richard Gaillardetz explores the development of images of church from the nineteenth century through current documents. This evolution points to the need to avoid distinctions that place an opposition between forms of ministry. Gaillardetz calls for a movement away from the centuries-long static sense in the Western Church that ministries were set by the Lord to imaging the church as “constituted by the bestowal of the Spirit.” In this image, we can speak of the common call to discipleship and of publicly deputed ministries as “ecclesial repositioning” for the sake of service.

As Thomas Rausch indicates, this image of church calls for an often uncomfortable “deconstruction” of attitudes and assumptions about the exercise of authority and mutual accountability. This portion of the book concludes with a reflection on the frequent disconnect between an ecclesiology of common-union and canon law. Here, Elissa Rinere indicates that “law is intended to implement theological teaching that has attained the level of universal acceptance in the Church.” And, if it is true that, prior to any distinctions, the people of God all share in the Spirit of Christ, King, Priest, and Prophet, then (1) we need flexible universal structures and (2) canon law needs to get better at recognizing charisms, rights, and responsibilities.

Beginning the section “Ordered Ministries,” David N. Power asserts that “it is the body as a whole which presents Christ to the world.” In this view, the ministries of bishop and presbyter can and have taken on new forms for the sake of the mission. Again, Zeni Fox points to the need for a conversion of attitudes. Fox aptly recalls the famed rhetorical question of Yves Congar in “My Path-Findings in the Theology of Laity and Ministries,” The Jurist 32 (1972): “Have we clung too much to the recognized categories of classical ecclesiology?” With Congar, Fox’s terminology is not “priesthood/laity,” but rather “ministries/modes of community service.” Susan K. Wood amplifies this approach by saying that the parish is “the highest degree of actuality of the total Church” and situates presbyteral identity within concrete parish life. R. Kevin Seasoltz concludes with a survey of various forms of consecrated life, a study worthy of a volume by itself.

In my view, it is Kenan B. Osborne who names the elephant in the middle of our ecclesial living room by his penetrating critique of the attitudes and assumptions that linger from our centuries-long thought patterns deriving from scholastic philosophy and theology. At a time when a critical mass of persons simply no longer grasps those dualistic categories, Osborne wonders why ecclesial documents continue to use them.

This hope-filled collection of papers is an exquisite example of Catholic theology that balances our future with a reverence for our past.