

about early and medieval heresies, the important divisions in Christianity, and important theological terms. One looks in vain, however, for articles on the important subdivisions of Protestantism and for more recent currents in Christianity. There are, for example, entries about Albigenses, Waldenses, Puritans, and Pietists, but not about Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, or Pentecostals. Although the Millerites and the Great Disappointment each merit a short article, Seventh-day Adventists do not. Likewise there is no comprehensive article on the Roman Catholic Church, while there are separate entries for a number of Catholic orders.

Checking which sects and cults are included in this dictionary brought few surprises. The work mentions most major groups that evolved from Christian origins, the syncretistic movements imported to the United States, and movements characterized as occult. The (extremely critical) attention given to Mormonism is somewhat disproportionate; the main article is supported by dozens of shorter articles scattered throughout the book. On the other hand, I looked in vain for an entry on the Black Muslims. Later I found them under their official name: World Community of Ali Islam in the West. The omission of the Universal Peace Mission of Father Divine was likewise a surprise. More serious, perhaps, is the fact that Freemasonry remains unmentioned. For some organizations the headquarters office address is given; for others it is not.

The book offers a lengthy bibliography of relevant literature for many of the groups covered in the text. The inclusion of a section on "gay theology" may have been caused by some irrepressible dislike on the part of the evangelical authors for gays and their culture, but is not required, considering the content of the book.

Any one-volume dictionary of a few hundred pages obviously has its limitations; and a listing and description of religions, cults, and sects cannot escape some form of bias. This book is no exception. But in spite of its limitations and presuppositions, it offers a wealth of excellently organized information and is well worth its price.

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REINDER BRUINSMA

McGrath, Alister E., ed. *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993. 720 pp. \$94.95.

The publication of *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought* (hereafter referred to as BEMCT), composed under the accomplished editorial workmanship of Alister E. McGrath, signals the genesis of a new generation of reference works that provide needed orientation in the changed theological terrain. One year after the publication of *A New Handbook of Christian Theology*, edited by Donald W. Musser and Joseph L. Price (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1992), the BEMCT has set new standards for one-volume encyclopedias that will make it a much-sought-after reference work well into the next century.

The BEMCT seeks to provide informed and comprehensive overviews of the main features and central themes of modern Christian thought. "Modern" is taken to mean the period in Western culture which began with the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, whereas "Christian thought" is used in a broad sense, embracing the economic, social, political, aesthetic, and cultural outlooks of Christianity in the modern world, thus extending its scope well beyond the concerns of theology, narrowly defined (xi). The BEMCT aims not only to inform and stimulate the reader but also to direct attention to other sources for further information. This is usually done through selected bibliographies at the end of each essay. The bibliographies quite often include recent publications that reflect current scholarship as well as useful cross-references to articles of related interest. A helpful glossary of theological terms and an index ensure ease of use to a wide range of readers. Generally the book seems to have been carefully edited, although the page heading "Evangelism" (193-198) should read "Evil, Problem of."

Many of the essays provide excellent concise overviews and summaries of recent developments (see "Doctrine and Dogma," by Alister E. McGrath; "Ethics," by Nigel Biggar; "Feminist Theology," by Anne Carr; "God," by Robert W. Jenson; "Postliberalism," by Sheila Greeve Davaney and Delwin Brown; and "Postmodernism," by Robert Detweiler). Their generally balanced tone makes stimulating reading.

A unique feature of the BEMCT is its detailed survey of regional developments during the modern period. It contains extensive articles on the development of Christian thought in Australia, Canada, China, Germany, Holland, India, Japan, Korea, Scandinavia, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States. It also deals with Arab Christian thought and relationships between Judaism and Christianity. In other words, it seeks to reflect the increasingly multicultural and worldwide penetration and variation of Christianity.

Despite its aim to adopt a nonadvocational stance, avoiding a pre-commitment to conservative or liberal attitudes, thereby trying to ensure a balanced appraisal of the situation (xi), certain trends in its orientation are clearly perceivable. For one thing, a strong majority of its contributors come from the United Kingdom, giving the work a distinctly British flavor. The rest of the contributors are mostly North American scholars, leaving barely any room for representatives from Continental Europe, or from South America, Africa, or Asia. The selective orientation is evident, for instance, when under the entry "Liberalism" one finds the subheadings "Britain" and "USA," but misses "Germany," which certainly played its part in the development of modern liberal theological thought. The theological orientation of BEMCT does not always live up to its proclaimed neutrality, either (ix). For example, the entries that deal with creation and biological science do not even mention alternate conservative interpretations, thereby omitting without comment a significant sector of contemporary Christian scholarship. One also wonders why, although there are entries for "Tradition" and "Revelation," articles on "Scripture" and "Inspiration" are missing. Also lacking are treatments of the

topics of "Sin" and "Systematic Theology," to name but a few of the more significant subjects that have been omitted even though they have received considerable discussion in recent debates.

Despite the above-mentioned limitations, the BEMCT surpasses all others in its field and will be useful to anyone interested in the contemporary discussion of Christian theology.

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Minor, Mark. *Literary-Critical Approaches to the Bible: An Annotated Bibliography*. West Cornwall, CT: Locust Hill Press, 1992. xxxi + 520 pp. \$50.00.

Minor's *Literary-Critical Approaches to the Bible: An Annotated Bibliography* is a compilation of books and articles published in English that are related to the topic of literary criticism. Commentaries and dissertations, as well as articles in dictionaries, are excluded from this compilation. With a few exceptions, book reviews also have been omitted.

Minor introduces his book with a definition and brief history of the literary criticism of the Bible. With skill and concision he describes the different schools of interpretation that have influenced the development of literary criticism. Indeed, the author shows himself to be not only a thorough compiler, but an able analyst and synthesist of the material.

Minor's definition of the literary-critical approach is captioned by three principles: First, the biblical language should be regarded as a "mirror" (rather than a "window," which would be seen as capable of describing what is behind or beyond the text). Second, form and content are inseparable; when trying to find the meaning of a text, one should rely on both form and content. Third, the final form of the present text should constitute the foundation of any study or analysis (xx). The selection of bibliographical material is organized along the lines of the definition given above. The work also includes items that rely on "Composition Criticism" (which implies that the author's theology dictates the content of his work), since this approach uses some assumptions found in the literary-critical approach. Material based on traditional historical-critical methods has been excluded from this book. However, sources that use "New Criticism" (which gives importance to structure, diction, genre, style, etc.) have been retained. Likewise, the book retains material from other disciplines that literary critics use, such as structuralism and post-structuralism, feminism, folklore and myth criticism, etc. Obviously, the choice of materials has not been easy, since there is often a fine line between what relates to traditional historical criticism and what does not. But, as the author himself asserts, a delimitation should be established somewhere, subjective as it may be (xxiv).