

Reviews

CONTEMPORARY CATHOLIC THEOLOGY. A READER. Edited by Michael A. Hayes and Liam Gearon (*Gracewing*, Leominster, 1998) xiv + 528pp, £20.00

The Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (formerly the Catholic Teachers Certificate) is the most widely used foundation course in the Catholic Church in England and Wales. As offered to teachers the course consists of eight modules, two catechetical, two scriptural (the Old Testament and the New Testament) and four theological (the Person of Jesus, the Church, Christian Morality and the Sacraments). The present book provides a substantial collection of readings for the scriptural and theological modules. Everything included here has been published before, their re-publication in this format meaning however that they become accessible and useful to many more people.

Assuming that students are encouraged to read some 'primary sources' in preparing for the Certificate, the difficulty, as the authors note, is not what to include but what to exclude from the mountain of secondary theological writing which is available. Anybody involved in the teaching of theology will have his or her own preferences but the fact is that this book is now available at a price which is relatively inexpensive, offering a broad and in some places deep insight into Catholic theology of the past thirty years and including some excellent choices.

Raymond Brown introduces the themes of Church and Bible as well as discussing (and defending) the use of the historical-critical method in exegesis. Robert Murray discusses Vatican II's constitution on revelation and wonders why its influence has not been in proportion to its importance. Daniel Smith-Christopher introduces the books of the Old Testament (described here as 'the Hebrew bible' although Robert Murray has recently argued elsewhere [*The Month*, December 1998] that the use of this phrase by Christians is not at all straightforward). J.H.Hayes gives a fine introduction to what is involved in canonicity and Jeffrey S.Siker introduces the study of the New Testament. There are articles on prophecy, on Gospel stories and on Paul. If one is under pressure to choose as regards particular biblical themes and books these seem like the right choices, and there is in any case a lot of excellent material on other biblical themes and books in the contextual articles.

The second section of the book deals with the four theological subject areas covered in the Certificate course. For 'The Person of Jesus' there are chapters on the present state of Christology, on

Jesus as Saviour and Son of God, and on Jesus as a human being. Dermot Lane's chapter on the doctrine of the Incarnation links patristic thought about Christ with the concerns of contemporary cosmology.

Ecclesiology has been the theological theme for much of this century and there are more chapters here on the Church than on any other subject. Thomas P. Rausch outlines the background to Vatican II and summarises the work of the Council itself. Richard P. McBrien comments on *Lumen Gentium* and Enda McDonagh on *Gaudium et Spes*. Francis Sullivan is responsible for two chapters, on a theology of the Church, and on the interpretation of Vatican II. This part ends with a chapter by Christopher Butler on ecumenism.

That leaves morality and the sacraments. Denis O'Callaghan and Vincent MacNamara write about what is involved in 'Christian' morality. Timothy O'Connell gives an overview of the history of moral theology and Thomas Rausch links sexual morality and social justice. The last part of the book begins with considerations of the meaning of symbol and ritual before passing to consideration of the Catholic sacraments as such. Here, finally, space runs out and there is no consideration of individual sacraments.

But already so much has been included that it seems churlish to carp at this point. The reader is intended to assist students being introduced to Catholic theology, there is a fine index and some of the chapters end with substantial bibliographies. It will certainly be of great help to those for whom it is primarily intended, students following the CCRS course.

It is arguable that the Catholic Church in Ireland, Britain and the USA (from which places come the majority of contributors to this volume) might well have shown itself stronger in the face of current difficulties if its general membership had a richer theological culture. This book sets out and supports a course which could easily be followed in parishes and in adult education groups.

VIVIAN BOLAND OP

Book Notes

The Durham Centre for Theological research held a weekly seminar over two terms in 1996-97 which now bears fruit in *Where Shall Wisdom be Found? Wisdom in the Bible, the Church and the Contemporary World*, edited by Stephen C. Barton (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1999, pp. 389, paperback £18.95), an unwieldy title for a magnificent collection of some twenty five substantial essays, starting with Solomon and Job and ending with Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein.

The first three essays deal with wisdom in Israel (R.W.L. Moberly, Stuart Weeks, C.T. R. Hayward), followed by a paper on Qumran (Loren T. Stuckenbruck) and one on the apocalyptic tradition