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BOOK REVIEW

Glen G. Scorgie *et al.*, eds. *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011. Pp. ii + 852. Hbk. ISBN-13: 978-0310290667.

To be sure, this is not the only dictionary of spirituality on the market today (*The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* [Westminster John Knox, 2005] and *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* [Michael Glazier, 1993] come to mind, for example). But it was not so long ago that evangelical Protestants might have found discussion of “Christian Spirituality” vaguely suspect, with legitimate forms of spiritual expression limited to practices that fit more directly under the umbrella of classic pietism. Accordingly, the present volume is a welcome contribution in principle, a sign of openness on the part of evangelicals to engage other models and approaches than their own.

The work is divided into two parts. The first 200 or so pages contain 34 introductory essays that provide an integrative overview of particular issues: “Old Testament Foundations of Christian Spirituality” (Mark Boda); “The Holy Spirit” (Clark Pinnock); “Spirituality in Community” (Glen Scorgie and Kevin Reimer); “Mysticism” (Evan B. Howard), and the like. Some entries overlap: there is both a “Survey of the History of Christian Spirituality” and six additional essays on the piety and practice of specific areas and eras (“Byzantium and the East [600–1700]”; “Global Christianity [1700–Present],” etc.). Others I had to read before I could be certain what their titles meant (“Contextual Spirituality”; “The Future of Christian Spirituality”). The former refers to inculturation or indigenization of spiritual expression that takes its cue from the fact of Jesus’ incarnation (whether with respect to personality type, cultural

location, or sociol-historical setting). Yet notwithstanding the importance of contextualization, author Robert Solomon insists that “Christian spirituality stands against every context in a prophetic stance . . . In being grounded in and yet challenging its contexts, Christian spirituality will produce transformation of those contexts” (p. 210). In the latter article, James Houston highlights the impact of advancing technology, the shifting of Christianity toward the global South, aging populations, and anti-institutionalism in the Western church. But more significant than any of these, he writes, must be a return to Scripture: “No less now than in the 16th century, the church of the future needs another biblical reformation” (p. 239). While other summaries are equally deserving of comment, the appreciative tone of John Witvliet and Carrie Steenwyck’s article on “Liturgical Spirituality” is especially noteworthy, given the avowedly “evangelical” orientation of this volume. Even so, a fuller treatment of sacramental spirituality and the spiritual vision it implies would have been helpful somewhere in the work.¹ One especially helpful treatment—due to the prominence of music and musically-inspired devotion, even mysticism, in contemporary evangelical worship—is Steven Guthrie’s discussion of “Music and the Arts,” with its thoughtful appeal to the work of Saint Augustine.

Overall, the value of these essays is of a piece with the broader goals of spiritual theology, and of Christian spirituality in general. As explained by John Coe in “Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality” and Simon Chan in “Spiritual Theology,” attention to spirituality acknowledges the importance of integrating faith and life. Studying the ways of God entails an encounter with the Object of such inquiry, as a result of which theology (broadly understood) cannot be separated from its implications for outlook and experience (whether individual or corporate). Writes Chan, “Spiritual theology is the flip side of dogmatic theology. It focuses on the experiential reality underlying the concepts of systematic theology” (p. 52).

1. To make up this lack one may turn instead to Richard Foster, *Streams of Living Water: Celebrating the Great Traditions of Christian Faith* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1998) 235–72.

The remaining pages contain more than seven hundred articles on a wide variety of subjects. As expected, there are entries for major theologians and practitioners—Aquinas, Augustine, Barth, Calvin, Chrysostom, Hildegard of Bingen, Ignatius, Irenaeus, Jerome, Luther, Origen, the Wesleys and George Whitefield—as well as for those whose cultural prominence incorporates directly spiritual concerns—Bach, Dante, Donne, Handel, Herbert, Milton, and Tolkien, for example. More recent contributors to the spiritual life are fully represented: there are entries for (amongst many others) Anthony Bloom, Frederick Buechner, Dom Hélder Câmara, Maxie Dunnam, Shusako Endo, Elizabeth Elliott, Richard Foster, Billy Graham, William James, Martin Luther King, C. S. Lewis, Francis MacNutt, Henri Nouwen, Mother Teresa, Scott Peck, Ronald Sider, Howard Thurman, Desmond Tutu, Dallas Willard, and John Wimber. A host of lesser known figures are likewise brought to prominence: Angela of Foligno, Anne Bradstreet, Gertrude the Great, Pastor Hsi, Frank Laubach, Mechthild of Magdeburg, Raimon Panikkar, Pandita Ramabai, Henry Suso, Watchman Nee, and Ming Dao Wang, to name only a few. Incidentally, three authors who have either taught at or served on the faculty of Regent College in Vancouver—James Houston, Eugene Peterson, and Dallas Willard—merited a biographical entry while at the same time contributing to the volume.²

In keeping with their stated concern for the practical character of Christian spirituality, the editors saw fit to address significant practices and disciplines: there are articles on “Centering Prayer,” “Chastity,” “Dance,” Glossolalia,” “Inner Healing,” “Penitence” (but not, notably, “Penance”), “Pilgrimage,” “Spiritual Direction,” “Spiritual Journaling,” “Spiritual Marriage,” and “Time, Sanctification of.” Additional—albeit selective—attention is given to “Song of Songs”; to Johannine, Lukan, and Pauline spiritualities (in separate articles by those names), and to “James, Book of,” but not to the other Synoptic evangelists,

2. Houston and Willard wrote introductory essays (on “The Future of Christian Spirituality” and “Jesus,” respectively), while Eugene Peterson contributed the article on “Spiritual Reading (*Lectio Divina*).”

Hebrews, or the book of Revelation, for example. Other entries concern socio-ethnic or confessional distinctives: “African-American Spirituality”; “Celtic Spirituality”; “Franciscan Spirituality”; “Ignatian Spirituality”; “Korean-Christian Spirituality”; “Moravian Spirituality”; “Pentecostal Spirituality”; “Puritan Spirituality”; “Quaker Spirituality,” “Russian Spirituality,” and “Syrian Spirituality,” amongst others. Somewhat surprising given its ascendancy in recent scholarship was the fact that the *theologia crucis* received only passing mention in the article on Martin Luther (not at all, however, under “Lutheran Spirituality”). Many entries address more general concerns: chosen at alliterative random are “Happiness,” “Heart,” “Heaven,” “Hell,” and “Holiness”; “Lifestyle,” “Light,” “Love,” and “Lord’s Supper”; “Peace” as well as “Peacemaking,” “Perfection” along with “Perfectionism,” both “Praise” and Praise Music,” and “Psalmody” in concert with “Psalms.” Elaine Heath’s entry on “Women in the History of Christian Spirituality” touches on such a wide range of interests as to suggest that the topic deserved an introductory article of its own.

Given the avowedly Christian focus of the work, it is intriguing to see such topics as “Daoist Spirituality,” “Hindu Spirituality” (along with “Mohandas Gandhi”), “Jewish Spirituality,” “Muslim Spirituality” (as well as “Sufism”), “Mormon Spirituality,” “Neo-Pagan Spirituality,” “New Age Spirituality,” “Scientology,” and “Transcendental Meditation (TM).” The main purpose of these articles is to describe each perspective on its own terms, rather than evaluating or engaging them apologetically from a Christian point of view.

Some readers will be surprised (others perhaps encouraged) that, in addition to the introductory essay on “Spirituality in Relation to Creation,” there are dictionary entries entitled “Creation-Centered Spirituality,” “Ecological Spirituality,” and “Nature Mysticism,” since these are areas that some have been reluctant to recognize as authentically Christian (let alone “evangelical”). Equally novel (or welcome, depending on one’s point of view) will be entries that treat “Spiritual Geography,” “Liberation Spirituality,” “Holy War,” and “Internet” or “Technology and Spirituality.” A number of entries discuss practices

characteristic of, or arising from Roman Catholic devotional practice, among them “Relics,” “Rosary,” “Sacrament,” “Sacred Heart,” and “Spiritual Reading (*Lectio Divina*).” From my own perspective, I was unable to discern the relevance for spirituality of the article on “Allegorical Exegesis.” By the same token, was an article on “Water” required when its significance for spiritual practice is covered already under “Baptism”? Conversely, the article on “Epistemology of Spirituality” proved suitably enlightening, and I was led to new areas of reflection by the discussion of “Exercise, Physical Fitness” and “Sports and Spirituality.” To choose but two such examples, the articles on “Gilbert of Sempringham” and “Victorine Spirituality” revealed significant gaps in my education; the range of subjects is sufficiently vast that other readers are likely to find their intellectual horizons similarly expanded.

Because the entries cover such a broad range of concerns, it would have been helpful had the editors provided an appendix grouping article titles according to particular categories of interest. A helpful example is Gerald H. Anderson, ed., *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 765–814. Even a simple index would have sufficed.

Nonetheless, this is an invaluable reference work that will find a ready place in the study for students, pastors, and academics alike, all the more so given its modest price. The volume has already been well received: it won a 2012 Christian Book Award in the category of Bible Reference from the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association.

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