



Review

Reviewed Work(s): Principles of Catholic Theology by Edward J. Gratsch, John R. Cville, Ralph J. Lawrence and Donald G. McCarthy

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EDWARD J. GRATSCH (Ed.), JOHN R. CIVILLE, RALPH J. LAWRENCE & DONALD G. MCCARTHY, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, New York, Alba House, 1981, pp. 410.

Four professors of Mt. St. Mary's Seminary of the West have collaborated to produce a general overview of contemporary dogmatic and moral theology which should prove to be a very valuable reference-work for seminarians and other beginners in theology. Each of the twenty-four chapters, which range from « Revelation » to « Problems of Sexual Responsibility », thus covering all the major tracts, begins with a select bibliography which is carefully arranged even to the pagination of the cited works, which should make it most useful to a busy student.

Within the chapters, the division followed rigorously by the editor, who contributed almost half, is first, the teaching of the Church, then Sacred Scripture, finally theological reflection. The three other contributors follow, if not the letter, at least the spirit of this order. And there is something especially refreshing, particularly at this time, in the prominence given the teaching of the Church. Some recent works seem to have reversed the traditional order in such a way that the teaching of the Church is treated as if it were what used to be called erroneous opinions. These texts, particularly in Moral Theology, sometimes begin with the magisterium but only to then attempt a refutation. « You have heard it said... but we (the assumed consensus of contemporary theologians) say other wise ». In this volume the magisterium is given its right and proper dignity among the *loci theologici*.

Moreover the usefulness of this book is considerably enhanced by its good, handy design at a quite inexpensive price. It is relatively free of typographical errors, the most glaring of which may be the identification of the five final chapters on special moral problems as David Mc Carthy on the back-cover whereas he is Donald McCarthy throughout the book.

It would probably be impossible, at this particular time, to present to students a textbook or even a ready reference covering the totality of the theology, even when it is a work of collaboration by specialists in each area, which would satisfy, much less please, everyone, or even anyone completely. Therefore it would seem ungracious to say someone's style is a bit wooden, or that one wished some topics better handled and so forth. What would appear more to the point would be a consideration of the title and real nature of this book. Although it is entitled « Principles » the word is used in a very loose sense so that it might be better styled « Compendium » or some other word or phrase like it. So too for the sub-title, « A Synthesis of Dogma and Morals ». In this instance the editor does define what he means: « A synthesis brings together ideas that may be considered in isolation and shows how they are related in a logically consistent way ». While he and

his colleagues have achieved a notable improvement over a merely encyclopedic index (where the only logic is the alphabet) something less than a satisfactory synthesis has been accomplished.

The device outlined is « The Call » for Dogmatic Theology and « The Response » for Moral. Now there is a great deal in Part I which hardly fits the category of « call » and there is more in Moral Theology, although not as they treat it, than « response ». It is true that the theme of call and response did appear in some documents of Vatican II, but is doubtful that the sum of theology can be fitted into that framework.

Nevertheless the actual work is excellent and is warmly recommended for the student's shelf as a good handbook for viewing and reviewing.

URBAN VOLL, O.P.

Update 1979: Official Catholic Teachings, Wilmington, N.C., U.S.A., Consortium Books, 1980, xiii-487, with a 26 page Subject Index.

This very attractive volume is the most recent in the prestigious series *Official Catholic Teachings*. It maintains, and even intensifies, the very high tone achieved by its predecessors in the series.

The basic *Official Catholic Teachings* set of six volumes is a series which devotes each book to a topic of special interest: *Love and Sexuality: Social Justice; Bible Interpretation; Worship and Liturgy; Christ Our Lord; Clergy and Laity*. These subjects, as is evident, embrace very wide areas of Catholic thought, although, especially in these times which are so marked by conflicts in moral theology, one could wish for a volume devoted exclusively to Moral Teachings of the Church.

With these six very important, basic subjects well covered in a set of volumes, of great value for research and which should grace every library worthy of the name, the publishers now offer an annual « update » volume in order to keep the series current and also provide cumulative indexes to the entire set. As each year passes, the basic series, with its annual « update », will increase in value.

Update 1979 contains thirty-two documents of Pope John Paul II, the outstanding ones: *Redemptor Hominis*, the Holy Father's first encyclical; the important *Sapientia Christiana*, on the norms which are to govern the faculties of Catholic Universities; and the practical *On Catechetics*, with its program for effective catechetical programs. In addition there are included pivotal statements from the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Sacred Congregation for Christian Education, the Vatican Synod Secretariat, Patriarch Dimitrios I of Constantinople, the Bishops of Latin America, and the Bishops of the United States.