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James R. Ginther. *The Westminster Handbook to Medieval Theology*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009. xxxi + 207 pages. \$39.95.

Before reviewing the contents and merits of this handbook, I would first like to introduce its author. Dr. Ginther teaches medieval theology at my *alma mater*, Saint Louis University, and serves as the director of graduate students in its theology department. An expert on the medieval theologian, Robert Grosseteste, Ginther loves to work with medieval texts, including biblical commentaries, and recently directed a dissertation on medieval Apocalypse commentaries. He works closely with the university's Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies and its Vatican film library containing thousands of medieval manuscripts on microfilm. Furthermore, he often organizes sessions at the annual International Congress on Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo, providing opportunities for graduate students and others to share their research with their colleagues.

*The Westminster Handbook to Medieval Theology* reflects Ginther's broad knowledge, focused and disciplined research skills, and clear writing style. The introductory material answers the question "What is Medieval Theology?" and contains a section entitled "Resources for Studying Medieval Theology." This section does a great job listing textual resources. However the incorporation of lists of professional societies, conferences, journals, and programs of study specifically devoted to medieval theology would have provided even more connections for readers interested in the field.

The body of the book consists of an alphabetical arrangement of entries on major Christian thinkers, theological and socio-cultural developments, and key terms associated with medieval theology. For each entry on a person, the handbook provides basic biographical information, his or her important teachings and major contributions, and resources in English for further study. A sample of entries on medieval Christian thinkers includes Agobard of Lyons, Alcuin, Anselm of Canterbury, Bede, Bernard of Clairvaux, Florus of Lyons, Hugh of Saint Cher, Jean Gerson, John Duns Scotus, Peter John Olivi, Remigius of Auxerre, Theodulf of Orleans, Thomas Aquinas, and William of Ockham. Of course in a handbook of just over 200 pages its author must exclude many key persons, but I would have liked to have read entries on Isidore of Seville and Thomas Bradwardine, who both were influential in their own ways. The handbook also is conscious of the contributions of female authors to medieval theology and includes entries on Hildegard of Bingen, Catherine of Siena, and Bridget of Sweden.

A sample of key theological movements and concepts includes Adoptionism, Bull, Conciliarism, Indulgences, Merit, Purgatory, and Simony. In these I found one minor omission. The Beatific Vision entry mentioned the ninth-century author John Scotus Erigena who deviated from the Western tradition on this doctrine, and then stated that questions about the doctrine were not raised until the thirteenth century (21). However, significant questions on the beatific vision were raised among Erigena's contemporaries, as revealed in the lively discussions on this theological concept in the extant writings of Gottschalk of Orbais and Hincmar of Reims. Entries related to socio-cultural developments intersecting with medieval theology include Cathedral Schools, Crusade, Florilegia, Hierarchy, Inquisition, and Sentence commentaries.

The handbook's bibliography proved helpful. In it I discovered about fifteen new books that I would like to read and of which I was previously unaware.

Because it is a handbook and not encyclopedic in scope, naturally there are certain limitations to its content. For example, theological developments within Eastern Orthodoxy are not represented, so if one were researching on Hesychasm, for example, one would have to consult another reference work. The same is true if one were searching for information on various medieval popes, for which there are other capable reference works available. On the positive side, although it is not a handbook on medieval philosophy, since the disciplines of philosophy and theology intersect, it includes entries on Aristotle, Being, Substance, and Universals.

In my opinion, the chief ingredient that makes a good reference work is its usefulness to researchers, and this book squarely hits the mark. For example, if one were inquiring about the theology of the Lord's Supper in the middle ages, one would find entries on Eucharist, Berengar of Tours, Ratramnus of Corbie, Paschasius Radbertus, Lanfranc, Sacraments, and Transubstantiation. If investigating so-called "precursors of the Reformation," in this handbook one would find informative entries on Claudius of Turin, Waldensians, Lollards, John Wyclif, and Jan Hus.

The chief merits of *The Westminster Handbook to Medieval Theology* are its concise, varied, and accurate entries on people and subjects related to medieval theology, its usefulness to researchers, and its affordability. It would be an asset to every library, whether personal or institutional, in which study of medieval theology takes place.

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