

*Christian Social Teachings: A Reader in Christian Social Ethics from the Bible to the Present.* Edited by George W. Forell. Revised and updated by James M. Childs. Second edition. Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2013. 183 pp. \$39.00 (paper).

This is a fine collection of many important texts in Christian social ethics with helpful features like competent introductions and suggestions for further reading. Much like J. Philip Wogaman's *Christian Ethics: A Historical Introduction* (1993), the material is organized historically, beginning with the Bible and ending with contemporary readings, though this volume focuses much more on current areas like biomedical ethics, environmental ethics, and war. In general, the editors devote considerably more space to recent works than to earlier ones. The divisions also become more topically specific as time goes on. Early figures like Chrysostom and Augustine have their own chapters, as do themes like mysticism and the medieval papacy. About the last half of the book is entirely organized around topics like womanism, feminism, justice and liberation, human sexuality, and the kinds of ethics I mentioned above. Because of this, different parts of the book seem best suited to different purposes, probably reflecting the fact that the first edition, published in 1966, mostly followed people and movements rather than topics.

It is hard to envision a class designed to handle all that is going on in this text both historically and thematically. I can imagine constructive inquiries into how Christian thinking on, say, the church/world relation has changed over time, which many of the readings such as those by Luther and Anabaptist writers address, as do later selections by Yoder and Hauerwas. But orchestrating this kind of inquiry will require a lot of effort given the book's

structure. Likewise with war, to which the editors devote a chapter with readings from three recent and contemporary authors (John Paul II, David Hoekema, and Jean Bethke Elshtain) while some earlier material deals with war under other headings (for example, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Suárez, and the Quaker *Rules of Discipline*). The material is here for a teacher or student to trace war historically but, again, it will require some organization that differs from the book's overall structure.

Some of the choices for the selections are puzzling. They might have exhibited greater ecumenical range, for example. The volume is weighted toward Lutherans and other mainline Protestants and especially suffers from a shortage of Eastern Orthodox voices—a reading by John Zizioulous in the section “Trinitarian Theology and Social Ethics” might have been a good addition. I am also struck by some odd choices, such as in the chapter on bioethics in which there are five readings on topics like in vitro fertilization, cloning, stem cell research, and euthanasia. Four are written by Protestants; one by a Roman Catholic. Most of them, though, are strikingly out of date considering the quick-developing nature of the science to which bioethics responds. We have selections by Paul Ramsey from 1970, Joseph Fletcher from 1967, Richard McCormick from 1981, James Gustafson from 1975, and Paul Jersild from 2007. These are all dated (even the reading from 2007) in ways that are not interesting enough historically to have in a collection like this one. This problem, one that comes with more recent scholarship where the historical approach gives way to a thematic one, also affects the section on environmental ethics. Here we have selections by Joseph Sittler (1962), Larry Rasmussen (2000), Sallie McFague (1993), and James Nash (1991)—two Lutherans, a Methodist, and an Anglican. It is unfortunate that the most recent selection on one of the most pressing issues of our day is well over a decade old.

Weaknesses like these make me think we would do better with collections of historical texts on very specific issues (such as war, money, marriage, or the church/world relation) where the book's apparatus is clearly oriented toward highlighting the developments, tensions, and enduring questions. Then let us also have separate guides devoted to the latest debates on contemporary issues that require a steady focus on the state of scholarship. There is much to admire in the grand scope of this project. Unfortunately, I cannot see some of the sections being useful in a serious contemporary setting where the goal is to get a handle on the current state of rapidly evolving topics.

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