

**ECCLESIA: A THEOLOGICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE CHURCH** by Christopher O'Donnell, O.Carm., A Michael Glazier Book, *The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, xxli + 520 pages.*

Every entry in this dictionary, from *Abel, Church* from to *Zwingli, Ulrich*, has been composed singlehandedly by the author, who teaches at the Milltown Institute, Dublin. The bibliographies alone, including articles culled widely from the theological journals in the major languages as well as books, will be an immensely valuable resource. The '*ecclesia ab Abel*' theme, an expression probably first used by Augustine, was retrieved by Yves Congar and played its part in the renewal of the Catholic Church at Vatican II. As instruments of the renewal Congar, von Balthasar, and Rahner receive the most substantial treatment; more might have been said about others, such as de Lubac in particular. Some entries are a little intriguing: Annibale Bugnini, the Umbrian born Vincentian scholar who was more responsible than anyone for the Vatican II liturgical reforms, was transferred to the nunciature in Tehran in 1976, having lost the support of Pope Paul VI 'in circumstances the exact details of which are not widely known'. The entry on Hubert Jedin, 'arguably the most important Catholic Church historian of the 20th century', says nothing about his distress after Vatican II. But the bulk of the entries lies in often quite substantial discussion of major topics in ecclesiology: apostolic succession, charism, communion, development of doctrine, ecumenism, and so on. The author does not hide his views: the entries on magisterium and reception, for example, warn that 'the inflation of papal teaching since Pius XI makes assimilation, even for professional theologians, well-nigh impossible'. On the ordination of women he says that while the papal teaching is 'almost certainly true', 'legitimate questions can still be raised cautiously and respectfully'. In fact, a Catholic may hope for a change in the Church's position, 'on the understanding that such a reversal could come about only through the Holy Spirit leading the sense of the faith of the whole Church into a certainty that women can be validly ordained' — and then 'the supreme authority of the Church would in time undoubtedly follow the Spirit's leading'. meanwhile we need to relativize the whole issue in a sense of the Church in which the Marian, not the Petrine, function is much the more important — 'even if many women, nearly all men and most of the clergy, are not yet aware of the enormous and exciting implications of this Marian priority'. Not just a work of reference, then, this encyclopedia is also an invitation to argument about the direction of reflection on the nature of the Church.