

This dictionary is a useful contribution to the field of spirituality. It contains much of what one would hope to see in such a work. When some of the entries lack quality, it is often because the authors have been unable to do justice to their topic in such a small number of words, or because the topic itself is strange. The lack of articles on individuals and texts is certainly a limiting factor, along with a lack of entries relating to moral theology. Serious study of spirituality means engaging with texts and other theological disciplines, something which is vital to restoring its credibility, and this dictionary needs to be developed in this way in further editions. Nevertheless, there is much that is good and useful about this work. It is to be hoped that future editions will build on this foundation to produce a more comprehensive work. Does this dictionary ‘stand as the definitive reference work on all aspects of Christian spirituality today’? There are not too many other works competing for the title, so the answer is yes. But it could be improved so that it is genuinely worthy of the title.

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**OPENING UP: SPEAKING OUT IN THE CHURCH, edited by Julian Filochowski and Peter Stanford (Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 2005). Pp. 160, £14.95**

Usually when you read a compilation of essays written by a variety of authors you are required, along with enjoying a number of the pieces, merely to endure the others. *Opening Up: Speaking out in the Church*, is quite different in this regard, as it is a compilation, in large part, of a uniformly high standard, something that is of great credit not only to the essayists but also to the editors of the text.

Written in honour of the work of Martin Prendergast, who as the Introduction claims “has given most of his life to cherishing those who are on the margins, whether of society or the Church”, *Opening Up* contains essays dealing with topics ranging from poverty, abortion, homosexuality, ecumenism, liturgical reform to political activism, conscience and democracy. Broad in its selection and treatment of issues *Opening Up* is also an interesting, thought-provoking and refreshing read. Importantly, one need not always agree with the content to enjoy this text for its style and high level of writing, and the reader is constantly challenged on a number of levels, not least morally and theologically.

Timothy Radcliffe’s analogy of kneading bread from the outside margins to the centre sets a wonderful thematic tone from the outset. The power of his analogy is further enhanced when he extends the original idea to the baking of Eucharistic bread. In short, how can we have a true Eucharist without a concern for those on the margins? Radcliffe’s analogy could be further extended if he were to use the work of the Norwegian peace theoretician Johan Galtung and the notion that nations are either “centre” or “periphery”. Jon Sobrino’s text on “Getting Real About the Option for the Poor” is another piece that stands out in the early part of *Opening Up*. Particularly memorable from this essay is his forceful depiction of the poor of the world: “They are children, the street children, the child soldiers, those coopted into prostitution and the shadowy world of paedophilia. They are the women, those who suffer rape and abuse, those who are effectively cheated by the sorts of jobs they can get and the pay they receive. They are the emigrants, the men and women who have to leave their own country, culture and religion, watch their families break up, and get treated with contempt in a foreign land. They are the indigenous, exploited for centuries, seduced by false promises of a better future, helplessly watching their tribe disappear. They are the millions of people living with HIV, who look on powerlessly as so many die” (pp. 25–26).

In the entire compilation, no single essay delivers as much passion and sense of urgency as Sobrino’s. Aside that is from Conor Gearty’s confronting essay

“Keeping It Honest: The Role of the Laity in a Clerical Church”, that appears toward the end. Gearty’s recollection of the Ann Lovett tragedy in Granard, County Longford in 1984, is gut-wrenching, not so much for the skills of the essayist himself as for the tragic events to which he alludes. Again the editors chose well to put such a confronting piece at the close of their work. There is always the risk when one uses such events to be accused of exploitation, yet Gearty’s allusion is apt: some events need to be recollected so that they are never repeated, or at least so that their underlying causes are prevented.

The majority of other essays can best be described as thought enhancing. Of these James Alison’s, “Good-Faith Learning and the Fear of God”, is a valuable, incisive, study of the Church’s teaching on homosexuality. Alison’s reference to the work of Gitta Sereny on Treblinka is deliberately inflammatory, seeking perhaps to disturb the consciences of members of the Church hierarchy. Nonetheless he argues a good case that the Church must not sit back imperiously while moral issues rage. The Church must engage with important moral issues, not being caught out regarding homosexuality, as it was, morally, by the eugenics and euthanasia of Nazi Germany. His discussion of typologies within the homosexual debate is also very worthy of note (pp. 77–79).

The editors’ otherwise admirable work did include two essays that seemed out of place, those by Diarmid O’Murchu and Jeannine Gramick. Diarmid O’Murchu’s, “When the Paradigm Shifts, Even the Church Has to Change”, has at its base an attitude that is vastly different to the majority, if not to all the other essays. This is most vividly seen toward the conclusion of his essay: “In the words of the gospels, we can’t pour new wine into old wineskin, though we acknowledge that many are trying to do that, and with a measured degree of success. The agenda of the Kingdom, as I understand it, favours revolution rather than reformation. Jesus was a cultural, mystical subversive who was not too worried about his inherited religion. He often seems to have broken the rules quite blatantly in order to inaugurate the new paradigm for which he gave his life and death”. (p. 157). Once an individual proclaims themselves a revolutionary rather than a reformer dialogue is virtually over, and dialogue is what *Opening Up* is meant to be about. Moreover the ‘mystical subversive’ Jesus of Nazareth that O’Murchu proclaims sounds a lot more like the essayist himself rather than the one who said: “Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished” (Matthew 5:17–18). In comparison, a mere few pages later Aidan O’Neill completely rebuffs, though not specifically, O’Murchu’s revolutionary approach when he writes: “The proper response of the Church which continues to accept the overall legitimacy of the legal systems of western democracies cannot be to call for revolt against the system as a whole, but instead to call for change in specific aspects and laws thereof” (p. 188). On the one hand we see O’Neill calling for change within the system, a reform, on the basis of being able to disagree on points while all the while respecting the whole, while on the other we have O’Murchu wishing to raze the whole in order to raise his point. This is the only area of *Opening Up* where the desires of the essayists seem to be in conflict. It is one thing to ask to be listened to but quite another to call for revolution. In comparison to O’Murchu’s, O’Neill’s essay, “Can a Catholic Be a Good Democrat?” is a very good read, especially for Catholics considering involvement in, or already involved in, political matters.

The other essay that brought the general standard of discussion lower was Jeannine Gramick’s, “Changing Hierarchical Structures”. Very few would doubt that any institution two thousand years in the making would need reform to its hierarchical structures. Yet Gramick does not seem to be the person to deliver the required blueprint for this. The essay contains comments from Gramick

such as: “Catholics have not been trained to find the door of moral discernment nor encouraged to question, probe or analyse. They have been taught to memorise facts or teachings and to conform to the direction of authorities. In terms of Lawrence Kohlberg’s six stages of moral development, many Catholics are near the bottom rung of the ladder: a literal obedience to rules and authority” (p. 242). If this is true why should one bother reading a book of essays written by Catholics, be they conservative or liberal? Furthermore, how can Catholics be expected to discuss reform judiciously if they are moral primitives?

This aside, *Opening Up: Speaking out in the Church*, is well worth reading, especially for those who consider themselves positioned toward the more conservative wing of the Church. For this particular group it is always important to realize that the Church is larger than any limitation imposed by personal opinion and that one should try and come to understand the breadth of perspectives that together comprise the yearnings and aspirations found in the Universal Church. This said I doubt whether many conservative readers will actually consider the time spent reading *Opening Up* as time well spent. Thus the book may in reality become another one of those works that liberals write and read in order to affirm that they are not alone, to feel that their voice is being heard by someone at least.

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