

the limits of metaphorical interpretation, which I do not find satisfactorily resolved by saying that anything in the canon of Scripture must be true, *a priori*, and that is our only criterion.

Thus I find the thesis of the book deeply problematic and at odds with what most theologians say about revelation. Yet the problems are real ones to which few have suggested an answer anywhere near as clear as Swinburne's; and maybe most theologians need to look again at their presuppositions in view of this trenchant defence of propositional revelation. It should open up these fundamental issues to fuller debate at the level it sets so elegantly .

KEITH WARD

RETROSPECT by John Deedy. *The Mercier Press 1990 Pp.330 £9.99*

The changes which hit the Catholic Church subsequent to the Second Vatican Council were as unsettling for some as they were liberating for others. How could the Church which had seemed so stable, and had claimed to present an unchanging and enduring message, now change so radically ?

John Deedy aims to ease this trauma by showing the origins and evolution of various catholic beliefs and practices. The style is chatty and the order is unsystematic, a measure of catholic obsessions rather than a theological overview. So we start with (1) Mary, (2) The Mass, (3) Marriage, Divorce, Annulment, (4) the other six Sacraments, (5) Miracles, (6) Indulgences. The Bible for all it is "recovering its place of honor among catholics" is nevertheless squeezed in at chapter 14 between Angels and Canon law.

John Deedy we are told on the back cover is a "veteran Catholic journalist" and author of *The Catholic Fact Book*, among other things. This book is also a book of facts for catholics rather than a work of history or theology.

Sometimes alas the facts are slightly wrong. So he tells us for instance that "the Church holds a validly contracted marriage to be indissoluble by both church law and divine law". This is only true however of *sacramental* (that means *both* partners baptised), *consummated marriages*. A marriage may be valid though it is not a sacrament, or when not yet consummated. Given the emotive nature of marriage law accuracy here is very important.

There are also some doctrinal mistakes such as saying that the immaculate conception means "Mary was born free or original sin".

New and Old Catholic Encyclopedias are both much quoted, sometimes to give a contrast between pre and post Vatican II, sometimes criticised, sometimes cited as an authority.

For someone worried about changes in the Church this book may be helpful, but because of its unreliability and lack of theological perspective I would be loath to recommend it.

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