

Thomas P. Rausch S.J., the process through which the whole community incorporates into its life a particular decision, doctrine or practice—something which Catholics have long ignored but which ecumenical discussion with the Orthodox has forced back on our agenda. The difficulty, at least for us in the West, is that, if a doctrine or practice is unpopular, we are tempted immediately to conclude that it is erroneous. Thinking ahead ecumenically, Rausch also asks how one ecclesiastical community (such as the Roman Catholic Church) might recognize a common faith in some other ecclesiastical community from which it had long been separated.

This dictionary is welcome, then, not only for the traditional presentation of central Christian doctrines in a fairly accessible language but also for the many ways in which perspectives are opened up for further reflection, perhaps particularly in areas which are ecumenically problematic. This is certainly the 'aid to preachers and teachers of the faith' which the editors aimed to give to those of us who are 'engaged in secondary and college-level teaching or in ordinary preaching'.

FERGUS KERR OP

THE OCEAN OF TRUTH by Brian Hebblethwaite, *Cambridge University Press, 1988.*
pps. 165. Pb. £7.50.

Continuing the Cambridge obsession with water, Hebblethwaite sets out to drown the ebbing sea of faith in the boundless ocean of truth. It does not take long; the book is remarkably brief and presents a case for objective theism in a beautifully succinct way. Hebblethwaite scores many palpable hits against those who hold that 'modern thought' leads away from objective theism. He argues that the works of Darwin, Marx and Freud, carefully interpreted, may call for some revision but not for any abandonment of the concept of God. He charges Don Cupitt with selecting marginal figures to support his attack on objective theism, and briefly surveys the work of contemporary theologians and philosophers to show how 'critical realism' is in fact a more typical modern view. A spirited and informed attack on Kant is followed by a short but penetrating defence of natural theology—it is refreshing to find arguments for theism that do not simply fall into Kant's pre-arranged grooves. It is beautifully done—though one must lament the brevity which rebuts a large and influential work by J.L Mackie in two pages. Hebblethwaite finds fulfilment beyond death to be a necessary implication of theism, and spells out an attractive vision of the world as an intelligible, beautiful whole crying out for due fulfilment. He ends with a final blast at those who claim to purvey Christian truth without an objective God. It is wonderfully done; but there are peculiarities. He does not hesitate to throw out antique lumber; and this seems to include 'a literal belief in miracles' (13). God reveals himself in 'fallible and developing media', and works mediately through natural processes. Yet Hebblethwaite retains a firm belief in one unique incarnation of God in Jesus, and in the resurrection, 'however we may understand that mysterious event'. But is it not very odd to believe in just one miracle in the whole of history? Or to suppose that a fallible process of revelation could suddenly find one perfect vehicle in Jesus? The account remains precariously balanced between a more robust supernaturalism and a more universalist and naturalistic theism, which might find God working in many ways, perceived by many diverse and fallible theologians. A tension remains at the heart of Hebblethwaite's vision, which must be resolved if metaphysical theology is not to remain all at sea. Let that not detract, however, from the elegance, succinctness and power of the form of Christian theism Brian Hebblethwaite places before us.

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