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[Book Review of] *The Concise Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, edited by Bernard Stoeckle

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hopes to keep the "Pandora's box contained and orderly" (p. 19) and does it in a very intelligible way and to a remarkable degree.

He would bring students to a point of questioning and pursuing moral issues "with as much rigor as the field admits" in an effort to be able to test, with them, the strengths and weaknesses of their moral reasoning. He would resist "indoctrination" but by indoctrination he seems to mean standards imposed without the benefit of examining the reasoning processes behind them. Thus religious faith, examined and supported by reason, is not to be excluded. Indeed, Clouser points out that "many students (and patients) already have religious beliefs and are anxious to see what their faith has to say about particular moral problems" (p. 62).

There is a great wisdom in his observation that "the most important additional requirement of one already trained in ethics is great familiarity with the medical and medical educational world. This cannot be stressed enough. It goes without saying that it is essential to have detailed factual knowledge of those medical areas concerning which one is raising moral questions" (p. 35).

This book is at least an antidote against what seems to be an all too prevalent error among many in the medical field: that physicians can fly through ethical questions by the seat of their pants and write articles on medical ethics with the sole guidance of their gut feelings.

In short, if a teacher first knows where he stands on moral questions, and where he is coming from, and if his own premises are tested and reasonable, Clouser's book will deliver what its title promises: strategies, problems, and resources, and will do it in a very intelligible way.

A valuable six and one-half pages of appendix, which Clouser refers to as "a starter kit" lists and briefly describes a selected bibliography, relevant professional journals and helpful resource organizations, for teaching bioethics.

— Thomas J. O'Donnell, S.J.

The Concise Dictionary of Christian Ethics

Bernard Stoeckle, Editor

The Seabury Press, 815 Second Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017. 1977, x + 285 pp., \$19.50.

In 1967, John Macquarrie edited a volume entitled *Dictionary of Christian Ethics*. The work was clear, comprehensive, coherent and, in a word, competent. Even if it sold today at three times the original price of \$7.50, it would be a bargain.

No bargain at any price is *The Concise Dictionary of Christian Ethics* which is poorly conceived, badly edited, hastily published and unethically overpriced. Since a dictionary — especially one which is the work of many authors — is a different genre of scholarship, it can be reviewed only in a general way with illustrations used to highlight its overall orientation. A dictionary, after all, is meant to be consulted, not read.

The contributors hope that this work, "while it shuns the dictatorship of any party-line," will offer "basic guidelines for all interested Christians who wish to consider or reconsider the fundamentals of ethics at the present time (p. x).

(Coincidentally, a similar statement is to be found in the preface to Macquarrie's work above: "We have followed no party line, but have tried to bring together in this volume some of the most significant thinking that is currently going on about Christian ethics.") There is a wealth (or at least a welter) of information in *The Concise Dictionary*, but the "fundamentals of ethics" do not really stand out. This is unfortunate, especially since the work seems designed for persons other than professional ethicists, at least if the bibliographies are any indication.

Apparently as a convenience to English-speaking persons, foreign titles are not included in the bibliographies even though most of the 30 or so authors are German-speaking and even though professional ethicists whose native language is English must have a facility with other modern languages (German, for example). Some major entries (e.g., "Norm") have no bibliography, and when a name is used in other entries (e.g., "Biblical Ethics") there is no reference in the bibliography. Nor is every bibliographical reference accurate: in the bibliography appended to "Celibacy," R. Francoeur's book *Eve's New Rib* becomes *Eve's Spare Rib!*

There are other inaccuracies as well. For example, in the same entry on "Celibacy," this is said: "... by the Reformation a theoretically celibate clergy was taken for granted in the West. This was reaffirmed at Trent, and again in the Decree on Priestly Formation of Vatican II. A flurry of encyclicals in the same sense, before and since, is perhaps the clearest indication that change will eventually come about" (p. 40). The fact is, there has been no "flurry of encyclicals" in any sense, and it is certainly misleading to suggest this as an indication (let alone "the clearest") that things will change. There is an abundance of typographical errors, a few instances of lines being left out and other lines repeated, some awkward translations and, most notably, major omissions for a work of this type.

In brief, the publication of this *Dictionary* is not one of Seabury's better editorial decisions.

— Dennis J. Doherty, Dr. theol.
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Current Literature

Material appearing below is thought to be of particular interest to Linacre Quarterly readers because of its moral, religious, or philosophic content. The medical literature constitutes the primary, but not the sole source of such material. In general, abstracts are intended to reflect the substance of the original article. Contributions and comments from readers are invited. (E. G. Laforet, M.D., 2000 Washington St., Newton Lower Falls, MA 02162)

Pruitt RD: On science and ethics.
Mayo Clin Proc 1978; 53:684-685.

Andre Courmand has advocated the "Code of Science" as the most appropriate ethical basis for modern society. But despite his assertion that the ethic of science "should provide a basis for going beyond the competing ideologies and religions of our day," its tenets are

curiously similar to those embodied in some of the world's great religions. Nevertheless, demonstrating these parallels between the Ethic of Development and the Judeo-Christian ethic demeans neither. In fact, "science in its role as the 20th century Messiah may give to those teachings a power for dispersion and general acceptance that they would not otherwise achieve."