

Diccionario de Pensadores Cristianos

Xabier Pikaza Ibarrodo, with the collaboration of Fernando Torres and others. *Diccionario de Pensadores Cristianos*. Estella, Navarra, Spain: Verbo Divino, 2010. 987 pp. 47.51€. Hardcover. ISBN: 9788499451060.

Xabier Pikaza Ibarrodo is a well-known Catholic scholar from Spain, the author of a number of important works. He is a member of the Mercedarian Order, a Catholic priest, and was a professor of the Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca for many years until 2003. After his “retirement” he has been writing on theology, ethics, and religious history, in addition to lecturing in Spain and Latin America.

Pikaza’s dictionary includes the life and work of over a thousand Christian thinkers who have defined the history of religion in the West. Not just theologians, but also philosophers, mystics, literary writers, and churchmen are included. He concentrates on Christian thinkers, starting from Origen to Rahner, from Thomas of Aquinas to Edith Stein, from Luther to Barth, from Hildegard of Bingen to René Girard, from Ignatius of Loyola to Theresa of Jesus (Teresa of Ávila), from Calderón de la Barca to Hans Urs von Balthasar, from Dietrich Bonhöffer to Martin Luther King, to mention some examples. If a category is selected, such as classical thinkers, mystics and spiritual masters, and men of the church, the reader may go from Augustine of Hippo to Xavier Zubiri, from Adam of Perseigne to Simone Weil, and from Saint Ambrose to John Zizioulas. The choice of the persons included is based on Pikaza’s teachings and research. The dictionary summarizes, from the author’s perspective, forty years of teaching, study, and research of theology, and in some ways it fills a long-existing gap in this area. It attempts to gather the thinking of a living Christianity, along with well-known intellectuals: Catholic, Protestants, orthodox and heterodox, from Miguel de Unamuno to Gustavo Gutiérrez, from Carl G. Jung to Joseph Ratzinger. The dictionary also includes major Spanish writers—men of letters—including Calderón de la Barca, Miguel de Cervantes, Francisco de Quevedo, Luis de Góngora, Lope de Vega, and Antonio Machado, among others.

The dictionary includes a greater number of males, because through the centuries men have had more time and opportunity to think about Western Christianity. In spite of this, it underlines the contribution of over a hundred women that who greatly influenced Christianity’s vision and who will have a larger presence in the years to come. [Editor’s Note: I discovered the breadth of the dictionary when I found that it included the dean of Catholic Theological Union, Barbara Reid, O.P, a feminist Biblical scholar.] It is a dictionary of people whose memory persists and who continue to influence our thought. Pikasa covers a number of Christians who were persecuted or assassinated because of their thoughts, from Saint Paul to Ignacio Ellacuría. Some readers may disagree, for understandable reasons, with the choice of thinkers, preferring other names and the exclusion of some in this work. This dictionary makes a clear distinction between central figures (such as Origen or Cervantes) with several pages dedicated to each; the less important receive just a short reference, with basic information about their life and work. The writers Cervantes and Lope de Vega receive a lengthy treatment, whereas Küng, Metz, Galilea, and others that have been influential in the theological scene are not as well-represented.

The dictionary intends to be universal, but it is written from the Spanish world perspective, giving some predominance to Spanish-speaking Catholic authors. This is undoubtedly due to the author’s personal view of Christianity and

from his Spanish background, though it includes other ancient writers (Latin and Greek theologians) and modern authors as well, who write in German, French, English, and Russian. It is also an open dictionary, since it includes individuals who were once rejected or excluded from the Church, either for being strange or heterodox, such as Marx, Nietzsche, Comte, and Feuerbach.

One interesting feature is the so-called particular indexes, each with an appropriate title: Seven Dictionaries in One: Main Subjects, The First Millennium, Gregorian Reform to Modernity XIX-XX, The Great Ruptures, Current Situation, Addendum: Special Divisions, and the General Index of thinkers. Within each “dictionary” there is an additional useful topical division, as in the main subjects: classical thinkers, condemned or admonished, mystic and spiritual masters, moral and practical commitment, men of church, philosophers, and literature writers. Information from Augustine of Hippo to Zeno of Verona can be found in the Church Fathers section of the “First Millennium Dictionary.” Because of this feature, the reader can easily find information not just on names, but also on subject categories, specific periods of time, the Catholic church orders, etc., in addition to the general index of thinkers. The headings in black that stand out while browsing and their alphabetical order are very useful for searching. This dictionary includes cross references that direct the reader to related topics within the text, which is helpful for research purposes.

The *Diccionario de Pensadores Cristianos* is indeed a valuable research tool for professors, students, librarians, theological libraries, and libraries in general. But it is also a useful resource to any reader who seeks reference information on some of the intellectual minds of Western thought, seen from a Christian perspective.

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