

# Theology handbook is somewhat flawed, but thorough

*A Handbook of Contemporary Theology*, by David Lorne Smith; Bridgepoint Book, (Wheaton, Ill., 1992); \$19.99; 394 pages.

By Father Sebastian A. Falcone  
Guest contributor

Handbooks and reference works call for assessment on at least five general criteria: scope in relationship to readership, reliability of information, proportion, resources, and critical approach.

By such standards, *A Handbook of Contemporary Theology* deserves high commendation overall, despite some shortcomings. This is not after all an easy kind of book to write. It requires breadth and synthesis. The author has achieved a significant measure of both. He has placed us in his debt.

David L. Smith is professor of systematic and historical theology at Providence Theological Seminary in Otterburne, Manitoba, Canada. His book emerged from his classes on contemporary trends in theology. His avowed aim is to trace contemporary — rather than recent — theologies from an explicit evangelical perspective.

Part I explores Basic Contemporary Theologies: Fundamentalism; Neorthodoxy; Pentecostalism; Evangelicalism; Neo-literalism; Post-Vatican II Catholicism; Eastern Orthodox Theology; and The Charismatic Movement.

Part II deals with Contemporary

World Trends: The Theology of Hope; Process Theology; Secular Theology; Theologies of Success; Liberation Theology; and Third Wave Theology: the Vineyard Movement; Feminist Theology; Reconstructionist Theology; the New Age Movement; and Creation Theology.

Smith's scope has not shortchanged his students or his readers.

Each chapter offers an exposition of the theology, historical features, doctrinal tenets, an appraisal from an evangelical standpoint, and a brief bibliography. An Appendix offers a general introduction to Some Third-World Theological Directions. A general index and an index of names round out the work.

In a book of this type, oversimplification is a persistent danger. This probably explains why Karl Rahner is labelled a "neo-Thomist" (p.93), and the theologies of various churches (see especially that of Roman Catholicism on p.113) turn up deficient, if not defective.

The work's mechanics leave something to be desired as well. The General Index is riddled with omissions. Smith might find it amusing, if not amusing, that for all of his evangelical concern and a full chapter on Evangelicals, not a single entry on the topic is found in the General Index. Misspellings of foreign language terms and incorrect references have eluded the proofreader.

Two general features were disconcerting to this reviewer.

I believe questionable judgment is at work when Matthew Fox's presentation is given 13 pages, John Wimber (of the Church Growth movement) 12, Robert Schuller 10, Karl Rahner five, Hans Kung two, and Edward Schillebeeckx one and a half. Mathematics aside, some omissions defy explanation: e.g., Elizabeth Schussler-Fiorenza in the chapter on feminism. But then again, in general, biblical theology (apart from two pages devoted to Rudolph Bultmann) is given short shrift throughout.

Perhaps the most objectionable fea-

ture — certainly the most persistent — is to evaluate theologies and theologians from an explicitly evangelical perspective. One might hope that judgments about theologies and theologians could be made without falling into such polemical rhetoric as: "shoddy," "to be disparaged," "deserving failing grades."

For all that, *A Handbook of Contemporary Theology* deserves a thorough reading by anyone who wishes to understand "the directions in today's theological landscape."

Father Falcone is on the faculty of St. Bernard's Institute.

## One-Act Play Festival set for this weekend

**FAIRPORT** — Four Catholic high schools in the diocese will take part in the fifth annual Monroe County High School One-Act Play Festival. The event is scheduled for Feb. 4-6, at Fairport High School, 1358 Ayrault Road.

Aquinas Institute and McQuaid Jesuit high schools will present their plays on Feb. 5, while Our Lady of Mercy and Bishop Kearney high schools will perform on Feb. 6.

Aquinas' one-act play is titled "Chamber Music." This Arthur Kopit production is a comedy-drama about eight women in an insane asylum who imagine they are famous women in history.

McQuaid's play is an adaptation of "A Separate Peace," based on a novel by John Knowles.

Mercy's production is "I Saved A Winter Just For You," an adaptation of winning pieces from a high school writing competition at New Mexico State University.

Kearney's cast will perform "The Prophet," a play which focuses on racial bias.

Other schools participating in the festival are Allendale-Columbia, Brighton, Greece Arcadia, Fairport, Irondequoit and Rochester School for the Deaf.

## Logos GUARANTEED BOOK OF THE WEEK!

All books reviewed in the Catholic Courier's weekly book review column are available at Logos Book Stores.

At Logos, we bring you the best in Catholic Reading. If you're not completely satisfied, return the book with the original sales receipt within 30 days and you'll receive a complete refund. That's our MONEYBACK GUARANTEE, and it's that simple. (Guarantee applies to books purchased up to 6 months from date of review.)

VISA AND MASTERCARD ORDERS ACCEPTED BY PHONE OR MAIL

**GREECE** TWO CONVENIENT LOCATIONS:  
THE STREET OF SHOPPES OUT-OF-TOWN CUSTOMERS,  
1600 Ridge Road West CALL:  
(716) 663-5085 **1-800-755-6467**

**PENFIELD**  
PENN-FAIR PLAZA  
2200 Penfield Road  
(716) 377-4480

## A HANDBOOK OF CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY

is available at Logos Bookstores for \$19.99. Stop in to one of our two convenient locations to pick up your copy, or mail this coupon to:

**LOGOS BOOKSTORE**  
THE STREET OF SHOPPES  
1600 RIDGE ROAD WEST  
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK 14615

Please send me my copy of A HANDBOOK OF CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY Enclosed is \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (each Book \$19.99 + 7½% sales tax). Number of Copies ordered \_\_\_\_\_  
Please include \$1.65 (first book) postage & handling, 75¢ each additional book. Make check or money order payable to Logos Bookstore, or include your VISA or MasterCard # on order blank. (Allow 2-3 weeks for delivery)

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
(Check One) VISA \_\_\_\_\_ MasterCard \_\_\_\_\_ Card # \_\_\_\_\_ exp. date \_\_\_\_\_

**AVON INN**  
55 East Main Street  
Avon, NY 14414  
(minutes off 390, exit 10)  
716-226-8181

The Avon Inn welcomes all to experience the warmth of winter in this 170 year old Greek Revival Mansion. With five cozy parlors, each with a fireplace, the Inn offers a comfortable setting for dining and overnight lodging.

Join us for our Winter Get-Away Package. It includes a room for two, \$25 dinner certificate, a bottle of champagne, and a continental breakfast. Only \$49 + tax Sun., Tues., Wed., and Thurs. and \$69 + tax on Friday and Saturdays. Valid through March 31st, 48 hour advance reservations required, and not valid on Feb. 12, 13 and 14th.

On Sunday, February 14th, Valentines Day, we are offering three dining options. A sitdown breakfast from an a la carte menu will be served from 8:00a.m. to 12:00. A special Valentines Breakfast Buffet, only \$5.95 + tax, is available from 9:00a.m. to 1:00. Dinners will be offered from 1:00p.m. to 8:00p.m. Please call for reservations.

The Avon Inn is the perfect place for WEDDING RECEPTIONS, Showers, Meetings and Anniversary Parties for up to 200 guests.

Call for details on our upcoming Beer Tastings, Murder Mystery Dinners and Friday evening entertainment.

Make plans to visit the historic Avon Inn today.

## Dining Around the Diocese

**BOSDYK'S**  
Restaurant & Lounge  
430 Spencerport Rd.  
(corner of Long Pond)  
716-247-7690

Open 7 days a week for lunch and dinner, we offer a relaxing, comfortable atmosphere and reasonable prices. Whether you choose from our complete menu, or from one of our daily lunch or dinner specials, we're sure to please your palate. Come and try one of our lunch and dinner specials. Our party room is available for gatherings of up to 60 people. We hope to see you here!

**CINELLI'S**  
Country House Restaurant  
6007 Lake Rd. (Rt. 18)  
Sodus, New York 14551  
(315) 483-9154

One of Wayne County's finest restaurants and Party Houses, Cinelli's Country House Restaurant is a really special place! Fine service, great view, wonderful food, and a marvelous menu are just the beginning.

A big, beautiful California-coast-style solarium dining room with real wood arches and glass commands an unparalleled panorama of orchards, farms, old woods, and Lake Ontario.



**MR. DOMINIC'S ON THE LAKE**  
4699 Lake Avenue  
(716) 865-4630

If you're planning lunch or dinner out, take a drive to Mr. Dominic's at the Lake. Noted for their fine Italian cuisine, they offer delicious appetizers, wonderful soups, 11 veal dishes, vegetarian, chicken and fish specialties, and homemade pasta. Early bird dinner specials are served Sunday-Friday. Also offered is a 10% senior discount. Delivery is available for your luncheon group of ten or more. Lunch hours from 11a.m.-2p.m., Tuesday-Friday. Dinner hours Monday-Friday 4-9:30p.m., Saturday 5-10p.m., Sunday 3-9p.m.

**PETALS**  
at the Marriot Thruway Hotel  
5257 W. Henrietta Road  
359-1800

Petals offers a rich wood and brass decor, serving traditional American cuisine. Popular for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Lunch, Mon. - Sat., 11:30a.m. - 2p.m. Dinner, Mon. - Sat., 5 - 11p.m. Sunday Breakfast Feast served 11:30a.m. - 2:30p.m.

**IRONDEQUOIT TOWN LOUNGE**  
705 Titus Avenue  
(716) 342-3465

Serving lunches 11:30-3p.m. daily except Sunday. Featuring an Early Bird Special every night but Friday. Fish Frys every Friday. Our party room can accommodate up to 60 people for your next gathering. Clip out this ad and receive \$5.00 off two dinners (not valid on dinners under \$8.00 or Early Bird Specials), offer good Sunday thru Thursday, during the month of February. Please present ad when ordering.