George Thomas Kurian and Mark A. Lamport, eds.

Encyclopedia of Christian Education. 3 vols. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015.

Pp. xxxvi + 1630 (numbered continuously). Hb, \$340.

This is a dual purpose encyclopedia. First, it is an encyclopedia about contemporary Christian education in the United States and the rest of the world by editors and contributors very committed to it. Second, it is an historical encyclopedia describing Christian education from the beginning. The results are published in three folio-sized volumes with double-columned pages containing about 1,200 entries written by four hundred contributors. The entries are presented in alphabetical order. There are numerous survey articles; articles on individual educational concepts, organizations, and programs; and articles on individuals. There are also a number of “lead-in” essays designed to provide general introductions to groups of articles. These are all printed in volume 3 after “Z,” which is an awkward location. The encyclopedia is ecumenical. While the editors and possibly a majority of the contributors come from the Evangelical side of American Protestantism, it has numerous entries on Roman Catholic education over the centuries, plus education in the Assyrian, Coptic, Eastern, Greek, and Russian Orthodox churches.

To achieve the first goal, the encyclopedia offers many articles on the different approaches, organizations, pedagogies, philosophies, and materials employed in Christian education today. For example, there are articles on Behaviorism, Bible Study Software, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, Connectivism, and four articles that discuss the relationship between Christian education and Postmodernism. One of them even offers an understandable definition of Postmodernism, a daunting task. There are articles about Christian education today in many countries of the world. The extensive appendices offer a great deal of statistical information concerning the number of Christians in countries across the world; the number of schools and universities; literacy rates; the distribution of New Testaments, Bibles, Christian literature, and Christian libraries; the number of people who listen to Christian radio stations; and a list of Christian universities and their websites. In the United States the definition of what constitutes a Christian institution of higher learning is sometimes difficult to determine. The article “Church Related Colleges” presents a typology describing four degrees of relationship between colleges and churches. All of this is informative and useful.

The historical coverage begins with the early Christian era. On the whole, the discussion of Christian education in the ancient world is comprehensive enough and good. Christian education in the Middle Ages is almost as good, with one qualification. The importance of medieval mendicant reli-

gious orders in the education of the laity is exaggerated, because the orders concentrated on educating their own members and did not educate very many lay persons. Schools sponsored by municipal governments played a greater role than the articles suggest. Christian education in the Renaissance and Reformation era receives a good deal of attention, most of it well done. The encyclopedia has many good articles on the impact that Protestant and Catholic reformers, pedagogues, new churches, and catechisms had on Christian education.

The encyclopedia describes the history of education in various Protestant churches and movements: Adventist, Anabaptist, Anglican, Assemblies of God, Baptist, Lutheran, etc. In each case one to three consecutive articles briefly inform the reader about the origins of the church or movement in the era of the Protestant Reformation, how it approached education initially, and how it approaches Christian education today. On the whole, these articles achieve their purposes. But there is no article on education in the African-American churches or in the Mormon Church.

The encyclopedia devotes less attention to Christian education in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries than it does to the Reformation era or the contemporary world. There are four linked articles on the beginning of Methodist education in the eighteenth century, which are good if repetitious. But there is no article on the destructive impact of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution on Christian education. And Christian education in the nineteenth century, especially in Europe, needed more attention. At that time civil governments, driven by statist and nationalist agendas, expanded public education, with varying impacts on Christian education. On the other hand, the coverage of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is fulsome.

Of the five brief articles on the Jesuits, those on Ignatius of Loyola, Robert Bellarmine, and Bernard Lonergan (but lacking his date of death, which was 1984), and the *Ratio studiorum* are adequate, and that on the Jesuits is weak because it mostly quotes and summarizes old general printed sources. On the other hand, it lists the url for Jesuits Worldwide, which gives information on the Jesuits today. Given the number and importance of Jesuit schools through the centuries and across the world, they merited more substantial treatment. The article on the educational principles of the Catholic Reformation is good and has a good bibliography.

The encyclopedia is ambivalent about the impact of Renaissance humanism on Christian education. On the one hand the articles on Erasmus and Christian Humanism correctly assess the humanist influence on Christian education, especially in the Protestant world, as important and beneficent, because humanists directed attention to the Bible and other early Christian primary

sources. On the other hand, a lead-in introductory article by Kurian condemns Renaissance humanists for focusing “entirely on the temporal world and the self-fulfillment of human beings” and the “conviction that raw and unfiltered knowledge in itself would improve the human condition” (1434). This inaccurate judgement may echo the old idea that Renaissance humanism was secular humanism. By contrast, there is a balanced assessment of secular humanism in the article on Humanism.

There is no discernible confessional bias in the articles. Articles about Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Anabaptist, etc., organizations, themes, and individuals are free of bias and often well done. A series of thoughtful essays on theological education including Thomism (1265–1304) briefly summarizes the history of theological education and the complexities and dilemmas of theological education today. For example, there is a discussion of the relationship between theological education and the 1999 Bologna process model (1289), which seeks to transform European higher education. Grouping these articles together was wise, despite some repetition.

There are a number of entries on individual universities across the world. Some of them are deservedly well-known: Bologna, Cambridge, Paris, Oxford, plus Calvin College, Catholic University, Harvard, Notre Dame, and so on in America. Unfortunately, there are also entries on Liberty University and Regent University. These are puff pieces about intellectually inconsequential institutions. Neither article mentions that both institutions adamantly promote a very conservative Christian Republican political agenda. For example, the current president of Liberty University has urged students to get concealed gun permits, and the university sponsors a training course for using handguns. What part of Christian education is that? The article on Regent University writes “Among Regent’s most noteworthy graduates is Bob McDonnell, who served as governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia” (1037). McDonnell has been sentenced to two years in prison for taking bribes while in office. Although the Supreme Court overturned the conviction, McDonnell is not a graduate of which to be proud. These articles should have been deleted.

There are inconsistencies that a stronger editorial hand might have rectified. While the vast majority of entries include English-language bibliographies, a small minority lack them, and only a few list non-English works. None of the articles have cross references, which is unfortunate and unusual in encyclopedias. There is too much repetition, perhaps because the editors decided to give contributors free reign rather than imposing more precise content directions.

It is surprising to see a substantial entry entitled “The Dark Ages, Christian Education in the (AD 476–1000) [*sic*],” on pp. 377–85, even though the article

asserts that this is a prejudiced view, plus passing references on pp. 196, 1001, and 1277. By contrast, the *Dictionary of the Middle Ages* never refers to “the Dark Ages.”

The overall judgment is mixed but more positive than negative. The historical information is brief and has some problems, but also has some good introductions to individual topics, and good-to-excellent and interesting information on many specific items (see McGuffey, “Readers and The New England Primer”). Scholars wanting more and better historical information on larger topics should go to works devoted to specific historical periods, such as the *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, *Encyclopedia of the Renaissance*, and the *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*. In the articles on contemporary Christian education there are a handful of advocacy articles lacking objectivity, such as the two articles on Home Schooling. There are many more that are balanced, thoughtful, and useful. Every article examined was clearly written. And the encyclopedia passes the browse test, which is that one can open a volume at random and find interesting material. Readers wanting substantial information and discussion about contemporary Christian education and its issues will find this work informative and stimulating, even when they do not agree with all the views expressed.

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