James T. Keane, ed.

Avery Dulles: Essential Writings from America Magazine. Notre Dame, IN: Christian Classics, 2019. Pp. xxiv + 345. Pb, \$24.95.

Avery Dulles was one of the most influential theologians in the United States in the twentieth century, if not the most influential. He was respected by persons on all sides of the theological spectrum because of his clarity, integrity, honesty, and fairness.

This book gives a view of all of these qualities in what James T. Keane, senior editor of *America* magazine, considers to be Dulles's most important writings that appeared in this publication. These thirty-nine selections span the years 1962 through 2008, with more than half published before 1990. The work of choosing and sorting the pieces was a monumental task. The editor ultimately decided on four categories: Reports and Reflections, Lectures and Addresses, Book Reviews, and Appreciations. The articles in each section then are arranged in chronological order. The book begins with a preface by the editor (ix–x) and an introduction by James Martin, S.J. (xi–xxiv). It ends with Martin's interview with Dulles when he was named a cardinal of the Catholic Church in 2001.

The first section is also the largest with fourteen essays. It is interesting to note that the first seven of these focus on various aspects of faith, while the last seven deal with topics concerning theology and theologians. All of the articles on faith display a great deal of sensitivity on the part of Dulles. A convert himself from agnosticism (he had long left the Presbyterian faith of his family before his conversion to Catholicism), he stresses in each of these writings the personal freedom of the individual in matters of faith as well as the patience needed as the seeker gropes with doubts and difficulties. It is in these articles that we see a trait usually overlooked in Dulles—his pastoral sensitivity. He often commented that he had no parish experience but had been an academic all of his life. That personal evaluation is true as it stands, but what Dulles never saw in himself was his kindness and his understanding of others, especially his compassion for those struggling with issues of faith. The remaining seven articles in this first section are focused on key theological issues of the time.

As the Laurence J. McGinley Professor of Religion and Society at Fordham University from 1988 to 2008, he delivered thirty-nine biannual public lectures. The second division, "Lectures and Addresses," presents eleven of these McGinley Lectures. As can be seen in the table of contents, these lectures do not follow a particular pattern. Dulles sometimes chose subjects that were topical at the time. Only four of the remaining entries included in this section were lectures delivered at other universities.

The last of his McGinley Lectures, originally titled “Farewell Address,” but published with the title “A Life in Theology,” is an especially beautiful and poignant one. It is truly Dulles’s reflection on his own life as he is increasingly incapacitated and facing death. (James Martin describes this lecture on pp. xxii and xxiii.)

The third section, “Book Reviews,” contains only seven reviews, four of which deal with books written by Hans Küng. Of the remaining three, two are of books written by Richard McBrien and one by Charles Davis. This section is particularly dated with the last review, *Catholicism* by McBrien published in 1982. According to Dulles’s official bibliography there were five other reviews published later in *America* of books by David Tracy, Walter Kasper, Francis Sullivan, William May on the Curran Case, and Joseph Ratzinger, but these are not included.

The fourth section, “Appreciations” presents Dulles’s testimonies on Henri de Lubac and Yves Congar—theologians who themselves were named cardinals in view of the impact of their writings on the church in the twentieth century, especially for their influence on Vatican II. Reading Dulles’s presentation of their lives and their work, it is easy to see the similarities with himself who later also would become a cardinal.

The book ends with the interview of the newly named Cardinal Dulles by James Martin. After describing his conversion, Dulles explains his understanding of the role of the theologian and his own personal living of that vocation. Since he rarely spoke autobiographically, this interview is a valuable insight into his own understanding of his life’s journey.

However, there is one article that is conspicuously absent in this volume. It is entitled “The Rights of Accused Priests: Toward a Revision of the Dallas Charter and the ‘Essential Norms,’” which was published in the June 21–28, 2004 issue of *America*. He warned against the lack of specificity in the listing of sexual malfeasance, pointing out that there was no differentiation in the types of behavior, nor gradations in punishment. However, another situation arose when, as soon as an accusation was made and before investigation by both church and government officials, priests were removed from ministry immediately and sent away from their rectories with no means of support and no place to live. Here his sense of fairness is evident. Dulles is one of a few voices who see the accused priests as punished unfairly before due process takes place. For this reason, this reviewer wishes that this article had been included. Today, more than ever, Dulles’s thoughts on this matter need to be seriously considered and discussed.

There is one fact that needs to be corrected in the Preface. Joseph A. O’Hare, S.J., president emeritus of Fordham University and former editor of *America*

magazine, who died in March 2020, did not preach the homily at Cardinal Dulles's funeral Mass in St. Patrick's Cathedral on December 17, 2008. That Mass took place on December 18, 2008, and the celebrant and homilist was Cardinal Edward Egan, archbishop of New York.

This volume gives a concise overview into the theology of Avery Dulles, whose writings continue to influence the Catholic Church in the United States today, more than ten years after his death. The editor hopes that these selections will show the development of his thought on important issues. It is useful to look back to the early writings of Dulles to see how his later thoughts can be found in the beginnings of his career as a theologian.

The closing sentence of the preface gives the hope that "this book will continue to promulgate the enlightening wisdom of a profound theologian and a great soul." Despite its few limitations, it has great potential to do so.

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