

Livingston, James C. *The Enlightenment and the Nineteenth Century*, Second Edition. Vol. 1 of *Modern Christian Thought*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006. xv + 430 pp., Pb. ISBN-13: 9780800637958. \$35.00.

Livingston, James C. and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza with Sarah Coakley and James H. Evans, Jr. *The Twentieth Century*, Second Edition. Vol. 2 of *Modern Christian Thought*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006. xvi + 544 pp., Pb. ISBN-13: 9780800637965. \$35.00.

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James C. Livingston, Professor of Religious Studies Emeritus at the College of William and Mary, published his single volume *Modern Christian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Vatican II* in 1971, which quickly became a standard text in the history of Christian thought in the modern era. Twenty-five years later he expanded what was by that time his classic single volume work into two-volumes, the first focusing on the enlightenment and the nineteenth century, and the second on the twentieth century, published in 1996 and 1999 respectively. Now Livingston has done a favour for all those who have benefited from the use of the two previous manifestations of these texts, as well as the many future readers that these books will be sure to elicit, in offering a greatly expanded and updated second edition of the two-volume work.

Livingston begins the first volume of the second edition, *The Enlightenment and the Nineteenth Century*, with a terse, but highly engaging introduction in which he discusses his understanding of what constitutes modernity. He argues that “*modern Christian thought* can best be understood as beginning with the formidable changes in our worldview that were occasioned by the intellectual ferment unleashed in the scientific, philosophical, and historical changes of the Enlightenment” (2). In agreement with Ernst Troeltsch, Livingston maintains that the Protestant Reformation, which many historians have traditionally understood as the impetus of the modern era, was not essentially modern, but, rather, an outcome of late Medievalism. He explains that “what was genuinely modern about the Reformation only emerged *after* classical, orthodox Protestantism was profoundly challenged by

the intellectual and social revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries” (2). It is within this temporal framework, between the dawn of the seventeenth and the close of the nineteenth centuries, that Livingston organizes his first volume.

In the first three chapters, Livingston covers many of the major theological movements and thinkers of the Enlightenment, including the rationalistic understandings of Christianity in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, as well as those philosophers who challenged these rationalistic conceptualizations. In the remaining twelve chapters, Livingston focuses on mostly nineteenth century theological developments such as Christian romanticism, idealism, French traditionalism, the Oxford Movement, nineteenth century Catholic thought, the post-Hegelian critique of Christianity, biblical criticism and Darwinianism, Ritschlian and Protestant liberal theology, Princeton theology, Ultramontanism and neo-Thomism, Catholic modernism, and the thought of Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche. While Livingston does a masterful job of covering a wide range of movements and figures in a single volume, he does, however, either omit or sparsely mention some important figures such as Jonathan Edwards, Johann Fichte, and Friedrich Schelling.

Livingston opens the second volume, *The Twentieth Century*, by again discussing the concept of modernity, but this time in the context of the twentieth century. He writes that, “While Christian thought in the twentieth century has taken new directions, especially in the latter half of the twentieth century, many of the questions that emerged during the Enlightenment, and often were pursued more deeply in the nineteenth century, remain vital issues today” (1). Livingston argues that in the twentieth century, theologians continued to deal with those issues that were essentially modern and that emerged out of the Enlightenment. He writes that “to the discerning reader it is also clear that the substantive issues have not always advanced very far beyond the Deists, Kant, Herder, Hegel, Schleiermacher, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche” (1, 2). Livingston is not by any means denying the fact that new issues and questions have emerged during the twentieth century, but, rather, is careful to observe that “Our religious life and thought has been largely

shaped by ‘modernity,’ and we remain preoccupied with its concerns” (2). As these statements suggest, Livingston and the other authors of the second volume are careful to contextualize the developments that occurred within twentieth century theology according to their relationship with those questions bequeathed from the Enlightenment.

The second volume follows much the same format as the first, with the obvious difference of Livingston writing ten chapters, Francis Schüssler Fiorenza four, and Sarah Coakley and James H. Evans, Jr. one chapter each. In chapters one through six, ten, twelve, fifteen, and sixteen, Livingston covers the areas of modern historicism, American empirical and natural theology, dialectical theology, the theologies of Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Christian existentialism, Christian realism, process theology, evangelical theology, theology of religions, and a concluding chapter on the state and future trajectories of theology at the end of the twentieth century. In chapters seven through nine as well as eleven, Schüssler Fiorenza contributes four excellent chapters on the Nouvelle Théologie and transcendental Thomism, Roman Catholic theology after Vatican II, political and liberation theologies, and developments in the areas of history and hermeneutics. Sarah Coakley and James H. Evans, Jr. complete the second volume with a chapter each on feminist and black theologies respectively. Noticeably absent from the second volume is any treatment of the feminist theologians Elizabeth Johnson and Rosemary Radford Ruether, the British theologians Thomas F. Torrance, and John Milbank, evangelical theologians J.I. Packer and Donald Bloesch, and the Canadian theologian Douglas John Hall. Despite these and other glaring omissions, it is difficult to critique the authors for making difficult editorial decisions, as a work on even the most important twentieth century theologians, which avoided detailed analysis of its subjects could easily span several volumes.

Readers will especially appreciate four features of this second edition of Livingston’s *Modern Christian Thought*, which serve to set it apart from many other texts in the area. First, the generous and judicious incorporation of primary source materials that helps to provide a sense of the actual thought of the figures being discussed, as opposed to

only the interpretation of the authors. Second, the inclusion of less frequently discussed figures such as H.S. Reimarus and G.E. Lessing in volume one and H.N. Wieman and Friedrich Gogarten in volume two. Third, the discussion of Roman Catholic movements and theologians beyond the giants John Henry Newman, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and Karl Rahner. Fourth, the inclusion and careful consideration of political, liberation, evangelical, feminist, and black theologies.

Any omissions on the part of the authors in either volume are easily forgiven by virtue of the concise and clear, yet thorough and authoritative, treatment of some of the most important theological movements and figures of the last three centuries. For the student interested in an accessible, comprehensive, and erudite account of the unfolding narrative of modern Christian thought, there is simply no substitute for this two-volume work. University and seminary students of modern theology, as well as their teachers, would be well advised to make these texts essential reading.