The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology

With over 550 entries ranging from 'Abba' to 'Zwingli' composed by leading contemporary theologians from around the world, The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology represents a fresh, ecumenical approach to theological reference. Written with an emphasis on clarity and concision, all entries are designed to help the reader understand and assess the specifically theological significance of the most important concepts. Clearly structured, the volume is organized around a small number of 'core entries' which focus on key topics to provide a general overview of major subject areas, while making use of related shorter entries to impart a more detailed knowledge of technical terms. The work as a whole provides an introduction to the defining topics in Christian thought and is an essential reference point for students and scholars.

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Contents

List of contributors  page vi

Acknowledgements  xvii

Preface  xix

Entries  1

References  542
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It goes without saying, however, that all this work behind the scenes would have been to no purpose without the co-operation of our many contributors. Given the many other demands on a scholar’s time, composing articles for a reference volume is truly a work of supererogation, and we are correspondingly grateful for the participation of so many colleagues, who willingly condensed their expertise on complex topics into agonizingly restrictive word limits for the benefit of our readers. We have especially appreciated their grace and patience in dealing with the quibbles of four editors, and we hope that they find in the final product a tool that justifies their trust in us along the way.
Preface

There is no shortage of Christian theological reference works in print. Moreover, the proliferation of web-based resources (most notably the increasingly comprehensive Wikipedia) means that basic information about even the most obscure theological terms is rarely more than a few mouse clicks away. Under these circumstances the production of yet another theological dictionary may seem unnecessary at best and reactionary at worst. Consequently, before embarking upon this project, we discussed at some length what possible justification there could be for *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*.

In part we were encouraged by our sister publication, Robert Audi’s *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, which is widely recognized as having achieved remarkable compactness and accessibility without sacrificing accuracy or comprehensiveness. At the same time, we recognized that the extraordinarily pluriform character of contemporary Christian theology, including but also cutting across traditional confessional and juridical boundaries, raised particular challenges. Nevertheless, it seemed to us that there was a place – and, indeed, a need – for a single-volume reference work that was at once comprehensive in its coverage of topics, inclusive in the many perspectives of its contributors, and, most importantly, committed to a specifically theological examination of each topic considered. In short, we wanted a text that would exhibit what Hans Frei once referred to as a ‘generous orthodoxy’: coherent and capacious, but neither partisan nor blinkered.

In order to achieve these aims, we sought to enlist the services of a broad range of prominent theologians writing in English. Given the many commitments scholars face we have been able to reach this goal only very imperfectly, but we are all the more grateful for the generosity of the many colleagues who agreed to contribute to this volume. In enlisting their services, we judged it important to give the *Dictionary* a structure that would allow their individual contributions to be combined most effectively for the reader. Thus, while the *Dictionary*’s specifically theological (as opposed to historical or sociological) focus includes a comprehensive coverage of relevant topics, no less important than the range of material included is its level of integration. While the *Dictionary* is formatted conventionally, we have tried to ensure that the length and focus of individual articles make it as easy as possible for the reader to move between multiple entries in order to gain a well-rounded, appropriately contextual understanding of related theological concepts.

Entries range from a minimum of 250 to a maximum of 2,000 words in length. We settled on the minimum length of 250 words on the grounds that an important feature of a *theological* dictionary should be that it devotes enough space to terms and concepts to allow the reader to see how they are actually used in theological conversation. We have therefore not included any purely lexical entries. At the same time, we have opted for an upper limit of 2,000 words as an appropriate means of preserving the concision expected in a dictionary, which, we felt, would be eroded if individual entries were to encroach upon the length of a book chapter. Nevertheless, these longer entries contribute to the distinctive character of the *Dictionary*, since they provide a framework through which the various shorter entries are integrated both with one another and with larger conceptual fields.

**Core Entries**

We have conceived the 2,000-word articles as ‘core entries’. Although they comprise only about 10 per cent of the total number of listings, they take up around a quarter of the total volume of text. As such, they are designed to provide the conceptual ballast for the volume as a whole, serving as the superstructure around in terms of which many of the other entries are conceived and composed. The core entries fall into five basic categories that together map the territory of systematic theology from distinct, though complementary, conceptual perspectives:

- traditional doctrinal topics or loci (e.g., creation, ecclesiology, revelation);
- confessional orientations (e.g., Catholic, Lutheran, Orthodox);
- theological styles (e.g., evangelical, feminist, liberal);
- Christianity’s relation to other faith traditions (e.g., Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam);
- academic disciplines (e.g., biblical theology, historical theology, systematic theology).
The inclusion of core entries on Christianity’s relation to other faith traditions (as well as a range of articles of varying lengths on theologies emerging from non-western regions) is a feature driven by the recognition that the startling growth of Christian Churches in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, together with patterns of migration, make it likely that theology in the twenty-first century will cease to be dominated by western academic elites and that it will be increasingly conducted in close proximity with other religions.

The core entries include basic lexical orientation to the subject matter, historical and cultural contextualization, summary of key developments in the history of the topic, identification of continuing points of tension or debate, and evaluation of future prospects. Furthermore, core-entry authors were encouraged to use the comparatively large amount of space allotted to provide their own perspective on the topic as well as coverage of the basic conceptual terrain. The core entries were commissioned prior to the other articles, so that their content could be used by the editors to guide the composition of shorter articles on related topics. In this way, shorter entries are used to provide definition of and orientation to technical terms, freeing authors of core entries to sketch the main contours of their assigned topic without the need to make frequent explanatory digressions.

Needless to say, while the range of material covered by the core entries is large, it is not exhaustive. Some selection has inevitably been required in order to control the overall size of the volume, in line with our judgement of the relative significance of topics for the field as a whole. Thus, while all the major doctrinal loci feature in core entries, some significant theological styles (e.g., narrative and Queer theologies) have been assigned fewer than 2,000 words. Similarly, slightly shorter entries (generally between 1,500 and 1,750 words) have been allotted to other important topics that do not fall under any of the broader core-entry categories (e.g., baptism, monasticism, and philosophical traditions that have been important influences in the shaping of Christian thought). Finally, entries on theologies associated with particular geographical regions vary widely in length and are, inevitably, somewhat arbitrary, though we have endeavoured to identify coherent centres of theological production both within (e.g., Scottish theology) and outside (e.g., South Asian theology) more established North Atlantic academic contexts. All these classes of articles function analogously to core entries, in that they have been used to help focus discussion on related topics.

Biographical entries fall into a separate category. Though in many cases individual theologians are directly relevant to the material covered in core entries and/or shorter articles relating to particular theological concepts or movements, we judged it important to treat significant thinkers in a more focused and deliberate manner. At the same time, because the number of figures who might qualify for entry is almost limitless, it was necessary to impose fairly severe limits on the number of figures granted individual entries. We have followed the practice of the New Dictionary of National Biography and the Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart in not assigning separate entries to living persons (though living theologians are in many cases mentioned in other articles). Even with this means of exclusion, however, the list of those who might have been included remains vast, and we acknowledge a degree of unavoidable arbitrariness in the selection of those to be included.

In order to provide as balanced a list of figures as possible, we have tried to prioritize those theologians whose influence on the shape of central doctrines (e.g., Athanasius, Irenaeus), the subsequent history of the tradition (e.g., Aquinas, Luther, Palamas), or contemporary theology (e.g., Barth, Rahner) is widely recognized. Since the sociological complexion of Christian culture up to the twentieth century virtually guarantees that these criteria will produce a list that is overwhelmingly male and European, we have also endeavoured to include a significant number of women and persons of colour whose voices, though not as prominent in traditional academic theology, indicate something of the genuine, if often unacknowledged, diversity of Christian thought over the centuries.

In order to allow the maximum amount of space to subject entries, the vast majority of biographical entries have been set at either 250 or 500 words, though a few major figures have been assigned 1,000 words or more. Although the article’s assigned length will constrain what is possible in each individual case, all entries include a summary of the figure’s life, reference to the debates or controversies
in which he or she was involved and the major ideas with which he or she is associated, identification of his or her most important works, and an evaluation of his or her influence.

USING THE DICTIONARY
As already noted, articles are arranged alphabetically, with each entry clearly identified in bold type and small capitals (e.g., APOLOGETICS). Core entries are further set apart by being printed in all capital letters (e.g., CREATION). Small capitals without boldface are employed within articles as a means of cross-referencing: when the reader comes across a term in small capitals in the body of an article (e.g., SCRIPTURE), this indicates that the term has an article of its own elsewhere in the Dictionary. Occasionally, cross-referencing is indicated by the addition of the conventional designations, ‘see’ or ‘see also’. Because the core entries provide the conceptual centre of gravity for the text, readers are encouraged to refer to them in order to acquire a fuller sense of how concepts covered in related shorter entries mesh with the larger themes of Christian theological discourse.

Most entries include a brief bibliography of between one and six works. Obviously, given the enormous amount of writing available on almost every one of the entry topics, these bibliographies could be extended almost indefinitely, but stringency was necessary in order to meet the requirements of a one-volume reference work. The items listed at the end of the articles are, correspondingly, proposed in the vein of ‘suggestions for further reading’ for those wishing to pursue the topic in greater depth. In addition to these more formal bibliographic entries, however, two further sorts of references to other works are found in the Dictionary. First, biographical entries in particular generally include in the body of the article the titles and dates of the most important texts authored by the figure examined. Second, within all articles works cited are referenced by an abbreviated title and (where a portion of text is quoted) page, paragraph, or section numbers in parentheses. The full titles, original composition/publication dates, and (where relevant) the English translations (ET) from which the citations were taken are listed alphabetically by author (or, where no author is indicated, by title) in the ‘References’ pages at the end of the volume. Where material is cited from a modern or more contemporary edition of an older work, the date of the more recent edition is given in square brackets after the original publication date.

There are also a number of other, miscellaneous editorial conventions we have adopted in the Dictionary that the reader should note. First to note are the conventions we have adopted for biblical quotations. All such quotations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise indicated, using the abbreviations for biblical and apocryphal books followed by the Journal of Biblical Studies; to save space we have also abbreviated the Old and New Testaments as OT and NT respectively. Second, throughout the volume we have chosen to use only Arabic numerals when referencing premodern texts (e.g., Against Heresies 3.20.3 means Book 3, Chapter 20, Section 3; The City of God 5.6–9 means Book 5, Chapters 6–9; Summa theologica 1.93.2–4 means Part I, Question 93, Articles 2–4, and so forth). Third, we have uniformly referred to the Church of Rome as ‘Catholic’ rather than ‘Roman Catholic’. Although we realize that this decision begs some significant ecclesiological questions, it was the easiest way to ensure consistency and economy of expression across a volume including contributors from a range of confessional traditions. (For similar reasons, we refer to the Chalcedonian Churches of the East as ‘Orthodox’ rather than as ‘Eastern Orthodox’.) Finally, we have sought to provide dates for all figures mentioned within articles who do not have an article of their own elsewhere in the Dictionary. In most cases we have used dates of birth (if known) and death (where applicable), or, where both are unknown, fl. (Latin floruit, ‘flourished’). For popes and monarchs, we have opted to use the dates of their reigns (indicated by the letter ‘r’). There are, however, two exceptions to this last convention. First, because the onset of the Roman emperor Constantine I’s reign can be marked in several different ways, we have used his birth and death rather than reign dates. Second, in referring to the competing claimants to the papal throne during the Great Western Schism of 1378–1415, we have used birth and death dates to avoid confusion with respect to overlapping reigns, as well as disputed judgements regarding particular claimants’ canonical status.