

BOOK REVIEWS

Daniel Patte (general editor), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pp. lxxvii + 1343. ISBN: 9780521820967 (Hardback), £ 95.00 (US\$ 150.00); ISBN: 9780521527859 (Paperback), £ 25.00 (US\$ 39.99).

The aim of the editors was to provide students, scholars and general readers with a one-volume comprehensive, yet accessible, reference guide of Christianity, covering its history from the beginning to the present times. It proves to be an invaluable reference tool for the study and reflection on the main question that the authors intend to answer: 'What is Christianity?'

It engages with the majority of Christian denominations, including for the first time sections on Eastern and Oriental Orthodox theology, and even brief entries on Charismatic 'independent Christians'. The dictionary gathers more than 3,500 entries, written by 828 scholars of many denominations and from all over the world, and covers a vast array of details and aspects of Christianity. Amongst the authors, I found both clergymen and laypersons, reputed professors of theology and religious scholars, representing all areas of Christianity and virtually every existing Christian tradition.

After the list of the editorial board and the area editors and advisors, an extensive preface (pp. xlv-lxiv) explains the aims and objectives of the Dictionary, but also methodological aspects regarding the form and content. The bibliography is completely absent in the volume, being provided online only (at <http://hdl.handle.net/1803/3906>). The short entries, arranged into two columns, are interspersed with more detailed clusters of specific themes, providing a broad image of the different historical and denominational aspects of the respective subject. The topics discussed in clusters include 'Biblical interpretation' (pp. 114-125), 'Bible translations' (pp. 125-128), 'Buddhism and Christianity' (pp. 151-154), 'Christologies' (pp. 213-225), 'History of Christianity' (pp. 521-551), 'Monasticism' (pp. 830-836), 'Popular Christian practices' (pp. 978-984), or 'Theological education' (pp. 1219-1226). It also includes thematic clusters on all major Christian denominations and beliefs, such as 'Anglicanism' (pp. 35-44), 'Charismatic and Pentecostal movements' (pp. 184-198), 'Eastern Orthodox Churches' (pp. 892-907) and 'Oriental Orthodox Churches' (pp. 907-915), 'Protestantism' (pp. 1016-1030), and 'Roman Catholicism' (pp. 1078-1102).

However, it is virtually impossible to cover everything and there are still important areas that were left uncovered. Although there is an entry on 'Arts and Theology', which is complemented by other brief entries such as 'Iconography', 'Literature and Christianity' and 'Music in/as worship', we believe that a more

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thorough treatment of Religious art and the impact of Christianity on the arts would be very much needed. Also, the Dictionary seems unbalanced at times. For instance, while the abovementioned entry in 'Arts and Theology' is allocated one and a half columns, the lesser broad subject of 'Psychology and Theology' extends over almost three columns. Furthermore, the different types of biblical interpretations are insufficiently treated in the 'Bible interpretation' cluster or otherwise within this volume. Therefore, while the 'Reception Studies of Scripture' is given just one column, other approaches to biblical criticism and interpretation such as Sociopolitical, Postcolonial, or Poststructural methods and views are completely absent.

The general character of the dictionary is that of an academic ecumenical approach to the history of Christianity, with a special focus on the geographical distribution of Christians. It appears that the editors intended to offer different denominational views given by their own theologians and scholars, a very important feature that deserves much praise. This, in my opinion, gives a fresh and very accurate picture of how Christians and the plurality of the Christian faiths and traditions are present worldwide. The reader is given the possibility to examine both the differences and similarities of Christian belief and practice in various historical, geographical and social contexts. I am confident that this Dictionary will be of great use for all those interested in Christianity, both believers and agnostics, and I salute with great joy the impressive endeavour of Daniel Patte and his editorial board.

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