

# Dictionary of Christian Spirituality

## PREFACE

This volume was prepared with the conviction that the way to really live is to do so before God in the transforming and empowering presence of his Spirit. The key is to cultivate consciousness of and willing alignment with the presence and grace of God in all things. At this point in history, this has become more than a “quality of life” issue. Many insightful observers of our times agree with Thomas Cahill in his assessment that “the twenty-first century will be spiritual or it will not be.” The crises of the modern, materialist world suggest that spirituality may now matter more than ever before. The problems of our times are too deep-seated to allow for merely political or economic solutions.

But then we must also frankly ask: Does the Christian faith still possess the resources necessary to satisfy the spiritual needs of the human race? We are convinced that it does. And we also believe that today the Spirit of God is prodding the amnesiac people of God to reclaim the spiritual resources that have inspired and sustained believers through the centuries. The future is ominous for all forms of organized religion that in their worldly calculus cut themselves off from the transcendent.

One scholarly critic of the “spiritual scene” today has described spirituality, as popularly conceived, as a marketable commodity for individuals, one that amounts to little more than “wafting experientialism.” Admittedly, much of the devotional literature produced by Christian publishers is of precisely this vague and fluffy nature. One of the purposes of a reference volume like this is to help Christians reunite their heads with their hearts (and also with their hands, as Dennis

Hollinger would have us add). Christian spirituality is about more than having warm feelings toward Jesus.

A new volume like this is not created from scratch. It utilizes resources already available, and we acknowledge with gratitude our indebtedness to so many of these. For example, we have profited from numerous efforts to publish English translations of important primary sources in Christian spirituality. The most impressive of such efforts is the Classics of Western Spirituality (CWS) series that was launched by the Paulist Press in the 1980s. Since then the series has grown to well over one hundred volumes and continues to expand. Also since then HarperCollins has spun off a sixteen-volume series of abridged versions of selected texts from the larger CWS series.

The sheer quantity of such material can be daunting to navigate. For this reason a number of abbreviated one-volume anthologies have been published. Among these there are F. Magill and I. McGreal, eds., *Christian Spirituality* (1988); R. Foster and J. B. Smith, eds., *Devotional Classics* (1993); and A. Holder, ed., *Christian Spirituality: The Classics* (2009).

Certain works have earned the status of milestones in the history of the disciplines of spirituality and spiritual theology. Some of these are not yet available in English, but among those that are, we acknowledge in particular the translated three-volume *History of Christian Spirituality* (1963-1969), written by Louis Bouyer and others, as well as the three historically sequenced volumes on *Christian Spirituality* (1985-1989), edited by Bernard McGinn, John Meyendorff, and others, in the World Spirituality series.

In recent years a number of significant reference works in Christian spirituality have been published. *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* (1993), edited by Michael

Downey, represents a Roman Catholic perspective. On the Protestant side there are *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (1983), edited by Gordon Wakefield, and its successor, *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (2003), edited by Philip Sheldrake. *The Study of Spirituality* (1986), edited by Cheslyn Jones and others, is a substantive and supplementary collection of historical and thematic essays with rich bibliographic suggestions for further study.

The field has been further enriched with *The Story of Christian Spirituality* (2001), edited by Gordon Mursell, an accessible volume with colorful visuals. From the Wesleyan tradition has come *The Upper Room Dictionary of Christian Spiritual Formation* (2003), a helpfully concise work edited by Keith Beasley-Topliffe, and from Oxford, *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality* (2005), prepared by Arthur Holder, dean of the Graduate Theological Union at Berkeley.

Since the field of Christian spirituality is already so well resourced with excellent English-language reference works, the question surfaces: Why produce yet another?

The short answer is: Christian spiritual theology, spirituality, and spiritual formation have now become familiar terms in the global evangelical community. Consequently, an accessible and reliable academic resource is needed on these topics—one that will offer a discerning orientation to the wealth of ecumenical resources available while still highlighting the distinct heritage and affirming the core grace-centered values of classic evangelical spirituality. While a number of scholarly reference works on Christian spirituality are already available, the need exists for a high-quality reference volume with the following features:

1. Biblically engaged

2. Accessible and relevant to contemporary Christian practitioners
3. Generous in its regard for the full range of Christian traditions of spirituality
4. Attentive to otherwise neglected topics, concerns, and formative figures in the evangelical tradition of spirituality
5. Global and international in both topical scope and contributors
6. Reflective of interdisciplinary engagement with related fields of inquiry
7. Reasonably priced

This volume has two main divisions: (1) thirty-four larger “integrative perspective” essays followed by (2) nearly seven hundred smaller alphabetized entries of varying lengths. Each of the integrative perspective essays has been written with an awareness of the other briefer but related articles included. These shorter articles provide more details on particular topics than was possible to include in the integrative essays themselves. Believing as we do that history is shaped by individuals as well as by larger movements, we make no apology for including many succinct biographical entries in our mix.

Preparing this volume has been a stretching experience for everyone involved. Some contributors—specialists in their own biblical, historical, or theological fields—have been obliged for the first time to think carefully about the links between subjects familiar to them and the discipline and dynamics of Christian spirituality. To some degree, therefore, the present volume reflects “the state of the union” in emergent evangelical study of Christian spirituality. The reader will be able to tell some things about us by what we have included and what we have left out. The volume is

not presented as the definitive work on this topic; it is our hope, however, that it will prove to be immediately helpful and a serviceable benchmark for future editions.

In terms of our intended audience, contributors to the volume have been encouraged to address their peers in ways that will also be accessible to a larger audience of thoughtful readers. As editors and writers who have made substantial investments in this volume, we naturally hope that it will be well received and favorably reviewed. Positive response from people “in the know” will naturally be most welcome. But deeper down, I think we identify with the great American theologian Jonathan Edwards, who resolved fairly early on in his own career to be “useful rather than conspicuous.” We are hopeful that the volume may influence the understanding—and even more importantly, the actual dynamics—of Christian spirituality in many churches, colleges, and seminaries for years to come.

Glen G. Scorgie  
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