

## New Dictionary of Theology: Historical and Systematic

### Preface to the first edition

‘Everything a theologian does in the church,’ said Martin Luther, ‘contributes to the spread of the knowledge of God and the salvation of men.’ That may not sum up every Christian’s attitude to theologians and theology, but it strikes the right note. The root meaning of ‘theology’ is ‘speaking about God’. What Christian theology seeks to do is to spell out the significance of God’s revelation, supremely in Jesus Christ, of himself and his provision and purposes for his world and the men and women he has made. Theology does this in different ways, some of which are suggested by qualifying epithets such as ‘biblical’, ‘historical’ and ‘systematic’. Yet all the various methods and models of theology aim to set forth an ordered understanding of the revealed mind of God—about himself, about his creatures in this world, and about the way he plans us to live in fellowship with himself and one another. The Christian whose diet has no theological content is likely to suffer from stunted or unbalanced growth instead of developing maturity of mind and heart.

This Dictionary is intended to provide the enquiring reader with a basic introduction to the world of theology—its themes, both majestic and minor, its famous formulations and its important historical moments, its distinguished—and notorious—exponents, past as well as present, its sources, disciplines and styles, its technical vocabulary, its ebb and flow in movements, schools and traditions, and its interaction with other currents of thought and religion. While the common standpoint of the editors and contributors is allegiance to the supreme authority of the Scriptures, and their

shared concern to set forth a biblical basis for theological knowledge and judgment, no attempt has been made to exclude or minimize diversity of interpretation within these boundary marks.

The production of a volume like this would never have been possible without the contributions of many individuals over many months. Special mention must be made of Richard Bauckham, who helped in the planning stages, and of successive theological editors of IVP, David Preston, Claire Evans and David Kingdon. The last-named has borne the heat and burden of the main part of the day. Their reward, and ours, in part will be the knowledge that this Dictionary fulfils its purpose—to promote an informed and biblically controlled approach to thinking and speaking about God and his works.

SINCLAIR B. FERGUSON  
DAVID F. WRIGHT

## Preface to the second edition

Many students and readers have expressed their appreciation for the *New Dictionary of Theology* (1988). As the second of the dictionaries produced by IVP (the first being the *New Bible Dictionary* in 1962), it has been a trustworthy and informative guide. After almost thirty years, however, there are many new writers, issues and themes on the agenda, for theology does not stand still, and this second edition therefore has over 400 new articles. Many of the existing articles have been expanded and amended, and almost all have additional bibliographical references.

The editors have tried to give more attention in this mainly British publication to theological writers and themes

in North America and around the world. The excellent material on biblical theology has been (regretfully) deleted, since this subject is now covered at length in IVP's *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (2000). This book is therefore now more specifically a dictionary of systematic and historical theology, though we recognize that this cannot but take its rise from biblical theology.

Like the original editors, the revising editors share a commitment to the historic Christian faith and particularly to the evangelical tradition which acknowledges that our systematic theology is under the authority of Holy Scripture. This can be acknowledged without apology, since the false concept of objectivity as the stating of completely neutral facts, an activity incompatible with commitment to any position or viewpoint, is now regarded as an illusion. Nevertheless, the editors aspire to that degree of objectivity which begins with an acknowledgment of our own perspective, and therefore every care has been taken throughout the Dictionary to give a fair and accurate account not only of every tradition of evangelical theology, but of every Christian, and indeed every non-Christian, stance.

Thanks are due to all who have contributed, and particularly to the organizing editor, Steve Carter, whose work was completed by Dr Philip Duce. We acknowledge our debt to the original editors, Dr Sinclair Ferguson and Professor David Wright, and to the original consulting editor, Dr J. I. Packer. We dedicate this second edition to the late David F. Wright, Professor Emeritus of Patristic and Reformed Theology at the University of Edinburgh, in gratitude for his Christian witness and the painstaking scholarship which made him a guide and mentor to so many.

MARTIN DAVIE  
TIM GRASS

STEPHEN HOLMES  
JOHN MCDOWELL  
T. A. NOBLE