

Dictionary of Christian Spirituality

Glen G. Scorgie, ed. *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011. 852 pp. \$27.95. Hardcover. ISBN: 9780670022823.

The goal of this work is to provide an “accessible and reliable academic resource” for the study of spirituality, one that is global in coverage, but also inclusive of the “distinct heritage ...of classical evangelical spirituality.” Seven criteria are listed, and are worth repeating: 1) biblically engaged, 2) accessible and relevant to contemporary Christian practices, 3) generous in its regard for the full range of Christian traditions of spirituality, 4) attentive to topics, concerns, and formative figures in the evangelical tradition of spirituality, 5) global and international in both scope and contributor, 6) reflective of interdisciplinary engagement with related fields of inquiry, and 7) reasonably priced. It is fair to say that this volume succeeds on all counts.

The general editor, Glen G. Scorgie, has been a professor of theology at Bethel Seminary, San Diego, since 1996 and has written *A Little Guide to Christian Spirituality* (2007). His consulting editors are Simon Chan, a professor at Trinity Theological College, Singapore; Gordon T. Smith, President of reSource Leadership International, British Columbia; and James D. Smith III, professor at Bethel Seminary, San Diego.

The volume is 852 pages in length and contains a listing of the 200-plus contributors, along with each one’s terminal degree and current occupation. Contributors are primarily theological professors from North American and European universities, and make a most impressive list. In addition, a smaller number of spiritual practitioners (that is, people working in the field) also contributed to the work. A perusal of these practitioners reveals ministers, psychologists, editors, directors of non-profits (including a zoo), and even a librarian. Few doctoral students are listed.

The book is divided into two distinct parts. The first is a series of thirty-four essays, each about five pages in length. They cover larger, more unitive topics in spirituality, such as “New Testament Foundations of Spiritual Theology,” “Jesus,” and “Mission and Ministry.” A number of historically focused essays are also included, such as the “Survey of the History of Christian Spirituality,” “Global Christianity (1700-Present),” and “Byzantium and the East (600-1700).” Also included are essays either on topics that overlap with spirituality or on activities through which people express their spirituality, such as “Spirituality in Relation to Creation,” “Spirituality in Relationship to Psychology and Therapy,” and “Music and the Arts.”

The quality of the essays is good, and at times better than good. In particular, the initial essay, “Overview of Christian Spirituality” by the general editor, is an excellent synopsis of what Christian spirituality is about: “living all of life....” Dr. Scorgie discusses three dynamics that he believes characterize the spiritual life: the relational, the transforming, and the vocational dynamic. This essay also furthers the goal of the volume by stating clearly that “this reference work reflects in general terms an evangelical consciousness and commitment” (28). The editor defines evangelicalism as “a broad tradition of experiential religion rooted in the Protestant Reformation and its Bible-centered approach to the Christian faith” (28). As a person not overly familiar with evangelical consciousness, I found the subjects discussed both beneficial to and supportive of any Christian worldview. In fact, there is much in this volume to pique the mind of any spiritual person.

All the essays have a sources-cited list and a section on further reading. Both the citations and reading recommendations cover a wide spectrum of Christian spiritual writing, and are not limited to any one denomination or tradition. The listings could have been improved with full bibliographic information instead of an abbreviated author, title, and year of publication.

In the book's second part, almost 700 short essays on a wide variety of topics are listed in alphabetical order. Each entry is one to two columns in length, is signed by the author, and includes a further reading list. Several offer a "see also" reference to other essays in the volume. A sizable portion of these short entries are biographical. Many deal with very familiar spiritual leaders such as St. Francis of Assisi, Julian of Norwich, John of the Cross, William James, and Ignatius of Loyola, though others are revelatory and include such geographically diverse people as David Du Plessis (South Africa), Jacques Ellul (France), Shusaku Endo (Japan), and Pastor Hsi (China). Leaders from many different traditions are represented, from Emanuel Swedenborg to Billy Graham. The same diversity is evident in the centuries covered, although a surprising number of contemporaries like Kathleen Norris and Brennan Manning are found within the pages.

Other short essays discuss general topics on the spiritual life. When the topic is very broad (e.g., joy, love, suffering, service, parenting), it is up to the author of the entry to determine which aspects to emphasize, leading to some unevenness in coverage. "Sacred space" is well defined and described, while "spiritual journaling" is less so. It is in these topical essays that the evangelical focus promised in the first essay becomes sharper. In the entries on Marian devotions, ordination, and the Sacred Heart, for example, the subject matter is filtered through an evangelical mindset.

While there are many other spiritual dictionaries, such as Bernard McGinn's three-volume work *Christian Spirituality* (1963-1969) or *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* (1993) edited by Michael Downey, the evangelical voice and distinctive choice of biographical entries makes this volume unique. The *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* is a bargain for the amount of material enclosed. I would recommend it for theological libraries as well as for private collections.

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