

Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms

Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling. *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999. 122 pp. \$9.00. Paperback. ISBN: 9780830814497. *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* 2012. IVP mobile app for iOS and Android. \$1.99.

The print version of the *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* is one in a series of paperback reference books from InterVarsity Press, a non-denominational, Christian evangelical press. The *Pocket Dictionary* is small (4.25" x 7"), but it covers a lot of territory with over 300 entries, averaging three to four on each of the 122 pages. The entries include both English and foreign terms, theologians (ancient to twentieth century), and theological movements and traditions.

New students often struggle with the challenge of learning the specialized vocabulary associated with their field of study. A Christian student undertaking theological studies will need to learn terminology that spans many centuries and multiple languages: Latin, Greek, German, and possibly others. Philosophical and denominational terms may also be unfamiliar. The *Pocket Dictionary* is an invaluable reference resource for theology. The option to purchase either a paperback book or the app for iPhone or Android makes this a good choice for the student who is interested in a lightweight and easy-to-use tool.

One drawback is that the dictionary has not been updated since 1999. There are theological terms that are common in theological education today, such as “mission,” that are missing from the dictionary. I think a revised edition would be well received.

Advantages of the app: The app has a number of helpful features, such as the ability to highlight terms and add notes. Additional icons at the bottom of the screen help you navigate: “Dictionary,” “Notes,” “Search,” “Highlights,” and “More.” The “More” icon includes instructions, contact information, and the options to e-mail terms and connect with Facebook and Twitter. The best feature available with the app is the ability to add words to the dictionary, although it would be nice to have an entry in the A-Z list show that a term is one that you added and not part of the original list. The search feature brings up words that have the search term in the definition. “Narrative,” for example, brought up “genre,” “metanarrative,” and “narrative, narrative theology.”

Drawbacks in the app: The app does not allow you to adjust the size of the type. If you have a large phone, you will be fine; if not, the type can be very small. This lack of functionality was surprising given that so many other apps incorporate the feature. I was disappointed that notes you add don’t show up as you scroll below a term. You have to tap on the screen, and the note then takes you to another screen. Where two terms mean the same thing, I was surprised that one term is linked to the other and not repeated. For example, “perichoresis” is also known as “circumincession,” but instead of having the definition repeated under perichoresis, you must tap the link to get to circumincession.

Once you begin to look at definitions you can swipe from one to the next (either right or left), but in order to return to the app’s A-Z word list you must go back to the dictionary icon and start over. You cannot just tap on an icon that will take you to A-Z.

This is a good basic dictionary and app — both are well worth their cost. With a little effort IVP could make several improvements and make this app even better.

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