

Introduction

As the title suggests, this book is a dictionary of the major Christian theologians from the apostolic fathers and the beginnings of post-biblical theology to Duns Scotus – the height of medieval scholasticism. Scotus was chosen as a cut-off point because he was the last great representative of the “golden age” of medieval Christian theology – but there are no real clear points of transition in intellectual history, and the choice of any externally imposed break must inevitably be somewhat arbitrary.

The purpose of the book is to give clear overviews of the life and theology of the figures it describes, and also to provide comprehensive bibliographies of their works and secondary literature concerning them. While there are a number of reference works on ecclesiastical or theological history, there is no other that focuses on individual theologians with this level of detail, or which provides such comprehensive bibliographies. These two features make this volume an invaluable reference tool. In particular, the bibliographies not only list the primary and secondary literature for those wishing to research a particular thinker in more depth, but give a good overview of the scale and scope of existing scholarship on that thinker.

The main criterion for inclusion has been *contribution to the development of Christian theology*. Sub-criteria by which that is measured include, above all, originality and influence on later figures. Inevitably, then, most of the individuals described are writers. But other persons important to the history of Christian

theology are also included, such as missionaries, monarchs, ecclesiastical politicians, and monastic founders. The entries tend to focus on their role *as theologians*, which means that an emperor or pope who was historically very significant in a non-theological way, but less so from the point of view of the development of theology, may receive only a fairly short entry. In order to keep the scope of the book manageable, no non-Christian figures have been included, although clearly there are many who had a great influence on the development of Christian theology.

Inevitably, these criteria are hard to assess and quite subjective. There are many more figures who could easily have been included, but who have been left out because of considerations of length. Also, the criteria have been applied more or less strictly when considering different eras. In the pre-Nicene period, there were few Christians at all, let alone ones with the leisure and ability to write theology, and as a result virtually all theologians from the period have been included. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, by contrast, there were enormous numbers of theological writers, and so in their case the criteria have been applied more strictly, with the exclusions accordingly becoming more widespread.

Each entry gives an overview of the subject’s life and works, together with a summary of his or her leading ideas (where appropriate). Where there is significant scholarly dispute this is mentioned, but not in detail. The best way to get an overview of the state of scholarship on each

figure is to look at the bibliography of secondary literature.

The bibliographies are intended to be as comprehensive as is practicable. As a rule of thumb, the more literature that exists on any given figure, the more selective the bibliography is. The primary texts listed include original-language editions and English translations; translations into languages other than English have generally been omitted (except where no other translations exist, or when they also incorporate original-language editions). For major authors whose works exist in several editions or translations, all major editions have been included, but obsolete ones have been omitted. The main exceptions to this rule are the *Patrologia Latina* and *Patrologia Graeca* editions published by J.-P. Migne in the nineteenth century, which continue to be widely used although many of the volumes have been superseded. “PL” or “PG” at the beginning of the list of primary texts indicates which volume of Migne contains an edition of the author in question.

For a majority of the entries, most secondary literature in book form is listed, going back to the middle of the twentieth century. Important journal articles are also listed, although older ones and those in languages other than English are less likely to be included. If less literature is available for a given thinker, earlier publications and more

foreign-language articles will be included. For those entries with *very* little relevant literature, everything available is listed. Conversely, if there is extensive literature available for a given figure, the criteria for inclusion are more restrictive, and fewer journal articles and older books will be listed. For thinkers with exceptionally extensive literature, I have generally omitted most journal articles and listed only the most important books earlier than the 1980s.

Many ancient and medieval theologians have variant names, some of which are really different names and some of which are alternative transliterations from the original languages. Where there are such variants, I have aimed to use the one most commonly used in the scholarly literature, but list the alternative names both in the entries and in the index. The policy of using the most common version of each name means that most ancient theologians with Greek names are listed in the traditional, latinised version, but most medieval theologians with Greek names are listed in the Greek form. For example, “Athanasius” rather than “Athanasios”, but “Italos” rather than “Italus”. Although this is not entirely consistent, it was felt that the volume would be most useful if the most common spelling of each name were used. Note that where the only variant of a name is the Greek or Latin spelling, these alternatives are not listed.