An Introductory Dictionary of
Theology and Religious Studies

An Introductory Dictionary of Theology and Religious Studies

Edited by
Orlando O. Espín and James B. Nickoloff

A Michael Glazier Book

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We dedicate this dictionary to Ricardo and Robert,

for their constant support over many years.

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VIRGINAL CONCEPTION (BIBLICAL THEOLOGY)
VIRGIN BIRTH
VIRGINITY
VIRGINITY OF MARY (BIBLICAL THEOLOGY)
VIRGINITY OF MARY (SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY)
VIRTUE
VISHISHTADVAITA VEDANTA
VISHNU
VISION QUEST
VISIONS (IN CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM)
VITA
VITORIA, FRANCISCO DE
VIVEKA
VIVEKANANDA, SWAMI
VIVES, JUAN LUIS
VOCATION
VODOUN
VON BALTHASAR, HANS URS
VON RAD, GERHARD
VOWS
VOWS (RELIGIOUS)
VRATA
VULGATE

WAHHABI
WAHHABIYA
WAILING WALL
WALDENSIANS
WANG YANG-MING
WAR
WARD, MARY
WEBER, (KARL EMIL MAXIMILIAN) MAX
WEIGEL, GUSTAVE
WEIL, SIMONE
WESLEY, CHARLES
WESLEY, JOHN
WEST, CORNEL
WESTERN CATHOLIC CHURCHES
WESTERN THEOLOGY
WHIRLING DERVISHES
WHITEHEAD, ALFRED NORTH
WIDOWS (IN THE EARLY CHURCH)
WISDOM
WISDOM LITERATURE
WITCHCRAFT
WITNESS/WITNESSING
WITTENBERG
WITTGENSTEIN, LUDWIG
WOMANIST THEOLOGY
WOMEN, ORDINATION OF
WORD OF GOD
WORK/EMPLOYMENT
WORLD (IN THE NEW TESTAMENT)
WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (WCC)
WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS
WORLDVIEW
WORMS, CONCORDAT OF
WORMS, DISPUTATION OF
WORSHIP
WRATH OF GOD
WRITINGS/KETUVIM (IN HEBREW SCRIPTURES)
WU-HSING
WU-WEI
WYCLIFF, JOHN

XIMÉNEZ DE CISNEROS, FRANCISCO
YAD HAHAZAKAH
YAHRZEIT
YAHWIST SOURCE
YAJNA
YAJUR VEDA
YAMA (DEITY)
YAMA (PRACTICE)
YANTRA
YARLMULKA
YELLOW TURBANS
YHWH
YIDDISH
YIHUD
YIN AND YANG
YISRAEL
YIZKOR
YOGA
YOGACHARA
YOM HAATZMAUT
YOM HASHOAH
YOM KIPPUR
YUGA
YUGEN

ZAKAT
ZAZEN
ZEA, LEOPOLDO
ZEALOTS
ZEN
ZHOU DYNASTY
ZION
ZIONISM
ZOHAR
ZOMBI (OR ZOMBIE)
ZOROASTER
ZOROASTRIANISM
ZUBIRI, XAVIER
ZWINGLI, ULRICH

Introduction and Acknowledgments

College professors of religion have been discovering over the past two decades that their students are frequently unfamiliar with ideas, terms, historical events, or persons deemed important in the study of religion. *An Introductory Dictionary of Theology and Religious Studies* intends to provide basic definitions and background information on concepts, persons, objects, and events that seem to be important or useful for the academic study of the world's major religions. It is further intended for students at colleges and universities where the academic study of religion is part of the undergraduate curriculum.

This dictionary is *not* meant to take the place of the professor, or of the professor's classroom explanations, or of other required reading. It is simply intended to provide a source of information with which students may initiate or enrich their study.

The dictionary is purposely *introductory*. The entries included in this volume were not written in order to break new scholarly ground or to disseminate recent research results. The authors were asked simply to present the subject matter in synthetic form, explaining what is commonly held by mainstream specialists in the field, in language understandable to beginners.

The dictionary is not intended, furthermore, for catechesis or religious education, although it might prove helpful in those contexts as well. We have kept the college religion course in mind, and not the parish, as the primary context in which this volume might be used.

Although the dictionary reflects the Catholic heritage of many of the authors, a significant portion of entries was written by scholars from other religious traditions or from none. We hope the dictionary will be useful to students in institutions public and private, denominational and secular.

We have attempted to be as ecumenical, multicultural, and international as possible. In order to achieve this aim, we have made the following decisions:

- We have tried to reflect developing-nation and U.S. minority perspectives in the list of entries, alongside European and Euro-American perspectives.
- We have included entries on U.S. Latino/a, Latin American, African American, African, and Asian theologians, besides the expected ones on Europeans and Euro-Americans.
- We added entries on religions present in the United States but usually absent from American introductory dictionaries (for example, Umbanda, Condomblé, Santería, Vodoun, native religions from the Americas, and so on).
- We also represented European countries usually ignored in American dictionaries (for example, Spain, Portugal, Russia, and Greece).

To achieve the preceding four goals, as well as to make sure that women from across the world were included, we chose to have entries on scholars and religious leaders still living, working, and writing.

The emphasis of this dictionary is on mainstream Christianity, in particular "Catholic" Christianity, broadly understood. At the same time, we have acknowledged Protestant, Anglican, and Orthodox Christianity and have included as many entries as possible on every one of the world's other great religions. Specialists in these other traditions, often members thereof, authored the many entries on Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Santería, and so forth.

This is the first edition of the dictionary. With suggestions from professors and students, the subsequent editions can be improved, enlarged, new entries included, and others deleted. This introductory dictionary is intended as a real teaching tool for the academic study of Christian theology and world religions. We hope that it will serve its purpose well.

We also acknowledge that this first edition is not perfect. Choices were made on what to include and what to exclude, and others might agree or disagree with these choices. The students' and professors' feedback will be of great help to us in the preparation of future editions of the dictionary.

We would like to thank all the authors who wrote the entries included in this volume. Our colleagues at the College of the Holy Cross and at the University of San Diego generously participated in the long process that has finally led to the publication of this dictionary. Their support of this project, over many years, is deeply appreciated. We also thank Mark Twomey, former editorial director at Liturgical Press, and project editor Aaron Raverty, O.S.B., for their patient and gentle prodding. And we also thank the director, Peter Dwyer, and the staff of Liturgical Press for believing in this project and for shepherding it to conclusion.

We especially want to explicitly thank Professor Patricia Plovanich, of the University of San Diego, who first suggested the need for this project, and who worked with us during early editorial stages. She has remained as author of a significant number of entries.

Through the years that it took to produce this dictionary, many colleagues and friends have provided suggestions and offered support. We would like to mention in particular the help of Professors Gary Macy, Justo González, Lance Nelson, and Alana Cordy-Collins. Professor Tony Harvell (now at the University of California, San Diego) and the research librarians at the University of San Diego proved indispensable to the coeditors and to many of the authors. Finally, we offer a special word of thanks to Mary Tracy for her help at a crucial stage of this project.

Orlando O. Espín, University of San Diego

James B. Nickoloff, College of the Holy Cross

July 2007

A

AARON

The brother of Moses, the son of Amram (Exod 6:20) and the sister of Miriam who was the ancestor of the Aaronide priests who dominated the priesthood in Israel from the period of the Babylonian Exile on. The descendants of Aaron, usually called the "sons of Aaron," are presented as descended from Levi, one of the twelve sons of Jacob (Exod 6:16). The meaning of the name is uncertain.

Russell Fuller

ABBA

Recent christologies propose Jesus' use of *abba* to speak about God to indicate his unique sense of and special relationship to God. The usage derives from J. Jeremias who interpreted the term as a familial usage ("daddy") unknown to the Judaism of the era, thus unique to Jesus and suggestive of his novel teachings about God in *The Prayers of Jesus* (1967). Jeremias abandoned the interpretation, but the usage gained credence in many reconstructions of the historical Jesus, as in M. Borg's *Jesus: A New Vision* (1987). The reading allows the methodological possibility of linking the Gospels' implicit christologies to the explicit christology of dogma. Recent biblical scholarship does not support this interpretation of the word, and feminist exegetes have noted its patriarchal implications, but the christological application persists. It is an instance of a (possibly unrecognized) dogmatic interest at work in the interpretation of Scripture.

Patricia Plovanich

See also CHRISTOLOGY.

ABBASIDS

The ruling dynasty of the Islamic world (749–1258 C.E.) that came to power with the fall of the first dynasty (the Umayyads) and ended with the invasion of the Muslim empire by the Mongols. The dynasty is referred to as a caliphate because its leaders were considered spiritual and political successors of Muhammad (570–632 C.E.), Islam's founder and Prophet. The Abbasids are credited with integrating non-Arab Muslims, most notably the Persians, into the spiritual, intellectual, and political leadership of the Islamic empire. The Abbasids are also remembered for making their capital, Baghdad, a center of culture and learning where art, medicine, literature, and science flourished. Though the Abbasid caliphate was not able to exercise complete political dominance over the entire Islamic world during its

five-hundred-year existence, it remained a symbol of the unity and universality of Islam throughout the period. After Baghdad was sacked by the Mongols in 1258, Abbasids continued to reside in Egypt but without any significant political or military power. This last vestige of the once-great dynasty was conquered by the Ottomans in 1517.

Ronald A. Pachence

See also CALIPH (KHALIPHA)/CALIPHATE; OTTOMAN; UMAYYADS.

ABBEY

Traditional term for an autonomous monastery under the authority of an abbot or abbess. If the leader is referred to as prior or prioress, the monastery is called a priory.

Mary Anne Foley, C.N.D.

See also ABBOT/ABBESS; CONVENT/CONVENTUAL; MONASTERY.

ABBOT/ABBESS

The title given to the leader of monasteries of men (abbot) or women (abbess) in Benedictine and most other monastic orders. The term "abbot" is derived from the Hebrew word for father, and the classical model for an abbot can be found in the second chapter of the *Rule of St. Benedict*, where it is suggested that his role is to act in the place of Christ, caring like a father for those in the monastery. During the Middle Ages, both abbots and abbesses often wielded great ecclesiastical and political authority, answerable only to the pope rather than to the local bishop.

Mary Anne Foley, C.N.D.

See also ABBA; BENEDICTINE RULE (RULE OF ST. BENEDICT); BENEDICTINES; MONASTERY; MONASTICISM IN WESTERN CHRISTIANITY; ORDERS (RELIGIOUS).

ABE, MASAO (1915–)

Contemporary Japanese philosopher and teacher and currently professor emeritus at Nara University in Japan. Abe is one of the leading representatives of the Kyoto school of philosophy and leading interpreter of Zen for the West since the death of D. T. Suzuki. He has taught extensively in the West at Columbia, Princeton, Chicago, and other places, and has also become one of the primary synthesizers of Eastern and Western philosophy. His major writings include *Existential and Ontological Dimensions of Time in Heidegger* and *Zen and Western Thought.*

G. D. DeAngelis

See also SUZUKI, DAISETSU TEITARO; ZEN.

ABELARD, PETER (CA. 1079–1142/4)

As a young man, Abelard devoted his life to the pursuit of knowledge, leaving his home near Nantes to seek out the best teachers he could find. He studied philosophy under Roscelin of Compiègne and William of Champeaux before teaching philosophy himself at Melun, Corbie, and finally at Paris. Having mastered philosophy, Abelard turned to theology, studying under Anselm of Laon. As he had earlier with William of Champeaux, Abelard soon set himself up as a rival to Anselm, and by 1113 Abelard was teaching theology in Paris. Fulbert, a canon of the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, hired Abelard to tutor his niece, Heloise. Abelard and Heloise soon fell passionately in love, secretly married, and produced a son, Astralabe. Fulbert, enraged by this turn of events, hired thugs who castrated Abelard. Abelard met this humiliation by joining the Benedictine abbey of St. Denis and by insisting that Heloise enter the convent of Argenteuil.

Abelard's theology also came under attack, and in 1121 he was forced by the Council of Soissons to burn his book now known as the *Theologia "Summi Boni."* Unable to get along with the monks at St. Denis, Abelard received permission to retire to his own oratory which he entitled the Paraclete. Soon a thriving school grew up at the Paraclete, but once again Abelard was forced by his enemies to retire. He spent several unsuccessful years as abbot of St. Gildas in Brittany, eventually returning to Paris to teach. In the 1130s Abelard produced a new book of theology as well as his most famous book, *The Ethics*. Led by William of St. Thierry and Bernard of Clairvaux, opposition again arose against Abelard's theology. His teaching condemned at the Council of Sens in 1141, Abelard retired to the monastery of Cluny. He died sometime between 1142 and 1144 at a priory attached to Cluny. Abelard was buried at the Paraclete where he was joined in death around 1163/4 by his wife, Heloise. The two lovers are now buried together in Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris.

Brilliant, exasperating, and charismatic, Abelard, more than any other medieval figure, has symbolized the use of logic and dialectic to challenge existing authority. Certainly his works, especially the *Yes and No* (*Sic et Non*) and *The Ethics*, greatly influenced later thought in this regard. Yet, he was also a devout monk and concerned spiritual director as his sermons, hymns, and other writings demontrate. In the popular imagination, however, Abelard is best known for his relationship with Heloise. Their passionate affair is chronicled in Abelard's *The History of My Calamities.* Moving letters exchanged between Heloise and Abelard also exist, although doubts have been raised about their authenticity.

Gary Macy

See also BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX; HELOISE; MEDIEVAL CHRISTIANITY (IN THE WEST); MONASTICISM IN WESTERN CHRISTIANITY; SCHOLASTICISM.

ABHIDHARMA/ABHIDHAMMA PITAKA

The collection of the early Indian Buddhist canon in which the teachings are arranged by various detailed schema. As designated by the Abhidharma's meaning, "advanced teachings," early scholastic monks collected listings of religious terms, psychological designations, and analytic elaborations of phenomena to demonstrate the application of the doctrine to all spheres of reality. By 300 C.E. numerous Abhidharmas were organized by monks in every major school to advance their understanding and presentation of the logical extensions of the Buddha's teachings. Only the Theravada canon exists in its entirety; various Sanskrit Abhidharmas endure in Chinese, Tibetan, or Korean translations. The commentary by the scholar Vasubandhu, the *Abhidharmakosha*, was the greatest, comprising a compendium of early Buddhist thought written from the Sarvastivadin school's doctrinal system.

Todd T. Lewis

See also BUDDHAGHOSA; DHARMA (IN BUDDHISM); PALI CANON; SARVASTIVADIN SCHOOL; TRIPITAKA/TIPITAKA; VASUBANDHU.

ABHISHEKA

In Hinduism, *abhisheka* (Sanskrit, sprinkling) is a ritual of anointing, sprinkling with water, or bathing, especially as part of the coronation rites of a king or the consecration of an image of a deity in a temple. In the case of a temple icon, the ritual of consecration is said to invoke the living

presence of the deity in the image. In Buddhist countries, kings and temple images are typically consecrated in similar ceremonies.

Lance E. Nelson

See also AVATARA/AVATAR; BUDDHISM; HINDUISM; IMAGES, WORSHIP OF.

ABHISHIKTANANDA, SWAMI (1910–73)

Swami Abhishiktananda was the religious name adopted by Henri Le Saux, a French Benedictine monk and priest who lived in India from 1948 until his death. Although he never abandoned his identity and faith as a Christian, Le Saux acknowledged a considerable spiritual debt to Hindu teachers, in particular the famous South Indian saint, Ramana Maharshi. As part of his spiritual quest, he took on the dress and the ascetic mode of life of a Hindu *sannyasin*, as well as his Hindu-style monastic name, meaning "the bliss of the Anointed One" (that is, of Christ). With Fr. Jules Monchanin and Fr. Bede Griffiths, Abhishiktananda was an important early pioneer of Hindu-Christian dialogue.

Lance E. Nelson

See also GRIFFITHS, BEDE; SANNYASA.

ABJURATION

The term indicates the 1917 Code of Canon Law's requirement that prospective converts or Catholics returning to the church make a formal, public rejection (before a church authority) of anything believed contrary to official Roman Catholic doctrine. The gesture is no longer required, for the new baptismal ritual for adults incorporates it in a general way.

Patricia Plovanich

ABORTION

An abortion is an intentional medical procedure to terminate a pregnancy and bring about the death of a human fetus. There has been a generally negative evaluation of this practice throughout the history of the Judeo-Christian tradition. The reasons for this negative evaluation and the circumstances in which it has been applied, however, have been varied. For example, the contemporary Roman Catholic teaching sees any direct action taken against the progress of a pregnancy—*from the moment of conception*—as a very grave offense because it deprives an innocent human person of the right to life. In the Middle Ages, however, only the abortion of a fully formed fetus was considered to be a homicide; earlier abortions were considered sinful because they were usually procured to obscure a sexual misdeed. Cultural developments and new biological insights have influenced church teaching on abortion, an issue where volatile concerns about homicide, sexual morality, and gender roles intersect.

Contemporary Concerns

After the Second World War, many persons in western Europe and North America argued for access to abortion, particularly for those cases where a new child would impose an emotional, physical, or financial hardship on the mother. Starting in the 1960s, many nations liberalized their abortion laws, and in 1973 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Roe v. Wade* that laws forbidding abortion were unduly interfering in the privacy rights of women.

Since *Roe* and the resulting liberalization of abortion policy in the U.S., abortion has developed into one of the most contentious and divisive social issues of the period. It figures prominently in local and national elections as well as in the process

of nominating and approving candidates for the judiciary; both sides of the debate have been effective at developing grassroots protests and sophisticated political action organizations. At times, the controversy grows violent with abortion facilities bombed and abortion providers assassinated. The debate about the morality and legality of abortion focuses on the status of the fetus and on the moral autonomy of women. Thus, it is not a theological debate in its essence. Although Evangelical opponents of abortion may advance scriptural arguments, Roman Catholic opposition is based on natural law, which is presumed to be accessible and persuasive to all rational persons of good will.

Those in the U.S. opposed to abortion generally refer to themselves as "pro-life," while those who favor liberalized abortion policies refer to their cause as "pro-choice." Pro-life advocates argue that because fetal life is, in fact, *human* life it must be accorded the rights ascribed to persons, principally the right to life. Because the innocent may not be unjustly deprived of their lives, all abortion should be forbidden. Some pro-life advocates are willing to make exceptions, however, in cases of rape, incest, and threat to the mother's health, despite the apparent inconsistency. In addition, pro-life advocates make a "slippery slope" argument, claiming that liberalization of abortion policy undermines the sanctity of life at all stages of existence.

Although the moral status of the fetus is not the central issue for abortion rights advocates, they respond to the assertions of pro-life supporters in this regard by arguing that fetuses are not persons, that fetuses do not fulfill the criteria of personhood. Such criteria can include one or more of the following: consciousness, self-direction, communication skills, or reasoning ability, although some of these standards might exclude infants from personhood. The fetus, they argue, is "part" of the mother, and the right to bodily integrity supports the right to terminate a pregnancy. Any clash between the "rights" of a fetus and the mother's rights ought to be decided in favor of the existing person from this perspective. Pro-choice advocates in the U.S. attempt to build a positive case for abortion rights by appealing to deeply held beliefs about the freedom of conscience and the right to make private choices without government interference. Further, they argue that unless women have control over their reproductive capacities, their moral and social autonomy is effectively undermined.

Religious Perspectives

The pro-life movement in the U.S. receives strong support from those Roman Catholics and Evangelical/fundamentalist Christians who tend to favor traditional family relations and gender roles. Official teaching in those communities is solidly pro-life. Mainstream Protestant views on abortion are varied. While generally negative toward abortions, most denominations acknowledge that there are circumstances (pregnancies resulting from rape or incest, danger to the life or health of the mother, severe hardship caused by the birth of a child, or gross fetal deformity) that can justify an abortion. Thus, they support legal access to abortion. In this way, their views mirror the views of most Americans who do not support "abortion on demand" but do acknowledge circumstances where it is appropriate to end fetal life.

Brian F. Linnane, S.J.

See also CONTRACEPTION/BIRTH CONTROL; ETHICS, SEXUAL; EVANGELIUM VITAE; NATURAL LAW; SEXUALITY.