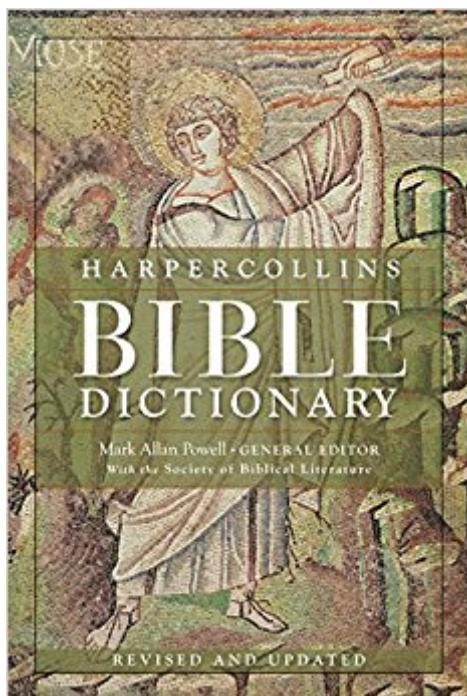


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# HarperCollins Bible Dictionary - Revised & Updated



## **Synopsis**

The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary, revised and updated edition, is the most complete, up-to-date, and accessible guide for the study of the Bible available today. With more than 4,000 lively, informative, and reader-friendly entries, this essential reference book provides all the information you need to understand the Bible. Whether you are a pastor, layperson, or a student of scripture, you will find every important name, place, and subject that makes Bible study come to life. From Aaron to Zurishaddai, here are all the people, events, and ideas of biblical times. This third edition continues in the rich tradition of its predecessors but has been thoroughly updated and revised by a new editorial team under the direction of the premier international scholarly body, the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL). More than half the articles in this book are new, and several dozen charts and tables have also been added as well as updates on recent archaeological discoveries. Over 200 contributors to the HarperCollins Bible Dictionary, from a diverse group of authorities, represent an ecumenical and non-biased viewpoint of scripture from different positions—Roman Catholic, Jewish, mainline Protestant, and evangelical. Filled with explanations of biblical beliefs, language, and insights into the culture and customs of the people who lived in biblical times, this resource will help anyone interested in scripture to more fully appreciate the meaning and message of the Bible.

## **Book Information**

Hardcover: 1168 pages

Publisher: HarperOne; 3rd Revised, Updated ed. edition (March 8, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0061469068

ISBN-13: 978-0061469060

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 2.1 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 3.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 39 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #56,219 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #15 in Christian Books & Bibles > Bible Study & Reference > Dictionaries & Encyclopedias #49 in Books > Reference > Encyclopedias & Subject Guides > Religion #349 in Books > Textbooks > Humanities > Religious Studies

## **Customer Reviews**

“The publication of this thoroughly revised and updated version of what has long been a standard reference work on the Bible is good news indeed. Put it beside your Bible and use it with

loving care!â• (Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., Professor of New Testament, Boston College School of Theology and Ministry)â•“We are fortunate indeed to have this fresh resource available in its accessible format.â• (Walter Brueggemann, Professor Emeritus of Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary)â•“Over the last few decades, the HarperCollins Bible Dictionary has established itself as a basic reference work. I am happy to see that its distinguished editors have updated and expanded its articles in the light of recent research so that it may serve the next generation of young scholars.â• (John P. Meier, Warren Professor of Theology, Notre Dame)â•“The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary represents Western academic scholarship at its best. An excellent resource for the classroom.â• (Scot McKnight, Karl A. Olsson Professor in Religious Studies, North Park University)

Mark Allan Powell (general editor) is the Robert and Phyllis Leatherman Professor of New Testament Studies at Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio. He is the author of nearly twenty books, including Fortress Introduction to the New Testament.

As a seminary professor, I recommend this (and in some courses require it) to all my students. It is very thorough for a one volume bible dictionary. It reflects the latest scholarship, is academic yet accessible to the layperson. One flaw that causes me to subtract a star: two important articles are missing from this edition that appeared in the 1996 edition. The article on textual criticism and the article on the various kinds of exegetical methodologies are not present in this volume. They were excellent articles and I don't see why they could not have been included in this edition. Even so, still the best one volume bible dictionary around.

The third book I purchased for my pastoral library, while a seminary student, was the Harper Bible Dictionary (1967). I sorrowfully gave it away last year for the print was too small for my aging eyes. Being able to purchase the Kindle edition of the revised and updated edition is a great blessing to me. It took a while to learn to use the Kindle addition, the key is to click the contents page and scroll down to the first letter of the word you are looking for. Don't click on the letter itself, click on the arrow to turn the page. You can quickly find the word you are looking for from the list. The dictionary has a great many helps and the articles on each subject is detailed and has scripture references. The articles on Pentecost/Shavuot were especially helpful for post Easter teaching. I have found that reading one definition/article leads to another and it's easy to just keep reading. I have owned several Bible dictionaries; they do not compare to the Harper-Collins Bible Dictionary.

This is the Third Edition (2011) of the HarperCollins Bible Dictionary, developed in cooperation with the Society of Biblical Literature and with a new editor, Lutheran professor of Theology, Mark Allan Powell. The editor has promised several important changes. Since most people who are reading this review may already own a copy of the Second Edition, the question is whether the new edition is worth the \$30 bucks. This is especially true since the older version was often considered the best single volume Encyclopedic reference to the Bible. The first thing I checked was that all biblical quotes are from the NRSV (1989), while the 2nd edition quotes were from the RSV (1946 - 1952). Score points there. Next, all Associate Editors are new, including Amy-Jill Levine. But there are no OT specialists to replace Michael Fishbane. Editor Powell states that there are more references to scripture in the articles. For that and for other matters, I compared the old and new articles on Pontius Pilate, who appears in all four Gospels. The old version was written by Francisco O. Garcia-Treto. The new version retains the original author's credit, with credit to Powell for revising the article. It is plain that Powell kept much of the original text, however the original article was two columns long and the revised version was about three columns long. The first difference I spot is that the new edition cites exact references to Pilate in the works of Philo and Josephus. The older edition simply mentions those references. Most of the additional length is in the section titled "In the Gospel Accounts". In the original version, the author seems more careful than in Powell's revision in summarizing the differences in the way Pilate is treated in the Gospels, but Powell makes up for it by providing lots of detail about the differences between the Synoptics and John. Powell also does not make the mistake of saying that Pilate appears to be a pawn in the hands of the Jews in John. One can interpret Pilate's "business" to be more judicious than the Jews, at the same time respectful of their customs in addition to the rights of the prisoner. (Pilate does show some anxiety near the end, but he gets his pound of flesh from the Jews, when they swear allegiance to Caesar.) Powell's additions certainly have more passage citations than the original. Dear to my heart is Bibliographies. Here, the new edition is a clear winner. In the article on "Romans", the new edition has four new sources, all of which are considered leading contributions on the letter, including James Dunn's 2 volume commentary (1988), which was oddly excluded from the second edition (1996). The story with the Gospel of John is similar, with seven references (six new references) compared to five references in the second edition. The earlier article was written by Dwight Moody. The later article was rewritten by Powell, adding a table comparing John to the Synoptics (from Powell's NT book). Powell's version, including new table, is longer than Moody's article. So why does John begin on page 533 in the old edition, and on 479 in the new edition? Comparing the

beginning of "A", I found some reasons. First, the entries for the letters, such as "A" are removed. This is not trivial, since "A" and "B" are abbreviations for identifying two major codices of the Greek Bible. I also notice several lesser articles, especially on OT and geography, to be unchanged from the older edition. I also noticed additional cross-reference entries in the new edition, not in the old. However, some cross references in the old, such as "sergeants" was missing from the new. In the newer edition, articles with numbered sections are typeset so it is much easier to see the numbers, as they each begin a new paragraph, and numbers are in bold. At page 15, I found what may be the principle reason for the shrinkage. A three column article on "African Americans and the Bible" was deleted. I have mixed feelings about this. My first thought is that the article was out of place in a reference book about the Bible itself. But when I read the second edition article, I discovered one could say that black contextual theologizing began in the late 18th century, and not in the 1960s, when James Cone wrote his first book. In the end, I suspect that the editors thought the subject had expanded so much in the last 16 years that it outgrew its relevance to straight biblical interpretation. A less controversial deletion would be the long articles (12+ pages) on Sociology in the OT and NT. A fair trade for that deletion would be the expansion of the article on "The Sermon on the Mount" from one column to three pages, a six-fold increase, written by Powell, with a Bibliography, missing from the original. In the article on "agape" by Powell, I find a major improvement over the earlier anonymous article. Powell states the best modern interpretation of the Greek word as a synonym for "philos" and other Greek words for love. The small article on "agora" shows some of the added biblical citations. Older version had one, the newer version had four. I have not found any evidence of a large number of added maps. However, there are numerous added tables. For example the new edition adds a full page table to the article on "Jerusalem" on the centrality of Jerusalem in Luke-Acts (also from Powell's book, but he did not write the "Jerusalem" article.) The old article on "homosexuality" was edited and enlarged by Powell, ending in a far more balanced view of Paul's references to the subject than was in the original. Some OT articles are a bit shorter, such as the article on "copper". Very small articles, such as one for "cor" lost a line by omitting the pronunciation and replacing words for numbers, such as "60" for "sixty". The glossy colored illustration sections in the middle and the colored map sections at the end are identical. (Other reviewers neglected to actually look at the color sections and count pages.) If the volume is to be used by children, especially if there are few other biblical reference books around, I suggest replacing the old with the new. If you don't have the old, get the new instead of the less expensive older edition. If you have several biblical reference books, the old will probably do fine, until it falls apart from use.

It's a great reference book, but it's missing the article on the Trinity that was in the previous edition. Pretty big mistake to take it out.

Works great on Kindle for iPad. I have multiple 5 and 6 volume Bible Dictionaries along with a half dozen single volumes and this one is the best single volume available. AND so handy I can easily read it daily on my iPad.

The dictionary is good overall. It has the basic entries one would expect. But it is a disappointment compared to the previous edition which included articles on biblical interpretation, etc. that were for some reason cut from this edition.

Thoughtful modern Biblical scholarship makes this book trustworthy and a great recommendation for a Bible study aid.

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