

the oxford dictionary of saints david hugh farmer

the oxford dictionary of saints david hugh farmer is a seminal reference work that offers extensive biographical information on saints from various Christian traditions. This authoritative dictionary, compiled by David Hugh Farmer, is widely regarded as an essential resource for scholars, students, and enthusiasts of hagiography and ecclesiastical history. The work meticulously covers saints from early Christianity through to modern times, providing historical context, feast days, and significant contributions associated with each saint. As a comprehensive encyclopedia, it balances scholarly rigor with accessibility, making it a valuable tool for academic research and personal study alike. This article explores the background, content, and significance of the Oxford Dictionary of Saints by David Hugh Farmer, highlighting its features and how it serves as a key reference in religious studies. The following sections will provide a detailed overview of the dictionary's scope, structure, and impact.

- Background and Author
- Content and Scope of the Dictionary
- Structure and Features
- Importance in Religious and Historical Studies
- Usage and Accessibility

Background and Author

The Oxford Dictionary of Saints David Hugh Farmer edition is a product of extensive scholarship by David Hugh Farmer, an eminent historian and theologian specializing in Christian hagiography.

Farmer's expertise in the lives of saints and ecclesiastical history underpins the dictionary's reliability and depth. The first edition was published in the late 20th century and has since undergone several revisions to incorporate new research and discoveries. Farmer's academic background and dedication to accuracy have made the dictionary a respected resource in both academic and religious circles.

David Hugh Farmer's Contributions

David Hugh Farmer was known for his comprehensive approach to documenting the lives and deeds of saints across different Christian denominations. His work extended beyond simple biographical entries to include critical analysis of historical sources and the cultural significance of each saint. Farmer's scholarship has helped preserve many lesser-known figures in Christian history and provided clarity on disputed or obscure hagiographies. His commitment to thorough research is evident in the detailed annotations and cross-references found throughout the dictionary.

Evolution of the Dictionary

Since its initial publication, the Oxford Dictionary of Saints has been updated multiple times to reflect ongoing scholarship and changing perspectives in religious studies. These revisions have included additional entries, updated historical data, and expanded geographical and denominational coverage. The dictionary's evolution illustrates the dynamic nature of hagiographical research and the importance of maintaining current information in reference works.

Content and Scope of the Dictionary

The Oxford Dictionary of Saints David Hugh Farmer edition covers a vast array of saints from different eras, regions, and traditions within Christianity. It includes saints from the early Christian church, medieval period, and modern times, spanning Western and Eastern Christian traditions. The dictionary offers concise biographical sketches that cover each saint's life, deeds, patronages, and feast days, alongside historical and theological context.

Range of Saints Included

The dictionary features a diverse selection of saints, including:

- Early Christian martyrs and church fathers
- Medieval monastic founders and reformers
- Patron saints of various countries, cities, and occupations
- Eastern Orthodox saints and lesser-known figures
- Modern saints canonized in recent centuries

This breadth ensures that users can access information about well-known figures such as St. Augustine and St. Francis of Assisi, as well as obscure or regional saints who might otherwise be overlooked.

Theological and Historical Context

Entries often provide insights into the historical circumstances surrounding each saint's life and their impact on Christian practice and culture. This contextualization helps readers understand the significance of the saints beyond biographical facts, shedding light on their contributions to theology, art, and community life.

Structure and Features

The Oxford Dictionary of Saints David Hugh Farmer is organized alphabetically for ease of reference, with each entry carefully structured to deliver clear and concise information. The dictionary combines biographical data with historical notes, making it both an encyclopedic reference and a scholarly

resource.

Entry Format

Each saint's entry typically includes:

1. Full name and alternative names or titles
2. Dates of birth and death, where known
3. Summary of life and key achievements
4. Information about martyrdom or sainthood recognition
5. Feast day(s) and liturgical significance
6. Patronages and associated symbols
7. References to historical sources or further reading

Additional Features

Besides individual entries, the dictionary includes:

- Indexes for quick location of saints by name or region
- Cross-references to related entries and topics
- Explanatory notes on hagiographical terms and concepts

- Maps and timelines in some editions to aid historical understanding

These features enhance the usability of the dictionary, making it suitable for both quick consultation and in-depth study.

Importance in Religious and Historical Studies

The Oxford Dictionary of Saints David Hugh Farmer remains a cornerstone resource in the study of Christian saints and hagiography. Its scholarly precision and comprehensive scope make it indispensable for researchers, clergy, historians, and students of religion. The dictionary not only preserves the legacy of the saints but also facilitates an understanding of their role in shaping Christian traditions and cultural identities.

Academic and Educational Use

Universities and theological seminaries frequently utilize the dictionary as a foundational text in courses on church history, religious studies, and medieval literature. Its detailed entries support coursework and research, offering reliable information that can be cited in academic writing. The dictionary's clear organization also aids educators in designing curricula related to saints and religious history.

Contribution to Interfaith and Cultural Dialogue

By including saints from diverse Christian denominations and traditions, the dictionary promotes greater awareness and appreciation of the shared heritage and differences within Christianity. This inclusivity fosters interfaith understanding and highlights the cultural richness associated with saint veneration worldwide.

Usage and Accessibility

The Oxford Dictionary of Saints David Hugh Farmer is accessible in various formats, catering to different user needs. It is available in print editions, which remain popular among libraries and collectors, as well as in digital formats that allow for quick searches and updates.

Print and Digital Editions

The print version is valued for its authoritative presentation and ease of annotation, while the digital edition offers enhanced search functions and portability. Many academic institutions provide access to the online version through their library systems, broadening its availability to a global audience.

Who Benefits from the Dictionary?

Key users include:

- Theologians and clergy preparing sermons or liturgical materials
- Historians researching religious and cultural history
- Students writing papers or studying Christian traditions
- General readers interested in the lives of saints and religious history

The dictionary's comprehensive coverage and clear presentation make it a valuable tool for anyone seeking authoritative information on Christian saints.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is 'The Oxford Dictionary of Saints' by David Hugh Farmer?

It is a comprehensive reference book that provides detailed information and biographies of saints from various Christian traditions, compiled by David Hugh Farmer.

Who was David Hugh Farmer, the author of 'The Oxford Dictionary of Saints'?

David Hugh Farmer was a noted scholar and writer specializing in hagiography and ecclesiastical history, known for his expertise on saints and their lives.

What makes 'The Oxford Dictionary of Saints' a valuable resource?

The dictionary offers concise yet detailed entries on thousands of saints, including historical context, feast days, and legacy, making it an essential tool for researchers and enthusiasts of religious history.

Which editions of 'The Oxford Dictionary of Saints' did David Hugh Farmer contribute to?

David Hugh Farmer authored the original editions of the dictionary, with the first published in 1978, and subsequent revised editions updating and expanding the content.

Does 'The Oxford Dictionary of Saints' by David Hugh Farmer cover saints from all Christian denominations?

Yes, the dictionary includes saints recognized by the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, and other Christian traditions.

How is 'The Oxford Dictionary of Saints' organized?

The dictionary is organized alphabetically by the names of saints, providing easy access to biographies and related information.

Can 'The Oxford Dictionary of Saints' be used for academic research?

Absolutely, it is widely used in theological studies, religious education, and historical research due to its authoritative and well-researched content.

Are there illustrations or images in 'The Oxford Dictionary of Saints'?

Most editions primarily focus on textual content and do not include many illustrations, emphasizing detailed textual biographies instead.

Where can I purchase or access 'The Oxford Dictionary of Saints' by David Hugh Farmer?

The dictionary is available for purchase through major book retailers, online stores like Amazon, and can also be accessed in many university and public libraries.

Additional Resources

1. *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* by David Hugh Farmer

This comprehensive reference book provides detailed biographies of over 1,300 saints from the Christian tradition. It covers saints from early Christianity to the modern era, including well-known and obscure figures. The entries include historical context, feast days, and cultural significance, making it an essential resource for scholars and enthusiasts of hagiography.

2. *A Dictionary of Christian Biography and Literature to the End of the Sixth Century A.D.* by Henry Wace and William C. Piercy

This dictionary offers extensive information on early Christian figures, including saints, theologians, and

writers. It serves as a valuable companion to studies on saints, providing historical background and literary contributions related to early Christian history. The work is well-regarded for its scholarly depth and detailed entries.

3. *The Penguin Dictionary of Saints* by Donald Attwater and Catherine Rachel John

This accessible dictionary covers more than 1,000 saints from various Christian traditions, focusing on their lives, legends, and feast days. It includes saints from Western and Eastern Christianity and provides concise yet informative entries. The book is popular among readers seeking an easy-to-use guide to saints.

4. *Saints: A Brief History* by Thomas Cahill

This book explores the historical development and cultural impact of saints throughout Christian history. Cahill combines storytelling with historical analysis to show how saints influenced religious practice, art, and society. It offers readers a narrative approach to understanding the significance of sainthood.

5. *Butler's Lives of the Saints* by Alban Butler

A classic work in hagiography, Butler's multi-volume series provides detailed biographies of saints arranged according to their feast days. It has been a cornerstone reference for centuries, offering both historical facts and devotional insights. The series remains widely used in both academic and religious contexts.

6. *The Lives of the Saints* by Ælfric of Eynsham

Written in Old English during the late 10th century, this collection of saints' lives is one of the earliest English-language hagiographies. Ælfric's work was intended to educate and inspire the Anglo-Saxon Christian community. It provides valuable insight into medieval perspectives on sainthood and religious practice.

7. *Saints and Their Cults: Studies in Religious Sociology, Folklore and History* by Stephen Wilson

This scholarly book examines the social and cultural roles of saints and their veneration in different societies. Wilson discusses how saints' cults develop and influence local and regional identities. The

book is useful for understanding the broader impact of saints beyond their religious significance.

8. *Dictionary of Saints: East and West* by Michael J. Walsh

This dictionary offers an extensive compilation of saints from both Eastern Orthodox and Western Christian traditions. It provides concise biographical sketches, feast days, and historical notes. The inclusion of saints from diverse traditions makes it a valuable tool for comparative religious studies.

9. *Medieval Saints: A Reader* edited by Thomas Head

This anthology collects primary texts and scholarly essays about saints from the medieval period. It includes hagiographies, sermons, and theological reflections that illuminate the medieval understanding of sainthood. The book is ideal for students and researchers interested in medieval religious culture and literature.

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