

bibliographical information. Cross referencing increases the value of this work.

Although the characters are presented in alphabetical order, the gods and demons are characterized by five separate categories: those mentioned by name in the Bible (i.e., Asherah, Baal, Hermes, Zeus), those mentioned as part of the composition of a personal or place name (i.e., Anat in Anathoth, or Shemesh in Beth-shemesh), gods mentioned in the Bible but who are not acknowledged as gods (i.e., the so-called "demythologized deities" [xvi], who are mentioned in connection with usages such as the word *yār'āh* derived from the name "Yarikh" the moon-god), gods whose "presence and/or divinity is often questionable" (xvi) (i.e., "by slightly revocalizing Isa 10:4, and altering the division of the words, Paul de Lagarde obtained a reference to Belti and Osiris where generations of scholars before had read a negation [*biltī*] and the collective designation of prisons [*'assîr*]" [xvi]), and human figures who allegedly arose to divine or semidivine status in later tradition (i.e., Jesus, Mary, Enoch, Moses, Elijah).

The *Dictionary* is a useful (and interesting) tool not only for biblical theologians, but as one who comes from a systematic background, I found that the book helped to indirectly explain certain relationships between the development of modern hermeneutics and its original Greek sources by providing dialogue about Greek gods and their traditions. Such is the case with the god Hermes, from whom the term "hermeneutics" is derived. In addition, the god Dionysus is the basis for the Greek cultic festival of ecstasy that Aristotle described in his *Poetics* and for which he described the process by which to reach the state of catharsis that brought the festival to its climax. The *Poetics* serves as the basis for modern literary methods of interpretation.

The work provides a valuable starting point for further indepth studies of ANE gods and demons. However, one criticism lies in the designation of the *Dictionary's* fifth category of gods and demons: that of attributing a divine or semidivine status to human figures such as Enoch, Moses, and Elijah. While some ancient traditions do appear to apply a mythological character to figures such as Elijah (i.e., in Jewish folklore he is presented as one who combats social injustice; in Jewish mysticism he is a supernatural being "not born of a woman" [284]), Scripture itself presents these individuals as historical figures. Their qualification as divine or semidivine in the *Dictionary* lies in their purported supernatural deeds or encounters. However, in spite of my reluctance to include human figures as deities, I found the documentation valuable as a launching point for further studies.

The more than 400 articles contained in this work are a tremendous contribution to understanding the *Sitz im Leben* of Scripture. I would recommend the *Dictionary* as a useful resource tool.

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Walton, John H., Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000. 800 pp. Hardcover, \$29.99.

There are several different ways in which to relate extrabiblical texts from the Ancient Near East to the biblical text. Each of these has its strengths and weaknesses. A standard reference work is *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating*

to the *Old Testament*, edited by J. B. Pritchard, which has been in use for half a century. In that work, the Ancient Near Eastern texts are presented simply in translations arranged geographically and chronologically.

The present work by Walton and his cowriters takes a different approach. It is basically a biblical commentary with as much discussion of extrabiblical texts incorporated into the commentary as is feasible within the limits of space. This 800-page commentary covers the whole of the OT, so there is not a lot of space for each book, chapter, and verse. To strike a balance between the biblical and extrabiblical material, the commentary does not provide verse-by-verse coverage. The Psalms, for example, are divided up by the five books of the Psalms, within which selected Psalms and their ideas are treated. In book 1, the order goes from Pss 1 to 2 and then 4 to 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 16. Especially significant verses are singled out for comment.

This work is more a biblical commentary with additional illumination from extrabiblical texts than it is a collection of extrabiblical texts relevant to the Bible. Special topics from the ANE are treated, however, in about two dozen sidebars, which usually cover the bottom half of a page. The subjects of these sidebars are listed in the Table of Contents. As is to be expected, one of these covers the ANE flood stories (37). An especially useful one relates the structure of the book of Deuteronomy to ANE treaty formulation (172). The sidebar on the date of the Exodus considers both the fifteenth-century B.C. date and the thirteenth-century date, without coming to a final conclusion (86).

Compared with the sidebars, a far greater amount of extrabiblical material is discussed in the body of the commentary. Much of this is current with recent archaeological information, i.e., the Balaam Inscriptions from Deir Alla are discussed with the passage on the Balaam oracles in Num 22-24 (159). Interesting parallels and contrasts are found in the discussions of clean and unclean meats (Lev 11 [128]) and the scapegoat of Lev 16, which the authors interpret as a demonic figure (181).

In the discussion of the Conquest by Joshua, the treatment of the archaeology of Jericho is brief and weak (217). Treatment of the conquest of Ai could have taken into account the recent excavations at Khirbet el-Maqatir, where Late Bronze pottery has been found in a small settlement near Bethel.

In the historical books, the authors appear to favor two Assyrian campaigns against Hezekiah, one in the time of Sargon, with Sennacherib accompanying as a prince, and the other during the reign of Sennacherib in 701 B.C. (451-456). This yields a high chronology for the reign of Hezekiah, which would begin in 727 B.C. (451).

The introduction to the Psalms is excellent. Of special interest here is a glossary of musical terms (516-518).

In the prophets, the discussion of Isa 7 covers the historical background, the use of signs inside and outside the Bible, and the use of throne names paralleling the titles for the Messiah, but the Hebrew word for "young woman" in v. 14 is not investigated.

The Lachish letters are brought into the discussion of Jer 34 (668), and with Jeremiah there is a nice sidebar on biblical seals (666). This discussion could have been extended into the commentary on Jer 36, where we now have seals of three of the individuals known from this chapter: Baruch the scribe, Gemariah the son of Shapan, and Jerahmeel the son of the king.

Much of the interpretation of Daniel revolves around Antiochus IV

Epiphanes, but the Babylonian background is brought out well and the Akkadian Apocalypses are discussed in a sidebar (747). On a still unsettled question, the author favors the view of Darius the Mede as Cyrus.

At the back of the volume, the glossary, tables, and maps are very useful. However, some Median cities could have been included in the map of the Median Empire (826).

Any attempt to cover all of the books of the OT with relevant ANE material in 800 pages is bound to involve many decisions on what to include and what to leave out, so it would be easy to list some omissions. To dwell on that side of the commentary would be majoring in minors. The bigger picture here is that the three authors have produced a really excellent volume that incorporates into a discussion of the biblical text much material that has not previously been utilized in this fashion or was left only in less accessible journal articles. The authors are to be congratulated on the production of this superb volume, which should be valuable for scholars, pastors, and lay persons who are interested in understanding the Bible within its wider ANE context.

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