

Its system of transliteration is clear, simple, and consistent (the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* uses no less than three systems).

The second major asset of this dictionary is its *actuality*: its coverage of topics that are presently relevant, such as "Holocaust Theology," "Theological Aspects of the State of Israel," and religious events that took place more recently, especially in the United States (e.g., the death of the rabbi-messiah Schneerson in 1994) and in Israel (the recognition by the Israeli Supreme Court of the legitimacy of Reform and Conservative conversions in Israel). Also, the articles have incorporated recent bibliographical information, including journal articles since 1980.

The only major weakness of the *Dictionary* derives from the assumptions by the editors that after the Holocaust, Jewish scholarship revolves essentially around two new centers: Israel and the United States. Accordingly, the editors of the *Dictionary*, both from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and visiting professors in American universities, have chosen their contributors mostly from these two centers and totally ignored, for instance, the intellectual and religious vitality of the French contribution. Important names such as Edmond Fleg, Georges Vajda, Shmuel Trigano, and Emmanuel Levinas have been omitted (while most of them are mentioned in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*). And Jewish philosopher André Neher has been merely (falsely?) identified as "a historian of Jewish thought."

In spite of this "geographical" deficiency, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion* remains a clear, comprehensive, and well-balanced instrument; and indeed, an ideal introduction to Jewish religion. It is a useful resource, not only for every religion student or scholar, but also for the general reader.

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JACQUES DOUKHAN

Wells, Ronald A., ed., *History and the Christian Historian*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998. vi + 248 pp. Paper, \$23.00.

Twenty-five years ago two Calvin College historians, George Marsden and Frank Roberts, edited a book entitled *A Christian View of History?* (Eerdmans, 1975). As the question mark indicates, the issue of whether a Christian might interpret the past in a distinctive manner was open to debate. With the impact since the appearance of that book of the various theories commonly described as postmodernist, however, academics have increasingly recognized that every scholar is "situated" and therefore understands a subject from a particular perspective. Although ethnicity, gender, and class are the elements usually identified as shaping perspective, Marsden in recent books has argued that religious belief is an equally important factor in shaping one's scholarship.

The current discussion has shaped *History and the Christian Historian*, a collection of essays, and given it a direction that distinguishes it from earlier anthologies on the relationship of Christianity to the academic study of history. Section I, entitled "Perspective and Theory," begins with Marsden's argument that the Christian perspective makes a difference in scholarship. Shirley A. Mullen and C. Stephen Evans then address the contested issue of historical truth, the former arguing for both the possibility and limitation of truth statements, while the latter seeks to open up room for consideration of the possibility of miracles by critical

historians. D. G. Hart closes this section with an account of the movement of the evangelical Conference on Faith and History from a strong affirmation of the possibility of recognizing God's hand in history to its present uncertainty regarding the status and meaning of Christian history.

Section II, "Discrete Themes and Subjects," explores particular issues and possible applications of a Christian approach to history. Taking up the issue of gender, Margaret Lamberts Bendroth urges that a feminist Christian history represents a natural alliance, one that offers a basis for respecting both sexes while at the same time recognizing the "brokenness" of gender relations. Mark A. Noll then follows with a discussion of how missiology can uniquely help Christian historians negotiate the varying demands of Christian triumphalism, scientific history, and postmodern multicultural sensitivity. The next several essays turn in a historiographical direction as Bill J. Leonard examines the various ways Baptists have told their story, Richard Pointer discusses the changing interpretations of American Puritanism, and Robert P. Swierenga and Ronald A. Wells argue that historians should give greater attention to religion as a historical force. Swierenga relates differences in agricultural practices to denominational affiliation, while Wells sees the conflict in Northern Ireland as a fundamentally religious affair.

The final section, "Applications for Teaching History," attempts to place postmodernist themes within a Christian classroom setting. Jerry L. Summers and Edwin J. Van Kley emphasize multiculturalism, finding Christianity supportive of rather than threatened by the need to understand and appreciate cultural variation. In the only essay dealing with the issue of literary form and historical truth, G. Marcelle Frederick speaks of the need for the Christian historian to choose narrative structure to "do justice" to historical figures.

Throughout most of these essays a recurring theme emerges, namely that there is a truth "out there" that can be discovered and yet our understanding of that truth is partial and distorted. The concern for the validity of truth is crucial to these authors both professionally and religiously. Mullen writes, "As Christians and as historians, we want ways of understanding our truth-telling that, on the one hand, preserve the possibility of speaking of a world 'out there'—that save us from the perils of relativism and extreme subjectivism—but, on the other hand, also allow us to recognize that truth is more than a thing out there to be found—that it is connected with our desire to know the truth, and that it is connected with our desire to be changed by the truth—and allow us to recognize that, in a fallen world, the concerns of truth will always be intertwined with the concerns of power. That is the nature of our world" (37-38). Elsewhere, Noll speaks of the need to recognize both an ultimate reality and the finitude of human knowledge, Pointer suggests that "Christian scholars [should] be suspicious of suspicions that there are no metanarratives in history" (157), and Marsden calls Christian historians to "stand for the truth as they understand God to have revealed it" and at the same time to "see their role as one of humility and servanthood" (22). In short, these authors believe that Christian historians can learn much from postmodern skepticism but at the same time must affirm the possibility of truth-telling. It is clear, in their view, that history is ultimately a moral enterprise that involves responsibility to evidence, to the community of scholars, and ultimately, to God.

This volume is essential to anyone concerned with issues of historical theory as they relate to the possibility of Christian history. The presence of women contributors and the interaction with postmodern questions give this volume a unique cast and make it of special contemporary relevance. Although most of the essays deal with the issue of perspective, future writers need in particular to build on Frederick's discussion of narrative form. As Ewa Domańska's recent collection (*Encounters: Philosophy of History after Postmodernism* [Virginia, 1998]) of interviews with historical theorists demonstrates, the "aesthetic" question is the next frontier that historians, Christian or otherwise, must explore.

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Witte, John, Jr., and Michael Bourdeaux, eds. *Proselytism and Orthodoxy in Russia*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999. xiv + 353 pp. Paperback, \$20.00.

This symposium brings together the latest scholarship on the new Russian laws regarding religion and human rights, with valuable suggestions for foreign missionaries coming to Russia. Witte (J.D., Harvard) is the Professor of Law and Ethics and Director of the Law and Religion Program at Emory University, and author or editor of eleven books and numerous articles. Bourdeaux (Ph.D., Lambeth) is founder and Director Emeritus of Keston Institute, Oxford, a specialist in Russian history and religion, and a long-time advocate for religious freedom in Communist Russia. Bourdeaux is the author of seven books (most prominently *Gorbachev, Glasnost, and the Gospel* [1990]) and numerous articles.

This volume on Russia is among the first titles in a new book series, "Religion and Human Rights." The new situation in Russia has brought on a "new war for souls" between indigenous and foreign religious groups. With the political transformation of Russia in the past two decades, foreign religious groups were granted rights to enter previously inaccessible regions. The question raised in this volume is: How does a community of faith balance its own right to expand with another community's right to do the same? The book deals with the new legal culture of religious favoritism for some and religious repression of others. Its diverse authors provide a highly informative analysis of both religious and legal opinions on issues of worship and belief in post-Soviet Russia. Although most of the authors approach Russian religious history from Western perspectives, the book is essentially free of the stereotypes and biases that usually accompany such endeavors.

Philip Walters and Firuz Kazemzadeh (chaps. 1 and 12) provide a historical perspective on the relationships in Russia between the gospel and culture and church and state. Those seeking to understand the modern stance of Russian society as rooted in centuries of ideological domination by the Russian Orthodox Church will find these two articles a required resource. The historical background provided explains well the recent attempt to reestablish Orthodoxy as the "national" religion of the Russian people.

James Billington and Michael Bourdeaux (chaps. 2 and 10) recount the roles of different religious groups, including the Orthodox Church, in the transformation of the Soviet state.

Alexsandr Shchipkov (chap. 4) examines the general development of