

sprinkled throughout the commentary, which deal with topics that require more detailed elucidation—e.g., “Does Paul Ask for Manumission?” (412-415). While the author periodically makes comments that are based on the structure of the original text, all citations of Greek or Hebrew wording are transliterated.

While the initial two volumes published in the new ECC series (1 & 2 Timothy and Philemon) were published in the same year, there are some conspicuous differences in the layout and appearance of the two works. While both commentaries sport similarly designed dust jackets, the actual covers of the books themselves are of starkly different colors. The series boasts a fresh translation of the text; but while in the 1-2 Timothy volume the entire translation was placed at the beginning, the Philemon volume has the translation interspersed throughout the commentary. Similar lack of standardization also applies to the locations and designations of the bibliography and indices as well as to the layout of the commentary proper. While such differences are trifles in terms of substance, their conspicuous nature makes one wonder if the two volumes really constitute a series, or just merely two independent commentaries that were given similar dust jackets.

Regarding accuracy, the reference at the end of the first paragraph on page 87 mistakenly refers to “pp. 34-36,” but should read “pp. 49-53.” The word “pluperfects” is spelled incorrectly on page 364. On the same page, the reference to “sec. III.B., 18-23” should read “sec. III.B., 18-22.”

In the final analysis, this work is well done and finally allows Philemon to be considered as an independent book in its own right and as worthy of detailed examination. It is also a highly informative source for examining the sensitive and difficult issues associated with Philemon. For these reasons, including the fact that this volume contains probably the single best compilation of social background information on slavery in the ancient world in relation to Paul’s letter to Philemon, it should find its place on the bookshelves of professors, students, pastors, and studious laity.

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Bienkowski, Piotr, and Alan Millard, eds. *Dictionary of the Ancient Near East*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000. 352 pp. Hardcover, \$49.95.

The editors of the *Dictionary of the Ancient Near East* are both at the University of Liverpool. Piotr Bienkowski is Curator of Egyptian and Near Eastern Antiquities, National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, and Honorary Research Fellow. Alan Millard is Rankin Professor of Hebrew and Ancient Semitic Languages.

The *Dictionary of the Ancient Near East* is a one-volume reference work, with entries written by experts in a variety of fields, covering major aspects of the history, culture, and language of the Ancient Near East. The coverage of chronological periods ranges from the Lower Paleolithic to the Persian conquest of Babylon in 539 B.C. Entries deal with a broad spectrum of topics, including people, places, chronology, geography, institutions, religion, poetry, economy,

trade, and architecture. Most entries include major bibliographic references, and some are illustrated. The book includes a map of the Ancient Near East, a chronological chart, a king list of the principal dynasties, and an index.

Although the *Dictionary* does not cover Egypt, it has a broader scope than other recent reference works on the Ancient Near East, such as the *Encyclopedia of the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt*, edited by Kathryn A. Bard (2000), and *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Ancient Near East*, edited by Eric M. Meyers (5 vols.; 1997).

Doing justice to the copious information now available on the Ancient Near East in a one-volume work is a heroic task, which the contributors and editors have done well to accomplish. The material is useful even to the specialist as a quick reference resource, but clearly presented in language understandable to the novice. Asterisks before words for which main entries exist facilitate access of information.

It would have been helpful if a small map had been included at the beginning of each entry dealing with a geographical item, to indicate the location of the place under discussion. Many of the sites and rivers discussed cannot be found or are difficult to find on the few maps included in the volume. The well-chosen illustrations are in black and white, undoubtedly keeping the cost of production down.

Due to the fact that specialists from a variety of fields contribute, the quality and coverage of entries are not consistent. Some entries are biased toward one regional area. For instance, the entry for "Economics" covers only Mesopotamian concerns and nothing is said about those of other regions. The rationale for concluding coverage with 539 B.C. is that with the emergence of the Persian Empire, the Ancient Near East was incorporated into a larger empire that had increased interaction with the Greek world. It is true that at this time the center of power shifted eastward from the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers to the Iranian Plateau. However, the Persian period, which extends down to 332 B.C., is a direct continuation of Ancient Near Eastern history. For example, the Persian monarch continued to take the hand of Marduk as "king of Babylon." Persia's links to the ancient cultures of Mesopotamia, particularly that of the Assyrian Empire, are woven into the fabric of its art and architecture. While selected topics relevant to the Persian Empire are represented in the *Dictionary*, cutting off broad coverage at 539 B.C. limits the usefulness and effectiveness of this volume.

While there are limitations inherent in this work, it is an important reference resource for students and scholars alike. It can be recommended for all who have an interest in the Ancient Near East.

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CONSTANCE E. GANE

Evans, Craig A., and Stanley E. Porter, eds. *Dictionary of New Testament Background*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000. 1060 pp. Hardcover, \$39.99.

Though this volume stands alone, it is the fourth in a distinguished series of massive one-volume reference works issued by the publisher, including *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (1992), *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (1993), and *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments* (1997). A similar series