

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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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

for the OT will follow. This last volume in the NT series is the largest of the four, but it is offered for the same reasonable price as its predecessors.

Craig Evans, the editor for Jewish backgrounds, and Stanley Porter, the editor for Græco-Roman backgrounds, head an impressive list of able contributors that largely represents the best evangelical scholarship but is by no means limited to that orientation. The roster is ecumenical and international.

The body of the work consists of some three hundred articles ranging in length from five hundred words to more than ten thousand words. Some of them are updated from articles appearing in the previous volumes, or even duplicate them, so that the value of this volume is not supposed to depend on having access to the others. So current and thorough are the treatments that it is safe to say that this work supersedes all comparable works as of this date and probably for the next several years. You have here the last word on many of the topics covered.

Obviously, three hundred entries do not cover all possible things that the reader may wish to learn about, but there are exhaustive Scripture and subject indices that expand the volume's usefulness. How editors of such works decide what to include and what to omit is often inscrutable, and the present one is no exception.

A case in point is "Crucifixion," about which there is no article, but the subject index lists forty-eight places where it is referred to. A patient searching of all these places turns up nothing substantial about the background of the subject. The index was apparently computer-generated, and most of the references are merely passing ones. One looks in vain, for example, for any mention of the archaeological evidence found at Giv²at ha-Mivtar in 1968. This is all the more remarkable, because a rather good discussion of the topic appeared in the earlier *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 147-148.

There are no illustrations in any of the volumes of the series, though in some cases they could have been quite helpful. On the other hand, there are some duplications of material. For example, D. A. deSilva has contributed a useful article, more than seven columns long, on "Honor and Shame." But S. C. Barton's excellent treatment of "Social Values and Structures" includes a section more than one and a half columns long on precisely the same topic. Each of these articles contains a cross-reference to the other. All articles include not only cross-references, but choice bibliographies.

This dictionary is especially good in its surveys of the various corpora of literature that illuminate the NT, whether Jewish (e.g., Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, Qumran, Philo, Josephus, Rabbinic literature), or Græco-Roman (e.g., Plutarch, the Plinys, Philostratus), or Christian (e.g., the Apostolic Fathers), or Gnostic as well as articles on individual works. Some of the articles (e.g., Apocalypticism) will become benchmarks.

It may be strange to say of a reference work, but this one is hard to put down. It is a pleasure to browse it. On page after page one finds information conveniently gathered about topics one always intended to research, but never got around to it, and other topics that are completely new to the reader. It will be an enormous boon to every student of the NT, whether graduate student preparing for comprehensive examinations, teacher, pastor, or any motivated reader. It should be in everyone's library, and the low price makes that possible.