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# Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible, edited by Kevin J. Vanhoozer, et al.

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## Peer Reviewed

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By way of contrast, Vasile Mihoc traces contemporary Orthodox approaches to OT messianism back to that of the church fathers and the view implicit in the NT itself. With an interesting collection of quotations from Western scholars, he shows that elements of this same traditional approach were shared by numerous Western exegetes in the not-too-distant past.

Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr offers a summary and response to the papers in each section of the book. He raises questions about the implications of christological readings of the OT for Jewish-Christian dialogue, an important issue in the West but less so, for a variety of reasons, in Orthodoxy. Niebuhr also offers a useful, longer concluding article reviewing the current state of the question of the role of Scripture in the ongoing ecumenical dialogues between particular Churches.

In the richest theological treatment in the volume, R. Walter L. Moberly focuses on the role of the canon and underlines the unity of the two testaments for Christian interpreters, questioning the academic trend toward specialization that separates the study of the two testaments. Moberly makes three proposals: (1) The resurrected Christ on the road to Emmaus does not communicate new information but points his disciples back to the existing Scriptures of Israel. This suggests that the truth Jesus teaches must be seen as a deepening and intensifying of the truth already made known to Israel. (2) The Shema, which expresses commitment to YHWH as the defining reality of life, is a hermeneutical key to the OT. (3) The phrase, "the fear of YHWH is (the beginning of) knowledge/wisdom," plays a functional role in the OT equivalent to "faith" in the NT. Moberly briefly raises the question of the status of the Septuagint but does not engage the real issues at stake. That this question is treated only in passing is an unfortunate lacuna. This type of forum would seem to be the ideal venue for this discussion, and I hope that future meetings devote time to this issue. The volume concludes with a list of the 64 participants and three indexes: Scripture, authors, and subjects.

*Dominican House of Studies, Washington*

STEPHEN D. RYAN, O.P.

DICTIONARY FOR THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE. Edited by Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *et al.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005. Pp. 896. \$54.99.

This *Dictionary* should rightly become an important resource for those interested in biblical interpretation and theology. It is a unique work that accessibly integrates current biblical, theological, and philosophical scholarship. Students and scholars of the church and the academy will be pleased by the wide variety of entries, each accompanied by a brief bibliography and cross-referenced where appropriate, and the helpful lists and indexes.

The greatest strength of the *Dictionary* is its interdisciplinary perspective. Philosophy, particularly postmodernism, is usefully brought into conversation with biblical and systematic theology. Biblical scholars, too often trained in philology at the expense of philosophy, will benefit greatly from

the concise presentations. The *Dictionary's* postmodern perspective emerges in its sensitivity to different communities of interpreters (for example, "African Biblical Interpretation," "Asian Biblical Interpretation," "Charismatic Biblical Interpretation," "Catholic Biblical Interpretation," and "Orthodox Biblical Interpretation," with "Latin American Biblical Interpretation" cross-referenced under "Liberation Theologies and Hermeneutics"). Entries on influential interpretive schools such as the "Tübingen School" or the "Yale School" can also be a great point of entry for those outside the field.

The *Dictionary* is also marked by considerable historical breadth. It attempts to incorporate more history of interpretation, from the early church to the contemporary period, than do other works of its kind. Kevin Vanhoozer (the general editor) offers the rationale for the work's scope when he calls to mind Gerhard Ebeling's observation that "church history is essentially the history of biblical interpretation" (21). This diverse group of contributors, representing a great number of ecclesial affiliations, holds in common that: (1) the text is divinely authored; (2) the focus should be on the final form of the text; and (3) biblical interpretation should be directed toward building up a community of faith (23). Ecclesial diversity is also represented in the use of at least seven different Bible translations (NIV, ESV, KJV, NKJV, NRSV, RSV, and TNIV).

The *Dictionary's* commitment to ecumenism and its sensitivity to ecclesial diversity are to be commended; however, readers should be aware that entries can be tendentious and unbalanced at times. A work of this breadth, which claims to offer something to everyone with serious theological concerns, is bound to dissatisfy some. While the editors do not articulate what is meant by the "church," there is a strong Protestant perspective both in the selection of entries and also in the entries themselves. For example, although an entry is devoted to each biblical book, the deuterocanonical books are discussed only generally under the larger category of "Apocrypha." While this entry is quite good, it is self-consciously written from a Protestant perspective for a Protestant readership.

This tendentiousness appears in entries such as "Doctrine," as that discussion leaps from the early church (notably only two early church figures are named, Irenaeus and Cyril of Jerusalem) to Protestant theologians from the modern period (James Orr, Charles Gore, P.T. Forsyth, Reinhard Hütter, and Adolf von Harnack), and concludes with early Protestant Reformers. In this entry, no mention is made of Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, or any Catholic theologian from the modern period. Much care is taken to represent the diversity of Protestant groups, but little effort is given to representing the diversity of Catholicism (not assuming of course that "Catholic" refers strictly to Roman Catholic) and other non-Western expressions of Christianity. Apart from the entry on "Orthodox biblical interpretation," readers will find scant treatment of Eastern forms of Christianity even in relevant entries such as "Liturgy."

Some readers may also be disappointed by the entry on "Anti-Semitism," which contains no discussion of how pervasive and influential

was the ancient *adversus iudaeos* tradition—religiously, socially, and politically. Readers may be surprised to find that important watershed documents such as Vatican II's *Nostra aetate* (1965) are neither mentioned nor included in the bibliography.

Despite these shortcomings, the *Dictionary* makes a unique and valuable contribution. Space does not permit a full discussion of the many excellent entries on the Bible, hermeneutics, and exegesis, many of them authored by leading scholars in the field. This *Dictionary* should be consulted by all who are interested in the theological interpretation of the Bible and will undoubtedly enrich future interdisciplinary and ecumenical conversations.

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**LIFE IN ABUNDANCE: STUDIES OF JOHN'S GOSPEL IN TRIBUTE TO RAYMOND E. BROWN.** Edited by John R. Donahue. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 2005. Pp. xiv + 313. \$29.95.

This collection includes articles and responses originally given at an International Conference on the Gospel of John: Life in Abundance, held at St. Mary's Seminary and University, Baltimore, October 16–18, 2003. Donahue, who held the inaugural appointment as the Raymond Brown Distinguished Professor of New Testament Studies, coordinated the conference and edited the resulting volume. Appended to the articles are a biography and bibliography of Brown's publications (composed by Sulpician confreres Ronald D. Witherup and Michael L. Barré), a sermon by Phyllis Tribble (a longtime colleague and friend of Raymond Brown) given at an interreligious prayer service at Union Theological Seminary, and Donahue's homily preached at a closing liturgy of the Baltimore conference. The conference itself was a fitting tribute for a man who devoted his life to the study of the Johannine literature.

The list of presenters reads like a Who's Who of Johannine studies over the past four decades, but also includes scholarly representatives of more recent generations. The nine articles and eight responses are organized under four categories: (1) Johannine Studies: Challenges and Prospects; (2) Historical Context and the Gospel of John; (3) Johannine Theology; and (4) Interpreting the Work of Raymond Brown. The work presented under these headings comprises the most up-to-date assessment of the contemporary state of Johannine studies as well as suggestions for its future direction. Without slighting the excellence of each individual article and response, I will here focus on the lead article and response from the first two parts as indicative of the uniform excellence of the entire collection.

Francis J. Maloney's "The Gospel of John: The Legacy of Raymond E. Brown and Beyond" emphasizes the importance of historical study in biblical interpretation while offering a nuanced view of the advantages and disadvantages of historical-critical analysis in Johannine studies. M.'s pithy remark that "text without context is pretext" acknowledges the tension between subjectivity and objectivity in interpretation and suggests that this