

*Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period: 450 B.C.E. to 600 C.E.* Edited by Jacob Neusner and William Scott Green. Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1996, xxv + 693 pp., n.p.

Readers not well-acquainted with Judaism are in need of a tool that can assist them when encountering words, institutions, practices, events, and persons that are unfamiliar. This dictionary, first published by Macmillan in 1996 and now republished by Hendrickson, fills such a need. The scholars contributing to the volume are acknowledged experts in the field, and so the novice in Judaism can be confident of instruction by trusted guides. The entries on the whole are short and clearly written. The editors intended the work to be a *dictionary*, not an encyclopedia, which explains why the entries are concise. Bibliographies are not included, though I must confess that I think brief bibliographies would have been helpful, and yet they would have increased the size and presumably the expense of the work.

The dictionary is ideal for students and pastors who need a definition of "mikveh" or wonder who the "Boethusians" are. The brevity of the work is apparent when the article on the Pharisees is restricted to about one and one-half columns, and yet the entry is an excellent introduction to the Pharisees. The dictionary does not restrict itself only to matters Jewish, but also includes matters that affected Judaism from 450 B.C. to A.D. 600. Hence, there are entries on Constantine, writers like Diodorus Siculus, Gnosticism, Pythagoreanism, the Chionites (a non-Jewish people), and Egypt. The dictionary also has some entries on Christianity, including John the Baptist, Tertullian, Jesus of Nazareth, Jerome, and even *ex opera operato*! The standard critical view is adopted, so that in the case of Jesus it is argued that reconstructing his teaching is difficult since the gospels are

later theological accounts. Some theological topics are also explored, and some of these receive a more lengthy treatment. For instance, there are entries on predestination, salvation, scripture, inspiration, etc.

The dictionary's value does not lie in its discussion of Christianity or its reference to things Roman, since most students have access to these matters in other sources. Most Christian students, though, have difficulty identifying the names of Jewish tractates in books like the Mishnah, and the dictionary translates the title and gives a brief survey of contents. For that matter some students may not know what the Mishnah or Tosefta or Talmud are, and hence it these entries will be immensely helpful for the novice. It is also interesting to read entries on matters like "self-righteousness" to receive a Jewish perspective on such matters (although many of the scholars who contributed are not themselves Jewish). I recommend the dictionary as a lucid and scholarly tool for students. It will be especially useful to busy pastors who need help in finding brief definitions in matters that are outside their usual frame of reference.

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