

The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism

John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow, eds. *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010. 1397 pp. \$95.00. Hardcover. ISBN: 9780802825490.

With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the field of Second Temple Judaism or Early Judaism has blossomed. Renewed interest by scholars in the Pseudepigrapha (non-canonical Christian writings, many of which have Jewish origins), fueled in part by greater access to the primary sources, has watered this fertile ground. *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism* has been written to meet the needs of this growing field. While its intended audience is scholars and students, the editors state their hope that it will also provide accessible information to the general reader.

The *Dictionary* consists of two parts. Thirteen essays by prominent scholars provide an overview of Judaism during the Second Temple Period. These essays are followed by 520 alphabetical signed entries, each with its own bibliography. Articles vary in length from one column of text to several pages. Most are broken down into reasonable amounts of text with subheadings in bold type.

The editors of this volume have assembled a prestigious group of consulting editors and contributors. Both ecumenical and international, the 266 authors hail from twenty different countries. They are Jewish, Christian, and of no religious affiliation. All appear to be scholars of repute within their fields.

The thirteen essays in the first part of the *Dictionary* succeed in giving an overview of the current scholarship in Early Judaism. They are scholarly and well researched but still intelligible to the general reader. All have extensive bibliographies. The essays provide an important framework upon which rest the alphabetic entries of the second component. Topics include an overview of the literature of pre-rabbinic Judaism (“Early Judaism in Modern Scholarship” by John J. Collins), an historical survey of the time period from Alexander the Great to the Bar Kokhbeh Revolt (“Jewish History from Alexander to Hadrian” by Chris Seeman and Adam Kolman Marshak), and a treatise on the importance of the interpretation of scripture in the post-exilic society of the Second Temple Period (“Early Jewish Biblical Interpretation” by James L. Kugel). Further essays discuss “Judaism in the Land of Israel” (James C. VanderKam), “Judaism in the Diaspora” (Erich S. Gruen), and “The Jewish Scriptures” (Eugene Ulrich). Other essays cover the “Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha” (Loren T. Stuckenbruck) and the “Dead Sea Scrolls” (Eibert Tigchelaar). “Early Jewish Literature Written in Greek” (Katell Berthelot) shows how the culture of the time period reflects the adoption of Greek culture while still retaining Jewish identity, and Jurgen K. Zangenberg lays out in a thorough and well-organized way the “Archaeology, Papyri and Inscription” of the Hellenistic, Hasmonean, and Herodian periods both in Palestine and the diaspora. The remaining compositions examine “Jews among Greeks and Romans” (Miriam Pucci Ben Zeev), “Early Judaism and Early Christianity” (Daniel C. Harlow), and “Early Judaism and Rabbinic Judaism” (Lawrence H. Schiffman). The authors of these essays come from varying backgrounds and thereby help to give a balanced synopsis. Overall, a strength of the *Dictionary* is that the content of these essays will satisfy the researcher while the design and layout will keep the less academic reader from becoming confused and overwhelmed.

An alphabetical listing of contributors (viii – xviii) provides the position of each author and the institution with which the scholar is affiliated. It also acts as an index to the articles authored by each contributor. The alphabetical

list of entries following the list of contributors is a helpful place to determine quickly if the entry one is looking for is included in the *Dictionary*. Even more useful is the topical list of entries which allows one at a glance not only to see related topics together but also offers an overview of how many entries are provided on a certain topic. It further functions as a topical index. First listed are the articles on the various types of literature of the period such as “Biblical Texts, Versions and Canon” and “Dead Sea Scrolls.” Then the non-literature articles are broken down into topics such as “Groups and Dynasties” and “Religious Beliefs and Influences.” Despite these helps a subject index would have been a useful addition to this work (especially as it would also direct the reader to topics within the essays).

Maps are placed in articles as needed and a List of Maps (xxx) gives the reader quick and direct access to them. A convenient timeline showing the Chronology of Early Judaism from 538 B.C.E. to 200 C.E. (xxxi-xxxii) follows the list of maps. Finally, a list of abbreviations (xxxiii-xxxvii) rounds out the front matter. Four and a half pages of abbreviations and acronyms are delineated; everything from the more commonly known definitions (B.C.E. Before the Common Era) to the obscure (Her. *Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres Sit*) is clarified.

Pictures and figures have been inserted into the entries in supportive ways. For example, the entry for “Architecture” has diagrams of a number of site plans, which aid in the understanding of the text. The entry for “Art” logically has photographs and artistic renderings that illuminate the copy. Interestingly, the article on “Art” has more photographs of mosaics than does the article on “Mosaics.” However, a cross reference note following the “Mosaics” entry does direct the reader back to “Art.”

In addition to the list of entries at the front of the volume, the *Dictionary’s* use of cross references such as “Devil → Satan and Related Figures” and “Works of the Law → Miqṣat Ma’asê Ha-Torah (MT)” point the reader in the right direction. Furthermore, some articles have “see also” references (like “Mosaics,” above), which are quite convenient. However, many of these cross-references do not appear to be reciprocal. For example, “Egypt” has a “see also” reference for “Ptolemies” but “Ptolemies” does not have a reciprocal reference for “Egypt.” “Kingship” has a “see also” for “Messianism” but “Messianism” does not have a reciprocal cross-reference for “Kingship.” Granted, sometimes a reciprocal entry is not needed. Nevertheless, when there is a clear notation in an article to another person, topic, or object it would be advantageous to have the cross reference. For instance, the article “Samaritans” has a whole paragraph about Josephus but no “see also” reference. Nor does the “Josephus” article have a cross-reference to “Samaritans.” It would have been more helpful to have entry words set in boldface type at first use. The use of such a system would allow the reader to immediately see what other articles might discuss related topics. This technique could also have been utilized in the essays in order to direct the reader to the more specific information of the various alphabetical entries.

In *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, the editors have achieved their goal of creating a resource that meets the needs of scholars but is also accessible to the general public. The articles are clearly laid out and, although they are scholarly, the topics are broken down into subcategories that allow the general reader to follow the text and/or to focus more narrowly on finding information needed. The *Dictionary* can be used both for quick reference and for an overview of the field of Early Judaism. This volume is a valuable resource for all theological libraries.

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