

NEW INTERNATIONAL DICTIONARY OF OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY AND EXEGESIS, 5 VOLUMES

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NIDOTTE, as this dictionary will be termed, is a full, rich and diverse reference work which is sure to have a long and fruitful use. It consists of over 5,800 densely packed pages of Christian OT scholarship, which is both a reflection of the growing maturity of conservative biblical scholarship and, more importantly, an excellent resource for further work. 'New International' is of course a code phrase for evangelical, however imprecise the latter term, and this is the position of the editors and most (though not all) contributors. Nevertheless, there is a truly international element among the 206 contributors. While two-thirds work in North America, others are based in the UK (29), South Africa (17) and elsewhere (25, including Japan and Nepal).

Apparently the words 'and Exegesis' were added to the title when the project was well under way, and articles already submitted were then redrafted. The addition is redundant, since all lexical and theological study of an ancient text must necessarily be exegetical, but was perhaps undertaken with an eye to widening the potential readership. This, along with the length and breadth of the work, may explain why the project took eight years.

The Dictionary has four parts: a Guide, with several significant articles (vol. 1a); a Lexical Dictionary of all Hebrew roots and many individual words, with all other words cross-referenced (vols 1b-4a); a Topical Dictionary of people, places, books and themes (vol. 4b); and several Indexes (vol. 5). While the clear spine labelling should prevent confusion, it would have been neater to put the Guide and Topical Dictionary together in volume 1 and keep the Lexical Dictionary to volumes 2-4. This would also have allowed those with fewer resources to buy a one-volume compendium.

The opening Guide covers over 200 pages, beginning with an introduction to the dictionary by the general editor. Then follow 11 articles in 7 sections: Introduction (another): Vanhoozer provides a lengthy discussion of hermeneutics (which the editor himself admits is 'somewhat complex', 14); I: Waltke deals with textual criticism; II: Merrill and Long give theological and hermeneutical perspectives on OT history; III: Longman and Satterthwaite discuss literary approaches and narrative criticism; IV: Cotterell provides a theoretical approach to linguistics, and Walton provides principles for word study;

V: Martens and Schultz treat various aspects of OT theology; and finally Conclusion: VanGemeren illustrates 'doing OT exegesis and theology' with the very detailed worked examples of Ruth 1 and Psalm 119:1-8.

These are all good articles, even if it is hard to visualize the LXX translators 'flying by the seat of their pants' (61), and would make a substantial independent introduction to OT study. But they seem somewhat lost in their present place, and I suspect they will be largely neglected. Even the two useful chapters on semantics remain rather theoretical, and advise more on pitfalls to avoid than on procedures to adopt. Further, though they are both nuanced in their discussion, the two authors give contradictory advice on the key issue of whether terms have 'core meanings'. Cottrell rejects this as a misconception (148), while Walton finds it a helpful approach (168).

The Lexical Dictionary is clearly the heart of the set, its *raison d'être*. Here each Hebrew term is examined in turn, usually under the headings ANE, OT, P-B and sometimes NT. Longer articles subdivide discussion into numbered sections. This allows for detailed discussion of a term's various uses, meanings, difficulties and interpretations. Each concludes with cross-references to other semantic fields and bibliography. For example, the article on *kpr* (cover, atone) takes up 20 pages (some 12,000 words) with nearly 50 sections (ANE 4, OT 33, P-B 7, NT 4). It interacts in detail with other scholarship, cross-references to 7 related terms, and has a 40-item bibliography. Such comprehensive, thorough, systematic study should earn *NIDOTTE* a wide, frequent and long-lasting readership.

However, several aspects are regrettable. It is immediately obvious that articles vary considerably and sometimes unexpectedly in length. *ḥzq* (strong) has a generous 20 pages, while the theologically more important *y'r* (fear) has only 6 pages. *r'pā'im* I (shades, 8 occurrences) has 7 pages of excellent discussion, including a 43-item bibliography, while *š'ōl* (65 occurrences) has only 1 page of brief though competent summary. Of course, frequency of use is not the only indication of importance. Nevertheless, better editing could have given greater evenness of treatment. Secondly, related articles are often by the same author, thus limiting the variety of insights. Half of the 18 articles listed under Death in the subject index are by a single author (one of the editors). Many of these are admittedly minor terms, but not all, e.g. *mwt* (death). Thirdly, the level of scholarly discussion is occasionally disappointing. Neither '*ādām* (man) nor '*iššā* (woman), written by the same author, engage with feminist studies, even though the former proposes the translation 'earthling' and the latter gives some bibliographical references. So some users of the dictionary will have richer fare than others will.

The Topical Dictionary complements the Lexical. As well as all proper nouns, it covers biblical books and themes.

For example, under 'A' there are: 13 people(s), 8 places, the Book of Amos (4 pages), and the following themes (with page length): Adoption (2), Anger (7), Animosity (6), Anthropomorphisms (3), Apocalyptic Literature (5), and Apocrypha, Theology of (7). Articles on proper nouns are subdivided as in Part 2 (where, as lexical studies they would more properly belong), others thematically. Again there is much wealth of detail and scholarship. 'Abraham', 'Baal' and many more are thorough and learned. Separate articles on Bildad, Elihu, Eliphaz and Zophar complement 15 pages on the Theology of Job. Unexpected riches include articles on Desert, Education in the OT, Particles, and Sexual Ordinances. But there is also unevenness of treatment. 'Adam and Eve' interacts with neither ANE texts nor (again) feminist readings. 'Clean and Unclean' (9 pages) contains only one paragraph on proposals regarding the rationale of animal classification (and only mentions Mary Douglas in passing), and 'Conquest' ignores the new archaeology (though lists works which interact with it).

Finally, there are four valuable indexes, each with its own introduction. The first, of Semantic Fields, indicates relevant terms and articles and other semantic fields. This is the Dictionary's most innovative feature, and will enable continual, fruitful study. But at times it is too full, e.g. 'Death' lists the root *mut* with apparently three articles, but the last two of these are simply cross-references back to the first. An index of Hebrew words and phrases helpfully lists discussion outside the obvious articles. The Scripture Index includes Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha (though not NT), and the Subject index appears suitably thorough.

One serious flaw concerns bibliographies. Unfortunately and inexplicably, these often omit the editor(s) of volumes of essays. This will dismay users who only have access to author-indexed catalogues, especially since many important lexicographical articles are buried in such volumes! By contrast, the same bibliographies tediously and unnecessarily include book subtitles, so space was not an overriding concern.

There are also some minor blemishes. For ease of use, volume number should precede page number at the foot of every page (as in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*), and page headings in the Guide should indicate the current article (as elsewhere in the Dictionary). Article subheadings throughout could be more visible. In Parts 2 and 3 the related terms listed for cross-reference in each article hardly need to include the term of the article itself! Abbreviations are occasionally unexplained, e.g. HUBP (1:54), P-B (lexical articles). Inappropriate assumptions are sometimes made: text critics are male (1:61), BHS editors are humanists (1:65), NIV is used (1:207). And inevitably in a work of such length and complexity, a few glitches occur, e.g. the bibliography for the Theology of Ruth is clearly truncated.

To conclude, *NIDOTTE* is a major reference work which should be in every college library and every biblical scholar's study and should be consulted constantly. Ministers and other Christian workers will also certainly profit from using it, though the cost may prevent them purchasing it. (Again, a combined volume of Guide and Topical Index would have been helpful.) At the same time, the very wealth of detail poses dangers. As with any such reference work, it is easy to get sidetracked from the immediate subject of study and explore other fascinating but irrelevant topics. Similarly, it is easy to get so immersed in the detail that one loses sight of the main issues, with the result that the study or sermon under preparation loses its focus. The dictionary is so rich that it must be used with care! Overall, *NIDOTTE* provides a tool for OT study which is nearly always competent, usually very good, and often excellent.

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