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van der Toorn, Karel, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst, eds.
Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible (DDD)

Leiden: Brill, 1995. Pp. xxxvi + 1773, Cloth, No Price Available, ISBN 9004103139.

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A unique reference tool that provides concise articles on "all the gods and demons whose names are found in the Bible" (p. xv). By "the Bible," the editors mean the books of the Hebrew Bible in the Masoretic Text, the Septuagint (including the Apocrypha), and the NT. Among the purposes of the volume are (a) to provide "a scholarly introduction to the religious universe which the Israelites and the Early Christians were part of," (b) to "enable readers to assess the distinctiveness of Israelite, Jewish, and Early Christian religions," and (c) to show "the mythological background of various biblical notions and concepts" (p. xvii). The dictionary does not include entries on deities from the Ancient Near East or the Greco-Roman environment that are not named in the Bible, a limitation overcome, to some extent, by the healthy smattering of references to non-biblical divinities that *are* included (the index allows the reader to track these down), and even more by the generous definition of what it *means* for a deity or demon to be "mentioned" in the Bible.

There are five kinds of entries: (1) biblical deities that are explicitly named as such (e.g., Asherah, El, Zeus); (2) deities incorporated into personal or place names (e.g., Shemesh in "Beth-Shemesh," or Artemis in the name "Artemas"); (3) deities named, but not in their capacity as gods (e.g., the Hebrew word for new wine, *tiros*, is "etymologically the equivalent of . . . the Canaanite god Tirash," p. xvi, on which, therefore, an entry is provided); (4) deities whose appearance in the Bible is subject to question (e.g., when scholars have either emended the text to represent a divine name or reinterpreted a common word as a theonym--such as the Hebrew *ra*(, "evil" [= the Egyptian sun-god, "Re"?]); and (5) human figures who later came to be seen as divine or semi-divine (e.g., Enoch, Moses, and Mary). This latitude of definition allows for a surprisingly large number of entries: over 80 alphabetized under "A" and "B" alone. Many may not be expected (e.g., Dew, Fire, Thornbush, Vampire). Each article discusses the name of the deity, its etymology, and its identity, role, and character both in its "culture of origin" and in the biblical traditions themselves. All entries conclude with relevant bibliography; some provide additional discussion of the deity in post-biblical periods.

The three editors and their panel of over one hundred contributing authors from around the world are to be commended for providing an important and unparalleled reference tool for scholars of the biblical and surrounding cultures. (4/96)