

RBL 06/2004



Glynn, John

Commentary and Reference Survey: A Comprehensive Guide to Biblical and Theological Resources

Ninth edition

Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003. Pp. 311. Paper. \$18.99.
ISBN 0825427363.

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The work of John Glynn deserves its fame, if one takes into consideration its restricted aims, as a rich source of information. As such it is very helpful for students of the Bible, for classes, teachers, and the professor who is the next person to be asked by his or her readers for a comprehensive counsel on what to read as commentaries or reference books when working on a special biblical theme. The large number of editions shows that it has gained a large audience since its first appearance in 1994, and it has been augmented by “Late Additions” even now (309–11). It likewise comprises titles for the study of both Testaments. An important part of this book of only medium size—the space on a page is rather limited—is devoted to lists of commentaries (about 40 percent; see 21–22), supplemented by special monographs on the books of the Old (53–103) and New Testaments (131–78). Commentary series are separately listed in the beginning (42–46). The deeply practical intentions of the author become visible at the start, when he first gives advice as to how and by what financial means (!) to build up a private study library (28–44). Shorter chapters deal with “Introduction. Survey, and Theology” together (Old Testament: 47–52; New Testament: 117–22). “Jesus and the Gospels” deserve a special chapter (123–30). Of course, for an up-to-date understanding of the Bible the background for Old (104–12) and New Testaments (179–94) are also indispensable. In these chapters

quite different fields of research are packed together: for the Old Testament dictionaries and historical and archaeological resources, but also titles on general manners and customs and social and religious background; for the New Testament in the first place early church references, followed by special literature on Paul, the Greco-Roman background, again archaeology, and Gnosticism as a specific religious movement of the period.

At the end of the book one finds chapters on systematic theology (244–64), church history (265–84; including that of foreign countries), and such practical suggestions as how to use computers and the Internet (285–300). In this way the author again provides guidance that is up to date.

The author has a wide range of readers for his book in view. Beginning with his separate recommendations for laypeople, Bible college students, and pastors regarding their respective libraries, he divides his lists into evangelical, conservative, and liberal, in critical and moderate, technical and semitechnical titles (this grouping especially with commentaries), each marked by a respective initial (22–23). He further distinguishes between exposition, on the one hand, and preaching and application, on the other. Commentaries to single books are followed by a choice of special titles. The outlook is wide, so the book can be used by different groups of interested readers. Another help is distinguishing between more or less important titles by the use of bold script. This choice follows a religious scale (25). The author confesses that he has not read all the books contained but relied on secondary sources (*ibid.*). But who would have expected this!

Of course, mentioning one book and omitting another depends on rather personal motives in every case. The system has its natural restrictions in being not more than a catalogue, sometimes with short remarks on the main contents of a title. All in all, the instructed reader will observe that in most cases mentioning one title and omitting another is justified by good reasons, even if not always explained.

For a reviewer from the European continent, one weakness of the book is obvious: one detects many titles the original of which was written by European, mostly German, authors, and too infrequently this origin is noted. I would like to suggest that in future editions the original titles might be mentioned, so that readers who are trying to widen their horizon, even by learning European languages, might be incited to have a look upon the originals. A translation remains a translation!