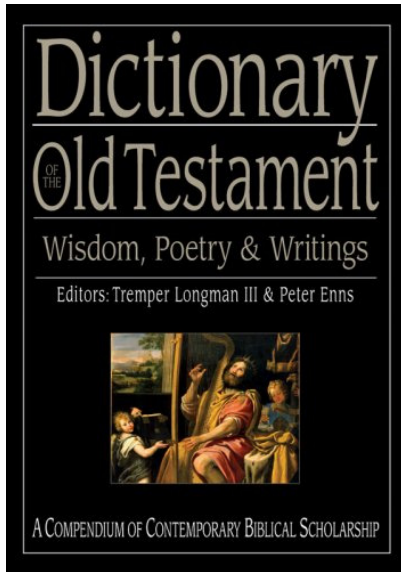


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Longman, Tremper, III, and Peter Enns, eds.

Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry and Writings

Downer's Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2008. Pp. xxiv + 966. Hardcover. \$50.00. ISBN 0830817832.

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1. General

The third Old Testament volume in InterVarsity Press's celebrated "Black Dictionary" series offers nearly 150 articles covering all the important aspects of Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Psalms, Song of Songs, Lamentations, Ruth, and Esther. Over ninety contributors, many of them experts in this literature, have contributed to *The Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry and Writings*. This volume maintains the quality of scholarship that students, scholars, and pastors have come to expect from this series.

Coverage of each biblical book includes an introduction to the book itself as well as separate articles on its ancient Near Eastern background and its history of interpretation. Additional articles amply explore the literary dimensions of Hebrew poetry and prose, including acrostic, ellipsis, inclusio, intertextuality, parallelism, and rhyme. There are also well-rounded treatments of Israelite wisdom and wisdom literature, including wisdom poems, sources, and theology. In addition, a wide range of interpretative approaches is canvassed in articles on hermeneutics, feminist interpretation, form criticism, historical criticism, rhetorical criticism, as well as social-scientific approaches.

It should be remembered that the biblical books covered by this volume are somewhat different from those covered by previous volumes. In this context it may be noted that the

Old Testament books of wisdom and poetry carry themselves differently from those of the Pentateuch, the histories, or the prophets. The divine voice does not peal from Sinai, there are no narratives carried along by prophetic interpretations, nor are oracles declaimed by a prophet. Here Scripture often speaks in the words of human response to God and God's world. The hymns, laments, and thanksgivings of Israel, the dirge of Lamentations, the questionings of Qoheleth, the love poetry of the Song of Songs, the bold drama of Job, and the proverbial wisdom of Israel all offer their textures to this great body of biblical literature. Then, too, there are the finely crafted stories of Ruth and Esther that narrate the silent providence of God in the course of Israelite and Jewish lives. Given that such is the case, it can be seen that the compilers and contributors to this dictionary will have had their work cut out. This is a tough agenda to deliver to.

2. Particular

One of the problems that students face in their learning of biblical Hebrew texts is the vocabulary and syntax they encounter when turning to such texts as the poetry of the Hebrew Bible. These problems are faced and defined in a very helpful article on the Hebrew language one finds in the poetic books of the Hebrew Bible. The helpful thing about this article is that in one of its subsections, entitled "Language Variation," this topic is examined on a book-by-book basis, so that there are sections on the Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Ruth, Esther, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes. In the case of the book of Job, for instance, the varying approaches to its language setting are discussed. In the course of doing so the author also seeks to draw attention to the "Aramaisms" and "Arabisms" that are to be found in this difficult book and can only be explained by recourse to one or other of these languages. Equally important is his discussion of the features that are normally characteristic of early biblical poetry and those that are usually associated with Late Biblical Hebrew. Additionally, in the first part of this article there is a very helpful discussion of the meaning of the Hebrew verbal system as it can be found within the genre of Hebrew biblical poetry. At the conclusion a very helpful bibliography is appended, to which all readers should pay particular attention.

There is equally a very helpful article also to be found within its pages on the subject of "Text and Textual Criticism." Here there is ample reference to the readings that the discoveries at Qumran have provided and that every student should pay attention to. As with the previous article referred to above, this topic is also examined on a book-by-book basis, so that there are sections on the Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Ruth, Esther, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes. These sections include remarks on the differences that exist between the existing Hebrew version (MT) and the Septuagint. One of the helpful sections in this article is the differences in order between the MT and the Septuagint; in the case of the book of Proverbs, this is produced in tabular form. Once again in the case of the book of

Job there is a very full valuation on the fragments that have survived from Qumran. These are dated to between 225 and 150 B.C., and the nature of their script is also noted. Also in this article there is an evaluation of the two Targumim that have survived from Qumran on this book. This is followed by an evaluation of the Septuagint as a version of the book of Job together with its revisions. Again this is followed by several paragraphs that deal with the other ancient versions, such as the Syriac Peshitta, the Latin Vulgate, and the Aramaic Targumim. This is not only the case with the article's treatment of the book of Job but is equally true in respect of the other books dealt with by this dictionary.

Four articles deal with the book of Job as follows: (1) "The Book of Job"; (2) "The Ancient Near Eastern Background of Job"; (3) "The History of Interpretation"; (4) "The Person of Job in Scripture." All of these are excellent productions, and it is somewhat surprising that there is an evenness of approach to be found in all of these articles. It should be noted that these remarks apply equally to the other books dealt with by the dictionary.

3. Conclusion

This work concludes with three indexes: a scripture index; a subject index; and an article index. The only way that this excellent work could have been improved would be by the provision of an author index, but perhaps that might be asking too much on this occasion.