

lar, conservative Christian viewpoint that is too narrow for adequate scholarship. Libraries serving those constituencies may prefer the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (Doubleday, 1992) or *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Abingdon, 2009). For this reason, the *Zondervan Encyclopedia* is recommended for Christian seminaries, church libraries, and public libraries that serve a mainly conservative Christian patron base.—*Amanda K. Sprochi, Health Sciences Cataloger, University of Missouri-Columbia*

Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary. Ed. by John H. Walton. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2009. 5 vols. \$249.99 (ISBN 978-0-310-25572-7).

Walton and Zondervan have taken a rather courageous step with the publication of the *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary*. By providing a work focused on the cultural contexts of Biblical texts to a lay, evangelical audience, they risk being incorrectly identified with critical traditions both within and outside of Christianity that use the cultural contexts of scriptures to argue against an evangelical doctrine of inspiration.

Walton makes his case for the work in his introduction. He invites his readers and, implicitly, his critics to adopt a more sophisticated understanding of intertextuality. He argues that an intertextual relationship between ancient texts need not imply that a religious text represents “derivative mythology,” and therefore does not disqualify a Biblical text from the possibility of use as a sacred text in a religious tradition that insists on the historical accuracy of its sacred texts. Even so, the commentary’s scholarly, comparative approach to Biblical literature is likely to produce at least some discomfort for many among the work’s target audience.

The work is clearly intended to be an aid to Biblical exegesis. Walton writes, “successful (Bible) interpreters must try to understand the cultural background of the ancient Near East just as successful missionaries must learn the culture, language, and worldview of the people they are trying to reach” (xii).

The commentary achieves this purpose by placing Biblical texts in direct comparison with other historical, archaeological, and literary evidence from the ancient Near East. Virtually every page includes a color photograph of ancient art, a map, or a comparative table that greatly enhances the commentary. The work also contains occasional topical essays related to ancient Near Eastern history that is relevant to the commentary. Some examples of such essays are “Altar on Mount Ebal” (2:39), “Dreams and Temple Building in the Ancient Near East” (3:292), and “Development of the Term ‘Satan’” (5:210).

Although the title of the work says “Bible” rather than specifying Hebrew or Christian scriptures, the scope of the work is limited to the Hebrew Bible or the “Old Testament.” Walton provides no reason for this decision, and one is left to wonder whether New Testament volumes are forthcoming. On the other hand, one might speculate that Walton and

Zondervan decided that placing the explicitly Christian scriptures side-by-side with pagan Graeco-Roman sources could be too uncomfortable for their audience. Perhaps they are testing the waters with this Hebrew Bible source.

Even though the primary audience is Christian, the commentary does not “Christianize” the Hebrew Bible by reading the New Testament onto the Hebrew texts. In fact, the work debunks some Christianization and harmonization in subtle ways. One could imagine a Jewish reader finding the work inoffensive, interesting, and informative. It remains clear that the questions being answered are questions of interest to Christian interpreters, such as “what is a redeemer?” However, the work often provides evidence that differs with evangelical doctrine.

The commentary has an instructional tone that is delightfully readable. It is neither too erudite nor too pedestrian. The work is not as accessible as it is readable, however. The only index in the work is a picture index for each volume, and even this index lists the images by book and chapter rather than page number. This is a drawback of the set. A simple topical index, or even just a names-and-places index, could have greatly enhanced accessibility.

This work is clearly useful for Biblical interpretation that is sensitive to historical context and as an introduction to comparative approaches to the Bible. It can also provide interesting browsing material. The work is most appropriate for public libraries and for academic libraries that support coursework introducing a historical, contextual approach to studying the Bible.—*Steven R. Edscorn, Library Director, Memphis (Tenn.) Theological Seminary*

Professional Materials

Karen Antell

Editor

Bite-Sized Marketing: Realistic Solutions for the Overworked Librarian. By Nancy Dowd, Mary Evangeliste, and Jonathan Silberman. Chicago: ALA, 2010. 140p. \$48 (ISBN 0-838-91000-9).

Bite-Sized Marketing is the latest in an avalanche of publications devoted to helping the library world cope and compete in the marketplace for the hearts, minds, and tax dollars of patrons, customers, users, and clients. ALA offers several similar titles in 2009, such as *Creating Your Library Brand* by Elizabeth Doucett, *Marketing Today's Academic Library* by Brian Mathews, and Barber and Wallace's *Building a Buzz: Libraries and Word-of-Mouth Marketing* (ALA, 2010). Other titles on the topic out this year are Elenora Dubicki's *Marketing and*