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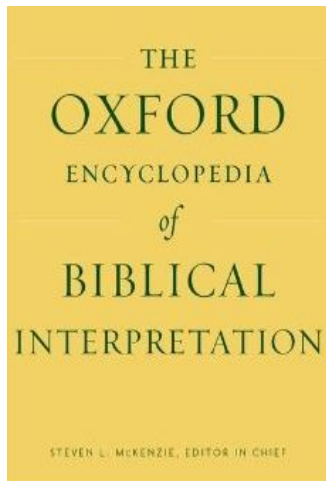
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Steven L. McKenzie, ed.
The Oxford Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation. (2 vols)

Oxford University Press, 2013

Pp. xxviii +559 (vol. 1); Pp. x + 566 (vol. 2).

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[Hardcover]. [Purchase](#)

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The Oxford Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation (OEBI) is an invaluable resource for scholars, and especially those in biblical studies. Steven McKenzie and his editorial team have produced a volume that combines accessibility, clarity, and eruditeness. The contributors include both well-established and emerging scholars from a variety of fields and from different global and cultural vantage points. Each of the essays, organized alphabetically, is a few thousand words in length and includes a—many times annotated—bibliography. The second volume helpfully includes at the end a list of contributors and their essays, an index, and a topical outline of contents. This last feature is especially beneficial, as it assists the reader in locating essays for which they may be unsure of the title. The topical outline is also useful for potential buyers, since it demonstrates what the dictionary does and does not cover. The topics listed are “The Biblical World,” “The Biblical Text,” “Literary Approaches,” “Cultural Approaches,”

Ideological Approaches,” “Philosophical Approaches,” and “Political Approaches.”

One should notice from this list that the dictionary’s primary aim is to cover the various interpretive approaches in biblical studies, rather than provide comprehensive coverage of other topics like biblical content, theology, and history. The editors chose to use Paul Ricoeur’s “. . . rubric of the worlds behind the text, of the text, and in front of the text,” as a means of choosing topics (p.xix). Also of note is the fact that the *OEBI* is available in both print and electronic format, and McKenzie gives the impression that the electronic version may be updated on occasion with new articles (p.xx).

Readers of this journal will be particularly interested in and benefit from the following essays: “Allegory and Allegorical Interpretation” (Mark W. Elliott), “Authority of the Bible” (William W. Klein), “Canonical Criticism” (Corrine L. Carvalho), “Canon of the Bible” (Hal Taussig), “Evangelical Interpretation” (Walter C. Kaiser Jr.), “Inner-biblical Interpretation” (G. Brooke Lester), “Intertextuality (B. J. Oropeza), “Patristic Interpretation” (Paul M. Blowers), and “Theological Interpretation” (Craig Bartholomew).

As with any edited volume, some essays are stronger than others. This reviewer found the articles on theological interpretation and patristic interpretation to be particularly well written and beneficial. Each of the others mentioned, as well as all those included in the volume, are careful, scrupulously researched, and helpful for readers. Nevertheless, this reviewer was left with some questions after reading a few of the articles. First, at times Mark Elliott’s essay on allegory seemed to oscillate between organizational methods, namely historical and categorical. While this could be a natural consequence of the ebb and flow of allegorical approaches throughout the history of

interpretation, the shifts from section to section and from one organizational method to another were not always apparent until one was well past the turning point. Second, there are times when the articles can become repetitive, and this is perhaps nowhere more apparent than when one reads the “Inner-biblical Interpretation” and “Intertextuality” articles together. Both of these essays contain large swaths of material that are covered in the other article, and it may have been wiser for the editors to combine these two into one essay.

Third and finally, while not a criticism, readers should remember that much of the *OEBI*'s content is related to particular interpretive approaches used by certain groups of biblical scholars. This necessarily means that scholars who approach biblical interpretation differently and from different, and even opposing, vantage points will not agree with either the presuppositions or the methods used by various approaches. For instance, non-confessional scholars may have some difficulty with Klein's article on the authority of the Bible. In one instance, for example, Klein argues that the Bible has a grand narrative, one that “. . . points to the *missio Dei*, God's mission of redemption and restoration . . . “ (55). Although this reviewer agrees with Klein's position here, other readers who see more disunity in the biblical corpus from both a narrative and theological perspective may not find his essay as beneficial. Other methodologies covered in the dictionary, such as many of the ideological approaches that have proliferated in the midst of the postmodern turn, may not be as palatable to an evangelical reader.

Regardless, though, of one's interpretive stance, the *OEBI* is a premier resource for biblical scholars. It should be owned and consulted for anyone who desires to take seriously the tasks of understanding and undertaking biblical interpretation.

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