**Porter, Stanley E.**

*Dictionary of Biblical Criticism and Interpretation*

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The *Dictionary of Biblical Criticism and Interpretation* (hereafter *DBCI*) is a unique reference that seeks to do in a more comprehensive manner something that other resources have only done in sketch form, that is, it seeks to be a "one stop handbook reference of biblical interpretation." According to the front matter the key perspectives studied include:

- the historical dimension; addressing how interpretation has developed at various periods of time; from early Jewish exegesis to the historical-critical method
- the conceptual approach; looks at the various schools of thought that have generated biblical interpretation, and compares and contrasts competing conceptual models of interpretation
- the personal perspective; addresses the reality of biblical interpretation by individuals who have helped plot the course of theological development

For the task Porter gathered together a group of international scholars that are as diverse as the topics they cover. Some of the more readily recognizable contributors include James D. G. Dunn, D. A. Carson, Andreas J. Köstenberger, David A. deSilva, Bruce D. Chilton, Craig A. Evans, Joseph Blenkinsopp, Richard Longenecker, Anthony Thiselton, and of course Stanley Porter himself. This list doesn't even cover half of the contributors most of whom contribute multiple articles.

The articles themselves vary in size and length ranging from something as short as the various ½ to 1 page articles on different interpreters (e.g., James Barr; Hans-Georg Gadamer; Bruce Metzger; etc.) to something as long as Colin Brown's 10+ page article on the "Enlightenment Period" (p. 91-101) or Richard Longenecker's 11+ page article on "Early Church Interpretation" (p. 78-89) While seeking to be comprehensive Porter has no delusion of being exhaustive. In the introduction he states the need for selectivity and apologizes for possibly not including the reader's favorite scholar. But he describes the volumes saying:

> The articles contained herein are not meant to be definitive in any absolute or encompassing sense, but to provide means of access. This volume is designed to overcome the kind of contemporary critical introspection that results in failure to contextualize the contemporary within the broader sweep of history. (p. 2)

While I understand and appreciate the need for selectivity I was a bit surprised to see that there was no separate entry for Julius Wellhausen who is mentioned in passing in the articles on "Historical Approaches" (p. 157-9) and "Post-Enlightenment Criticism" (p. 280-7). I also thought that Bruce Chilton's article on the "Historical Jesus" (p. 159-62) was a bit on the light side as it amounted to basically saying that people believe he existed and are studying him. No significant attention is given to various pictures painted by historical Jesus scholars. Almost nothing is said of methodology in historical Jesus research. I've yet to find reference to the criteria of authenticity in the entirety of the volume (aside from a book reference on p. 179) which seems a glaring omission given its importance for biblical criticism and interpretation. Overall I think that *DBCI* needs beefing up on the subject of the historical Jesus.

But on a more positive note, the end-of-article bibliographies that have become common in dictionaries such as this are featured in *DBCI* as well. Of course they vary in length and quality, e.g., Allen Brent's bibliography for his article on "Patristic Interpretation" (p. 254-64) is magnificent, ranging from specialized to more general books on the subject. I'm hard pressed to think of anything that could be added. On the other end of the spectrum Marvin A. Sweeney's bibliography to his article on "Canonical Criticism: Childs' Approach" (p. 46-7) lists only the works in Childs' corpus of writing which is good so far as it goes, but it doesn't give a range of views such as those of his critics or of his disciples/interpreters (e.g., Christopher Seitz). But the bibliographies, whatever their length and quality, are without doubt more helpful than not.

The list of contributors and article entries in the front matter (p. ix-xii) and the detailed index in the back (p. 393-406) contribute to the overall functionality of this volume and make it even easier to recommend to the interested layman and scholar alike. On Porter's goal of *DBCI* being a "means of access" he succeeds greatly while leaving room for improvement in future volumes, whether updates of this one or companions meant to be used in conjunction with it; highly recommended.