

*A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature.* Edited by D.L. Jeffrey.

Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans. Hardback. 960 double column pages.

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Many people are working as teachers of English. We know, at least vaguely, that the Bible has had a great influence on Western thought, history, and literature. We know that Golding's works such as *Lord of the Flies* are excellent starting points for discussing the depravity of man. But I have longed for a book that would set out the themes of the Bible and how they have been taken up by the famous writers of literature. In particular I have wanted a book that is scholarly, that could be held in repute by my University colleagues, and yet is easy to read, and is genuinely Christian. To have a book written by the Catholics or liberals would definitely be second best. A book that preached would be unacceptable.

This dictionary meets all my criteria. It can be used to raise the level of credibility among our colleagues, leading to positive input which does not even hint of propaganda. In addition, it is up to date and has an extensive annotated bibliography of both general works and material studying how authors used the Bible. The dictionary takes biblical themes, explains first the biblical context, and then how the themes have been used in Western Literature. The letter "I," for instance, has the following headings: "I Am that I Am," "I know that my Redeemer liveth," "I only am escaped," "Ichabod," "Icon," "if thy right hand offend thee," "Imago Dei," "Immaculate conception," "Immanuel," "Impanation," "In principio," "Incarnation," "Incest," "Inheritance," "Inspiration," "Isaac," "Isaiah," "Ish-bosheth," "Ishmael," "Ishtar," "Island," and "Issachar."

The people I work with are likely to be very suspicious of any hint of persuading people to believe something else. But when I produced this book, the Department Head gratefully welcomed it as just what was wanted, especially for its stress on literature. Material from the book was later incorporated into the courses. So the book is well worth buying, lending, and using. Even if your subject is not English literature, with this book in hand you could teach the biblical themes and images in literature.

I have one major regret. I wish the publishers had indexed the writers to the themes in the dictionary, so that whatever writers were being studied could be checked to see what the dictionary had to say about their use of biblical material. As it is, you will have to do that step yourself, identify the main images in an author and find out for yourself what the dictionary says. Similarly, biblical phrases that are in ordinary speech are explained, but not all in one section.

I have two major desires. The first is to see similar books covering the influence of the Bible on history and civilisation. The second is for something that goes more into the linguistic aspect of the Bible's influence. The book reviewed here is concerned primarily with literature, and so has less than I would like on the influence of the Authorised Version on the language itself, for example, the more important idioms and proverbs of today that have allusions to the Bible. If we had lists of such idioms we could use them to open people's minds to the wonders of Scripture. Can any reader tell us where such material can be found?