



Journal of Religion & Society

The Kripke Center

Volume 2 (2000)

Karel Van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst, eds.
Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible. Second Edition. Leiden:
Brill; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999. Pp. xxxviii + 998. \$120.00 / £70
(Cloth).

[1] A careful exegesis of its title would leave those of us trained in close reading of texts with a mistaken notion of its contents. Like its first edition, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (hereafter, DDD) provides (in)valuable information on considerably more than just deities and demons in the Bible. In the editors' words, DDD "assesses the impact of contemporary religions on Israel and the Early Church by focusing on those gods that actually left traces in the Bible" (xv). Thus, the major criterion for the inclusion of a deity/demon in this reference work is its mention in the Bible. Even this seemingly straightforward criterion requires further clarification.

[2] By defining "Bible" as the canon recognized by the Orthodox Churches, the editors have available the "most comprehensive canon currently used." More difficult to define is the "mention" of a deity/demon's name. "Mention" most obviously refers to direct reference (e.g. Dagon in 1 Samuel 5:1-7). However, the editors significantly expand the meaning of "mention" to include those deities/demons who appear as an element in personal or place names (e.g. Anat in Anathoh). Rightly acknowledging that the occurrence in a place name does not guarantee that that deity in question was worshipped by the inhabitants of a particular place, the editors nevertheless include that deity/demon because of its presumed "familiarity" to these inhabitants. In other words, the deity/demon was "part of the religious milieu of the Bible" (xvi).

[3] This same characteristic underlies the other three criteria for inclusion, namely (1) those (e.g. Tirash) who are mentioned in the Bible, "but not in their capacities as gods" (xvi), (2) deities/demons whose presence and/or divinity is often questionable (e.g. Re), and (3) human figures who rose to attain divine or semi-divine status in later tradition (e.g. Jesus, Mary, Enoch, Moses, and Elijah). These rather far reaching criteria allow rather obscure beings (e.g. Tirash) and/or concepts (e.g. Source) an entry in the volume. For example, reading the entry on Tirash (contributed by E. Lipinsky), the Hebrew of which "appears to

be the term for 'new wine'" (871), left me wondering why this particular deity was included. Lipinsky points out that the word *tirosh* occurs frequently in the Bible, but usually only with reference to its "plain meaning, often in the context of the formulaic phrase 'the grain, the new wine and the oil'" (871). Is this deity included because of its etymological connection with the Akkadian *siras* (the word for both beer and its deity), its linkage with a divine name attested in Ugaritic and other non-Hebrew Bible sources, or its allusion to the Canaanite deity Dagan? I saw no unambiguous reference to the deity in the Bible itself.

[4] A little less ambiguous are the biblical references to Source. According to F. Stolz, Source has "great significance in the Ancient Near East" (805) because of its association with water supplies. He goes on to say that the necessity of water often caused these "sources" to "acquire the status of holy places. As such, they were either identified as gods or as divine dwelling-places" (805). Yet, most of the references to "Source" that Stolz provides are in contexts other than those of water, e.g. En-Shemesh (Joshua 15:7), the source of the sun.

[5] These comments critique the criteria for a deity/demon's inclusion, not the content of the entries themselves. In fact, reading the entries for these seemingly insignificant deities/demons made me realize just how much valuable information the volume provides. Better still, it gave me a better appreciation for the complexity of the "religious milieu of the Bible."

[6] Unfortunately, the same criteria that allows some rather obscure deities/demons into the volume fall short for some deities who are more significant in the religious environment of Israel and Early Christianity. Two examples that the editors acknowledge are Anu and Enlil. However, "the imbalance produced by a selection based on the occurrence of a god's name in the Bible is redressed, to some degree, by a system of cross-references throughout DDD and an index at the end" (xv). Although piecing together information about Enlil by reading snippets of information about him from 35 different entries or Anu from 22 entries may prove tedious, the reader has the advantage of learning about Enlil and Anu in relationship to the other deities of the Mesopotamian pantheon.

[7] Despite the problems associated with the criteria for inclusion, the information provided for the deities/demons is comprehensive. Most entries begin with a description of the name of the god, its etymology, and its significance in the religious environments of Israel and the Early Church. For example, the entry for Marduk (contributed by T. Abusch) begins with a concise statement of his function, i.e. "Marduk was the god of Babylon and the supreme ruler of the Mesopotamian universe" (543), followed by a few comments on the Sumerian origin of its name. The second section of the entry "deals with the identity, character and role of the deity or demon in the culture of origin" (xvii), while the third section "deals with the role and nature of the deity in the books of the Bible" (xvii). For a deity like Marduk, whose only explicit biblical attestation occurs in Jeremiah 50:2, the second section provides considerably more information than the third section. In this example, Abusch writes nearly five pages on Marduk's development into a major Mesopotamian deity, but includes a mere paragraph in section three. By contrast, the entry for Dagon (contributed by J. F. Healey) contains more information in the third section than that of Marduk because of Dagon's greater number of biblical attestations. Each entry concludes with a bibliography, with some more extensive than others.

[8] In sum, DDD delivers far more than its title implies. It provides valuable, and now even more up-to-date, information about the divine or semi-divine players in the religious environments of Israel and Early Christianity. The biggest problem with this very useful reference work is the requirement that the name of a deity/demon must appear in some way, shape, or form in "the Bible" to be included. Perhaps if a third edition collapsed the four criteria into one, i.e. any deity/demon that was part of the religious environment of Israel and Early Christianity, it would alleviate the Enlil/Anu problem discussed above. Another solution might be to make the material available in an on-line searchable format. Nevertheless, I highly recommend DDD to anyone interested in ancient comparative religion.

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