from the particular world of the Bible. This construct is of course largely the product of the composer’s and/or librettist’s own social, religious, political and philosophical world view; where the origin of the construct is a biblical narrative, a high degree of elaboration is always required, since the psychology and motivation of women in the Bible is particularly underdeveloped. The article first surveys the terrain – surprisingly limited to six chief operas, which together treat only four biblical subjects. The first of the operas, Verdi’s early work Nabucco, is analysed in terms of the depiction of its – totally invented – femme fatale, a fictitious daughter Abigaille given to King Nebucadnezzar. The development of the concept of femme fatale is then traced until it reaches its apotheosis with the extraordinary character of Kundry, in Wagner’s Parsifal. She is then used as the vehicle to explore the themes in depth.


HISTORY OF RELIGIONS

General ★ basic concepts and issues

2076 HANS DIETER BETZ ET AL. (EDS.), Religion Past and Present: Encyclopedia of Theology and Religion. Volume 3: Chu – Deu

In at least three fields this encyclopedia surpasses all existing general reference works on religion in English: Christian theology (1), biblical studies (2), and Christian history (3). In category (1) belong the long, multi-authored articles on: church, church polity (i.e., the organizational and legal aspect of the church), confession of faith, creation, demythologization. Category (2) is well represented by contributions on: Colossians, Corinthian epistles, covenant, cross/crucifixion, Daniel (book of), Decalogue (E. Otto), David; Deuteronomy (E. Otto), Deuteronomy History, Deuteronomic History, Deuteronomy (E. Otto). Category (3) includes: church architecture, church history/church historiography, Church of England, conversion (with an excellent section on ancient religions, by H. Cancik), Cromwell, crusades, cultural Catholicism, Dante. The German origin of this work (whose English translation is produced under the able editorship of David Orton) is occasionally visible, see entries such as the one on “denazification” and the one on biblical concordances (with a list of only German printed concordances). In many cases, the bibliographies have been updated for the English edition. – Both general and theological libraries cannot do without this important work of reference.

Brill, Leiden (2007) CXII/1–795 (BL)

2077 FRIEDRICH JAEGGER (ED.), Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit. Bd. 6: Jenseits – Konvikt

It is hard to tear one away from browsing in this encyclopedia of early-modern cultural history that spans the period from ca. 1450 to ca. 1850. While this is the time frame set by the editor, the general trend among the contributors seems to be to neglect the early period and to extend the time frame to include all of the nineteenth century. There is also a focus on German-speaking lands (understandably), and practically nothing about America (regrettably; but see the entries “Kolonialismus” and “Kolonialreiche”). The present volume includes a number of key articles on subjects relation to Christianity and Judaism. Fifteen articles deal with Jewish subjects, the longest ones being “Judentum” and “Jüdische Gesellschaft”, but there are also substantial ones on “Judenfeindschaft” and “Jüdisches Recht”. Christian subjects are well served with the following entries: Jesus Christus (W. Sparn), Katholische Reform, Katholizismus, Kirche, Kirchenordnung, Kloster, and Klosterschule, all complete with brief up-to-date bibliographical references. Most entries use historical terms as headings, but there are exceptions such as “Konsensualisierung”, “Kommunikation” and even “Konsunngesellschaft” (a term originating, as the article explains, in the 1980s), based on more recent, twentieth-century notions developed by cultural historians and sociologists. – This is a basic work of reference. Librarians should subscribe to the set and encourage their clientele to brush up their German.

Verlag J.B. Metzler, Stuttgart (2007) XX/1–1199 (BL)

With articles on Jerusalem, language (philosophy of), letter-writing, lexicography, library (with a section on monastic libraries, and much on university libraries), literary criticism, London (British Museum), Marxism (with a section on Aristotle’s influence), Mass (yes, the Catholic Mass), mimesis, museum, myth, mythology, National Socialism, Near Eastern archaeology, New York (Metropolitan Museum), and numismatics – and of course many others – this is another fascinating instalment of an encyclopedia that provides access to the reception history of classical culture in the Western world, and beyond (see the entry “Japan”, for instance). The book invites browsing, and makes one wish for the rest of the volumes, including a detailed index that would direct those who wish to study the influence of Aristotle to the entry “Marxism”. – See also IRBS 53:1353 and 2088. – For all reference collections.

Brill, Leiden (2008) LIV/1–1290 (BL)

2079 Urs Thurnherr et al. (eds.), Lexikon Existenzialismus und Existenzphilosophie

Existentialism is an umbrella term for related, or semi-related twentieth-century philosophical thinking to which mainly German and French authors contributed. The present book opens with an essay on the history of the terms “existentialism” and “philosophy of existence”, followed by a dictionary of existentialist terms, each of which is written by a major interpreter. Thus Annemarie Pieper contributed the entries: das Absurde, Existenz, Mythos, and Revolte, M. Großheim the article Engagement, and Kristin Kaufmann writes on Gott, Transzendenz, and Zweifel, to name just a few articles and authors. Appended are bibliographies that list major works of the following authors: Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Jaspers, Heidegger, Marcel, Sartre, Camus, i.e. those who belong to the canon of existentialist thought. Other authors frequently referred to include Paul Tillich and E. Lévinas. Since there is no real unity of perspective in existentialist thought, the form of alphabetically arranged articles may be the best form to present its many aspects.

Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt (2007) 1–348 (BL)

2080 Loek Halman et al., Changing Values and Beliefs in 85 Countries: Trends from the Values Surveys from 1981 to 2004

While I think that the time span considered is a little short (I would have preferred 50 years), this is a most significant survey of opinion polls from all parts of the globe, including India, Iraq, China, and Japan along with the US, Germany, and Mexico. Some of the opinion polls surveyed are about religion: confidence in churches (p. 173), membership in denominations (p. 209), belief in God (p. 219, 227), belief in heaven (p. 223), comfort and strength from religion (p. 229). Many figures are to be taken with a grain of salt, but the material is valuable and significant. Thus one suspects that belief in God among Mexicans, against the figure given, is not actually increasing; but massive decline of belief in God is characteristic of Belgium, Great Britain, and the Netherlands. Religious awareness seem to grow in Russia and Bulgaria. – One can only hope that this project will continue.

European Value Studies 11; Brill, Leiden (2008) IX/1–267 (BL)

2081 Tom Flynn (ed.), The New Encyclopedia of Unbelief

This encyclopedia lists personal names and subjects relevant to the subject of unbelief – which means, generally, disbelief in traditional Christian doctrine. Of relevance to biblical studies are the following articles: biblical criticism (R.M. Price, with a survey of major recent book on Jesus); biblical errancy; Bible and violence; Christianity, resistance to in the ancient world (R.J. Hoffmann); devil, unbelief in the (W. Stephens); heresy; Jesus, historicity of (G.A. Wells); Judaism, unbelief within; miracle, unbelief in; revelation, unbelief in (R.M. Price). Each article includes a topical bibliography. – This is a most