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Long and Sawyers' "The Bible in music: A Dictionary of songs, works, and more" (book review)

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Book Reviews



Long, S. D., and Sawyer, J.F.A. (2015). *The Bible in music: A Dictionary of songs, works, and more*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. \$111.00. ISBN 9780810884519

Long's and Sawyer's *The Bible in Music: A Dictionary of Songs, Works, and More* alphabetically lists and describes musical works that have a connection with the Bible. Many of the songs are from popular music. On average, about a paragraph describes each song. This reference book, in addition to the dictionary, has, in sequence, acronyms and abbreviations, chronology, acknowledgments, introduction, glossary of technical terms, an admirable bibliography, two Bible-related indices, and information about the authors. Long, an Irish musicologist and musician, wrote *The Sacrifice of Isaac: The Reception of a Biblical Story in Music* (2013). Sawyer, a Scottish biblical scholar, edited *Blackwell Handbook of the Bible and Culture* (2006).

To the reviewer's knowledge, the book of closest similarity is Donald A. Spencer's *Hymn and Scripture Selection Guide* (Baker, 1993). Spencer's book has two parts: Hymns with Scripture references, and Scripture with hymn references. Spencer succeeds best with Part One, taking phrases and seeing which phrases have a Scripture base. There is also similarity to hymnal companions from Donald Hustad's *Dictionary-Handbook to Hymns for the Living Church* (Hope Publishing Co., 1978) and to William J. and Ardythe Peterson's *Complete Book of Hymns: Inspiring Stories about 600 Hymns and Praise Songs* (Tyndale House Publishers, 2006). The similarity with the hymnal companion is in the length and style of entries in the dictionary, not in the genre covered. This work succeeds somewhat from the fact that it is published and marketed by Rowman & Littlefield, a secular publisher, rather than by a Christian publisher. Long and Sawyer focus more on popular music, whatever genre. *The Bible in Music* contributes not so much to hymnology as to the study of song in general, with its focus on popular song.

Reviewer

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