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Aids to Bible Study

Bible Dictionaries

By FREDERICK W. DANKER

[EDITORIAL NOTE: This article constitutes Chapter IX of a contemplated book with the title *Aids to Bible Study* by Professor Danker. In previous issues we have offered our readers several other projected chapters. Designed particularly as a textbook for classroom use, it should be of interest and help to every Bible student, as the favorable response by our readers to the published articles indicates. Publication date is set for early fall of this year.]

In his *De doctrina Christiana* St. Augustine wrote:

Certain scholars have rendered great service by providing the student of the Sacred Scriptures with interpretations of all Hebrew, Syrian, Egyptian, and other foreign expressions and names that are introduced without further explanation by the sacred writers. Eusebius through his historical investigations developing out of a concern for the divine books has also left us an indispensable tool. These men have done their work so that Christians need not search through many authors for information on some small point. But there is further need of someone with the proper qualifications to produce, in the interests of his fellow Christians, what would properly be called a labor of love. What I have in mind is a work which would carefully classify and accord individual treatment to the geographical locations, the flora and fauna, and the stones and unknown metals of Scripture (Bk. II, 39).

Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, had indeed written a book on geographical names in both the Old and New Testaments *Περὶ τῶν Τοπικῶν Ὀνομάτων τῶν ἐν τῇ Θείᾳ Γραφῇ*, amplified by Jerome under the title *Liber de situ et nominibus locorum Hebraicorum* (Migne *PL*, 23, cols. 903—976), but the world waited more than 1,000 years for the fulfillment of Augustine's dream. Johann Heinrich Alsted (1588—1638) merits the title of pioneer in this area of Biblical interpreters' aids.¹ After writing on almost every conceivable subject, including *Tabacologia: doctrina de natura, usu et abusu tabaci*, he must have been in fine fettle for his *Triumphus Bibliorum Sacrorum seu Encyclopaedia Biblica* (Frankfort, 1625).

In the succeeding century Augustin Calmet published the first dictionary of consequence, *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*,

¹ On the history of Bible dictionaries see McClintock and Strong's *Cyclopedia*, II, 787ff.; *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, IV, 577ff.; and *Fuller Library Bulletin*, Nos. 20—23 (Oct. 1953—Sept. 1954).

Chronologique, Géographique et Littéral de la Bible (2 vols., Paris, 1722; Supplement, 1728; 4 vols., 1730). The work was translated by D'Oyley and Colson and published in England, 1732, under the title *An Historical, Critical, Geographical, Chronological, and Etymological Dictionary of the Holy Bible*. Numerous additions were made by Charles Taylor (London, 1795), and in 1832—35 Edward Robinson published a condensed and revised seventh edition. The influence of Calmet's work is evident in most of the Bible dictionaries of the last century. The work is not completely antiquated even today, for included at the end of this opus is a long classified bibliography of interpretive aids, the like of which would be difficult to find.

G. B. Winer's *Biblisches Realwörterbuch* (2 vols., Leipzig, 1820, 1833, 1847) broke new ground and remained the standard work for two generations in Germany. In England John Kitto's *A Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature* (Edinburgh, 1843—45; 2d ed., 2 vols. by Burgess, 1856; 3d ed. rewritten by Wm. Lindsay Alexander, Philadelphia, 1865), set fresh patterns with emphases on the religion, literature, and archaeology of the New Testament. Biographical sketches of prominent Bible students and discussion of rabbinical lore such as the Talmud were for the first time considered substantial ingredients of a Bible dictionary. Both Winer and Kitto served as the basis for a number of articles in *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (New York, 1894), edited by J. McClintock and J. Strong.

William Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible* (3 vols., London, 1860—64) soon replaced Kitto in popularity. Based on the language of the Authorized Version, this dictionary was the first to contain a complete list of proper names in the Old and the New Testament and the Apocrypha. Its material on topography is superior to that on natural science. The dictionary was designed to be noncontroversial, and some of its subjects are represented by several articles, each treating the matter from a different point of view. A revised American edition by H. B. Hackett, assisted by Ezra Abbot, was published in New York, 1870 (4 vols.), under the title *Dr. William Smith's Dictionary of the Bible; Comprising Its Antiquities, Biography, Geography, and Natural History*. The work has fathered a number of one-volume editions. William

Smith was eminently qualified for this type of work, and his discussions in the 9th edition of *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, of which he was coeditor, reflect an immense erudition. His article on "Bible," however, cost him his chair in divinity.

Deserving of more than passing mention is T. K. Cheyne and J. S. Black's *Encyclopedia Biblica* (4 vols., New York and London, 1899—1903). The great number of leading Biblical scholars contributing to this work and the generally high degree of accuracy and completeness pervading it place EB high on the priority list, despite its unnecessary skepticism and undue emphasis on conjectural criticism.

A less technical production designed also for laymen was undertaken by James Hastings, with the assistance of John A. Selbie, A. B. Davidson, S. R. Driver, and H. B. Swete. The title, *A Dictionary of the Bible Dealing with Its Language, Literature, and Contents, Including the Biblical Theology* (4 vols., New York, 1901—04; extra vol., 1923), abbreviated HDB, indicates the broad scope of this work. Jewish scholars like W. Bacher made signal contributions to these volumes. A one-volume edition appeared in New York, 1909.

An attempt "to give an account of everything that relates to Christ—His Person, Life, Work, and Teaching"—is set forth as the aim of *A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, HDCG, also edited by James Hastings, with the assistance of John A. Selbie and John C. Lambert (New York and Edinburgh, 1917). A parallel volume *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church* (2 vols., New York and Edinburgh, 1916), HDAC, edited by the same scholars, endeavors to do for the rest of the New Testament what the former did for the Gospels, but does not measure up to the same degree of excellence.

A moderate type of French Biblical scholarship is represented in F. Vigouroux's *Dictionnaire de La Bible* (5 vols., and suppl.; Paris, 1895 et seq.). This dictionary is compiled with great care and will reward the student with rich dividends.

Less detailed than such dictionaries as Hastings and Cheyne is *A Standard Bible Dictionary* (SBD), edited by Melancthon W. Jacobus, Andrew C. Zenos, and Edward E. Nourse (New York and London, 1909; 2d ed., New York, 1926), which is marked by a

generally honest and reverent approach. A third revised edition was published in New York in 1936 under the title, *A New Standard Bible Dictionary*. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, under the general editorship of James Orr (5 vols., Chicago, 1915), is drawn up along similar lines and attempts to reflect a "reasonable conservatism."

ONE-VOLUME DICTIONARIES

A word should perhaps be said about one-volume Bible dictionaries. J. D. Davis' *A Dictionary of the Bible* has long been a reliable handbook since its first edition in 1898. The book was revised and largely rewritten under the direction of Henry Gehman and published in Philadelphia, in 1944, under the title *The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible*. The editor claims to have made every effort to maintain within limits the Davis "tradition of sound and conservative scholarship." Of comparable value, and even more up to date, is *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, by Madeline S. Miller and J. Lane Miller (New York, c.1952), which gives expression to the dominant critical trends of its time. From the archaeological and historical point of view it is one of the finest handbooks of its type. At the opposite end of the critical spectrum is *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, by Merrill F. Unger (Chicago, 1957), which specializes in matters archaeological, historical-geographical, biographical, and doctrinal. *Bibel-Lexikon*, edited by Herbert Haag, with the assistance of A. van d. Born and others (Einsiedeln and Zurich, 1951—56), includes most of the material found in its English companions, plus a great deal of topical matter. For example, three columns with bibliography are devoted to the question whether Judas shared in the Last Supper, and five columns are spent on the synoptic problem.

ENCYCLOPEDIA WORKS

In addition to the works already mentioned, reference should be made to publications which reflect special historical or ecclesiastical interests. The first of these in point of time is *Realenzyklopädie für Protestantische Theologie und Kirche* (PRE), begun by J. J. Herzog and edited in a third edition by A. Hauck (24 vols., Leipzig, 1896—1913). A condensation and modification of this edition was published under the title *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of*

Religious Knowledge (12 vols., New York, 1908—12; 13 vols. and suppl., reprint, Grand Rapids, 1949—50). The name "Schaff" reflects the fact that the English edition is in fact a reworking of a translation undertaken by Philip Schaff. *Evangelisches Kirchenlexikon: Kirchlich-theologisches Handwörterbuch* (Göttingen, 1956—59) follows a similar pattern but on a less comprehensive scale; biographical material especially is curtailed.

Only the highest praise can be accorded Roman Catholic productions in this same area. *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (CE, 16 vols. and suppl.; New York, 1907 et seq.) has rendered long and valuable service but is eclipsed by two foreign publications. The older of these, *Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique*, was published in 15 volumes in Paris, between the years 1909 and 1950. Its Italian counterpart *Enciclopedia Cattolica* (EC) is briefer—only 12 volumes—but was produced over a shorter period of time (1948—54) and is therefore more up to date in almost every entry. The bibliographies accompanying even the briefest articles help make the work an indispensable tool. The indexes in Vol. 12, cols. 2043—2058 indicate the amount of Biblical material available in this encyclopedia. More modest in scope is *Lexicon für Theologie und Kirche* (2d ed., rev. Josef Höfer and Karl Rahner; Freiburg, 1957—). M. Buchberger edited the previous 10-volume edition of the latter work (1930—38).

Not to be overlooked are two superior Jewish encyclopedias. The first of these is the elaborate and scholarly *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (JE, 12 vols.; New York and London, 1907), edited by Isidore Singer. *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* (UJE), edited by Isaac Landman (10 vols. and index; New York, c. 1939—) is not inferior in its scholarship, but is drawn up in a more popular vein in the interests of Jewish public relations and devotes a major part of the work to modern Jewish life and biography.

As a rule of thumb one may say that a great percentage of what one can expect to find in the general Bible dictionary is not covered in these encyclopedias. Thus, for example, HDB has an article on "Stomach," but CE has only a reference to the invention of the stomach pump in its article on "Medicine." This circumstance is indicative of the characteristic differences between Bible dictionaries and religious encyclopedias. The former concentrate on Biblical

terms and expressions, the latter on those phenomena characteristic of each of the sponsoring groups. Thus Schaff-Herzog spotlights scholars and other historically significant personages who have made distinct contributions inside Protestantism. The Roman Catholic and Jewish encyclopedias do the same for their distinguished men and women. On the other hand, a certain ecumenicity prevails, and instructive varying viewpoints may sometimes be obtained by checking in all three groups.

A work that combines the principal features of these encyclopedias with the detail one can expect to find in a Bible dictionary is the *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (New York, 1895), edited by J. McClintock and J. Strong. This marvelous work not only lacks the parochialism of the previous encyclopedias, but covers, in addition to classical mythology, such a remote area as Japanese mythology. Classical antiquities are generously treated. Where else, except in some learned German tome, could one expect to find an article, not to speak of a drawing, on the "Sistrum"? Even in matters where CE would, it might be assumed, have a monopoly McClintock and Strong should not be overlooked. "Stabat Mater," to take but one example, is treated by the latter in much greater detail.

Four other works of an encyclopedic nature should be mentioned. *Reallexicon für Antike und Christentum: Sachwörterbuch zur Auseinandersetzung des Christentums mit der Antiken Welt* (RAC), edited by Theodor Klauser (Stuttgart, 1950—), aims to demonstrate the continuity and relation between pre-Christian and the early Christian periods. Thus the article "Diakon" discusses the history of the term deacon and devotes three columns to the interpretation of Acts 6:1ff. The person of Abraham is first treated from the standpoint of the Old Testament, then of later Judaism, paganism, the New Testament, patristic literature, Christian liturgy, Christian exorcism, and finally from the standpoint of Christian art. The relevant literature is then cited. Fourteen columns are devoted to "Adoption," by L. Wenger and A. Oepke, including a discussion of *υιοθεσία*. Oriental, Greek-Roman, and Christian practices are first discussed, and then the metaphorical usage is traced. A greater emphasis on Christian cult is to be noted in *Dictionnaire D' Archéologie Chrétienne et De Liturgie*, edited by Fernand Cabrol

and Henri Leclercq (15 volumes; Paris, 1924—53). Here the article on Abraham concerns itself with the appearance of Abraham in the intertestamental literature and in liturgy. An article on concordances appears, but the discussion centers in an early fragment consisting of passages taken from the Psalms, which seems to reflect a rudimentary concordance effort. A bibliography directs the reader to later concordance developments.

A strong comparative theological interest is evident in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft* (RGG, 5 vols. and index, 2d ed., rev.; Tübingen, 1927—32). A third edition is in process under the direction of Kurt Galling. *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (ERE), edited again by that master cataloguer James Hastings, assisted by John A. Selbie and others (13 volumes, New York, 1928), concerns itself with almost every conceivable topic germane to the religions of the world, and should be consulted on theologically significant Biblical terminology. "Baptism," for example, is treated in its Hindu, Jewish, Moslem, and Polynesian contexts, to mention but a few.

WORDBOOKS

Related to the more encyclopedic Biblical works are the more specialized treatments of select word areas, designed for the reader who is not familiar with the original Biblical languages. Alan Richardson's *A Theological Wordbook of the Bible* (New York, c. 1950) falls into this category, along with Jean Jacques Allmen's *Vocabulaire Biblique*. The first edition of this work appeared in Paris, 1954. A translation of the second French edition was made by P. J. Allcock and others, under the title *A Companion to the Bible* (New York, 1958). A kind of miniature Kittel,² featuring theologically significant terms found in Luther's translation and modern German versions, was published in Göttingen, 1954, under the title *Biblisch-Theologisches Handwörterbuch zur Lutherbibel und zu neueren Übersetzungen*. A second revised edition appeared in 1959. Judicious use of the index prefacing this valuable work will aid greatly in opening its treasures.

² I discuss *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Stuttgart, 1933 et seq.) in Ch. VII of my *Aids to Bible Study*.

PAULY-WISSOWA

A richly loded mine often overlooked is *Paulys Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (ed. G. Wissowa, Stuttgart, 1893—). Vol. II A, 2 (2d series) includes, for example, a two-page discussion on "L. Sergius Paullus" (cols. 1715—18) and discusses the question whether Paul took this minor official's name. Vol. XX, 2 carries the curious information that the Ethiopian Church enrolled Pontius Pilate among the saints (June 25) and that Coptic tradition asserts he died for the Savior. In Vol. XXIII, 1 Arthur Weiser has a long and detailed discussion on the Psalms (cols. 1161—1220).

THE USE OF BIBLE DICTIONARIES

The extraordinary range of material in all these tomes, both large and small, is utterly astonishing. The quality likewise is often exceptional, since the writers of such articles are usually chosen because of their competence in the particular area assigned to them. Limits of space, furthermore, discourage that prolixity which sometimes is a bane to intellectual digestion.

The use one may make of these volumes will vary from time to time. Perhaps one of their chief values, in addition to the capsuling of information, is the select bibliographies the larger works offer on most subjects. These must, of course, be brought up to date, but not all the standard works of yesteryear are antiquated, and the supplementary volumes will help keep one abreast. Time is of the essence, and it is wise, if the work contains one, to go directly to the index volume. If the dictionary includes an index of Greek terms, additional resources are opened. Thus one can readily find Benjamin Warfield's article on "Little Ones" in HDCG (Vol. 2), which casts fresh light on such passages as Matt. 18:6; Mark 9:42; and Luke 17:2. Most commentaries carry only a few lines of explanation. Warfield expends almost six columns on the expression in an effort to demonstrate that the phrase has reference to the humble disciples of Jesus.

It is wise to keep in mind the varying accents of the different dictionaries and encyclopedias. Thus, if the subject is "Baptism," it might be well to get the general picture out of one of Hastings' works, but for specific Jewish considerations JE should be consulted.

For an exalting religious experience as well as an unanticipated exegetical reward James Cooper's article on "Nunc Dimittis" in HDCG (Vol. II) should be read, but for its liturgical fortunes CE is the work to check.

A certain amount of ingenuity must be held in reserve to tap these catalogued treasures. For example, in looking for material on concordances I had no difficulty in finding an excellent treatment under "Concordances" in McClintock and Strong, but I had to go to "Greek Language" to check on older editions of New Testament grammars and lexicons. Sometimes the encyclopedia is itself inconsistent. Schaff-Herzog, for example, carries an article on New Testament lexicons but none on New Testament grammars. This lack of consideration can be most frustrating.

Caution must be observed at all times in adopting views and conclusions that may have been antiquated by more recent findings, but the Bible dictionary and related works judiciously used can greatly enrich one's knowledge and extend one's spiritual horizons.

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