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## Brief Studies

Frederick W. Danker  
*Concordia Seminary, St. Louis*

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## BRIEF STUDIES

## THE 1959 PRINTING OF THE RSV

**THE HOLY BIBLE: REVISED STANDARD VERSION: REFERENCE EDITION WITH CONCISE CONCORDANCE.** New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1959. xiii, 1296, and 191 pages. 12 colored maps. Leather. \$9.95.

This printing, the latest of the Revised Standard Version, renders all previous editions obsolete if one keeps in mind the interests of the general reader. A few changes in the wording of the text indicate that the revisers have acceded in some instances to the suggestions which they requested. Job 19:26 now reads "from my flesh I shall see God," and 1 Tim. 3:2, 12, and Titus 1:6 read "the husband of one wife." (1 Tim. 5:9 in this new edition reads "the wife of one husband," not "the husband of one wife," as the preface states, p. vii). Mark 15:39 now reads, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" (So also Matt. 27:54.) The more precise rendering of ταύτην in John 7:8 makes the context intelligible. John 16:23 in previous editions read, "In that day you will ask Me no questions." The new edition reads, "In that day you will ask nothing of Me." The alteration is not in the direction of greater clarity. The point made by Jesus in the preceding verses is that the disciples will be perplexed at God's mysterious *modus operandi*. They will have sorrow, but Jesus will see them again. Then they will no longer be in perplexity, that is, they will not have to "ask Him any questions." (Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, Göttingen, 1950, p. 449.) In John 19:14 the reader will note a significant change in preposition. The rendering of διὰ τῆς πίστεως (Rom. 3:30) has been brought back into harmony with Pauline theology. In Eph. 5:27 the committee has changed the earlier passive render-

ing and now correctly makes Christ the agent of the church's renovation.

Stylistic alterations include the change from "be He" to "is He" (Matt. 21:9). On the other hand, the phrase "ears of grain" continues to grind (Mark 2:23). Transliteration of Hebrew names remains inconsistent. "Loruhamah" of the AV (Hos. 1:6) had been thoughtfully rendered "Not-pitied," but the revisers continue to trundle out "Mahershalalhashbaz" in Is. 8:3, instead of taking Moffatt's cue, "Spoil-soon-prey-quick" (hyphens ours). And what are we to make of "the Tartan, the Rabsaris, and the Rabshakeh" in 2 Kings 18:17? Millar Burrows (*What Mean These Stones?* [London, 1957], p. 43 f.) points out that these are respectively Assyrian military titles for a field marshal, a chief officer, and a chief eunuch. In Is. 20:1 the RSV inconsistently but correctly renders מֶלֶךְ with "commander in chief." A few corrections in punctuation are claimed in the preface, but our examination failed to note any in James 2:18. The quotation marks still make nonsense of the passage.

The revisers claim in the preface to have noted all departures from the MT consonantal text. However, the alteration לְעַמּוֹ for לְמִוּ in Ps. 28:8 remains unnoted. (See also RSV's unnoted adjustment of Ps. 108:2 [MT] in the light of Ps. 57:8 [MT].) References to the "Greek" version in the Old Testament not infrequently remain misleading. The reader might infer that in each case the Septuagint as read in the major MSS. is meant, but in 2 Sam. 24:6, to cite but one example, the "Hittites" are found only in Lucian's recension. In the New Testament frequent reference is made to departures from the Textus Receptus, but no mention is made of the omission of the words "to repentance" in Mark 2:17. Again, one might infer from the indiscriminate and

wholly uncritical use of the phrase "other ancient authorities" throughout the New Testament section that the shorter appendix to Mark had almost as substantial attestation as the longer appendix. We also note that the margin gives no hint of the reversionification of 1 John 5. A future edition should take note of these and similar editorial lapses and not content itself with only "a few changes . . . authorized for . . . subsequent editions," p. vii.

The most welcome feature of this new edition is the incorporation of a center reference column, which includes and augments the references found in the margin of the previous editions. The reference system, in many respects, is quite useful. We note, however, that at Mark 1:2 no reference is made to Ex. 23:20, which is the primary source for the first part of the verse. In a related type of quotation (Matt. 21:5) the correct references are given. The references to 1 Peter 1:1 include a number of passages illustrating the word "dispersion," but the all-important reference to Ex. 24:3-8 is regrettably lacking at the side of 1 Peter 1:2. In brief, the claim of the foreword to a "full body of cross references" requires modification. Why Matt. 24:22 and Luke 18:7, furthermore, were used to illustrate 1 Peter 1:1 is not clear. The references would have meaning for one familiar with the Greek text, but hardly speak to the uninitiated layman for whom the version presumably is primarily designed.

A further feature of this new edition is a "concise concordance," which suffers from the symptoms commonly associated with this genre of aids, namely, arbitrary choice of

words and unsystematic selection of passages. The snatches of phrasing are lamentably incomplete (perhaps the product of Univac's unsympathetic efficiency): "the tomb with f. [fear] and great joy," Matt. 28:8; or, "as is f. [fit], because your faith is," 2 Thess. 1:3. Again, the claim of the foreword that this is an "indispensable" aid to Bible study is grossly exaggerated.

The casual reader of this edition as well as of its immediate predecessors might infer that the claim to an "authorized" version implies ecumenical sanction. But the editors are careful to note that the "publication of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments, was authorized by vote of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. in 1951" (p. iv).

The type is much easier to read than the type in the familiar edition of 1952, but the thin paper will discourage the sustained Bible study for which the volume is designed. The reader untutored in classical antiquities should be informed that the name of the poet allegedly cited by Paul is not "Apatus," but Aratus. (Acts 17:28, center column)

These criticisms are advanced, not to depreciate the values of a version which has proved so great a blessing to so many and whose merits are beyond adequate assessment but that this notable revision might in future editions experience an even larger measure of devotion than it has yet known. That the revisers are conscious of the need of further *labor limae* is apparent from their statements in the preface. FREDERICK W. DANKER