

# Concordia Theological Monthly



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## BRIEF STUDIES

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### MORE TOOLS FOR BIBLE STUDY

One indication of the recent renewal of interest in Biblical studies is the prompt necessity for reprinting—hardly a month after its publication—the first large-scale English-language lexicon of New Testament Greek to come out in two generations. Another indication is the reissue in brochure form late last year of eleven articles from the first three volumes of *Interpretation* under the title *Tools for Bible Study*.<sup>\*</sup> These articles discuss the bibliographies of all the major tools of Biblical interpretation, such as lexicons, concordances, grammars, and Bible dictionaries. Even more important, they provide directions, with illustrations, for the proper use of these tools. These articles ought to be read early by every clergyman and by every seminary student. So stimulating are the discussions that a soul must be jaded indeed not to grow excited about old friends or new and unknown books.

It may be of value to add one or two items that were either omitted from these bibliographies or appeared after them. These additions make no pretense of completeness; they are rather one reader's random marginal jottings that may be of service to others. To the article on concordances can now be added the *Konkordanz zum hebräischen Alten Testament*, being compiled by Gerhard Lisowsky (Stuttgart, 1956 ff.). Six of the twelve fascicles have been published and can be had at an extremely reasonable price. Its counterpart for the New Testament, Alfred Schmoller's *Handkorkordanz zum griechischen Neuen Testament* (8th ed., Stuttgart, 1949), deserves mention, as does also the older concordance of Bruder. To the listing of New Testament lexicons we can now add the long awaited English Bauer referred to in our opening sentence, done by William F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, 1956). This volume supersedes every other English New Testament lexicon and deserves an honored place in every pastor's library. The *Lexicon Graecum Novi Testamenti* of Jesuit Father F. Zorell is also useful (Paris, 1931). Two other lexica of aid to the interpretation of the New Testament merit mention: F. Preisigke, *Wörterbuch der griechischen Papyrusurkunden* (Heidel-

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<sup>\*</sup> *Tools for Bible Study*, eds. Balmer H. Kelly and Donald G. Miller (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1956), 159 pages. Paper. \$2.00.

berg, 1924—1931; supplement in progress) and the lexicon of Patristic Greek announced for this year under the editorship of Lampe. Along with Kittel's monumental dictionary one interested in the theological meaning in Bible terms would find *A Theological Word Book of the Bible*, edited by Alan Richardson (New York, 1952), and the *Biblisch-theologisches Handwörterbuch zur Lutherbibel und zu neueren Übersetzungen*, edited by Edo Osterloh and Hans Engelland (Göttingen 1954), both stimulating and reverent in approach.

One-volume dictionaries are so numerous that it is futile to try to list them. Under the head of New Testament grammars a few titles should be mentioned. Blass-Debrunner's *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch* (9th ed., Göttingen, 1954) is made more usable with the incorporation, beginning with the ninth edition, of the *Anhang* into the body of the text. The second volume of Debrunner's *Geschichte der griechischen Sprache* in the *Sammlung Götschen* has much of value to the student of the New Testament. C. F. D. Moule's *Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge, 1953) is a delightful treatment of selected material. Max Zerwick's *Graecitas Biblica* (3d ed., Rome, 1955) has much good material.

The student of Biblical archaeology will probably be looking for the new book to be published soon under the pen of G. Ernest Wright. It was surprising to find no mention of Jouion's *Grammaire du Hebreu biblique* (2d ed., Rome, 1947) in the section on Hebrew grammars. The *Hebräische Syntax* of C. Brockelmann (Kreis Moers, 1956) is another addition to Old Testament tools. Under Old Testament lexicography the names of Köhler-Baumgartner and Zorell deserve mention, though some are disappointed with the former.

Under Bible atlases and geographies the new edition of the *Westminster Historical Atlas* (Philadelphia, 1956) and Grollenberg's *Atlas van de Bijbel* (Amsterdam, 1955), recently Englished by H. H. Rowley, are of first-rank importance. To the article on Rabbinic materials someone should write a postscript on the Dead Sea Scrolls material.

It would be wonderful if a similar anthology from *Interpretation's* "Studia Biblica" series would be the second in the magazine's reprint series.

EDGAR M. KRENTZ

#### FOUR ONE-VOLUME BIBLE COMMENTARIES \*

\* *The New Bible Commentary*, eds. F. Davidson, A. M. Stibbs, and E. F. Kevan (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1954), 1,199 pages. Cloth. \$7.95.

*A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1953), xvi + 1,312 pages. Cloth. \$15.00.

*The Twentieth-Century Bible Commentary*, eds. Davies, Richardson, and Wallis (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955), xvi + 571 pages. Cloth. \$6.95.

*Concise Bible Commentary*, by W. K. Lowther Clarke (New York: The Macmillan Company, no date), 995 pages. Cloth. \$7.00.

These four volumes probably represent the most significant of all recent attempts to summarize the results of nearly a century of historico-critical Biblical investigation for the non-specialist reader within the compass of a single pair of covers. All are about equally up to date, that is, all reflect most of the "assured" results of Biblical scholarship, but they are almost unanimously silent about approaches which have come very much to the fore in the last decade or two, but on which the dust has hardly settled sufficiently to obtain a consensus (for example, *Traditionsgeschichte* and cultic influences). Each of the four, however, sifts the material with a different sieve, so that the aggregate represents the thought of a large proportion of contemporary Christendom. Like all one-volume commentaries, these, too, might often better be classified as Bible dictionaries, but this does not detract from the value of their introductory articles and the synopses of the contents of the Biblical books.

The *New Bible Commentary* probably approximates most closely the points of view of the majority of the readers of this journal. It attempts to answer in the affirmative the question posed in the first introductory article: "Can there not be a true and reverent criticism?" The publisher's assertion that it is an "up-to-date treatment of the text characterized by an unqualified belief in its divine inspiration, essential historical trustworthiness, and positive Christian usefulness" is substantially correct. Unlike its three companions, it can be recommended without presuming a great amount of critical background on the part of the reader.

Although conservative, the work is by no means obscurantist. While a traditional isagogics has been maintained, the contributors generally admit that legitimate questions may be raised about traditional points of view. For example, on the question of Deutero-Isaiah the commentary states that "nothing is to be gained by ignoring the case put forward by those who disagree with us" (p. 558). Similarly, source theories in Bruce's article on the "Fourfold Gospel" receive sympathetic treatment. Only rarely do the authors succumb to the temptation (all too apparent in much conservative literature) to oversimplify and lump all critics together as "destructive," "arbitrary," "speculative," "liberal," etc. On the other hand, the authors appear at

times less dogmatic than their more "liberal" brothers in the presentation of views on such questions as authenticity and integrity.

One advantage of this volume over the others is its section-by-section (instead of verse-by-verse) commentary, followed by a more detailed presentation of individual problems. This results in better continuity and in the ability to stress major concepts, although inevitably some topics one looks for in introductory articles appear here instead. A Reformed exegetical approach is evident throughout, but the authors attempt to take cognizance of Lutheran and Anglican variations.

Also conservative and traditional in its own way is the *Catholic Commentary*. Its editors have performed a task most creditable to Roman Catholic scholarship. Not only are the introductory articles models of compressed information (a very small type is used throughout the work), but the comments on the texts of the canonical writings, including the apocrypha (a lamentable omission in the previous work), are extensive in a fashion not generally found in a book of such space limitations.

This commentary reflects the curious and paradoxical synthesis of extreme reverence for tradition with the unfettered, pioneering research which one meets so frequently in contemporary Roman Catholic scholarship. On the one hand, it is only to be regretted that the decrees of the Papal Biblical Commission and the doctrinal tenets of the Roman Church have invalidated so much that might have been so good. While the contributors are consistently at pains to stress how few in number are the passages where unanimous patristic usage or papal decrees require an official exegesis, relatively rarely do they do more than assert their *right* to express nontraditional exegetical and isagogical views (the first eleven chapters of Genesis are a notable exception!). On the other hand, the *Lebensraum* granted Roman Catholic exegesis by the encyclical *Divino afflante Spiritu* in 1943 is already quite apparent (although not nearly so much so as in certain other recent Roman works), and the solid, substantial scholarliness of almost all the articles simply cannot be gainsaid.

While perhaps the volume's greatest contribution is to the history of Roman Catholic exegesis, and while, like the others, it cannot, of course, be recommended as an altogether reliable guide to extracting the meaning of Sacred Scripture, yet, *mutatis mutandis* (plus or minus certain presuppositions in the area of the church's authority or tradition, or both), most of the articles and commentaries could be read with great positive profit by Lutheran pastors.

Extremely stimulating articles were those on "The Literary Charac-

teristics of the Bible," and "The Interpretation of Holy Scripture," to mention only two. As examples of disappointment may be mentioned the desperate effort to introduce the blessed Virgin into the discussion of the Protevangel (p. 188), and the dogmatic implication (p. 942) that Luke 1:47 speaks of a "preventive grace" of God. More candor is displayed (p. 984) on our Lord's reply to His mother at Cana; the writer correctly states that Jesus' answer is "an assertion of independence of his Mother, similar to the word he spoke in the temple about his Father's business."

Most "liberal" and least usable on several counts is the *Twentieth-Century Bible Commentary*. A vapid introductory article on "inspiration" somewhat sets the theological pace of the entire work. On the whole, however, the introductory articles are more valuable than the extremely brief notes on the text, although both assume more background in Biblical studies than appears warranted in view of the popular approach.

The work avowedly is designed to meet the spiritual, devotional, and intellectual needs of a wide variety of readers. It is to be expected that a broad range of subjects treated by a number of topnotch specialists should display considerable variation, as is indeed the case. The closest approach to classical Wellhausenism and its evolutionistic points of view appears in T. H. Robinson's essay on "The Religion of Israel," which is in considerable contrast to certain aspects expressed in G. E. Wright's excellent discussion of "Biblical Archaeology." Thus the volume is indicative of the wide diversity of opinion apparent in most modern scholarship. While the approach to Chronicles, for example, is markedly cautious and conservative, too much of the work is not modern enough to qualify truly as a "twentieth-century" commentary, at least to judge by the clear swing of the pendulum in a conservative direction at the present time. Perhaps it better reflects opinions current in the second quarter of the twentieth century than those in prospect for the third quarter.

In general, the New Testament material is treated in more cautious fashion than the Old Testament, although even in the latter the sensitivity to religious values is in most instances sustained. Many admirable points could be mentioned, such as the line drawings on Palestinian life and implements, an intriguing discussion, the language of the Old Testament, a description of the Jewish elementary school in the first century of our era, as well as innumerable valuable insights into the message of both Testaments, but one wonders whether (except as a popular summary of those phases) the price of reading the whole

for the benefit of the gleanings may not be too high for the average reader. Certainly the commentary is not to be recommended for the beginner in Bible studies.

The *Concise Bible Commentary* avoids many of the defects of the previous work. By its consistent procedure it shows the value of the one-man approach to a work of this sort. While its critical positions are usually not the traditional ones, the most conservative reader will recognize a most praiseworthy attempt to avoid dogmatism, to present both sides of theological issues, and to exercise great caution in its able treatment of a vast mass of critical material. This is most notable in the chapter on "Interpretation of the Bible" (pp. 308—313); in the ensuing discussion of "Critical Study of the Bible" (pp. 316—324) it is the "liberals" who nearly become the whipping boys. Clarke frequently exhorts his readers to examine the primary sources and make up their own minds—an end which is furthered by the suggested "Courses of Study" at the end of the book (pp. 981—987). The tone is about as reverent and devotional as is possible for a work of this nature.

While faithful to its title, this volume contains not only commentaries on the entire Bible (including the apocrypha and a good survey of other extracanonical literature) but also 333 initial pages packed with a wealth of material on 28 special questions, including excellent essays on "Hebrew Religion," "The Jewish Backgrounds of the N. T.," "The Teaching of Jesus," "Doctrine in the N. T.," "Miracles," etc. The appendix even includes a helpful "Glossary of Bible Words."

Parish pastors will perhaps again find the special articles more useful than the brief exposition of the Biblical text, but at least to those who have the background critically to weigh and assess, this commentary may certainly be recommended.

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