

## REVIEWS

Barker, Kenneth (General Editor): **The NIV Study Bible**. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Bible Publishers 1985. xvii+1950+45+153 pp., 16 maps, no price stated.

This publication is the result of a tremendous amount of work by contributors, editors, and publishers alike. NIV itself was a piece of responsible conservative scholarship based on a reliable text. In the same way, the NIV Study Bible is a thoroughly professional piece of work.

As a book, it is easy and pleasant to handle. Although it has slightly more pages than the New Jerusalem Bible, which does not claim to be a study Bible, it is over 16% lighter and over 27% thinner.

The Introduction to the Study Bible begins with a eulogy of NIV which includes clear doctrinal statements: those responsible for the Study Bible "all confess the authority of the Bible as God's infallible word to humanity"; the Study Bible "reflects traditional evangelical theology". Where there are differences between conservative evangelicals, notably on the millennium (Rev 20.2), these are fairly stated. By contrast, the notes on Mt 16.16-20 do not enter the controversy between Roman Catholics and others concerning the place of Peter and his alleged successors.

The arrangement of notes on the page is perhaps unnecessarily complicated. NIV text notes are indicated by raised, bold-faced letters, and cross references by raised light-italic letters, so that the reader frequently has to cope with things like:

"Praise the LORD<sup>nm</sup>" (Ps 112.1).

In addition, study notes, referred to by chapter and verse numbers, occupy on average just over one-third of the page. There is considerable overlap between cross references and study notes; sometimes they are identical (e.g. Mk 7.7-10; cf. Ex 21.13). References to quotations are distinguished by an asterisk. References to "head links" are prefaced by *S*, for "see"; this device functions like "!" in Nestle-Aland. There are many more cross-references than, for example, in the Special Edition of GNB; in particular, more references from the Old Testament to the New.

In terms of the quantity of information given, the NIV Study Bible will be hard to beat in a single volume. "The concordance", it is claimed, "is the largest ever bound together with an English Bible." Unfortunately, its compilers, or perhaps their computers, have not learned from the mistakes of the full NIV Concordance to distinguish homonyms. Under "lie", for example, we find in uneasy concubinage:

Lev 18.22 "Do not *l* with a man  
19:11 "Do not *l*

The Index to Subjects unnecessarily includes page numbers, but fails to indicate whether references are to text or notes.

Turning to introductions to individual books, the introduction to Genesis contains a fine survey of related ancient near-eastern texts. Statements about

authorship, however, are generally to the right of a moderately conservative evangelical publication such as the Inter-Varsity Press's *Dicationary of the Bible*. "The 40-year period of Israel's wanderings . . . would have been the most likely time for Moses to write the bulk of what is today known as the Pentateuch." The introduction does however allow for "a certain amount of later editorial updating". Similarly, Isaiah "may have written chs. 40-66 during his later years. In his message to the exiles of the sixth century B.C., Isaiah was projected into the future, just as the apostle John was in Rev 4-22". "The strongest argument for the unity of Isaiah is the expression 'the Holy One of Israel,' a title for God that occurs 12 times in chs. 1-39 and 14 times in chs. 40-66. Outside Isaiah it appears in the OT only 6 times" (1014). This selective statement contrasts with the comprehensive computer analysis of the book's language by Y. T. Radday, referred to in *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, 427a. The introduction to Daniel is even more tendentious. By comparison, the introduction to the Psalms is cautious about the Davidic authorship even of psalms headed "[A psalm] of David"; but David is assumed to have written Ps 110, no doubt because Jesus referred to David as its author.

A Study Bible cannot answer everyone's personal questions, but the NIV Study Bible gives little help in solving the notorious moral problems raised by some OT and even NT texts. God's order to destroy the Amalekites (1 Sam 15) means that "Saul is given an opportunity as king to demonstrate his allegiance to the Lord by obedience in this assigned task." The killing of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5) is explained by comparison with God's judgments on Nadab and Abihu, Achan, and Uzzah; but if you are a Christian, this is a case of *obscura per obscuriora*.

Perhaps, in the end, those readers who use this book critically, making full allowance for its distinctive theological slant, will benefit from it even more than those who accept its statements without question.

P.E.

Achtemeier, Paul J., ed.: **Harper's Bible Dictionary**. New York, London: Harper & Row, 1985. xxii, 1178 pp., plus 18 maps.

Members of the Society of Biblical Literature, 179 of them, have worked together to produce an outstanding one-volume Bible dictionary. This will certainly prove to be one of the best available today. It is especially useful in terms of archaeological information.

Some features: names occurring three times or more are included, plus those that have special significance. Articles are found on every book of the Bible, including the Deuterocanon; on important theological terms; general articles on culture, language, history, economics, sociology; on some of the pseudepigrapha and the New Testament apocrypha; on ancient sites not mentioned in the Bible, such as Ebla, Mari, and Ras Shamra; and much more.

Most illustrations are photographs (occasionally out of focus) that frequently reduce the length of explanations required. Maps are inserted throughout, with