

## The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised

### PREFACE

*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, popularly known as ISBE, has served the Church well over the past generations. Even in its revised form, however, it has naturally become dated as new work has been done in the text of Scripture and new light has been shed by continuing, and in some cases exciting, archeological discoveries. If not without some trepidation, then, the decision has been made to issue a fresh and more drastic revision of the venerable and still by no means valueless encyclopedia.

The situation in which the new edition has been prepared resembles that of the preparation of the first edition of 1915. The original preface speaks of a plethora of biblical dictionaries at that time, called forth by the remarkable advances and changes in biblical studies. The new ISBE comes on the scene when dictionaries again abound, and one can only repeat the words of our predecessors when they say that “it is in no spirit of rivalry ... that the present Encyclopaedia is produced” but to fulfil what is seen to be the distinctive purpose of serving both the more advanced student and yet also “the average pastor and Bible student.”

Friends of the project, and many contributors to it, will realize that this new edition has been in the making for an unusually protracted period. There are two main reasons for the delay. The first relates to the editorial team. All three of the original Associate Editors were lost to us at a formative stage in the work: Professor N. B. Stonehouse of West-

minster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, through death; Professor J. L. Kelso of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, through sickness; and Professor J. G. S. Thomson of Glasgow, through the pressure of other duties. Their places have been ably filled by Professors E. F. Harrison and W. S. LaSor of Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, and Professor R. K. Harrison of Wycliffe College, Toronto, but not without some unavoidable dislocation. On the managerial side, too, the death of Calvin Bulthuis, who played so large a role in the initial planning, proved to be another serious blow, and his immediate successor, John DeHoog, was able to stay with the project for only a relatively brief span. Fortunately the third project editor, Dr. E. W. Smith, has remained long enough to see the revision through to publication. The progress even at this rate would have been impossible without the diligent and intelligent contributions of Editorial Associate Allen C. Myers; Editorial Assistants Nola J. Opperwall and Dr. Ralph W. Vunderink; Illustration, Design, and Production Coordinator Joel D. Beversluis; and Typographer-Typesetter Donald M. Prus.

Changes in the scope of the revision provided the second main reason for the delay of publication. In view of the high esteem in which ISBE has been held, it was felt at first that the bulk of the existing material should be retained in its original format. A good deal of work was done on that premise. Increasingly it became obvious that with the pace and magnitude of biblical and archeological changes, along with the rapid shifts in the political, geographical, and social life of the Near East, more would have to be done, so that a call went out for more articles and contributors. Eventually the editors and publishers were forced to acknowledge, however reluctantly, that a thorough updating of both matter and format constituted the only logical course, so that now, al-

though some of the most durable of the original material remains, the revision has become to all intents and purposes a new, or at least a completely reconstructed, encyclopedia. In this regard the delay has finally been an advantage, for if the work had been rapidly completed according to the original plan, much of it would already be in need of a new updating and all of it would have a decidedly old-fashioned look.

It should be emphasized that, in spite of the necessary changes, ISBE has by no means lost its identity. Many important features have in fact been carefully retained. To begin with, the new ISBE has aimed to be as consciously international as the old. If all the editors reside in North America, the General Editor and one of the Associate Editors come from Britain, and articles have been sought from scholars in many lands. As in the original ISBE, interdenominationalism has been practiced as well as internationalism. Coincidentally, the General Editor and three Associate Editors consist of two Anglicans and two Presbyterians, but contributors from a wide variety of churches combine to make this new edition a truly ecumenical enterprise. Along these lines, separate articles have again been included to represent different views on such matters as church polity and baptism.

Furthermore, great care has been taken to maintain what the preface of the first edition described as the attitude of "a reasonable conservatism." Freedom has naturally been allowed to individual contributors to express their views on debatable matters. At some points divergent approaches may thus be found. A hearing is also given to hypotheses and theories which cannot finally be adopted. Nevertheless, the general "attitude of mind and heart" is still one "which reverently accepts a true revelation of God in the history of

Israel and in Christ.” Indeed, while the high level of biblical scholarship has been retained, some of the unnecessarily mediating views of the first contributors have been eliminated, so that the new edition is, we believe, at once more scholarly and more conservative than its predecessor. This demonstrates the change from an earlier period of sharp confrontation between “criticism” and “faith” to one when the possibility grasped by the original editors has been more fully realized and “reverent criticism” is making a constructive contribution to faith.

As the first ISBE aimed at comprehensiveness, its successor has done the same. In this respect the original articles have served as a useful guide in both selection and execution. Some of them have, of course, been changed in length. Usually, although not uniformly, the change has taken the form of shortening to make way for the new material provided by more recent discoveries and developments. All the same, the principle has not changed. The editors have again sought the “ample and minute” treatment of “History ..., Ethnology, Geography, Topography, Biography, Arts and Crafts, Manners and Customs,” etc. which their predecessors claimed. If there has been one main innovation, it lies in the field of dogmatic history. Accounts of the main developments of thought on such central matters as Christology, election, and inspiration have been added. If more is offered here than a biblical encyclopedia strictly demands, we believe that this added feature should be of help and value to many readers.

It might be noted that, in order to maintain continuity with the past, many articles have been preserved in emended form and a few particularly significant ones have been preserved virtually unchanged. To the latter group

belong especially the article on the Bible by James Orr, General Editor of the first edition, and that on inspiration by B. B. Warfield. If in Orr's article the section on the literary origin and growth of the Old and New Testaments needs revision, readers may be referred to the entries under the individual books and still profit from Orr's article, as from that of Warfield, as an evangelical statement of the early 20th century. That Orr and Warfield differed in the nuances of biblical understanding, yet did not see in this a reason for breaking evangelical unity, gives additional value to their representative articles.

Having spoken of the general continuity between the editions, we may speak more briefly of the detailed discontinuity. In one way the greatest single change is the elimination of most of the indexes. Indexes are obviously useful, but in alphabetically arranged dictionaries and encyclopedias they are obviously not essential. Their retention would have added disproportionately to the expense and price of the series. It is mainly for this reason that they have been deleted.

Of a different order, but possibly even more significant in its own way, is the adoption of the RSV instead of the ASV as the approved English rendering of the Bible. Naturally, an iron rule has not been imposed here. Variants are provided where useful and appropriate. Words from the AV or ASV which have been dropped from the RSV are still listed. It seems, however, that the RSV has now sufficiently established itself, especially in the scholarly world, to justify its general adoption.

Mention need hardly be made of the wholesale replacement of the older maps and illustrations. Even a cursory

glance at the earlier editions will show the need for the radical updating which has been done.

Lesser but not unimportant changes have been made in such matters as abbreviations, pronunciations, and schemes of transliteration. The changes here are not just for the sake of change but to bring ISBE into line with generally accepted, although not, of course, definitively established practice in these areas. Details of the adopted schemes will be found in the pages that follow.

Superficially the old ISBE might seem to have been changed beyond recognition by these alterations and updates. Readers will quickly see, however, that this is not so, for the material continuity, represented by the listings, far outweighs the formal discontinuity. The same fulness, authority, and accessibility have been sought in the new ISBE as in the old. Every effort has again been made to produce an encyclopedia that can meet the “exacting requirements” of teachers, students, pastors, and “all others who desire to be familiar with the Holy Scriptures.” We trust that the new ISBE will have the same enduring value and engender the same enduring affection as the old. Above all, however, we trust that it may contribute to a better knowledge, understanding, and love of holy Scripture and thereby bring glory to God and edification to His people, thus fulfilling, in some measure at least, the service which it is our Christian privilege to render.

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