



Tenney, Merrill C. and Moisés Silva, eds.

The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible: Revised, Full-Color Edition (5 volumes)

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Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

New Jersey

The *Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible* (hereafter *ZEB*) is a revision of the *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (hereafter *ZPEB*) published in 1975 which was a work inspired by the 1963 *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*. The *ZPEB* served students, pastors, and scholars well for over thirty years, but as with everything, discoveries are made, knowledge increases, and concerns shift. Under the revising editorship of Moisés Silva the *ZEB* has been produced to address these shifting concerns while reflecting the growth in knowledge over the past thirty-plus years. According to the introduction "hundreds of brief new articles have been added... some twenty new in-depth articles have been commissioned... [v]arious existing articles have been totally rewritten... [and] [s]pecial effort has been expended to make bibliographical references more current." (1.v) Silva claims responsibility for the revisions to all articles between the original edition and this one where the name attached to the article has not changed. Where a new name appears attached to an old article the responsibility for the differences is that of the new author.

Aesthetically this set is exquisite, which is commonplace for Zondervan publications these days. The five hardcover volumes all share the same cover art while varying in the background color of the title. They're encased in an attractive slipcase that's quite durable. This is ideal for users who would like to keep the set on their desk or perhaps a side-table near where they read. I've opted to remove the volumes and house them in my bookcase containing my various other dictionaries and encyclopedias and at present they're the center of attention. Once each volume is opened the

reader is treated to a plethora of beautiful high-resolution, full-color photographs, charts, and maps. I'm hard-pressed to think of a visual image that could have been included in this set that wasn't. There are more than a few really nice aerial shots of various cities (e.g., Khirbet Qana [1.513] or Jerusalem [3.166]), hundreds of photos of ancient artifacts (e.g., an altar dedicated to Zeus found in Hierapolis [5.244] or a cuneiform tablet containing the *Epic of Atrahasis* [2.591]), dozens of maps of every location listed in the Bible, and hundreds of pictures of various buildings, plants, ruins, ancient artwork, etc. Pretty much anything you can think of can be found within the pages of these five volumes.

The articles (over 7,500 in all) were produced by more than 250 contributors from around the world. They're written from a conservative evangelical point of view but fairly represent alternative views when describing and interacting with them (at least so far as I have read). They vary in length from a few sentences to monograph length treatments of certain subjects, e.g., Donald Guthrie's *A Shorter Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970) was originally the entry for "Jesus Christ" in the *ZPEB* and has been updated by Silva for *ZEB* (3.567-664). The longer articles begin with outlines and are concluded with bibliographies of works recommended for further study. The material used throughout the article is generally referenced within the article itself. A strong emphasis has been placed on works from 1990-2007 while "works published in 2008 have been added less systematically." (1.v) Due to space limitations full bibliographic information is not provided and the reader is left with the title and year of publication. The cross-referencing system is pretty standard; when a reference is made to a topic that has an entry somewhere else in the encyclopedia it's printed in small caps to alert the reader to this fact.

Needless to say with over 7,500 articles I haven't even skimmed the surface of all that this set has to offer, and I doubt that I'll ever work through them all, but that's the nature of reference material: you reference it when you need to. Of the more substantial articles that I've read so far on "Jesus Christ" (3.567-664); "Spiritual Gifts" (5.596-600); "Monotheism" (4.307-8); "Adam" (1.60-3); "Christology" (1.834-8); "Biblical Criticism" (1.607-22); and "Johannine Theology" (3.708-24) I can say that I have mixed feelings. For the most part they're quite good. Donald Guthrie's two entries on "Jesus Christ" and "Johannine Theology" are wonderful from beginning to end. They're both in-depth and scholarly while being easy to read and not overly technical. The same can be said for Grant Osborne on "Biblical Criticism." The manner in which he's able to accurately explain positions that he personally disagrees with is commendable. Ralph Alan Cole on "Spiritual Gifts" seems somewhat sparse and doesn't really do Paul justice, and his entry on "Christology" focuses on titles alone, not showing any familiarity with what's been going on in the field over the past twenty years. Paul King Jewett on "Monotheism" is dated both in terms of the content of the article and the bibliography following it, e.g., there's no reference to Hayman, Hurtado, Horbury, Bauckham, Fredriksen or anyone who has written anything significant on the

subject in the past twenty to thirty years. This reflects a feature that I'm not overly enthusiastic about; Silva explains:

[T]he revising editor, out of respect for the integrity of individual contributions, has retained many comments and opinions that were more persuasive thirty years ago than they are today. As a result, certain articles may come across as somewhat dated in their concerns or in their manner of expression, but most users of the encyclopedia will appreciate hearing the authentic voice of the contributors. (1.vi)

Unfortunately, warning the reader in advance doesn't make up for dated entries, and if the reader were so inclined they could consult the original edition to hear the authentic voice of a contributor thirty years ago. I also have an aesthetic gripe, although I'll admit it's a small one and something that most readers wouldn't care about at all, but there are many times when the photographs extend into the outer margins of the pages. It throws off the symmetry of the page and to my eye is somewhat distracting. I realize that I'm nitpicking, but in a set as well produced as this one flaws are going to be difficult to find, and that's a good thing! From what I've seen of the *ZEB* so far I'm confident that it will aid any student, pastor, or scholar (especially those looking for an alternative view than they'd get, in say, the *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*) in their studies, sermon preparation, or research. Whether you're looking for an introduction to a specific book of the Bible, a brief synopsis of a certain character found within the Bible, background information on places or events, or discussions of matters pertaining to Biblical interpretation or theology, the *ZEB* has it all. I look forward to using this set with great profit for years to come.