

Eclectic Study Bible

Preface

Why Another Bible?

Let me begin by saying that there are excellent commercial bibles and public domain bibles readily available. My personal favorites are the new ESV (*English Standard Bible*, Good News Publishing, 2001), the *MacArthur Study Bible* (NKJV – Word Publishing, 1997), the MKJV (*Modern King James Version*, Jay P. Green, Sr.) and the *Online Bible* by Larry Pierce, with its original language modules (great stuff). So why this one? There are two reasons.

First, because other translations pride themselves on being unbiased. To satisfy scores of denominations, and increase the market-share for their “product,” the publishers of these translations have taken input from hundreds of Christian leaders who have competing theologies. This can result in compromise and inconsistency. Bad translations lead to bad theology. And so the ESB is a one-man project, begun as a personal study. It is admittedly biased by my theology, which is reformed and confessional. If you haven’t noticed, the historic faith is quickly being supplanted by “popular” theology. Books like *Christianity for Dummies*, and *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to the Life of Christ*, have become the new textbooks for Christian believers (actual book titles!). Ignorance of the bible is now widespread, both in society at large and, shamefully, within the church. Scripture was once the universal reference language, providing society with common imagery and a cohesive world view. But Calvinistic theology has fallen into disfavor; the confessions and creeds are now considered divisive. Thus the historic Christian faith is weakening through neglect, laziness, and active opposition. As a result, there is no framework within which to understand the word of God. Far too many translations have become vanilla renditions of the truth, sadly lacking in exactness and teaching. I felt compelled to take a more doctrinal approach to this translation. This *Eclectic Study Bible* is the result. It is intentionally biased, and designedly dogmatic. Its notes are in the reformed tradition of Calvin and Luther.

Secondly, I wanted a good translation based on the Textus Receptus (TR), the collection of manuscripts used for the sadly flawed and outdated KJV. For 25 years I have used and enjoyed the NIV. I told my students that, although translations varied, the underlying text in Hebrew and Greek is basically the same. Thus, there is no need to argue over words (1Tim. 6:4; 2Tim. 2:14). For the most part, I said, the differences between the Nestle/UBS text (NU), the Majority text (MT) and the Textus Receptus (TR), are insignificant. Over the years, however, I have become increasingly frustrated by what I call “unfortunate” translations. So I began to examine the original text more closely, and specifically the differences between the TR, the MT, and the NU-texts. Along the way, I discovered some doctrinal issues arising between the various Greek texts. Most of what I read about such differences was nonsense, or it was overstated by KJV fanatics. But some of it had substance. An excellent book in this regard is *The King James Only Controversy* by James R. White (Bethany House, Minn., 1995). Josh McDowell’s book, *New Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (Nelson, Nashville, 1999), also contains an outstanding history of the bible, which touches on this debate. While there may be no conspiracy to undermine Scripture, or the divinity of Christ, I still have concerns with the MT and NU-texts, but more so with many of the translations.

Let me give you one quick example so you have a better grasp of what the debate is about. Look at Luke 2:33. The KJV and NKJV say, “Joseph and his mother...” The ESV and NASB say, “his father and his mother...” The NIV says “the child’s father and mother.” The Greek TR, used for the KJV and NKJV, does actually say, “Joseph and his mother;” and the Greek NU-text does actually say, “his father and his mother...” So you can see that each translation does a good job of reproducing its source text, except the NIV which substitutes “child’s” for “his,” even though there is no word for “child” in the source text (this

is called dynamic equivalence, rather than literal). But the source text is different between the TR and NU-text. And the NU-text apparently says that Joseph is Jesus' father. Now, this is not a statement by Joseph or Mary, made in public for appearance' sake, as in verse 48. It is made by the writer, Luke. This same Luke records Jesus' reply in verse 49 that God is his father, rebutting the NU-text. Moreover, Luke's whole intent here is to convey who Jesus truly is: the Son of God. In James White's book, this very argument is made to support using "father and mother." White says it is OK because it is obvious that Luke knew better. My conclusion is the direct opposite: because Luke obviously knew better, why would I select a manuscript that refutes him, especially when there is a perfectly acceptable manuscript that does not? I don't think we should let the rules of textual criticism override common sense, nor the obvious intent of the writer.

I appreciate the fact that such differences are footnoted in the NU-text. But they are not always footnoted in the translations. The NIV and ESV don't footnote 2:33 at all. The NKJV does, and it also clearly and objectively says that the NU-text reads differently. As a result of the NU-text choice of manuscripts, and because this difference is not footnoted in some translations, the reader may be confused by the inconsistency concerning the Trinity. It creates what I believe is an unnecessary internal conflict in the Scripture. There are a number of such passages. And there are a number of dropped sentences and verses that are clearly supposed to be there, either because they are subsequently referred to (Matt. 12:47), or because they provide a logical missing step (Acts 8:37). When these sentences are missing, the reader is again confused, and may suspect that the translators made other poor choices. It doesn't help to read a footnote saying that the "oldest and best" manuscripts didn't have that verse, when it is apparent that they should have had it. How could they possibly be the "best"? Where there are such competing or conflicting words, the reader understandably infers that perhaps God's word, the version in his hand, is not true. And if there are a lot of competing versions, he might think that perhaps *none* of them is true. If we don't believe God's word, or we come to doubt it because of conflicting versions, then we may become so frustrated that we grow indifferent to what it says. "Well, it means whatever you think it means. You can make it say whatever you want." That sounds like Satan in the Garden, whispering "Did God really say...?"

And so I have returned to the original TR, with a few noted exceptions. Most often my footnotes for such passages will simply say, "Some mss omit...", or "the NU-text adds..." The notes don't cover all the differences, but they do cover the essential ones.

Why the title?

The word "eclectic" means a selection of the best from a group of available choices. It means more than just picking between the NU-text and TR. Have you found that you like Psalm 23 in one version more than another? But you like John 1:1 in that second version better than the first? Or you like a passage from the *Peshitta* (Heb. 6:4), or the *Jerusalem Bible* (e.g. *don't pay me lip-service*)? And you wish you could combine them in your bible. Or perhaps you get frustrated when looking at the Hebrew or Greek, or the context of a passage, knowing what they're trying to say, and you can't find a single translation that captures it. And so you have this pile of paper stuffed in your bible, notes scribbled in every margin, and notebooks on the shelf filled with such tidbits, with no way to add them to the text, or search them electronically. Well, this bible is designed to satisfy that longing in your soul. The ESB allows you to copy, correct, modify, footnote, and comment it. That way you can agree or disagree with my own treatment of a passage, and then change it accordingly. Mark it up as you see fit. "Eclectic" is a subjective standard.

Purpose of the ESB:

The aim of this work is to provide a reasonably reliable, academic, public domain version of the Christian Bible in the reformed tradition that may be readily understood by current speakers of American English. You will find that some of the translation is, well, unique. So are some of the notes. I hope they startle you, and drive you to study the annotated verses for yourself. Strong's Numbers have been included in this format: (OT:7200) or (NT:5101). They will give you access to hundreds of word-study books discussing the nuances of the words used (Vincent's, Vines, Robertson's, etc.). Hopefully you'll find passages written in a way that delights, and mystifies; you'll dig into it just to see if I'm right. Maybe you'll read something new, even gain an insight. Try John 13:23, for example. I tend to travel to the beat of a different drum...

The 1901 American Standard Version -

This bible is an adaptation of the 1901 American Standard Version. That version is in the public domain. I don't have to pay royalties to anyone for copying, modifying, or using it, and therefore neither do you. That makes it a good starting point for making those eclectic choices I spoke about. However, its language needed updating to effectively convey the truth of God's Word to a modern audience. I have restated its content in a way that I hope provides clarity, while preserving its original meaning. There are two ways to update the wording of a document: textual equivalence (word for word), or dynamic equivalence (essential idea). I favor word for word because it is less interpretive than dynamic equivalence. However, depending on the structure of a passage, a literal translation may not be possible, or even desirable. For the most part, the ASV is a literal translation. Other translations, like the *NIV*, use dynamic equivalence. Still others, like *The Message*, paraphrase the bible. Paraphrases convey the gist of what is said, but they cannot be used for study. They have interpreted the source text, and then replaced the words from which the interpretation was derived; and so you can no longer tell what was originally said.

The rule I use is this: *use the fewest possible words to accurately and clearly render the actual words of the source text into Modern English, considering their context and intent.*

Biases and Preferences:

This work is necessarily the result of personal choices motivated by my own experience, study, and doctrine. The reader has a right to know something about these things to be able to assess their influence. Also, where two possible words in English mean essentially the same thing, choosing one over the other is more a matter of personal preference than accuracy. But where two words have different meanings, choosing one over the other requires some kind of justification. Words have both a denotation and a connotation. In re-wording the ASV, I have tried to be accurate and faithful to the original language. Where my wording differs from the ASV, it is motivated by the source text rather than the ASV translation itself. For example, in the OT, the ASV translation says that both Joseph and David were "comely." And that word, in Hebrew, can mean goodly, attractive, handsome, beautiful, fair, or pleasant. For Joseph, I chose "handsome," because Potiphar's wife was attracted to him. It explains the attraction. For David, I chose "pleasant," because he is being selected to soothe Saul's distemper. It explains his selection. Using "handsome" might suggest the wrong thing, and misstate the intent. And so, the same underlying Hebrew word is assigned a different English word based on its context and connotation.

Additionally, there is the bias of my *doctrine*, or church *dogma*. You may be curious why *doctrine* would be involved in translating or rendering biblical text. Everyone thinks we should be objective about this, scientific, deducing doctrine from what is written. That may sound even-handed and fair, but it is not.

Irenaeus once wrote that biblical interpretation requires knowing what the pattern is supposed to be before you begin assembling the pieces. He says to think of an image of a king made from a pile of mosaic tiles. By rearranging them you can turn the image of that king into a fox with the very same “authentic” tiles. Jesus explained to his disciples the purpose of his coming, his sacrifice, and his resurrection, before the NT was written. Thus, it was written with those explanations in mind. On the road to Emmaus, Christ explained to the two travellers the pattern of the Old Testament, and the fulfillment of its prophecies in him. If they could have derived that meaning and intent from the text alone, they would have needed no explanation from him. We cannot disregard the pattern and purpose of Scripture in rendering a translation from the original. If we do, then we may confute the very doctrine that the words are intended to convey. The heresy of Open Theism results from literal interpretation without doctrinal grounding.

For example, in John 3:8 we have a description of the activity (or motions) of the Holy Spirit. The NIV says that “the wind blows wherever it pleases.” That suggests the Spirit is arbitrary. The KJV says, “the wind blows where it listeth.” That suggests (in Old English) an inclination, a leaning. The ESV and NASB say, “the wind blows where it wishes.” That suggests that the Spirit is not bound or obligated by anything. The MKJV says, “The Spirit breathes where he desires,” which suggests the Spirit may be free to act independently (Jay Green does not believe that, as his preface clearly reveals). All of these favor an Arminian point of view. But the word for list, wish, desire, pleases, or wants is *thelo*, (NT:2309 *thelei* to be exact). It can also mean to *will* something, especially as an alternate form of *haireomai*, (NT:138), meaning to choose. In my opinion, the ASV correctly renders it, “the wind blows where it will.” What, then, ought to determine our choice of a word out of a group of equally valid ones? I have no hesitation in letting *doctrine* determine which word to use.

My doctrine is reformation doctrine. It is the historic faith of the church articulated by Paul and Augustine, and restated during the Reformation in various confessions of faith. Reformed doctrine holds that a covenant was established between the Father and the Son to redeem the people whom the Father gave to the Son from eternity. This is called the *redemptive* covenant (Isa. 63). It is distinct from the covenant of *works* with Adam (“do this and live”), or the covenant of *grace* with Abraham and his seed (“I will make a great nation of you”). Christ’s duty was to live a sinless life so that his perfect obedience would be imputed to his people. And he died on the cross so that our sins would be imputed to him. He was our surety. In our stead, he paid the penalty for our sin. He finally and effectually redeemed us from the curse of the law, and purchased eternal life, grace, fellowship, and peace for us. The Spirit has been sent by both the Father and the Son to apply these fruits of Christ’s death to his elect, and to prepare the elect for reasonable service in the kingdom. There is nothing arbitrary about that. A select group of people is to be brought home to the Father. They are the only objects and beneficiaries of the redemptive covenant, and of Christ’s death. These individuals were specifically and completely saved by the Son (this is called *limited* or *particular* atonement). The Spirit is the down payment on this covenantal promise, the earnest which seals it.

What the Spirit does then, he does by an act of will, not whim. And his will is the Father’s will, for the Lord God is One. The will of the Father is that none should be lost. And so the Spirit has been sent by the Father and the Son to ensure that their will is fulfilled in us. In other words, our salvation and sanctification are intentional and *irresistible*. God in Christ is the initiator and the completer of our faith (Heb. 12:2). The Spirit does not “blow where he wishes,” but where he is committed. And therefore, as a reformed theologian, having to choose between these various words, each of them an acceptable rendering of the Greek *thelo*, I choose “will,” because it best fits the *doctrine* of Scripture. But being an academic, I insist on providing the original Greek, and the alternative words. I give you the doctrinal implications, and the reason I chose “will.” With such information in your possession, you now have a more complete view. You are able to make a judgment, and to exercise your God-given wisdom. If you prefer “wish,” then make a textual change. As you can see, understanding someone else’s point of view

helps to avoid arguments over words; it shifts such arguments to doctrinal truth, where the exchange of ideas, and the need to apply Scriptural evidence, becomes beneficial and edifying to all who hear.

Biblical Study and Interpretation:

And that brings us to how to study the bible. To avoid popular theological fads and outright misrepresentations, we need to employ proper rules of interpretation. The rules of biblical interpretation are the same rules that lawyers use to interpret contracts. Long ago, lawyers were taught those rules by the church. In fact, jurists wear black robes today because originally they were ministers of God's Law. These rules used to be universally agreed upon. However, in the past 100 years or so, the accepted rules have come under attack by historical and biblical revisionists. Contributing to these arguments over rules of interpretation is an anti-intellectual bent in the church. We also have anti-denominational movements that often side-step the ordination process. Ordination is where we certify that we have passed on what we received, no more, no less (1Cor. 15:3; 1Tim. 5:22). Out of this anything-goes atmosphere, a flood of new books on interpretation (hermeneutics) has hit the "market." Many of them do not return us to our roots, but instead offer another methodology. The layman can get thoroughly confused, or misled. Milton S. Terry's book on hermeneutics, the standard, is now out of print. There's another good one by A. Berekeley Mickelson. But I personally recommend one written in 1978 by Bob Smith, called *Basics of Biblical Interpretation*. I think it's the best one available for novices. You can get it for free at Ray Stedman's website: <http://www.raystedman.org/leadership/smith/> It's simple, clear, and comprehensive. And it's filled with lots of examples and practice material: *perfect* for the serious layman. Bob, by the way, opposes dogmatic teaching. He likes the student to derive truth for himself. I agree. But that has nothing to do with establishing the text that the student uses to interpret. If you follow his techniques and guidelines, you will find yourself resorting to the original language anyway, out of sheer fascination and delight. You may also want to read, *Life Together* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. It will put the study and use of Scripture in its proper context for you.

Textual Changes to the ASV:

Here is a brief overview of what has been done to the text of the 1901 ASV. All the *eths* and *ests* are gone. So are the *hasts*, *wasts*, and *withals*. "They that" is now "those who." "He who" and "man that" is now "one who" or "someone who," unless "man" is required by the text. "Thee" and "thine" are now "you" and "yours." Some say replacing "ye" and "thee" with "you" takes away the ability to distinguish plural from singular you's. Not really. It has always been determined by the context. Besides, it is wrong to draw conclusions from the grammatical plurality of a word alone. In the Old Testament, *elohim* (God) is plural, but that is *not* a proof for the plurality of the godhead (contrary to popular belief, and despite the teaching of many of our untrained preachers). God addresses Moses as "ye" (plural) when no one else is there, and before Aaron has been suggested as his spokesman (Ex. 3:18). Grammar is more complicated than just looking at plurals and case endings. God's Spirit in the OT is feminine gender; that doesn't mean God is a sexual being. That's why we have language experts (no, not me). So be cautious; do not go beyond what is written, and do not make an assumption without using a reliable language guide.

Other changes – archaic words are updated: "smite" and "tire" are now *strike* and *turban*. "Gird" is updated, but it has a number of meanings depending on the context. So you will find *dress*, *prepare*, *wrap*, *support*, etc. Seldom-used words have been replaced with simpler ones (e.g. *cavil* is now *quibble*). Doctrinal words remain, as you would expect from my comments above (justification, regeneration, predestination, etc.). Spelling has been corrected. Sentence structure (syntax) has been simplified (noun-verb-object). Run-on sentences have been broken into two or more sentences. And so I have continued the ASV tradition of removing colons and semi-colons. The punctuation is governed by where we would naturally finish a thought, take a breath, or separate a clause – unless it would change the meaning. Passive voice has been changed to active for readability. Parallelism has been employed to complete an

obvious train of thought. That results in added words, but they are clearly intended in the context. Such added words are italicized for identification. If added words affect content, they are also footnoted. Pronouns without obvious references have been made explicit, and then italicized. Contractions are occasionally used. Don't panic at all this. These are common practices when translating or updating language for *any* text.

Italicized words in the 1901 ASV remain italicized, although many of those added words have been removed (either they didn't help, or they colored the meaning). Words omitted in the ASV, though contained in the Textus Receptus, have been reinserted. Passages that were italicized in the ASV to indicate they were missing in the oldest texts, are no longer italicized. The italics suggested they were untrustworthy. They are footnoted instead. Where there is no agreed-upon translation from which to deviate, my guess is no better or worse than anyone else's; whether such passages are footnoted depends on their doctrinal import.

In the OT, descriptive names of places or people that connote other things are footnoted with their translated meaning (e.g. *Adam* means dirt, or earth). "Jehovah" has been changed to "Yahweh" where the tetragrammaton YHWH (יהוה) is found. Money terms have been reverted to their original Greek, Hebrew, or Latin words and footnoted (see Money Chart in the *Appendix*). According to Easton's Dictionary, "brass - which is an alloy of copper and zinc, was not known till the thirteenth century. What is designated by this word in Scripture is properly copper (Deut. 8:9)." And so, brass is now copper, or bronze. Things that underwent severe heat (e.g. altar), or were used for support (e.g. columns and gates), I have made *bronze*. Everything else is *copper*.

The ASV replaced the KJV "hell" with *Sheol* throughout the OT (OT:7585). *Sheol* is the resting place of the dead (described in Lk. 16:20-25). I liked the idea, so I kept *sheol*. Where "grave" represents a physical grave, tomb or sepulchre, rather than a state of death, the original word remains. In the NT, where you find the word "hell," it represents *gehenna* (NT:1067). Gehenna was the valley outside the Jerusalem wall that garbage was thrown into for burning; its fires never went out. "Depths of Hades" is used for the single instance of *tartaroo* (2Pet. 2:4; NT:5020). In mythology, *tartaroo* or *tartaros* was understood to be the deepest level of Hades. Where the Greek "Hades" is found, it has been kept (NT:86). Hades is the resting place of the dead, equivalent to *Sheol* in the OT, but it is not *gehenna*. This generates questions concerning the "intermediate state," but there should be questions.

There are four NT Greek words for "world" that might be confused. There is *kosmos* (NT:2889 *kosmos*) referring either to the planet earth or the entire universe, *oikoumene* (NT:3625 *oikoumene*) referring to the inhabited parts of a nation or of the world, earth (NT:1093 *ge*) referring either to the ground on which we stand or the collective continents of the world, and *eon* (NT:165 *aion*) referring either to our current age or all of eternity. What we have respectively are words that are scope, place, and time oriented. Like the ASV, *kosmos* is exclusively rendered the "world," except for 1Pet. 3:3. There *kosmos* is rendered "adornment" – as stars adorn a night sky (metaphorically). And *ge* is rendered earth, land, ground, soil, or country. The problem is that *aion* in the ASV is sometimes rendered "world." In the ESB, *aion*, which is a time-oriented word, is never rendered "world," which is a place-oriented word. That way it won't be confused with *kosmos*. And "earth" always refers to physicality, not scope.

Subscripts -

The word for the inhabited parts of the world, *oikoumene*, is subscripted "world_{oi}" to distinguish it from the scope of the physical world, *kosmos*.

In the NT, there are 3 words for love: *agape*, *phileo*, and *eros*. *Phileo* (the Greek word for fond love), has been subscripted (love_p) – all other instances of the word "love" represent *agape* (unconditional or godly

love); these have no subscript. *Eros* (sexual love) does not appear in the NT except, curiously, in the name *Erastus*. An interesting nickname to be sure. Agape love is the one sometimes rendered “charity” in other translations. I use *charity* in Mark 10:21 and 2Pet. 1:7, for example, but it would also be excellent in 1Cor. 13: faith, hope, and *charity*. There are some Greek words that use *phileo* as their root, such as *philadelphia*, and *philostorgos*. These are footnoted but not subscripted.

Various English words are used to represent a number of Greek words for *knowing* and for *seeing*, but not consistently. The English words for *understanding*, and *seeing*, are also variously used to represent a number of Greek words So each instance of the Greek word is subscripted in the ESB for easier identification. A list of these subscripts has been included in a chart of Greek Cognitive Verbs (how we mentally and visually gather and process information). See the Appendix.

Believe in and *believe on* now consistently reflect the Greek prepositions *eis* (in/into) and *epi* (on/upon). They have been used interchangeably for 400 years. If there is a subtle difference, I suppose it is this: *believe in* implies a change of position (coming to Christ), while *believe on* suggests a resting place (depending on Christ). But you wouldn't know it from the use of these prepositions in the original text.

Errors in Translation and Updating:

The wording in this bible is different from other bibles in a number of places. That does not constitute an error. Words have been selected, and renderings have been made, that will not agree with other translations. That is not an error either. Because of the different wording, resulting interpretations will vary as well. However, that still does not make the wording erroneous. If there are good, sound, grammatical reasons why a particular rendering is invalid, based on the underlying text (the original Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, or Latin), or doctrinal truth, then let me know and I will change it. Otherwise, my choices are my choices. You may make your own. That's why I am allowing you to modify it as you see fit. If you believe I have made an error, it is your duty as my brother or sister in Christ to warn me, and to give me the opportunity to repent or rebut. I suffer from a fallen nature just like everyone else: mistakes and errors in judgment come easily to me, despite the working of God's Spirit.

Final Thoughts:

I pray that this work is sufficiently accurate, and that it helps you in your study and application of God's word. My primary purpose is to glorify God by honoring his word. I have strived not to treat this bible as if it were just another book in need of editing. It is anything but that. God's word is Spirit-filled, literally. It is the very breath of God. It must be treated with reverence and awe, and a healthy fear of God. I quite enjoy informal translations. But I have chosen to make this one formal (although I do employ some contractions). The reason is that it is intended for study. While I hesitate to modify the work of other godly servants whose labors have blessed previous generations, God's word is a living thing. And so is the vernacular that expresses it. As the vernacular changes, so must the expression of God's eternal and unchanging word.

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