THE EXTENDED BIBLE

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Category: English Bibles

This morning, I had lots of Google hits for blog posts about a new Bible translation. Following up on the links the reason for the mass blogging became obvious, Thomas Nelson have released a new edition of the New Testament and are giving away free copies to the first people to blog about it. I don't suppose that I'll be early enough to get a free copy but I'm not that worried.

Here is what the Thomas Nelson website says:

> *On August 11, 2009, Thomas Nelson will release a new product especially designed for our customer. Developed by a trusted team of Bible scholars The Expanded Bible New Testament... gives the reader help to reach their goal of hearing Godâ€™s message to them directly from the Scriptures.*
>
> *Why is it different?*
>
> - *It meets the needs of the contemporary student of the Bible by combining devotional reading and in-depth study in a completely new way. Users can now study the Bible while they read* ***with study aids and resources placed in-line with the text of the Bible.***
> - *It joins Bible text with traditional wordings, explanatory comments, additional wordings, literal meanings and expanded word definitions,* ***all integrated within the text of the Scripture.***
> - *It offers readers a unique Bible study experience by making them* ***a part of the process and decisions made by scholars*** *while developing a translation*
>
> *The end result is a Bible that is highly readable for devotions or study purposes that includes a richer in-text explanation of the Scripture. The experience will help customers grasp all that God is saying and give them a complete meaning of words and their alternative wordings. Itâ€™s like having a robust Bible reference library at your fingertips without having to flip a page or grab another book.*

Firstly, it is important to note that while a lot of the hype around this new edition is calling it a new translation, it is actually based on the New Century Version which has been around for ages. I must admit that I've never used the NCV and don't know anyone who has, so I'm not able to comment on the translation from first hand knowledge.

You can download the Extended New Testament as a PDF here.

The key selling point of the Expanded Bible is that notes, alternative readings and other comments are all included in line with the normal text. Essentially the Biblical text is in Bold and the additions are in lighter text with brackets to distinguish them. Straight away, this causes a problem; the page is

so crowded and cluttered that far from being easy to read, this version is likely to give you a headache in a short time.

More seriously, the convention of the bold type and plain type does not sufficiently distinguish between the inspired text of Scripture and the comments made by the editors. After a while, you find yourself just reading the whole thing through without stopping to think whether you are looking at Scripture or comment.Â Given that in some places, the commentÂ is far longer than the actual text of Scripture, this is clearly a problem.

As with the Amplified Bible, the way in which alternate translation suggestions are strung together is rather confusing and makes it look as though the original Greek text was confused.

I've not had the time to go through the actual comments in any depth. A quick scan through didn't reveal anything startlingly good, or startlingly bad and I'll wait for someone else to look at these in depth.

The bottom line is that this edition does nothing that a good study Bible (or even a heavily annotated translation like the NET Bible) doesn't do already.Â However, a study Bible clearly separates the inspired text from the comment and notes in a way that the Expanded Bible fails to do. If you are in the market for a one volume Bible with commentary then I would suggest that you go for the NLT Study Bible, though theÂ NIV Study Bible and the ESV Study Bible are worthwhile too.

Regarding the Extended Bible, I reckon that the Free Download is probably worth the price you pay for it, but I wouldn't suggest spending anything on the printed and bound edition when it comes out.

Just a reminder, that while English language publishers vie with each other to find ever more attractive (or confusing) ways of publishing the Bible, there are still over two thousand languages without a single word of Scripture. I do worry about the church's priorities!