

Reflections

reading notes

MAY 2005—*Study Bibles*

There has appeared a glut of study Bibles in the bookstores, each one taking its marketing aim at some particular segment of the professed Christian world. There is the *Spirit-Filled Bible*; *The Open Bible*; *Life-Application Study Bible*; *Student's Life Application Bible*, Zondervan's *Study Bible*, etc.

Some of these Bibles feature the work of an individual like the *MacArthur Study Bible*, containing commentary by Calvinist expositor John MacArthur.

Others target various groups of people. For example, those who are associated with various 12 Step programs can purchase a Bible whose notes emphasize the kind of help a person might receive from Scripture for addiction issues.

There are study Bibles that feature a particular doctrinal stance like the new *Reformation Study Bible* edited by R. C. Sproul. This is a Bible I wanted desperately to like. It features the English Standard Version of the Bible in slightly larger print than the edition published by Crossway Books. It is annotated by scholars who believe the Bible to be the word of God. They are not, for the most part, premillennial. And it contains outstanding articles throughout on various theological topics. But if you are not a Calvinist, some of the articles and notes will frustrate you.

For example, the articles on “Infant Baptism” (p. 37); “Original Sin and Total Depravity” (p. 781); “The Freedom and Bondage of the Will” (p. 1078); “Baptism” (p. 1623); “Perseverance of the Saints” (p. 1627); “Election and Reprobation” (p. 1630); and the notes on Romans 9; Psalm 51; among others are openly Reformed—which is what one should expect from a study Bible with the name, *The Reformation Study Bible*, edited by R. C. Sproul.

I would like to see a McGarvey Study Bible that combines J. W. McGarvey's book, *A Guide to Bible Study* (kept in print by Star Bible), with the ASV or some other reliable translation. Simply place brother McGarvey's comments in the appropriate place throughout the Bible.

I am not familiar with all the study Bibles on the market. I am told that some of our brethren have attempted to produce such a Bible, but I have not seen it. Wayne Jackson was invited to offer brief notes for an ASV pocket New Testament published by Star a number of years ago. (He calls it the King Wayne Version :).)

Hugh Shira offered the best advice I've heard to date. Because the help you get in these study Bibles are abridgements, buy a good reliable translation and buy the helps separately.

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