



Williams, Keith, ed.

***Holy Bible: Mosaic (New Living Translation)***

Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2009. p. M340 + xi + 1319.  
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Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

New Jersey

## Introduction

There's been no shortage of reviews of the *Holy Bible: Mosaic* (hereafter *Mosaic*) in the past month, which is due to Tyndale House's generosity in providing review copies to various bloggers, of whom I am one (thanks to Laura Bartlett and Christy Wong for this review copy!), as well as their wide-ranging blog tour<sup>1</sup>, of which this is my contribution. I won't rehearse the various features of the *Mosaic* because most other reviewers have done so and the official *Mosaic* website<sup>2</sup> can do so more effectively and eloquently than I can.

## Initial Impression

When I initially heard of this Bible I had hoped that it would be fairly slim and serve as an NLT that I could carry around and make regular use of. When it arrived my hopes and dreams were

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.holybiblemosaic.com/blog/?p=45>

<sup>2</sup> For more information on the Holy Bible: Mosaic see the following:

Features – [http://www.holybiblemosaic.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=frontpage&Itemid=2](http://www.holybiblemosaic.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=frontpage&Itemid=2)

Photographs – <http://www.holybiblemosaic.com/slideshow/>

Sample Pages – <http://www.holybiblemosaic.com/trymosaiconline/>

crushed as it's a fairly thick volume. All of the specifically Mosaic content appears as the front matter of this Bible and is printed on different paper than that of the actual Scriptural text which I found interesting, and Keith Williams' explanation of this made a lot of sense, that is, they wanted to keep the Scriptures separate from the other content so as to highlight the difference. In a nutshell, the stuff up front is supposed to lead you to the stuff in the back, i.e., Scripture.

## **Artwork**

As you'll see if you click the link above to the photograph slide show the Mosaic contains a number of beautiful pictures inside, most of which, surprisingly, are contemporary. I say 'surprisingly' because one of the draws of this Bible is that it takes various pieces from throughout the Church's history to form this wonderful mosaic that Christianity is, and there's certainly no lack of extraordinary artwork from the patristic period (and I'm sure there's even some great stuff that dates before this) onward. I was very pleased to see my favorite icon of Jesus the "Christo Pantocrator" from the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul on p. M-145 (I seriously have this as the wallpaper on my cell phone). This is one of the older pieces of artwork in the *Mosaic* dating to the Middle Ages (they have it dated at c. 1050, the only piece older, according to my perusal, was the "Bread and Fish Mosaic," c. 380 on p. M-68). The contemporary artwork comes from artists all over the globe, e.g., Hong Kong, Ecuador, England, Samoa, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Mexico, Cameroon, USA, Iran, etc.

I'd be lying, however, if I said that I found all of the art to be equally appealing, and there's one piece in particular that I found somewhat shocking and a bit disturbing. I have in mind "Jesus Became Poor" by Jake Dorr on p. M-176 which depicts Jesus cutting up credit cards with a pair of scissors and it serves as the introductory image to a section entitled "Wealth" (= Pentecost, Week 3). My problem with this picture is theological, and it's tied to my eschewal of the 'Word of Faith' teaching that Jesus was (financially) rich and became (financially) poor so that we might become (financially) rich. This picture only serves to perpetuate, even if unintentionally, this kind of 'prosperity' preaching that doesn't take an adequate account of Paul's purpose in drawing the analogy.

## **Weekly Meditations**

The weekly meditations are pretty cool, even if completely foreign to me as one who has worshiped in a 'low church' context for my entire adult Christian life. They're arranged according to the "Church Year" (= Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Passion Week, Easter, Pentecost) and include various quotations from Christians throughout history as well as Scripture readings and some blank lines for you to write down any reflections you might have. The Scripture readings are taken from various lectionaries that are in use around the world, but

when I asked my Orthodox friend Esteban Vázquez how they matched up with the Orthodox Church's liturgical readings he said, "not at all."

One thing I would have liked to have seen with regard to the various quotations would have been some more detail in the citations. As it stands in the main body of text we're simply given the author's name and the time they lived. The reader would have a difficult time running down these quotations if they wanted to read them in their broader context or even check them for accuracy. More information is provided in the "Tesserae" (M-333-8) which serve as end notes of a sort, but even here I would have preferred a bit more information (e.g., page numbers as opposed to chapter numbers; places of publication and publishers, i.e., full bibliographic details). There's also the issue of not knowing exactly how each theme connects to the particular week in the Church's calendar. E.g., I'm not sure why Pentecost, Week 28 should be associated with "Creation" (M-326-31), or why Easter, Week 3 should be associated with "Mastering Virtues" (M-134-9). Perhaps this is due to my general ignorance of the Church calendar, but introductory notes on such matters would be a welcome addition.

## **Bible**

As Keith Williams notes in his video introduction<sup>3</sup>, the Scriptures are the most important part of the *Mosaic*. Without them we wouldn't have a *Holy Bible: Mosaic*, we'd just have a standalone devotional book (which, in point of fact, Tyndale House does have: *Devotions for Advent & Devotions for Lent*). So let me say this: the Bible is great! One complaint I had with the NLT Study Bible was that it didn't employ center column referencing. The *Mosaic* does! One complaint that many people (although not me personally) had about the NLT Study Bible was that the words of Christ were in red. Not so with the *Mosaic*! The text itself is small yet still readable, and throughout the margins we find icons that identify the passages of Scripture from the weekly meditations in the front. In the center column we find various (transliterated) words in Hebrew and Greek that are keyed to the "NLT Word Study System with Hebrew/Greek Dictionary and Index" (1196-1209). There's also an extensive 108 page dictionary/concordance at the end of the Bible (1211-1319). Oh, and it goes without saying that the NLT is a fine translation, one of my favorites in fact!

## **Conclusion**

So who is this Bible for? If you're the type of person who enjoys devotional-type Bibles (and mind you that this isn't properly a devotional Bible) then I think you'll enjoy this one immensely. If you're looking for a durable hardcover NLT with some great looking pictures and a wide array of quotations from all sorts of characters throughout Church history then look no further than

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.holybiblemosaic.com/blog/?p=27>

the *Mosaic*. If you simply want to best formatted NLT to date and don't want to wait for a standalone volume then I say go for this one! For what the *Mosaic* set out to do it seems to have done it incredibly well. The question you need to ask is whether or not the *Mosaic* is suited to your needs and interests.