



Mounce, William D. and Robert H. Mounce, eds. *The Zondervan Greek and English Interlinear New Testament (NASB/NIV)*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008. Pp. xii + 1198. Hardcover. \$49.99.

Schwandt, John and C. John Collins, eds. *The English-Greek Reverse Interlinear New Testament: English Standard Version*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006. Pp. 1339. Hardcover. \$49.99.

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Preface

I want to preface this review by stating that these two interlinears are really different animals altogether. *The Zondervan Greek-English Interlinear New Testament* (hereafter ZI = Zondervan Interlinear) stands more in line with what I'm used to in traditional interlinear format and structure. It has the Greek text with the English underneath and marginal translations. The *English-Greek Reverse Interlinear New Testament* (hereafter RI = Reverse Interlinear) begins with the English and places the Greek text beneath it. And because it begins with the English of the ESV, it doesn't contain the translation(s) in the margin.

Aesthetics

Both volumes are beautifully bound, but the first thing one notices is the sheer size difference. Don't let the page count fool you (ZI, 1198 pages; RI, 1339 pages), the ZI is massive (!) while the RI is about the size of your average hardcover Bible. The bibles' dimensions are as follows:

ZI = 7.6 wide x 9.5 high x 2.2 deep in. | **RI** = 6.5 wide x 9.5 high x 1.75 deep in.

These are my measurements which differ slightly (for the RI) from what the websites list. Of course, the ZI is really four NTs in one while the RI is two-in-one, so the size difference is understandable, but if you're looking for an Interlinear to carry to church with you on Sunday then I think it's obvious which one you'll go with.

Greek Texts

The ZI Greek text is based on four Greek texts: (1) The UBS4/NA27; (2) The Greek text underlying the TNIV; (3) The Greek text underlying the NET New Testament; (4) The Textus Receptus. Mounce says, "the text I have included here is simply a compilation of the first three with notes from the TR" (ix). The RI Greek text is based on the NA27. Schwandt and Collins note, "In places where the Greek underlying the ESV differs from Nestle-Aland 27, the Greek line reflects that difference and an explanatory note has been added" (xix).

Layout

Below I have created a picture which shows the layout of the interlinear portions of each Bible. I have included my basic description of each line to the right of the picture. The ZI is on top and the RI on the bottom.

2 ⁷ Ἀβραάμ ἐγέννησεν τὸν Ἰσαάκ, Ἰσαὰκ δὲ ἐγέννησεν τὸν Ἰακώβ, and	← Greek Text
Abraham was the father of ^{the} Isaac, Isaac ^{and} was the father of ^{the} Jacob, and	← Mounce's translation
11 1164 3836 2693 2693 1254 1164 3836 2609 1254	← Goodrick-Kohlenberger Numbering System
n.nsm v.aai.3s d.asm n.asm n.nsm cj v.aai.3s d.asm n.asm	← Parsing Information
we have confidence before God; 22 and whatever we ask we	← ESV translation
→ ἔχομεν ₉ παρρησίαν ₈ πρὸς ₁₀ < τὸν ₁₁ θεὸν ₁₂ > καὶ ₁ < ὃ ₂ ἐὰν ₃ > → αἰτῶμεν ₄ →	← Greek text engineered to follow ESV English
echomen ₉ parrhesian ₈ pros ₁₀ ton ₁₁ theon ₁₂ kai ₁ ho ₂ ean ₃ aitōmen ₄	← Transliteration
VF1PPPIA NASF EA RASM NASM C PRASN T VF1PPPSA	← Parsing Information
2192 3954 4314 3588 2316 2532 3739 1437 154	← Strong's Numbering System

Not pictured above are the textual notes at the bottom of the pages, as well as the translations in the margins of the ZI. They can be seen in the PDF proofs on the Zondervan site.¹ In the left

¹ http://zondervan.com/media/samples/pdf/0310241391_samptxt.pdf

margin there is the NIV translation and in the right margin the NASB translation. Also not seen in the picture above are the textual notes and the parsing key that appears on the bottom of every page of the RI, which can be seen in the sample page on Crossway's website.²

ZI Pros & Cons

As a study tool the ZI is fantastic because it allows the student to compare three different translations (NIV, Mounce's, NASB) with the Greek text. This is definitely a pro, but it also contributes to a con which is the text size in this volume. The ZI is forced to employ rather small print because of this. The Greek text is comparable in point size to the NIV and NASB, but Mounce's translation is smaller. Of course I can understand the need to go with such a small text size, the book is huge as it is.

What at first appeared to be a con, i.e. the GK numbering system, was offset by another pro, which is the 199 page Greek-English dictionary in the back of this volume (999-1198). This is the same dictionary included in *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. I suspect that most people do not have access to dictionaries that employ this numbering system so the inclusion of Mounce's dictionary in this volume is a major help.

And perhaps the biggest pro of all is the elder Mounce's translation. For starters, just the layout of it is better than your standard interlinear. As can be seen in the picture above, Mounce's translation doesn't follow the Greek word order, which allows it to read like any other English translation. But the Greek to English correspondence isn't sacrificed either, as the original word order is preserved in superscripted italics throughout. But the translation itself is quite good. Where else can you read "For this is how God loved the world: he gave his one and only Son that everyone who believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16)? As far as I can tell, the HCSB is the only translation that even comes close to rendering *οὕτως* in such a manner ("in this way", HCSB). But overall, Mounce's translation is fresh and something I'd like to see appear as a separate volume.

And finally, the biggest con is with the parsing codes. Unless you memorize all of the abbreviations you are forced to reference the key in the front of the Bible. There are quite a few abbreviations and many of them use the same letters; e.g., 'p' = plural; present; passive, while 'm' = masculine; middle; imperative). Unless you spend quite a bit of time familiarizing yourself with the Mounce's parsing system and these abbreviations, you'll constantly be turning back to

² <http://www.esv.org/assets/blog/2006.10.interlinear.1john.big.png>

the front of the book. Perhaps including a bookmark with all of this information would serve as a helpful corrective.

RI Pros & Cons

In contrast to the ZI, the RI's text size is not too small. It's a decent size and quite bold, making it easy on the eyes. This was obviously made possible because the only English translation employed is the ESV which serves as the main text rather than a marginal translation or underlying text corresponding to the Greek.

This however contributes to what I perceive as a con, which is that the Greek does not follow the standard order. The editors have included subscripted numbers next to each Greek word that appears out of sequence in order to alert the reader to the correct order; this can be seen in the picture above. This makes following the Greek harder than it needs to be, although to be fair, I believe the editors make a good point when they say, "since Greek is not as dependant on word order as English, often the Greek found in a reverse interlinear is also readable" (xv).

Another pro is the transliteration of all Greek words. I personally prefer to read the Greek characters because the accent marks tell me how to pronounce each word, but for those who aren't familiar with the Greek alphabet these transliterations will prove helpful. In addition to this feature, I appreciate that they've used Strong's numbering system since it is so readily available to students of the Bible. Whether they have a Strong's Dictionary/Concordance in their personal library, or simply access to the internet, it's easy to find and follow.

My favorite feature of the entire Bible is the abbreviation key at the bottom of every page. The entire key runs along the bottom of every two pages but it saves the reader from constant flipping back and forth to decipher the parsing codes. This is extremely helpful, although I can see how some might see it as a crutch. I'd also mention that the RI includes brief book introductions as well as section headings. Many might perceive this as a pro, and I admit that it can be helpful, but I think that it takes away from the look of the Bible and in the case of the section headings, gets in the way.

Finally, I must mention that the RI comes with an English Standard Version Bible Reference Library CD-Rom. This includes: "a fully searchable electronic edition of the ESV text, additional Bible reference works, a documentary on the history of the ESV translation, and a video tutorial to help you get the most out of this free resource" (from the label of CD-Rom).

Conclusion

When it's all said and done I think that both interlinears are fine products, but because they are so different I don't know that I could recommend one over the other. I'd say that if you're an avid user of the ESV then you'll probably want to go with the RI, but if you're more interested in Bible study in general, then the ZI is the way to go. If money is no object then why not get both and call it a day? They really do serve different purposes so I wouldn't think it superfluous to own both. At the end of the day I think the pros far outweigh the cons in each volume, but each has room for improvement.