

Two web-based tools for serious Biblical engagement

The Church has probably given rise to more printed materials than just about any other institution. After all one of the great defining moments for the Church is when ordinary people can have access to their own Bible translated into their own language. But the advent of the printing press not only put the Bible into the hands of many it also allowed other material to be made widely available. Those in formal theological education are prepared for the ministry that lies ahead, to a large extent, through the wisdom made available to them through the printed word. They value that wisdom not only for their training but also throughout their future ministries.

While the printed word still holds an important place, the electronic word vies for a place alongside the book. So, when the book can be accessed electronically it means that a whole library becomes accessible and portable.

Two web-based tools offer just this in relation to Bible engagement. They differ in scale, in accessibility and in sophistication but both have something to offer to those seeking serious, scholarly engagement with Scripture.

Scripture Tools for Every Person [STEP]

www.stepbible.org

As the STEP website says it "is an online resource making freely available serious Bible study software from the international team of researchers based at Tyndale House, Cambridge." Tyndale House is a Christian community dedicated to researching all the primary evidence relevant to the study of the Bible.

"It is our vision to equip churches in every country with the tools to study the Bible in its original languages from the best that Cambridge and international scholars have to offer," said Dr Peter Williams, Warden of Tyndale House. *"While we've spent years pre-loading STEP with unique and cutting edge content, this re-launch is a significant stride toward making this accessible for all."*

Simon Sykes, Librarian and Chief Operations Officer explains: *"The church is well served by an array of free Bible study tools available online, and by paid proprietary software on the desktop. We looked at both those models and realised that Tyndale House was in a unique position to combine them - the latest in biblical scholarship; online and at no cost."*

Some of the main features of STEP are:

- **Reading the text with** references, notes, headings, comparisons, interleaved and interlinear
- **Related passages** in popups, in context, in multiple versions, in any language
- **Interlinear Bibles** in English, Greek & Hebrew and a few other languages
- **Original text** as Hebrew/Greek, transliteration, with grammar or English glosses
- **Hundreds of Bibles** & commentaries in different languages and styles



Additional Material: Two web-based tools for serious Bible engagement

- **Original language** vocabulary in any Bible by hovering over the verse number
- **Subject searches** leading to main passages, sorted lists and related verses
- **Word searches** in any language, or by underlying original text or combinations
- **Greek and Hebrew** dictionaries

The programme is easily accessible and relatively easy to navigate around although I imagine that, like most software packages, users will find greater value in the features and find them more useful as they work with them and plumb the greater depths that can be offered.

The content within the programme is the product of the work of many able volunteers and will, I imagine, be constantly updated and probably upgraded.

Logos Anglican Software

<https://www.logos.com/anglican>

Logos describe their mission as one “to serve the church. We do this by fostering a culture of service and innovation, by creating Bible study tools that connect people to the Word, and by hiring awesome, fun people” They offer Bible study software, along with resources for Christian living.

In relation to serious engagement with the Bible they offer six software packages from a Starter package containing 182 resources through four further upgraded stages to the Diamond package with 1,595 resources. Although the number of resources increases with each package they cover some of the same topic areas:

- Language tools
- Commentaries
- Reference books
- Different translations of the Bible
- Devotional and spiritual formation resources
- Lectionaries
- Maps, photos and media
- Inter-linear Bibles
- Modern theology section
- Liturgy, hymnody and worship

Their website has a number of helpful introductory videos that explain the different aspects of what is offered by each package. The programme is easily accessible and relatively easy to navigate around although it will certainly be the case in relation to Logos that users will find the features become more useful as they work with them and plumb the greater depths of what can be offered. Logos also has the possibility of customising the package to your own preferences, interests and the kind of focus you want the tool to bring to you.



Some further thoughts and comments

Both these software packages offer valuable tools for deeper Bible engagement. They bring extensive resources literally to the fingertips of the users making what is often cumbersome cross referencing of several books a thing of the past. If you have a computer with reasonable specifications then both offer real benefit to the user.

STEP, at present, does not go far from helping engagement with the Biblical text but nevertheless offers the possibility of drawing on considerable scholarship to aid that engagement. Logos offers not only this but a wide library of related writings that increase in volume as you move up the ladder towards the Diamond product. BUT Logos is expensive (in July 2014 just under \$300 for the Starter package and just under \$2,000 for Diamond – both have payment schemes to enable smaller monthly payments). Having said it is expensive I would want to add that it is excellent value as you not only get the Bible engagement tools but also access to a considerable biblically orientated library. Logos are also prepared to enter into negotiations to lower their prices for bulk orders.

In conclusion, it seems that both Tyndale House and Logos are doing the Church a great service in that they are not only bringing together in one place what previously would have had to be held on several bookshelves but they are also, via their software, enabling the reader to cross reference in a way that is impossible with the printed word.

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