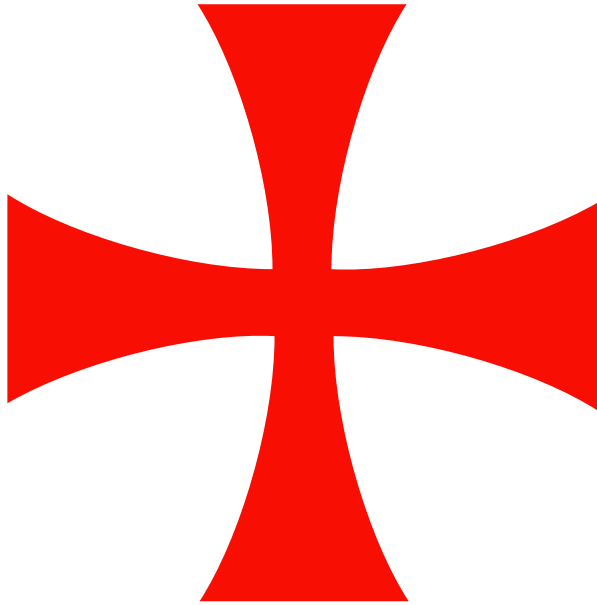


Oecumenicum



Holy Bible Trilogy

United States Christian Bible
Compiled by Eric Muss-Barnes

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Holy Bible Trilogy

United States Christian Bible

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Hardcover, paperback, and ebook editions of this book contain the complete and identical text. Not one word has been altered or omitted.

This *United States Christian Bible (USCB)* of the Holy Bible is based upon the *Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition (DRA)*, the *World English Bible (WEB)*, and *American Standard Version (ASV)* text, sourced from BibleGateway.com and eBible.org respectively.

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Exordium

AUTHOR'S NOTE: The *Oecumenicum* is a biblical trilogy of three volumes. The opening exordium and the closing postlude are identical in all three books.

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Good day, dear reader.

Thank you for reading this introduction. Yes, I know it is titled with a pompous word like “Exordium”, but I promise this brief essay shall remain very down-to-earth and easy to read. An “exordium” is just a fancy word for an introduction. Despite the lofty chapter title, this is not an arrogant and stuffy collegiate thesis, as one would find in most biblical openings.

Allow me to introduce myself.

My name is Eric Muss-Barnes. I am a novelist and a writer, but I am not a “biblical scholar” by any means. Nevertheless, I am the lone individual who formatted and compiled this Holy Bible, called the *Oecumenicum*, starting in the summer of 2020 and finishing in 2023.

The word “*Oecumenicum*” means “ecumenical” in Latin, and “ecumenical” means something shared between all denominations of Christianity. Since I pray this version of the Holy Bible will be enjoyed by all people, regardless of their faith, the *Oecumenicum* seemed an appropriate title.

What exactly is a Holy Bible?

The Holy Bible is, in essence, a library of different books, all published together. These multiple biblical books are a compilation of religious writings, gathered over the course of many centuries, which define a particular faith in a divine Creator of the world. Some of the “books” are brief letters, some are short stories, while others are lengthy doctrines and teachings. Originally, these ancient texts were written in the languages of Greek, Aramaic and Hebrew.

While the scriptures and books which comprise the Holy Bible are thousands of years old, the Holy Bible itself is only a few centuries old. Around the year 367, the Christian Orthodox Church became credited as being the first group of people to compile all of these random scriptures and writings into a single book, called a Holy Bible.

Which religious faiths follow the Holy Bible?

All of the books collected in the Holy Bible are only followed by the Christian faith. However, there are two other religious groups (Jews/Hebrews and Islam/Muslims) who believe in *some* books collected in the Holy Bible. Together, these three religions (Christianity/Judaism/Islam) are often called “Abrahamic religions” because their faiths all share a foundation in the original books of the bible and the stories of a holy man named Abraham.

That original and oldest group of biblical books is called the “Old Testament” by Christians and the “Torah” by Jewish people. Faith in the sanctity of these teachings is shared by all three Abrahamic religions.

The second group of books (starting with the book of *Matthew*) is called the “New Testament” by Christians, and conveys teachings from a person named Jesus of Nazareth. Hebrews and Muslims believe Jesus of Nazareth was a great prophet, while Christians believe Jesus of Nazareth was a divine son of God and a messiah.

That is a simplified explanation, but as a general overview, that’s what the Holy Bible is, how it came to be created, and who follows the teachings in it. With over 5 billion people following the three Abrahamic religions, the Holy Bible represents the spiritual faith of a majority of humanity.

For a lone individual to publish a Bible raises many questions.

Why did I do it?

How could I create a project this huge by myself?

What inspired an ordinary American citizen to make a Bible?

After all, there have been countless printings and editions of the Holy Bible over the centuries. Why make another?

What makes this Holy Bible different from all those before it?

Was I called by the Holy Spirit to write this book?

Those are all valid inquiries.

Allow me to answer by sharing the story of how this project came to pass . . .

Born and raised in a working-class Roman Catholic household in Cleveland, Ohio, like many Christians, I had never actually read the Holy Bible. I heard countless out-of-context passages of scripture quoted at Mass in church, of course, but despite attending 12 years of parochial school, I never sat down and read the Good Book from cover to cover.

I attempted reading the Holy Bible as a 12 year old. I was in school, opened a copy, and was baffled. It was filled with weird brackets, parenthesis, superscript enumerations, chapter markers, multiple columns, margin notes, and footnotes. It was a formatting nightmare! How could anyone possibly grasp such a terrible slop of

confusion? I could barely read a paragraph. It looked like some sort of convoluted theorem by a mad scientist, not ancient stories about creation and morality.

Although I lack the vocabulary or understanding to define what He or She may be, I have always had faith in the existence of our Creator or Creators. Despite rational incredulity and healthy skepticism, I have never been an atheist. When you study the world around us, it's obvious chaos cannot create such stable patterns; nature and science are the irrefutable evidence that "something more" is at work in the mechanics of the cosmos. Noble gasses and raw elements can not transform into life and consciousness. While I'm not wise or intelligent enough to explain *why* the universe exists, surely the complicated structure of the universe can't possibly be random chance. Someone, or something, either accidentally or intentionally, *made* all of this world. While I have no guess as to the purpose, I have always had faith this universe was created, not something which formed by accident.

Atheism is a strange religion, because an atheist is a person who has faith in nothing. They believe there is no cause, no creation, no purpose, and all the orderly laws of physics and existence merely manifested by happenstance. No reason. No source.

POOF! Here is a universe!

Thinking an orderly universe sprung out of chaotic nothingness is not a very logical or scientific viewpoint. Believing life and consciousness spontaneously appeared from a galactic soup of molten elements is the equivalent of having faith in magic. Atheism equals sorcery.

Science acknowledges cause and effect. What caused sentience to spring forth from noble gases and nothingness? As human beings with a consciousness, we are the miraculous embodiment of the universe contemplating its own existence. How can that be? Scientifically speaking, human beings are little more than sacks of chemical compounds.

Chemical compounds can't think or reason.

Yet, we do.

Why?

How?

There *has* to be a cause.

Whether your name for that cause is the Creator, the Goddess, the Divine, God, Allah, the Great Spirit, Yahweh, or J.R. "Bob" Dobbs, it doesn't matter. But pretending the universe is a cosmic accident is very illogical. Chalking up this magnificent universe to random chance seems rather crazy and, well . . . unscientific.

So, no, I can't define "God" but, I have never been an atheist.

However, like many people of my era, my devotion to ancient religions waned in my teens. While I speak to God often, I haven't set foot in Mass for decades.

Beginning in the summer of the year 2020, within the course of a few short years, numerous tragic historical events seemed to be unleashed on the world all at once. One evening, pondering a source of comfort in those uncertain hours, I was inspired with a simple thought, "Maybe I should finally read a copy of the Holy Bible."

Yes.

If I wish to know the will of God, to find an answer to why the world was enduring such turmoil, why not read His word directly?

Of course. I should buy a Holy Bible. Maybe it contains answers.

When most people are struck with such a thought, they will simply go to a bookstore, and purchase the first Holy Bible they see.

Not I.

I am a lifelong geeky nerd who must research *everything* I do.

The thought of buying a Holy Bible filled me with questions.

What kind of Holy Bible should I buy?

There are many translations, I think . . . Right? I wasn't sure.

Which translation is best?

How does the print quality differ between publishers?

What makes a \$200 Holy Bible better quality than a \$30 one?

Where are the countries different Holy Bibles are printed in?

All of those questions, and more, began to inform my research.

As I did more and more investigating, I wasn't able to find any copies of the Holy Bible which appealed to me. I found myself disappointed with at least one aspect of every single version of the Holy Bible on the market. Permit me to explain a few examples of the shortcomings I discovered.

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a.) Because the Holy Bible is extremely long, and most publishers attempt to fit the entire book in a single volume, the paper is often very thin. In fact, the paper is so thin, you frequently see ink bleeding through on the backside of each page. As a result, many publishers boast a selling point of how opaque their paper happens to be. In my opinion, this is an awful compromise. The Holy Bible should be printed on quality paper, not flimsy and fragile onion skins. No reader should be forced to tolerate poor paper translucence, just because printers can't figure out how to pack an adequate quantity of pages in a book.

b.) As mentioned earlier, the original scriptures were written in the languages of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. There are a vast

number of English language translations of the Holy Bible, and most are designated by initials. For example:

King James Version (KJV)

American Standard Version (ASV)

New American Bible Revised Edition (NABRE)

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

And literally about two dozen more.

As I studied their layouts, I found I disliked the formatting of all existing translations, for one reason or another.

c.) I learned, in the late 20th and early 21st century, a majority of current editions of the Holy Bible are printed in foreign nations. As an American citizen, I prefer to own a Holy Bible printed by my fellow Americans, in the United States of America. I was shocked and disappointed to find only a small handful of bible editions being printed in the USA.

d.) I wasn't pleased with the layout of the text in most editions. Many are "Bible Study" editions, cluttered with comments and opinions of modern authors and clergy. Why? That struck me as exceptionally arrogant and blasphemous. Why on earth do modern theologians feel the need to explain the Word of God to you? To me, that shows they are terribly conceited, woefully disrespectful to the competence of the translators, and think very little of your reading comprehension skills. The Word of God deserves more reverence. And so do you.

I wanted to read a Holy Bible with the pure Word of God, unencumbered with insipid, magniloquent commentaries, chapter numbers, verse numbers, and cross-references spoiling the natural flow of the prose. While this rare style of Holy Bible does exist, there are only a scant few available.

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Those are a few examples of things I found objectionable.

I began to think there wasn't a Holy Bible out there for me.

Frustrated, I was struck with the idea, "I've published 11 books, including compiling all the founding documents of the United States. Why not just . . . print my *own* Holy Bible?"

That sounded like the perfect solution!

I could simply take the text of an existing Holy Bible, format it into a style which was easy to read, and print a multiple-volume set of books, so I don't have to use thin paper. Plus, I would have it printed here, in the United States of America, at an American printer, employing fellow Americans.

That was my answer.

If I can't find a quality Holy Bible to purchase, I'll make my own!

Now, the question became, which version, which translation, should I use to print *my* edition? Obviously, I wanted to source a version which is considered the most "scholarly" and true to the original texts. For centuries, there have been many translations of the Holy Bible, with some versions considered more historically "accurate" than others.

As I attempted to locate the translation which scholars cited as the most "pure", I was in for another stunning revelation.

Regrettably, I also discovered, there are very few Holy Bible translations in the "public domain" and most are copyrighted.

What does this mean?

"Public domain" means the text is free to the public. Anyone can use it. Anyone can publish it. No one owns it.

"Copyrighted" means the text of a book is owned by a writer or publisher who has the exclusive legal right to publish that book. Most translations of the Holy Bible are copyrighted by companies (some of which are hundreds of years old) who reserve exclusive rights to publish *their* version of the Holy Bible.

This was shocking news to me!

As an experienced novelist, I knew modern books and novels are all copyrighted. But I was stunned to discover scriptures, written thousands of years ago, by anonymous authors long-deceased, were copyrighted by present-day corporations!

I had no idea.

Therefore, for legal reasons, I was not allowed to publish my own Holy Bible, unless I could source a translation which was in the "public domain" and not copyrighted. In my exploration, I only found eight English versions of the Holy Bible in the public domain:

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American Standard Version (ASV)
Darby Translation (DARBY)
Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition (DRA)
King James Version (KJV)
English Revised Version (ERV)
World English Bible (WEB)
World Messianic Bible (WMB)
Young's Literal Translation (YLT)

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Those editions became my only options for source material.

All other translations are copyrighted.

Created in 1901, the ASV is frequently cited as one of the most well-respected versions of the Holy Bible, because it is regarded as one of the most dutiful English translations of the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek text. For this reason, I decided to base a majority of my rendition of the Holy Bible on the ASV edition.

The 1901 ASV was published by Thomas Nelson & Sons and is derived from the 1885 English Revised Version (ERV). The ERV is a revision of the 1769 King James Version (KJV) which was an update to the 1611 King James Version (KJV). The ASV uses a translation method which is known as *formal equivalence* or *word-for-word* translation. The New Testament texts used in the ASV were the Westcott-Hort and Tregelles Greek texts. The use of archaic language (such as “thee” and “thou” instead of “you”) makes the ASV more “accurate” than some modern translations, along with honoring strict literalness of the original scriptures.

I was determined to faithfully preserve the original ASV text and not alter a single phrase or the fundamental grammatical structure. My goal was to simply format the passages so it read like a novel, but I would not change a word.

The most troublesome and valid lingering criticism of all biblical translations is a simple and rational one: How do we know the scriptures haven’t been changed and modified over the centuries? How do we confirm the text is original? How do we know these teachings are valid?

In short, we can’t.

Unless you have access to the most ancient of scrolls, and the ability to read their original languages, you can’t confirm or deride the authenticity of any translation. We just trust they are close.

Skeptics could refer to the 1862 YLT by Robert Young, or the 1890 DARBY by John Nelson Darby, which are both first-generation English translations, taken directly from Greek and Hebrew writings. But, even those translations were sourced from medieval texts, which were 1000 years older than the first Orthodox bibles.

The bigger question may be, why are you so cynical?

If the accuracy can’t be confirmed, why presume it’s incorrect?

Four iterations of translation is not far from the original texts.

Personally, I trust the ASV is accurate and pray I am correct.

However, in my opinion, there are also a number of problems with the formatting of the original ASV. Here are elements in the ASV which I didn’t like and sought to rectify:

a.) All the ASV pronouns referring to God are lowercase. From my childhood, in Roman Catholic school, I was taught, when using pronouns to refer to God, those pronouns must always be capitalized, even if it is in the middle of a sentence. The reason for this is simply to show respect and reverence to God.

This concept carries across many faiths. For example, Jewish people replace the letter “o” with a dash when writing the word “God” and spell the word as “G-d” instead.

I once thought that was a bit odd and silly, since the Hebrews are simply replacing one alphabetical character for another, until I realized capitalizing Godly pronouns is also replacing a letter out of respect. I shouldn’t judge the grammatical idiosyncrasies of others too harshly, when I’m perpetuating equivalent ones of my own!

In doing my research of various bible translations, I was mortified to discover *many* versions of the Holy Bible do not follow this guideline of pronoun capitalization. I decided to capitalize all pronouns of God, because I believe He deserves that respect. Please forgive me if I made some mistakes and didn’t capitalize *every* single Godly pronoun. Remember, I formatted all 2000 pages of the *Oecumenicum* all alone, word-by-word, with no help from anyone. So, over the course of many years and thousands of pages, it’s quite likely I missed a few pronouns and made some errors. I fully expect to have made typographical errors. I did my best.

Sometimes, it can also be difficult to know *when* to capitalize Godly pronouns. For example, when an angel of God is speaking on His behalf. There are long passages of dialog in the *Book of Esdras*, for instance, where Esdras is speaking to the angel Uriel, but Uriel is conveying the words of God. So, should the pronouns used by Esdras be capitalized in those moments, when he is speaking to Uriel? I felt they should be, because it was the *presence* of the Lord which was being addressed by Esdras, not Uriel himself.

Obviously, some folks may disagree with my choice, and say the pronouns shouldn’t be capitalized in that instance, but I had to make a decision and stick with it, in an attempt to maintain some consistency.

Likewise, in the New Testament, the pronouns of Jesus of Nazareth remain lowercase, not to dismiss his divinity, but to respect his humanity. Once again, some may disagree, but all the pronouns of Jesus are lowercase in most translations of the Holy Bible, consequently lowercase pronouns are maintained for Jesus Christ in the *Oecumenicum*.

Additionally, if God tells us His name, it’s disrespectful to *not* use it. Refusing to type God’s name because it’s “too holy” is dumb. If you introduced yourself as “Bob” and someone said, “Well, I’m

going to call you ‘Frank’ out of respect,” you wouldn’t find that very respectful! Right? If you tell folks your name is “Bob” that’s what you *want* them to call you, not to invent a different name for you!

The proper name of God, commonly used in the Old Testament, is either Yahweh or Elohim.

Therefore, all references to the name of God have been set to “Yahweh” simply for the sake of consistency and out of reverence to Him. Therefore, any book which may have used variations of His name, such as “Jehovah” or “LORD”, have all been respectfully changed to “Yahweh” instead. Besides, historical research suggests “Jehovah” is a mistranslated spelling of “Yahweh” made back in the Middle Ages. The name “Jehovah” is apparently nothing more than a long-accepted mistake, which became normalized, simply because people failed to question the origin. So, we are sticking with Yahweh for the entire *Oecumenicum*.

b.) The ASV never uses beginning or ending quotes for any dialog. This is a terrible grammatical practice, making the text exceptionally difficult to read and understand. There is also a tendency to use an overabundance of pronouns during dialog, and rarely use proper names. Consequently, much of the ASV dialog between two people reads as:

And he said Blah, blah, blah.

And then he said Blah, blah, blah.

And he said Blah, blah, blah.

Using “he” over and over, when the dialog is alternating between multiple speakers, also is very confusing. Instead, the dialog should be written like a modern book, using a formatting like:

And Jacob said, “Blah, blah, blah.”

And then Esau said, “Blah, blah, blah.”

And Jacob said, “Blah, blah, blah.”

So, I fixed both of those dialog problems. I added start and end quotation marks, to every bit of dialog; and replaced copious pronouns with proper names, anytime such a replacement would provide clarity.

c.) Like most renditions of the Holy Bible, the ASV contains chapter and verse numbers. Obviously, the original source material for scriptures did not utilize chapter or verse numbers. But, many people are surprised to learn, the original versions of the Holy Bible also lacked chapters and verses, for over 1000 years. Chapters and verses were added around the 16th century.

If you permit me the indulgence, one could even argue chapters, verses and annotations are sacrilegious. After all, the book of *Deuteronomy* says, “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it.”

Furthermore, the book of *Revelation* says, "I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto them, Yahweh shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book, and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book."

Of course, I'm being somewhat facetious, since I doubt those edicts were a reference to grammatical structures and translations. Nevertheless, adding the presence of chapter and verse numbers tends to be very distracting, cluttering up the page and diverting attention from a comfortable reading experience. Therefore, all chapter and verse numbers are removed from the *Oecumenicum*, to honor and respect the original scriptures. This style of formatting is often called a "Reader's Bible", as it makes reading so much easier and far more pleasant. In my opinion, the removal of chapters and verses is one of the most important and essential elements of the entire *Oecumenicum* project.

d.) As chapter and verse numbers were removed, so too have enumerated books of the Holy Bible been consolidated. In other words, books such as *1 Samuel* and *2 Samuel* have been concatenated into a single *Samuel*. Scriptures like *1 Corinthians* and *2 Corinthians* are now joined in a singular *Corinthians*. As with the addition of chapter and verse numbers, numerically dividing biblical books is illogical and unnecessary.

In addition to consolidating the books, all of them have also been given single-word titles. For example, the *Song of Songs* is simply called *Songs* and the *Prayer Of Manasses* is simply called *Manasses*. This change was made simply for aesthetic reasons. About 90% of biblical books are one-word titles. Making all books a single word just lends a cleaner and nicer consistency.

e.) Some paragraphs of the ASV are run-on paragraphs and difficult to read. For example, an entire conversation between God, Adam, and Eve, in *Genesis*, is written in a single paragraph. Combine that with the lack of quotation marks, and it can be very confusing to differentiate each speaker. Therefore, such antiquated formatting has been changed, to allow for a more pleasingly flow of text on the page. Another odd bit of formatting I removed, an annoying grammatical idiosyncrasy, was excessive use of the word "And" at the start of many sentences. Certain biblical books begin nearly every sentence with "And" which is a very awkward and unnecessary word to tack onto the beginning of every single sentence. Constantly seeing And, And, And, And, is just pointless.

Therefore, perplexing stanzas of dialog like this:

And he said, Blah, blah, blah. And then Esau said, Blah, blah, blah. And he said, Blah, blah, blah.

Have been changed to something more legible like this:

Jacob said, "Blah, blah, blah."

Then Esau said, "Blah, blah, blah."

Jacob said, "Blah, blah, blah."

f.) Many Christians are unaware there are three major denominations of Christianity. One of the biggest discrepancies between them, are the quantity of books in their respective Holy Bibles. The three primary Christian denominations are:

- *Orthodox* (original compilers of the Holy Bible)
- *Catholics* (removed books from Orthodox bibles)
- *Protestants* (removed books from Catholic bibles)

Without diverging into a long history lesson, allow me to summarize how this happened.

Earlier, I explained the Christian Orthodox church is credited with inventing the Holy Bible, because they were the first to compile numerous scriptures into a single volume, which we now call the Holy Bible. However, because there is such a vast quantity of "holy text" source material, disagreements arose among scholars over which texts are legitimately sacred (i.e. "inspired by God") and which are not.

Bickering over the sanctity of scriptures was the predominant catalyst for the creation of the three distinct denominations in the Christian church.

Such debates created three "categories" of biblical books.

1. *Canonical*: Books every denomination agrees are scripture.

2. *Apocrypha/Deuterocanon*: Books only certain denominations believe are scripture, but all acknowledge as "instructive" writing. Depending upon the exact denomination, there are typically about 6 to 8 apocryphal books, which only appear in Orthodox and Catholic editions of the Holy Bible.

3. *Pseudepigrapha*: Countless scores of "extra" books which are accepted by some denominations as scripture, and rejected by others. Scholars continue arguing over the legitimacy of these books, thereby causing the list of pseudepigrapha scriptures to be in constant flux.

Therefore, every denomination of a Christian Holy Bible contains the same canonical books. Every edition of a Catholic Holy Bible contains a few extra apocryphal books, while an Orthodox Holy Bible contains even more deuterocanonical books. Some denominations of Holy Bibles will occasionally contain some (but never all) of the pseudepigrapha books.

The ASV is a Protestant bible, thereby removing a number of deuterocanonical books from the Old Testament.

While it would be daunting, and near impossible, to include all the fluctuating books of the pseudepigrapha, I wanted this Holy Bible to be as complete as possible and inclusive of the majority of denominations of Christianity. Consequently, I couldn't rely solely on the incomplete Protestant text of the ASV. Some books of the apocrypha can be found in the WEB and DRA (both of which are "public domain" translations) and using those resources, I have included the deuterocanon, to make this a more comprehensive and ecumenical Christian work, respecting the faith of all denominations. I also included a 1917 public domain translation, by Robert Henry Charles, of the famous *Book of Enoch*, from the pseudepigrapha, because I personally feel the *Book of Enoch* holds relevant scriptural value. (Perhaps my research and contribution to the controversy qualifies me as an amateur "biblical scholar" after all!)

The sanctity and validity of scriptures has been debated and determined by scholars and clergy for centuries. Those who have hidden and omitted scriptures from ancient Bibles have no right to censor and determine the Word of God on your behalf. I have no right to keep biblical scriptures away from you, just because others have done so in the past.

I decided, the most ethical solution, was to restore and integrate as many books as possible, and allow you, the reader, to determine which books felt right and hold value in your life.

The *Oecumenicum* is an ecumenical Holy Bible for all people. You are the only person in the world with the authority to define your relationship to God. You must decide, not scholars or clergy, which books of the Holy Bible speak to your heart.

As mentioned earlier, all three Abrahamic faiths consider differing sets of biblical books "true" to their beliefs.

Jews believe the Old Testament, which they call the "Torah".

Christians believe New Testament covenants replace the Torah.

Muslims hold the Torah, New Testament, and Qur'an as sacred.

In fact, Muslims believe their holy book, the Qur'an, is the actual Word of God, verbally dictated by the angel Gabriel to the prophet Mohammad, and is therefore not "inspired" by Yahweh, but is His actual speech. That is why the Qur'an is revered as exceptionally holy to followers of Islam.

Such sidenotes may not seem relevant to the *Oecumenicum*, but it provides some historical context, regarding the sanctity of this book, in relation to similar faiths.

g.) Every now and then, the ASV uses oddly-placed punctuation in the form of unnecessary semi-colons, hyphens, or failure to capitalize the start of a sentence. It stands to reason, a translation done over a century ago is going to have various grammatical and punctuation idiosyncrasies which have fallen out of practice, and make for slightly confusing sentence structures. As often as appropriate, these types of anomalies have been repaired too.

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Those caveats are the only elements altered in the formatting of the *Oecumenicum*. I did not change anything contained in the ASV, WEB or DRA, beyond those minor items mentioned above:

- Capitalizing all God-based pronouns
- Consistently using “Yahweh” as the proper name of God
- Adding quotation marks where necessary
- Clarifying conversational pronouns
- Eliminating chapter and verse numbers
- Consolidating books to remove numeric designations
- Formatting sentences into modern paragraph structures
- Returning most Apocrypha books to the Old Testament
- Fixing punctuation/grammar oddities

I call this translation, the *United States Christian Bible (USCB)*.

Because the text of the Holy Bible is so lengthy and verbose, it was not possible to publish the USCB in a single book. Therefore, the USCB has been divided into three volumes.

For those who are wondering, yes, the text of the USCB is in the public domain, falling under a Creative Commons BY-SA 4.0 license. I will not blaspheme, like many other publishers and organizations, by taking “ownership” of the Word of God.

Yes, I am selling these *Oecumenicum* books for a profit, but I justify those profits from my many years of time invested into the layout and formatting, not from claiming any sacrilegious “possession” or “ownership” over the scriptures themselves.

However, I do reserve exclusive rights to publish the *Oecumenicum* and the *United States Christian Bible* under those specific trademarked names.

In other words, others may publish a Holy Bible based upon the text of the USCB, but no publisher may ever designate their version as a “USCB edition” and they may not use the trademarked title “*Oecumenicum*” for their books. To phrase the caveat another way, you may use the USCB text as a foundation, and modify the layout,

as I did with the ASV, but I am the only one legally allowed to publish the USCB text in this exact format.

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I don't expect anyone else will be publishing their own Holy Bible, but I wanted to include all of that, just in case.

For those who have never read the Holy Bible, and this will be your first time, I welcome you. Although I do believe in a Creator and a Higher Power, I am also a passionate writer and novelist. Consequently, I hold a great deal of respect and reverence for the Holy Bible, not simply from a theological standpoint, but also from a purely literary standpoint. As a looking glass, reaching back into ancient cultures, stories in the Holy Bible prove people were just as emotional, articulate and introspective 2000 years ago as they are today. All too often, it seems the present day world dismisses the emotional and intellectual complexity of humanity from the past. We arrogantly and ignorantly presume those born thousands of years ago were predominantly illiterate, comparatively uneducated, and simple-minded, when in fact, many were more philosophical, and commanded a wider vocabulary, than the average citizen of Western culture in the 21st century.

As for the question of how I could create something this huge, all by myself, well, when I began this project, I had already published 11 books and over a million words. Yes, organizing a Holy Bible is a massive undertaking, but all I did was nicely format existing scriptures. I didn't translate anything or write anything new. I just did a lot of grammatical compiling. Yes, it was a daunting and enormous project, which required years of my life to complete, but the work progressed like any other book; do a little each day and tenacity prevails.

There you have it, my dear readers.

Now you know my story of how a lone individual decided to publish a Holy Bible, all by himself.

The end result of my adventure was the *Oecumenicum*, the only Holy Bible in the world, with all of the following features:

- A precise and faithful reprinting of the ASV translation text
- Includes the DRA/WEB deuterocanon books
- Includes the 1917 Book of Enoch
- Compiled using modern dialog punctuation and formatting
- Honors pronouns of God with capitalization
- Consistently uses “Yahweh” as the proper name of God
- Multiple-volume set
- Printed upon quality paper which is not translucent
- No distracting chapter or verse numbers
- No distracting footnotes or references
- Multiple numeral scriptures are consolidated
- Offered as copyright-free in the “public domain”
- And finally, as a 5th generation, patriotic American citizen, I

am proud to declare, all USA purchases of the USCB are printed and bound in the United States of America.

Truly, there has never been another Holy Bible, in the history of the world, quite like this one. Because this version of the Holy Bible is so unique and distinctive, I wanted to endow it with an equally unique and distinctive title, which is why I have called the collective volumes the *Oecumenicum*.

To my knowledge, a multivolume, deuterocanonical, reader’s bible, printed in the United States, and compiled by just one person, has never been attempted before. No other version of the Holy Bible, in the entirety of human history, mirrors all the features I have imbued into the *United States Christian Bible*. The *Oecumenicum* stands as the most accurate, unencumbered, legible, pure, complete, all-American Holy Bible ever created.

The *Oecumenicum* is scripture formatted like a novel.

The *Oecumenicum* is what I wished the bible was when I was 12.

May it remain among your family heirlooms for generations.

I pray thee, enjoy it.

Eric Muss-Barnes

June 2020

www.Oecumenicum.com