

THE BIBLE'S INFLUENCE

ENGLISH LITERATURE ♦ AMERICAN HISTORY ♦ SOCIAL STUDIES
ART ♦ MUSIC ♦ CULTURE ♦ MEDIA
MOVIES & TV ♦ CHARACTER ♦ FLOURISHING

The Bible's Influence

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The Bible: Civilization's essential book

By DAVID KEENE

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

It was 1952 and as a seven year old who had a Sunday School perfect attendance record for a year, I was presented with my very own King James Bible. I still have it and still refer to it.

I wasn't able to make my way through it at seven, but after a few years I decided it was time to read every word and digest as much of it as possible. Millions of others like me had done the same since the first versions of what we know today as the "Holy Bible" were put together by disciples of Jesus Christ and those who

knew him some years after his death.

Those early authors were, it is believed by Christians and Jews alike, recording the word of God for the benefit of mankind. The written Bible was needed as Christianity spread and as those who had known Jesus themselves died off. For centuries, biblical texts were laboriously copied by hand by monks to preserve and spread the word until the mid-15th century when moveable type was invented and the Gutenberg Bible appeared in 1454. Since then some six billion Bibles have been printed, distributed and devoured by Christians the world over.

Tyrants, ancient and modern, have tried over centuries to burn them, deny the Bible's content and suppress those who believed with Thomas Aquinas that "The author of Holy Scripture is God."

Christians were sentenced to Stalin's Gulag for distributing Bibles, killed by Mao's troops for spreading its words and are today beheaded, tortured and burned alive in parts of the world for doing the same. But the words of the Bible have never been stamped out or its influence diminished. It is not only the most widely published and read book in the history of the world, but the most influential.

Intellectuals, historians and philosophers can argue about whether it was God's words that its more than forty authors transcribed or which version and/or translation of those words is accurate. But believing Christians and Jews believe to day as they have for centuries that God either virtually dictated the book to its authors. Orthodox Jews believe for instance that the first five books of

the Old Testament, known to them as the Torah, came into existence or were inspired to their authors to accurately reflect God's words.

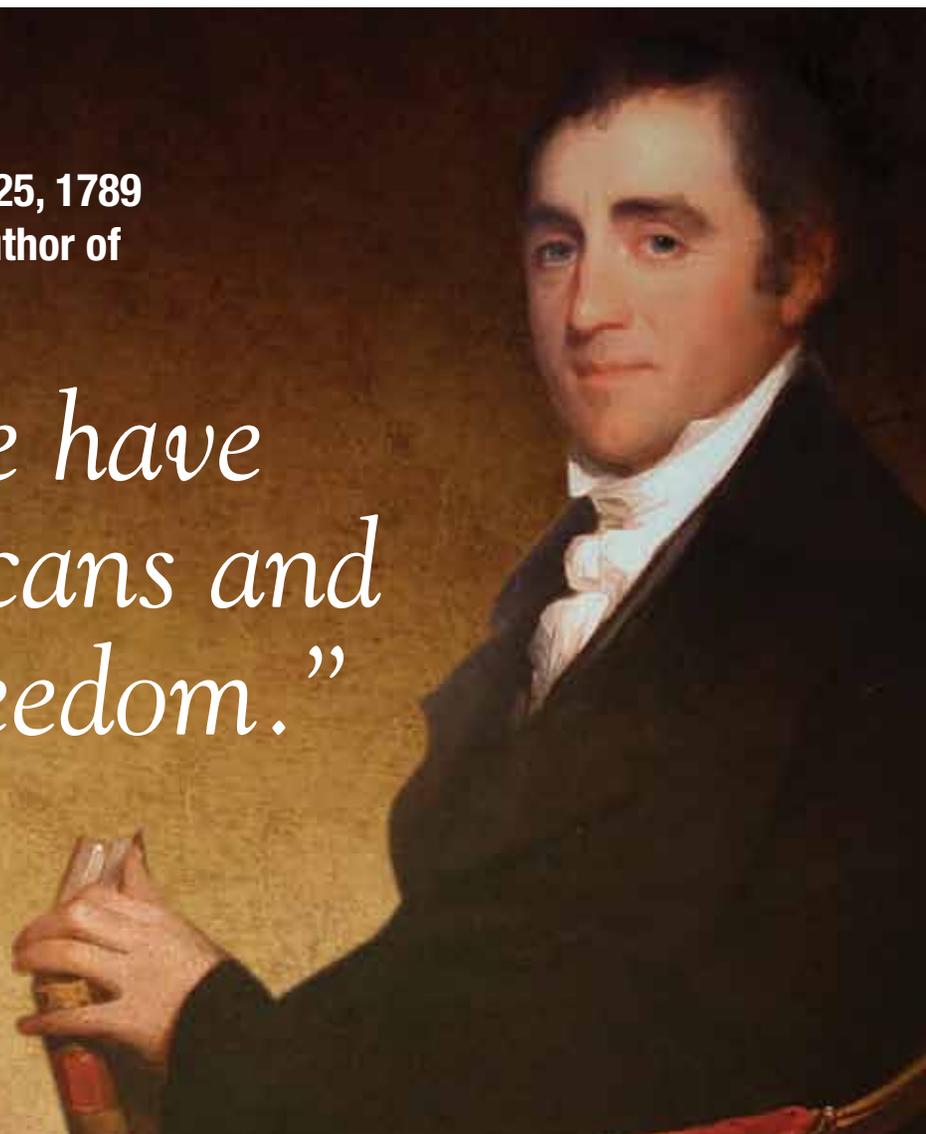
In this country secularists have tried to drive religion and the Bible from the public square. But try as they might, even today young people seem to have an unquenchable thirst for this book written so long ago. Today something like 10 percent of the student body at Princeton attends voluntary bible study classes at least once a week, and students at dozens of other colleges and universities are doing the same.

Regardless of one's beliefs, no one can deny the influence of this one book on human history nor dismiss its value either as literature or as a guide to a better world.

Upon arriving at the First Congress on March 25, 1789 in New York, my ancestor, Fisher Ames, the author of the First Amendment asked,

“Why is it that we have six million Americans and only 600 want freedom.”

This nation would not have survived if it were not for God’s intervention. He is a God who can heal this nation. Everyone needs healing in our nation.



We need a return of Christian ethics and morality in schools, thus giving hope and direction to our children (suicide rates for our youth are staggering). Morality and honor must be taught in our educational systems. God must not be abandoned in our schools. A federal government controlling education with common core, teaching our children socialism, and removing God from schools, robs morality from our youth. The people are losing faith in what their government represents.

Our enemies know that if we remove God from our history, they can destroy us. We must not allow our enemies to remove God from our educational system or our government.

Our founders put symbols of God on our monuments, our money, and in our constitution to remind us never to stray from those original foundations.

We must never give in. We must never surrender! Every time we budge, our enemies chip away at our freedoms. We must stay the course!

Today we need our churches to be more involved in saving our nation. Churches also need to be talking politics and winning elections for God.

We are a Christian nation in a dangerous world. If our churches were more involved, conservatives could win elections almost every time. If our pastors would stand tall with courage in our

churches, and if the people and the churches together would stand up against this barrage of contrived political correctness and stand up for God, we could be victorious as a nation.

Fisher Ames also said, “We have but a slender hold of our virtues; they ought therefore to be cherished with care and practiced with diligence. He who holds parley with vice and dishonor is sure to become their slave and victim. The heart is more than half corrupted, that does not burn with indignation at the slightest attempt to seduce it.”

Billy Graham once lit a candle in a stadium in Texas. Then he asked the entire congregation to light candles from the flame of his candle. The whole stadium lit up. Some thought the stadium was on fire.

The pastors and the people must **LIGHT A CANDLE FOR GOD, AND SHOW HIM AND OUR NATION THAT WE REPRESENT GOD!**

This is, and always will be, a Christian nation. Abandon that, and our nation will be no more!

I ask for His Holy Spirit to bless us, our government, our schools and our leaders.

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This article is sponsored by Ames Gathering of Eagles and Ames Research Laboratories, Manufacturers of Ames Blue Max basement coating.

The Bible's Influence

The Bible as Literature

By Leland Ryken

There are many angles that can be pursued when thinking about the Bible as literature, but two bedrock questions underlie any discussion of the subject. Those two questions are why we should read the Bible as literature and how we should read it. These are the two questions that I have set before me in this article.

The first reason to read the Bible as literature is that it is a work of literature. Because the primary sphere in which the Bible has been read through the ages is the religious sphere, it is easy to be misled into thinking that the Bible is a piece of doctrinal exposition. This is a misconception. The form in which the Bible comes to us is primarily (though not completely) a literary book.

We can see this on a global scale when we look at the overall format of the Bible. That format is the literary anthology—a collection of varied literary genres written by multiple authors over the span of many centuries. In its details, too, the Bible is a literary book. Most of it is embodied in the genres of narrative, poetry, letters, and visionary writing. Dozens of smaller genres accumulate under those big rubrics.

Why should we read the Bible as literature? Because its literary format requires it. C. S. Lewis sounded the keynote when he wrote in *Reflections on the Psalms* that “there is a ... sense in which the Bible, since it is after all literature, cannot

properly be read except as literature; and the different parts of it as the different sorts of literature they are.”

What are the implications of this? The literary nature of the Bible opens the way to its being studied as part of the literature curriculum of any school. This is not the only place in which to locate the academic study of the Bible, but it is the most natural place. Among other considerations, it is useful to note that there is something prototypical about the Bible. In the Bible we see the essential principles of literature highlighted. This makes the Bible the best possible introduction to literature and its techniques.

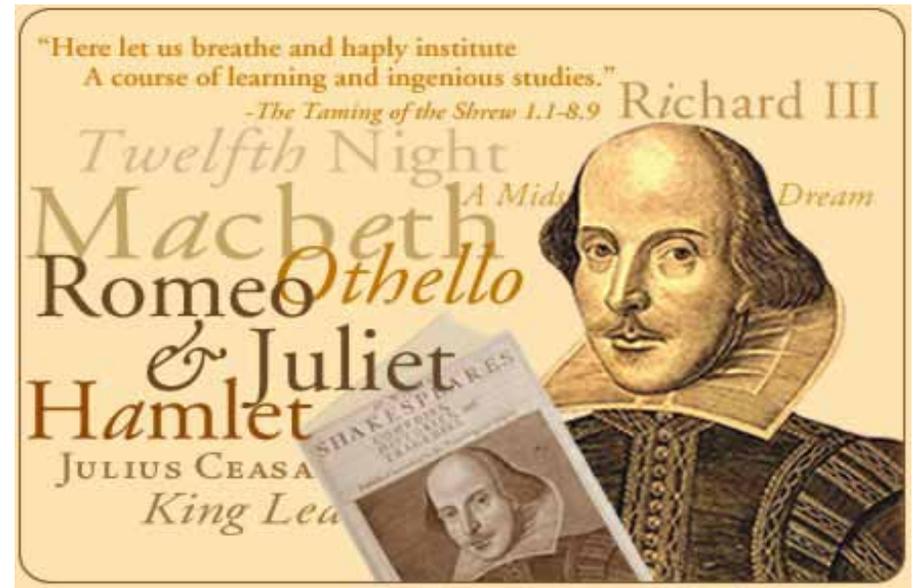
But is the Bible important literature? Yes, it is the world's most famous literary work. In fact, it is the central book of English-speaking cultures throughout the ages. It has provided the cohesive frame of reference (what some literary scholars would call the mythological universe) for England and America. Compared to the Bible, even the collected works of Shakespeare are demonstrably in the second tier.

A further dimension of the literary importance of the Bible is that it is the primary source and influence for English and American literature. The oldest extant piece of English literature (“Caedmon's Hymn”) takes the story of creation in Genesis 1-2 as its material and is modeled on the Bible's psalms of praise. A clear line of continuity exists between this poem and a modern novel like Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*. We can't even get past the first sentence of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*

without knowing the Bible; that sentence reads, “Call me Ismael.”

I come, then, to my second question: How should we read the Bible as literature? The answer: we should apply exactly the same methods of literary analysis to the

The great gift of the literary approach to the Bible for educational purposes is that people of all persuasions can meet on common ground. The Bible can be trusted to reveal its distinctive features if we simply approach it with the literary methods



Bible that we use for other literature. This is not to say that the Bible is in every way just like other books. It is rather to say that the literary aspects of the Bible do not require anything different from ordinary tools of analysis. In the Bible no less than in English and American literature, a story consists of settings, characters, and action. The poetry of the Bible is made up of images and figures of speech.

of analysis that we bring to Shakespeare's plays and the poetry of Robert Frost.

Professor Ryken is a professor of English at Wheaton College where he has taught for 47 years courses that include British literature, Shakespeare, literature of the Bible and writing effective prose. He has written nearly fifty books.

The Bible and American History

By David Gelernter

Every school that teaches American history must teach the Bible's central role. Easily said; but experience suggests that many of today's classes in English and U.S. history are stuck somewhere between useless and harmful. High school history and English curricula ought to be rebuilt from scratch right now, on an emergency basis. Those rebuilt curricula should (of course) teach students about the centrality of the Bible...

Anglican settlers founded Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607; Pilgrims arriving on the Mayflower founded Plymouth in 1620. Boston and Salem, 1630. The goal of the early Puritan settlers, writes the historian Sidney Ahlstrom, was “a Holy Commonwealth standing in a national covenant with its Lord.” Ahlstrom mentions also that “an ‘Anglicanism’ deeply colored by Puritan convictions would shape the early religious life of Virginia”; so it seems fair to describe the first stages of the invention of America as a basically Puritan affair. The early



settlers founded a series of colleges to provide them with pastors and theologians, starting with Harvard in 1636. By 1700, a quarter of a million ex-Europeans and their descendants lived in the future United States.

America's earliest settlers came in search of religious freedom, to escape religious persecution—vitally important facts that Americans tend increasingly to forget. A new arrival who joined the Pilgrims at Plymouth in 1623 “blessed God for the opportunity of freedom and liberty to enjoy the ordinances of God in

purity among His people.” America was a haven for devoutly religious dissidents. It is a perfect reflection of the nation's origins that the very first freedom in the Bill of Rights—Article one, part one—should be religious freedom. “Separation of church and state” was a means to an end, not an end in itself. The idea that the Bill of Rights would one day be traduced into a broom to sweep religion out of the public square like so much dried mud off the boots of careless children would have left the Founders of this nation (my guess is) trembling in rage. We owe it to them in simple gratitude to see that the Bill of Rights is not—is never—used as a weapon against religion.

You cannot understand the literature and experience of 17th-century American Puritans unless you know the Bible. The Pilgrim father William Bradford reports in his famous journal, for example, that his people had no choice but to camp near their landing-place on the Massachusetts mainland. There was no reason to think they could do better elsewhere; after all they could not, “as it were, go up to the top of Pisgah to view from this wilderness a more goodly country.”

Bradford saw no need to explain that he was referring to Moses gazing at the Promised Land from atop Mount Pisgah before his death (Deuteronomy 34:1). To 17th-century readers, the reference would have been obvious—and so too the implied message: These Pilgrims are like biblical Israelites. They are a chosen people who made a dangerous crossing from the house of (British) bondage to a Promised Land of freedom. Other Puritan settlers expressed themselves in similar terms. There is a fascinating resemblance between these Puritan writings and the Hebrew literary form called “melitzah,” in which the author makes his point by stringing together Biblical and rabbinic passages. The Puritans' world, like traditional Jewish society, was permeated and obsessed with the Bible.

Bradford's comparison between Puritans and ancient Israel is central to the American revolution and the emergence of the new nation. Americans saw themselves as Israelites throwing off a tyrant's yoke. Most historians look to the British and Continental philosophers of the Enlightenment,

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Ancient scriptures predict a time when



nature's deadly assaults on this earth are to be followed by a pure language.

Decades ago Richard Wetherill identified a natural law he called the *Law of Absolute Right, requiring people's rational, honest thoughts and actions*. In later years, he suggested that the scriptural "pure language" is defined by that natural law.

Do nature's many assaults on this planet in the form of earthquakes, floods, volcanoes, wildfires, tsunamis, and extremes of weather qualify to introduce that pure language? Think about it.

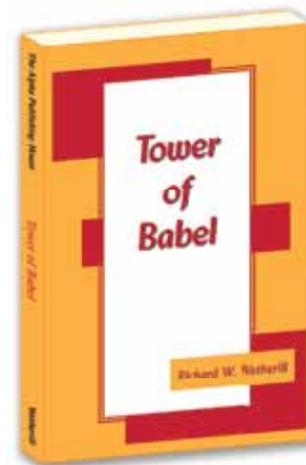
Wetherill also referred to a language of thought that had disclosed nature's laws of physics to researchers. In turn, they imparted those laws to the public. Now, in effect, gravity speaks its language of thought to all people for their safety.

Consider that the creator's Law of Absolute Right, calling for rational, honest thinking and behavior describes the promised pure language! If it does, nature's assaults on earth could worsen until the "impure language" of human thought and behavior is abandoned.

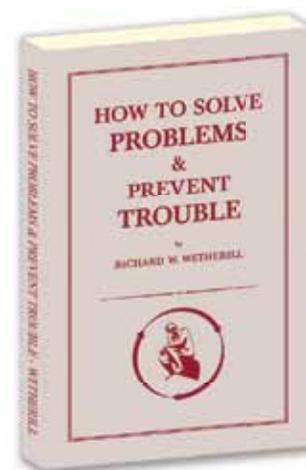
Join in thought with others now learning to adhere to the pure language defined in the creator's *Law of Absolute Right*:

Think, say, and do only what is rational and honest.

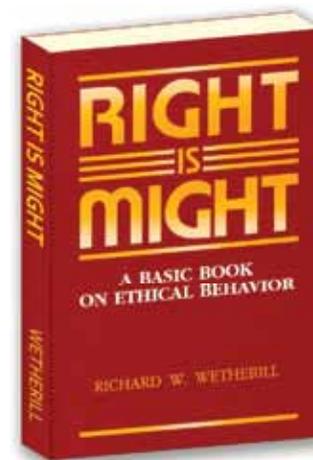
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This public-service message is from a self-financed, nonprofit group of former students of Mr. Wetherill.

HISTORY

From page D4

Locke especially, as the major intellectual influence on America's Founding Fathers and revolutionary generation. To rely on Locke is to rely (indirectly) on the Bible. Yet the Bible itself, straight up, was the most important revolutionary text of all. Consider the seal of the United States designed by a committee of the Continental Congress consisting of John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson. (They don't make congressional committees like they used to!) Their proposed seal shows Israel crossing the Red Sea, with the motto "Rebellion to kings is obedience to God." The pastor Abiel Abbot proclaimed in 1799, "It has been often remarked that the people of the United States come nearer to a parallel with Ancient Israel, than any other nation upon the globe. Hence Our American Israel is a term frequently used; and our common consent allows it apt and proper."

That Britain and America should both have been inclined to see themselves as chosen peoples made a subterranean connection between them that has sometimes--one suspects--been plainer to their enemies than their friends. Down to the war in Iraq, enemies of America and Britain have suspected an Anglo-Saxon conspiracy to rule the world. In part this is paranoia; but it might also have something to do with Britain's and America's Bible-centered cultural histories. The two nations speak of a "special

relationship" with each other--besides which, each has a history of believing in its own "special relationship" with the Lord Himself.

The bible continued to shape American history. Some Americans saw the great push westward as fulfilling the Lord's plan for the United States, modeled on Israel's settlement of the holy land. Meanwhile, many have noticed that the history of modern Israel resembles earlier American experience. Harassed Europeans arrive in a sparsely settled land in search of freedom. They build the place up and make it bloom. They struggle with the indigenous inhabitants, some of whom are friendly and some not. At first they collaborate with the British colonial authorities; each group winds up in a push for independence and a deadly fight with Britain.

But long before Israel resembled America, America resembled Israel. It's true that Manifest Destiny--the idea that America was predestined to push westwards towards the Pacific--was less a Bible-based than a "natural rights" approach to America's place in God's plans. You didn't have to consult the Bible to learn about America's Manifest Destiny; it was just obvious. But America was called back to her biblical faith by no less a man than Abraham Lincoln himself.

As the Civil War approached, both North and South saw their positions in biblical terms. Southern preachers sometimes accused abolitionists of being atheists in disguise. Lincoln rose above this kind of dispute. "In the present civil war it is quite possible," he wrote in 1862,

"that God's purpose is something different from the purpose of either party."

Lincoln was America's most "biblical" president--"no president has ever had the detailed knowledge of the Bible that Lincoln had," writes the historian William Wolf. Lincoln turned to the Bible more and more frequently and fervently as the war progressed. His heterodox but profound Christianity showed him how to understand the war as a fight to redeem America's promise to mankind. Lincoln never joined a church, but said often that he would join one if "the Saviour's summary of the Gospel" were its only creed. He meant the passage in Mark and Luke where Jesus restates God's requirements in terms of two edicts from the Hebrew Bible: to love God with all your heart and mind and soul and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. Lincoln's religion was deeply biblical--and characteristically American.

In modern times the Bible was no less important as a shaper and molder of American destiny. Woodrow Wilson, another intensely biblical president, spoke in biblical terms when he took America into the First World War--on behalf of freedom and democracy for all mankind. Harry Truman's Bible-centered Christianity was important to his decisions to lead America into the Cold War, and make America the first nation to recognize the newborn state of Israel--to the vast disgust of the perpetually benighted State Department. Reagan's presidency revolved around Winthrop's Gospel-inspired image of the sacred city

on a hill. George W. Bush's worldwide war on tyranny is the quintessence of a biblical project--one that sees America as an almost chosen people (as Lincoln called us), with the heavy responsibilities that go with the job.

There is no agreement whether God created the world, but the Bible's awe-striking creative powers are undeniable. There is no agreement whether God "is not a man that He should lie" (Numbers 23:19), but the Hebrew Bible's uncanny honesty respecting Israel and its many sins is plain. The faithful ask, in the words of the 139th psalm, "Whither shall I go from Thy spirit?" or "whither shall I flee from Thy presence?" And answer, "If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me." Secularists don't see it that way; but the Bible's penetration into the farthest corners of the known world is simple fact. Most contemporary philosophers and culture critics are barely aware of these things, don't see the pattern behind them, can't tell us what the pattern means, and (for the most part) don't care.

David Gelernter is a professor at Yale University in computer science and a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard and was a senior fellow in Jewish Thought at the Shalem Center, Jerusalem. The above is an excerpt from "Bible Illiteracy in America" from the May 23, 2005 issue of The Weekly Standard.

Teaching The Bible in Social Studies

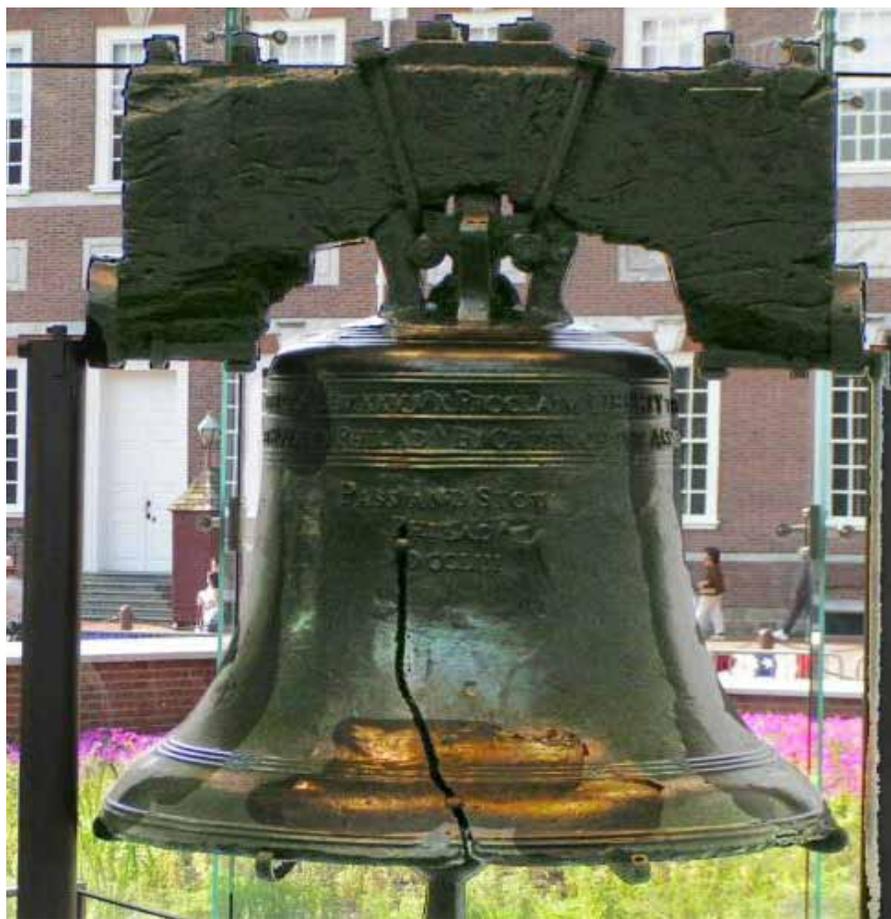
By Chuck Stetson

Many historians over the years have tried to sift through the ages to find a single intelligible source for the great experiment in freedom and self-governance that is the American experience.

From the moment the explorers' ships began landing on the shores of the New World to the development of the colonies, through the American Revolution, through a great Civil War, to the nation's position on a contemporary world stage, there have echoed the constant themes of religious freedom, economic freedom and individual freedom.

Some have wanted to attribute the American experience to the Enlightenment, or to philosophers ranging from Plato and Cicero to Locke, Montesquieu, and Hume. American democracy shows traces of all these men as well as the trend of the times toward a republican form of balanced government--executive, legislative, and judicial.

Although there is much evidence for all these influences in the history of the country, there is another influence--one that often gets much shorter shrift than the others--that winds through the four



Proclaim Liberty thro' all the land to all the inhabitants thereof. Leviticus XXV.10

hundred year history of the land like a golden thread. That influence is the Bible--both the Hebrew Scriptures, and the New Testament--on freedom.

An overarching theme of America's development has been the drive to freedom. And that drive was often nourished and inspired by the Bible. From the time of the earliest settlers, we can easily identify these three principal freedoms:

- Religious freedom
- Individual freedom
- Economic freedom

It is important to remember that there was very little freedom in England where the first immigrants came from. In England, as in the rest of Europe, religion was established and endorsed by the government. In England, it was the Church of England, which was Protestant and had withdrawn from the Roman Catholic Church. Catholics and others not belonging to the Church of England were persecuted. In France, the official religion was Catholic, and it was the Protestants, particular the Protestant Huguenots that were persecuted.

Religious freedom is often called "the first freedom" because it impacts both individual and economic freedom. For example, under the Tests and

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SOCIAL STUDIES

From page D6

Non-conformist and non-Christian in England were not allowed to stand for office to be part of Parliament until the early 19th century. They also had to acknowledge that the King of England was the head of the Church of England. A similar statute was implemented in Ireland even though 80 percent of the population was Catholic.

Although the first British arrivals in America predated the English Bill of Rights in 1689, they still suffered similar discrimination at home and saw their journey to the New World as an image of

a new Israel escaping from their bondage in England just as the Israelites escaped the clutches of Pharaoh in Egypt. In 1754 when the Liberty Bell was cast and placed in Philadelphia, the inscription was from Leviticus 25:10, "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof."

One of the struggles of biblical proportions has been the drive for individual freedom. The contemporary Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s included the Freedom March on August 28, 1963 where The Reverend Martin Luther King delivered the speech that has become known as "I Have A Dream." In the speech, Reverend King developed the notion that the Declaration of Independence was a down payment on the God given rights that The Reverend

King and his fellow African Americans had now come to claim. It was towards the end that the singer Mahalia Jackson shouted from the crowd "Tell 'em about the dream, Martin!" and Reverend King left his prepared remarks and developed his dream of freedom.

Gatherings for freedom continue today. Congress continues to pass laws to uphold freedom, including the Religious Freedom Restoration Act passed in 1993 by a unanimous House of Representatives and a near unanimous Senate and signed by President Bill Clinton.

The Bible, for good and at times for ill, has been significantly influenced religious, economic and individual freedom in America in addition to touching all aspects of American life—not just the devotional life of Americans. The

Bible has been not only as a foundational document along with other influences, but also as part of the warp and woof of the national tapestry of freedom.

Americans need to be aware of the role of the Bible in society and the ability to see how knowledge of that role and influence is important for your personal education on religious, economic and individual freedom and for the country's future as well.

Chuck Stetson is co-author of The Bible, Its Influence and the CEO of Essentials in Education and a New York venture capitalist.

The Bible and Character

By Mark Hyatt

David Gergen's article in *U.S. News and World Report*, December 12, 2009 issue decries the lack of leadership in the U.S.

Indeed, confidence in government plummeted back in the '60s and '70s and has never really recovered. It was nearly four decades ago that John Gardner first observed that at the founding, with a population of 3 million, the republic spawned a dozen world-class leaders—Washington, Jefferson, Franklin, Adams, Madison, and Hamilton among them—but today, with a population nearly 100 times that, we struggle to produce even one or two.

Character and leadership is particularly important today. At the U.S. Air Force Academy I was responsible for the character education of 4200 colleges students who are future leaders in our military. Just a few years after graduation, these young leaders will be responsible for deployment and use of all kinds of weapons including nuclear weapons. We must be able to trust them. Yet at American colleges and universities character has dropped off the radar screen in the past few decades. This coincides with when the Bible was pulled from public schools and played a lesser role in colleges. Many of the top colleges and universities in American were founded in bible teachings and now have turned to secular curricula.

While there are many great accounts and parables in the Bible that involve character, there are several direct commentaries on character. In the Letter to the Colossians, the Apostle Paul urges the Colossians "to death therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature; sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed which is idolatry...now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other..." Interestingly, all of these are selfish and self-absorbed character traits.

In contrast, the Apostle Paul urges the Colossians to "clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience" and with forbearance, forgiveness and love. Who would not want to have a neighbor or friend with these character traits? All of these traits show concern for others. One of the most interesting of these traits is compassion, which in the Greek language (in which this part of the Bible was originally written) did not exist previously in the Greek language. Greeks hid their emotions. The Greek Stoics were a classic example of people who held back their emotions and worked to avoid emotional engagement. It was therefore not only perfectly acceptable to walk by an injured person who was lying in pain and need of help, but it was expected that one did that. The Bible introduced the concept of taking care of every human being. What an amazing character trait! Most Americans would agree with biblical virtues.

The Bible also inspired much thought about character. In the sixth century, Pope Gregory developed the notion of the Seven Deadly Sins which Dante in his classic "The Divine Comedy" developed as sins that were to be dealt with in going from Inferno (Hell) to Paradiso (Paradise). For Dante, each of the Seven Deadly Sins represented broken loves: the first three broken loves are perverted loves: Pride, Envy and Anger. They all lead to a very destructive path. The fourth broken love, Sloth, is insufficient love. The last three broken loves are misdirected loves. There is nothing wrong with having money, except the attitude of greed and hoarding money for yourself. There is nothing wrong with eating food. We have to eat food to live. But Gluttony, stuffing yourself, is a misdirected love. Likewise, sex within marriage is a wonderful thing designed for procreation. However, unchecked lust is going too far. Interestingly, the only way that Dante

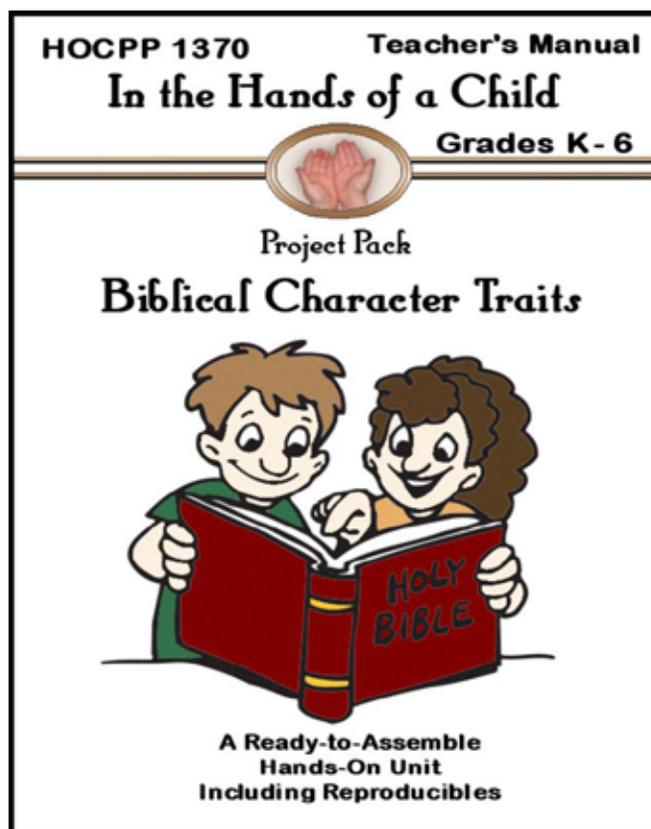
can deal with these seven broken loves is to apply The Beatitudes, a section in the Gospel of Matthew. It is humility and actively serving others that is the best antidote that allows Dante to rise through the seven terraces breaking the bondage of each of the Seven Deadly Sins or seven broken loves.

The Bible was taught in public schools from the earliest days of American settlers in the early 17th century. It was the basis for teaching character to the next generation. Since the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed the devotional teaching of the Bible in public schools in 1963 in *Abington v. Schempp*, character education in the public schools has largely disappeared. Yet, businesses need people of character to lead. The number one character trait desired by businesses in two South Carolina Chamber of Commerce surveys, one in 1998 and one in 2000 is honesty.

Essentials in Education, the parent company of Bible Literacy Project, is working with The Business Roundtable, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the American Bankers Association and Character.org to develop character standards for school curricula in America that businesses can support. This group expects to make an announcement about standards for character education by late 2015.

It doesn't matter what our faith background is, businesses need schools and parents to again teach these Biblical character traits if we want to flourish as a society.

Mark Hyatt is the former CEO of Character.org. He was also Director of the Center for Character and Leadership Development at the U.S. Air Force Academy, President of the International Center for Academic Integrity at Duke University (now located at Clemson U). Hyatt served in the role of school Superintendent for ten years and was Executive Director of Colorado Charter School Institute. He is currently President of Cloudcross Consulting, helping leaders succeed.



The Bible's Influence in American Music

By Sarah Grace Shewbert, PhD

Lowell Mason, Pete Seeger, and Lady Gaga created music in vastly different eras and styles, but they hold one thing in common. Listeners cannot fully understand their music without knowing the Bible.



Since the earliest colonial settlements, the Bible has played a significant role in the creation and performance of music in America. Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs were imported from Europe and newly created on American shores. Singing schools were established with the expressed purpose of enabling each and every churchgoer to participate fully in religious music-making.

Classical music was also an important force in American community and church life. The Handel and Haydn Society, founded in 1815 in Boston, is America's oldest continuously performing arts organization. Two of their first major presentations were of Handel's *Messiah* and Haydn's *The Creation*, both of which are based on biblical texts.

Later, musical themes from Handel's *Messiah* were used in the hymn tune "Antioch" (arranged by American music educator and composer Lowell Mason in 1839), which is now best known as the Christmas carol, "Joy to the World." In 1907, the hymn "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee" was set to a melody from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

The biblical imagery and language in Christian hymns, in turn, greatly influenced folk music, including African-American spirituals. Beginning in the early 19th century, slaves sang songs of deliverance like "Go Down, Moses" (Exodus 7), "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" (2 Kings 2), and "Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel?" (Daniel 6).

It is hardly surprising that biblical allusions and quotations would abound in sacred music, Gospel, and the Contemporary Christian Music industry, but the Bible's influence was—and is—not confined to religious

circles. Popular songs by mainstream artists in every conceivable style have included references to biblical stories, such as Joseph in country legend Dolly Parton's "Coat of Many Colors" (Genesis 37) and one of the miracles of Jesus in alternative rock band CAKE's "Hem of Your Garment" (Luke 8).

The bluegrass trio Nickel Creek released "Doubting Thomas" in 2005, which contains references to two of Jesus's disciples: the title figure Thomas and Peter, to whom Jesus said, "You of little faith. Why did you doubt?" (Matthew 14). One of their most recent songs, "21st of May," is about the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4).

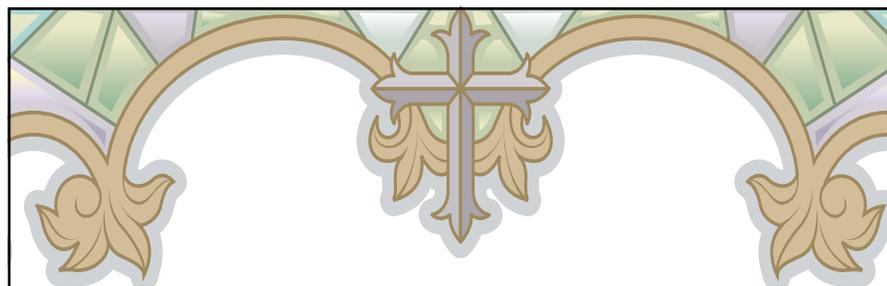
Lauryn Hill—who is best known for her work with the hip hop band Fugees—also recorded the song, "Forgive Them Father," which takes its title from Luke 23, quotes the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6), and contains references to Cain and Abel, Jesus and Judas, "turning the other cheek" (Luke 7), and "wolves in sheep's coats" (Matthew 7).

Other popular musicians directly quote the Bible: "Turn! Turn! Turn!" by the Byrds (written in the 1950s by folksinger Pete Seeger) is drawn from Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, "40" by U2 (from the 1983 album *War*) is a modification of Psalm 40, and "A Light in the Darkened World" by metal/hardcore band Killswitch Engage (released in 2009) quotes Joshua 24:15. Contemporary folk band Mumford and Sons regularly references the Bible in such songs as "Babel" (Genesis 11) and "Awake My Soul" (Psalm 57).

Artists have always been drawn to the Bible's more colorful characters and salacious stories: David and Bathsheba and Samson and Delilah (both in Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah"), Mary Magdalene ("Bloody Mary" by Lady Gaga), and the betrayal of Jesus by Judas Iscariot (U2's "Until the End of the World" and Lady Gaga's "Judas").

Musicians sometimes choose biblical texts or imagery as a testament to personal faith; however, some appear to court controversy. Consider the music videos and performances of Madonna and Lady Gaga, which often contain violence and sex mixed with religious imagery. Still, these songs and their videos—like much of music in American life, whether classical or popular—depend upon a wide-spread cultural awareness of biblical stories, themes, and iconography for their very power. Those who don't know the biblical references can't fully understand what these artists are trying to communicate.

*Sarah Grace Shewbert is a professor at Concordia University-Portland, Oregon who will be teaching about music and the Bible in the online course *The Bible and Its Influence* beginning in March 2015.*



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Influence of the Bible in Art

By Kurt Bergdolt

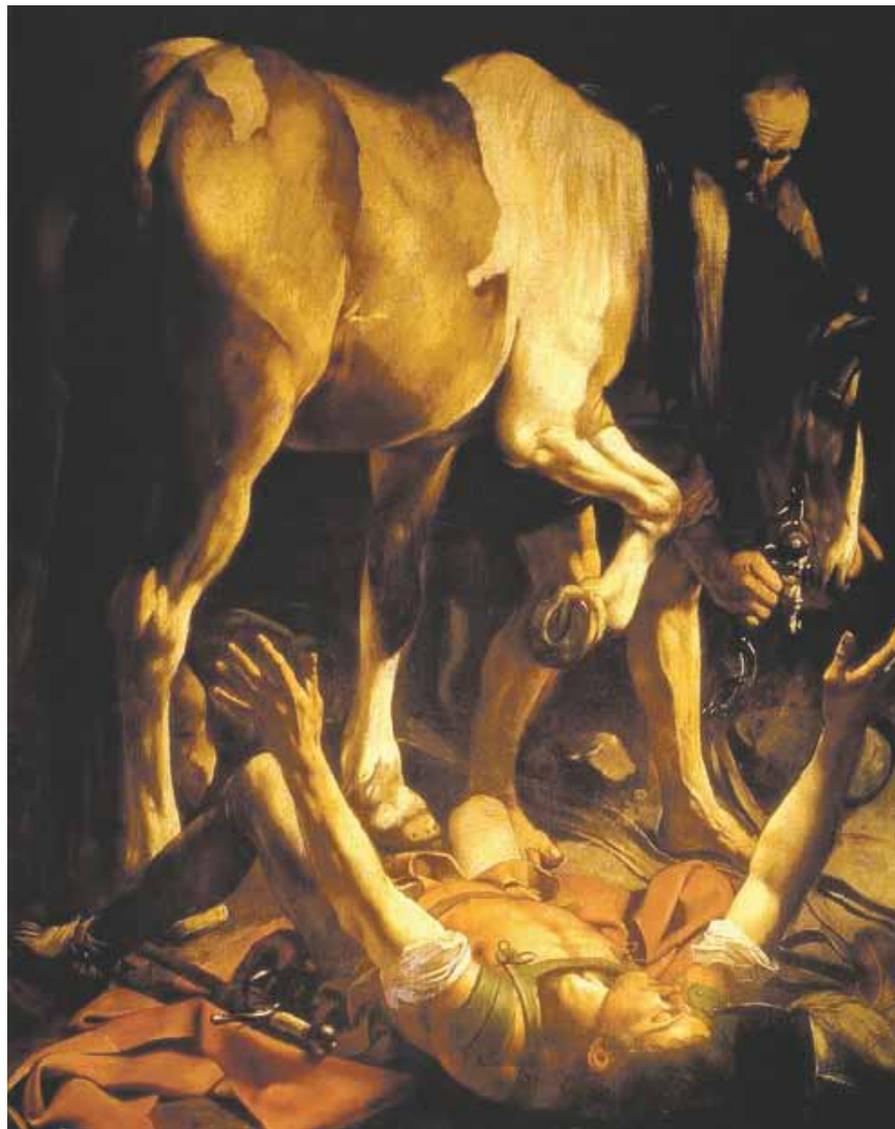
The influence of the Bible in works of Art has changed dramatically depending upon the time period, place, or culture that it is created in. In the early Christian church, believers used specific signs such as the anchor or the fish to identify themselves as Christians. For example, the cross could be traced in the dirt of the ground by the toe of a believer to identify himself to another believer in the times of Roman persecution.

It has been said that Christianity thrived during the Roman persecution however the art that was made certainly did not. Many of the early Christians did not have the means to support the commissioning of artworks and when they did, they often paid lower quality artists to do the work. These artists attempted to fuse Christian beliefs into the visual forms available to them, often using the Roman god Apollo as a figuration of Christ.

Works of art within worship spaces had both a commemorative function as well as a didactic function. Believers would worship at the burial places of the saints in the Roman catacombs in the belief that this place had significance, a thinning of the barrier between the divine and mortals. In the era of Constantine, churches were often built at the legendary sites in the life of Christ or the saints. The idea was to situate the worship space in places that had come into contact with the divine.

As Christianity became legal and legitimized, the patronage of the church became an important source of income for artists. In northern European countries, artwork was typically portable, drawn on vellum around the words of Scripture and placed within jeweled covers to be venerated. In Italy and the Byzantine Empire, frescoes and sculpture served to show the relationship of Jesus to his followers, typically as the relationship between a shepherd and his flock.

During the medieval era, the church played such an important role in the



daily life of the believer. Art was almost exclusively connected to instructional or decorative functions and would not have been thought of as a means for personal expression. One exception might be the fantastic beasts carved into the columns of the cloisters at Moissac that led Bernard of Clairvaux to proclaim his concern over the distractive nature of the carvings. One could easily imagine an overexuberant craftsman endowing the sculptures with a personality that was soon dampened by the master!

In the awakening of the Renaissance, the complete reliance on the words of

Scripture and the proclamations of the clergy began to wane. As a sense of humanism began to arise along with the desire to explain the natural world through observation, art became more individualistic and interpretive rather than retaining the images and techniques of the past. While artists such as Masaccio and Leonardo were devout Christians, that did not stop them from combining their faith with contemporary faces and themes in their works. In the Baroque period, the patronage of the Roman Catholic Church produced works by artists such as Caravaggio

and Bernini that were full of dramatic tension and lighting. The excitement generated by the work was intended to bring wayward souls back into the waiting arms of the church and appeal to the common person as well as the nobility and clergy.

As the secularization of art continued through the 18th and 19th centuries, artists still used the Bible as source material yet they also looked to art to have a communicative function that was outside the bounds of the church. The success of the images of the Counter-Reformation led artists to use art to bring attention to social ills and elevate political heroes.

Contemporary artists still use the Bible for source material but in many cases it is only for the purposes of the artist. In the video piece, *The Crossing*, Bill Viola uses imagery that can be interpreted as having Biblical symbolism but can also be used to refer to belief systems from other world religions. Other contemporary artists at the forefront of the art world rarely use religious imagery in order to be taken seriously and allow the work to exist on its formal properties without relying on a narrative. Since the Renaissance, artists have become increasingly secular in their outlook.

In the Postmodern era, art has continued to focus upon the inner self for truth rather than a God that transcends time and culture. As contemporary artists look to the past for inspiration, they are forced to confront art that was deeply focused on Biblical stories and artists who not only used the Bible for inspiration but were transformed by the message within. That message, whether couched in terms of spirituality or religion, is still able to awake the deeply held desire for humans to know and become one with their Creator.

Kurt Bergdolt is an Assistant Professor of Art and has been teaching classes in Art Appreciation, Art in the Christian Church, and Ceramics at Concordia University-Portland since 2009.

The Bible in Movies and Television

By Ted Baehr

The first episode of this particular min-series was seen by 13.1 million viewers, the largest cable television audience in 2013 at the time. Subsequent episodes of the mini-series continued the blockbuster ratings. After being released in other countries, the mini-series had more than 100 million cumulative views. The mini-series? The Bible television series based on the Bible. Mark Burnett a well known television producer with 112 Emmy nominations in his career and with current television shows *Survivor*, *The*

Apprentice, *The Voice*, *Shark Tank*, the People's Choice Awards and his wife Roma Downey, who had starred in the very successful *Touched By An Angel* television series decided to produce this mini-series on "The Bible" after having watched Cecil B. DeMille's 1956 version of *The Ten Commandments* for the first time after childhood.

The Bible has always been a best seller in the movies and on television from the earliest days when some of the earliest movies were representations of Jesus. These representations were straightforward primitive movies (they called them "recordings" in those early days) of various live "passion plays." A passion play is a dramatic presentation of the suffering

and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. These passion plays were some of the longest movies made at the time they were made. They were so successful that they eventually convinced the nickelodeon operators that there was an audience not just for shorts, but also for longer, feature length movies. Thus, in part, the modern movie was birthed out of the overwhelming success of the passion plays.

In 1897, two American theatrical producers, Marc Klaw and Abraham Erlanger, filmed a passion play in Horitz, Bohemia. In 1898, R.G. Holman and A.G. Eaves photographed a passion play on the roof of a New York skyscraper. The length of the movie was 2,100 feet or 20 minutes.

A narrator took the place of captions. Also in that year, the Oberammergau Passion Play was photographed by a Mr. Hurd, an American representative of the first major French filmmakers, the Lumiere brothers, and a French passion play was filmed for the Musee Eden.

The Augustinian Fathers set up the "Bonne Cinema" in Paris to produce good movies. They used churches as a normal place for projecting films until Pope Pius X decreed at the end of 1912 that "even religious films were not to be projected in churches, in order that the sacred character of the buildings should be safeguarded." Therefore,

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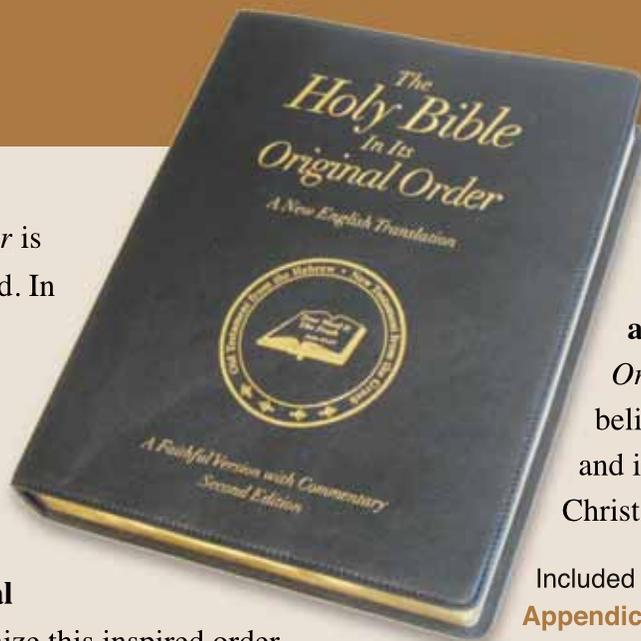
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MOVIES

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showings of the filmed passion plays were banned in the churches (starting with the cathedrals in Paris).

One of the earliest biblical films was *Samson and Delilah*, produced in 1903 by the French company Pathe. The legendary Hollywood producer Cecile B. DeMille did a silent version of *The Ten Commandments* in 1923 and then repeated it in color film in 1956 where it was the most successful of 1956 and the second-highest grossing film of

the 1950s. According to the Guinness World Records, it was the seventh most successful film of all-time when the box office gross is adjusted for inflation. The promotion of the 1956 version of *The Ten Commandments* included a partnership with the Fraternal order of Eagles to place the Ten Commandments of the walls of courtrooms and in schools around America and to erect monuments.

The 2004 film *The Passion of the Christ* on the last 12 hours of Jesus' life caught the attention of Hollywood when it grossed \$370 million domestically and set the record for the

highest-grossing independent film of all time.

There were also fictional stories related to the Bible such as MGM's 1926 *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ* which was later remade in 1959 in a highly promoted feature film. Other popular award winning films more recently have included *Chariots of Fire*.

Overall, there have been over 100 films based on Hebrew Scriptures that were made both by Hollywood and the Italian film industry and somewhat lesser number of films for the New Testament. However, producers of film for the movies and television keep

coming back to producing movies on the Bible because the Bible on film is a best seller. There is a huge pipeline currently of films based on the Bible that will be released soon.

Dr. Ted Baehr, the President of MovieGuide which he founded in 1985, does a two-minute and five-minute radio show and cable and satellite broadcast in more than 200 countries and territories. MovieGuide celebrated its 20th Annual MovieGuide Faith & Values Report to the Entertainment Industry in 2014.

The Bible as Theatre

By Max McLean

The Bible is a hot property these days. Russell Crowe's film *Noah* took in \$360 million at the worldwide box office, and Christian Bale debuts as a big-budget Moses in *Exodus* this month. On television, the miniseries *The Bible* drew the largest cable audience for all of 2013.

So when does the Bible make its bow in the theatre? Of course, it has already. *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Godspell* have each had recent Broadway revivals. A musical based on John Newton's born again experience—*Amazing Grace*—debuted in Chicago last month and has plans for Broadway. *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, drawn from the book of Genesis, continues to tour nationally. On the flip side—making fun of religious ideas—*The Book of Mormon* plays to a packed house on Broadway nightly.

The Bible has inspired the greatest literary achievements in Western civilization—the works of Shakespeare, *Paradise Lost*, *The Divine Comedy* and *Les Miserables*—the source of another musical currently running on Broadway. Such works make good theatre because they engage audiences through the dramatic struggle between good and evil, or through tension-building supernatural encounters or with cathartic stories of loss and redemption.

Theatre originated in the religious



rituals of ancient Greece. It was rooted in the human need to worship. Some books of Hebrew Scriptures—*Job* and the *Song of Solomon*, for example—are poetic dialogues meant to be performed orally. The Passover celebration is a dramatic reminder to each generation of God's faithfulness to Israel, when He delivered the Jews out of slavery in Egypt and into the Promised Land.

The Christian Church continued these dramatic storytelling practices in the Middle Ages and provided the starting point for the modern theatre. In a few short steps, theatre moved from the worship of the sung Mass to short playlets of Bible stories performed outside the church. Soon professional troupes traveled the English countryside performing works by named playwrights like Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare. These authors made explicit allusions to the Bible and displayed common Christian experiences such as guilt,

repentance and forgiveness.

Fellowship for Performing Arts (FPA), a New York-based theatrical production company began with a similar mission. Namely, to explore the theatrical possibilities of the Bible. The critical response in New York and Chicago to such stage adaptations of Mark's Gospel and Genesis combined with growing audiences gave each long shelf lives on stages across the country. They even found audience approval in such staunch secular colleges such as Smith, Brown, Johns Hopkins and Duke. Mark's Gospel even received a Jeff Award, the Chicago professional theatre community's highest honor.

FPA has continued to draw inspiration from writers such as C.S. Lewis and G. K. Chesterton. Each has a deeply rooted faith in the Judeo-Christian supernatural tradition emanating from the Bible. Today, FPA has produced two C.S. Lewis productions. The hit play *The Screwtape Letters* is a story about a demon who tempts an

unsuspecting human toward the seven deadly sins. That production had a successful nine-month run in New York followed by a 50-city national tour including three long stops at D.C.'s Lansburgh Theatre in 2008, 2009 and 2012. Nearly half a million people have seen it.

FPA is currently on a 25-city tour with C.S. Lewis' *The Great Divorce* that is resident in D.C. this month. A recent staged reading of G.K. Chesterton's *Magic* was extremely well received with potential for further development.

Clearly, the Bible's current draw as a basis for thought-provoking and engaging entertainment is no passing fad. In fact, its themes and stories form the very foundation from which our dramatic tradition rises. And as long as humanity has supernatural longings, is aware of psychic guilt and is suspicious of the theory that the material universe is the only reality, then the Bible will continue to be a huge source of inspiration for playwrights and dramatists.

Max McLean is founder and artistic director of New York City-based Fellowship for Performing Arts, whose mission is producing theatre from a biblical worldview that engages a diverse audience. FPA's theatrical adaptation of C.S. Lewis' The Great Divorce plays Dec. 20-Jan 4 at the Lansburgh Theatre. CSLewisOnStage.com

The Bible and The Newsroom

By Richard N. Ostling

The Bible produces good "hard news" stories and "soft" features, and brings good news to magazines and newspapers in terms of reader interest and resulting income.

Back in the days when newsstand sales were sizable and carefully monitored as an index of magazine readership, my colleagues at Time could anticipate extra profits, letters to the

editor, and cultural buzz when a cover story or a major inside article dealt with the Bible. During subsequent years with The Associated Press, this writer's assignments for the "wire" included a weekly column about the Bible. It was never difficult to come up with pertinent topics for what turned out to be a run of more than 400 articles.

Fulton Oursler coined the phrase "the greatest story ever told," but considering the aforementioned factors, as an old joke says, the Bible is

also "the greatest story ever sold." It's frequently said that the Bible is the most important and most-read book in human history, which is undoubtedly true and not to be forgotten by editors. (Due to world events, Islam's Quran may be moving up to second place.)

Regarding the Bible in the newsroom, there's obvious impact in coverage of internal developments with religious organizations and movements. But there's also an exterior aspect, the way biblical concepts

regularly pop up in unexpected ways in politics, economics, athletics, show business, literature, the fine arts, and such. There are few religious or moral debates, or for that matter major historical trends, without a biblical element.

Yet in recent times there's been a bit of a news media slump. Part of that involves smaller "news holes" and shrinking staffs with fewer specialists. Solid religion coverage

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usually requires reporters with at least a modicum of knowledge. Religious controversies can be complex and require intelligent exposition of various viewpoints. Sinister groups in the news will sometimes cite the Bible, and frequently fads and fantasies will purport to rewrite biblical history – claims that require careful inspection by journalists.

General readers in the U.S., especially Millennials, are gradually losing their grasp of biblical materials that underlie much of western civilization and – increasingly – shape the cultures of modern Asia, Africa, and Latin America with their expanding churches. It's said the typical college graduate today knows less about the Bible than the unlettered plowman of a century ago.

That's what makes projects like "The Bible and Its Influence" high

school textbook so important. There's a fair amount of ignorance, confusion, misinformation and prejudice that public education and the news media alike should seek to overcome. Basic education is treated by other essays in this collection. I would add that biblical knowledge fosters sociopolitical understanding and tolerance in an increasingly multicultural America. This is vital for inter-group understanding and appreciation of religious minorities' freedoms under the U.S. Constitution's Bill of Rights. That's one of the many reasons biblical knowledge is essential for non-religious citizens.

Take a simple example. Centuries ago the ancestors of today's Mennonites and Quakers took Jesus' New Testament words literally and embraced the unconventional belief that all participation in warfare is evil. To

its great credit, the American nation allowed the minority of biblically inspired pacifists to avoid military service, from the Revolutionary War onward. Similarly, the efforts to abolish human slavery and Jim Crow, and many other social campaigns that journalists need to understand, have been grounded in the Bible. That's most unlikely to change in the 21st Century.

Richard N. Ostling spent nearly four decades as a religion writer with "Time" magazine and The Associated Press along with side work for the PBS "NewsHour" and CBS Radio, and currently writes the "Religion Q and A" blog for patheos.com and the "Religion Guy Memo" for getreligion.org.

The Bible: Its Original Character and Context

by Thomas E. Boomershine

When was the last time you heard the Bible read in Church and people applauded Jesus' actions of loving kindness or laughed wholeheartedly at the disciples' stupidity? The absence of these signs of the engagement of the audience is a sign of the changes that have happened in our experience of the Bible since its composition 2,000-3,000 years ago. In the historical context of antiquity when 80-90% of people couldn't read, the books of the Bible, like the plays of Shakespeare some 1500 or so years after the Gospel of Mark, were composed for performance to audiences. The composers of the books of the Bible assumed that the performances of their compositions would include gestures, variations in tempo and volume, facial expressions, and changes in tone of voice.

In the media culture of our time that Walter Ong has called a "secondary oral culture," we are rediscovering the vitality of "the book." In my experience as a biblical storyteller, people are often surprised at how "alive" the stories are when they hear them told and ask,



"How did you make the stories so alive?" My favorite explanation is that rather than the stories being like Frankenstein brought back to life, they are alive and well. My job is not to kill them.

The Bible was and is the quintessential book. Indeed, the word "Bible" is an English version of the Greek words biblos/biblion that mean "book." An associated meaning is "scroll" because the original copies of the "books" of the Bible were scrolls in which the pages of papyrus or vellum were pasted together in a continuous roll. Our current bibles and books are descendants of later codexes in which the pages were folded in half and bound together in the middle. If we want to understand human history, much of which is preserved in books, we have to learn about "the book," the Bible.

The Bible was not originally a book as we think of a book as a text to sit and read alone in silence. The various books of the Bible were visual recordings of sound that the original authors assumed would be performed for audiences, often from memory. The reasons for this were: 1) most people were illiterate (85-95%) during the more than one thousand years during which the various books of the Bible were composed 2) books had to be copied by hand using costly materials, and were, therefore, expensive to buy. Our bibles now are the product of loving labor and technological developments such as the printing press that have been developed during the last three thousand years of human history.

An appropriate and interesting way of experiencing the Bible is to listen to a good biblical storyteller telling the stories. Over half of the individual books collected in the big book of the Bible are stories that were told and retold by storytellers for anywhere from a few decades to a few centuries before they were written down. These storytelling occasions, sometimes with and sometimes without a manuscript in hand, varied in length from a few minutes to several hours. The Gospel of Mark was a two-hour story and the Gospel of Luke

a four-hour story. And those were short stories when compared with the performances of Homer's Iliad that went on all night long. Furthermore, they reflect the varied memories of the original events that circulated in different storytelling circles. Thus, the four stories of Jesus' resurrection in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John identify different groups of women who went to the tomb and different angels who spoke to them. But all of the stories are memories of the same transformative event.

Therefore, as we read the books of the Bible in our modern book, we can picture and hear those original storytellers, prophets and singers in our imagination. We can also picture and hear the millions of people in homes, classes, synagogues and churches who have read, recited, heard, and remembered the books of the Bible over the two thousand years since they were formed into the definitive collections. Listening to the Bible is an entry into a grand adventure of exploration and discovery.

Tom Boomershine is the Professor of New Testament Emeritus, United Theological Seminary and Founder, Network of Biblical Storytellers which has guilds on five continents

The Bible and Written Literacy

By Bob Creson, CEO, Wycliffe Bible Translators USA

The desire to read the Bible is a powerful motivation for learning to read and write. At the same time, the desire that others might be equipped to read the Bible is a powerful motivation for Bible translators and others to develop literacy programs that empower people with new skills.

Take English as an example. Just 70 years before William Shakespeare put

pen to paper, there was no viable written English language. Scholars and academics at universities and professions in business and law spoke Latin, the universal language of the day throughout England and Europe. The king and nobility spoke Norman French. English peasants, a marginalized people group of that time, who spoke a throw away language, English were seen as beyond reach of the Gospel.

The first English translation of the Bible was done in the 14th century by John Wycliffe. William Tyndale took English translation to a whole new level by doing an excellent translation

of the Bible creating modern English. Translating from Hebrew and Greek, his translation was accurate and at times poetic and memorable. Caught, tried and sentenced to death, his dying wish as he was burned at the stake was "Lord! Open the King of England's eyes." The following year King Henry VIII allowed English Bibles to be distributed in England. Then, in 1539, Henry VIII allowed publication of "the Great Bible," which included Tyndale's translation.

Even more amazing is that in a period of 100 years reading and writing English among males in England went

from about 5 percent of the population to 25% eventually reaching 40% of the population. By 1770, shopkeepers were 95% literate. Literacy in England is directly attributable to the Bible.

What Wycliffe and Tyndale did for literacy through Bible translation has been 'systematized' by Wycliffe Bible Translators and our partner organization like SIL International. A number of years ago in Peru, children and adults were taught to read first in their mother tongue and then gradually transitioned into reading Spanish.

LITERACY

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Sometimes called “bilingual education,” the program was highly successful preparing students to read their newly translated Bibles and also to benefit from the country’s educational system (that was in Spanish).

Now labeled “multilingual education,” or sometimes “mother tongue first” or “first language education,” the approach continues to work. Longitudinal studies show that children who are first taught to read and write in their mother tongue bridge more easily into education in a national language. They stay in school longer and are more successful in their studies.

Mofu is a language spoken in Northern Cameroon. The New Testament is available in Mofu, and so is a program of multilingual education. A recent report showed that schools using this mother-tongue-first approach had a passing rate of 99 percent on the end-of-primary-school exams. Schools not using the mother tongue as the means of teaching the early grades had a maximum of 49 percent passing.

When I’ve visited schools in places like Cameroon, the Philippines, and China using this approach, I’ve observed that students in classes using their mother tongue were clearly more involved in the learning process than were their peers being taught in



French, English, or Mandarin. In the traditional classes, students sat in rows and learned—or memorized—the lessons on the chalkboard. But in the non-traditional, mother-tongue-first classes, the students were animated, actively interacting with their teacher.

Most language communities today exist in the context of other languages, and over time, more and more governments have changed their language policies to include a multilingual

approach to education.

Literacy and education create opportunities that help communities deal with social justice issues and combat the spread of diseases like HIV, AIDS and malaria. It’s said that teaching a mother to read is more effective than putting a doctor in the community. She will be proactive; the doctor is reactive. Dana Roberts, director of the Center for Global Christianity and Missions at Boston University, has said, “...if you

look worldwide at poverty, literacy is the main thing that helps you rise out of poverty.”

For a large number of language communities, the first step out of poverty—the foundational step—is gaining a written form for their language. When linguist/translators come alongside mother tongue speakers to help them develop their languages, their first project is often working together to create an alphabet that fits the sound structure of the language. Once there is an alphabet, there can be books and literacy—first in the mother tongue and then in a language of wider communication.

Wycliffe’s vision is for every man, woman, and child to hear the Good News in the language and form they understand best, and literacy programs are at the center of our work as Bible translators.

And because of our commitment to serve the whole person, we are delighted that Bible translation and the accompanying development of alphabets, books and literacy worldwide is often the starting point for solutions to some of the world’s most pressing humanitarian issues.

Wycliffe Bible Translators, the largest scripture translation organization in the world recently re-elected Bob Creson to this fourth consecutive term as President and CEO.

The Bible as Cultural Influence

By Leland Ryken

Every year two million visitors file past the famed Liberty Bell in Philadelphia. As they look at the cracked bell, they read these words: “Proclaim LIBERTY throughout all the Land unto all the Inhabitants thereof.” The inscription comes from the Bible (Leviticus 25:10).

When presidents of the United States raise their right hand to take the oath of office at their inauguration, they place their left hand on a copy of the Bible.

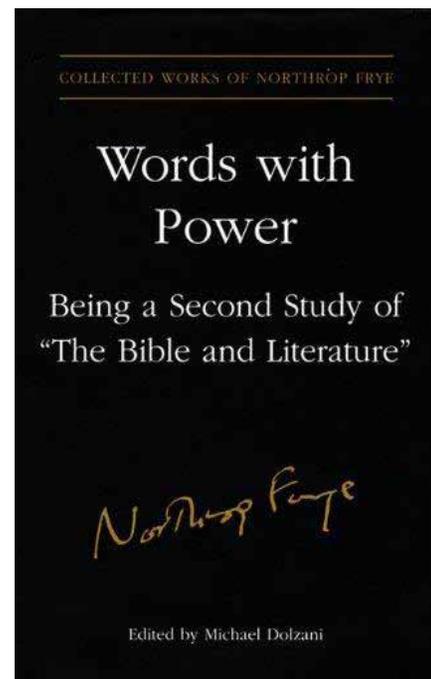
When Martin Luther King stood on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D. C., and delivered his famous “I Have a Dream” speech, he said, “We will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.” Those words come directly from the Bible (Amos 5:24).

Why does the Bible appear in these places? Because it is the central and foundational book of Western culture, including American culture. Everywhere we turn in the cultural past, we find the Bible. We cannot avoid it if we tried, and we will not understand our past without a knowledge of the Bible.

George Lindbeck, former professor of theology at Yale University, once described the cultural position of the Bible in American culture this way: “Its stories, images, conceptual patterns, and turns of phrase permeated the culture from top to bottom. This was true even for illiterates and those who did not go to church, for knowledge of the Bible was transmitted not only directly by its reading, hearing, and ritual enactment, but also indirectly by an interwoven net of intellectual, literary, artistic, folkloric, and proverbial traditions. ...There was a time when every educated person, no matter how professedly unbelieving or secular, knew the actual text from Genesis to Revelation...”

The evidences of this cultural influence permeated every sphere of life. Theodore Roosevelt correctly observed of the English Bible that “no other book of any kind ever written in English... has ever so affected the whole life of a people.”

One of the most important spheres of influence is the English language itself. One index to this is the familiar sayings that come straight from the Bible (and of course everything that we say about the historic influence of the Bible is a comment on the King James Version). “The salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13). “The signs of the



times” (Matthew 16:3). “The root of the matter” (Job 19:28). “Old wives’ fables” (1 Timothy 4:7).

When American pioneers rode westward with two books in their covered wagons, they signaled the foundational importance of those two books for the civilization that they hoped to preserve amid circumstances that threatened it. The two books were the King James Bible and the complete

works of William Shakespeare. Part of what was being preserved was a standard of excellence for the English language.

Among the cultural influences of the Bible, none is more obvious than literature. English and American literature scarcely exist apart from the Bible. Titles of literary works can be regarded as the tip of the iceberg: *The Power and the Glory*. *Measure for Measure*. *The Sun Also Rises*. *East of Eden*. *Absalom, Absalom*. *Evil under the Sun*. Literary scholar T. R. Henn has written that the Bible “becomes one with the Western tradition, because it is its single greatest source.”

An obvious conclusion to be drawn from the centrality of the Bible in literature is that the Bible should be part of every literature curriculum. In fact, Northrop Frye, the most influential literary scholar of the second half of the twentieth century, believed that the Bible should form the basis of literary education. He famously wrote that “the Bible should be taught so early and so thoroughly that it sinks straight to the bottom of the mind, where everything that comes along later can settle on it.” Frye’s vision was never fully realized, but it remains a beacon toward which we can aspire.

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and Parents are the Teachers*

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the mothers
and fathers
of the world.**

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The Influence of the Bible on Women

By Marie Goughnour Wachlin

Women of the Bible—some respectfully devout, some of ill repute, others in between—exhibited valor and inspiration not only to those at the time of the writing, but have continued to be an inspiration even today. Women in the Bible were strong and sought out justice and were held in high regard. They accomplished great things.

Examples of strong women include Deborah in Hebrew Scriptures who was a prophet, wife and judge and the first woman to lead the nation of Israel and secured victory over the Canaanites. Mary in the New Testament defied convention of the day and sat down to listen to Jesus talk in a men's only world at a time when male teachers did not allow women to learn with them. Jesus rebuked Martha for holding the view that Mary couldn't sit and listen to him teach and lifted up Martha's sister Mary. (Luke 10:38-42).

The 200 named women of the Bible comprise less than sixteen percent of the people in the Bible. Nevertheless, historically, biblical women continue to inspire



others to assume humanitarian roles: women's suffrage, abolition, temperance, and compassion for the weak.

Following the tradition of women in the Bible, women in the 19th century played major roles in the abolition movement and in women's suffrage. In the petitions in England in the late 18th century, women signed their own names to the petitions at a time when they were not allowed to vote. They wore the on their dresses the medallion of abolition created by Josiah Wedgewood – “Am I not a man and a brother” featuring a black slave on his knees in chains. It was an indirect way of voting since they couldn't do so at that time. Abolitionists in the U.S. distributed

and sold medals at abolition of slavery fairs, raising money with a women kneeling in chains with the slogan: “Am I not a woman and a sister”

Women were great organizers for the abolition of slavery in America and England. Despite the limitations by law and convention, they wrote poetry, essays and letters. They sent petitions to the government, raised money, gave lectures and helped slaves escape.

Following in the tradition of women in the Bible, Sarah Moore Grimke, famous for making speeches to mixed company of men and women about slavery was condemned for doing so even by clergymen. Yet Sarah held that “All I ask of our brethren is that they will take their feet from off our necks and permit us to stand upright on the ground which God intended us to occupy.”

Susan B. Anthony, one of the leaders of the women's right to vote in a speech in the 1850s expressed the hopes of many women of the time:

The true woman will not be exponent of another, or allow another to be such for her. She will be her own individual self-do her own individual work- stand or fall by her own individual wisdom and strength. ... She will ... use worthily every

talent given her by God, in the great work of life, to the best advantage of herself and the race.

Women in the Bible also inspired organizations. In the spirit of the biblical Hannah who stood up to taunts because of her barrenness and was oppressed by others until she finally had a son, Hannah House ministers in various locations: a shelter for oppressed women and children in Columbia, SC; a women's residential treatment center in Vancouver, Canada and supervised parental visitation for children otherwise unable to visit due to custody litigation or other difficult family transitions in San Diego, CA.

Another example: From her home on the Jericho city wall, the prostitute Rahab boldly hid two Israelite spies. Rahab was later recognized as part of Jesus' ancestral line. In that spirit, Rahab's Sisters is a hospitality ministry in Portland, OR, offering support to women, especially those impacted by the sex industry: “Like the original Rahab, we strive to give ‘friendly welcome’ to those who would otherwise be on the streets and in danger.”

Women inspired by the Bible and organization inspired by women in the Bible continue to be an important part of the fabric of the world around us today.

The Bible in Black America

By Deborah De Sousa Owens, Ed.D.

The Bible has always played an important role in the lives of Black Americans. It has influenced Black culture more than any book ever written.

The Bible has been the source of inspiration for Black Americans since the slaves arrived on America's shores. Though many slaves could not read, some slave masters read the Bible to their slaves. It was a contradiction that men who

themselves. This commitment to the Bible and its teachings was passed on from generation to generation. It was the content of the Bible and the teachings of the Black preacher that would decades later bring about change for Blacks in America.

The Bible is a sacred book to many Blacks. Black culture regards the Bible as a book that is to be treated with dignity and respect for it contains the words of an Almighty God. It has a distinct place of honor in many homes. Whether it is sitting on a mantel or a table, it is always handled with care. It is this kind of respect for the Bible and its content that forged a bond between Blacks generations ago.

It was because of the strong belief in God and His word that many Blacks found courage to engage in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. A preacher and Bible scholar who was “called” and thrust onto the scene during the days of segregation challenged the system through non-violent protest for

equal rights for Blacks in America. His name was Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. He was able to do what he did because of his strong faith in God and the infallible words contained in the Bible. The Bible had a tremendous influence on his life and was his guiding light. Reverend King fought for what was right, just and honorable. He framed his speeches around the important tenets of the Bible and all

of Black America flocked to hear him. His messages reverberated around the nation. He spoke truth: the truth of God's Word found in the Bible.

Not only did he believe the truth of God's Word, but because of his commitment to the Civil Rights Movement and his unwavering faith, he did what he was compelled to do and put his life at risk to help others. On April 3, 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. accepted an invitation to help the sanitation workers in Memphis who were on strike. On that fateful day, he would deliver his last speech, entitled I have been to the Mountain Top. This electrifying speech was delivered at Mason Temple (Church of God in Christ headquarters). Mason Temple is named after the founder of the Church of God in Christ (COGIC), Bishop C.H. Mason. The COGIC is the largest Pentecostal denomination, which boasts six million members worldwide. This tremendous work is attributed to one man who was deeply influenced by the Bible.

As fate would have it, Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., a Baptist preacher, would deliver his last sermon at a Pentecostal church, the “Mother” church, which is steeped in history. Many in the Pentecostal movement believe in the prophetic and ministry gifts, so it was no coincidence that Reverend King would use Biblical language when he spoke of his mountain top experience. Some say it was a foreshadowing of what was to come: Reverend King's death, which occurred the next day. Reverend King spoke of his possible demise, but his words demonstrated he was not afraid of death:

“Like anybody, I would like to live - a long time; longevity has its place. But I'm

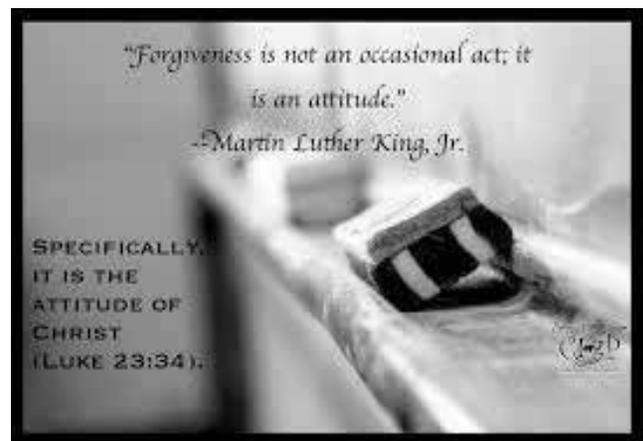
not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I have seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we as a people, will get to the Promised Land. So I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord”.

Only someone whose faith is anchored in Scriptures contained in the Bible can live a life of passion and conviction while knowing that death might come suddenly, yet remain unafraid to face death. This is what the Biblical experience means to many Blacks from the days of slavery through the present.

The Black Church has always been the conscience of America and remains so today. It is steeped in tradition and loyal to the Biblical teachings espoused by Black pastors who remain faithful to the tenets found in the Bible. The contents of the Bible have had an astounding effect on Black America throughout the ages. As Blacks in America continue to let the Bible influence their lives, their future and culture can only continue to thrive. It is only if Blacks fail to let the Bible influence their lives that they will see their demise as a people and America as a nation.

The Bible is able to influence and transform the lives of every race and creed that yields to the truths, wisdom and teachings contained in this ancient book.

Deborah Owens is Co-founder of the Coalition of African American Pastors along with her husband Bill Owens.



established this nation as a Christian nation would hold men and women captive against their will, but they did. Notably, the Bible offered slaves hope from their daily despair, thus allowing them the endurance needed to face their oppressors in the belief that one day they would be freed.

Once Black men and women began to learn how to read, they read the Bible, prayed and sang Negro spirituals to uplift

The Bible and Flourishing By Chuck Stetson

The late professor Angus Madison made some interesting observations in looking over what has happened to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita over the last 2,000 years. North America has been spectacularly successful economically for the average person, followed by Europe.

Why was the West so successful while the Soviet Union collapsed economically along with China under Mao and North Korea. All three countries impoverished their people and starved millions - at least 20 million in the Soviet Union in the 1930s and 60 million in the years following the launch of the Great Leap Forward in China beginning in 1958.

The Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto wrote an article in the International Herald Tribune in 2002 entitled "Why Capitalism Succeeded in the West and not elsewhere." Based on the economic research that The Institute for Democracy and Liberty, which Hernando heads, has conducted in 35 countries in the world, Hernando believes that it is property rights and limited regulation that help the poor economically.

Property rights and freedom are core to the Bible and yet so hard to find in other religions and views of the world. Almost everyone knows the Biblical commandment "Do not steal" which effectively establish property rights. Somewhat less familiar is the concept that God pulled the Hebrew people out of slavery and meant for humans to be free.

But there are a number of other things that support flourishing. Even in the time of great crisis, when Jerusalem had been destroyed in 586 B.C., the Prophet Jeremiah told those carried off in exile to "seek the Shalom (Hebrew for wholeness) of the city... If the city flourishes, you will flourish." In the ancient world where rage and revenge were what captives did, this was a startling and shocking idea.

The Bible asks us to look after others. The word compassion didn't enter the Greek language until the first century where it appears 12 times in the New Testament.

The Biblical notion of flourishing was later implemented as a measure of justice in the guilds in England by having Fair weights.

A business ethic grew up around John Wesley's Sermon 50 on "The Use of Money." It was based on three

premises - "we ought to gain all we can, (not throwing our) precious talent into the sea, save all you can and then give all you can." This was very important to Sir John Templeton who built up value in the Templeton Funds which he sold and now after his death has three foundations collectively worth \$5.5 billion.

Andrew Carnegie's Gospel of Wealth which he wrote in June 1889 sums it up well for many. It was a favorite of Bill Simon and my father who worked with Bill. Addressing the issue of rich and poor, a hot topic today, Andrew Carnegie concludes:

"Thus is the problem of Rich and Poor to be solved. The laws of accumulation will be left free; the laws of distribution free. Individualism will continue, but the millionaire will be but a trustee for the poor; entrusted for a season with a great part of the increased wealth of the community, but administering it for the community far better than it could or would have done for itself. The best minds will thus have reached a stage in the development of the race which it is clearly seen that there is no mode of disposing of surplus wealth creditable to thoughtful and earnest men into whose hands it flows save by using it year by year for the general

good. This day already dawns. But a little while, and although, without incurring the pity of their fellows, men may die sharers in great business enterprises from which their capital cannot be or has not been withdrawn, and is left chiefly at death for public uses, yet the man who dies leaving behind many millions in available wealth, which was his to administer during life, will pass away "unwept, unhonored, and unsung," no matter to what uses he leaves the dross which he cannot take with him. Of such as these the public verdict will then be: "The man who dies thus rich dies disgraced."

Such, in my opinion, is the true Gospel concerning Wealth, obedience to which is destined some day to solve the problem of the Rich and the Poor, and to bring Peace on earth, among men Good-Will."

For a person the Bible, then, life is about being free, having property rights, working hard and seeking the wholeness of the communities we live in. While so many humans don't live up to these ideals, imagine if they did. Wouldn't this be Paradise?

The Bible Is Now Making a Significant Comeback on the Ivy League College Campuses

By Matt Bennett, Founder and President of Christian Union

The Bible was once highly valued in the curriculum of the first universities founded in America. Harvard's original motto which can be seen in the front room on the third floor of the Harvard Club in New York was "Veritas pro Christo et pro ecclesia" (Truth for Christ and the Church). Yale's motto is "Lux et Veritas" (Light and Truth). Up until the 19th century, knowing Hebrew and ancient Greek was essential to get in to Harvard founded in 1636 and Yale founded in 1701. The Congregationalist ministers who founded Yale wanted that "Youth may be instructed in the Arts and Sciences who through the blessing of God may be fitted for Publick employment both in Church and Civil State." Furthermore, students had to "live religious, godly and blameless lives according to the rules of God's Word, diligently reading the Holy Scriptures, the fountain of light and truth; and constantly attend upon all the duties of religion, both in public and secret." In the mid-18th century, approximately two-thirds of the graduates of Yale University went into the ministry.

Something strange then happened in American universities starting in the early 1800s culminating in a dramatic shift in the mission of universities over the next 150 years. While it started in the early 1800s, it was Charles Eliot, when he became President of Harvard in 1869 that accelerated the university's shift in mission. For example, Eliot appointed Dean Christopher Langdell as the first Dean of Harvard Law School in 1870. Langdell removed Sir William Blackstone Commentaries on the Laws of England which had been the standard teaching text in Law Schools. Blackstone (1723-1780) was a recognized legal English scholar who believed that the Ten Commandments should be at the heart of his Commentaries. He believed that mankind was created by God and granted rights by God. Man's law must be based on God's law, which was the basic concept in the Declaration of Independence. Dean Langdell reversed Blackstone's belief in the supremacy of God's law by teaching man's law as supreme when he introduced the case study method of law. Case law introduced the notion of moral relativism into the study of law instead of the prior absolutes in law. Starting in 1890, other law schools started to follow the case study method, which has become standard teaching.

Eliot oversaw the end of many longstanding requirements that involved the Bible including the end of

compulsory daily chapel in 1886. This started a trend which other universities followed to eliminate mandatory daily chapel, including Yale in 1926 and reducing the role of the Bible in colleges. Gradually, the formal study of the Bible got integrated into "Religious Studies" where it became one of many religions studied as if all religions are equal.

But the Bible is making a comeback now in the 21st century at the Ivy League Colleges in a very interesting way. On the Princeton campus, which was the first campus that Christian Union went to in 2002, there are now 400 of the 4,000 or so students or 10 percent of the students at Princeton doing a very detailed and methodical study of the books of the Bible such as the Letter to the Romans in voluntary, not for credit course written by Christian Union. On other Ivy League campuses, that were started afterwards there are the same active voluntary Bible studies that are growing in popularity. Since Christian Union writes its own Bible study materials so that we can incorporate the latest rigorous scholarship, but we also make the material relevant and applicable to the daily lives of students. It is significant that students engage in our Bible studies voluntarily, on top of their regular heavy academic load because they have such a hunger to learn what the Bible has to say. In one small group study led by one of our employees,

four of the twelve young women had never before owned a Bible, so they were given ESV study bibles to study the New Testament book of Hebrews this fall. The students are intellectually curious, and when presented with the robust scholarship on Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament, they take a deeper look at religious belief that they may have passed over in the past.

What these students discover, much like what the founders of these great universities understood, is that there is no better foundation for life and scholarship than the Bible.

We have developed an annual competition between Ivy League Colleges on performing Bible

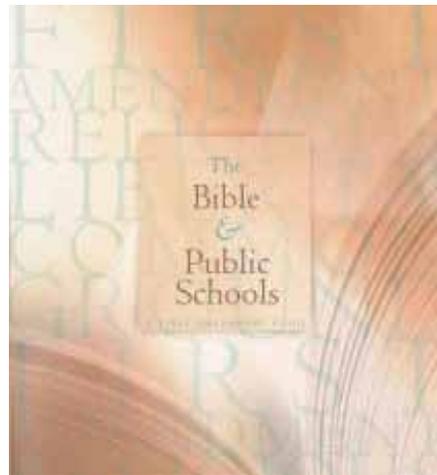
We have developed an annual competition between Ivy League Colleges on performing Bible memorization - The Spoken Word Contest. Students—or teams of up to four students—who enter the contest and are selected as finalists will present, in a creative spoken word format, from memory, a Biblical text from one particular passage or from a range of passages in the Old and/or New Testaments.

Matt Bennett founded Christian Union in 2002 which is now running very popular Bible studies courses with a significant number of students on each of the eight Ivy League Colleges and is expanding out to Stanford University and MIT.

Teaching the Bible Academically in American Public Schools

Teaching About the Bible In American Public Schools

An Excerpt and Commentary Relating to "The Bible & Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide"



On November 11, 1999, a group of 20 organizations including the National Association of School Boards, American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association, Christian Legal Society, National Association of Evangelicals, American Jewish Congress and American Jewish Committee and the People for the American Way came together and issued a consensus statement *The Bible & Public Schools, A First Amendment Guide*.

Charles Haynes, Director of the Religious Freedom Center of the Newseum, was formerly the Senior Scholar at the First Amendment Center where he was the author of the consensus statement and had previously participated in the Williamsburg Charter in 1989 and had later in 1994 written a consensus state on "Religion & The Public School: A First Amendment Guide."

Dick Ostling former Religion Editor at Associated Press wrote 10 full page articles on teaching the Bible in public schools subsequent to the publication of *The Bible & Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide*. Recently he wrote:

Surveys show there's appalling ignorance about the basics of the Bible, especially among younger Americans. Even religious skeptics would have to admit that's a serious cultural and educational problem, wholly apart from Scripture's religious role. Bible knowledge is essential to comprehending the art of Giotto and Chagall, Bach cantatas and African-American spirituals, Shakespeare's plays, countless allusions in novels and poems, historical events like the Protestant Reformation and the civil rights and anti-apartheid movements, the rhetoric of U.S. presidents, populism and pacifism, and on and on.

This fiasco is not what the U.S. Supreme Court intended when it outlawed mandatory Bible readings in public schools for creating an "establishment of religion" that violated the Constitution's First Amendment (in *Abington v. Schempp*, 1963). Though the justices barred ceremonial and devotional use of the Bible, they included this key clarification:

"It certainly may be said that the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historic qualities. Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be effected consistently with the First Amendment."

So the Supreme Court itself has explained the "why," but the "how" has proven difficult during the ensuing half-century. School districts have been reluctant to apply the Court's admonition, fearful of legal threats, wary of maneuvering through America's growing religious diversity, and unsure how to obtain appropriate teachers and curricula.

President Clinton's education department provided brief guidance in 1995. Then in 1999 Freedom Forum's First Amendment Center, the Society of Biblical Literature (a body of university and seminary Bible scholars), and the Bible Literacy Project (see below) sought to overcome "confusion and conflict" through a remarkable 13-page agreement, "*The Bible & Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide*." This policy is endorsed by an unusually wide coalition that includes seven major public school organizations, evangelical and "mainline" Protestants, three prominent Jewish groups, the Council on Islamic Education, and others.

This booklet's material about curriculum says "objective" Bible coursework should cover a variety of interpretations and "neither promote nor disparage religion, nor should it be taught from a particular sectarian point of view." Teachers should be selected for academic qualifications, not religious views, with no non-school involvement, just as with other subjects. Textbooks should not be "devotional." Schools should not "undermine or reinforce" students' "faith in the Bible or lack of such belief." Supernatural events in the Bible "may not be taught as historical fact." Students "cannot be uncritically taught to accept the Bible as literally true, as history. Nor should they be uncritically taught to accept as historical only what secular historians find verifiable in the Bible." This careful balancing act displeases some religious traditionalists.

Below are some key excerpts for "*The Bible & Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide*" about teaching the Bible and Literature and the Bible in History in America in a constitutionally acceptable way:

When teaching about the Bible in a public school, teachers must understand the important distinction between advocacy, indoctrination, proselytizing, and the practice of religion – which is unconstitutional – and teaching about religion that is objective, nonjudgmental, academic, neutral, balanced, and fair – which is constitutional.

The Bible and Literature

Academic study of the Bible in a public secondary school may appropriately take place in literature courses. Students might study the Bible as literature. They would examine the Bible as they would other literature in terms of aesthetic categories, as an anthology of narratives and poetry, exploring its language, symbolism, and motifs. Students might also study the Bible in literature, the ways in which later writers have used Bible literature, language, and symbols. Much drama, poetry, and fiction contains material from the Bible.

Bible Electives in Literature

A literature elective in the Bible would focus on the Bible as a literary text. This might include the Bible as literature and the Bible in literature. A primary goal of the course would be basic biblical literacy – a grasp of the language, major narratives, symbols, and characters of the Bible. The course might also explore the influence of the Bible in classic and contemporary poems, plays, and novels.

Of course, the Bible is not simply literature – for a number of religious traditions it is scripture. A "Bible Literature" course, therefore, could also include some discussion of how various religious traditions understand the text. This would require that literature teachers be adequately prepared to address in an academic and objective manner the relevant, major religious readings of the text.

The Bible and History

The study of history offers a number of opportunities to study about the Bible. When studying the origins of Judaism, for example, students may learn different theories of how the Bible came to be. In a study of the history of the ancient world, students may learn how the content of the Bible sheds light on the history and beliefs of Jews and Christians – adherents of the religions that affirm the Bible as scripture. A study of the Reformation might include a discussion of how Protestants and Catholics differ in their interpretation and use of the Bible.

In U.S. history, there are natural opportunities for students to learn about the role of religion and the Bible in American life and society. For example, many historical documents – including many presidential addresses and congressional debates – contain biblical references. Throughout American history, the Bible has been invoked on various sides of many public-policy debates and in conjunction with social movements such as abolition, temperance, and the civil rights

movement. A government or civics course may include some discussion of the biblical sources for parts of our legal system.

Learning about the history of the Bible, as well as the role of the Bible in history, are appropriate topics in a variety of courses in the social studies.

Bible Electives in History

An elective history course that focuses on the Bible is a difficult undertaking for public schools because of the complex scholarly and religious debates about the historicity of the Bible. Such a course would need to include non-biblical sources from a variety of scholarly perspectives. Students would study archeological findings and other historical evidence in order to understand the history and cultures of the ancient world. Teachers who may be assigned to teach a history course focused on the Bible need a great deal of preparation and sophistication.

Unless schools are prepared to design a course that meets the above requirements, they will face legal and educational challenges. In view of these requirements, most public schools that have offered a Bible elective have found it safer and more age-appropriate to use the Bible literature approach discussed earlier in this guide.

Schools must keep in mind that the Bible is seen by millions of Jews and Christians as scripture. For adherents of these faiths, the Bible makes sense of events in terms of God's purposes and actions. This means that the Bible may not be treated as a history textbook by public-school teachers but must be studied by examining a variety of perspectives – religious and non-religious – on the meaning and significance of the biblical account.

As we have already noted, sorting out what is historical in the Bible is complicated and potentially controversial. Teachers who teach a history course focused on the Bible need to be sensitive to the differences between conventional secular history and the varieties of sacred history. Students must learn something about the contending ways of assessing the historicity of the Bible. They cannot be uncritically taught to accept the Bible as literally true, as history. Nor should they be uncritically taught to accept as historical only what secular historians find verifiable in the Bible.

Sometimes, in an attempt to make study about the Bible more "acceptable" in public schools, educators are willing to jettison accounts of miraculous events. But this too is problematic, for it radically distorts the meaning of the Bible. For those who accept the Bible as scripture, God is at work in history, and there is a religious meaning in the patterns of history. A Bible elective in a public school may examine all parts of the Bible, as long as the teacher understands how to teach about the religious content of the Bible from a variety of perspectives.

What do American students know about the Bible, and what do they need to know in order to get a good education?

By Marie Goughnour Wachlin, Ph. D.

Bible Literacy Report – What do American Teens need to Know and What do they know? was funded by the John Templeton Foundation and was published on April 26, 2005. The following is an excerpt from the Executive Summary:

This research project consists of two parts: (I) a qualitative research study of what the best high school English teachers think their students need to know about the Bible and (II) the only recent nationally representative survey of American teens' religious knowledge to uncover what American students currently know about the Bible (and other religious texts).

The Qualitative Research Findings:

In a diverse sample of high school English teachers in 10 states, 40 out of 41 teachers said Bible knowledge confers a distinct educational advantage on students. Ninety percent of high school English teachers said it was important for both college-bound and "regular" students to be biblically literate. An Illinois teacher stated: "I think from the standpoint of academic success, it is imperative that college-bound students be literate.



For the others, I think it's important for them to understand their own culture, just to be well-grounded citizens of the United States—to know where the institutions and ideas come from."

Conversely, many teachers reported that students in their English classes who were not familiar with the Bible were disadvantaged. One California teacher said: "Students who don't know the Bible are certainly at a disadvantage. It's harder for them. They're not as familiar with it, and it takes more time for them to understand

what it is." Teachers reported students without Bible knowledge take more time to teach, appearing "confused, stumped, and clueless."

These English teachers reported that among their students Bible illiteracy is common. The majority of high school English teachers in this sample estimated that fewer than a fourth of their current students were Bible literate. Only 4 of the 30 public schools in the study (compared to all four private schools) offered a unit or course about the Bible. Economically advantaged

school districts in this sample were far more likely to offer academic study of the Bible than less-advantaged school districts.

The Nationally Representative Gallup Survey: Bible Literacy Project Analysis

This Gallup Survey is based on a nationally representative sample of 1,002 teenagers between the ages of 13 and 18, who were interviewed between May 20 and June 27, 2004.

It represents the first extensive, (and today still the only) nationally representative survey of the Bible and religious knowledge among American teens in recent years.

The good news is that strong majorities of American teens recognize the basic meaning of widely used Judeo-Christian terms such as "Easter," "Adam and Eve," "Moses," "The Golden Rule," and "The Good Samaritan."

However, substantial minorities lack even the most basic working knowledge of the Bible. Almost one out of ten teens believes that Moses is one of the twelve Apostles. About the same proportion, when asked what Easter commemorates, or to identify Adam and Eve, respond "don't know."

Also, only a minority of American teens appear to be "Bible literate," reaching the level of knowledge similar to that defined by high school English teachers as necessary to a good education. For example: Fewer than half of teens (49 percent) knew

» see **STUDENTS** | D20

"Should not the Bible regain the place it once held as a school book?"

Its morals are pure, its examples captivating and noble.

In no book is there so good English, so pure and so elegant; and by teaching all the same book, they will speak alike, and the Bible will justly remain the standard of language as well as of faith."

-Fisher Ames

(Member of Congress)

Author of First Amendment (1789)

Biblical principles teach our youth and families Good Morals that build a foundation for Good Mental Health. We do not need more gun laws; we just need our schools, families, and churches to start teaching the Bible again! It is through God's written Word that we find hope and God's spiritual guidance and meaning of life.

This article is sponsored by Ames Gathering of Eagles and Ames Research Laboratories, Manufacturers of Ames Blue Max basement coating.

STUDENTS

From page D19

what happened at the wedding at Cana (Jesus turned water into wine). Nearly one out of four refused even to guess. Given a choice of four quotations from the Bible, almost two-thirds of teens could not correctly identify a quotation from the Sermon

on the Mount. Similarly, fewer than a third of teens could correctly identify which statement about David was not true (David tried to kill King Saul). One-quarter of teens believed that the statement “David was king of the Jews” was false.

Only 8 percent of teens in public schools in this sample reported that their school offered an elective course on the Bible, and just one out of four

public school students (26 percent) said that a unit or section on the Bible was offered in an English or social studies class.

The Bible Literacy Project analysis of the Gallup data concludes “[N]o controversy among adults, however heated, should be considered an excuse for leaving the next generation ignorant about a body of knowledge crucial to understanding American

art, literature, history, language, and culture.”

*Marie Goughnour Wachlin is a former English teacher in the Portland, Oregon public schools and currently an adjunct professor at Concordia University's College of Education, where she is leading the online course *The Bible and its Influence* which will begin in March 2015.*

What University Professors Say Incoming Students Need To Know About Bible

By Marie Goughnour Wachlin, a professor at Concordia University-Portland, will introduce an online course, *The Bible and Its Influence*, beginning in March 2015.

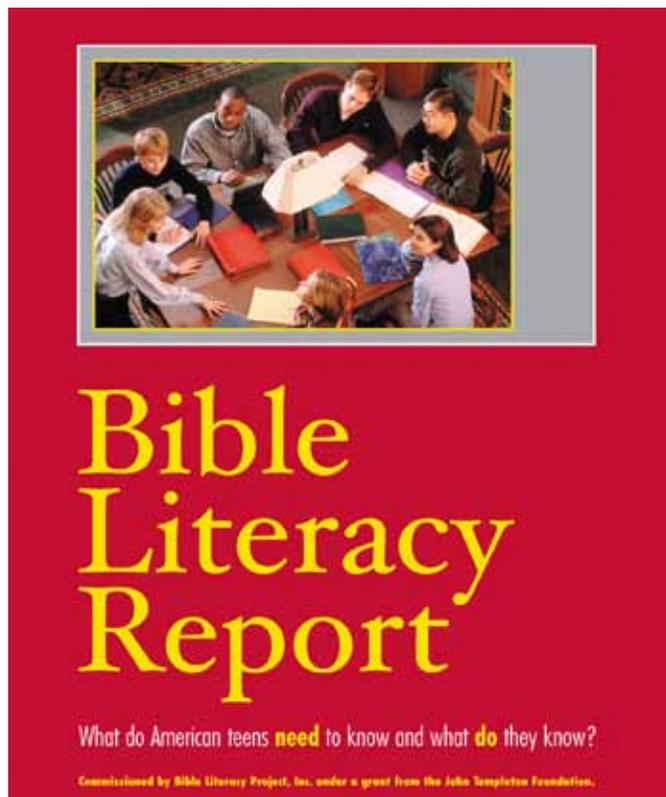
Bible Literacy Project released Bible Literacy Report II a study of what university English professors believed incoming students needed to know about the Bible to be successful in college. The John Templeton Foundation funded this report. The following is from the Executive Summary with some quotations from the Report.

What do today's college students need to know about the Bible to participate fully and equally in the courses taught in America's elite colleges and universities? This study surveyed 39 English professors at 34 top U.S. colleges and universities to learn their assessment of how important Bible literacy is to college-level study of English and American literature. What do incoming freshmen in college-level English courses need to know about the Bible?

Almost without exception, English professors, we surveyed at major American colleges and universities see knowledge of the Bible as a deeply important part of a good education. The virtual unanimity and depth of their responses on this question are striking. The Bible is not only a sacred scripture to millions of Americans, it is also arguable (as one Northwestern professor stated), the “most influential text of all of Western culture.”

For example, when asked to respond to the question, “Regardless of a person's faith, an educated needs to know about the Bible,” no professor disagreed; nine provided additional explanations. When asked, “Some scholars say Western literature is steeped in references to the Bible. How would you respond to that?” 38 of 39 English professors agreed; 24 strongly. When asked, “In your opinion, how important is it for students who take your courses to be familiar with the Bible?” 38 of 39 professors said it was important.

Overwhelmingly, professors in this survey indicated that a lack of basic Bible literacy hampers students' ability to



understand both classics and contemporary work. Arduously “decoding” scripture references detracts from absorbing and responding to great works of art, both ancient and modern.

At the same time, a number of professors expressed discomfort or reservations with appearing to “take sides” in favor of the Bible in the contemporary context. They did not wish to associate themselves with a potential movement around the Bible, or to seem to detract from the importance of other aspects of a good education, including the value of becoming knowledgeable about other world religions.

This report concludes that high schools should make basic Bible knowledge a part of their curriculum, especially for college preparatory students. Doing so requires developing a variety of educational materials and curricula that simultaneously (a) acknowledge the Bible's status as sacred scripture to million of Americans, (b) are fair to students of all faith traditions, and (c) are of high academic quality.

Doing so will be an important part of meeting the next generation's educational needs in an increasingly diverse population.

...Several professors expressed doubts that the negative effects of Bible illiteracy on students' comprehension

of literature could be compensated by noting references in footnotes or other similar techniques. A failure to be Bible literate means students must spend more time “decoding” the Bible's literal meaning, and even when they grasp a specific allusion they may not fully comprehend larger issues the writer is raising.

It's valuable for me to tell you this because I'm not a Christian, I'm a Jew. I know the Hebrew Bible better than I know the New Testament. But I know the New Testament. I know St. Matthew. If I teach Chaucer, and Chaucer is mocking the Prioress for wiping the edge of the cup clear. The Padre said, “Woe you scribes and Pharisees. You keep the inside of the cup dirty, but outside you wipe clean.” This I have to relate to my students because they can't pick it up. They're not going to find it in the footnotes of the text either. I've discovered.

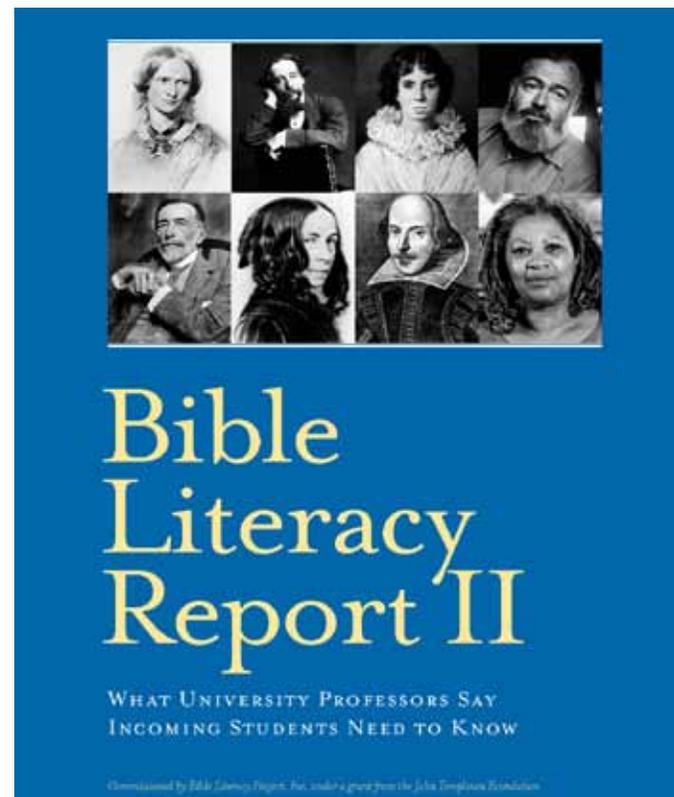
Or when you have the old man in Chaucer's “Pardoner's Tale” who wants to die and doesn't know how to die and the revelers who want to kill death, and again then you get the same thing in the figure of despair in Spenser and you get it in Milton. Well, students say “well, how can one kill death?” Well, it goes down from Hosea to St. Paul, you know. “Death, thou shalt die.” I use to teach a sonnet by John Donne about “Death Be Not Proud.” So, you know, there's a kind of substantial

theological basis that's part of a literary culture that they need to understand. (Prof. Ulrich Knoepfmacher, Princeton University.)

(With) poetry and autobiography as my primary fields, it helps to know the stories in Genesis and Exodus. It certainly helps to know the New Testament stories and something of the Book of Acts. But if a student doesn't know a reference, I assume that he or she can look at the footnotes in the text and go and look up whatever the Biblical story or reference might be. Now obviously if students know those intimately, they will recognize allusions or paraphrases or even quotations right off. Where the students who's never read any of the Bible won't. And that's a disadvantage if you're doing advanced work. (Prof. Linda H. Peterson, Director of Graduate Studies, Yale University.)

Students without Bible knowledge are always having to spend their energies just kind of decoding it. (Prof. Kevin Dunn, Dean of Arts and Sciences College, Tufts University.)...

The research was conducted and written up by Marie Goughnour Wachlin, a former public high school English teacher in Oregon and now an Adjunct Professor at Concordia University College of Education at Portland, Oregon.



The Role of the School Board in Introducing Bible Literacy Courses

By Kris Thomasian, President, Board of Education, Murrieta Valley Unified School District, California

The role of the school board in public education in the United States is wide-ranging. While routine duties include setting policies, adopting budgets and hiring staff, the most critical role of the local school board is to make decisions about curriculum and to incorporate their community's viewpoint of what students should know into courses and textbook selection. The states and federal government are increasingly mandating certain standards, or educational goals, for each grade level, but it is up to the local school board to determine how the students will be taught the skills to master the standards. Curriculum, course outlines and textbooks remain under the control of local public school boards.

Our school board's journey toward offering a Bible literacy course began in 2006, when several board members returned from a convention with information from The Bible Literacy Project. The first step for our board was to hear from an attorney regarding the legal aspects of the study of religion in public schools. Learning factual legal considerations was vital to ensure support from all board members. Next, our board requested a team of district curriculum leaders and high school teachers to explore possible course options. The team returned to the board with a variety of options for new courses, including Bible and Its

Influence, Bible as Literature, Bible in Literature, Religion in America, World Religions, Classical Religions, Religions in the Arts, and Religion in Society. The enthusiasm of the teachers in presenting the various course possibilities was exciting to see, and confirmed our suspicion that students, too, would be interested in course offerings based on the study of religion.

Murrieta is located in southern California, mid-way between Riverside and San Diego, in southwest Riverside County. The area was recently rated as one of the most conservative in California. We are a high-performing K-12 district with 23,000 students. Murrieta is a fast growing area, and many families have moved here due to our great schools and family oriented community.

Our board understands our community's perspective, and agreed with our teachers that students would be

interested in a religion-based course. The decision of what course or courses to offer was a topic of many board meetings. A primary consideration quickly emerged - any new course should be rigorous and meet the University of California / California State University requirements as a college preparatory course.

All board meetings held to discuss the possibility of offering a religion based course were public meetings, and the community and press quickly became interested. We offered many opportunities for members of the public to ask questions, express their concerns and offer recommendations. As community interest increased, we often encountered residents who were misinformed that religion could not be discussed in public schools. It became important to repeatedly reaffirm the legal considerations as well as the difference between the academic study

of religion as opposed to the school promoting religion. Many community members were supportive, while some felt that our public schools should not venture into the topic of religion.

The board ultimately decided to offer two new optional courses, World Religions and Bible in Literature. The World Religions course is a one semester course offered through our social studies department. The Bible in Literature course is a full year course offered through our English department. In our district, seniors must take an English course and the Bible in Literature course is one of four options which also include AP Literature, AP Composition and British Literature. All four courses meet the college preparation requirements of both the UC and CSU systems.

The Bible in Literature course description states, "The students study significant classical and contemporary literature that references stories from the Bible. The course focuses on the author's use of Biblical stories as a source for the artistic expression of the complexities of human thought and experience." Textbooks include works by Dante, Milton and Shakespeare, as well as the Bible and the Bible Literacy Project's, "The Bible and Its Influence."

The Bible in Literature course has proven to be popular with students, and following an initial growth period, enrollment has remained high, with students excited for the course and very engaged in learning. By taking the initiative to introduce the concept of offering a Bible-based course, and proceeding through a thoughtful and thorough process, our school board was able to create a new and vital learning opportunity for our students.



**Concordia University
– Portland, Oregon is
beginning an eight-week,
three semester credit
course – ENG 199E -on
“Hebrew Scriptures,” in
March 2015.**

A subsequent course on the New Testament is planned. Both courses will use the First-Amendment-Safe textbook, *The Bible and Its Influence*. Both courses are designed for high school seniors and college undergraduates that need to fill in their understanding of the Bible to more fully understand English literature, history, art, music and culture. For more information, contact Marie Wachlin, PhD at mewachlin@gmail.com

Teaching the Bible to Families

What parents should teach and children can learn from the Bible

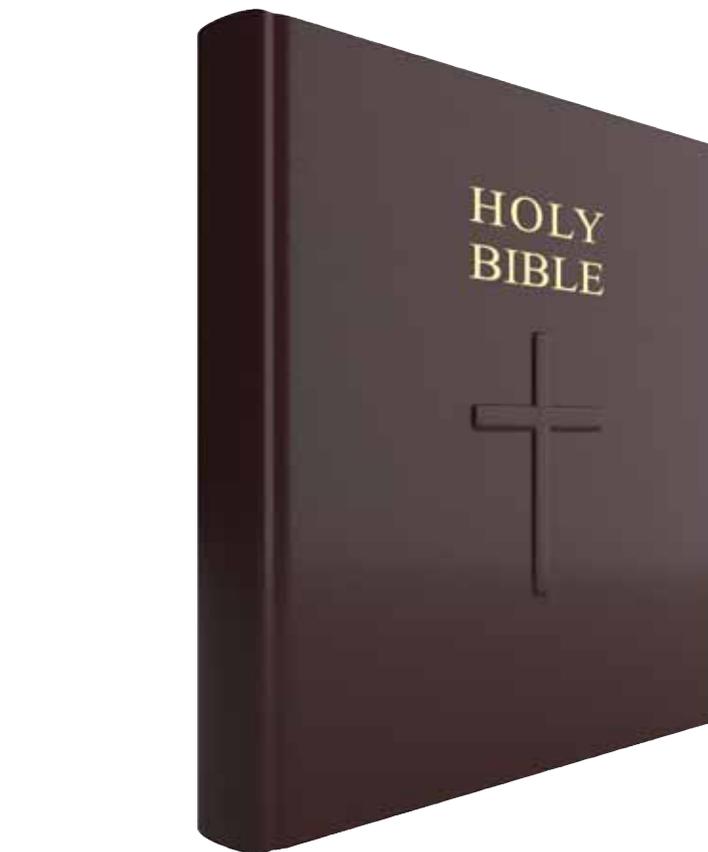
By Bethany Blankley

As a child I could rarely put a book down. I frequently wondered who wrote the words that came alive in my imagination? Who could construct entire languages like Elvish, Dwarvish, and Black Speech? And who thought a wooden doll's nose could grow, or an elephant could fly, or a princess could escape from goblins using invisible string?

For some reason, I speculated that another story existed, behind each story I read. Similarly, G.K. Chesterton thought, "I had always felt life first as a story: and if there is a story there is a story-teller."

The Bible answers this curiosity for children (mini adults) and parents (grown up children).

Its sole author is known, who from the first word to the last provides an account of real peoples' lives. Their stories interconnect over hundreds of years, yet all point to one man who is very much alive. On every page readers are compelled to love and hate good and bad kings, queens, judges, warriors, teachers, doctors, and many others. Occurrences of storms, earthquakes, floods, fires, or total darkness can be shocking. Other times, heart-felt longings are stirred to hear angels sing.



To understand the Bible, parents and children must know they are no different than most described on its pages. More importantly, they cannot live fully without loving its author and his son.

The son travels far and wide, searching for his treasure chests, finding them often sinking at sea or in quicksand. A brave warrior and prince, he leaves his throne to find, rescue

and glorify those his father loves. He's willing to die for them, and ultimately does, because he loves them, too.

But the story doesn't end there. The prince shapes the hearts and minds of many people. They tell others the good news, so much so that thousands of years later, his story is still told. Believers trust the author and his son, confident of their

protection over their lives.

Like goblins or the Orcs of Mordor, however, many don't believe the author's story and hate him. Instead, they wrote their own books about make-believe people, excluding the prince who alone offers a free gift of grace and life.

This is why parents and children must wisely discern biblical truth from that which is false. Trusting in and accepting the son's gift results in transformed, purpose-driven living. His love enables believers to also love freely, and discover and best use their talents.

The son entrusts believers with vocations to encourage human flourishing. Through the renewal of their minds, under any circumstance, they can live without doubt, fear, discouragement or self-pity. Trusting the testimony of those before them and the author's promises, they live courageously.

They also anticipate the day when pain, loneliness and sorrow will cease. The day when disease, sickness, death, hatred, crime, and war are gone, and all wrongs are avenged and righted—forever.

In this way, the lives of believers unknown to each other, continue to bear witness to the greater story, which the author of life has not yet finished writing on peoples' hearts.

Bethany Blankley, a political analyst for Fox News Radio and columnist for The Washington Times, writes from the perspective of an evangelical.

Teaching the Bible in the Church

The Early Churches' Use of the Bible

By Jeff Reed, President and CEO, BILD International

In his insightful work, *According to the Scriptures: The Sub-structure of New Testament Theology*, C. H. Dodd builds a careful case for how the Apostles used the Hebrew Bible to lay the foundation for both the kerygma (the proclamation of the gospel—the story of Jesus) and the teaching (the didache—the Greek word for “the teaching”)—Jesus' teaching delivered to the Apostles as promised by Jesus in the Upper Room Discourse (John 13–17). The kerygma and the didache provided the core teaching and laid the foundation for the formation of the New Testament canon, which would not be complete for over 100 years after this teaching was delivered to the churches in 362 A.D. by Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria. This teaching, mostly in the form of letters circulated amongst

the churches, together with the Hebrew Bible became “the Bible” for the early churches and eventually made up the heart of the New Testament.

What did they base this teaching on? Dodd makes a powerful case. By using passages that contain the phrase “according to the scriptures” in its various forms and by making a careful comparison of the use of Hebrew Bible verses, allusions, and stories, Dodd shows how all that happened with Jesus, including His death, burial and resurrection, was carefully predicted beforehand in the Hebrew Bible. Remember, on the road to Emmaus, Jesus opened the disciples' minds to understand the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms (the first book of the Writings). He was referring to the entire Hebrew Bible.

Letter by letter, they essentially wrote the New Testament, which was eventually completed by writing the Gospels (Mark was written by Peter's key disciple, Mark). In Luke's account of Acts we can see how first Peter, in his five sermons,

built an understanding of the kerygma by quoting the Hebrew Bible, showing how it all pointed toward Christ as the promised Messiah, as the one who would inaugurate the kingdom. Paul built his case in the same way. Paul's letters were the heart of the unfolding of the teaching of Christ—the didache—in which the church was revealed as the core community of faith that would be at the heart of the birth and unfolding of His kingdom.

How did the Apostles view the unfolding of this teaching—the kerygma and the didache—that would make up the New Testament? Peter gives us insight in his second epistle, when he refers to Paul's letters as Scripture, designed to establish the new believers and churches in the faith. These teachings were called “the faith,” “the deposit,” and the “sound doctrine,” and all churches were to follow them. They were to grow in them, and as they did, they would mature in Christ. Paul makes a general statement to Timothy, who was trained in the Scriptures by his mother and grandmother from

childhood: all Scripture “is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness.” He told Timothy to carefully hold to this teaching—exactly, to take care to preach it “in season and out,” and to take care to hold to its exact standard. This teaching, which eventually was formed into the New Testament, was considered “the rule of faith” for all the churches. These new, emerging scriptures, carefully rooted in the Hebrew Bible, were the reason why these small, authentic communities—called churches—continued to multiply for the next almost 300 years and turned the Roman Empire upside down.

Jeff is the founder of BILD International, which is committed to promoting comprehensive church-based theological education worldwide. He has taught church-based theological education seminars throughout the United States and in over thirty countries and helped establish leadership training programs in over sixteen of those countries.

A call for the Church to reengage with the Bible

By Geoff Tunnicliffe and C. Rosalee Velloso Ewell

All times are historic and momentous. All eras filled with grand stories and discoveries, with tales of heroic acts, huge tragedies and amazing wonders. Ours is such a time as well. For Christians, the Bible is supposed to guide the way we understand our histories and sustain our hopes for the future. Yet despite years of systematic teaching of the Bible, it is in many ways unnoticed today in the Church around the world. There are many good and well-intentioned Bible-believing people all around the globe. Yet the proposal here is for the Church to go beyond the stories and the verses themselves, and move towards the ability to see (and act) with eyes that show that another better world is not only possible, but has come in the kingdom of God brought by Jesus Christ – another world is possible where people “may have life abundantly” (Gospel of John 10:10).

Bible engagement is life-enhancing. It is taking the Scriptures so seriously that we can see our past and our future with the same perspective as Mary, the mother of Jesus who upon hearing that she would bear a child, the young woman declared, “Here I am, the servant of the Lord” (Gospel of Luke 1:38). To her relative Elizabeth she narrated her life and the works of God in light of texts from her sacred scriptures. The Bible both guided her thoughts and her actions such that God through her obedience made the world a better place. Mary is an



embodiment of Bible engagement.

Engaging with Scripture can be revolutionary. It upset self-important people in Nazareth when Jesus preached from the prophet Isaiah. In the late 4th century it turned Augustine’s life upside-down and through him changed the course of church history. It led Luther to challenge the nominalism and abuse in his times. It led Mother Teresa to challenge all the Church to see Jesus in those to whom our world turns a blind eye.

Through Bible engagement, the Church can be a source of “healing for the nations” (Revelation 22:2). It can inspire creative ways for Christians to engage as faithful witnesses to Jesus to address urban violence, corruption, and socio-economic inequalities. It can transform anger and violence into acts of justice and peace.

In the multiplicity of our cultures, engaging with the Bible opens our eyes to see the world and our society

through different eyes. As the narratives of Scripture unfold and we hear them anew through the retelling of someone from the other side of the world, we can see God act in ways we had not seen before. Like a kaleidoscope that with each turn offers the viewer a new shape or a new color combination, we are invited to see and participate in God’s work in the world in new, beautiful and amazing ways which we could not have determined in advance. We are exposed to viewpoints and perspectives with which we might not agree. And yet, at the same time, that is part of the beauty of God’s kingdom, and a unique gift that Bible engagement has to offer — a way for Christians from all around the globe to come together to learn, teach, debate, disagree, sometimes agree, and in the process, improve ourselves and the world around us, making it a better place.

Bible engagement is not about winning the argument or having the best idea, but about participating in the kingdom of God. It is about the whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world and about learning with others what it means to be on that journey together. It is a humbling and exciting role to play as we strive towards answering the invitation to the kingdom and extending that invitation to others, building a better life for our communities and for the next generations.

Geoff Tunnicliffe is the CEO, World Evangelical Alliance and Rosalee Velloso Ewell is World Evangelical Alliance Executive Director, Theological Commission and Chair of the Global Human Trafficking Task Force.

The American Bible Society and Reaching the Unreached

By Roy Peterson, President and CEO, American Bible Society

In 1816, James Madison was president of the United States, Indiana became the 19th state and American Bible Society was founded. Not many aspects of life today look as they did at that time in history. Most things from 1816 have become forgotten treasures of a history long gone. But not the Bible.

Despite unfathomable cultural changes over the last 200 years, the Bible is still the best-selling book today and of all time, and the most translated book. It maintains a vibrant relevance in America even as it faces some new challenges in today’s culture.

Americans’ relationship with the Bible has had its ups and downs throughout the history of our nation. While access to the Bible has surely increased, active engagement with God’s Word is our primary focus today. According to American Bible Society’s 2014 State of the Bible research, 88



percent of American adults own at least one Bible. But America’s Bible lovers and Bible skeptics now each make up 19 percent of the adult population. This means you are just as likely to meet someone who believes in the accuracy of the Bible and reads it frequently as you are to meet someone who rejects the idea of the Bible as a reliable sacred book. That’s why so many Church leaders and Bible agencies are looking for new ways to encourage people to set

aside their negative preconceptions and misconceptions of the Bible and read God’s love letter for themselves.

While American Bible Society’s passion for sharing God’s Word hasn’t changed over its nearly two centuries of ministry, its strategies have changed continuously. Today, people are engaging with the Bible through a multitude of media. Though the Bible is still most-often read in print, more and more Americans are accessing the Bible on computers, tablets and smartphones. Verses are shared across the pages of social media or emailed across the country and around the globe. That’s why it’s so important that Bible-loving Christians constantly adapt and advance, seeking out new resources and study methods that meet the changing needs of Americans.

No matter the changes that have occurred from 1816 to 2014, one thing has remained the same—the message of Christ’s love found in the pages of Scripture. No matter the generation, the Bible speaks to every aspect of the human experience and holds answers to life’s challenges in its pages. It is the story of God’s love and His passionate pursuit of a relationship with

humankind—a pursuit that continues today.

As American Bible Society approaches its 200th year, we remain passionate about the work ahead. We want to link arms with business leaders, church leaders, global missions, and other Bible agencies to help millions of people grow in their engagement with Scripture, even as we work with our network of 146 other Bible Societies around the globe to ensure that 100% of the world’s languages are translated for Scripture engagement.

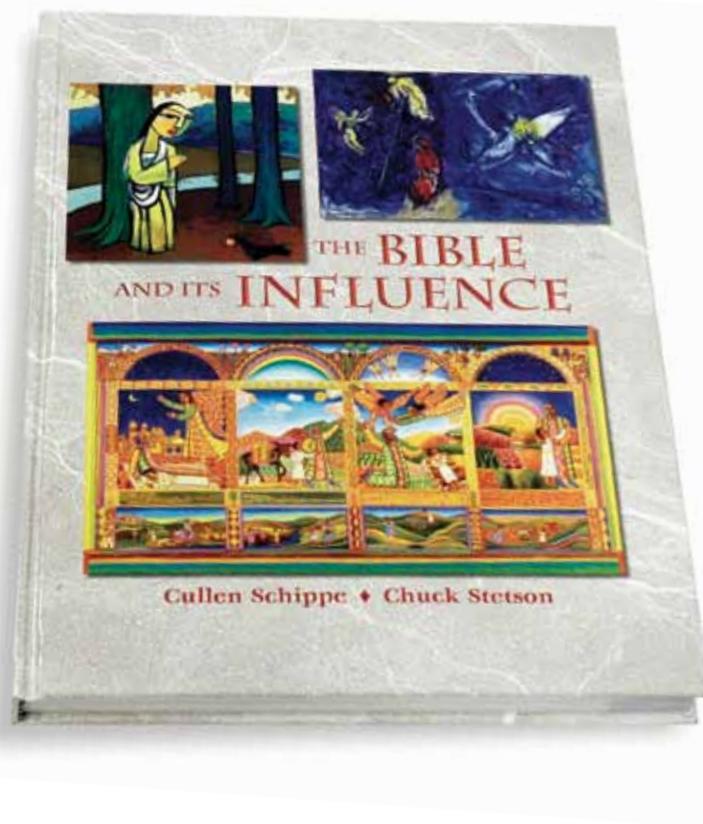
If you are one of the 88 percent of Americans who own a Bible but you have not read it lately, is there something we can do to help you? Try reading a new English version, or listening on your mobile device or signing up for a new daily devotional sent to your phone. However you access it, you’ll discover the Bible offers hope and encouragement for today, just as it did in 1816.

Dr. Roy Peterson joined the American Bible Society in 2014 after 10 years of serving as president and CEO of the Seed Company, a Bible translation ministry based in Arlington, Texas.

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