



The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version (RSV) - Large Print

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The Revised Standard Version is the English translation of the Christian biblical canon, composed of the Old and New Testaments. This revision is based on the 1901 American Standard Version, and attempts to provide an accessible and literal English translation.

The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version (RSV) - Large Print Details

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Books Ring Mah Bell says

If my ticket to Hell was not already a given, the following review would surely set me up for eternal flames.

Growing up, the only exposure I had to anything biblical was the reading of Psalm 23 at every funeral and Corinthians at every wedding. (including my own. I married a nice Catholic boy) My first bible reading occurred when I was maybe 12, when this nice guy handed me a Gideons Bible as I was walking to school. That night, I read Revelations under my blanket with a flashlight. I proceeded to have nightmares for a month. High school came along and I took a class called "Classic Lit." the first few weeks were spent on Greek and Roman mythology, and the last few weeks were spent on the Bible. I'm pretty sure I was the only one in my class without my own Bible. (The Gideons Bible was left in a library, as I was too scared to throw it out, fearing eternal damnation.) In college, my roommate was a very religious girl, and we had many talks about the Bible. So I picked it up to try and understand all the fuss. It wasn't easy. It took awhile and to be fair, plenty of it went over my head.

Parts of this were just dull. Boring, and dare I say, irrelevant. Yes, I dare. I'm thinking mostly of the begats! (gah! Chronicles!) Yeah, lineage is important, but... enough with the begats! Give me a flow chart. And the laws! Oh, the laws in Leviticus and Numbers! More ho-hum, yet sometimes amusing.

Parts were, well, good, from a story standpoint. Poor Job. The story of creation... And that damn Revelations! *shudders*

And some parts of this sacred text are absolutely amazing, beautiful even. Song of Solomon comes to mind. The Beatitudes. (make me think fondly of my Catholic family) Most of the Proverbs I find full of wisdom (and humor) such as "It is better to live in a corner of the roof than in a house shared with a contentious woman."

Amen.

Marian says

I have been reading the Bible for going on 2 years with a study group that meets every week. Fascinating reading. although the Bible is not something you can pick up and understand on your own (you might quit reading after all those begettings). It requires guidance and assistance in its interpretation to understanding its meaning. Powerful, thought provoking, life changing. The bible has it all, stories of every imaginable sin and the sinners who committed them to be an example for us to learn from... or if you want to be a jerk about it, As my husband puts it, why do you think Alex DeLarge, the main character Played by Malcolm McDowell read the bible,in A Clockwork Orange.... Don't wait till you're old and "cramming for the finals"...read it now and live the life God intended you to live. (as for my husband ...I told him I'd pray for him)

Aaron Crofut says

It doesn't matter what your beliefs are, the Bible is a key to understanding Western Civilization. While some aspects are dry, this book contains a ridiculous number of amazing stories that have had profound impacts on all of literature. This book also provides a decent historical account of the holy land during the kingdoms of Israel and of Judah.

Ben Fairchild says

I read the Authorised Version (KJV) now because it is more poetic and pithy and because language has become dumbed down so far beneath the RSV now anyway that one may as well go the whole hog.

For study I read the NRSV with Anglicized text (note 'Anglicised' spelled with a 'z') because it is the more accurate translation using the latest sources (e.g. Qm'ran texts) and seems to be fairly well established. It does have an element of "inclusivity" going on which I question sometimes and think that they have overstepped their mandate to use non gender specific pronouns only when it most accurately reflects the Greek but at least it is not as bad as the NIV which has translated Jesus' rebuke of Mary beginning "Woman!" as "Dear mother!" because they thought that "Woman!" sounded too harsh. America is ruthlessly P.C. and they own the bible copyrights but do they really have the right to introduce their political preferences into the most widely read translations of Holy Scripture?

Mary Ronan Drew says

Some 20-odd years of reading the King James version has spoiled me for any other, no matter how much more accurate or "readable."

Turaaa says

I want to address some of the recurring comments about the bible that I find quite odd.

"This is the word of god!" -

As a secular person I don't believe that; I believe that the bible is mythology that is largely based on historical events and is one of the most influential documents on western civilization.

"Authors seem to change between books, inconsistent narrative" -

Yes, the bible is a series of many separate books, written by different people, hundreds of years apart.

"The book is Racist, Sexist etc.."-

This book was written over two thousand years ago and reflects the social norms of that period. It does not subscribe to modern political correctness. It is however an unprecedented leap forwards towards human values and social justice compared to the norms of the ages in which it was written.

(eg. giving social rights to slaves was unheard of).

"Evolution and genetics are called into question in this book"-

The Bible should not be judged by the standards of modern science; back then nobody knew about evolution ,genetics quantum physics etc.. .

"Longer than it needs to be, to many dry spots ,accountant listing"-

It isn't designed to be a best seller novel and shouldn't be expected to have one narrative. It is what it is, a mythological chronicle of the history of the Jewish people.

"Poor prose, lousy writing "-

This version of the bible is an English translation of the Greek translation of the Hebrew original. If you could read the Hebrew original you would experience some of the most poetic , dramatic and moving texts in literary history.

In summary , if you read the bible , expecting a novel you will be disappointed. But if you read it as a book on history, mythology, religion, philosophy, poetry, war ,ethics and human nature, you will be greatly rewarded.

Marfita says

I've been working on this for a few months - a little bit each night, absorbing it as I go. I remember being really annoyed at parts I read as a teen and a proto-feminist. This time I started with the NewT and went back for the Old Testament. I was delighted to find a typo in my edition, someone's son who became king at 49 when his father died at 42 or some such. It was easy to check because the histories are duplicative (and I can't express what a pain it was to read the same info over and over). The son was actually 29. It doesn't ruin the whole book, but it does show I was paying attention. My next project is to mark the sections by author. I have a big box of highlighters. The pages are so thin, though, and I'm afraid the highlighters will bleed through. Fortunately, I have two copies of this edition. Dang, we have so many bibles in this house, most of them in German.

My advice to people: read it all the way through - don't just cherry-pick the good parts, and there are good parts.

My review: The Iliad is better. I'm not saying the philosophy is better, it's just a better and more cohesive story. Babies brains are dashed out in both, so I think it's a fair comparison. They were both written a long time ago and as a window into their times they are very interesting - but I'm not going to live my life based on the philosophy of either of them. All I need to know about life I learned from my mom: Forgive and forget; Never say never; You always worry about the wrong thing; Be nice; All men are creeps in one way or another, you just have to find the least creepy one; and Don't worry, we'll be dead soon and our ideas will go with us. Wish she had been right about that last one - I get the uncomfortable feeling that our greed, pettiness, and hatred just get perpetuated generation after generation and books like this one add to the vitriol.

K.D. Absolutely says

Final Review

So, this is it. Today, I finished reading the Holy Bible. Cover to cover. I spent a total of 20 months reading all the 66 books. I read almost everyday save from those days when I did not feel like it. Most of those days were during the time that I felt disillusioned or uninspired. I started reading this in 2010 with a group of friends but they stopped one after the other so I was left without reading buddies.

Was it worth the time? DEFINITELY YES. I now feel closer to God. I am happy that I tried and happier that I succeeded. I am not saying that I understood everything. Some books, chapters or passages are too deep or with historical background that I either have no idea or not interested or tired to even look them up, so I guess I missed those. (I can read this again, right?) Even if I stopped and went very slow in my reading, I just could not understand them. I prayed for the Holy Spirit (and I hope I had it during most of my readings) to intercede but I was not still convinced of my interpretations. Maybe they are not meant to be understood now and God will reveal their meanings to me later. This book has been by my bedside and in most mornings, my first book to start my day with. The book, now tattered and the black cloth cover starting to fall off, has been with me in my out of town trips. This has been to Quezon, Pampanga, Baguio, Cebu and recently Davao. This book has lowered and stabilized my blood pressure and made me feel happy and contented during the days of sadness and uncertainty.

How can this book not get 5 stars from me? Even if I read this solely on its historical perspective, this is still amazing. Wiki says that this book is the best-selling book in history with approximate sales estimates ranging from 2.5 billion to 6 billion, and annual sales estimated at 25 million. No other book, even those by Shakespeare or Agatha Christie can beat that, right? Written by many authors over a course of a thousand years, there is no other book (I think) that covers the scope of this book.

Why did I read this book? I started reading this with 500+ books in my read folder and I told myself: *What's the use of having all those books if I have not read the Book of Books that is for us Catholics is none other than the Holy Bible?* Now that my read books are 700+, I am proud that one of those is this book. Many classic and contemporary books are based on this anyway so, even for that reason, why not?

My review for each of the 66 books:

Book #66 : The **Revelation** to John

The final book of the Holy Bible. Yay! Revelation comes from the Greek word *apokalypsis* which means "unveiling" or "revelation."

This book contains different visions that even with God's graces, I do not understand and I don't think I should understand. It uses symbolism and visions that are hard to comprehend and I am sure generations after generations tried to decipher these also. The anti-Christ as "666" has been said to be the computer language but I heard it when I was a boy and nobody can prove it yet. Mussolini and Hitler were said to be the first two anti-Christ but after reading *The Burden of Guilt* last week, I am not really convinced that Hitler could be a worthy opponent pitied against Jesus. No match, really.

Revelation uses three literary genres: epistolary (chapters 1-3), apocalyptic and prophetic. Apocalyptic is in terms of the symbols and metaphors such as the angelic mediators, strange visions and the divine judgment.

Prophetic in terms of what the book really is. It foretells the future but it does not tell specifically what. It just gives us an indication that the believers will be rewarded and the non-believers, i.e., sinners?, will be punished.

Using the Greek Septuagint, John makes 348 allusions, or indirect quotes, from 24 canonized books of the Hebrew Bible, predominantly from Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and Psalms. The narrative of the terrifying and boastful beast that rises out of the ocean, has many horns which represent kings, and which is thrown into the fire, derives from Daniel 7. The beast from the Book of Revelation combines body traits from all four beasts mentioned in Daniel 7. The description of the angel who gives the revelations derives from Daniel 10:5-6; the four horsemen derive from Zechariah (Zechariah 6:1-8); the lampstands and the two olive trees that represent two men derive from Zechariah 4:1-14; the four living beings derive from Ezekiel 1 and Ezekiel 10; the edible scroll that tastes as sweet as honey derives from Ezekiel 2:8-3:2; the marking of people on the forehead to determine who will be harmed and who will be spared derives from Ezekiel 9:3-6; and the locusts that look like horses and have teeth like those of lions derive from the book of Joel.

The paragraph above tells us that the visions are not just found in this book but already appeared in the earlier books. This tells us that John the Evangelist has basis for these visions as he is a learned man and knows the Bible well.

Many movies have been created with Revelation as the basis. Many of those are horror stories and they are made to scare the readers. However, if you are prepared to die, who should be afraid? We will die sometime soon or later and we have to be prepared anytime. God takes what He has given.

Book #65 : The Letter of **Jude**

The penultimate book in the New Testament and was believed to be written by Jude, the brother of James the Just (who wrote Book #59). This book reminds the reader to live a virtuous and faithful life and warns against denying God and succumbing to the pleasures of the flesh. It is one of the shortest books in the Bible, being only 25 verses long. Unlike the earlier letters, this one is *encyclical* in nature as it is not addressed particularly to anyone but the writer hopes that this will be circulated and read in all churches. It warns the readers about the doctrine of certain errant teachers to whom they were exposed. Examples of heterodox opinions that were circulating in the early 2nd century include Docetism, Marcionism, and Gnosticism.

Book #64 : The Third Letter of **John**

Yey! The shortest book in the Bible! Kind of personal since John addressed this to Gaius whose name has been mentioned in the earlier letters of Paul, Gaius being one of his companions. In the letter, John seems to be telling Gaius to go with Demetrius who is new to the place where he is evangelizing. Also, to warn him against Diotrephes who refuses to cooperate with the presbyters who is writing.

Book #63 : The Second Letter of **John**

This again warns against people who believe in docetism: "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh." Going further than the 1 John, that Jesus did not have a body but only a spirit. So, see how tainted minds can progress from their claim in the first letter to this one.

Book #62 : The First Letter of **John**

Written to counter docetism or that belief that the resurrected Jesus was just a spirit and his body was a

phantasm (a ghost). John, the apostle of Jesus and the author of the gospel (Book #44), asks the people to live full lives knowing that as believers of Jesus they are promised to have an eternal life.

Book #61 : The Second Letter of **Peter**

Quotes from Jude (Book #65) heavily, identifies Jesus as God and warns the people of being heretic just because the Second Coming that was foretold did not happen. He said that people should be wary of false prophets. He explained that the Second Coming was delayed to give people the chance to right their evil ways.

Book #60 : The First Letter of **Peter**

Peter was the #1 apostle and he became the first bishop of Rome (or Antioch). The letter is addressed to the countries that now part of Asia such as Turkey and ex-USSR members and is addressed to Gentiles rather than Jews. He advises these people to be steadfast in their beliefs especially in times of persecution.

Book #59 : The Letter of **James**

Believed to be written by James the Just and he was neither one of the two disciples of Jesus called James the Son of Zebedee (who was martyred in 44 CE) or James the Son of Alphaeus (who was not a writer). James the Just was said to be the half-brother of Jesus. This letter, like most of the letters in the part of the Holy Bible, reaffirms the believers of the Second Coming and promises their salvation through Jesus Christ.

Book #58 : Letter to the **Hebrews**

Basically, this book affirms to the Hebrews that Jesus Christ is the mediator between God the Father and his believers.

Book #57 : The Letter of Paul to **Philemon**

One of the shortest books in the Holy Bible. Onesimus is a man's *barong* brand here in the Philippines and I did not know that it is a biblical name. Paul wrote this letter/book in prison in behalf of Onesimus who used to be Philemon's houseboy. Onesimus seems to be in the same prison as Paul so he is trying to patch up the difference between the master and his slave.

Book #56 : The Letter of Paul to **Titus**

Paul's last pastoral letter. This time to Barnabas' partner, Titus who was said to be the first bishop of Crete (small island in the Mediterranean Sea).

There is a part here called **Epimedes Paradox** and is being used by philosophers: *""One of themselves, a prophet of their own said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beast, lazy gluttons." This testimony is true.""* The prophet, Epimedes is also a Cretan so he is also a liar. Therefore what he says here is false. Got it?

Book #55 : The Second Letter of Paul to **Timothy**

Another instruction-like short letter from Paul to his ward (son) Timothy. There is a sad part here where Paul predicts his persecution and death. It reads: *"For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth*

there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me, but also to all who have loved his appearing." Nice, isn't it? How I wish that on my dying bed, I should be able to say those words.

Book #54 : The First Letter of Paul to **Timothy**

The next three books are letters of the mentor Paul to his mentee Timothy so these are called pastoral letters. Sweet. Paul was originally Saul of Tarsus, a Jew while Timothy's father was a Greek. Timothy saved Paul during the latter imprisonment (in Acts) so their relationship is not only that of mentoring but also undeniably friendship bonded by their belief on Jesus Christ. I actually read this part to my wife last weekend: *"For love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs."* Now, my wife hesitates to ask for money from me. :)

Book #53 : The Second Letter of Paul to the **Thessalonians**

Yay! This book has this verse that was used by Lenin as an adage in Soviet Union (the one in bold letters): *"For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: **"If any one will not work, let him not eat."** For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work in quietness and to earn their own living."* If only all people will work honestly and not deceive others to earn a living.

Book #52 : The First Letter of Paul to the **Thessalonians**

Said to be the first letter Paul wrote and so this is somewhat personal in nature with only a few passages talking about the doctrine. Then there are parts encouraging the people of Thessalonica *that they have to purify their lives, reminding them that their sanctification is God's will for their lives* and to be steadfast on their belief to God.

Book #51 : The Letter of Paul to the **Colossians**

This letter is addressed to the people of Colossae, a small city in Ephesus (now part of Greece). The content has many similarities with the messages in Ephesians. This is the reason why the scholars are sure that this letter was also written by Paul and not by anybody who was his fan. During the time of writing, people of Colossae have incorporated rituals for other Gods and Paul gives some sort of a warning that they should stick with Jesus as the only way to the Father.

Book #50 : The Letter of Paul to the **Philippians**

Philippi was a place in Macedonia (Greece) and it was said to be where the first congregation in Europe was founded by Paul. In this letter, Paul introduces himself and his friend Timothy to them including their present whereabouts. Then it evangelizes on the requirements for sanctification and some doctrinal issues.

Book #49 : The Letter of Paul to the **Ephesians**

This book emphasizes that the church is the Body of Christ. It also contains very practical and useful tips on daily living especially the roles of each member of the family. Although it has similarities in the other succeeding letters, it is here where the most frequently quoted verses that have made imprints in my mind as a father are:

"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body."

I actually liked this particular passage because St. Paul likened the Christ's love to his church to that of the man liking his own body and his wife.

Book #48 : The Second Letter of Paul to the **Corinthians**

Timothy has reported to his friend Paul of Tarsus that the situation in Corinth has not improved from the latter's last visit. So, Paul is writing this letter with a saddened heart and threatens to come back *with a stick*. So, the mood of this book is very personal yet firm. However, it still conciliatory as Paul continues to encourage the Jews and Gentiles alike to believe in Jesus Christ to get to the Father.

Book #47 : The First Letter of Paul to the **Corinthians**

Who does not love these verses?

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hope all things, endures all things.

Beautiful, isn't it? That's St. Paul writing to the Corinthians, said to be the place where he founded the church. Corinth (the place) is now part of Greece but Wiki said that he wrote this in a place which is now part of Turkey.

Book #46 : The Letter of Paul to the **Romans**

The book starts the letters of Saint Paul to the people living in the different areas in the biblical world. This one is to the Romans and if I understand it correctly, must be the people living not only in Rome but also in Italy. Just like an ordinary letter, Paul's thoughts are in it but it is unstructured and can go from one topic (praising the Holy Father) to others (the promise of salvation to Jews and Greeks - remember that St. Paul was originally targeting the Gentiles in propagating the faith, the way to the Father through Jesus, etc. He used to be a Jewish persecutor before he got converted as told in "Acts" so this letter has that "feel" of introducing himself to Jews as a reformed man and now an evangelist.

My favorite passages: *"Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord."* (Rom 12:9&10).

Book #45 : **The Acts of the Apostles**

- Read on Black Saturday and Easter Sunday, April 7 & 8, 2012

After reading four books about Jesus, this book overwhelmed me. This is quite new to me. The Catholic Church (my perception) focuses its teaching mostly on Jesus Christ, particularly his stay on earth. Even the books and the movies are mostly centered on Jesus Christ.

So, it took me two days to finish this book. I even bought a commentary book that explains "Acts" to me. That's the only time I understood this book's content particularly on what happened to the Twelve after their Master, Jesus Christ, went up to heaven. Judas Iscariot was replaced by Matthias but the apostles are not just the twelve. It now includes St. Paul whose life became the center of this book.

I will review that commentary book separately maybe today or tomorrow. For now, on to "Romans" but it is also somewhat new to me. I need to have that book in the series too.

Book #44 : The Gospel According to John

- Read on Good Friday, April 6, 2012

I am not sure if the silence of Good Friday contributed to depth of my appreciation of this gospel. I am certain of one thing though: John is the better writer among the four. In the end of his book is a statement saying that he was an eyewitness so that added to the credibility of his account. Why he even had the conversations or actual dialogues captured in his book. There is so many moving parts like Jesus washing the feet of Peter and I was like struck with awe since I liked those exchanges very much.

I have been attending Sunday masses since the time I was a kid. My mother was the one who used to bring me to church. Now it is my wife's job. I am normally immersed in my books on weekends so sometimes I feel lazy going out on Sundays.

In the Holy Mass, they read some chapters or verses from the Bible so I have been hearing those stories. Here in the Philippines, sometimes churches even dramatize those scenes (like the washing of the feet). There are also passion plays on the street and of course those movies. So, all in all, I know the story of Jesus Christ.

However, there are still somethings that were made clear by my reading of this book: (1) It was Passover when Jesus was crucified; (2) The Jews hated Jesus for his blasphemy, claiming that he is the Son of God. Wait, was this the reason why Jews were killed by Hitler? I have to read the history of Holocaust to answer this; (3) For me, Jesus did not answer some questions because they were almost the same, i.e., repetitive or he already knew His destiny - to die for our sins. So even if He explains himself or even if he creates miracles to prove that He is the Son of God, He is destined to die on the cross as prophesied by Isaiah.

Reviews of the earlier books, from #1 *Genesis* to #43 *The Gospel According to Luke*, are in my tumblr.

Steve Flanagan says

The book of Truth, Wisdom, and Everlasting Life. It only took me 7 years to read it (1997-2003). If you read it, start & finish with the Gospels. These verses have strengthened my faith, given me the courage to walk through valleys of shadow & death, and kept my hand steady in battle. Here are some of my favorite verses:

"As I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil, Lord, for you are with me. Your shepherd's rod and staff protect me." Psalm 23:4

"Then I heard the Lord say, 'Whom shall I send?' I answered, 'I will go! Send me!'" Isaiah 6:8

“Those who trust in the Lord for help will find their strength renewed. They will rise on wings like eagles; they will run and not get weary; they will walk and not grow weak.” Isaiah 40:31

“When you pass through fire, you will not be burned; the hard trials that come will not hurt you.” Isaiah 43:2

“You will succeed, not by military might or by your own strength, but by my Spirit.” Zechariah 4:6

“Fear the Lord, and you will have nothing else to fear.” Sirach 34:14

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth... But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven ... For where your heart is, so therest your treasures lie.” Matthew 6:21

“In the same way you judge others, you will be judged.” Matthew 7:2

“He that finds his life shall lose it, and he that loses his life for my sake shall find it.” Matthew 10:39

“He that is greatest among you shall be your servant.” Matthew 23:11

“There is nothing hid that shall not be revealed. Therefore whatever you have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light.” Luke 12:2-3

“Do not work for food that spoils; instead, work for the food that lasts for eternal life.” John 6:27

“I (Jesus) am the living bread that came down from heaven. If you eat this bread you will live forever.” John 6:51

“If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” John 8:7

“I (Jesus) am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will have the light of life and will never walk in darkness.” John 8:12

“The truth will set you free.” John 8:32

“I (Jesus) am the gate. Those who come in by me will be saved.” John 10:9

“I (Jesus) am the way, the truth, and the life.” John 14:6

“My (Jesus) kingdom is not of this world.” John 18:36

“I have the strength to face anything by the power that Christ gives me.” Philippians 4:13

“Do not quench or restrain the Spirit.” 1 Thessalonians 5:14-23

“Endure hardship, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No warrior entangles himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please Him who has chosen him to be a soldier.” 2 Timothy 2:3

“The Lord stood with me and strengthened me... and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.” 2 Timothy 4:17

“Be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to anger.” James 1:19

“He that overcomes will inherit all things; I will be his God, and he will be my son.” Revelation 21:7

“Come, whoever is thirsty; accept the water of life as a gift.” Revelation 22:17

Charissa says

I laughed, I cried, it became a part of me.

Okay, not really. This book has left me largely untouched in any substantial way, except for the times it had caused me to shout out uncontrollably, "WHAT The FUCK??!! Are you KIDDING ME??!!!" Such as:

Jephthah made a vow to the Lord: "If you give the Ammonites into my hands, whatever comes out of the door of my house to meet me when I return ... will be the Lord's, and I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering..." and the Lord gave them into his hands.... When Jephthah returned to his home...who should come out to meet him but his daughter, dancing to the sound of tambourines! And he did to her as he had vowed. And she was a virgin.

-- Judges 11:30-32, 34, 39 (NIV)

and:

Some small boys came out of the city and jeered at [the prophet Elisha], saying, "Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!" And ... he cursed them in the name of the Lord. And two she-bears came out of the woods and tore forty-two of the boys.

-- II Kings 2:23-24 (RSV)

and:

My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him.

-- Song of Solomon 5:4 (AV)

There she lusted after her lovers, whose genitals were like those of donkeys and whose emission was like that of horses.

-- Ezekiel 23:20 (NIV)

There is something so very very very wrong with this piece of literature. Anyone who says they live their life by it, or even who says they understand it... I have a deep and innate distrust of.

On the other hand... there is some lovely poetry:

You have stretched out the heavens like a tent-cloth :
and laid the beams of your dwelling upon their waters;
You make the clouds your chariot :
and ride upon the wings of the wind;
You make the winds your messengers :
and flames of fire your ministers;

You have set the earth on its foundations :
so that it shall never be moved.

So... all in all, it's worth a read. Entertaining, if nothing else.

Vikram Kumar says

Read Book of Job, Genesis, Ecclesiastes, Judges, Kings, and Exodus of the Hebrew Bible. Read Matthew, Luke, John, and Romans of the New Testament.

Blair says

An anthology of many stories, laws and poems garnered over 2000 + years. I have read it numerous times and I can't see or find what all the hubbub it about. Most of the stories are taken from other sources that are much older and there are no real answers to life's questions, unless one plans on living like a desert dweller in the middle east about 2000 years ago. The rules are strict and highly punitive. Everyone should read it cover to cover. They should write down the laws of Leviticus and Deuteronomy. Live BY ALL OF THE RULES and see just how ridiculous they are in today's age.

Julia says

This edition includes the Old and New Testaments plus introductions, and appendices, maps, study guides, etc.

Genesis & Exodus: stories of a backward and superstitious tribe of shepherds ruled by systematic xenophobia to the point of incest, paranoia, and fratricide. Not to mention all the core systemic misogyny.

Leviticus: the laws laid out by Moses. There is not (that I know of) a sect practicing today that still follows all of these laws to the letter, and that's a good thing.

Numbers: census records of the tribes of Israel, first taken to establish taxes to create an elite class of Priests and temple guardians, and second to create an army by establishing a draft.

Deuteronomy: Moses reiterates the law, chastises past transgressions, and rallies the troops to make war on the previous tenants of "the promised land".

Joshua & Judges: The mass genocide of the inhabitants of Palestine by the tribes of Israel, followed by the division of the land and resources. Includes a minor interlude on a known murderer escaping the law and the woman who brings him to justice (Samson & Delilah).

Ruth: a quaint story of total obedience and submission.

Samuel I&II: Israel's first king, Saul, continues the murderous sprees of his predecessors, including attempted murder of his successor, David. King David (after vanquishing Goliath and Saul's armies)

preserves Israel & Judah's garrulous traditions with occasional mercy holidays.

Kings I&II: The Land wars will continue until morale improves. Notable exceptions are the judgments of Solomon, the lesson of Jezebel (don't encourage your husband's success at the expense of justice), and the miracles of Elijah and Elisha (healing sickness and feeding the hungry).

Chronicles I&II: Repeats the history in Kings, minus the human interest stories but with more lists--genealogies, census records, temple records, etc. The moral: Kings who follow Levitical law are good and victorious in battle, those who worship the gods of the civilizations surrounding Israel, will lose in battle to them.

Ezra & Nehemiah: Follows the tribes of Israel from captivity in Babylon, back to Jerusalem, sent by the Kings of Persia to rebuild. Captivity has led to intermarriage and mixed offspring; Ezra, the priest and appointed governor, creates a lower caste of those with unproven genealogies.

Esther: One of the great heroines. When the King is displeased with his wife who won't come when called, his men search the kingdom for a new Queen and find Esther, a secret Jew. Using her wits to gain his favor, she is able to save the Jews from a faction bent on their destruction.

Job: a philosophical dialogue on the question, "When a god-fearing man encounters misfortune, should he abandon his faith?" Framed as a wager between God and Satan, this is the argument between Job and his friends concerning his right to curse God. Job repents, but God punishes the friends because he doesn't like the arguments they make on his behalf.

Psalms: Songs of Praise and Warning. A few good lines of poetry amongst a sea of repetition.

Proverbs: Rules for life, arranged poetic couplets, such as 3 verses on the merits of beating your child, and many on the dangers of too much education and relying on one's own insight.

Ecclesiastes & Song of Solomon: Two succinct books of literature, offering wisdom akin to the Dao de Jing. Enjoy the pleasures of youth before they are gone, for man's plans are all vanity. Song of Solomon is full of lush sensuality akin to Persian or Sanskrit poetry.

Isaiah: Proverbs, Poetry, Prose, and Prophecies. The message is the same, but with more style, and more passages expressing the joy of creation.

Jeremiah & Lamentations: A priest's speeches dictated and assembled in a jumbled history of Judah's last 40 years and captivity in Babylon. Israel has fallen to Assyria and the prophet blames Israel's apostasy, but Judah has behaved worse by worshiping the local fertility god Baal. God will send Nebuchadnezzar to destroy Jerusalem. Jeremiah is imprisoned but later rescued and allowed to remain in Jerusalem. He predicts the fall of all regional powers and the return of God's chosen to Palestine. Lamentations are songs of loss and longing for the home that is finally destroyed.

Ezekiel: Meanwhile in exile in Babylon - the faithless Israelites earned the fall of Jerusalem and deserve God's punishment in the form of foreign armies. The message evolves into hope and solidarity - predicting God's destruction of the surrounding nations, and Israel's return home, with a detailed vision of the new temple and holy city. Ezekiel rewrites the ordinances of the temple and the division of the city and surrounding land among the tribes, creating a fair division to include those who have married into the tribes as equals.

Daniel: Daniel interprets the dreams of King Nebuchanezzar of Babylon, who converts on his deathbed. His son makes Daniel the third ruler in the kingdom, though Daniel has prophesied his murder. After him, Darius makes Daniel President of a third of the Kingdom, which angers the Satraps, who pass a law making worshiping any God above Darius punishable by death in the Lion's Den. When Daniel survives, claiming God has saved him, the King converts the kingdom. Daniel serves four kings, and four of his visions regarding future conflicts and dynasties are recorded.

Hosea, Joel, Amos: More predictions of doom for apostate Israel, in different flavors - Repent and be forgiven; Lament, fast, and be pitied (during a locust plague); Witness destruction or new life.

Obadiah: The shortest book in the bible - a visionary poem of the return to Zion.

Jonah: God tells Jonah to warn the wicked city of Ninevah that God will punish them. Jonah hops a boat to Tarshish instead, but is thrown overboard by the superstitious crew during a storm. He is swallowed whole by a "great fish" (read: whale) and survives to go to Ninevah, whom he warns, and God forgives. Jonah basically tells God, "So I went through all of that for nothing?"

Micah & Nahum: poetic prophesies of world destruction and the vengeance of an angry god, followed by the god's forgiveness of those who survive.

Habakkuk: Hymns of desperation, beseeching God for forgiveness.

Zephaniah: More prophesies of doom and destruction - the end is nigh.

Haggai: Haggai the prophet convinces the people to rebuild the house of the lord, to house the wealth and abundance of the world which God will soon shower upon the faithful.

Zechariah: With some of the more florid prose of the old testament, Zechariah's dream urges the Israelites to leave Babylon, and return to rebuild Jerusalem. Lively poetry warns of God's impending destruction of the lands of the north, and his intention to reward the pious who return to Zion.

Malachi: The Messiah, or Elijah, or the Messenger of God, is prophesied - this book is presented as the first person word of God to his people.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John: Much of the first three books are word for word copies of each other. The tenor of the book of John, however, is much more zealous, and ventures interpretations rather than just the plain descriptions that form the bulk of the other gospels. Meaning is added, and it is much more obvious in the book of John that the account was written much later with knowledge of future events - in this gospel we can observe Christian dogma taking form.

Acts of the Apostles : The Apostles speak in tongues on Pentecost, and apply their new language skills toward converting more followers. As they grow to thousands, converts are rounded up and imprisoned by Saul. When Saul is converted during a vision that temporarily blinds him, he joins the ranks of the persecuted. The Apostles decide to include the gentiles in their mission. Still facing murder plots, imprisonment, and trial, they create churches while being chased through the eastern Roman Empire, with Saul now called Paul, as their most ardent evangelist.

Romans: Paul's letter to the church in Rome, in which he delineates the churches mission and core philosophy. Here is the origin of the Christian concept of original sin and being "saved" by Christ, and it is the most circular logic I have ever encountered - God made everyone - Jews and Gentiles - born into sin, sinful by nature, so that he could send Jesus to save us, so we should love sin and sinners because we get to

be saved.

Michael Finocchiaro says

Yes, believe it or not, I did read the Bible a few times. The RSV version being in a language closer to 20th C english than the traditional King James Version (KJV) and less colloquial than the New International Version (NIV). It is, well, the version with all the apocryphal books left out. As a piece of literature, it has its moments (primarily Psalms and Proverbs) where it is poetic, and then there are the humanistic quotes from Solomon and Jesus, as well as all the famous fables in Genesis, Exodus and Judges, etc. However, there is a lot of boring stuff here (Leviticus and Numbers) and long lists of do's and don'ts. Not sure I will have the patience to go back and read it though.

Derek says

"Probably the best book you've never read!"

There is not enough space to say all that should be said about this - the greatest book ever published. It is one of the primary reasons the discovery of the printing press even occurred. The world has been transformed by the Bible. It can go along way to providing all the answers to the world's problems - if only the world would use it. Alas, it is frequently misquoted by being taken out of context. It has been criticized by probably millions of people over its' long life span and still stands firm as the all time best seller. It cannot be changed or replaced by any other book, no matter what your beliefs are. All attempts to make its' words fit our requirement so as to ignore God inevitably fail.

What are the odds that words spoken by one man, Isaiah, 700 years before the event could accurately predict and explain the Lord's birth, his suffering and resurrection, and not be true? I am amazed by the Bible everytime I read it. God, in the form of Jesus Christ, makes it abundantly clear about who He is and why you should meet Him.

If you only read one book in your life, this is it!
