




THE BIBLE

《圣经》纵览

John Riches 著 梁 工 译



通识教育
双语文库

A VERY SHORT
INTRODUCTION



外语教学与研究出版社
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译者序

《圣经》是世界图书史上译本最多、发行量最大的书籍，也是文化史上最具影响力的著作之一。古往今来，诠释《圣经》的著述浩若烟海，令人叹为观止。面对如此深奥繁杂的一门大学问，现代读者如何找到一条便捷的通道，仅以少许精力即可进入《圣经》的学术境界，一览其胜景而领略其堂奥？可以说，约翰·里奇斯（John Riches）的《〈圣经〉纵览》便提供了一条这样的通道。

这本小书的篇幅不大，内容却精当而丰富。它论及《圣经》本身的多种内部知识，诸如其卷籍从口头流传到书写成文的漫长历史，及其被接纳为正典而获得权威性地位的复杂过程；还多角度地评述了相关的外部知识，涉及犹太教徒与基督徒理解《圣经》的不同维度，和宗教改革年代以降“批评性解读”的概貌——其中既有马丁·路德等新教思想家对天主教释经传统的反驳，也有赖马鲁斯、莱辛、威斯、施魏策尔等近代宗教学者对《圣经》的历史性和学术性辨思。此外，作者还立足于当代文化的制高点，深刻分析了《圣经》与后殖民世界的错综关联，描述了它在高雅文化与通俗文化中扮演的多重角色，并就其在政治生活中的功能和地位发表不少精辟之见。这些内容应能有效地回应读者了解《圣经》的基本需求。

这本书的另一鲜明特色是具备较高的学术品位。在介绍《圣经》内部和外部的各种知识之际，作者十分注意将西方学术界

的重大研究成果体现在行文中，使人有可能一斑窥豹，览一书而略知《圣经》学术史。比如，论及《圣经》成书的历史过程时，作者评述了构成摩西五经的“四文献说”（主张摩西五经乃由 J、E、D、P 四种早期文献在大约 600 年间陆续汇编而成）；并述及学术界对“同观福音问题”¹的探讨结论（主张《马可福音》首先成书，马太和路加都采纳了马可的资料，同时使用了一种被称为“Q 文献”的耶稣言论集）。以这类由众多前代学者呕心沥血得出的研究成果为依托，这本小书能给人带来事半功倍的读书效果。

VI

本书的高品位还通过其客观公正的学术立场表现出来。作者既充分肯定《圣经》在文明发展史上的重要地位，认同“其中的故事、意象、隐喻、道德和宗教概念已经塑造并将继续塑造世间万众的经验和理念”；对《圣经》又不作简单武断的褒贬评价，而主张其历史功能是多方面的：“《圣经》为人类思想、文学和艺术中某些具有纪念碑意义的作品提供了灵感，同时也滋生了人类某些最恶劣的野蛮、无知、自私和偏狭”。就《圣经》与殖民及后殖民世界的关系而论，它既曾被殖民征服者用作道德和宗教的旗帜，借以向弱小民族滥施暴行；也被受压迫者用作反抗殖民统治的精神武器，从中求得慰藉、力量乃至民族和社会的解放。

至于同一部《圣经》何以能向多种最为歧异的阅读敞开大门，本书作者认为，根本原因在于读者身份的歧异性和《圣经》内在要素的多样性——读者可能由于时间、地点、人种、族裔、教派、文化传统及现实条件的差异而各不相同，《圣经》中的文化元素则具有无限的丰富性：其素材来源和成书过程异常复杂，文体和手法变化多端，文本意义在不同层面的显示更是各

¹ “同观福音书”（Synoptic Gospels）又译为“对视福音书”、“符类福音书”，指《新约》卷首的三卷书，即《马太福音》、《马可福音》和《路加福音》。它们的观念基本相同。记载耶稣事迹的顺序也大同小异，可以相互对照阅读。

有千秋。这些要素奇妙地组合起来，使人难以指望对《圣经》进行无可争议的单一阅读。纵贯全书，作者娴熟地运用现代阐释学理论对《圣经》知识作出灵活多样的释读，其间常有精妙之笔映入读者的眼帘，令人赞不绝口。

然而，约翰·里奇斯的这本小书并非枯燥乏味的思辨之论，而是有着很强的趣味性和可读性。为了阐明深层原理，书中穿插了不少典范的《圣经》引文，也提到《圣经》传播史上的许多轶闻趣事。作者以“阿克达”（祭献以撒）故事为例，形象地表明犹太人和基督徒对《圣经》的不同理解和运用；又借助于一批鲜活的案例，证实了《圣经》对西方文学艺术的广泛影响。而所有这些，无疑都能引领读者轻松地走进《圣经》的世界。

VII

梁 工
于古城开封铁塔湖畔

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Chapter 1

The Bible in the Modern World: Classic or Sacred Text?

It is sometimes said that there are more unread copies of the Bible than of any other book in the world. Such a claim is difficult to prove, though it clearly reflects widespread concern among Christians in Europe about growing levels of ignorance of the Bible's contents. However, it also misses an arguably more significant truth, namely that the Bible is still one of the most influential and widely read books in the world.

1

It would be interesting to run a competition to find out Today's Most Influential Book and Today's Most Read Book in the World – not by any means the same thing. Marx's *Das Kapital* might until recently have qualified for the first, though hardly for the second; Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man* and Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* might get short-listed for the first too. There would surely be candidates of this kind from the sciences (such as Darwin's *Origin of Species*), and from philosophy, literature, and the arts. How would they fare in relation to the great central texts of the major world faiths? 'Influence' is not too precise a measure and the eventual outcome of such a competition would probably say as much about the judges as about the winner.

The list of leading contenders for Today's Most Read Book in the World would feature some literary classics and some favourite children's books, though these would probably be surpassed by works of light

romantic fiction and crime novels. Popular though these titles are, their appeal tends to be limited to a particular culture. By contrast, the principal religious texts of the major world faiths, with their regular use in worship and private devotion, and their role in the spiritual formation of the adherents and officials of widely dispersed communities, attain a much wider readership.

The point of this imaginary competition is not to claim any particular moral or aesthetic superiority for any particular text. That would have to be argued on quite different grounds, if it could be argued at all. The point is to show up, right from the beginning, something of the very special quality of such major religious texts. They are immensely influential over people's lives and are read by people of vastly different educational and cultural backgrounds. How do they do it?

It is not my task to answer that question for the Koran, though it would be very interesting to consider what these two texts, or collections of texts, have in common. It is, however, the major purpose of this *Very Short Introduction* to answer it for the Bible. Why does this ancient collection of texts continue to exercise such power over people's lives in our modern, post-colonial, post-industrial world?

Let me first however introduce some of today's Bible readers, simply to communicate something of its extraordinary appeal, its ability to speak, negatively or positively, to people of different education, culture, and beliefs; but also to portray something of the great diversity of readings which are made of it.

Best-selling titles worldwide

***Bible*: 2.5 billion between 1815 and 1975**

20,751,515 distributed in 1998

***Bible, translations of*: at least part of the Bible is available in 2,212 of the world's 6,500 languages. The whole Bible is translated into over 350 languages.**

Best-selling titles: the world's best-selling copyright book is *The Guinness Book of Records*, with sales of 80 million (1955–97)

Best-selling author: Agatha Christie, whose 78 crime novels have sold c.2 billion copies

Best-selling novels: *Gone with the Wind* (1936), *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960), and *Valley of the Dolls* (1966) are all said to have sold over 30 million copies.

Renee Zulu is part of a remarkable group of women in Soweto, Johannesburg's major black township. This group, the Zamani Soweto Sisters, emerged out of the deep trauma of the 1976 Soweto uprisings, when many young people were killed by the South African police, and is active in community education and development. The Sisters became a powerful educational force, training women in literacy, sewing, dressmaking, household management, even bricklaying. They made beautiful patchwork quilts, which they exhibited in Glasgow in 1983, and smaller collages, following an idea from Chilean refugees, in which they portrayed the struggles, traumas, and hopes of their lives in Soweto.

Renee is an avid Bible reader. She belongs to one of the African Independent Churches, which has its roots in Zimbabwe. Once a year for two weeks, she goes with members of her church to spend time in prayer, singing, and Bible study. The rich narratives and poetry of the Bible provide her with a source of strength, comfort, and delight in a life otherwise marked by hard, repetitive work and economic and political struggle.

Mary John Mananzan is a Benedictine sister from the Philippines, who is also chairperson of Gabriela, a women's organization with 40,000 members from grassroots organizations. This involvement in the struggle for women's dignity and rights led her to question the type of

devotion to Mary which was prevalent. Filipina women were encouraged to be submissive and obedient to their husbands and superiors, as Mary was submissive to God's purposes in agreeing to bear his son: 'be it unto me according to thy word'. Mary John found ammunition against such kinds of Marian piety in Mary's Hymn of praise in Luke's Gospel, known in the church as the Magnificat. In it she sings of her God:

He has shown strength with his arm,
he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts,
he has put down the mighty from their thrones,
and exalted those of low degree;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent empty away.

Luke 1: 46-55

Here was a vision of a Mary altogether more active and subversive, who worships a God who supports the poor and dispossesses the wealthy. Mary John took the students in her classes on demonstrations. 'Teaching social action not social graces' was how an article in the *New York Herald Tribune* described it.

Bishop Dinis Singulane is an Anglican bishop in Mozambique. For years after independence the country was racked by a terrible civil war between RENAMO and FRELIMO. Bishop Dinis was part of a church group involved in the peace process. At one crucial meeting with the RENAMO leader, he took out his Bible and read two verses from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5: 7, 9):

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

He pleaded with the leader to have mercy on the people of Mozambique and to stop the fighting. He appealed to him to become a peacemaker, for then he would be called a son of God. 'If however you

choose not to work for peace,' continued the bishop, 'then we shall want to know whose son you are.' The leader asked Bishop Dinis to leave his Bible behind so that he could use it with his generals.

Daniel Boyarin is an Orthodox Jew who teaches Rabbinic Studies in California. For some time he taught at Bar-Ilan University in Jerusalem. In his book *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*, he argues that Paul, precisely as a Jew, was profoundly critical of those tendencies in the tradition which emphasized Jewish difference and particularity. 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.' (Galatians 3: 28).

Such universalizing tendencies are not, however, without their dangers. What about those who wish to hold on to the old distinctions? What place is there for them in this brave new world? The subsequent history of Jewish-Christian relations shows how terrible the consequences of this refusal to recognize the particular identity of the Jews have been. But equally, Jewish desire to restore and maintain their particular attachments to the Land of Israel has brought its own severe problems. Boyarin's view is that Jewish existence in the Diaspora (that is to say, in Jewish communities outside Israel) is a better model for intercommunity relations than the Zionist vision of restoration. Paul's cultural critique of Judaism has to be heard, just as it too has to be subjected to radical critique.

One last example of a Bible reader is less attractive to liberal sentiment. In his fascinating travel narrative *The Divine Supermarket*, Malise Ruthven describes a meeting with the Reverend Tim La Haye, one of the leading proponents of so-called Armageddon theology – someone, that is, who believes that the Bible has revealed a precise scenario for the end of the world. It starts with the establishment of the State of Israel, includes the restoration of the Temple, a massive world war, the conversion of the