



“十二五”普通高等教育本科国家级规划教材

A Literary Introduction
to the Bible (Second Edition)

圣经文学导读

(第二版)

[美] Leland Ryken Wayne Martindale 审

黄宗英 编著

高等教育出版社



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总序

随着全球化进程的加速发展，文化全球化和经济全球化的深入推进，高等教育，特别是英语专业教育在新的历史转型期的文化交融层面越来越肩负着举足轻重的社会责任。因此，为了培养具有扎实的英语基本功、相关的专业知识和文化知识、较强的英语综合应用能力和创新思维的人才，为不断深入的大学英语教学改革培养和提供师资，而且立足于中国语境，用全球化的理念和视角进行教材设计，我们策划了“高等院校英语专业立体化系列教材”。

实现这一具有时代意义的战略任务需要广大英语专业教师树立执著的敬业精神，制订科学的、高水平的、切合实际的英语专业教学大纲，编写出版能充分体现大纲要求的有关课程（必修和选修）的配套教材，以及开发为课堂教学和学生自主学习服务的、与新型电子化教学仪器设备配套的教学软件系统。由高等教育出版社策划并陆续出版的“高等院校英语专业立体化系列教材”作为“普通高等教育‘十一五’国家级规划教材”，就是为实现英语专业教学改革这一历史任务服务的。

为实现以上目的和任务，本系列教材注重以下方面：

1. 注重培养学生的跨文化交际能力和文化鉴赏与批判能力。在教材设计时体现“全球视野，中国视角”的理念。这就是说，本系列教材在保持各门课程的思想性和批判性的优良传统外，既向学生提供西方文化背景知识，也引导学生鉴赏和学习我国的优秀文化传统。要让学生在多元文化的背景下，熟悉掌握中外文化的共同点和差异。在这个基础上，培养学生的鉴别和比较能力，启发和诱导学生进行创新思维。

2. 科学安排，系统设计。经过多年来对教学模式改革的探讨，我国英语专业教学已总结出良性的教学规律，一般将4年的教学过程分为两个阶段，即：基础阶段（一年级和二年级）和高年级阶段（三年级和四年级）。按照此教学规律，本系列教材分为基础阶段教材和高年级阶段教材，同时悉心设计基础阶段和高年级阶段的衔接。基础阶段教材的主要任务是传授英语基础知识，对学生进行全面的、严格的基本技能训练，培养学生实际运用语言的能力、良好的学风和正确的学习方法，为进入高年级学习打下扎实的专业基础。高年级阶段教材的主要任务是在继续打好语言基础的同时，学习英语专业知识和相关专业知识，进一步扩大知识面，增强对文化差异的敏感性，提高综合运用英语进行交际的能力。同时，根据《高等学校英语专业英语教学大纲》的课程设置，本系列教材将课程分为英语专业技能课、英语专业知识课和相关专业知识课三种类型。全面培养学生的语言能力、思维能力、终身学习能力，拓宽学生的知识面，同时帮助学生树

立正确的人生观和价值观。

3. 时代性。这不仅表现在选材方面能反映当代人民的生活内容,更主要的在于对它的“立体化”要求。21世纪的教材不再拘泥于传统的纸质教材,而是能培养学生多元识读能力(multiliteracy)的基于多媒体(multimedia)的多模态(multimodality)教材。本系列教材在建设传统纸质教材的同时启动建设一个开放性、超文本化的网络系列课程,构建全国英语专业英语自主学习体系,使优秀教学资源共享,充分体现“以人为本”的教学理念。这一举措也反映了由于当前英语专业招生人数的不断扩大,英语专业的传统教学模式已不能满足当前专业教学的需要。本系列教材采用立体化配套,将各种多媒体手段运用到教学中来,这是英语专业教学发展的需要,也将为我国英语专业教学改革和发展作出重大贡献。

4. 可教性。在编写过程中,反复强调教材的可教性。在选材上,讲究趣味性,让学生喜欢学。在内容安排上,力争让学生在较少的课时内学到该学的内容,从而体现当代先进的模块化教学思想。在习题设计上,做到有针对性、形式丰富,便于教师和学生课内课外操作。充分体现教学过程以学生为中心的教学理念,通过教师与学生互动、学生之间互动的教学活动,把语言、文学、文化、翻译等方面的教学内容转化成为学生能掌握的技能 and 知识,着力培养学生分析问题和解决问题的能力,传授基本研究方法,增强学生的研究意识和问题意识,同时提高学生的学术素养,提升学生综合素质。

5. 适用性。本系列教材集中全国著名大学的一批专家编写,凝聚了他们多年教学经验的精华,体现了我国英语专业教学的最新理念和先进水平。入选系列教材的初稿均在不同重点高校教学中使用过至少三轮以上,深受学生喜爱,能够真正反映当前英语专业教学改革的思路和教学的实际情况。

综上,本系列教材反映了当代新的教学理念。为此,编委会也做出了大量努力。一方面,编写工作中强调协同性。在编写策划层面,出版社与编委会之间、编委会与编写者之间反复协商,制订计划,讨论样章;在使用者层面,充分考虑到师生之间以及学生之间的互动和协作。另一方面,教材致力于构建良好的英语学习平台,为学生的自主性学习、独立思考和创新思维创造条件,同时向作为教学各个环节的咨询者、组织者、监督者的教师提供指导。

多年以来英语专业教材,特别是专业高年级教材的出版比较零散,一直没有相对配套完整的系列教材。我们深信本系列教材的出版对于推动英语专业的教学改革和建设,对于进一步提高英语专业人才的培养质量将起到积极的作用。同时,我们衷心希望听取广大师生的意见和建议,使本系列教材的出版日臻完善。

“高等院校英语专业立体化系列教材”编委会
2007年10月



Preface *To the Second Edition*

The primary claim that the Bible has on us is its importance in the history of the world. The Bible has been translated into more languages than any other book. It is the all-time leading English-language bestseller. While the influence of the Bible has been greater in the West than elsewhere, its origins in the Mediterranean region make it as much an Eastern book as a Western book.

Why has the Bible been such a universally acknowledged book? One reason is that it is a literary book. Its overall genre is the anthology of literature. Within this anthology, we find a small library of literary genres, with stories and poems dominating. Literature takes universal human experience as its subject. The Bible is accordingly a book for all people in all places at all times. The literature of the Bible has an elemental quality to it, expressing the essential features of human life in this world. The Bible presents life at its core, stripped of distractions.

But there are other reasons to read the Bible in addition to its captivating rendition of human experience. Literary form and artistry are also important in literature, and the Bible fully meets our taste for literary technique and beauty. The literary skill of biblical authors is evident on nearly every page. Of course not all of the Bible is equally literary, and some of it is not literary at all. The advantage of reading excerpts from the Bible in an anthology like the book that follows is that the material is “the best of the best” from start to finish.

There is something prototypical about the Bible, making it the best of all books to illustrate the essential features of literature. I have found in my fifty years of teaching literature at an American college that the Bible provides my best examples when I introduce students to such literary forms as narrative and poetry and satire. By some mysterious quality, the Bible enables me to see the dynamics of various literary forms and genres more clearly than with other literature. The Bible is not only an example of unsurpassed literature — it is also the best introduction to literary form

and technique.

We can read and study the Bible as a work of literature, but there is a whole further dimension to the literary importance of the Bible. In addition to the Bible as literature, we have the phenomenon of the Bible in literature. The author of a book entitled *The Greatest English Classic* wrote that “the Bible is a book-making book. It is literature which provokes literature” (C. Boyd McAfee). It is a commonplace that English and American literature do not exist apart from the Bible. This led literary scholar Northrop Frye to say that “a student who doesn’t know what is in the Bible doesn’t know what is going on in English literature.”

But the Bible is the source book for more than literature. Through the centuries it has been the largest cultural influence in English-speaking countries. For members of such countries, knowledge of the Bible can show where their tradition comes from and consists of. For Chinese readers, reading the Bible can be an introduction to English and American culture and thinking. For such readers, the Bible is a book of discoveries.

An important aspect of such discovery is learning what the Bible says about good and evil, God and people. This is a way of saying that biblical literature embodies a moral vision of what is right and wrong behavior. Of course readers then need to decide what they will do with the moral vision that is placed before them. Similarly, it is obvious from the first page that the Bible presents a religious view of the world. God is the leading character of the Bible. People and events derive their meaning from their relationship to God. If we want to feel what it means to view the world in a religious light, we can do no better than read the Bible.

All of the foregoing considerations provide answers to why we should read the Bible. The further question is how we should read it. The first answer to that question is that we should read the Bible with an open mind. No one can read the Bible without being surprised at every turn. Our preconceptions about what we will find in the Bible are certain to be challenged and modified once we start to read. For example, we know that the Bible is a religious book, but it turns out to be a thoroughly human book as well. In fact, we can say of the Bible what we say of literature



universally — that it is the human race's testimony to its own experience.

We should also read the Bible expecting to find the usual literary qualities of delight and edification. The biblical authors did not write primarily to entertain, but what they wrote exhibits all of the usual features of literary technique that constitute the entertaining side of literature. The edification comes from the ideas that the authors have embodied in their writings. There is no end to the intellectual stimulation that reading the Bible provides.

Titles of books about the Bible can sound the final note: *The Greatest Classic*; *The Book of Books*; *The Supreme Book of Mankind*; *The Greatest Story Ever Told*.

Leland Ryken

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2014-10-5

Preface *To the First Edition*

The Bible, like all great literature, is for all times; it is more relevant to modern life than the newspaper. The English journalist Malcolm Muggeridge puts it humorously: “News is old things happening to new people.” Great literature transcends both time and place because it gives us a window to some reality we would not know or feel without it. To state it another way, literature emphasizes the pattern of meaning in human experience. As poets and storytellers have long recognized, the deepest truths may only be expressed in symbols, metaphors, and stories; this makes them more true, not less true, touching the imagination and emotions, along with the intellect. It is not surprising, then, that the Bible is a thoroughly literary book. Its stories are often profoundly moving and its poems things of beauty.

Perhaps many readers will say with the British Romantic poet, philosopher, and theologian Samuel Taylor Coleridge: “in the Bible there is more that finds me than I have experienced in all other books put together [and] ... the words of the Bible find me at greater depths of my being; ... whatever finds me brings with it an irresistible evidence of its having proceeded from the Holy Spirit.”¹ For this and other reasons, many share Coleridge’s opinion that the Bible is the greatest book of all time. Its ideas and language have transformed personal lives, world history, and every area of human thought. The Bible is unquestionably an important book, but it is not always an easy book to read. Part of the Bible’s power, as well as its challenge, comes from its literary approach. Though unified around the theme of God’s redemptive purpose in human history and individual lives, it has come to us in many different literary forms.

But the Bible is not exclusively a literary book. It also contains a great deal of history. At the same time, it is theology. It claims that all merely



¹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Shorter Works and Fragments*, 2 vols. Eds. H. J. Jackson and J.R. de J. Jackson. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995, p.112.



human attempts to reach God fail. The Bible is the story of God's infallible attempt to reach humanity. We find there the long history of God's "reaching down" to draw us up. This is the Bible's truth claim, in summary. But to accurately interpret its theology, the reader must know the forms and figures in which the theology is communicated, and those are very often literary.

The Bible is an Eastern book that has come to the West and around the world in translation; yet, I can think of no truly great book in English literature that is not greatly influenced by the Bible. Indeed, many of the best English literary works engage the biblical text directly, like Milton's epic *Paradise Lost*; George Herbert's lyric poems; Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter*, T. S. Eliot's play *Murder in the Cathedral*; or C. S. Lewis's popular Narnia stories, which have recently been made into movies. Even works which do not engage the text directly are often impossible to understand without a knowledge of the great themes and events of the Bible. For example, in Shakespeare's tragedy *Hamlet*, to understand why Hamlet does not carry out his plan to kill Claudius — the man who has stolen his throne, murdered his father, and incestuously married his mother — we must know what Hamlet believes from the Bible about prayer, salvation and damnation, heaven and hell, repentance and forgiveness. The number of footnotes that would be necessary to understand the motivation and ambiguities of such a decision is beyond practicality. Clearly, we must know the Bible from reading it for ourselves if we are to understand this and other important literature.

The same is true for many great literary texts in other languages. Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* begins with the epigraph (a quotation) from the Bible, thereby announcing its theme that, paradoxically, giving up control of our lives to Jesus results in goodness for others and fulfillment for ourselves: The epigraph reads: "John 12:24, the words of Jesus: 'Except a corn [grain] of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.'" Similarly, Dante's *Divine Comedy* is rooted in Biblical themes and number symbolism, especially the number three for the trinity (God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Even books like

the French Voltaire's *Candide*, which is a satire on Christianity, depends upon an understanding of the Bible and Christian history for its humor. An important secondary reason for studying the Bible, then, is the essential help it gives to understanding other great world literature.

Over the centuries, people from around the world have read the Bible for theological, historical, literary, and personal understanding, as well as for pleasure. Professor Huang has made a historic contribution to literary and biblical studies, first, with his Chinese translation of Leland Ryken's *Words of Delight: A Literary Introduction to the Bible* (Peking University Press, 2007); then, with his teaching of "A Literary Introduction to the Bible" from 2008; and, now, this welcome textbook for academic study. It was my privilege to have Professor Ryken as a colleague for thirty years of my career and Professor Huang for two, so the honor of writing a preface to this volume is very great. My sincere wish is that this textbook will have the wide readership it deserves.

Wayne Martinich

Professor of English Emeritus,
Wheaton College, Illinois, USA
2011-5-30



Editors's Words *To the Second Edition*

The very word “Bible” comes from the Greek “*biblia*,” meaning little books, and the Bible is, literally, a collection of little books. The earliest books of the Bible go back beyond 1200 B.C., the latest date from the middle of the second century after Christ. Thus the collection spans fourteen centuries, a coverage broader than an anthology of English literature beginning with *Beowulf* and ending with an author of the twenty-first century. The Bible can be read as an anthology of literature because it contains not only such narrative categories as hero story, Gospel, epic, tragedy, comedy, and parables, but also such poetic genres as lyric, psalm, proverb, epithalamion, and many others. Besides, we also find prophecy, visionary writing, apocalypse, pastoral, encomium, oratory, drama, satire, and epistle in the Bible. Apart from its theological and cultural significance, the Bible surely serves as a valid and exciting literary text.

The Bible has been pervasive in its influence on Western writing. From the works of Caedmon in the seventh century to the works of contemporary writers, the Bible has been instrumental in shaping the content and style of much of English literature. To present this influence would require volumes, but each introduction to the separate chapters that follow focuses on some key literary elements embodied in the Bible. With the spatial limitation of this textbook, I start with a general introduction to reading the Bible as literature, attempting to approach the Bible as an anthology, an experience, a text, a style, literary archetypes, and as a course to meet the increasing demand of general education for undergraduate programs in China.

Chapter One, “In the Beginning,” offers a close reading of the opening stories of the Bible, including the stories of the creation of the world, the life in paradise, the fall from innocence, Adam and Eve’s sons, the flood, and the tower in Genesis. In Chapter Two, “Biblical Epic,” biblical epic elements have been summarized with a close reading of the Exodus as

an epic, which records the formation of Israel as a nation and describes the journey of Israel from Egypt to Canaan along epic lines. Chapter Three, "Biblical Poetry," explores the charm of biblical poetry. Apart from such biblical poetic elements as thinking in images, figures of speech like metaphor, simile, hyperbole, apostrophe, personification and parallelism, different genres of biblical psalms have been presented with introductions to biblical lyric poems, lament psalms, praise psalms, nature psalms, and worship psalms. The Song of Solomon is then discussed in terms of both love poetry and pastoral poetry with explications of sample passages from the poem.

Chapter Four, "Biblical Story," deals with such key elements of biblical stories as setting, plot, and character. The setting of biblical stories has been explored here as atmosphere, symbol, and culture; the plot in Abraham's story has been sampled to explain the plot conflict and suspense, conflict in foil, and plot unity in a biblical story; the characterization has been approached with a detailed discussion of the character of Jacob in Genesis 25:19-35. Chapter Five, "Hero Story," discusses the elements of biblical hero stories, exploring the struggles and triumphs of human race in the six ordeals in the first six chapters in the book of Daniel. The story of Daniel is a story of success and virtue rewarded. In Chapter Six, "Biblical Tragedy," the elements of a biblical tragedy have been introduced with a close reading of Samson's life. It is a story of human failure, which captures with particular clarity some characteristics of a literary tragedy: human limitation and fallenness, human choice, the dangerousness of life, justice, human suffering, wisdom through suffering, and human significance.

Chapter Seven, "Literary Features of the New Testament," introduces the literary uniqueness, experience, and presentation of the New Testament with more of a focus on Gospel as a literary form. A literary approach to the New Testament is under the formula "meaning through form." "Form" should be constructed broadly in this context. Without form, no meaning is conveyed.

In Chapter Eight, "The Gospel According to John," the composition



background, the structural unity and the narrative pattern of the book have been carefully discussed before we start reading the Gospel as the revelatory and regenerative works and words of Jesus. John is unique in his powerful presentation of Jesus as the great co-Creator of the universe.

Chapter Nine, “The Letter of Paul to the Romans,” the most comprehensive and systematic statement of Christian faith in the Bible, is actually presented as a letter written by the apostle Paul and sent from the city of Corinth in Greece to a young church at Rome in A.D. 57. The letter simply explains the gospel of God, yet its messages are so profound and carefully constructed that it stands as a Bible within the Bible. The book contains all the literary features of a biblical epistle, including the salutation, thanksgiving, body, paraenesis, and conclusion. But what distinguishes the letter is its genre, known as “the diatribe,” the characteristics of which include imaginary dialogues, question-and-answer constructions, hypothetical objections, rhetorical questions, analogy, antithesis, aphorism, etc.

Chapter Ten, “The Revelation to John,” discusses such literary elements as genre, symbolism, unity and structure, literary purposes and themes in the book before we do a close reading of the whole book. Apart from the “epic prologue” and the “grand finale to the Bible,” John’s dramatic presentation of his “seven letters,” “seven seals,” “seven trumpets,” “seven great signs,” “seven bowls of wrath,” and “seven last events” have been approached carefully.

With my limited knowledge about the Bible in general and about the literary study of the Bible in particular, I acknowledge gratefully here that I have organized my introduction in each chapter of this textbook primarily on the basis of Leland Ryken’s *Words of Delight: A Literary Introduction to the Bible* (1992) and Leland Ryken and Philip Graham Ryken’s *The Literary Study Bible* (2007). Besides, I have based my teaching notes to the texts greatly on the interpretations of the Bible in such scholarly works as Leland Ryken and Tremper Longman III’s *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible* (1993), Wayne Grudem’s *ESV Study Bible* (2008), Kenneth Barker’s *The NIV Study Bible* (1985), John Eadie’s *The Holy Bible*

with the *Commentaries of Scott and Henry* (1858), David Lyle Jeffrey's *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature* (1992), Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III's *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (1998), Owen Collins's *The Classic Bible Commentary* (1999), Kevin J. Vanhoozer's *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (2005), Herbert Marks's Norton Critical Edition of *The English Bible* (KJV. Vol. I: OT, 2012), Gerald Hammond and Austin Busch's Norton Critical Edition of *The English Bible* (KJV. Vol. II: NT, 2012), etc.

In the context of globalization around the world, further exposure to different cultures is a must for Chinese college students to create successful careers of their own. From this vantage point at this historic period, Beijing Union University, Higher Education Press and Wheaton College (Illinois), join their efforts in supporting this project of working and reworking on an English literary introduction to the Bible as a textbook for college students in China. This is only a small step in reading and teaching the Bible as literature in China, but it is at the same time an important step in constructing a core course in English studies in this country.

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Abbreviations

General

c.	about, approximately	i.e.	that is
cf.	compare, confer	KJV	King James Version
ch., chs.	chapter(s)	lit.	literally
d.	died	NT	New Testament
e.g.	for example	OT	Old Testament
esp.	especially	par.	parallel passage(s)
ESV	English Standard Version	p., pp.	page(s)
etc.	and so on	v., vv.	verse(s)
ff.	following verse(s)	vs.	versus
Gk.	Greek		
Hb.	Hebrew		

Books of the Bible

Genesis	Gen.	Proverbs	Prov.	Malachi	Mal.	Hebrews	Heb.
Exodus	Ex.	Ecclesiastes	Eccles.	Matthew	Matt.	James	James
Leviticus	Lev.	Song of Solomon	Song	Mark	Mark	1 Peter	1 Pet.
Numbers	Num.	Isaiah	Isa.	Luke	Luke	2 Peter	2 Pet.
Deuteronomy	Deut.	Jeremiah	Jer.	John	John	1 John	1 John
Joshua	Josh.	Lamentations	Lam.	Acts	Acts	2 John	2 John
Judges	Judg.	Ezekiel	Ezek.	Romans	Rom.	3 John	3 John
Ruth	Ruth	Daniel	Dan.	1 Corinthians	1 Cor.	Jude	Jude
1 Samuel	1 Sam.	Hosea	Hos.	2 Corinthians	2 Cor.	Revelation	Rev.
2 Samuel	2 Sam.	Joel	Joel	Galatians	Gal.		
1 Kings	1 Kings	Amos	Amos	Ephesians	Eph.		
2 Kings	2 Kings	Obadiah	Obad.	Philippians	Phil.		
1 Chronicles	1 Chron.	Jonah	Jonah	Colossians	Col.		
2 Chronicles	2 Chron.	Micah	Mic.	1 Thessalonians	1 Thess.		
Ezra	Ezra	Nahum	Nah.	2 Thessalonians	2 Thess.		
Nehemiah	Neh.	Habakkuk	Hab.	1 Timothy	1 Tim.		
Esther	Est.	Zephaniah	Zeph.	2 Timothy	2 Tim.		
Job	Job	Haggai	Hag.	Titus	Titus		
Psalms	Ps.	Zechariah	Zech.	Philemon	Philem.		