

EDITORIAL

The vast majority of Americans, recent Gallup polls report, still regard the Bible as the word of God, and more than one American in three believes that every scriptural word is true. . . .

Americans publish more Bibles than any other people on earth—and buy them, too. . . . Last year alone we spent \$170 million for Bibles, and the Gideons distributed more than 1 million free to hotels, motels and hospitals. In 1982 Americans produced six new editions of the Scriptures and published books *about* the Bible in record numbers.

Thus far the good news as recorded in the feature story, “How the Bible Made America,” in *Newsweek* magazine (December 27, 1982) 45. And now for the bad news (same issue, same page):

Despite this publishing phenomenon, the Bible has virtually disappeared from American education. . . . Despite the fact that the majority of Americans say they accept the Bible as the word of God, a comprehensive 1979 Gallup survey found that only 49 percent of Protestants and 44 percent of Roman Catholics could name as many as four of the Ten Commandments and less than half of the respondents said they turn first to the Scriptures for guidance in times of crisis.

In sum, the Bible in America has joined the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, argues church historian Martin E. Marty of the University of Chicago, as an American “icon”—a leatherbound symbol of transcendent authority, certainty and continuity with our nation’s putatively sacred origins. Many Americans retain a family Bible as an heirloom in whose pages new names are added to the family tree . . . and Biblical rhetoric is as customary on Thanksgiving and the Fourth of July as it is on Christmas and Easter. No presidential candidate can afford not to pay ritual respect to the Good Book.

As the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* concludes its silver anniversary year, our Society shows no such ambiguity in its firm adherence to its doctrinal *sine qua non*: “The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written and is therefore inerrant in the autographs.” We affirm that from the first word of Genesis to the last word of Revelation the Bible is the in-scripturated Word of God, the only propositional revelation of God to mankind. It is the infallible rule for faith and practice in every area of our lives, although admittedly we often fail to live up to its demands. We do not distinguish between revelational and nonrevelational statements in Scripture. In the original manuscripts the Bible is inerrant in everything it teaches, whatever its subject matter. We neither believe nor assert that error is compatible with divinely inspired Scripture. The Biblical authors, borne along by the Holy Spirit, wrote precisely what God himself wanted them to write—neither more nor less. We adhere without mental reservation to the historical orthodox doctrine of the verbal and plenary inspiration of Holy Scripture. And we do so with joy and thanksgiving to God.

At the completion of my seventh year as your *JETS* editor, I look back with gratitude to the Lord for the privilege of working with ETS board members who

have served educational institutions dedicated unswervingly to Biblical inspiration and inerrancy: Covenant Seminary, Dallas Seminary, Denver Conservative Baptist Seminary, Moody Bible Institute, Reformed Seminary, Talbot Seminary, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Wheaton College, and Bethel College and Seminary, to name only a few. I know that I speak for our Society members as a whole, as well as for the schools we represent, in declaring our continued determination to study the Scriptures and to share the story of the Savior about whom they so eloquently speak.

To that end we are devoting this final issue of our *Journal's* twenty-fifth year to the Bible in celebration of its inspiration, its unity, its harmony, its consistency, its inerrancy, its eternal relevance. For us Holy Scripture is far from being an "icon" or an object of "ritual respect." For us it is the life-giving Word of our living Lord.

Ronald Youngblood