

# Prestige of Bible Higher Than at Any Time Since Early Conflicts With Science

By GEORGE W. CORNELL

NEW YORK (AP)—An old book which has been burned, ridiculed, loved, argued about and treasured today is commanding new and wider attention. The book is the Bible.

"There's an increasing general interest in the Bible, and respect for it, both among the church and the unchurched," said Dr. Francis Carr Stifter, secretary of the American Bible Society.

Many indications are that the book holds more prestige, in religious as well as other circles, than at any time since the modern period of scientific method began.

Public demand for it has set new records. In the last decade, many universities have set up Bible courses. The intellectual fire once trained on the book has dimmed.

Much of the early scientific criticism has been modified in view of later findings which turned out to be closer to what the old book said.

**Source of Insights**  
"It was once regarded in some circles as just an adventure, but it has proved to be a valuable source of insights and historical data," said Dr. Elias Bickerman, Columbia University professor of ancient history.

"It commands more respect from scholars. Many of its accounts of traditions, laws and chronology, have been confirmed by archeological material and records which previously weren't available."

Although friction still exists—especially between scholars and literalists who reject an allegorical view of some biblical accounts—the general shift has been toward more harmony.

This tendency has occurred, in varying degrees and over varying periods, in many scholarly fields—biology, archeology and history. Modern psychic findings have stirred a new scientific look at biblical miracles.

And among churches, the Bible has been getting stronger emphasis.

**Bible - Centered**  
"Seminaries have become more Bible-centered," Dr. Stifter said. "In the liberal theological realm, too, there is more Bible content. The criticism of the Bible that used to be popular in intellectual circles in the religious field has definitely changed."

Beginning on Thanksgiving Day, under sponsorship of the Bible Society, the 11th annual "World-wide Bible reading" period begins. With suggested scripture readings each day, it lasts until Christmas.

More than 15 million copies of the reading lists have been distributed to churches throughout the country, with some 2,000 radio stations carrying announcements of the program.

"Faith for our day" is the theme of the period, which has its climactic day on December 12, "Universal Bible Sunday."

**Sales at New High**  
As for the book's current popularity with the public, publishers report sales at new highs.

"At no time in my memory have so many people shown such a serious hunger for what the scriptures have to say to us," said Dr. Gerald E. Knoff, head of the Christian Education Division of the National Council of Churches.

Besides the public interest, there probably is more scholarly investigation and church work going on in connection with the Bible than in many years.

Roman Catholic scholars are working on a new translation, the first since the Douay English Bible in 1610 which was taken mostly from St. Jerome's 4th century Latin Bible.

Forty Protestant denominations joined in the 15-year project which resulted in the revised standard version of the Bible, which has surpassed all Bible publishing records—selling three million copies in two years.

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