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### You Can Judge a (Good) Book by its Cover

In a year with no new major translations of the Bible, the focus is on the proof that the Bible continues to pulse through American culture—based on the New Testament, *The Gospel According to John*—elsewhere—and Mel Gibson's *The Passion*. The first is attracting attention with its new movie release, New York and Los Angeles, while the second is generating emotion long before its release.

But the gospel according to publishers of the Christian Bible is that well-established trends continue to hold sway. First, youth Bibles are new ways to engage teens and tweens. Second, paraphrases and new editions are most indicative of the real health of the Bible market, and the success of new books has led to some surprising sales.

Repackaging offers even more Bible choices, and booksellers are taking notice. Zondervan's v-p and associate Bible publisher, believes half of the market is handed. "We don't have to do any research on this because the market is very deep," Paul Franklyn, director of Zondervan Bible Press, described advice given to the house as it prepared to launch a new Bible. "Anyone jumping in right now is jumping into so many different versions, personalities and age levels that it's a bit of a rest." And many publishers say what stands out most right now is the new, non-traditional. "The black and burgundy leather Bible became a sales success that looks like," said Laurie Whaley, Thomas Nelson's brand manager. "I think there's been this evolution that it doesn't have to look like a Bible."

### A New Look

Zondervan offers a prime illustration of this trend. When the publisher replaced the leather-covered Bibles, the initial print run of 75,000 was exhausted. Mark Rice, director of communications. "Right out of the gate, we exceeded our projections." Only the covers are new—inside is the familiar.

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up were the *NIV Compact Thinline* and *NIV Compact Reference*, *The Student Bible*, *The Teen Study Bible*, *The Men's Devotional Bible* this month, marking the 30th anniversary of the NIV. The success has been surprising, with many people searching for explanations. "We've heard for years, the medium is the message, and people don't perceive a black leather Bible as archaic, but we are focused on the message, and that begins with the cover." Zondervan also has *The Life in the Bible* (1990)—in both the NIV and KJV, with a new cover and design. *The Life in the Bible* is edited by Philip Yancey and Tim Stafford, now in large print. Zondervan is also releasing a New Testament in its controversial Today's New International Version (TNIV) in June. Rice said the delay has "nothing whatsoever to do with the TNIV translation, and that the full TNIV Bible is still slated for 2005."

There are also new products at Zondervan, including *The Disciples' Journey* (Mar. 2004) for the evangelical market. For Catholics, there is *The Good News Translation* edited by Yancey and Stafford (2003) in the Good News Translation (GNT) for the Catholic market. "We are testing the market by publishing the GNT in the Catholic market," he said. Zondervan is also publishing simple text Bibles (without study aids) and still out as to which is going to work best," he said. Zondervan is also holding focus groups and scholarly meetings to get the feel of the market. "These books are a challenge, and the information we get has been challenging. We have discovered

### Reaching Teens & Tweens

Much of the recent focus at Zondervan and other houses has been on reaching teens and tweens. Publishers report big numbers. New from Zondervan is *True Love: A Bible for Teen Guys*, both in the NIV translation (Nov.). Taking a gender-specific approach, the book deals with issues important to each gender: body image and body image for the boys. Zondervan has partnered with a music company to create a CD, and commissioned a bracelet for girls and key chain for boys. Zondervan also has *The Edge Devotional Bible* for "tweens," a *Bible* and *The NIV Backpack Bible*, both coming out in November. Reaching pop culture-oriented teens is a must.

No one is more firmly planted in that world now than Thomas Nelson. *The Complete New Testament* (2003), the New Century Version Bible, was sold out in eight weeks, and a second printing of 120,000 has been ordered. There is to be another run before Christmas (Nelson's average Bible sales are 120,000 per year). "We're not afraid to take a risk," Whaley said. "We didn't just publish and hope for the best. We hired an independent publicity firm to promote *Revolve*, and it paid off. *Revolve* was on NBC's *Today Show* and in the *New York Times Sunday Magazine* in 2004.

NavPress has had enormous success repackaging its *The Message* Bible. First published in 1993, this retelling has sold over 1 million copies. NavPress, the associate publisher for The Message Division, reports that *The Message* is selling well to younger readers but differing from the original only in its small size. *The Message* has sold over 150,000 copies in its first month. NavPress will offer *The Message* three times a year in different formats. Out this month is *The Message* with the book inside. Due in January is *The Message Remix: Life in the Bible* backpack. Other repackages include the just-published *The Message* *Gospel of John*. Snelling reports that sales for *The Message* show

copies in May and Sam's Club had sold more than 60,000 by late June. "The product fresh is partnering with Christian celebrities and their ministries. *Message* by sponsoring a tour with Christian singers TobaMac helps fulfill NavPress's publishing mission. "We don't want to be a niche publisher." "That's the big push for us this fall, and that will be our market share goal."

### Mixing Old and New

Tyndale House has a mix of new Bible products and older, reprinted titles. Bible marketing, that is really the name of the Bible publishing game, said. "That's the way you sell Bibles. You go into your backlist and see what's selling. The New Living Translation (NLT), has reached back to 1996 for *The NLT Bible, Slimline Premium Edition, NLT*. In new products, Tyndale has introduced new prayers traditions; *The NLT Complete Reference Edition Bible*; features wide margins for scribblers. In youth Bibles, Tyndale has introduced *NLT*, which came in two different sleek metal covers and will be available in *Way* and *The Metal Bible, NLT: Identify*. The first pair have sold well. Tyndale would like to see the 13%-15% market share its NLT Bible has. It is dedicated to its Bibles in both CBA and ABA stores. "We are working to correct a misperception that our market share is a lot lower than it really is."

Oxford University Press's sacred texts are also a bit of the old and new. On the board to update its much loved but long out-of-print *The Pilgrim's Progress*, longer met consumers' needs. "People joke about it, but USA Today says it's information packaged," said Rob Stone, OUP's manager of academic publishing. *The New Pilgrim Bible, KJV* still features a basic approach to the text. The format of the pages is crisper, brighter and features more pull-out boxes. Said Stone, "We haven't changed the theological perspective or the content. Some of the original material so that it would be more readable and targeted to an evangelical Christian market—many of them the original authors. Christian missionaries who made the original version so popular." *Evangelical Parallel New Testament*, which features eight translations side-by-side, from the decade-old New Century Version (NCV) to the Today's New International Version (TNIV) year.

Crossway Books marks the second anniversary of its English Standard Version (ESV) products, including the entire Bible on CD and on cassette tapes. The new thinline edition that came out in September. To help promote the new version, Crossway published a pamphlet titled "Why I Switched to the ESV," which is signed by several of its presidents. Marvin Padgett, v-p of editorial, said interest in the new version is high. The format, which in some months outsells all other versions. Padgett said the popularity highlights a consumer need for a "mature" translation. "We want a Bible that faithfully reproduces the text," he said, even at the expense of readability. "If it [the text] is difficult, we leave it difficult. The Bible is not a commodity in our view, it is the word of God."

In new adult Bibles, Nelson this year offers *The Answer Bible: A New Testament With God*, a New Testament with daily devotional readings, and *The Bible* (2003) in the NCV and edited by Max Lucado (a revision of the *Bible* (Oct.) and *The Holy Bible, NCV*, which comes in camel-colored leather with its bags," Whaley said. In the New King James Version (NKJV),

Christians and some African-American congregations, Nelson's *Bible* and *The MacArthur Study Bible*.

At Abingdon Press, the focus isn't so much on repackaging as on a new product. Out this year is *The New Interpreter's Study Bible* in two volumes, including the Apocrypha; it rests on the scholarly foundation of The New Interpreter's commentary. Abingdon's Paul Franklyn said the house is marketing the Bible to colleges and universities for course adoptions as well as to religious bookstores. The New Interpreter's brand, and to that end its editors are beginning to develop new products Franklyn was not ready to describe. "We have decided to focus on a few products because it does so well." So far, Abingdon is improving its sales. "It's really good wholesale," Franklin said, "about 15,000 units since last year."

Broadman & Holman also is building on existing product. The *HCSB Bible* (HCSB) will be available in April 2004 in *The HCSB Gift Bible*, *The HCSB Drill Bible* and *The HCSB Red Letter Text Bible*. Before then, Broadman & Holman is making the Bible available free online to create consumer buzz. In addition, the house has plans for which are still in development. But, said B&H Bible Editor-in-Chief, "Bible education is a marketing focus." "If the customer walks in and doesn't know about it, you are dead," she noted. B&H is still going after the niche market. "We are not afraid to meet the needs of smaller markets." The house is that you can craft a smaller product and meet the needs of a smaller market. "We are excited about B&H's four *Holman Military New Testament* Bibles, one for each branch of the armed services, with specific prayers and hymns. These four have sold through more than half of their 120,000 in stock."

Jumping into the Bible market for the first time is Destiny Images' *Plain English* (Oct.). Don Nori Jr., marketing and sales director, said the product, "they were not interested," he said. But once shown, "they bought it because it wasn't traditional leather." The house will follow with *Plain English*, a retelling of the New Testament in chronological order and in plain language. *Seamless Bible* fit the quest for a "non-traditional Bible approach that is different and will appeal to a new generation of readers." Bible Communications has *The Book of Mormon: Family Heritage* (Oct.). Robby Nichols, Covenant's v-p of marketing, said the book will be available in Utah and Idaho.

### **And Torah, Too**

It isn't only the Christian market that seems to be repackaging the Bible. The steady sales of its Hebrew-English Tanakh since its publication in 1990 show that the newest version, *The Pocket Edition of the Hebrew-English Bible*, 4-by-2 inches, "is flying." In its first month, sales reached 4,500 copies. "Torah sales that they are beginning to discuss plans for a revised edition. It needs its own translation," she said. "The one we have now is a translation of the Hebrew Bible about it now, by the time we get another finished product, it will be out."

Oxford University Press offers *The Jewish Study Bible* (Jan. 2004). The house's *The Catholic Study Bible* (1990). "Now we are coming into the Jewish market," Stone said. The house has obtained the license to publish the Bible. In marketing, Stone said, although new Christian Bible products are being distributed in seasonal catalogues that reach a primarily evangelical audience.

horse of a different color. It seems we are finding new areas we can reach those constituencies, OUP has set up a Web site and is reaching out to schools and congregations in all the various branches of Judaism. The book has an academic title and marketing it to Christian and Catholic colleges. We don't target a tiny splinter of the religious market by reaching out to niche channels.

At ArtScroll/Mesorah publications, work on *The Schottenstein Edition of the Talmud* is nearing completion, with *Menachos Vol. III* (May 2003), *Chullin Vol. III* and *Beitzah Vol. III* bringing it to 63 of 73 final volumes. The project should be completed by 2005. Nosson Scherman said sales have been very good as the market has expanded. He said that gatherings to celebrate the completion of the commentary, which occurs about every seven-and-a-half years—are getting bigger. "The market of study," Rabbi Scherman said. "Its availability in English has expanded. He is also encouraged that the Talmud is finding a home beyond traditional Jewish book chains and onto Amazon. Rabbi Scherman also reports that the market in the Christian market, where interest in Jewish sacred texts is growing.

Stanford University Press is taking a step outside its usual market. It has translated by Daniel Matt (Nov.), a new translation of the 13th century Zohar. This is the Zohar's first English translation from the original Aramaic. It is a commentary. "I am trying to recover the original flavor of the text," Matt said. "It is written by scores of scribes. "It is a challenge and a daring endeavor," said Geoffrey Burn, director of SUP. With a history in Jewish studies, Stanford plans to market the book to Jewish rabbinical schools and also to the general trade. "We want to reach a wider audience," said Burn. "That, Burn continued, is the challenge. " SUP will send Matt on a lecture tour to New York City to meet with educators and to promote the book in print, radio and other media. Burn said at scholarly conferences. Said Burn, "What is unusual about this book is that it is one of these individual things, but never on this scale and all for a single purpose."

While publishers agree the Bible market is soft, there is hope. "The market for new Bible said Bibles—and especially teen Bibles—continue to sell well. "The market for new booksellers throughout the industry saw a spike," he told *PW*. "The market will return to more typical levels some months later, but they have seen no waning of bright new covers and updated texts. "How long will the longevity of a Bible publisher be in repackaging. I think we do need to create a new product. " Zondervan's Caminiti said Bible publishers should be more actively engaged in the Bible, and it would be presumptuous on our part to say when they are older. So we have to try things that are innovative. "The market for Destiny Image into the Bible market for the first time, is optimistic. "The market has been down, but there are still stars," he said. "How many times will the market be down? Today, it has to be something different. "

### **Fewer Qur'ans, but More for Buddhists?**

While sales of the Qur'an spiked two years ago, reader interest has declined. "The market for the Qur'an is soft," said the director for Kazi Publications, a publisher and a Qur'an distributor. "A lot of Qur'ans were ordered, but then three months later, we got a lot of returns. Still, she said, demand is steady at colleges and universities. The market for the distributor, is a little different. President Aunali Khalfan has a

shows and gives away his products, perhaps as many as 3,000 said. But the trick is getting them to re-order before their shelves at the bookstores, and that is a setback, " he said. Khalfan, too, says the phenomenon he sees repeated with every newspaper headline and the demand is getting greater, " he said. "People want to look for their answers. " Out earlier this year from Tahrike Tarsile is *Young People* (June) and *The Holy Qur'an: Arabic with English*

Meanwhile, some see the market for Buddhist sacred texts picking up. Books, credits this to the number of practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism. "There are now about 500 Tibetan Buddhist centers in North America, and many who attend those centers to get their feet wet and take the next step into the texts. In this line, Snow Lion has *The Treasure of Knowledge Library: Knowledge Book Five: Buddhist Ethics* (June 2003) which will be followed by *Complete Explanation: Clarifying the Meaning of Chod* (May 2004), a text revered as a Buddha. Next year will see *The Great Treatise on the Way of the Bodhisattva, Vol. 2*, to complete the three-volume work that deals with sacred texts is toward deeper philosophical works. "In Buddhism, the teaching of the Buddha, " he said. "So there is a lot of study and research going on with *The Great Treatise, Vol. 1*, reaching 5,000 copies. As a result, Still, Cox said, there is a lot of bookseller education to be done with the books and large numbers of Dalai Lama books by major publishers on the Buddhist backlist. "

In other Eastern religions, North Point Press, an imprint of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, is publishing Eastern religious texts. But Becky Saletan, North Point Press, says the very different from the last time North Point published in this explosion of popular books in Buddhism, and we did not want to do more research on *The Ramayana*, and it showed that there is a steady demand. " That's where North Point will focus its promotion, and it will be followed by *The Ramayana* (May 2004) aimed at course assignments. In addition, North Point Press is a member of the Asian Journalists Association and will place advertisements in the press is pleased with the results. "The book has done nicely with

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