



Bible Student's Notebook™

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Volume XIX
Issue 473

Another Look at "Bible Study"

The Misuse of II Timothy 2:15 and the Abuse of Christ's Body

Part 2 of 4

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth (KJV).

THE UNDERLYING IGNORANCE RELATED TO "STUDY"

Ignorance of the History of Literacy

Let's first consider literacy¹ in the first century. We'll first hear from a familiar voice. A.E. Knoch speaks to the point of first century literacy when he wrote:

As few could write, a special class were professional scribes, and, being able to read, they were considered the learned class.²

Knoch writes this in the *Concordant Keyword Concordance* regarding "scribes." He informs us that men were called "scribes" because, in a society when few could read or write, they were a special class who could.

Some historians place the literacy rate of the 1st century at less than 10%,³ while Jewish resources suggest that it was even less than 3%.⁴



Recent History of Literacy

As for the more recent history of literacy, we will focus on English speaking people.

Throughout most of history the majority have been illiterate. In feudal society, for example, the ability to read and write was of value only to the clergy and aristocracy. The first known reference to "literate laymen" did not appear until the end of the 14th century. Illiteracy was not seen as a problem until after the invention of printing in the 15th century.⁵

During the 14th century, for example, 80% of English speaking adults could not spell their own names.⁶ It has not been many generations past that some of our grandfathers placed an X for their signature.

This is extremely humbling, is it not?

The Past 5 Centuries of English Literacy Rates

Look at the following chart showing the literacy rate of the past few centuries among English speaking peoples.

Notice that, in the middle of the 20th Century, English literacy was almost 95% among English speaking people. At the same time, the literacy rate worldwide was only 56%. So we can see that the issue of literacy was even worse in some groups of people.

(see *Study*, page 4187)

1. The ability to read and write.

2. *Concordant Keyword Concordance*, scribe, page 259.

3. "Literacy in the Roman empire, by very rough estimate, did not exceed 10% on average." - Yale Professor Wayne A. Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians*, 1986.

4. "Rabbinic sources support evidence that the literacy rate was less than 3%" - M. Bar-Ilan, *Illiteracy in the Land of Israel in the First Centuries C.E.*, S. Fishbane, S. Schoenfeld and A. Goldschlaeger (eds.), *Essays in the Social Scientific Study of Judaism and Jewish Society*, II, New York: Ktav, 1992, pp. 46-61.

5. *The Columbia Encyclopedia*.

6. *Literacy Rates*, by Tatiana Schlossberg.

Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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This free weekly electronic publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6);
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

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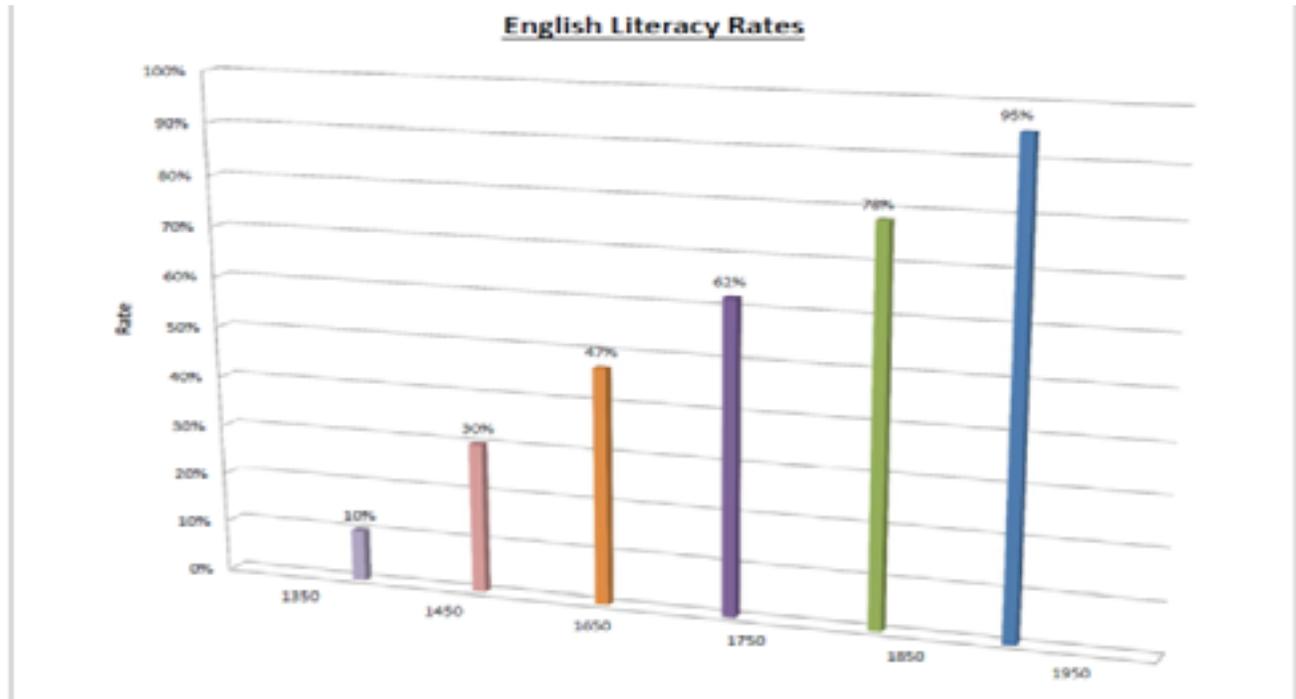
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STUDY (continued from front page)



Females and Ethnic Groups

Then think about if we had lived in periods of history where the education of women was diminished as a whole?

Or, what of those periods in American history where it was even illegal to teach slaves to read and write?

I am attempting to get us to imagine what it has been like for most of the centuries since Paul and the other writers penned the Greek Scriptures. I am also trying to get us to think of how *extremely* advantaged we are.

Scripture Translations in Our Native Tongue

Or, suppose we were among the few in history who were literate, but we lived in periods and locations where the Scriptures were not even in our *own* language. Let's say that we were English before the first complete English translation was available in 1384.⁷ All we might have access to would have been Greek, Hebrew and Latin. We would have been practically illiterate to the Scriptures, since they would not have been readable to us.

Eyesight's Effect on Literacy

I am trying to get us to think of all of the obstacles to literacy that we would have faced that are not even ini-

7. John Wycliffe is credited for producing the first whole Bible translation into English in 1384. Prior to that there were many portions done.

tially apparent in the statistics. Take fading eyesight for example. Even the literate can't read once their sight has diminished. I wear glasses and can't read my Bible without them. Eyeglasses were invented just in the 13th century, and it took a couple of additional centuries for them to become common.

Even if I were literate in the 12th century, at my current age and eye condition it would not make any practical difference. Or, even if I had lived in subsequent centuries I might not have had *access* to glasses or have been able to *afford* them.

Illiteracy and the Importance of Scripture

It is important to recognize that illiteracy doesn't suggest that someone is unintelligent; neither does it mean that Scriptures were unimportant. Even with a low literacy rate people could listen to Scripture being read, such as in the synagogue.

For Moses, from ancient generations, city by city, has those who are heralding him, being read on every sabbath in the synagogues (Acts 15:21).

Scriptures Created a Need for Literacy

Scriptures have often been the actual motivation for literacy. The importance and value of Scripture has had related effects as well, such as the inspiration for the printing press.

Ignorance of the History of Access to the Scriptures

Let's take a quick look at some key points related to the actual access of Scripture through history.

Handwritten Copies

Scriptures had to be handwritten until the invention of the printing press in 1440.

The History of Modern Paper:

The earliest certain evidence of the ancestor of modern paper was with the establishment of the first water-powered paper mill in the 13th century.⁸

The History of the Modern Pencil:

The "graphite writing implement" was developed in the 16th century⁹

The History of the Modern Pen:

It was Bartholomew Folsch who first received an English patent in 1809 for a pen with an ink reservoir.¹⁰

How long would it take to write a copy of the entire Bible?

Even with access to hand written copies of Scripture, how long would it take to produce one?

In 2013, Phillip Patterson of New York finished writing out every word in the Bible. Retired, he worked for as many as 14 hours a day on the project, though he averaged around six to eight hours a day.¹¹

How many sheets of paper did it take? 2,400.

Patterson had the marked advantage of using modern pens. One source tells us that an ancient scribe might use as many as 80 quills a day.¹²

How easy do you think it was for ancients to obtain paper, ink and quills? If they could have, how much would they have cost?

How many times longer do you think it would take to write the Scriptures by using a quill rather than a modern pen? Laboriously dipping one's quill in the ink well?

How long did it take Peterson with all of his modern conveniences? 4 years.

This is extremely humbling, is it not?

Chapter and Verse Divisions

8. Burns, Robert I. (1996), "Paper comes to the West, 800-1400", in Lindgren, Uta, *Europäische Technik im Mittelalter. 800 bis 1400. Tradition und Innovation* (4th ed.), Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, pp. 417f.
9. Douglas Harper (June 27, 2012) "Pencil," *Online Etymology Dictionary*.
10. Bosworth, C.E. (Autumn 1981), "A Mediaeval Islamic Prototype of the Fountain Pen?" *Journal of Semitic Studies* XXVI (i),

11. *How long do you think it will take to write the Bible by hand?* Associated Press, Philmont (New York), May 6, 2013.
12. www.biblica.com



The Deity of God

by – John Henry Essex (1907-1991)
Nottingham, England

Creation cannot help itself that all of its achievements are futile because of the slavery of corruption, but we take immense comfort from the fact that, in spite of all of its present "groaning and travailing," it was subjected to vanity in expectation of the eventual realization of that glorious freedom which is now already being enjoyed by the children of God.

It is in the prison epistle of Paul to the Ephesians that we find the most absolute expression of the Deity of God in relation to the points we have been considering. Here we find the phrase which puts all other Scriptures into their perspective:

According to the purpose of the One Who is operating all in accord with the counsel of His will (1:11).

God is the captain of the ship of the universe; all of His creatures are its passengers. He is guiding the vessel across the ocean of time from the port that is called "All in God" to the haven that is termed "God in all."

Even the ease of referencing and locating portions of Scripture is relatively recent. Although these are two-edged swords, creating unnatural breaks that can affect one's understanding of context, I personally could not imagine the study of Scriptures without them. Their value in referencing and locating text are immense.

Chapter divisions date back to 1227.¹³ Hebrew verse divisions were done in 1448,¹⁴ and the Greek in 1555.¹⁵ In 1560 the *Geneva Bible* was the first English New Testament to have both chapter and verse divisions.

Access to Tools

We set the stage for this point earlier.

Let's just consider the *most basic* of our study tools: a concordance.

The first exhaustive English/Hebrew/Greek concordance was published in 1890. It was a culmination of 35 years' work by James Strong¹⁶ and more than 100 of his colleagues.

PAUL SAYS FAITH COMES BY HEARING THE TIDINGS OF A HERALD

So then faith comes by hearing (Romans 10:17).

Consequently, faith is out of tidings, yet the tidings through a declaration of Christ (CV).

This is what Paul twice calls "the hearing of faith" (Galatians 3:2, 5). Paul elaborated on this in Romans 10:

How then shall they call on Him in Whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a herald? And how shall they herald, except they be sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of them that herald the good news of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

But they have not all obeyed the good news. For Isaiah said, "Lord, who has believed our report?" So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes

13. By Stephen Langton, professor at the *University of Paris* and later Archbishop of Canterbury.

14. By Nathan, a Jewish rabbi.

15. By Robert Stephanus, a French printer.

16. Professor of exegetical theology at *Drew Theological Seminary*.

certainly, "Their voice went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world" (:14-18).

Paul's quotation here (:18) is Psalm 19:4. Here is the context (:1-4):

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night shows knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their voice is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.

Creation itself has been the most ancient revelation and the most heard herald.¹⁷

Callings Related to the Ministry of the Scriptures

There are many different and diverse parts of Christ's Body. Not all of us have the same calling.

- Some teach.
- Some hear.
- Some verify.

The Order of Romans 10

The divine order as seen in Romans 10 is laid forth as follows:

- ✓ Sent
- ✓ Spoken
- ✓ Heard
- ✓ Believed

17. Not to mention the inner awareness of the "testimony of our conscience" (II Corinthians 1:12) and "premonition" (Romans 8:19, *Concordant Version*). "Premonition" is defined as "intuitive opinion" by the *Concordant Keyword Concordance*.

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The Role of the Bible Teacher

God calls and impassions some to (re)search truth and make it public. They are called to check and recheck for confirmation. They seek to unlock truth from tradition, revelation from deception.

The Ethiopian Eunuch

One clearly can notice the role of the herald in Acts 8. The Ethiopian eunuch is reading from the book of Isaiah. Phillip inquired if he understood what he read. His reply was,

How can I except someone guide me?

The Progression of Scripture Teaching

All believers tap into the journey of others: into what they know; what they have studied, read, heard, thought.

Each generation stands on the shoulders of the previous. This is no different for those teaching the Scriptures.

As Otis Q. Sellers has so well written,

I hope anyone following after me will go further than I have gone in the search for truth, will see more of the Word of God than I have seen, and will explore where I never dreamt treasures were to be found.

What may have taken decades to learn by one student of Scripture (even while standing on the shoulders of others) can be passed on to another in the course of a 30 minute talk or a short article.

What would I know today without the likes of A.E. Knoch, Vladimir Gelesnoff, E.W. Bullinger, A.P. Adams, Andrew Jukes and the innumerable host of those who came before them? Father used them to herald, and graciously granted us the “*hearing of faith.*” This is extremely humbling, is it not?

Special Heralds Are Called

We should all be thankful for such men who bring us the Word of God. They are treasures to us. Their feet are beautiful (Romans 10:5).

Their function is not accidental. As Paul and Timothy, they were (II Timothy 2:4):

- ✓ *enlisted (CV);*
- ✓ *chosen (KJV);*
- ✓ *summoned ... to serve (Rotherham).*

Their calling is to be heralds and teachers; to stand, *opportunistly, inopportunistly – exposing, rebuking and entreating, with all patience* (1:11; 4:2).

These heralds find other faithful men entrusting to them that which in turn is to be taught to others – generation upon generation.

What things you hear from me through many witnesses, these commit to faithful men, who shall be competent to teach others also (2:2).

The Basic Ministries of Scripture

Heralds – those who publicly read and proclaim the Scriptures.

κήρυξις (*kēruξ*)

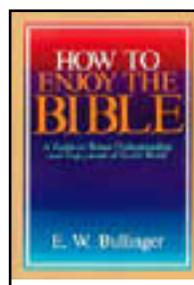
- a messenger (Thayer)
- PROCLAIMER (Knoch)
- a herald (Bullinger)

I was appointed a herald (I Timothy 2:7).

I was appointed a herald (II Timothy 1:11).

Herald the Word (II Timothy 4:2).

(To be continued.)



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by – E.W. Bullinger (1837-1913)

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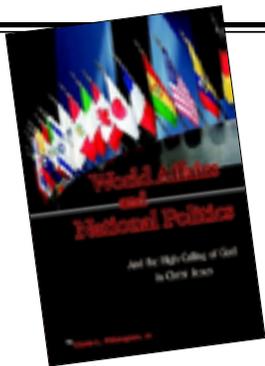


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And the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

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