

# New adventures in niche Bible publishing: The Bible gets a makeover

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The Bible is getting a makeover as publishers try to catch every type of customer's attention and draw in new readers who would be unlikely to pick up the holy tome in its traditional form.

Using different packaging, publishers of *The Green Bible*, *Bible Illuminated*, *The Peoples' Bible* and Zondervan's *Bible Across America* will try to reach specific audiences of both new and experienced Bible readers.

"The Bible is America's favorite book of all time," said Maureen Girkins, president and CEO of Zondervan. The publishers of these Bibles, she said, are just trying to make scripture more relevant to today's audience.

The Green Bible. HarperOne, 1,440 pp., \$29.95.

As environmental concerns continue to grow, the publishers of the new *Green Bible* say that God is the ultimate environmentalist.

Like the editions that feature the words of Jesus in red text, the "green" scriptures highlight more than 1,000 verses about the earth with soy-based green ink. Essays by religious leaders and other resources on eco-justice can be found inside the volume's 100 percent cotton/linen cover.

The environmental movement is "a big part of the Christian agenda today, especially among the youth," said Michael Maudlin, *The Green Bible's* editor. "And those who thought the Bible had nothing to say about it will find there is quite a bit there."

Matthew Sleeth, a doctor who's been pushing fellow evangelicals to go green in recent years, writes in his introduction to *The Green Bible* that the biggest problem

in the world is that the planet is dying.

*The Green Bible* contains only 10 percent recycled paper—the highest percentage possible for the Bible not to be too thick. Curiously, Psalm 23 and its references to still waters and verdant pastures isn't printed in green. Sleeth said future revisions will make green some important verses that might have been overlooked.

Bible Illuminated, New Testament. Illuminated World, 264 pp., \$35.00.

With its high-gloss cover and celebrity photos, *Bible Illuminated* looks more like a gossip rag you'd find in a dentist's office than a Bible. There are no chapter or verse numbers, but important quotes are highlighted or set in boldface type for emphasis. Originally published for a Swedish audience, the *Bible Illuminated, New Testament*, set to be released in the U.S. this fall, has been revamped for American readers.

It features intense pictures of violence and death around the world, along with photos of people who are working to find solutions for many of today's problems. U2 leader Bono, actress Angelina Jolie and former vice president Al Gore are all figures that Americans can easily recognize as activists, and they all get their own page in the *Bible Illuminated*.

"It's a conversation piece," said Autumn Black, a spokesperson for the American Bible Society. "It will open doors." It targets young, urban professionals who want to know the Bible as a piece of culture. The Bible Society licensed its colloquial Good News Translation for the project.

"Getting the youth of the Western world to engage the Bible and experience its life-changing message is our mission," Black said, adding that this version's photo images will inevitably be controversial among some strands of evangelicalism.

The Peoples' Bible. Fortress, 1,786 pp., \$35.00.

This study Bible, due to come out in November, is said by the publisher to highlight "the role of cultures in shaping the Bible" and its interpretation from "historical-critical, liberationist, postmodern and postcolonial" perspectives.

*The Peoples' Bible* features boxes that "reveal insights from African-American, Latino and Native American" viewpoints. A 16-page color gallery of culturally diverse art is included. The work's five editors used the New Revised Standard Version, and the volume contains the Apocrypha.

In a blurb for the Bible, feminist biblical scholar Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza of Harvard Divinity School called it “a rich resource for students as well as faculty.”

Bible Across America (Zondervan) is a work in progress.

The editors of this handwritten Bible are enlisting more than 31,000 Americans to write in one verse at a time on thin-stock Bible paper. The final product will be published and sold nationwide. The Smithsonian Institution will receive the original copy.

“The *Bible Across America* is a symbol of Zondervan’s commitment to make the word of God more accessible and more relevant to more people,” Zondervan head Girkins said.

By the time its tour ends in San Diego on February 12, the book-in-the-making will have visited 90 cities, stopping at universities, churches and other venues to seek additions from people “of all ages and walks of life.” Having people write the Bible in their own hand will help America “rediscover the Bible in a fresh, new way,” Girkins said.

The *Bible Across America*, its price yet to be announced, will be released in 2009. - *Religion News Service*