

## Book explores politics and beliefs that shaped Bible

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Many devout Christians know their Bible chapter and verse, but know little about how that Good News was cobbled together in the first place.

The Bible didn't just pop out of Heaven fully formed, like a loaf of bread. Men, inspired by God, picked and chose various texts to create it.

Donald L. O'Dell of St. Augustine has just issued "How the Bible became the Bible" from Infinity Publishing (ISBN: 0-7414-2993-4). His book explains the story of the Bible in a historic as well as a spiritual context.

It is well worth the read.

The years following Jesus' execution are a particularly fuzzy time in history.

O'Dell explains the formation of various Jesus cults that formed and how they merged their new doctrine with more traditional Jewish ethics. But soon these groups found themselves at odds with the church, which established sets of rules that strictly codified behavior.

He explains the writers of the first books of the Bible, the Israelites and the patriarchs.

At the end of the book is a timeline and an appendix with the collected words of Jesus.

O'Dell doesn't take a dogmatic view about anything.

He often says, "Depending on you point of view..." before launching into an analysis.

His voice is that of a gentle, friendly teacher, exploring all aspects of the Bible, providing interesting asides and giving a clear view of the political forces operating at the time.

It also offers a peek into O'Dell's psyche as well. He's a former Presbyterian minister and holds a master's graduate degree from the Princeton Theological Seminary and an undergraduate degree in history.

Most books on the Bible focus on theology. But O'Dell focuses on its origin – the writers, the events, what to include and what to reject.

No one will be offended by this book except perhaps those who strictly believe that every word of the Bible is the exact, unerring word of God. Even those readers will learn something.

Few books like this exist for the general reader. Even non-Christians can enjoy it, because – other than its religious importance – the Bible is an important cultural and historical touch-stone. No one is truly educated without knowing the Bible.

"How the Bible..." has been released for only a short time and already has been chosen by Unity Institute for all its Bible courses. Also, Religious Science International is considering the book for inclusion into its courses.

E.J. Niles of the Unity Institute said the book provides "a sane, high-level discussion of the development, history and understanding of the Bible for us today, in what is becoming a growing climate of extremism, misinformation and divisiveness."

For more information see the author's website <http://www.DonODell.com>

