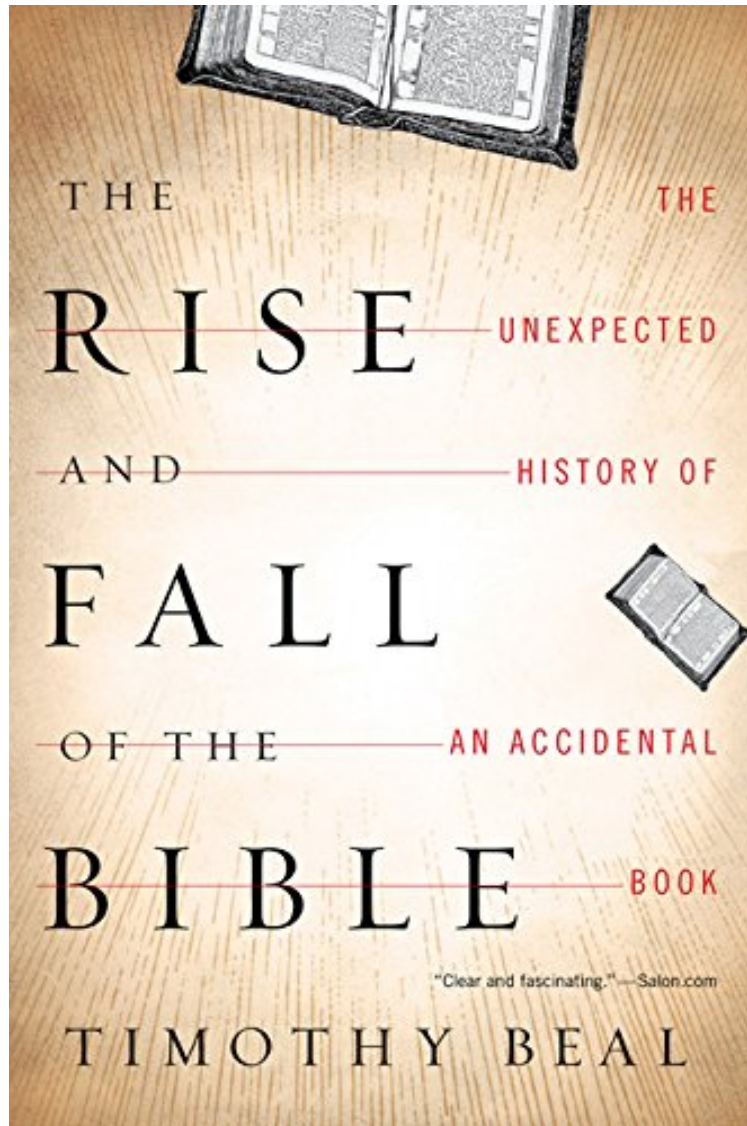


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# The Rise and Fall of the Bible: The Unexpected History of an Accidental Book

*Timothy Beal*

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**Timothy Beal : The Rise and Fall of the Bible: The Unexpected History of an Accidental Book** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Rise and Fall of the Bible: The Unexpected History of an Accidental Book:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Excellent--ask the questions, tell the storyBy Sun Drop BooksGreat read for Christian and non-Christian alike. Take Beal's questions to your own motives for reading (and purchasing) the

Bible, and share these questions with other Bible readers (or even those who think they know the Bible but rarely ever read it). Beal gets it right with challenging his readers to examine how they approach the Bible, particularly in keeping several things in mind, e.g., understanding that the biblical books are difficult to read, the rewards for reading are endless, the texts demand careful readers to ask questions, formulate answers and then ask more questions, aim at reading the text itself without getting lost in the footnotes and commentary (or using the footnotes and commentary as a substitute for the text). 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. This book is a top job illuminating the status of ...By John Hudson This book is a top job illuminating the status of how we have experienced development and collapse of Bible study in the church. Evidently there was a big campaign in the early 1800s to proliferate the Bible leading at present to such editions as "The Golfer's Bible", "The Bartender's Bible", "The Hot Rodder's Bible", and many many more with inserted boxes giving information on all sorts of ways to apply the Bible. In the process the Bible has become an icon and read mechanically according to formulas provided if at all. The author completes the book with an constructive way of dealing with the writings in the library called the Bible. A cutting edge book. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Beal demonstrates a long standing, deep, and personal ...By Josh Davis Beal demonstrates a long standing, deep, and personal reverence for scripture alongside a cleverly communicated awareness of the contemporary experience. I have read this book with groups that were distinctly Post-Christian and Traditionally Evangelical. Everyone I have read this with is captivated by the History of the Bible's publication and the implications for how they engage. Everyone I have read this with has set it down and picked up their Bible with renewed interest.

Personal and accessible . . . The Rise and Fall of the Bible is Beal's attempt to shatter this popular understanding of the Bible as a combination of divine instruction manual and self-help book. Adam Kirsch, Tablet In this revelatory exploration, a noted religion scholar and former evangelical Christian takes us back to early Christianity to ask how a box of handwritten scrolls became the Bible, and forward to see how the multibillion-dollar business that has brought us Biblezines and manga Bibles is selling down the Bibles sacred capital. Among his surprising insights: \*Christianity thrived for centuries without any Bible. Early congregations used collections of scrolls; there was no official canon of scriptures and no book existed that was big enough to hold them. \*The idea of the Bible as the literal Word of God is only about a century old. \*There is no original Bible behind the thousands of Bibles on the market today. The further back we go in the Bibles history, the more versions we find. In The Rise and Fall of the Bible Beal offers a chance to rediscover a Bible, and a faith, that is truer to its own history not a book of answers but a library of questions. Part autobiography, part social scientific research, part shrewd discernment, and part theological interpretation Tim Beal has written a zinger of a book about the cultural history of the Bible. This welcome and important book will cause a pause before we make glib claims for the Word of the Lord. Walter Brueggemann Beal . . . makes a compelling case against the idea of a fully consistent and unerring book, positing instead a very human volume with all the twists and foibles of the human experience, truly reflecting that human experience. He presents a convincing case for a radical rereading of the text, an honest appreciation of this sacred book. An engrossing and excellent work, highly recommended. Publishers Weekly, starred review

.com A Q A With Author Timothy Beal Q: Why this book? Why now? A: Because I believe that we are in the middle of a media revolution in the history of the Bible that will be as transformative of Christianity as was the invention of the printing press in the fifteenth century. This revolution is the result of a convergence of two things: the decline of print culture and the explosion of what I call "evangelical capitalism," a kind of supply-side religion in which its getting hard to tell the difference between spreading the Word and moving product, saving souls and selling the sacred. Already underway, this revolution will profoundly alter the way we think about and read the Bible. Its the end of the Word as we know it. While some will see this as disastrous, I suggest we embrace it as an opportunity an ending that can open up the possibility of an exciting new beginning. The end of the Word as we know it is not the end of the story. Q: Why is this an "unexpected history of an accidental book"? A: Nowadays its hard to imagine the Bible as anything but a book. Indeed, many consider it "The Book of books." But it wasnt always that way. Theres a lot to this story that I hope youll want to read for yourself. For now, suffice it to say that Christianity thrived for centuries without anything like the Bible. The rise of the Bible was an accident of the invention of the media technology of the book. And its fate as such is tied to that of book culture, which appears to be approaching its twilight years. The Bibles bookishness is accidental, an effect of media history; it wasnt always a book, let alone The Book, and it wont always be. In fact, if theres one constant in the history of the Bible, its change. Thats the story I try to tell. For most of us, that story is unexpected. Q: You write that "there is no such thing as the Bible, and there never has been." Thats a little provocative. What do you mean? A: I mean exactly that. There is no "the Bible," no book that is the one and only Bible. There are lots and lots and lots of Bibles. They come in many different material forms books, scrolls, magazines, mangas, digital media, and so on. And they come with a great variety of different content different canons, translations, notes, commentaries, pictures, and so on. Dont believe me? Just type "Bible" in the search box at the top of this page and get ready to be overwhelmed. The Bible business sells more than 6,000 different products for over \$800 million a

year all sold as "the Bible." Its totally nuts. "Whoa," some will say, "stop the madness! Save the Bible! We've got to get back to the original, pure, unadulterated Bible." In the book, I say, "Okay, let's try that." What we discover when we do that is even more surprising: not only is there no such thing as the Bible now; there never has been. There is no unadulterated original, no Adam from which all Bibles have descended. The further we go back in history, the more variety we discover. "That old-time religion" is an illusion. Q: How is this book different from all the other books out there on the Bible? A: To be sure, there are other books about the history of the Bible, full of good information, but they don't tend to ask what it all means. Their interests are mostly academic, thick on description but thin on interpretation. Not so *The Rise and Fall of the Bible*. Informed by two decades of scholarly research and teaching, I look back in order to look forward, to find a fresh way of understanding the Bible and its place in culture. How should its history change the way we think about and read it? What's happening to the Bible today, and what is its future in the Internet age? These are the kinds of questions this book explores. Q: Why do you care? Are you a "Bible believer"? A: The "story of the Book" that I tell in it is also, in a profound way, my story of the Book, my life in Bibles, from my own complicated relationship with my conservative evangelical heritage to my career as a professor of religion at a secular university. Indeed, my proclamation of the end of the Word as we know it is as personal as it is scholarly. I ultimately see this crisis in the life of the Bible as an opportunity to rediscover it in a way that's truer to its history and its contents not as a rock but a river, not as a book of answers but a library of questions. Having grown up a "Bible-believing" evangelical, I share my own story of rediscovery as an illustration of the journey I hope to inspire in others. The end of the Word is ultimately a hopeful word. From Publishers Weekly Starred . The role of the Bible in Western culture is undisputed. It has defined the Judeo-Christian ethic in so many ways it's hard to imagine the Western world without this inspired book. However, as Beal so eloquently explains, the specific role played by Holy Scripture has morphed over the years. In particular, it has taken on the role of "cultural icon" inerrant guide, big brother, worthy oracle. This is a new phenomenon: witness the number of specialty Bibles available in Christian bookstores. Raised in a strict, religiously literalist home, Beal (*Roadside Religion*), a professor of religion at Case Western Reserve University, has evolved into a top-notch scholar who makes a compelling case against the idea of a fully consistent and unerring book, positing instead a very human volume with all the twists and foibles of the human experience, truly reflecting that human experience. He presents a convincing case for a radical rereading of the text, an honest appreciation of this sacred book. An engrossing and excellent work, highly recommended. (Feb.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved. From Booklist \*Starred \* In his well-received *Biblical Literacy* (2009), Beal explored ways to think about Bible stories and how they have become ingrained in our culture. Here he discusses the Bible as a book and as a cultural icon. Writing in a remarkably accessible style (so accessible that it's easy to miss the profundity of the ideas behind the words), he begins with the fact that it wasn't until the nineteenth century and the rise of the Protestant evangelical movement that the Bible became an inherent guide to living and salvation. He goes on to demonstrate how much the Bible, what with so many contemporary versions and by-products, has morphed, devaluing the basic product. But perhaps Beal's main point is to show how the New Testament (and the Old, for that matter) comes from myriad sources, or, as he calls it, a cacophony of voices and perspectives, often in conflict with one another. Yet Beal is more than just a debunker; in fact, once evangelical, he still considers himself a Christian. He exhorts readers to see the Bible not as a book of finite answers but as a crucible of questions that provoke, inspire, and even anger those who pick it up. The same might be said about his own book. --Ilene Cooper