

## Periodicals

affiliate. Then, in 1937, came *The Guiding Light*, “a smash right from the gate.” Soon Phillips was earning \$250,000 a year. Her career was itself the stuff of melodrama, filled with double-dealing, lawsuits, and rumors of financing from a mysterious mobster lover. In 1941, her cocreator on *The Guiding Light* brought a long and bitter suit against her, which revealed Phillips’s harsh words about her sponsors and competitors, as well as a willingness to lie on the stand. She lost \$250,000.

In 1949, she intrepidly leaped into television, premiering the first major network soap, *These Are My Children*. She pioneered the TV close-up, and in 1964 had hits on all three television networks. She made many enemies in the industry and unwisely insist-

ed on negotiating her own contracts. In her seventies, she refused to join the Writers Guild union, forcing the producers of *As the World Turns*—considered the most successful soap of all time—to fire her. Six months later, she was dead.

Whether Selinger, Hummert, or Phillips deserves the credit for creation of the daytime soap opera, there’s no denying the leading role Phillips played in its wild success. Like one of her own characters, she overcame long odds. The soaps themselves now face the same odds, as cable television and reality shows threaten to kill the entire genre. Phillips’s name no longer appears in the credits of the shows she created, but her marriage of commerce and drama represents a lasting union.

## RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

### *They Don’t Know from Adam*

“Bible Illiteracy in America” by David Gelernter, in *The Weekly Standard* (May 23, 2005), 1150 17th St., N.W., Ste. 505, Washington, D.C. 20036.

“Unless we read the Bible, American history is a closed book,” writes Gelernter, a Yale University professor of computer science who is currently a senior fellow in Jewish Thought at

the Shalem Center in Jerusalem. Yet a recent Gallup survey sponsored by the nonprofit Bible Literacy Project indicates that American high school students are ignorant of significant events in the Bible such as the Sermon on the Mount, and of concepts such as Covenant and the Chosen People. Eight percent of them thought Moses was one of the Twelve Apostles, and more than a quarter could not identify David as a king of the Jews.

The rhetoric of the Bible runs as an unbroken thread through American history. “Wee are entered into Covenant with him for this worke,” said John Winthrop, the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. “Wee shall finde that the God of Israell is among us.” Three and a half centuries later, a sermon of Winthrop’s would be drawn upon, famously, in President Ronald Reagan’s evocation of a “shining city on a hill.” Historian William Wolt, contemplating Abraham Lincoln’s second inaugural address—“With malice toward none; with charity for all: with firmness in the right, as God gives us to



One sign that teenagers could use a Bible refresher: Eight percent think Moses was one of the 12 Apostles.

see the right”—says that it “reads like a supplement to the Bible.”

Such examples suggest something much deeper than mere rhetoric, Gelernter says. These “settlers and colonists, the Founding Fathers, and all the generations that intervened before America emerged as a world power in the 20th century” viewed the Bible, particularly the example of the Israelites as the Chosen People, as *their* story. As John Adams put it, “I always consider the settlement of America with reverence and wonder, as the opening of a grand scene and design in Providence.”

According to historian Fania Oz-Salzberger, the British political thinkers who influenced early America, such as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, saw in the example of Israel “a nearly perfect republic, from the time of the Exodus until at least the coronation of Saul. . . an exemplary state of law and a society dedicated to social justice and republican liberty.”

Understanding these influences on American thought and society are crucial, says Gelernter. Woodrow Wilson “spoke in biblical terms when he took America into the First World War,” and other presidents have used biblical imagery to underscore their ac-

tions. In Gelernter’s view, however, most contemporary culture critics “are barely aware of these things, don’t see the pattern behind them, can’t tell us what the pattern means, and (for the most part) don’t care.”

It may not be easy to correct today’s biblical ignorance. Even well-meaning “Bible-as-literature” electives, crafted to circumvent the minefield separating church and state, may not be the answer. Severing the Bible from its religious roots robs the work of the power that made it such a seminal text for earlier Americans. And the churches and synagogues that might be expected to teach the Bible to new generations are not doing enough, Gelernter says.

His own guess is that America will eventually experience another Great Awakening that will send people back to the Bible. It will begin with the country’s “spiritually bone dry” college students. Mostly, Gelernter says, “no one ever speaks to them about truth and beauty, or nobility or honor or greatness.” But “let the right person speak to them, and they will turn back to the Bible with an excitement and exhilaration that will shake the country.”

## *Locke to the Rescue*

“Natural Rights and Imperial Constitutionalism: The American Revolution and the Development of the American Amalgam” by Michael Zuckert, in *Social Philosophy and Policy* (Winter 2005), Social Philosophy and Policy Center, Bowling Green State Univ., Bowling Green, Ohio 43403.

Once celebrated for his central role in shaping American political culture, John Locke (1632–1704) has been pushed into the scholarly shadows in recent decades, as many historians have stressed the significance of classical republicanism and communitarianism in the American founding. The problem with that, argues Zuckert, a political scientist at the University of Notre Dame, is that it’s impossible to understand the founding without the Lockean philosophy of individual natural rights.

The conflict leading up to the American Revolution was a battle over the true character of the largely unwritten British constitution. The British insisted that Parliament had the right to legislate for the colonists “in all cases whatsoever,” as the Declaratory Act of 1766 stated. The rebellious Americans

maintained that Parliament did not have that right at all—that the colonists were represented, not in Parliament, but in their own legislative assemblies.

The Americans claimed their rights as British subjects. But their case had definite weaknesses, as they knew. Like the North American colonies, Ireland and two English Channel islands were not represented in Parliament, yet they were clearly subject to parliamentary authority. Why not the American colonies? The colonists had let Parliament legislate for them in the past. Why not now?

The British argued that the constitution provided for representation not of individuals but of “estates.” The Americans were part of the “Commons,” and they were represented in the House of Commons, even if they didn’t elect any of its members, insisted Thomas Whately,