

HISTORY & PEOPLE

FIRST DRAFT

'The Jefferson Bible' lives on at Denver exhibit

Thomas Jefferson had his own unique views about religion, steeped in Enlightenment logic and the recent history of religious civil



BOB SILBERNAGEL

wars in England. To him, any belief in a deity was intensely personal,

not something that should be prescribed by clergymen or government entities.

So, when the third president of the United States and the primary author of the Declaration of Independence later in life set out to edit the first four books of the New Testament to more closely conform to his own beliefs about Jesus, he kept the effort relatively quiet, discussing it with only a few close friends.

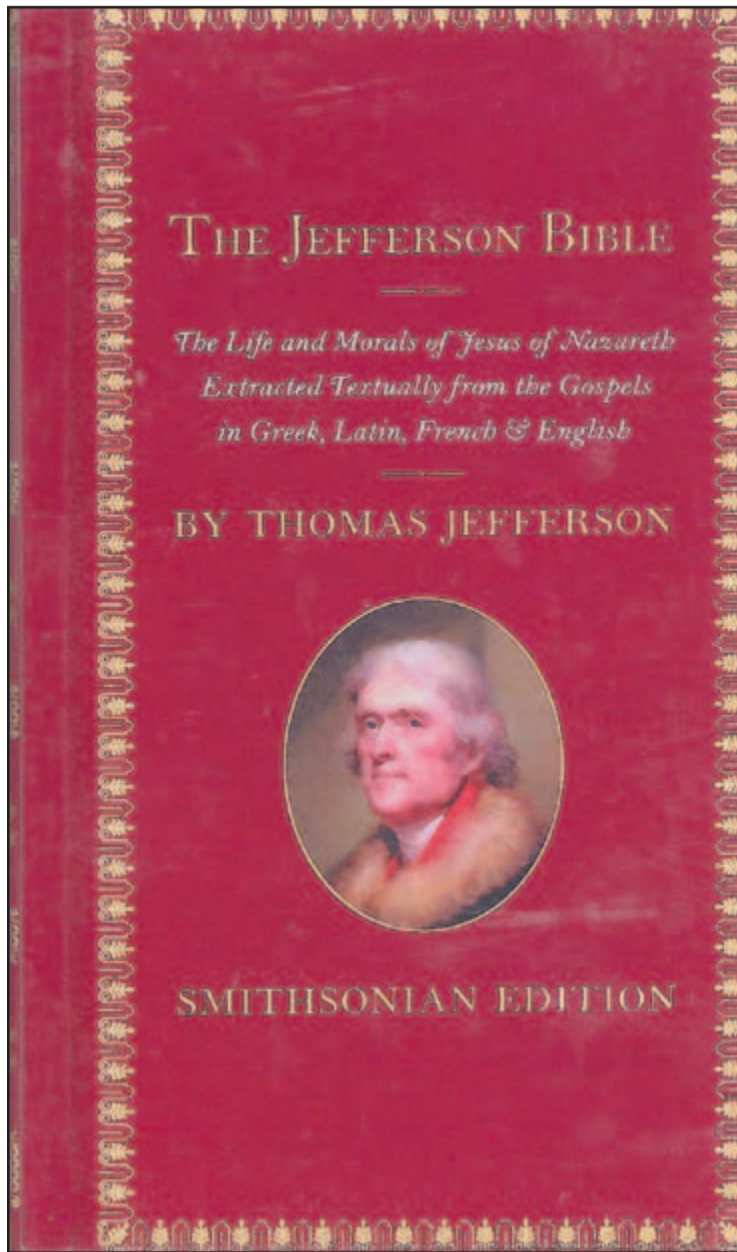
And he only published a single copy of the book, which he kept for his own reading. He had already been vehemently attacked by politicians and clergymen alike for his religious views while he was a candidate and as president. He didn't want to reignite those attacks.

That document is now known as "The Jefferson Bible," and the only copy of it is on display at the History Colorado Center in Denver until May 27, on loan from the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, where it has resided for the past 118 years.

I visited it with family last weekend, and it is inspiring to view a document — through a protective glass case, of course — that Jefferson himself created, held and reportedly read regularly.

The fragile, leather-bound manuscript was rapidly deteriorating until it was restored beginning in 2009 thanks to donations from a variety of groups and individuals, including the Grant family of Colorado.

"Making this historic trea-



The Smithsonian Edition of "The Jefferson Bible," published by Smithsonian Books in 2011, contains all of the items in Jefferson's original book, as well as a historical introduction. It is available at the History Colorado Center in Denver, the Smithsonian and Amazon.

sure publicly accessible was a key goal behind its conservation, and we are so pleased to lend it to History Colorado, a Smithsonian Affiliate institution, so we can share it with ... audiences in Denver," said Harry Rubenstein, curator of the Smithsonian's National

Museum of American History, prior to the opening of the exhibit.

This obviously isn't a column about the history of Grand Junction or western Colorado. But we owe more than a small debt to Jefferson — beyond his importance as one of our

JEFFERSON BIBLE EXHIBIT

"The Jefferson Bible" exhibit continues at the History Colorado Center, 12000 Broadway in Denver, Through May 27.

General admission to the center provides access to "The Jefferson Bible" exhibit without additional cost.

For tickets and visitor information about this and other exhibits, visit www.HistoryColoradoCenter.org or call 303-HISTORY.

principal Founding Fathers — as the man who negotiated the Louisiana Purchase that included this part of Colorado, and funded the Lewis and Clark expedition and others to explore the lands west of the Mississippi.

Jefferson has always been a figure of great contradictions: the extoller of the simple life and yeoman farmers, who lived in great luxury and acquired immense debt with his travels and purchases; the unceasing advocate for freedom and author of the words "all men are created equal," who owned slaves throughout his life and is believed to have fathered children with one of them.

Jefferson was also one of the country's leading advocates for religious freedom. He wrote the Virginia state statute on religious freedom that served as the foundation for the religious language in our own First Amendment. He coined the words "wall of separation between church and state" in a famous letter to a Baptist congregation in Danbury, Conn.

He was a deist and a man of the Enlightenment, who believed in the power of reason above all. And he struggled over many decades to come to understand his own views on who Jesus was and what he meant.

Hence the title that Jefferson

gave his edited version of the Gospels: "The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth."

Those who read Jefferson's edited Bible shouldn't expect to see the Gospels as they may know them. Jefferson rearranged the events from Matthew, Mark, Luke and John so they follow chronological order throughout one narrative, not four.

But most importantly, or perhaps most heretically, depending on one's views, he excised all mention of miracles from his book. The Jesus of Nazareth who appears in his edited Bible is strictly a teacher and arbiter of moral behavior, not a miracle-worker or a son of God.

"To Jefferson, no tradition was so sacred as to escape reconsideration in light of new discoveries and the progress of knowledge," wrote Rubenstein and Barbara Clark Smith in the introduction to the Smithsonian edition of "The Jefferson Bible," published in 2011. "The acts of Parliament, the English common law and the Bible itself must be read through the lens of enlightened human reason, then changed as reason might dictate."

Jefferson compiled his work

by literally cutting and pasting sections from existing Bibles. The exhibit at History Colorado includes two English-language versions of the New Testament that Jefferson cut excerpts from to paste into his book about the life of Jesus.

But Jefferson didn't limit himself to English. He also clipped segments from New Testaments written in three other languages. So, if you want to brush up on your Greek, Latin or French, each page of Jefferson's Bible contains side-by-side texts in those languages, as well as in English.

"The Jefferson Bible" is the work of a man who ranks equal with Benjamin Franklin as the most intellectually curious of our Founding Fathers — a man who directly challenged the most powerful government on Earth with his Declaration of Independence and who, in his mid-70s, was still questioning and challenging authorities, be they political or religious. In that regard, one could say he truly reflects the American spirit.

Have a history question or idea for Bob? Email bob.silbernagel@gsjournal.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS

■ **May 25-Sept. 2:** "The American Soldier, A Photographic Tribute from the Civil War to the War in Iraq," History Colorado Center, 1200 Broadway, Denver. www.HistoryColoradoCenter.org.

■ **June 1:** Tour of Gunnison Pioneer Museum. Museum of Western Colorado. www.museumofwesternco.com.

■ **June 8:** "History and Mystery of Grand Mesa Slopes," featuring cultural history of Kannah Creek, Whitewater Creek and Grand Mesa. Museum of Western Colorado. www.museumofwesternco.com.

■ **June 13:** "Mars Exploration," part of "Changing Landscapes of Science Series," Museum of Western Colorado, 7 p.m. Whitman Educational Center, Fourth Street and Ute Avenue, Grand Junction. www.museumofwesternco.com.

■ **June 20:** "History of Coal Mining in Palisade," Mesa County Historical Society and Museum of Western Colorado. Noon to 1 p.m., Whitman Building, Fourth Street and Ute Avenue, Grand Junction. 970-242-0971

PEOPLE SENTINEL WIRE SERVICES

Glover wins 'American Idol'

LOS ANGELES — Candice Glover was crowned the new "American Idol" on Thursday after defeating country singer Kree Harrison.

The booming 23-year-old R&B vocalist from St. Helena Island, S.C., looked stunned when "Idol" host Ryan Seacrest announced she bested the soulful 22-year-old country singer Harrison from Woodville, Texas.

"Three times," exclaimed a weepy Glover, referencing the trio of times it took before she made it to the finals of the Fox singing competition.

After her coronation, an emotional Glover sobbed her way through her new single "I Am Beautiful."

Thursday's finale also served as a farewell for Randy Jackson, the show's lone remaining original judge who announced last week that he's leaving "Idol" to focus on his record label and other business opportunities. The other judges are singers Nicki Minaj, Mariah Carey and country star Keith Urban.

Jackson has served as a judge on all 12 seasons of "Idol." He first appeared on the panel alongside Simon Cowell and Paula Abdul when the



Candice Glover of St. Helena Island, S.C., wins the "American Idol" crown for 2013 on Thursday in Los Angeles. After the announcement, she sobbed her way through her new single "I Am Beautiful."

competition debuted in 2002, becoming famous for his easy-going "yo, dawg" rapport with contestants.

"I love everybody that walked on this show," Jackson said. He added,

"Hopefully, I touched their lives a little bit. They certainly touched mine."

Grammy- and Oscar-winning former "Idol" finalist Jennifer Hudson returned for Thurs-

day's finale to duet with Glover on Natalie Cole's "Inseparable."

Hudson was among the guest stars who helped fill out the two-hour finale show, including Psy, Frankie Valli, Emeli Sande, Jessie J, Aretha Franklin and former "Idol" judge Jennifer Lopez.

Current "Idol" judges Urban, Carey — along with Jackson on bass — also performed.

'Vampire Diaries' star understands fans' passion

NEW YORK — "The Vampire Diaries" is known for its twists and turns, and one of its stars, Ian Somerhalder, said Thursday night's season finale wouldn't be any different.

The series is set in a fictional Virginia town where vampires, werewolves and witches live among humans (though not exactly peacefully). At the heart of the series is a love triangle among vampire brothers Damon (Somerhalder) and Stefan (Paul Wesley), who both love Elena (Nina Dobrev).

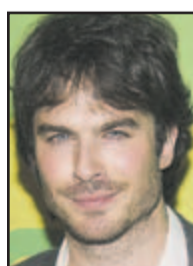
The show, which has been on the air since 2009, has a

passionate fan following, and Somerhalder, 34, said Thursday that he feels that investment almost everywhere he goes.

"I was in Toronto yesterday and people were coming up to me, men, women, children, literally some of them in tears, bludgeoning me with what's gonna happen (on the show). ... People are very, very affected."

Somerhalder's character struck a particular chord with viewers. Introduced as an antagonistic vampire, he's softened some over the years, largely due to his love for Elena.

"I always wanted to stay the bad guy, and (series co-creator) Kevin Williamson had to pound it into my head that we didn't want Damon to be a one-trick pony. I disagreed, but over time I realized (the writers) were right and you need a layered, dynamic character."



IAN SOMERHALDER

Thursday

May 23, 4:00-8:00pm
Lincoln Park Barn
FREE ADMISSION

girls just wanna have fun!

Hey, Girls! Wanna have some fun?

Join us in the afternoon or after work for an evening of shopping and fun - for girls of all ages.

The latest in spring and summer fashion!
Jewelry! Cosmetics! Salon services!
DOOR PRIZES! And most of all - FUN!

Because every girl wants it and every girl deserves it.



Be sure to stop by these exhibitors:
(List as of 5/16/2013)

- A. Kitto Music Studio
- Arbonne International
- Canyon View Wellness & Spa
- Clara's Dolls & Collectibles
- DoubleTree by Hilton
- Le Med Spa
- Lose 2-3 Sizes Permanently
- Mary Shipley Fused Glass Jewelry and Candy Wall Lampworking Glass Beads
- Midori Distribution/do TERRA IPC
- Monument Kinesthetics LLC
- Norwex
- Paparazzi Jewelry
- Paper Bow
- Queen of Bling Premiere Design Jewelry
- Roman Family Chiropractic & CoCo Bodyworks
- Ruth Stanley, CMT
- Silpada
- Skin Deep
- Steadfast Steeds Mustang Sanctuary
- Susie Hirsch LifeVantage Independent Distributor
- The Skinny Wrap Girl
- Thirty-One Gifts

THE DAILY SENTINEL
GRAND JUNCTION, COLORADO
734 So. 7th Street, Grand Junction, CO 81501
Advertising 256-4289