

Widely-endorsed public school book cleverly avoids trouble

By Richard N. Ostling
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Think it's impossible to create a textbook about the Bible for public high schools that's acceptable to varied faiths and legal in the eyes of church-state separationists?

That's the goal of the Bible Literacy Project of Fairfax, Va. And judging from initial

reactions, it succeeded handsomely with its new "The Bible and Its Influence," just issued for use in the 2006-2007 school year.

Bible Literacy's strategy is to respect all religions and shun divisive controversies about biblical interpretation, merely reporting these when they're relevant.

For instance, here's how the

touchy issues surrounding creation are handled. "Scholars and faithful readers differ on the date and authorship of Genesis. Even within the first two chapters, some see two distinct creation narratives. ... Some read Genesis as a literal account of the mechanics of creation. Still others read it as a poem about God's relationship with humans. Many

read the book as both."

Consider these endorsers of this textbook - folks who rarely agree on much else:

- Robert Alter, Hebrew professor at the University of California, Berkeley
- Harold Bloom, Yale University literary critic (an agnostic in religion)
- John Collins, Yale Old Testament professor (Catholic)

- Charles Colson, prison evangelist (Baptist)
- Jean Bethke Elshtain, University of Chicago ethics professor (Lutheran)
- Ted Haggard, president, National Association of Evangelicals
- Frederica Mathewes-Green, Eastern Orthodox author
- Joseph Stowell, retired

- president of the very conservative Moody Bible Institute
 - Bishop Richard Sklba, chairman, Catholic Biblical Association
 - Marc Stern, American Jewish Congress attorney and advocate for strict church-state separation
 - Leland Ryken, English professor at evangelical
- Please see BIBLE/5B

First black churchman has been installed as archbishop of York

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LONDON - The Church of England confirmed Ugandan-born John Sentamu on Wednesday as archbishop of York, making him the first black archbishop in the nearly 500-year history of the state church.

Sentamu, 56, was confirmed as 97th archbishop of York in a ceremony held at St. Mary-le-Bow church in central Lon-

don. He will not formally take up his ministry until his enthronement at York Minster on Nov. 30.

The archbishop of York holds the church's second-highest position after Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, leader of the worldwide Anglican Communion.

Sentamu has been bishop of Birmingham, Britain's second-largest city, since 2002. A campaigner against racism

and gun crime, he has recently led demonstrations against the Iraq war.

Sentamu has been part of a committee attempting to mend a rift in the church caused by the appointment of an openly homosexual bishop in a diocese of the U.S. Episcopal Church. He called for reconciliation on the issue, which has brought the church close to schism, urging more traditionalist African primates not to break with the Anglican Communion.

But Sentamu said he stood by the Lambeth Resolution of 1998, which rejects homosexual practice as "incompatible

with scripture," and rules out gay marriage in church.

He is the first black person to hold such a senior position in the history of the Church of England since its founder

King Henry VIII broke with the Vatican nearly 500 years ago over his desire to divorce his first wife, Katherine of Aragon.

Sentamu succeeds the Most

Rev. David Hope, who resigned in 2004 to spend his last years before retirement working as a parish priest.

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PHOTO/HAROLD TYSON

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