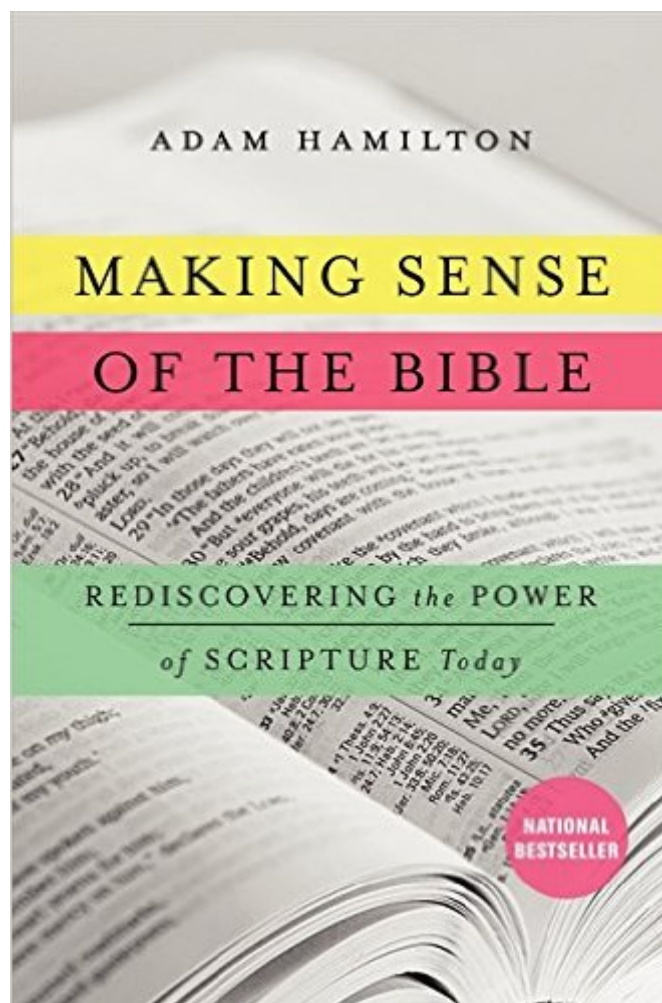


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Making Sense Of The Bible: Rediscovering The Power Of Scripture Today



Synopsis

Denominations from evangelical to mainline continue to experience deep divisions over universal social issues. The underlying debate isn't about a particular social issue, but instead it is about how we understand the nature of scripture and how we should interpret it. The world's bestselling, most-read, and most-loved book is also one of the most confusing. In *Making Sense of the Bible*, Adam Hamilton, one of the country's leading pastors and Christian authors, addresses the hot-button issues that plague the church and cultural debate, and answers many of the questions frequently asked by Christians and non-Christians alike. Did God really command Moses to put gay people to death? Did Jesus really teach that everyone who is not a Christian will be assigned to hell? Why would Paul command women to "keep silent in the church"? Were Adam and Eve real people? Is the book of Revelation really about the end times? Who decided which books made it into the scriptures and why? Is the Bible ever wrong? In approachable and inviting language, Hamilton addresses these often misunderstood biblical themes leading readers to a deeper appreciation of the Bible so that we might hear God speak through it and find its words to be life-changing and life-giving.

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Customer Reviews

I have only one real disagreement with what Adam Hamilton writes in *Making Sense of the Bible*, although it is a significant disagreement, which I will discuss shortly. Apart from this, I found the entire book valuable, useful, and quite cogently presented. Hamilton's goal is to help people who

aren't familiar with the Bible, or who are troubled by certain passages in it, to make sense of it. To this end he begins very helpfully with the crucial question, "What exactly is the Bible?" (p. 7). He explains that it is not what it is often considered to be: an owner's manual, a source of random guidance, a collection of data for systematic theology, a science and history textbook, or a treasury of precious promises. Hamilton then provides historical, geographic, and literary overviews of the Bible to orient readers to its background and contents. These will be valuable and helpful resources for the many today who don't start with a basic knowledge of the Bible. Hamilton addresses some questions about the nature of Scripture and then devotes the last half of the book to making sense of the Bible's challenging passages. As I read through the book, there were certain chapters that I found very meaningful personally. Hamilton's testimony in Chapter 24 of how he came to love Jesus by reading the gospels is poignant and beautiful. And I would recommend his reflections on suffering in the preceding chapter to anyone who is going through difficult times. So what's my one disagreement? It's with Hamilton's answer to the question of what the Bible actually is. He says it is a collection of books written by men seeking to express what they believed was God's will.

For tackling tough issues that require careful thought and sensitivity to billions of Christians, Pastor Adam Hamilton is to be commended. Hamilton has boldly gone where many United Methodist bishops have feared to tread. "Making Sense of the Bible" is borne of a great love for the Bible, along with years of study and pastoral ministry. Moreover, Hamilton is always charitable toward those with whom he disagrees. That point should be underlined because some folks (sometimes rather angrily) insist he should take a tougher line with his theological opponents. His final chapter on faithfully and fruitfully engaging the Bible is instructive. For all these reasons, this book deserves a fair hearing. That said, Hamilton's strength may be his weakness. Hamilton has a thoughtful pastor's ability to simplify the complex. Sometimes that works, but other times it oversimplifies or creates false dichotomies. Pastor Hamilton and I share many of the same conclusions - not all, but many. However, I am concerned that some of his conclusions set forth here will not ultimately bear the weight his other conclusions require them to bear. For example, Hamilton openly admits he's a traditional Christian fundamentalist on 4.5 of the 5 "Fundamentals (p. 298)," including the virgin birth of Jesus and Christ's atonement for humanity's sin. But Hamilton has consciously shifted toward a classically Liberal Protestant understanding of biblical inspiration and authority, one which tilts toward human authorship rather than divine influence upon the Bible. When Liberal Protestants of the early 20th c. took the same route, they eventually left those Fundamentals behind.

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