

**From:** [Pattengale, Jerry](#)  
**To:** [McDaniel, Sean](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Google Alert - "Mustang School District"  
**Date:** Saturday, April 26, 2014 12:06:45 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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Sean,

Thanks for sharing this. We anticipated much of this, but the criticism always seems a bit unsettling. Also, I'm more than willing to come by the high school and meet with the teacher and others to discuss any of this. I'll be out of the country for a couple of weeks, but we can schedule this. And please know that as an author for a few decades, I believe in listening to critique, and to make changes where needed. And we're attempting to respond appropriately.

It's difficult to respond directly to some of these media comments because of the overriding ad hominem argument taking place, both overtly and behind the text – the obvious attack on Steve and his family. And, knowing in November before any text was written an organization was going to challenge it – seems over-the-top bias.

The most obvious issue is that in the sections of the text that simply represent what the Bible actually teaches, critics represent it as some conspiracy or overt proselytizing by sharing it. If you are discussing any literature, this case could be made. Voltaire's book, *Candid*, is rather vivid at times. Chaucer the same. *Catcher in the Rye*, dark and morbid at times. For example, if during an assignment discussing the *Scarlet Letter's* Hester Prynne, the author of the textbook may put, "And Hester held these injustices in her heart." This is a summary of what Hawthorne says, not a value statement. Your response in the interview was right on about "that's what the text says" (or something similar).

What these criticisms tell us is that the reporters (and likely other readers) are not separating the Narrative chapters from the History and Impact chapters. That is, those chapters simply going over the biblical text. **Furthermore, we're discussing removing the Color Filter sections to avoid this.** Place that text in the teacher's guide to give some guidance on possible answers, and simply list the themes (actual titles of them) with a question – "Which of these themes, if any, are found in the assigned biblical text?" We will make this decision soon, but these edits are major and won't appear in the final layout form for a few weeks.

The comments about a bunch of Christians writing this is rather unfounded. When you look at the contributors' list, many scholars are from rather diverse backgrounds. Some, I've no idea of their religious beliefs. And at over 20, including Compedia not listed, are practicing Jews.

- "A basic text" was a criticism – which is actually a compliment. It's intended to be.
- Lacks scholarly inquiry – some of the world's best scholars have written key sections. That

comment is from a classics professor, not a high school teacher.

- “Scholars have proven Moses didn’t write Torah” – well, this is the same error they were trying to charge the text with – “proven?” Really? You can line up scholars on both sides of this issue rather easily. The mistake we made was using “traditionally” instead of “the Bible attributes Moses with writing most of the Torah.” Although many scholars on the project believe he did, it wasn’t the intention here.
- Use of Old Testament and New Testament as an egregious error. Really? These are the standard terms, used elsewhere, and the Jewish writers with us carefully tried to help readers know what the Jewish terms for OT are.
- Not sure of how to respond to a history charge, when some rather standard historical approaches are used.
- Attributes of God not including negative attributes – the Bible doesn’t list any, and these are in section representing what the text says.
- Story of Abraham and Isaac, that’s tough to represent, but using “horrific” in the criticism is itself a judgment. Again, we’ll look anew at this passage and make sure it’s clear it’s represented as what the text says.
- Comments about not knowing the archeological evidence shows anything substantial? This is an irresponsible comment. Defies logic. The listing of numbers of manuscripts alongside of classical sources is overwhelmingly in favor of the Bible’s text tradition. No matter how you cut it, numerically or otherwise, the information is rather heavy on the biblical text side.
- Comments about Founding Fathers – we’ll have to agree to disagree. We also have the top scholars involved on this one. They wrote the chapter. We’re also holding a second filmed panel on this with these scholars to have an additional teaching option.
- Heroes and villains – these are biblical designations (characterizations) not ours.
- Leading questions – actually they are right, and the very one they mentioned had already been edited.
- Feminism complaint – which is interesting that an overstatement here, usually the opposite criticism, was used against religious groups. But here the writer was correct—but that, too, had already been edited (just didn’t make the printed version). What is not correct is an attempt to disconnect the biblical narrative from an appraisal of uplifting women in a culture (NT) that was rather harsh on women’s freedoms.

Our PR firm was upset that the AP article did not include any of my comments. None. Also, we know they tried interviewing our scholars, but no quotes.

Also, we already were in a review process that would have garnered some of these comments in time, but the express schedule is bringing this after the first printing. Dr. Tim Steenbergh is under contract to run third-party evaluation for this type of feedback. We also will be conducting focus groups with the participants, following permissions and protocol.

I trust that this helps. And please let me know if coming to your campus would be helpful.

Jerry

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**From:** McDaniel, Sean [mailto:McDanielS@mustangps.org]  
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## "Mustang School District"

As-it-happens update · April 26, 2014




NEWS

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U.S. News & World Report

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