

HST, Bible Scholar



Biblicist. *President Truman and two of his 50 Bibles.*

Few Americans have more Bibles than Harry S. Truman (he has "about 50") and few quote from them with greater facility.

He won't be reading the latest addition to his collection—it's printed in Finnish. But its presentation last week by Finnish Minister K. T. Jutila on behalf of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland showed that the President's reputation as a Bible student has spread as far as Europe.

Truman sometimes amazes his callers with his ready Biblical quotations. One such surprised visitor was Isaac Halevi Herzog, chief rabbi of Israel, who alluded to Isaiah 2:4 in a discussion of his hopes for world peace.

From Memory. Without turning to his Bible, Truman recited:

"And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

The President seldom misses a chance to stress that only as the U.S. has faith in God can it face the future with confidence. In a message to the recent eighth World Baptist Congress in Cleveland, the President, himself a Baptist, emphasized that the nations of the world cannot survive materially unless redeemed spiritually.

Of the many Bibles given to the President, the most expensive was a \$5,000 morocco leather-bound reproduction of the original Gutenberg Bible,* printed about 1456. The donors: the people of his home town, Independence, Mo.

Two for the Oath. It was on this Bible, opened to the Ten Commandments, that Harry Truman rested his left hand while he took his solemn oath of office Jan. 20, 1949. (A second Bible was opened to the Sermon on the Mount.)

Truman thinks everyone can get a lot of good out of reading the Tenth Commandment (Thou shalt not covet . . .), recommends it especially in Washington where many men covet other men's jobs, their influence, their power.

*The Library of Congress owns one of the three perfect original Gutenberg Bibles, for which it paid nearly \$400,000.