

## A Sermon on Literacy

Sermon by Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE for July 19th, 2020 (and beyond)

This is going to be a short sermon in hopes you will meditate on, consider, and/or simply further appreciate the current state of civilization regardless of storefront, cultural influences, or economic disparities resulting from unrecognized resources and forfeited opportunities.

In the 2nd and 3rd years B.C./B.C.E. (a.k.a. Greco-Roman Era to some), only 20% of the human population could read and write at all. 80% of humanity was illiterate and could neither read nor write. Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_education](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_education) Plato says Socrates never wrote anything down and didn't wish others to write down what he said. It is possible Socrates was illiterate.

In 200 A.D./C.E. the early stages of "mass producing" any literature for distribution, teaching, or any other reason to mass produce literature is born/invented with the invention of woodblock printing. Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Printing\\_press](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Printing_press)

From 1381-1384 A.D./C.E. John Wycliffe wrote The Holy Bible which was later adapted for King James and then adopted by the Catholic Church as their text. The Catholic Catechism was not even written until the 16th century. The Holy Bible is the best-selling book of all time with over 5 billion copies in circulation. Source: <https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/best-selling-book-of-non-fiction>

In 1440 the printing press was invented in Germany by Johannes Gutenberg. Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Printing\\_press](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Printing_press)

In 1870 A.D./C.E. in the United States of America, 20% of the entire population regardless of demographic was illiterate and could neither read nor write. Source: [https://nces.ed.gov/naal/lit\\_history.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/naal/lit_history.asp) So, one way to look at that is to say in a 1,873 year period, human literacy rates did a 180.

In 2020 A.D./C.E. the global literacy rate for those ages 15 years or older is at 86.3% literate and 13.7% illiterate. Source: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/literacy-rate-by-country> And, 75% of prisoners in US prisons right now are reportedly illiterate. 85% of youth in the juvenile justice system are reportedly illiterate. Source: <https://observer.com/2017/07/prison-illiteracy-criminal-justice-reform/#:~:text=The%20Literacy%20Project%20Foundation%20found,percent%20of%20the%20prison%20population.> So, in a way it is like prisons represent medieval times in more ways than one.

No one can force anyone to read or learn in a free country. But, some legislators try anyway with government mandates for K-12 education and penalties for truancy that can impact the whole family and that killed at least one mother. Source: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/woman-jailed-over-truancy-fines-found-dead-in-cell/> Reading is essential and knowledge is power. Ignorance, fear, and superstition are often

the foundations of uncivilized or criminal minds. Civilization is a choice and those who reject it often get some version of the Spanish Inquisition even now, but, not always. Learning requires diligence in study and becoming good enough at anything to have it result in a healthy paycheck requires practice. So, if diligent study and practice are something you find beneath you or unworthy of your time, expect those who are diligent and well-practiced to respond in kind unless particularly charitable or generous in spirit.

Do you want to help? Consider donating to [www.donorschoose.org](http://www.donorschoose.org) today. Pick a classroom.

Need help choosing a book? See: <https://www.cope.church/reading.htm> for some recommendations. For a free e-book from our mission, see <https://www.heal-online.org/ebook.pdf> (particularly pages 6-9).

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32 KJV Willful blindness is an abomination.

COPE accepts Feedback, critical and complimentary. Learn more at <https://www.cope.church/feedback.htm> . For the sake of keeping myself and others humble, a sense of humor is welcome on all sides.

For More About COPE and the HEAL Mission, see:

<https://www.cope.church> and <http://www.heal-online.org>