



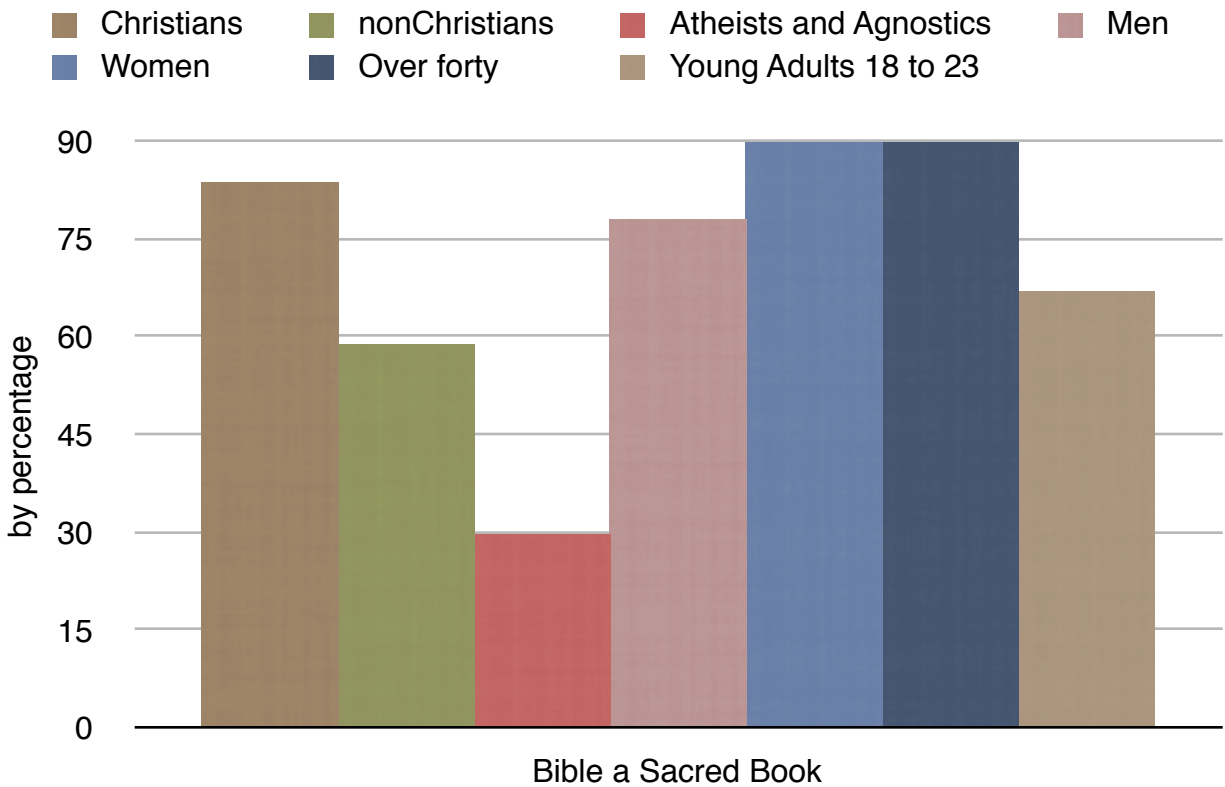
### **Holy, Holy, Holy is the Bible to Americans**

In a national survey by the Barna Group, George Barna commented that “Most Americans consider the Bible to be the word of God - and do not believe any other document fits that description.” About two dozen different books were identified by American adults as “sacred literature” or “holy books.” Only four of the various books were listed by at least 1% of the public, and just one book, the Bible, was considered sacred or holy by at least 5% of the survey participants.

Eighty-four percent of American Christians named the Bible as a holy book. Most of the population subgroups surveyed had three-quarters or more of their members list the Bible as a holy book. The only exceptions found by the Barna Group were people who describe themselves as “mostly liberal” on social and political issues (just 69% mentioned the Bible); people associated with non-Christian faith groups (59% of whom listed the Bible); Asians (54%); and atheists and agnostics (30%).

Men were less likely than women to consider the Bible to be sacred (78% versus 90% respectively). People under the age of 40 were less likely than older Americans to view the Bible as holy (77% versus 90%). Disturbingly, only 67% of Americans aged 18 to 23 felt the Bible was sacred literature. See Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1**  
**The Bible as a Sacred Book**



**Christians and Sacred Literature**

Evangelical Christians were all-or-nothing: “99% said the Bible is sacred literature, and 1% said there is no sacred literature. No other books were listed by the group.” Non-evangelical born again Christians included the Book of Mormon (3%), the Koran (3%), the Torah (1%), with 96% asserting the Bible to be sacred.<sup>1</sup> Notional Christians (those who consider themselves to be Christian but do not meet the born again criteria) identified the Bible (87%), the Koran (6%), the Torah (2%), and the Book of Mormon (1%).

“Although most American adults are only moderately committed to Christianity and to the church they attend most often, they have no inclination to embrace anything besides the Bible as sacred, especially if it originated from a different faith tradition.”

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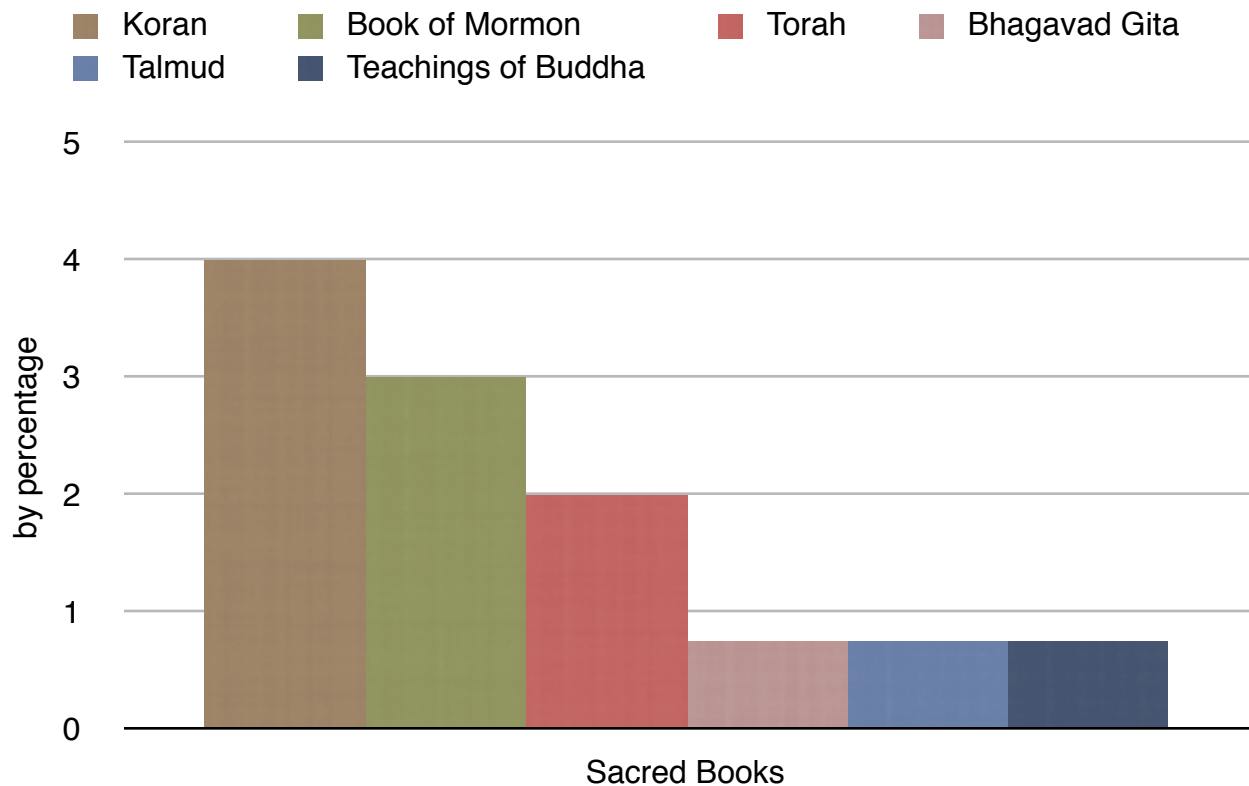
<sup>1</sup> See the original article for Barna’s description of “evangelical” and “born again Christians.” Also see the article entitled “What is an Evangelical?” on this web site.

The groups most likely to consider books besides the Bible to be sacred were also those whom Barna has found to be the most experimental in their sense of spirituality: adults under 25, residents of the West, and liberals.

### Other Sacred Literature

“Christians may not know much of what’s in the Bible, but they are not at all likely to investigate the religious books of other faiths or to refer to them as holy.” Only three books other than the Bible were labeled as sacred literature by at least 1% of the survey’s participants: the Koran (4%); the Book of Mormon (3%); and the Torah (2%). “Muslims, whose holy book is the Koran, represent about one-half of one percent of the nation’s population. Mormons, who include the Book of Mormon as one of their sacred texts, are roughly 2% of America. Jews, who include the Torah among their holy documents, are also about 2% of the adult public.” See Figure 2 below.

**Figure 2**  
**Sacred Literature Other Than the Bible**



The Bhagavad Gita (revered by Hindus), the Talmud (a Jewish text), and Teachings of the Buddha (which is esteemed by Buddhists) were viewed as sacred by somewhere between one-half of one percent and 1% of respondents.

A variety of works, with some surprises, were among the two dozen or so holy books named by less than one-half of one percent of Americans. Several embraced eastern faiths such as Analects, I Ching, Tao Te Ching, and Ramayana; several were Hebrew works including the Ketuvim, The Prophets, and Tanakh. The Mormon scripture known as Doctrine and Covenants, was also named, as was *Dianetics* (from Greek words meaning through and mind) by L. Ron Hubbard. The surprises included: *Civil Disobedience* by Henry David Thoreau, *Mein Kampf* by Adolph Hitler, *Secret Book* by Rhonda Byrne, and *Quiet Strength* by football coach Tony Dungy.

For more information on research conducted by the Barna Group, see the original article on their web site: [‘Americans Identify What They Consider “Holy” Books.’](#)