

What specific aspects would make a piece of literature indispensable to read before one could consider his education complete? Such a book would have a scope beyond any one subject, or even one period in history. It would be filled with valuable wisdom and insight for all time, laying out important principles and instruction for how to live and interact with others properly.

One could hardly consider his education to be complete without a practical knowledge of God's Word, the Bible. The Bible is the single most influential, often read, and widespread piece of literature of all time. With a scope far beyond that of any other book, the variety of the subjects it covers is amazing. While the Bible's most important teaching is what our relationship with our Creator ought to be and how we should glorify Him in our daily conduct, the Bible also encompasses many diverse branches of literature—poetry, philosophy, history, and theology. Although written by many different men, an incredible harmony and agreement exists throughout the Bible. The explanation for this striking phenomenon is that the entire Bible was inspired by God. Because of this, we can know that the Bible is entirely true, without error or mistake; if any source of man's knowledge and wisdom contradicts the Bible in any area, that source must be false. As man's only written word from God and the only perfect source of knowledge and wisdom, the Bible should be studied and meditated on daily.

Plato's *The Republic* is a remarkable book, essential for a complete education. While not always totally reliable for sound truth and wisdom, it is nonetheless critical to have a fundamental comprehension of the concepts taught in order to have a proper understanding of the development of Western civilization, culture, and intellectual tradition. A drama written in dialogue form, *The Republic* is an unusual and fascinating book. Inquiring into the meaning and application of true justice in human lives and politics, Plato philosophically examines through penetrating and relentless logic how human beings ought to behave toward one another—whether a life lived in pursuit of justice towards humanity is better spent than one lived for personal pleasure. The

philosophies examined have had a great influence on all who have been exposed to them, from Plato's contemporaries throughout the pages of history up to the present day. To a Christian reader today, *The Republic* is useful in helping to answer questions that the Bible does not address directly—such as what type of culture should we seek to create, and what rights do we actually have—by stimulating logical and Bible-based thought.

*Democracy in America*, by Alexis de Tocqueville, is a vital book to read in order to have a good understanding of how national government, and democratic government in particular, works. While it is the most complete and often quoted authority on the American style of democracy and American domestic life in general, it is also an essential study on what features are necessary for democracy to work elsewhere. De Tocqueville praises American self-rule and personal rights, but also examines some of the dangers and pitfalls that are possible in an American-style democracy, offering constructive criticism while refraining from mere flattery. Concluding that America is great because Americans are good, de Tocqueville recognized that a nation must have a firm set of morals and values if it is to succeed. As the single most original, authoritative, comprehensive, and influential book on democracy, *Democracy in America* deserves to be studied by anyone who wants to understand what basic elements are necessary for any nation to be successful as a democracy.

Each of these three books is crucial in attaining a proper understanding of the world we live in. By examining what our proper role is in life, what our relationship with government and our fellow citizens ought to be, and what kind of relationship we should have with our God and Creator, they will help us live our lives with a greater appreciation and understanding of what is true and just and a gratefulness for all that God in His everlasting love has done for humanity.