

THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

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An Introduction to the Bible

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Pick up any book. You see its title. It may be *American History*, or *The Vegetation of Hawaii*, or *How to Fix Plumbing*. The title tells you the subject matter, and usually the next thing you want to know is the name of the author. A book on *England* written by Adolph Hitler would probably not be so good as one written by Winston Churchill. Nor would I trust Stalin even though he had written *The History of Russia*.

The book we are now about to study is called the Bible. The word *Bible* means *The Book*. A book that can bear simply the title of *The Book* must be a very important book. It is better called *The Holy Scriptures*. At any rate, everybody knows that the subject is God and religion. Therefore we want to know who wrote it. Was it written by someone like Hitler and Stalin, whom nobody should believe? Was it written by a popular and competent author like Churchill? Was it written by an expert researcher, even more competent? Who is it that claims to know enough about God and religion to write a volume of, say, 1,300 pages of double columns?

One should also ask, what method was used in collecting all this information in 1,300 pages of double columns? We can easily see the names of most of the writers: Moses, David, Isaiah, John, and Paul. But what, if anything, made them more competent than Pharaoh, Absalom, Sargon, Herod, and Nero?

The answer to this last question is found with great clarity in two verses, the first of which states the general principle, while the second gives a particular example. *2 Peter* 1:21 states, "For prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The second verse is *Acts* 1:16, "This scripture must needs have been fulfilled which the Holy Ghost spoke by the mouth of David."

The first of these two verses shows that the prophets did not initiate the writing of the Bible. It was not as if they had been searching for God and trying to manufacture a religion, and then wrote down the results of their search and ingenuity. Peter says quite clearly that their prophecies did not come by their own volition. The original Greek is even stronger than the English translation. It says, "Prophecy *never* came by man's will." There are some theologians who put great stress on man's will. Now, undoubtedly man's will operates in a certain area; but there are some things a man cannot voluntarily do. One of these is to initiate a message from God. Man may invent a message and claim that it came from God. So too there are some religions that can properly be said to result from man's search for God. But not Christianity. The Hebrew prophets and the New Testament apostles spoke as they were carried along by the Holy Ghost.

The second of the two verses quoted shows that although in a sense the prophets actually spoke – if you had been in the streets of Jerusalem, you could have heard Jeremiah – nevertheless this is only half the truth. The more important half is that the Holy Ghost spoke. He not only "carried along" the prophets; he spoke through their mouths. Of course, the verse mentions only David, and not Moses or Jeremiah. But other verses, now to be given, will show that the other prophets, as well as David, spoke the words of God. For the author of the Bible is God.

Consider therefore and try to summarize the following verses.

Numbers 22:38: "Have I now any power at all to say anything? The word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak."

Numbers 23:5, 12, 16: "The Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth.... Must I not take heed to speak that which the Lord hath put in my mouth?... The Lord met Balaam and put a word in his mouth."

Deuteronomy 18:18: "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him."

2 Samuel 23:2: "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue."

Isaiah 1:20; 40:5; 55:14: "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

Isaiah 59:21: "As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever."

Jeremiah 1:9: "Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth."

Jeremiah 13:15: "Hear ye, and give ear: be not proud: for the Lord hath spoken."

Jeremiah 30:4: "And these are the words

that the Lord spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah."

Jeremiah 50:1: "The word that the Lord spake against Babylon and against the land of the Chaldeans by Jeremiah the prophet."

Ezekiel 3:1, 4, 11: "Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat what thou findest; eat this scroll, and go speak unto the house of Israel.... And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord God; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear."

Mark 12:36: "For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, the Lord said to my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool."

Luke 1: 70: "As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began."

In the light of these verses, nearly twenty of them, we cannot mistake the fact that the Bible claims to be the words of God. Today some people who call themselves Christian speak of the Bible as the Word of God, but deny that the Bible is the words of God. They want to make the words the products of human invention, while paying lip service to the notion that the Bible contains in some vague sense a sort of divine odor. Thus the Bible is reduced to the level of a purely human book. Moses, of course, wrote words on some parchment or other, as did David and Paul; but the words they wrote were the words of God. This truth is picturesquely stated in one of the best-known verses on the authorship of the Bible.

2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable..." for a number of things. Such is the *King James* translation. The meaning could be made still clearer by translating it, "Every word is breathed out by God..." Scripture, of course, means the written words; and the word for inspired is not *breathed into*, as if God breathed into the Bible, but *breathed out*. God breathed out the words of the Bible. Thus the author of the Bible is God.

From the fact that God is the author of the Bible, a most important implication may be drawn. If these words are the words of God, what they say is true. If the Bible is God's book, it is true.

Deuteronomy 32:4: "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: A God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he."

John 1:14: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth."

John 1:17: "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

John 3:33: "He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true."

John 14:6: "Jesus saith unto him. I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

John 17:17: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."

Hebrews 6:18: "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." In his first epistle John uses figurative language to say the same thing.

1 John 1:5: "God is light and in him is no darkness at all."

It would be possible to quote many other verses that express the same idea. In negative form the Bible denounces lies and hypocrisy; affirmatively, it exalts truth.

In the latter quarter of the nineteenth century two men, who may be designated by their initials G and W, made a violent attack on the Bible. They assumed that what the Bible says must be false unless other evidence proved it true. By this principle they concluded that the Hittite nation never existed. For years the students of G and W kept asserting that there never were any Hittites, and that the Bible was myth and fairy tale. They

also said that Moses did not write the Pentateuch, that Abraham did not fight the battle of *Genesis* 14, and that seven-stemmed lamps were never made until late Persian times. Today the disciples of G and W do not dare make such statements. They still attack the Bible; they still deny its truth; they still twist Hebrew history out of shape. But they do not dare deny the existence of the Hittites; and seven-stemmed lamps are known to have been made long before Moses mentioned them in the book of Exodus.

In the twentieth century John Dewey, paying little attention to Biblical history and the details of Christian theology, attacked the very notion of truth as fixed and unchanging. For Dewey what is true today will be false tomorrow and what is false today will be true tomorrow. In history, for example, Dewey might say that it was false in 1880 that the Hittites existed, but in 1950 it is true. I wonder whether in the year 2000 the Hittites shall have existed?

Dewey applies his theory of changing truth most vigorously to morality. For his morality is merely social custom. Not only does moral truth change from time to time, but also from place to place at the same time.

What is right in the United States is wrong in the Congo; and cannibalism is right in the Congo because that is what people do there. It is like driving on the right hand side of the road in America and on the left in England.

The notion that truth changes is supported even by science. Nineteenth-century theories have been replaced by different views. It used to be thought that light was a wave motion in the ether. Physicists now deny the ether and say that light is a stream of corpuscles.

If the changing laws of science support the idea that truth changes, all the more does common opinion. Common opinions are like styles in dress. One style is popular for a few years, and then a new style takes its place. Tomatoes were once thought poisonous. I once heard an M.D. say that apples should never be eaten raw. Much to the dismay of American opinion the French eat snails but won't

eat corn. The result of reducing morality to the level of eating habits, traffic regulations, or styles in clothes is seen today in the crime, violence, sex orgies, and drug addiction so prevalent in the public schools. These things used to be considered wrong. Now hundreds of thousands of students can gather to indulge themselves publicly. Owing largely to the influence of John Dewey, the public schools indoctrinate their pupils to believe that it is a fixed, unchanging, absolute truth that there is no fixed, unchanging, absolute truth.

Of course these people do not believe in God. If there were no God, maybe they would be right. But then "right" would be only a changing common opinion. Right conduct would only be custom. Moral principles would be like the principles of language, as Dewey explicitly said; and as grammar changes from century to century, so would all other opinions or customs. But no one can fit the words of God into this shifting, unstable scheme.

The stability of God's truth, and especially the truth of his promises, is emphasized in different ways. Here are some examples:

Psalms 19:7: "The testimony of the Lord is sure."

Psalms 93:5: "Thy testimonies are very sure."

Isaiah 28:16: "Behold I lay in Zion a sure foundation."

Note that a foundation could not be sure unless the truth that it is sure is unchangeable.

2 Timothy 2:18-19: "Who, concerning the truth, have erred.... Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure."

The Ten Commandments were not merely true and good for the age of Moses; the Atonement was not effective merely during the lifetimes of Christ and the apostles; justification by faith alone was not essential only for Luther and Calvin. They remain true, good, applicable, and essential in the twentieth century and in the twenty-first century also.

Unfortunately, truth is not always very useful. Take for example a formula concerning the momentum of

$$2 \pi \int_0^R r^2 dr = \frac{2}{3} \pi R^3.$$

a rotating sphere: Let this equation be as true as you like, it is probably of no use to any reader of this essay, for these readers probably do not know what it means. Or, suppose you take a sentence from Martin Heidegger: "When *Dasein* is resolute, it takes over authentically in its existence the fact that it *is* the null basis of its own nullity." This is probably false; but if it were true, it would be of little use to most people. Now, for the advancement of learning as well as for scientific discoveries, there must be brilliant scholars who understand technical affairs. But if the Bible were as unintelligible as the examples just given, Paul would have been foolish to address his epistle to the Romans. The Roman Christians were largely slaves and lower class people. Many could neither read nor write. They had never gone to high school, let alone college. But Paul wrote:

Romans 1:7: "to all that be in Rome, beloved by God, called to be saints."

The prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah are not addressed to certain people in the direct manner of a Pauline epistle. But they are unmistakably addressed to the people.

Isaiah 15, 7, 10: "Why should ye be stricken any more...? Your country is desolate.... give ear to the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah."

Isaiah was not literally addressing Sodom and Gomorrah: He was accusing the Israelites of sins as bad as those of the ancient wicked cities. The people were the people of Judah. Similarly Jeremiah addresses the people, not in the opening words of a letter, but throughout the book. The following verses are only some of many.

Jeremiah 6:1: "O ye children of Benjamin, gather yourselves to flee out of the midst of Jerusalem."

Ezekiel 2:3-4: "I send thee to the children of Israel.... I do send thee unto them, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God."

Hosea 4:1: "Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel."

Micah 1:2: "Hear, all ye people."

The point of all verses like these is that God sent his message to all the people, and therefore today all people should study the Bible. When the Roman Catholic Church ruled the world, it was a crime to own or read a Bible. Bibles printed in Holland and exported to England were seized by the government and burned. The people who read them were burned too.

Another verse that completely contradicts the Roman Catholic position is Jesus' command:

John 5:39: "Search the Scriptures."

This command was in the first instance given to a group of unbelieving Jews: by implication it extends to all who may be interested in Christ's life and works. Never is there any suggestion that the Bible should be prohibited to the people.

One reason for taking the Bible away from the people and even for burning those who read it was the idea that the Bible is too hard to understand. The further idea arose that God had entrusted his message to the priests, and no one else was ever to read it. But this contradicts what the Bible says.

Now, it is true that some parts of the Bible are hard to understand. It is also true that scholars who study it for long hours and long years know it better than someone who reads it only fifteen minutes a week. But even the hard parts were addressed to all the people, and all of it is profitable.

2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All Scripture...is profitable for doctrine, for reproof...that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

The conclusion here is that the words are true, understandable, and useful. They are not written only for mathematical scientists, like that equation given above; not for philosophers only, like Heidegger's unintelligible ravings; but for all Christians primarily, and secondarily for everybody else.

Something now needs to be said about the purpose for which the Bible was written. This purpose can be expressed in several ways, depending on how

much detail one wants to include. There are no single verses that state an all-inclusive purpose in so many words. The Gospel of John, however, has a single verse that pointedly states the purpose of that Gospel.

John 20:30-31: "Many other signs freely did Jesus...which are not written in this book; but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing he might have life through his name."

Of those distant events, we know only what has been committed to writing, and the purpose of John's writing and of Moses' and David's as well – was that we might believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and believing that, enjoy eternal life.

The Horror File

One of our good friends and supporters, Jeff Schneiter, called our attention to the following passages from pages 230 and 231 of *Love Is a Choice: Recovery for Codependent Relationships* by Robert Hernfelt, Frank Minirth, and Paul Meier (Nelson, 1989). They illustrate quite vividly that Clark was not attacking straw men when he discussed modern thought. My editorial comments are enclosed in brackets.

"Typically Bessie married into a codependent relationship. She lived thirty-three years with a miser of a husband who allowed her ten dollars a week spending money and considered himself generous. He died leaving her with a huge bank account and a powerful desire to commit suicide. It was therapy or death [Hobson's choice]. She crossed her arms and her eyes were blazing. 'Maybe someday I can forget. No way I can forgive.'

"Only when Bessie puts her logic behind her will she be able to break out of the place where she is stuck and take this final all-important step to healing.

"Lest you protest, 'I can't do that any more than Bessie can,' recall that utter dependence upon logic as such is a relatively recent mindset. Oh, sure, the

Greeks developed logic, including the logical mathematics that form the foundation of our scientific society. But it remained pretty much the realm of the intellectuals. The Arabic scientists carried it to new levels in math and astronomy, as did the Mayas and Aztecs in the New World. The general public in these societies, though, did not depend on pure logic. [Nor did the intellectuals, of course. The societies were superstitious and idolatrous from top to bottom.] Neither did Europeans then, even during her Renaissance when true scientific thought came into flower. Only in the last few hundred years, since the French Revolution, have reasoning and logic come to dominate the mindset of mainstream Western civilization.

[This attempt at intellectual history is pathetic. Except for Hegel, the nineteenth century was the century of the irrationalists: Kierkegaard, Marx, Darwin, Nietzsche. The twentieth century has been even worse: Freud, Dewey, James, Heidegger, Sartre, Skinner, Camus. The heyday of rationalism was the seventeenth century, with Spinoza, Leibniz, and Descartes. The heyday of Christianity was also the seventeenth century when the Westminster Confession was written. Furthermore, the authors seem to be laboring under the misconception that it was logic and reasoning that drove the French Revolution. They should consult James Billington's book, *Fire in the Minds of Men*, in which he argues that it was romanticism, irrationalism, not rationalism, that was responsible for the bloodshed then and since. To say that during the last two centuries reasoning and logic have dominated the mindset of Western civilization is to have lost touch with reality.]

"If such be so, what did logic supplant? Emotional responses. The 'thoughts' of the heart. In our society, 'In my heart of hearts I believe...' is poo-hooped as childish nonsense. We are taught to carefully avoid the messages of the heart and espouse only the messages of the head. Consider bereavement. If a new widow maintains a stiff upper lip and departs herself with dignity, her friends support her. If during her bereavement she consistently falls apart – actually the appropriate cleansing response to her tragedy – [so the

"appropriate cleansing response" is to "consistently fall apart"] her friends counsel, 'Now, now – you're being too emotional. You must be brave.' Or, uncomfortable, they simply back away from her completely.

"Two hundred years ago a bereavement called for a highly emotional response, and if the widow or widower maintained a brave or stoic front, the depth of the love came into serious question. [This statement lacks historical support.] Our [the possessive adjective cannot refer to the authors] utter dependence on reason and cool logic is a recent cultural phenomenon, and it is likely to get in the way of your recovery if you let it. [Why not just let out a Primal Scream?]

"In Bessie's case, her cause for unforgiveness was, on the surface, logical. In fact, it would seem illogical to forgive deliberate hurt. Conversely, if the persons who caused her grief were innocent of malicious intent, it would be logical for her to look past the ignorance and forgive.

"Bessie has two hurdles to leap. *First, she must sideline her reasoning mind and work from the heart.* [Emphasis in the original.]

"'I don't know how,' she says. 'I'm fifty-two years old, so I pretty much missed the women's lib thing where you aren't allowed to be emotional, but think of all the stuff you hear growing up. "Be reasonable." "That's not logical." "Don't let your heart rule your head or you'll marry badly." [Sounds like an open and shut case of child abuse.] How do I turn it off now?'

"'You mentioned to us before that you believe in God. Do you believe in the Bible?'

"'Sure.'

"'According to God's Word, cold, calculating reason isn't His way.'

"A thousand years before Christ, God instructed, 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.' Jesus Himself adjured, "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven.' How heavily does logic weigh in a little

child's thoughts?" [The authors are as competent at exegesis as they are at psychology.]