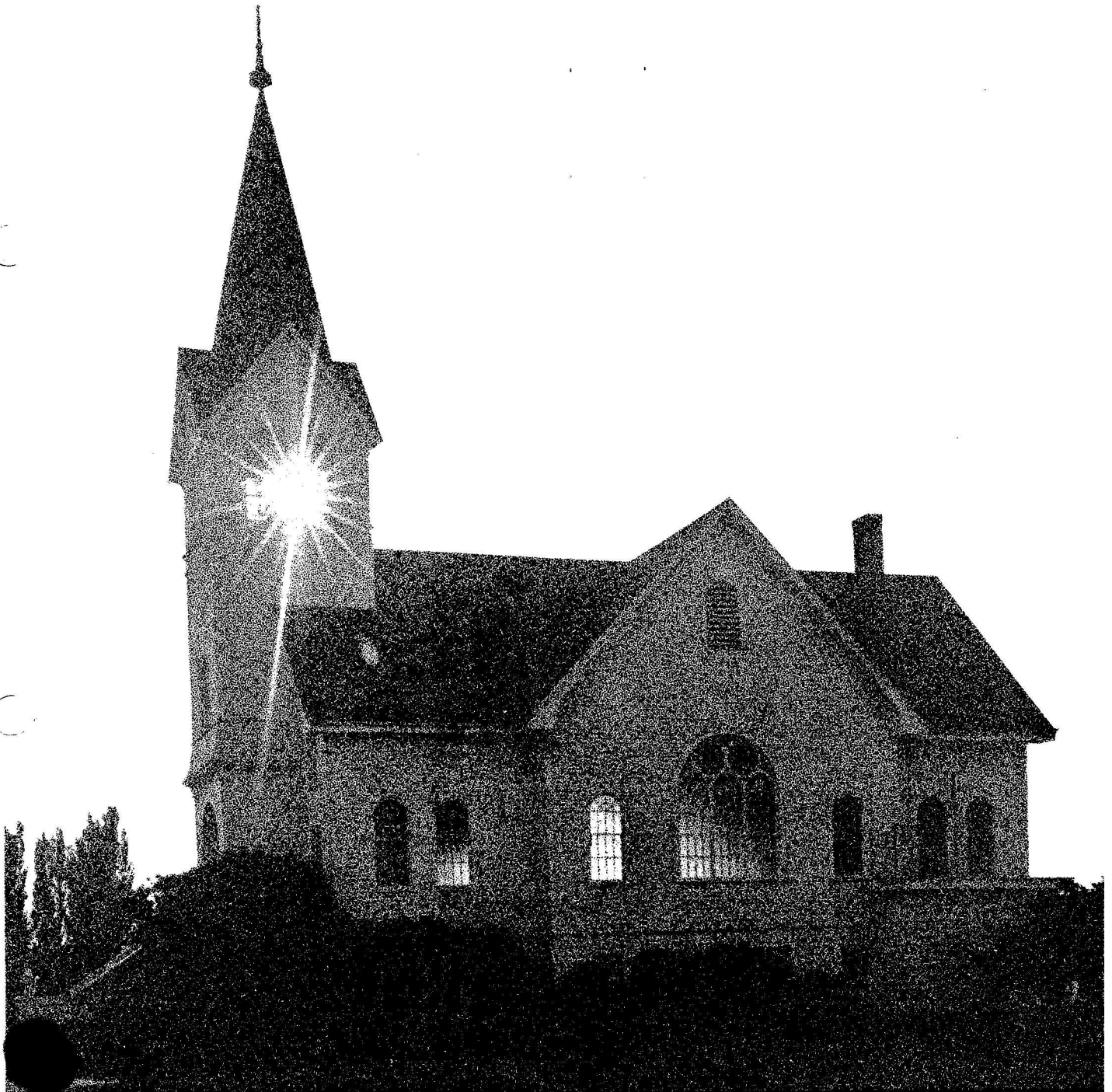


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Solo Christo—Sola Scriptura—Sola Fida—Sola Gratia



What Makes the Bible Authoritative?

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Editorial

Johann Goethe (1749-1832) the German poet, novelist and philosopher believed that all cultures pass through four basic cycles. The first stage is typified by deeply experienced visions and powerful symbols. The second and third stages are increasingly analytical. The instincts are repressed and abstraction flourishes. The final stage is marked by banality and vulgar sensuality. In this final stage, society makes an attempt to recapture its earlier vision, to return to the past, to restore the vitality of the initial impetus, but the effort only creates chaos.

There can be no question that our culture has passed through Goethe's third "analytical" cycle. Over the last half century we have witnessed a strong reaction to the sterile rationalism of previous centuries. There is today an accent on things mystical, religious and intuitive. Popular books, television shows and films reflect our society's thirst for the metaphysical, the transcendent. Our children continue to talk about "E.T.," "Return of the Jedi," "Superman" and "Star Wars."

Ironically, modern science itself has given a great impetus to this new interest in the religious and mystical. The old rational, mechanistic worldview established by the sciences of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has been shattered by the discoveries of Einstein, Hubble, Heisenberg, Whitehead and Bohr, etc. Modern worldviews based on the discoveries of these men leave more room for freedom, purpose and meaning.

The collapse of the old, rigid, mechanistic worldview has created a huge gaping void in the hearts of many. People today are looking for something to fill that aching void, something to satisfy the newly liberated religious instincts. Our hunger for God is as real as all of the basic biological drives for food, water, sex, sleep, etc. The still small voice persists in spite of centuries of education designed to muffle it. Is not this persistent hunger for the religious itself evidence that there must be something in reality to meet its needs? In his book, "The Weight of Glory," C. S. Lewis offers the following simple but compelling argument:

A man's physical hunger does not prove that man will get any bread; he may die of starvation on a raft in the Atlantic. But surely a man's hunger does prove that he comes of a race which repairs its body by eating and inhabits a world where eatable substances exist. In the same way, though I do not believe (I wish I did) that the desire for Paradise proves that I shall enjoy it, I think it a pretty good indication that such a thing exists and that some men will. A man may love a woman and not win her; but it would be very odd if the phenomenon called "falling in love" occurred in a sexless world. (pp. 8,9)

How shall we satisfy this basic spiritual hunger, this thirst for the transcendent? As in the physical world, so in the spiritual — there's a lot of junk food around. Too many today are filling the gaping void with fairy tales and mystical philosophies that are a million miles away from the simple realities of human existence. The Bible gives us the best food. It tells us how to satisfy our spiritual hunger. It tells us what to believe about God, and what to believe about ourselves. It tells us how to relate to God and to one another. There's no other book in the world that can match the unique revelation of God in Jesus Christ enshrined within the pages of the Bible. When the Bible is used to bring us closer to God and to one another it is a great blessing. The only way we can avoid Goethe's final stage of chaos is to return once more to the greatest book ever written.

—Noel Mason

What Makes the Bible Authoritative?

by Desmond Ford

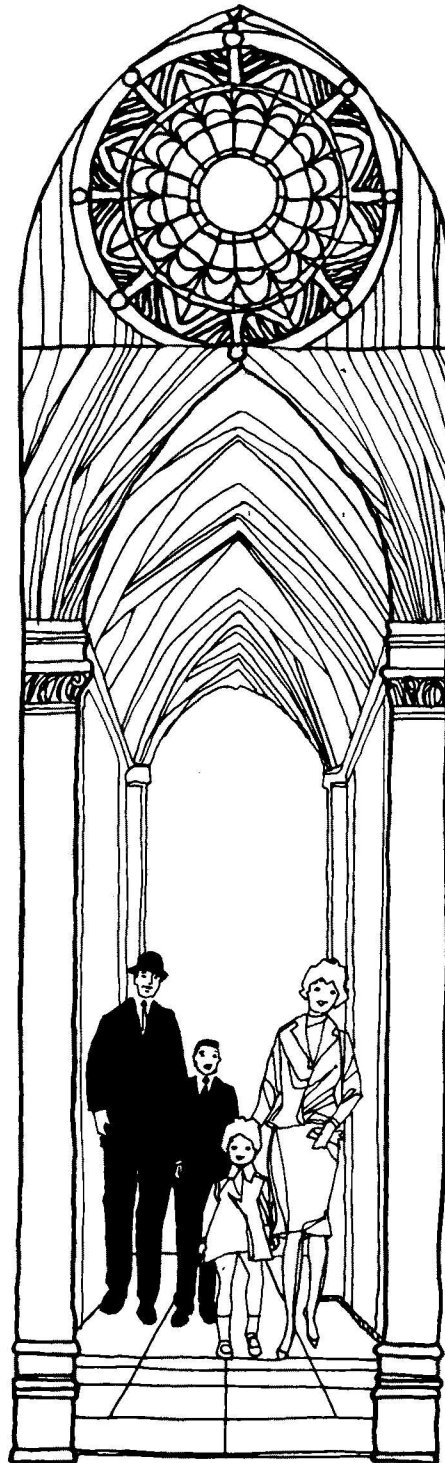
What is a human being without breath? Some pounds of putrifying fat, some smelly water, and hundreds of chemicals. What is a light bulb without electricity? Glass, a filament, and some metal. But who has ever seen breath or an electric charge? Things unseen make all the difference to things seen. After all, who has seen God conducting his business in the world? Who has seen the infinite Spirit brooding over earth's chaos? Who has seen the Spirit whispering into a darkened mind?

Form and Function

Take the human brain, for example. It is a gray jelly-like mass with fissures and clefts. Notice I said *brain*, not *mind*. There is a difference! Don't confuse the form with its function — the first is simple but also deceiving. This form of jelly makes possible the function which includes comprehension of the infinite God and his universe. Through a finite mass of cells the Infinite One manifests himself.

Open your transistor radio. See those colored wires, dabs of metal, etc.? Would an uncultured savage recognize the function by seeing the form? Or consider a love letter. Your dog looks at it and sees only black marks on a white background, but you know it means more than that! Suppose then you are given the task of analyzing a human brain or a light bulb or a transistor. Will you concentrate on its form or function? It depends on you. After all, the chemist and a woman see a diamond quite differently. One sees congealed carbon; the other sees cosmetic glory.

It's always been this way. Who was that woman in the cave stable by the inn? Just a Jewess. And who was the baby? Just another boy. "...When we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him." God came disguised. Doesn't he always? Or almost always? Look at that rude



weather-beaten tent at the center of the nomadic encampment of Israel. They called it the "sanctuary," "the holy place." Nothing looked very holy about it — from the outside, that is. But once we enter in, what a difference! A glorious light in the second apartment casts its radiance over gold and silver-

plated furniture. The old tent is "all glorious within."

The Function of Scripture

The same is true of the Bible. Why have so many through the centuries sensed an authority here that transcends the authority of truth in all other books? Because they have been able to distinguish between form and function. Remember that the form gives no more obvious clue to function than the gray jelly does to the mind. Some see in the Bible merely a collection of historical documents, most of them inaccurate. Others have seen in Scripture the very word of God. "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways . . ." (Heb 1:1). Indeed he did! And Scripture records the ancient revelations of God to our spiritual forefathers.

Ask reverent Bible scholars and they will talk of the many varied forms of literature in the Bible and of the multifaceted process of its production with human authors and even editors. Why then should I heed this patchwork of ancient Jewish literature? Why should I be concerned with living and believing according to its standards and directions? Because it matches the world's problems as a key does a lock; it reveals God as no other thing in creation reveals him; it witnesses to the most unique person ever seen on this planet, whose words after twenty centuries still come to us fragrant and fresh, pungent and powerful.

But can we rationally prove the divine origin of Scripture? Can we use anything outside the Bible to empirically demonstrate its inspiration? No. Such attempts are foolish. Once you make something else the test of Scripture you have made that something else higher than Scripture. *The fact is the truth of Scripture is self-authenticating.* Christians believe it because the Spirit testifies with their spirits

that these words are the words of God. As surely as black is black in itself and sugar is sweet in itself and neither are declared so by church fiat or chemical tests, just so, Scripture is Scripture, and uniquely so, as divine revelation. We do not prove it to be so, we only acknowledge it as such!

Of course there are many arguments from outside of Scripture, arguments from history and from archaeology and logic. But when you use them all and you have convinced a person intellectually of what you are saying, he or she still may not accept your conclusion sufficiently to act upon it. You see, it is not true "that the Bible and the Bible only is the religion of Protestants." Many religious sects claim the same thing. The truth is that when the Spirit ministers to a believing heart and a surrendered will, then only is the truth of Scripture experienced. This is the way we escape bibliolatry (the worship of a book). Only a committed Christian can really believe in the authority of Holy Scripture.

"The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Heb 4:12).

When we turn to human reason to demonstrate the authority of the Bible we are forgetting that human reason has been rendered inadequate because of the effects of the Fall. Secondly, any human being fully persuaded by human reasons would have but human faith, and at another occasion could be dissuaded by more human reasons. Only when the objective test from Scripture is intersected by the subjective witness of the Holy Spirit in the mind of a surrendered believer — only then do we have self-authenticating truth. The conviction of such truths being granted by God can for the believer only be removed by God,

and this he will not do.

Jesus appealed to the self-validating nature of Christian experience for one who has heard the word and walked in its light. He said, "If any man is willing to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine. . . ." (Jn 7:17). That's a test that is open to anybody. As H. L. Hastings said long ago:

There are men who study philosophy, astronomy, geology, geography, and mathematics; but did you ever hear a man say, 'I was an outcast, a wretched inebriate, a disgrace to my race, and a nuisance in the world, until I began to study mathematics, and learned the multiplication table, and then turned my attention to geology, got me a little hammer, and knocked off the corners of the rocks and studied the formation of the earth, and since that time I have been happy as the day is long; I feel like singing all the time; my soul is full of triumph and peace; and health and blessing have come to my desolate home once more'? Did you ever hear man ascribe his redemption and salvation from intemperance and sin and vice to the multiplication table, or the science of mathematics or geology?

But I can bring you, not one man, or two, or ten, but men by the thousand who will tell you, 'I was wretched; I was lost; I broke my poor old mother's heart; I beggared my family; my wife was heart-stricken and dejected; my children fled from the sound of their father's footsteps; I was ruined, reckless, helpless, homeless, hopeless, until I heard the words of that Book!' And he will tell you the very word which fastened on his soul.¹

You will notice this author has referred to the strength with which some word of Scripture has struck the soul of the individual so as to transform his life. This is what we mean when we say that Scripture is self-authenticating. "The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and

marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Heb 4:12).

Christ in the Bible

The self-authenticating quality of Scripture reaches its greatest intensity in Jesus Christ. The entire Bible witnesses to him, both the Old and New Testaments. Just as everything in nature tells us something about God the Creator, so it is with God's other revelation — Scripture. Everything that has ever happened in this world has bearing upon Calvary and reflects some element of the cross and the mysterious figure who hung there. There is no neutrality in human behavior. At every point it either surrenders to or rebels against the will of God. The conjunction of good and evil at Calvary reflected the myriad acts of each quality down through the ages. Similarly every good trait in any man or woman from the time of Adam reflects the perfection of Christ. When the committed Christian prayerfully reads the Old Testament Scriptures, the Spirit will speak to him of Christ. This does not mean precision, nor infallibility in all the reader's conclusions, but it does mean that he or she finds reinforced in the soul the truth of the words of Christ about the Old Testament writings, "They are they which testify of me." No wonder Spurgeon could say:

I will give the Old Testament to any wise man living and say, Go home and construct in your imagination an ideal character who shall exactly fit all that which is herein foreshadowed. Remember, he must be a prophet like unto Moses, and yet a champion like unto Joshua; he must be an Aaron and a Melchisedec; he must be both David and Solomon, Noah and Jonah, Judah and Joseph. Nay, he must not only be the lamb that was slain and the scapegoat that was not slain, the turtle dove and the priest that slew the bird, but he be the altar, tabernacle, meat, seat, and shewbread. Nay, puzzle this wise man further, we remind him of prophecies so apparently contradictory that

one would think they could never meet in one man. Such as these, 'All men shall fall down before Him,' &c., and 'He is despised,' &c. He must begin by showing a man born of a virgin mother, He must be a man without spot or blemish, but one upon whom the Lord doth lay the iniquities of us all. He must be a glorious One, a Son of David, yet a root out of a dry ground. Now if the greatest intellects could set themselves to invent another key to the types and prophecies they could not do it. These wondrous hieroglyphics must be left unexplained till one comes forward and proclaims, 'the Cross of Christ and the Son of God incarnate.' Then the whole is clear, so that he who runs may read, and a child may understand.²

Schopenhauer, the German philosopher, in a preface to his lengthy discussion of knowledge and will wrote:

A system of thoughts must have an architectonic structure in which one part supports the other, but it's not supported by it. The foundation supports the whole, but is itself not supported. The top stone is supported but it supports nothing. What you put upon it is supported by the foundation, but does not support the foundation. But there's another kind of book which is this. A work consisting of one idea, however comprehensive, must possess perfect unity. It may consist of parts, but they must be organically connected, so that each part supports the whole and is supported by the whole. No part is, so to say, first, and no part is last. The whole is illustrated by every minute part, and even the smallest part cannot be rightly understood unless the whole has been comprehended.

As a person surrenders to the Spirit of God and reads the Scriptures, he or she finds that the Bible is the second type of work

described by Schopenhauer.

There is a perfect unity about Scripture which cannot be found in any other library of diverse authorship. That's why when one reads Genesis 1, for example, one discovers the whole story of redemption as well as creation — from the time when God begins to move upon the darkened mind by his Spirit to separate good and evil, to the time when we are restored perfectly into the image of God and enter into a sabbath rest of soul. That's why the story of Eve being taken out of Adam's

No part is, so to say, first, and no part is last. The whole is illustrated by every and no part is last. The whole is illustrated by every minute part, and even the smallest part cannot be rightly understood unless the whole has been comprehended. . . . There is a perfect unity about Scripture which cannot be found in any other library of diverse authorship.

side during his sleep, on the sixth day, illustrates so beautifully the significance of the riven side of Christ on Calvary. That is the reason Genesis mentions "righteousness" in connection with the promise to Abraham (Gn 15:6). This text gives us in a nutshell the whole meaning that is enlarged in the book of Romans (Rom 4). Again, the first time the word priest occurs is in connection with Melchizedek, the king-priest, whose genealogy is not listed nor his death recorded, in order that he might prefigure our great High Priest, Jesus, who had neither beginning of days, nor end of life.

What then is the practical significance of our meditation? As Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones once

wrote: "Ultimately the way to understand the Scriptures in all theology is to become holy. It is to be under the authority of the Spirit. It is to be led of the Spirit."³ "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." It is still the pure in heart who see God, and it is the meek whom he guides in judgment. What a blessed plan of authority God has thus devised, and we bow in submission to the truth that it is "the heart and not the head to the highest doth attain."

1. H. L. Hastings, *Will the Old Book Stand?*, p. 22.
2. *The Biblical Illustrator*, pp. 336-337.
3. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Authority*, p. 79.



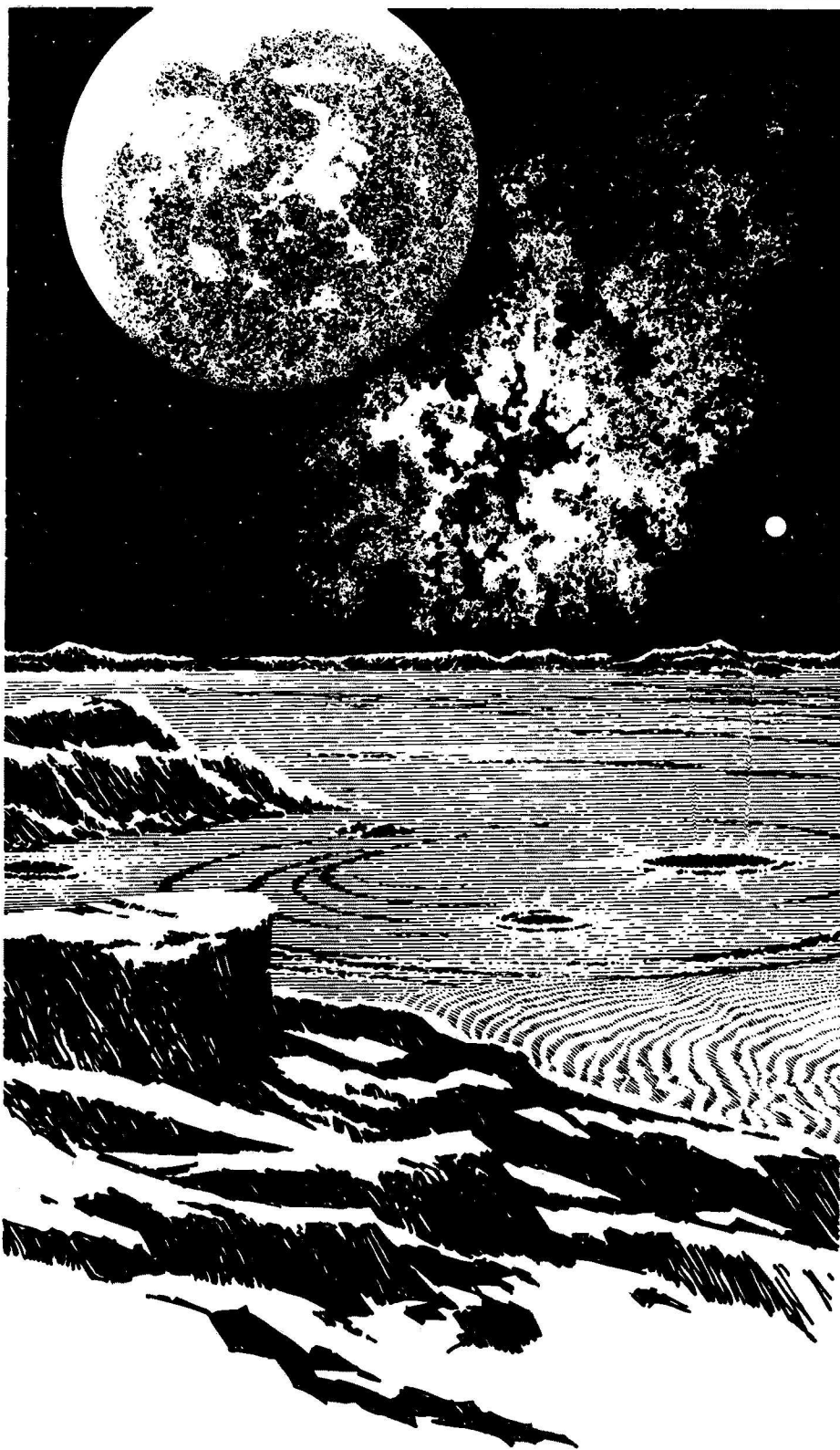
DESMOND FORD

Getting the Big Picture?

Part I

Religion, Science, and the Cosmos

—Noel Mason



Do you ever wonder? Do you ever wonder about the universe and how it came into existence? Do you ever wonder whether the physical universe is all there is and why it is as it is, and not something else? Do you ever wonder about the meaning of human existence, whether life is meaningful or meaningless, whether life is essentially a comedy or tragedy? Do you ever wonder why some people have good luck and others seem to have bad luck and whether your life is unfolding according to some plan? Do you ever wonder whether history as a whole has any meaning, whether our own civilization will crumble and vanish like the Greek and Roman civilizations? No one can avoid wondering what the answers might be to questions like these.

The World Riddle

The universe, with all its complexities and perplexities, its benevolence and malevolence, seems to lay before us like a giant jigsaw puzzle. We wonder how it all fits together. For thousands of years the greatest philosophers have tried to put all the pieces together to form a coherent world picture. The history of philosophy is really the history of man's attempt to develop a unified and comprehensive world picture, a worldview in which all the bits and pieces of knowledge and experience find their proper place. "Constructive philosophy," writes William Halverson, "is simply the search for the comprehensive view — the 'big picture,' as it is sometimes called — that is most adequate to all the known facts."¹

The Ancient World Picture

For thousands of years mankind has tried to construct a model of the universe, a world picture that would incorporate all of reality. The world picture of most ancient people was quite different from that of modern man. "The fundamental difference" write and H. A. Frankfort "between attitudes of modern and ancient man as regards the surrounding world is this: 'for modern,



HOW TO BE HAPPY

Gillian Ford

Every boy and girl wants to be happy. They know that their moms and dads and their friends are all seeking happiness and they want it too. But has anyone ever told you that most people in their search for happiness are cheated, they do not go the right way about it? Happiness is one thing you can never get if it's the main thing you seek. Happiness, like coke, is a by-product.

Many wise things have been said about this quest for happiness. It was Abraham Lincoln who declared that, "Most people are about as happy as they make up their minds to be." And Ralph Waldo Emerson said that, "Happiness is a perfume you cannot pour on others without getting a few drops on yourself."

Someone has reminded us that, "No one else is responsible for your happiness."

A very wise English novelist by the name of J. B. Priestly said this: To me there is in happiness an element of self-forgetfulness. You lose yourself in something outside yourself when you are happy; just as when you are desperately miserable you are intensely conscious of yourself, are a solid little lump of ego weighing a ton.

Perhaps you have never heard of Dr. W. Beran Wolfe. He died at thirty-five years of age, but only after he had helped many to find happiness. He was a psychiatrist, weighed down with the agonies of his patients. People came to him ready to suicide, complaining of loneliness and loss, and

hatred, and friendlessness. So many of his visitors were bitter and frightened and anguished and confused. All of them were desperately unhappy, and looking for a solution to their great problem.

As the young psychiatrist thought upon the tragedies of sadness he faced daily, he remembered what a humble Greek slave in Nero's Rome, a slave who was lame and poor, yet serene and content, had written: "If a man is unhappy, remember that his own happiness is his own fault; for God has made all men to be happy." Dr. Wolfe was convicted that most people were unhappy because they looked inward instead of outward. They thought too much about themselves instead of things outside themselves. He realized, as he contemplated, that happiness did not consist in having things, but it consisted in doing and being. As he thought on his many patients, he realized that most of them had one common trait — a selfish concept of life. Being intensely absorbed in their own wishes, they failed to minister to others and thus failed to make friends. In other words, selfishness was the cause of their unhappiness. So a young Dr. Wolfe sat down and began to write. These are some of the things he put to paper — things that have been a blessing wherever they have been read:

If we want to know what happiness is we must seek it, not as if it were a pot of gold at the end

of the rainbow, but among human beings who are living richly and fully the good life. If you observe the really happy man you'll find him building a boat, writing a symphony, educating his son, growing double dahlias in his garden. He will not be searching for happiness as if it were a collar button that has rolled under the radiator. He will have become aware that he's happy in the course of living twenty-four crowded hours of the day.

Just as no one can be happy in work which is centered entirely about his own person and deals exclusively with the satisfaction of his own immediate needs, so no one can be entirely happy in social relations which focus only in himself and his immediate and narrow sphere of influence. To find happiness we must seek for it in a focus outside ourselves. . .

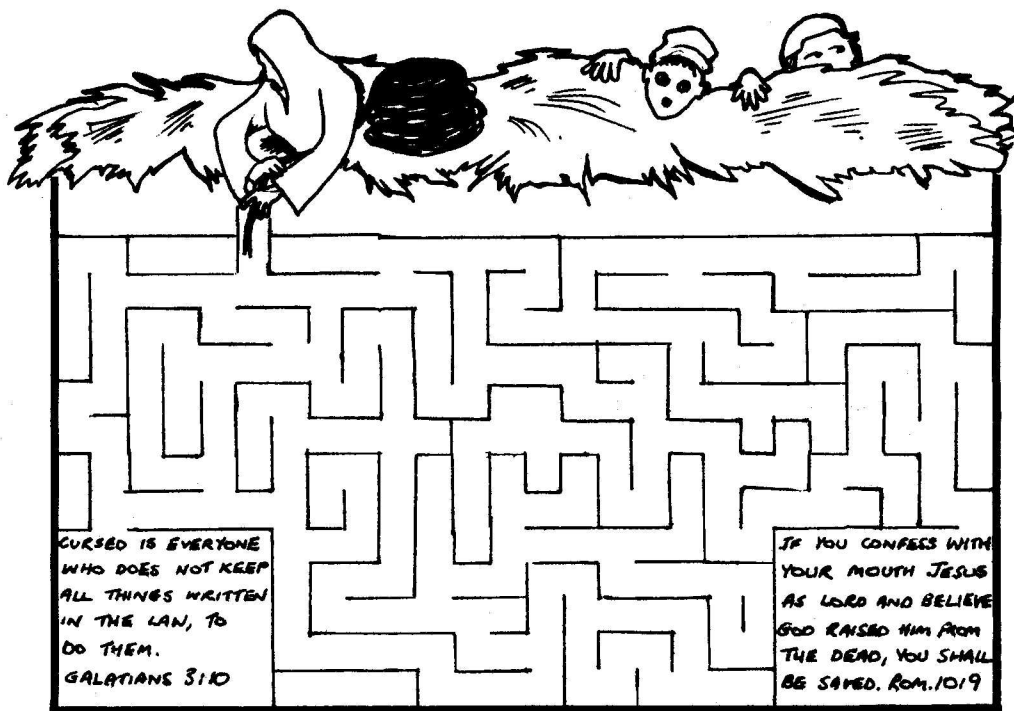
If you live only for yourself you are always in immediate danger of being bored to death with the repetition of your own views and interests. . . . Choose a movement that presents a distinct trend toward greater human happiness and align

yourself with it. No one has learned this meaning of living until he has surrendered his ego to the service of his fellow men.

When Jesus said to certain humble fishermen of Bethsada, "Come, follow me, and I'll make you fishers of men" he was actually telling them how to be happy. But he was also telling us. Mankind is your business, my business. Are we about our business, seeking to bless others? All you put into other lives by means of blessing will come back a hundredfold more upon your own head. You cannot love Christ without loving those for whom he died. And remember it was Christ who said that those who followed him in loving service would "receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands,...and in the world to come eternal life."

For "whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it." (Mar' 10:30;9:35).

THE SCARLET THREAD



The law that God gave at Mt. Sinai is a good list of how we should live but it can't save us because we never keep it perfectly. Rahab is trying to help the men of Israel get to safety but the scarlet thread has gotten tangled. Can you help them with your red pencil? The promise verse will help you but the law one will lead to capture.

Ask your mom and dad to read you the story of Rahab in Joshua 2. The scarlet thread is a symbol of Jesus' red blood that He shed to save us. Ask your mom and dad why you can only get to safety **ONE WAY** and ask them just what do these two verses in the puzzle mean? Have fun!

—Gill Ford

DANIEL AND THE KING'S FOOD

Gillian Ford

"When you are in Rome, do as the Romans do," they always say. But here was a young man in Babylon who would not do what Babylon did. Here was a youth in a court where you did what the king said or died, and he would not eat what the king ate, or drink what the king drank.

The Jews had been told by God to keep apart from the nations who did not worship him in case they lost their faith. They were not supposed to even eat with them. And here Daniel and his four friends, like other special prisoners, were introduced to the national food of Babylon.

There were several reasons why they weren't supposed to eat it. First of all it was unclean. In the book of Leviticus there is a list of rules about animal foods that were forbidden to the Jews. Some of the creatures forbidden by this list are pigs, hares, swans, sharks, and mice! These animals are scavengers, the rubbish-collectors of the natural world. It was their job to eat garbage and so keep the world clean. But for people to eat them spread illness. God knew this and made special rules for the Jews to keep them healthy.

A second reason the Jews were not to eat the king's food was that they had a special way of preparing their meat. They were not supposed to eat the blood in it because it was a symbol of life. So they killed clean animals in a special way to let the blood out. The Babylonians not only ate animals that were unclean to the Jews but they did not kill them properly.

The food was not acceptable to Daniel and his friends for yet another reason. It had been offered to the king of Babylon's gods.

So Daniel was in trouble. What was he to do? Imagine yourself in his place. Not only were the king's servants urging him to eat the food. That was difficult enough. But many of his friends from Jerusalem began to eat the food because they were afraid of what would happen. Then they tried to persuade Daniel to do the same.

You know how difficult it is to be different when nearly everyone is pushing you to be the same as them. Think about the sorts of things that might have been said.

"Daniel, it's only food. It's just a little thing. Why don't you forget about it?"

"If you're so fussy you'll get us all into trouble. Just do what you're told. God will understand."

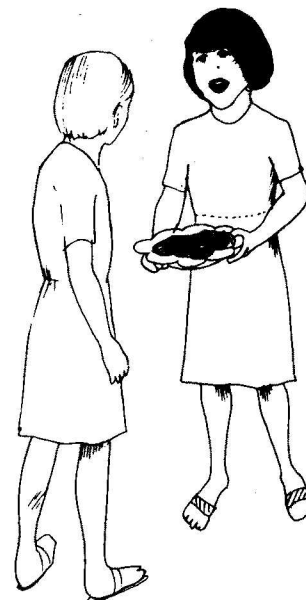
"Things are hard enough for all of us. Why are you trying to make it worse for us?"

What did Daniel think as he listened to all these different voices? His heart was pounding. His throat was squeaky dry. He felt scared. He wanted to please his friends and some of their arguments were very clever. But he asked, "What does God say is right for me to do?" In the end, he just did what was right, despite the cost.

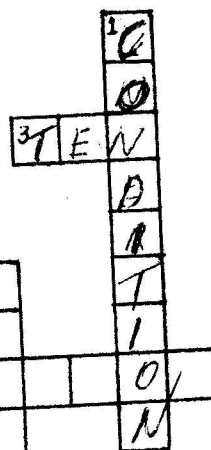
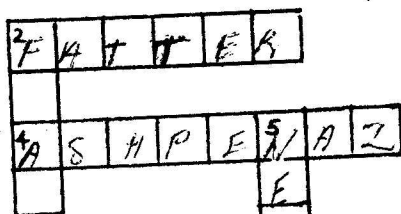
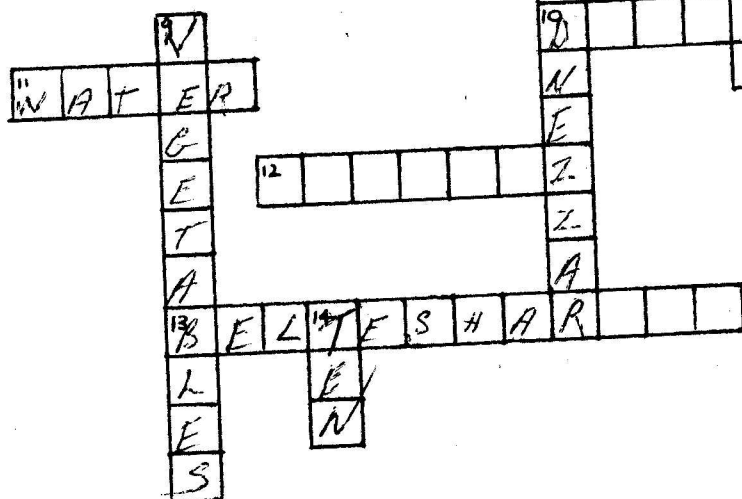
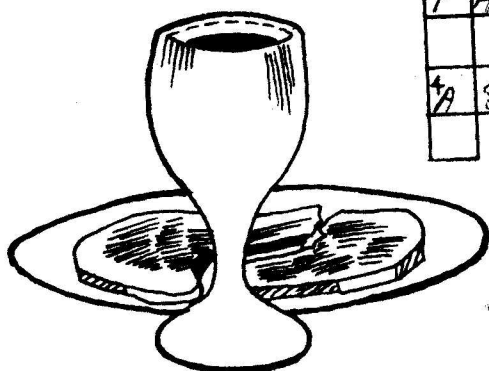
You can read the rest of the story in Daniel 1. When Daniel and his friends asked for a ten-day test and ate the simple, nourishing food they asked for, they came out looking ten times better than the other magicians and enchanters.

But this was only the first test. The first half of the book of Daniel is full of tests. Daniel did not have an easy time in Babylon for it always costs something to stand up for what is right. But because he was "a youth greatly decided," he became "a man greatly beloved." The seeds he sowed when so young (some people think he was only fifteen at this time) came to flower when he was older. He was trusted by kings.

You know, if Daniel had not stood for the right, we would never have heard of him. And he would never have delivered his people out of bondage. And it all began with a test over food. Sometimes big things hang on small decisions. When in Rome, do as the Romans do? Maybe sometimes the opposite is true. When in Rome, don't do what the Romans do.



CROSSWORD PUZZLE



DANIEL CHAPTER ONE

CLUES:

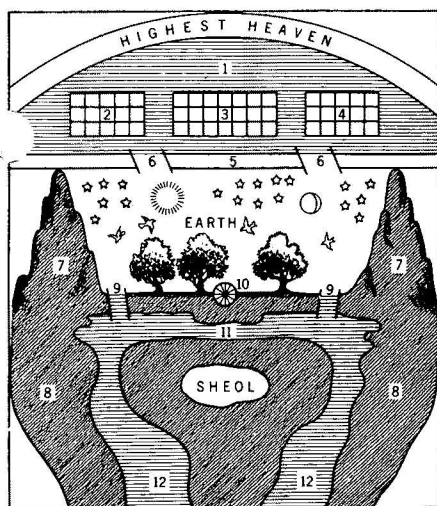
Down:

1. Daniel 1:10. The eunuch was afraid they would be in poorer _____ (9 letters)
5. Daniel 1:1. _____ (14 letters), name of the King of Babylon
6. Daniel 1:8. Daniel would not _____ (6 letters) himself with the king's food
8. Daniel 1:12. _____ (4 letters) your servants for ten days. . .
9. Daniel 1:12. Give us _____ (10 letters) to eat and water to drink.
14. Daniel 1:20. (The king). . . . found them _____ (3 letters) times better than all the magicians. . .

Across:

2. Daniel 1:15. They were better and _____ (6 letters) than all. . .
3. Same as 14 down
4. Daniel 1:3. The name of the chief eunuch (8 letters)
7. Daniel 1:9. God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs.
10. Daniel 1:4. Youths without blemish, _____ and skilful in all wisdom endowed with knowledge, understanding, learning,
11. Daniel 1:12. Give us vegetables to eat and _____ to drink.
12. Daniel 1:5. The King assigned a daily _____ (7 letters) of the rich food which the king ate.
13. Daniel 1:7 — Daniel's new name (12 letters)

scientific man the phenomenal world is primarily an 'It'; for ancient — and also for primitive man, it is a 'Thou'.² Everything was very close in the ancient world picture. The canopy of stars was just beyond man's reach. People felt themselves enclosed within a small world. The sky was shaped like an overturned porridge bowl, the flat earth, supported by a number of pillars, was surrounded by an abyss of waters. Although there were some differences between the Babylonian, Egyptian and Hebrew world pictures, physically their models of the universe looked something like this:



Biblical conception of the world: (1) waters above the firmament; (2) storehouses of snow; (3) storehouses for hail; (4) chambers of winds; (5) firmament; (6) sluces; (7) pillars of the sky; (8) pillars of the earth; (9) fountain of the deep; (10) navel of the earth; (11) waters under the earth; (12) rivers of the nether world.

For ancient man the cosmos was alive, a living thing not an inanimate object. The forces and powers of his world were experienced as the forces and powers of the gods. By the third millennium B.C. the ancient world had already a highly developed polytheism. How did ancient man identify the gods of his cosmos?

H. and H. A. Frankfort explain:

The world appears to primitive man neither inanimate nor empty but redundant with life; and life has individuality, in man and beast and plant, and in every phenomenon which confronts man — the thunderclap, the sudden shadow, the eerie and the unknown clearing in the wood, the stone which suddenly hurts

him when he stumbles while on a hunting trip. Any phenomenon may at any time face him, not as an 'It', but as 'Thou'. In this confrontation, 'Thou' reveals its individuality, its qualities, its will. 'Thou' is not contemplated with intellectual detachment; it is experienced as life confronting life, involving every faculty of man in a reciprocal relationship, thoughts, no less than acts and feelings, are subordinated to this experience.³

The people of the ancient world identified the gods, not so much by rational analysis, as by the experience of power and force in nature as they struggled to survive. George Ernest Wright described this experience of ancient man when he wrote:

The awesome power of the great thunderstorms, the majestic expanse and depth of the heavens, the mysterious brilliance of the moon and the stars, the wonderful blessing of the sun's warmth, the miraculous fecunding of the earth, the terrible reality of death, all these and many more awakened in him feelings of awe and wonder. He did not distinguish between reality and the force in or behind it. In the storm he meets the God Storm. Nature is alive, and its powers are distinguished as personal because man had directly experienced them...Man lives in the realm of a throbbing, personal nature, the kingdom of the holy gods. He is caught in the interplay of gigantic forces to which he must integrate his life. They are known to him because he has experienced them, not as objects, but as personalities so much greater in power than his own that of necessity he worships and serves them.⁴

With this understanding of the cosmos, life could never be taken for granted. The people of this world had to discern the will of the gods. If the Nile River in Egypt refused to rise and inundate, then the river or the gods were unhappy with their devotees. We have records of what happened in Mesopotamia when the Tigris River refused to

rise. King Gudea went to sleep in the temple in the hope that the gods might convey to him the meaning of the drought. Similarly in Egypt the Pharaoh made gifts to the Nile about the time when it was due to rise. When we stop and think about it, the answers to the questions that make us wonder are largely determined by our concept of God, our world picture.

The Modern World Pictures

Throughout history there has been a number of revolutionary eras in which civilizations have witnessed the dissolution and collapse of a world picture. One such era was the seventeenth century. *No one can really understand modern people without some knowledge of what happened in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.* Modern scientific people were born in these revolutionary centuries. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witnessed the collision of two worldviews. It was a difficult time for advocates of both world pictures. The medieval worldview collapsed before the new insights of Copernicus (1473-1543) Kepler (1571-1630) and Galileo (1564-1642), etc. This worldview was geocentric — earth centered. It was anthropocentric — man centered. Medieval people felt very secure living on a flat earth with God and heaven just above. Believing they were living at the very center of creation they felt very safe and cozy in their well-ordered universe. But then came the great discoveries of Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo and Newton, whose lives stretch across the whole of the seventeenth century. These discoveries had a devastating impact upon the worldview of medieval mankind. That impact is still being felt today, for philosophers and scientists are still trying to put Humpty Dumpty together again. Morris Berman in his book *The Reenchantment of the Universe* makes the following observation:

In the course of the seventeenth century Western Europe hammered out a new way of perceiving reality. The

most important change was the shift from quality to quantity, from 'why' to 'how'. The universe, once seen as alive, possessing its own goals and purposes, is now a collection of inert matter, hurrying around endlessly and meaninglessly... The acid test of existence is quantifiability, and there are no more basic realities in any object than the parts into which it can be broken down.⁵

In the light of this new way of looking at reality, the cozy, man-centered, earth-centered medieval world picture was seen as so much "romantic claptrap."

How did ancient man identify the gods of his cosmos? . . . "The world appears to primitive man neither inanimate nor empty but redundant with life; and life has individuality, in man and beast and plant, and in every phenomenon which confronts man"

Reeling under the impact of the vastness of the universe that had been uncovered, Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) cried:

When I consider the short duration of my life, swallowed up in the eternity before and after, the little space which I fill, and even can see, engulfed in the infinite immensity of spaces of which I am ignorant and which knew me not, I am frightened, and am astonished at being here rather than there,...why now rather than then. Who has put me here? By whose order and direction have this place and this time been allotted to me? *The eternal silence of these infinite spaces frightens me.*⁶

Pascal's feeling of dread would be greatly intensified if he were alive today, for according to Isaac Asimov there may be 135,000,000,000 stars in our galaxy, and there may be as many as 100,000,000 other galaxies distributed through space.

But scientific discoveries didn't stop with the seventeenth-century

scientists. Newton's structure of an orderly, regular universe began to crack when a new "Copernicus," Albert Einstein demonstrated that parts of Newton's picture of an orderly, regular universe could not be supported. Contrary to Newton, Einstein in his theory of relativity was able to show that time and space are not absolutes. They are relative to the position of the observer. Einstein was able to show that what looks straight to the naked eye is really a curve. When asked for a simple explanation of his theory of relativity, Einstein gave an answer which for most of us would indicate that the universe is queerer than we have ever been tempted to think. He said:

If you will not take the answer too seriously, only as a kind of joke, then I can explain it as follows. It was formerly believed that if all material things disappeared out of the universe, time and space would be left. According to the relativity theory, however, time and space disappear together with the things.⁷

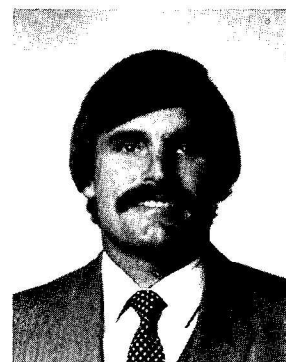
To put it another way, Einstein demonstrated that time and space were not just there to be measured and recorded. What is seen is dependent on where we are and how we are measuring.

The universe, once seen as alive, possessing its own goals and purposes, is now a collection of inert matter, hurrying around endlessly and meaninglessly . . .

More cracks were to appear in the Newtonian world picture. Scientists began to probe the atom, the fundamental building block of the universe. They became puzzled and astonished at what they "saw." The subatomic particles seemed to move in a random way. The more the physicists studied the irregularity of the subatomic particles the more convinced they became of their randomness and their indeterminacy. Einstein was upset. He wrote to Max Born, one of the founders of quantum

physics: "You believe in a God who plays dice, and I in complete law and order..." While the physicists Heisenberg, Born and others were busy probing the atom, astronomers were peering into the heavens with more powerful telescopes. Two astronomers, Hubble and Humason discovered the law of the expanding universe. They found that the further away a galaxy is, the faster it moves. These astronomers were some of the first to postulate that the universe must have begun with an explosion — a big bang. A new world picture was emerging. The Steady-state world picture which postulated that matter was eternal began to crack. Today scientists are busy refining the Big-bang world picture. Will the search for a coherent, stable world picture ever end? Not if the last three centuries of science is a pattern for the future. (To be continued)

1. A Concise Introduction to Philosophy, p. 9.
2. H. and H. A. Frankfort, *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*, p. 4.
3. Ibid, p. 6.
4. G. E. Wright, *The Old Testament Against Its Environment*, p. 17.
5. M. Berman, *The Reenchantment of the Universe*, p. 34.
6. Peneses B., p. 206.
7. R. W. Clark, *Einstein: The Life and Times*, p. 75.



NOEL MASON



The Way I See It

by Noel Mason

"The Bible In America: How One Book Unites Us, Divides Us, and Still Defines Us." These were the words on the front cover of *Newsweek*, December 27, 1982. Who will question the truthfulness of these words? With some embarrassment we have to acknowledge that over the centuries the Bible has often divided the body of Christ. Some today lay the blame on the Bible itself. They argue that there is little unity of thought in the Bible and that the multitude of conflicting denominations today are simply a reflection of the diverse theologies in the Bible itself. In spite of all the scholarly studies that have emphasized the rich diversity of thought in the Bible I remain convinced that a solid core of unity exists within the diversity.

In my opinion, many of the divisions in the church have been created by militant fundamentalists who have taken an unbalanced view of the Bible. These extreme fundamentalists use the Bible like a drunkard uses a street lamppost — mainly for support, rarely for illumination. For these Christians the Bible is

an arsenal of doctrinal proof texts to be kept near at hand ready for use at the first opportunity. Now, it is true that Scripture itself exhorts us all "to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 1:3). But it is one thing to contend for the faith, quite another to be contentious about it. Furthermore, it is clear from the letter of Jude as a whole, that what disturbs this writer is the impact that false doctrine was having on the lives of his fellow Christians. The intruders whom he opposes are "ungodly persons" who not only "deny...Jesus Christ" but who "pervert the grace of God into licentiousness" (v 4). It would be difficult to find a single instance in the New Testament of a Christian prophet contending for some point of theology that had no practical bearing on the Christian life.

Why do many Christians use the Bible primarily as a club to beat their fellow Christians into doctrinal submission? Is it ignorance, or arrogance, or a bit of both? I suggest this misuse of the Bible is largely due to ignorance.

And we have all been guilty of it at different times. It is likely that our first instructor handed on to us a lopsided view of revelation which tends to emphasize the divine at the expense of the human and the historical. If we look carefully at the extreme fundamentalist theory of revelation and inspiration we can often detect a faulty logic. It runs something like this:

God is perfect, infallible, inerrant,
The Bible is God's word,
Therefore the Bible must be perfect, infallible, inerrant.

But this seems a non sequitur to me, i.e. the conclusion does not necessarily follow from the premises. The Bible is not God's word, period. *It is God's word in the words of men.* God has spoken, but he has spoken through prophets who confessed they were "earthen vessels" (2 Cor 4:7). The Bible did not drop from the starry heavens. All of God's word has been mediated through sinful, erring human instruments. More than one Bible prophet laments the inadequacy of human language to express the things he felt God

had revealed to him. It was the Apostle Paul who confessed: "Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully..." (1 Cor 13:12). In spite of the fact that he was certain that God had spoken to him he still confessed that he walked by faith, not by sight (2 Cor 5:7). He admitted that his knowledge was imperfect (1 Cor 13:9). Jesus also confessed certain limitations to his knowledge (Mk 13:32, Mt 27:46). Any theory of revelation that doesn't make room for these confessions of inadequacies must be inaccurate. Many extreme fundamentalists fail to appreciate that the very translation they use is the result of thousands of hours of textual criticism. Our modern translations are based on thousands of bits and pieces of manuscripts. The notes in every Bible margin make this clear. Notes like "Some ancient authorities read...", "Some early manuscripts read..." indicate that translators cannot always resolve textual difficulties. The consequences are not always trivial. For example, consider Matthew 5:22:

But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council...

In the Revised Standard Version (RSV) there is a marginal reference after the word "brother." The marginal note reads: "Other ancient authorities insert 'without cause.'" How should the text read? Will anyone argue that it makes little difference? The ethical requirement in the reading, "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his

brother *without cause*" is certainly less stringent than the one that enjoys priority in the RSV. The usual response of the extreme conservative to this sort of hard, empirical data is that these are corruptions that have crept into the text. The original manuscripts were without error. But such an argument leaves one wondering why God went to all the trouble of ensuring word-perfect autographs if they were to be corrupted within the space of a few short years. Surely if it was God's intention to give us an infallible, inerrant manuscript he could have also preserved such throughout the centuries of transmission.

Some extremists who are willing to acknowledge textual difficulties will respond by saying: "Oh well inerrancy and infallibility do not mean that there are not some variations in the manuscripts." They say the same thing in response to theological disparities, historical inaccuracies, etc. The problem with this type of reasoning is that before long the fundamentalist theory of revelation and inspiration has died the death of a thousand qualifications. If the words "infallible" and "inerrant" need so many qualifications would it not be better to select more appropriate terms?

The picture of a lonely prophet receiving the word of God in a vision, or a dream, or from a voice out of heaven writing it down somewhat like a stenographer is a popular stereotype. Some passages in the Bible at first glance may support such a model of revelation (see Amos 7:14,15; Hos 1:2, etc.) But it is doubtful whether these passages are

to be interpreted in a literal way. For instance, what did Isaiah mean when he said, "The Lord of hosts has revealed himself in my ears"? (22:14). What did Amos mean when he said, "The Lord God showed me"? (7:1,4,7) And in spite of all our space-age knowledge, we do not really know what happened to Ezekiel when he says, "the Lord put forth the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of my head; and the spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven, and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem" (8:3). Paul was rather tentative about certain aspects of his experience of visions and revelations (2 Cor 12:1-10).

In light of the fact that the prophets themselves were not able to fully explain their experience one wonders how those who have never been chosen for the prophetic office can be so dogmatic about their theories of revelation and inspiration. Furthermore, it is clear that all prophetic utterances are not to be accepted uncritically. Paul advised the Corinthians to "let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said" (1 Cor 14:29). In the same context Paul unambiguously states: "For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect" (1 Cor 13:9). He also asserts that prophecy will pass away.

For me, all the energy spent and blood spilled over theories of inspiration and revelation that claim too much for the Bible would have been better spent over that which will not pass away — "love" (1 Cor 13:8). That's the way I see it. Can you see it that way too?

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Wrestling with the Word

by
Brad McIntyre

For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.'

(Rom 1:16-17 RSV)

In this brief study, we will focus on the phrase "the righteousness of God." What does Paul mean? Obviously he feels the gospel is a present and saving revelation of God's righteousness. To Paul, the gospel is a divine revelation. It is the power of God unleashed in a sinful world which effects the salvation of all who have faith, both Jew and Gentile. This saving activity of God, Paul says, reveals God's righteousness toward those who live by faith from start to finish (literally, "out of faith into faith").

I have come across at least four interpretations of "the righteousness of God." Some feel it refers to the righteousness (holiness or uprightness) demanded by God as a prerequisite for salvation. Others view it as the righteousness or ethical perfection God himself possesses — God's righteous character. A third interpretation sees the righteousness of God as a gift coming to sinners to cover them, sort of like a spotless robe of perfection

which covers the residual defilement in the sinner. A final possibility is that God's righteousness is his saving power or activity.

Paul uses the word "righteousness" (Gk. *dikaiosune*) about sixty times throughout his letters (thirty-five times in Romans). Six times Paul refers specifically to righteousness in relation to God (Rom 1:17; 3:21,25; 10:3; 2 Cor 5:10; Php 3:9). We have seen that Paul describes the gospel as the "power of God for salvation." "Power" (Gk. *dunamis*) in the NT designates a miracle, a manifestation of God's omnipotence, a mighty work of God. Used in conjunction with the term "the righteousness of God," it implies that God's righteousness is a powerful event. In Romans 1:2-3 we notice that the gospel concerns God's Son, Jesus Christ, and was foretold in the OT. Therefore, the gospel is a historical happening centering on Christ and bringing salvation to all who believe. This event is the revelation of the righteousness of God. C. H. Dodd paraphrases Romans 1:17:

God is now seen to be vindicating right, redressing wrong, and delivering men from the power of evil. (*The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 13)

This, to me, is the most accurate interpretation of the righteousness of God. Moreover, it is supported by a close reading of Romans 3:21-26. This passage clearly defines the nature of the salvation announced in 1:16-17. After establishing the lostness of humankind (including Israel) in 1:18-3:20, Paul triumphantly proclaims the arrival of God's righteousness — the only solution to the human dilemma. The righteousness of God in this section is revealed in the cross of Christ and results in justification for the sinner who believes. It is an activity initiated by God himself, quite apart from any human effort to keep the law (v. 21); it is a gift of grace for all who have faith (vv. 22-24); it

acquits, vindicates, delivers and restores the sinner to a right relationship with God. Again, the righteousness of God is seen as a saving event rooted in Jesus Christ.

This view of the righteousness of God is similar to that found in the OT. Whereas in Greek thought, righteousness meant perfect conformity to an ideal or ethical standard, the OT concept of righteousness is rooted in covenant relationships. Righteousness in the OT means covenant faithfulness, loyalty to the obligations of a personal relationship. Fulfilling the conditions of a relationship equals righteousness. For example, God is righteous when he acts in behalf of Israel in order to fulfill his promises. These acts include deliverance (Ps 31:1; 71:2), vindication (Ps 35:23-24; 98:2; 103:6-7), and salvation (Is 56:1; 51:5-6; 59:16; 63:1; Mic 7:18-20). Please read the above passages in a number of translations and it will become clear that the righteousness of "Yahweh" is his saving activity revealed in concrete, historical events of deliverance, vindication and salvation.

Paul continues the OT concept of the righteousness of God, only now he sees Jesus Christ as God's climactic event. The gospel of Christ is God's mighty work (power) because it reveals his righteousness — his saving activity. Jesus Christ is, for Paul, the ultimate act of divine deliverance, vindication and salvation. The righteousness of God in the OT was a prelude to his crowning act of righteousness, namely, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

So when Paul says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel . . . for in it the righteousness of God is revealed," he has in mind the entire Christ-event. In the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, God has unloosed his saving power in an unprecedented way, and all who believe are delivered, vindicated and saved. This is the righteousness of God.



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