

# The Bible – Its Rational Doctrine<sup>1</sup>

By

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<sup>1</sup> This article owes much to an outline by Homer Hailey.

One of the former presidents of the United States once said, “I believe the Bible is the best gift that God has ever given to man. All the good from the Savior of the world is communicated to us through this Book. I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go.”

Abraham Lincoln said that.<sup>2</sup>

Times have certainly changed since then. Enemies of the Bible abound. More than a hundred and fifty years of secular attacks on the relevance and truthfulness of the biblical doctrines have left the majority of people with little or no knowledge of the promises and reassurances contained in the Holy Scriptures. This is unfortunate because the Bible says concerning the apostolic advice to Timothy,

2 Timothy 3:14–17 (NASB95)

14 You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, 15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the

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<sup>2</sup> Michael P. Green, *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1990, p. 35.

man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

The Bible explains in forthright and rational terms how a person can be saved. It provides the wisdom to advise about and to correct bad behavior besides equipping the diligent reader for every good work.

Yet in all this there are still people who dissent and obstruct the message.

Thomas Paine, who was an immigrant to America in 1787, gained considerable fame for writing some brilliant pamphlets on freedom. After he had become famous he made a mistake. He began to write his “masterpiece” which he called *The Age of Reason*. In that book he scoffed at Christianity.

“This will destroy the Bible,” he predicted. “Within 100 years, Bibles will be found only in museums or in musty corners of second-hand bookstores.” His book was published in London in 1794. But it brought him so much misery and loneliness that he once said: “I would give worlds, if I had them, had *The Age of Reason* never been written.”

Paine became a bedridden invalid until his death, friendless and alone, in 1809. Despite Paine’s prediction the Bible remained.<sup>3</sup> And even today, regardless of the criticisms, disparagements and

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<sup>3</sup> Tan, P. L. (1996). *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (p. 176). Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc.

attacks by secular minded people the Bible remains. It cannot be destroyed. It is a beacon of instruction and hope to a beleaguered and despairing mankind.

Regrettably, there few who read its message despite the fact that it is "...profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;" and supplies the wisdom that leads to salvation through Christ.

### The Bible's Profound and Rational Doctrine

An example of the Bible's profound effect may be seen in the true story of the mutiny of the *Bounty*. The *HMS Bounty* was a small merchant ship under the command of William Bligh, an officer of the Royal Navy. In 1789 the ship sailed to the South Pacific to acquire breadfruit plants and to transport them to the West Indies. However, that mission was never completed, owing to a mutiny led by acting lieutenant Fletcher Christian. The mutineers sank the ship and landed with their native women on Pitcairn Island in the Pacific.

There were nine white sailors, six Polynesian men, ten women, and a girl of fifteen. One of the sailors discovered a method to distill alcohol, and the island colony descended into debauchery, drunkenness and vice.

Of the sailors who had landed with the original group only one survived. Native women and children surrounded him. This sailor, whose name was Alexander Smith, found a Bible in one of the chests that had been taken from the *Bounty* before it sank.

He read it.

Then he began to teach his fellow exiles its principles, with the result that his reading changed his own life, and finally the life of the entire island colony.

In 1808 the United States ship *Topaz* visited the island and found a thriving and prosperous community, without whiskey, without a jail, without crime.

The Bible had changed the life of that island community. As it was with the survivors of the *HMS Bounty* so it has been from age to age: the Bible has a profound effect.<sup>4</sup>

Man needs such a revelation as the Bible because, while “...the heavens declare the glory of God” (Ps. 19:1), And the creation declares His “...power and divinity” (Rom. 1:18-21), it is evident that God’s **nature, character, and will** for man must be revealed in a special way. For this reason we say that the Bible is that Special Divine Revelation.” A “special divine revelation” means that God, not man, was active in the production of it; and that it represents the supernatural—God intervening in the natural world to deliver a verbal message to man concerning His nature, character and will.

In making this revelation God spoke to mankind through the prophets in many parts and in many ways,<sup>5</sup> but lastly He spoke through His Son,

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<sup>4</sup> C. E. Macartney, *Macartney’s Illustrations*, Abingdon Press, New York and Nashville, MCMXLV, pp. 30-31.

<sup>5</sup> Hebrews 1:1.

Jesus, This may be seen in the gospel of John<sup>6</sup>; in Hebrews<sup>7</sup>; in Colossians,<sup>8</sup> and in the writings of the Apostle Paul.<sup>9</sup>

For this reason we say that “The profound and rational doctrine of God, man and redemption, as presented in the Scriptures, proves the Bible to be a special divine revelation.”

### If you think man does not need a revelation...

A rock, that was formerly a traffic barrier, was dumped in Golden Gate Park near San Francisco several years ago. New Ager, and Hindus turned the rock into a religious shrine. People were drawn to it from as far away as India. It created a constitutional quagmire for city officials who did not think it appropriate to build a religious shrine in a public park.<sup>10</sup>

- This is an example of man acting without guidance.
- Without guidance man sinks into ignorance, and the worship of rocks that were destined for the dump.

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<sup>6</sup> John 1:1-4, 14-18; 7:29; 14:6-10.

<sup>7</sup> Hebrews 1:1-3.

<sup>8</sup> 1:15-18; 2:8-10

<sup>9</sup> 1 Cor. 2:1-16.

<sup>10</sup> Tampa Tribune, Oct 25, 1993

## The Bible doctrine of God.

About forty individuals wrote the Bible, over a period of more than fifteen hundred years; yet, the picture of God is consistent throughout. The writers struck no contradictory notes. God is presented as personal: He loves, hates, sees, acts, and is constantly mindful of His creation. Such a view is both “profound” and “rational.”

God is not a rock.

### Characteristics of God

The following are characteristics of God as presented by the Bible:

1. God is **Eternal**, or God has **self-existence**. His name is “Jehovah, the I AM, the Self-existent One.” This may be seen in Exodus 3:13, 14; John 8:58; Revelation 1:8; 4:8; Isaiah 48:12.

2. God exists in **Eternity** and has **Omnipresence**. Time and space are conditions of human thought. In our thoughts there is a *where* and a *when* to everything. For God, the Absolute Being, there are no such limitations. God is everywhere. See Psalm 90:2; Hebrews 1:10-12; Psalm 139:7-10; Acts 17:26-28.

3. God is **Omnipotent**. He is infinite in power: as revealed in creation, Genesis 1:1-2; by direct statement, Genesis 17:1; and in the worship of Him by the angels, Revelation 4:8.

4. God is **Omniscient**. His works, prophecy and direct statement reveal His infinite knowledge and wisdom: Isaiah 45:1-5; 46:10; Hebrews 4:13, etc.

5. God is **Infinite in Holiness**. This is perfectly revealed in Jesus Christ, the sinless one. God manifests a hatred for sin from Eden to the Judgment, 1 Peter 1:13-15.

6. God is **Unchangeable**. Both covenants—the Old and New Testaments—reveal the same unchangeableness, Numbers 23:19; Malachi 3:6; James 1:17.

7. God is **Merciful, Longsuffering, and Compassionate**. The Bible reveals God as merciful, longsuffering, compassionate, giving man every opportunity to repent and turn to Him, but punishing the guilty always, Genesis 6; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 Peter 5:6,7; the entire Book of Revelation.

## The Bible doctrine of man.

### **The doctrine is consistent.**

The Bible doctrine of man is consistent throughout the Old and New Testaments. It never strikes a false note regarding man, nor does it contradict a conception formerly presented.

- This cannot be said of philosophers or human philosophies.

1. From Genesis through Revelation, the Bible presents **man as personal, moral, in the image of God, and possessing power to choose between right and wrong**.

2. The Bible describes man as: “**spirit,**” “**soul,**” and “**body,**” 1 Thessalonians 5:23; as “inward man” and “outward man,” 2 Corinthians 4:16.



The humanist doctrines based on the philosophies of materialism and naturalism are in direct contradiction of the Biblical doctrine of man:

For example, the *Humanist Manifesto Two* says:

Promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful. They distract humans from present concerns, from self-actualization, and from rectifying social injustices. Modern science discredits such historic concepts as the "**ghost in the machine**" and the "separable soul." Rather, science affirms that the human species is an emergence from natural evolutionary forces. As far as we know, the total personality is a function of the biological organism transacting in a social and cultural context. There is **no credible evidence that life survives the death of the body**. We continue to exist in our progeny and in the way that our lives have influenced others in our culture.<sup>11</sup>

The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:23: Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your **spirit and soul and body** be preserved complete, without blame **at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ**. 24 Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.

- Man is comprised of spirit, soul and body.
- The fact that God invites but does not compel implies that man has the power of moral choice.

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<sup>11</sup> Paul Kurtz, Ed., *Humanist Manifestos I and II*, Prometheus Books, Buffalo, New York, 1980, p. 16.

- The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead refutes the idea that life does not survive the death of the body.

The Scriptures throughout, present God and Satan as appealing to the will of man. **God appeals** to the will of man **by the intellect, affections and man's sense of reverence or godly fear.**

**Satan appeals** to the will of man **through the lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, and the pride of life.** See Genesis 3; Matthew 4:1-11; 1 John 2:15-17.

As the Apostle James wrote in James 4:1-2,

- 1 What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have; *so* you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; *so* you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

And from the Apostle Peter,

2 Peter 1:3-4

- 3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. 4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

For example, consider who is appealing to man through national sports spectacles. Some movies

and television dramas are designed to lead to satisfaction of man's lust to see and desire to experience even though it is done in a vicarious sense. But lust is not confined to movies and games; it includes a wide array of sensual appeals, many of which seduce from God and lead to the service of Satan.

As a moral creature, possessing power to choose, man makes his own choice as to whether he will succumb to the temptation of illicit desires, thus he becomes responsible for his conduct and condition.

## The Bible doctrine of salvation.

### **The humanist rejects God as savior.**

For example, The Humanist Manifesto says, "Too often traditional faiths encourage dependence rather than independence, obedience rather than affirmation, fear rather than courage. More recently they have generated concerned social action, with many signs of relevance appearing in the wake of the "God Is Dead" theologies. But we can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species. While there is much that we do not know, humans are responsible for what we are or will become. **No deity will save us; we must save ourselves.**"<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., Paul Kurtz, p. 16.

- The reason the humanist can find “no divine purpose or providence” is because they have closed their eyes, and stopped their ears. They only need to read the Bible with an open mind and they will find it.
- Even though the humanist declares that “we must save ourselves,” no one has devised a way to raise the dead—other than God.

1. The Bible always reveals sin as rebellion against God. It constantly portrays man as unable to save himself. God is always the Savior.

2. Salvation is always moral (based on man’s sense of what is right and just), never forced. God invites; man chooses, Isaiah 1:18; 65:2; Matthew 11:28-29; 22:37; 2 Corinthians 5:11.

3. From beginning to end the Bible unfolds a unified, definite plan of salvation; **God calls; He invites the sinner to return; man enters into repentance; God forgives.** God’s appeal is ever for **inner purity, not for mere external form.**

4. From beginning to end there is the pattern of altar, sacrifice, and priest. The entire plan of human redemption culminates in salvation by a divine sacrifice worthy of the mind of God.

The Bible’s profound and rational doctrine of God, man, and salvation takes the book outside the realm of human production. The consistency of its presentation of the theme over such a long period is evidence that behind the presentation there is one over-ruling and guiding mind.

Yet many have resisted the consistent and rational message of the Bible.

The story is told that when Thomas Paine showed Benjamin Franklin the manuscript of *The Age of Reason*, Franklin advised him not to publish it, saying, “The world is bad enough with the Bible; what would it be without it?”<sup>13</sup>

Paine of course could not destroy the Bible. God preserves His word. Yet the efforts of the enemies of the Bible have discouraged many people from reading it, and so its message is lost to them.

But what has been the result of the abandonment of biblical doctrine? Some of the fruits borne by the efforts of the opponents of biblical principles may be seen in the idea that man evolved from the natural world by accident, that morality is autonomous and situational, or that the two sexes of mankind are interchangeable.

Many of the outcomes of humanistic philosophy defy reason. The Bible, however, offers a reasonable and rational account for the condition of mankind and a rational explanation of how God intends to set the conditions right.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., C. E. Macartney, p. 30.