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Talmudic Judaism: *The Blueprint for all Manmade Religions*

By J. A. Billings

Keeping with the nature of tradition, Talmudic Judaism evolved over time to be a religion of self-righteousness. The word *Talmud* means “instruction” or “teaching.” It grew to be a body of Hebrew civil and canonical law based on the Torah (The Old Testament). Ezra ministered during the Era of Restoration. Through his ministry the law of God (The Pentateuch) became the manual of instruction for Jewish life. He was the custodian of the tradition known as the *Sopherim* (400 B.C.–200 A.D.). The *Sopherim* contains two divisions, the *Mishnah* and the *Gemara*. The *Mishnah* is a digest of all the oral laws and traditions handed down from the time of Moses. It was completed about 200 A.D. with the view to teach through repetition and explanation. The Jews regarded the *Mishnah* as the Second Law behind the Torah. The *Gemara* is a document written in Aramaic and was an expanded commentary on the *Mishnah*. As a Priest/Scribe Ezra became the forerunner to the religious professionals whose task it was to study and expound the Old Testament. Ezra was not responsible for what Judaism later became. From the post-exilic period, through the intertestamental era, into the apostolic age these became the religious elite. These elitists became the conscience of the people through their “oral law” and their “tradition of the elders.” They superseded the office of the priest and became nothing more than a professional class of scribes or “lawyers” whose job it was to enslave the people through their tradition and legalism.

Matthew 23:4 For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

The standard it demanded was unreasonable and too high for anyone to achieve. The perceived result was that only the religious elite had attained perfection in keeping the tradition of the elders while the unwashed masses fell far below the standard. The Jewish leaders made it their business to be “The law-keepers of Israel.” Thus, they became the standard for all others. Simply put, they manufactured elitism. In order to accomplish this elite position for themselves they made it their business to look for “law-breakers.” The quintessential story of the self-righteousness of the elite rulers of Israel and their view of the common man is not better illustrated than in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican by our Lord.

Luke 18:9-13 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

This fabricated self-righteousness of the ruling class provided a marked distinction between the “law-keepers” and the “law-breakers.”

The arrogance of Talmudic tradition demonstrates that it is a religion of self-righteousness and places itself above the Word of God. The following quote concerning why teachers sat

down when they were teaching exemplifies how far Israel had strayed from their fear of God and true biblical worship.

*That from the days of Moses, to Rabban Gamaliel (the Master of the Apostle Paul), they did not learn the law, unless standing; after Rabban Gamaliel died, sickness came into the world, and they learnt the law sitting; hence it is a tradition, that after Rabban Gamaliel died, the glory of the law ceased.*¹

The evolution of Talmudic Judaism over the centuries resulted in it being the dominate religion of Palestine during the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. It succeeded in controlling the uneducated, rank-and-file multitudes for centuries. Thus, it has become the blueprint for all religions, pseudo-Christian denominations and totalitarian governments devised by man.

A General Definition of Religion

Generally speaking, religion is concerned with giving meaning and value to human life. This is very attractive to the majority of individuals because all human beings are naturally religious. The reason we are naturally religious is because we are all born with a God consciousness. The Law of God is written on our hearts and we have an innate desire to commune with God.

Because of The Fall and the noetic effects of sin, Fallen man refuses to make the Word of God his point of reference, his "pou sto."² Fallen man has not stopped being religious in his view of God, man, and the created universe. The change is that he has reinterpreted the universe with man as the center of all perceived reality. Therefore the essence of all the world's religions is outward, tangible conformity to their rules and regulations.

What has been historically problematic for world religions is their propensity to control the masses through their particular world-views. Man-made religion has two major problems apart from its glaring opposition to the Word of God. First, it gives men a false hope that one can attain salvation through

works. Second, it enslaves those who partake of its philosophy. Ironically, the elite leaders and the followers are both complicit in this conundrum.

All man-made religions are religions of works. In other words they are all based on human effort with the end goal being their reward for their "good works." Religions require each individual to follow a set of rules and regulations in order to conform to that particular religious philosophy. Some religions are more strict than others but all demand an observance of rules and regulations in order to earn the end goal of salvation. It is universally recognized that achieving the end goal in any particular religion begins with self-denial and dedication, accompanied with long arduous years filled with intense self-effort and discipline to reach paradise, euphoria, self-awareness, or utopia. Ironically, no major human religion guarantees salvation at the end of the journey.

Roman Catholicism

Roman Catholicism is the most dominate religion in the western world. The essential parts of Roman Catholicism are infant baptism, membership into the church through infant sprinkling, works and the belief in Mary as the fourth person of the God-Head. Control of the common people is achieved through allegiance to the Pope, the supreme authority of the church over the Scriptures, conformity to the sacraments, confession to the priest and partaking in communion. Catholic communion is a sacrament or "means of grace" by means of receiving the literal body and blood of Christ through magic incantations by the priest upon the "Host." This Catholic doctrine was instigated by Pope Innocent III in 1215 A.D. and termed "transubstantiation."

Surprisingly, no one is guaranteed salvation at the end of his or her journey. At best, people are placed in purgatory. The means by which a person can someday leave purgatory is for a living relative to continually give money to the priest and by that relative to remain a faithful servant of Rome.

Islam

Islam is the dominant religion of the Middle Eastern world. Islam means "to resign oneself" or "to profess the way of righteousness." There are six articles of faith and six basic duties. The six articles of faith are: 1. Belief in Allah as the one true god. 2. Belief in angels. 3. Mohammed as the last and greatest prophet. 4. Belief in the Koran. 5. Belief in the day of resurrection. 6. Belief in fatalism (i.e., man is not a free moral agent and therefore is not responsible for his actions. Events happen inexorably.). The six duties for their followers are: 1. Reciting the profession of faith. 2. Affirming the unity of god and Mohamed. 3. Five daily prayers. 4. Fasting during daylight during the month of Ramadan. 5. One pilgrimage to Mecca. 6. The holy war or "Jihad" against all unbelievers.

Righteousness, according to Muslims, is defined by the six outward duties. The heart does not enter into their religion. Only their outward lifestyle reflects their religion. Consider the behavior of the terrorists the night before they murdered three thousand people in New York, Washington DC, and Pennsylvania. They spent their last night on earth in a strip club because they were guaranteed paradise through murdering "infidels." Murder is the one and only guarantee of reaching paradise in the religion of Islam.

Totalitarian Governments

Totalitarian governments use the same religious principles in their blueprint for control. They control the masses by creating laws that limit freedom through over-burdening the people with heavy taxation, through limiting private property rights, by limiting freedom of speech, by limiting freedom of religion and by taking away the right of self-defense. Totalitarianism does this under the guise of fairness and equality for all. All the laws of a totalitarian government are designed to show that the laws are necessary in order to provide for the welfare and a better quality life for the unwashed masses.

In every case they control the citizens by demanding strict obedience to their laws and regulations. The ruling class is

seen as the conservators of the law and at the same time they are perceived as above the law, thus obtaining the position of the elite ruling class. Plato referred to them as “Philosopher-Kings.” They sell the idea that Utopia is only attained through universal cooperation and strict trust and obedience to the state. Salvation cannot be achieved individually but instead, co-operatively as a society.

Christianity is the One and Only True Heart Religion

Christianity is exclusively a heart religion. Only the religion of Jesus Christ requires inward heart conformity to the Law of God. Never has any man-made religion conformed to the Word of God or the teaching of Jesus Christ. This is the great dividing line between Jesus’ religion and all man-made religions. This is why it is profoundly important that all people everywhere look to the Lord Jesus Christ and find rest unto their souls.

Matthew 11:28-30 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Jesus’ Revelation of True Religion

The Gospel of Jesus Christ reveals that His religion is the opposite of all man-made religions. The kingdom of Heaven begins with salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. All others must labor under harsh and burdensome laws only to be disappointed at the end. Only Jesus gives freely at the beginning. This is the nature of His Kingdom. He makes men free from the bondage of sin and death to serve Him with joy and happiness, redeemed from sin and alive unto God. Jesus liberates the soul from the heavy burden of slavery to sin and self. He makes men free. It is Free Grace! Men say they must do something, they must feel something, but the reality is that there is nothing we can do or feel that is worthy to offer up to God. The Ethiopian Eunuch heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ and believed unto salvation. He said to Philip the evangelist “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” He traveled home that

day a new creature in Christ. “He went on his way rejoicing.”

Ω

¹ Gill, John, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, Vol. 7, p. 36.

² “Give me a place to stand and I will move the earth”- Archimedes

Love Thy Enemy

By M. A. Bailon

As of this writing Pastor Terry Jones of the Dove World Outreach Center has not followed through on his threat to burn the Koran on the ninth anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States. It doesn’t matter why he backed down but he was widely criticized and condemned for threatening such a “barbaric, idiotic and dangerous act.” To be perfectly clear, the righteous indignation against Mr. Jones is certainly sincere but hardly righteous. Those in an uproar would certainly be eager to cast the first stone if it were a Christian on trial. This assertion cannot be proved deductively perhaps. But church history, beginning in the New Testament Acts of the Apostles, offers many hundreds of examples of believers who have been killed for their faith and the cause of Christ. It may take the faith of a believer to understand why persecution from our fellow Americans is a distinct possibility even in this generation. But a reading of the New Testament proves that persecution is guaranteed to the Christian.¹ This persecution mostly takes the form of personal attacks and other slights from those who are offended at the life and beliefs of the Christian. But history teaches us that minor persecutions can escalate to more serious unofficial persecution and even to persecution by the government, whether local, regional, statewide or even federal.

Unfortunately, it is hard to understand why Americans would tolerate Islam much less embrace it. Would many in our country despise Christians for condemning homosexuals as deviants but then support a religion with Shiria Law as its code? This does not make any sense. Does not our Lord Jesus Christ know this? After all, He was the one of whom it was written:

John 2:23-25 Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw² the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.

In the case of our Lord, the people followed him not because they understood He was the Savior and believed in Him for their salvation, but because they were mesmerized by his miracles and the wonder signs He performed. They did not comprehend who He was and what He demanded of them. Neither do those of our fellow Americans who would not want the Old Testament of Christianity and Judaism, but defend Islam as it invades our country. It is not the same problem but it is the same principle. One dare not look too closely at Islamic teaching, but a superficial one is OK. The ultimate reason why Islam is gaining traction in the United States is that it is not Christianity. Islam is defended by the American press for the same reason. Again, this cannot be proved, especially in a short article. But “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated you.*”³ The Bible is serious when it teaches us that Christians are citizens of the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of God is not of this world. The more we act like a citizen of God’s Kingdom the more we are at odds with the present world system. Now if the dirty little secret is that the tolerance for Islam is really intolerance for Christianity, then there is another secret that is an indictment against true Christians. Most Christians are living far below the commandments of our Lord; in particular, the command to love our enemies. In Matthew 5:43 - 48⁴ the Lord’s argument is simple. Anyone can love those who love back. It doesn’t take grace. What does take grace is to love our enemy and do him good. In this text the Lord also argues that since God does not discriminate in dispensing his blessings in sustaining the universe then Christians should not discriminate in doing good to others. The principle is that God will bless in any way He can so we must do likewise. This commandment is difficult because it is against sinful human nature. The

Christian must be transformed by the renewing of his mind in order to be in a position to practice this command to love our enemy. This command requires that the Christian be as selfless as possible. If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.⁵ For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.⁶ These sayings are hard. If it is truly an act of faith to use our time helping others instead of pleasing ourselves, then it is also an act of faith to love our enemy. These commands presume that the Christian is a servant of God. We are to obey for many reasons. God demands it because we are His children, He is our Creator, we are citizens of His Kingdom, and we have been bought for a price. All these perspectives put God first and you and me second.

There are many professed Christians who are busy serving God and there are many true Christians who are less obedient that they should be. My pastor puts it as “every Christian has a level of rebellion” against God. As an act of faithlessness we draw a line across which we will not go. We hold back our love and devotion to the extent that we keep certain aspects or activities of our lives to ourselves. After all, life is short. If I do all for the Triune God, then I may miss something pleasurable in this life. On the other hand, it is an act of faith to love God’s law with all our heart and keep His commandments. But knowing the weakness of our flesh the Apostle Paul, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, provides some interesting rationale to help us in our obedience:

Romans 12:19-21 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Even with this interesting motivation it takes faith to obey.

Ω

¹ Our Lord tells the disciples that “The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you;” (John 15:20). Stephen preached “Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:” (Acts 7:52). The Apostle Paul’s testimony is that he was “Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;” (2 Cor. 4:9). And Paul to Timothy, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” (2 Tim 3:12).

² Θεωρέω A present participle denoting a continuous looking upon and observing in detail. From the context we infer that the people were gawking at the miracles Jesus performed in their midst.

³ John 15:18 Εἰ ὁ κόσμος ὑμᾶς μισεῖ, γινώσκετε ὅτι ἐμὲ πρῶτον ὑμῶν μεμίσηκεν. Literally, if the world hates you, you know that me first, the world came to hate, before you.

⁴ (43) Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. (44) But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; (45) That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. (46) For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? (47) And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? (48) Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

⁵ Mark 9:34

⁶ Matthew 16:25

Verbal, Plenary Inspiration: *A Necessary Implication*

By W. R. Downing

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. 2 Tim. 3:16–17¹

The Bible is the inspired Word of God. Divine inspiration is both verbal (extending to the very choice of words, grammatical constructions and syntactical relationships in the original languages) and plenary (full or extending to every part). This is the uniform witness of all orthodox Christianity. It is the essential presupposition of true Christianity from which all else derives.

Apart from the authority of Scripture in its exactness, one is left with tradition, subjective experience or imagination, none of which is infallible or authoritative.

A necessary implication of verbal, plenary inspiration is that the preacher must open the text. This must be the inspired source through which he feeds his flock and evangelizes the unconverted. Preaching ought to indulge itself to a given degree when necessary in both exegesis and hermeneutics to open and explain the text and its meaning. Yet this is rarely the case. Sadly, in most pulpits one might merely hold to inspired concepts, as one hears, not careful scriptural exposition, explanation and hermeneutical clarification, but mere general references and proof-texts thrown into the sermon—and often without substantial comment. The emphasis is on an outline, illustrations or the emotions rather than opening the inspired Word of God and expounding it as the basis for the message. The preacher is a prophet—God’s spokesman—one who declares the Word of God. Thus, he must seek to make this Word clear and understandable.

Homiletically, there are essentially two types of sermons: textual and topical, i.e. one either opens and expounds a given passage or finds a text to introduce a given subject. Either way, the text should be opened, i.e., exegeted, expounded and clarified or made plain. Every text mentioned from the pulpit should be commented upon in some way so it suitably fits into the scheme of the message and the people may be fed and taught. Further, a careful distinction ought to be made between interpretation and application. The failure to do so is one of the gravest faults of the pulpit ministry. The Christian ministry is an instructional ministry—didactic, evangelistic, polemic and apologetic. The minister’s task is not only to declare the gospel, but to educate the congregation. Sitting under a sound, well-rounded ministry in the ordinary church services should be an education. If not, then there is necessarily a given amount of failure in the very nature of that ministry itself. Sitting under a godly, expository ministry for several years ought to

approach the character of a seminary education.

What is the testimony of Scripture regarding opening or expounding the text? Moses was not only the first author of Scripture, he was also the first expository preacher. His orations in Deuteronomy were largely an exposition of the Moral Law.² Was not this the personal occupation of the “blessed man” in Psa. 1:2?³ Consider David and his pondering the meaning and force of the Law (Psa. 119:9, 11, 18, 27). Take careful note of the studies and searching of Daniel in the prophecies of Jeremiah (Dan. 9:2).

Was this not the ancient method adopted by the scribes under Ezra during the Era of Restoration (Neh. 8:1–8)? They “caused the people to understand the law.... they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.” The returning remnant from the Babylonian Captivity spoke Aramaic, an ancient Chaldean dialect. The Scriptures were written in Hebrew. The Scribes had to open or expound the text and give the sense so the people could understand the Word of God exactly. They evidently engaged in both exegesis, or what the text said, and hermeneutics, or what the text meant. The exact meaning of Scripture is of the utmost importance. Our very salvation, doctrinal convictions, Christian experience and hope of eternity rest upon it! This is the essence of the time-worn truth that “the Bible is our sole rule of both faith and practice.” Thus, it behooves us to know it thoroughly.

This was the very approach our Lord took with the Lawyer (Lk. 10:25–26). “What is written in the Law? How readest thou? This necessarily implies both a careful exegesis and also an interpretation of the text. The entire passage, which contains the “Parable of the Good Samaritan,” encompasses the whole of expository preaching, from the “What is written in the Law? How readest thou? To the “Go and do thou likewise!” Did not our Lord do the same with his disciples (Matt. 13:52; Lk. 24:25–27, 32, 44–47)?⁴ He completely opened the Scriptures to their understanding, and his “text” was the entire Old Testament! What a great, enlighten-

ing sermon that must have been—and no one complained about its depth or length.

Was not the Apostle concerned with an exact exegesis of the text (e.g., Gen. 12:1–3; Rom. 1:17; 3:9–18; 4:3,7–9, 13, 16–18; Gal. 3:16)? He took the Abrahamic Covenant in its essence, even to the use of the singular reading in the Hebrew and showed that it referred, not to the “seed of Abraham” in the plural, i.e., the Israelitish people, but in the singular; it referred to the Lord Jesus Christ. Did not the Apostle urge Timothy in the strongest language to do a careful exegesis and exposition of the very text of Scripture in 2 Timothy 2:15?⁵

This was also the inspired, customary model of the Apostle Paul (Acts 17:2–3).⁶ This is a graphic illustration of inspired preaching. It ought to be studied closely. This was Paul’s customary method of reaching out to the Jews in the synagogue ministry. The Jews knew their Scriptures, yet were blind to the saving truth contained therein. This the Apostle carefully laid out before his critical audience through a careful exegesis and interpretation of the text. What an example to modern preachers who must stand and declare the Word of God to unbelievers and often to those who have been mistaught and need exact instruction and correction!

Some objection might be made against this pervasive principle by appealing to such passages as Acts 17:22–34 and Paul’s address to the Areopagus at Athens. In the greater context of v. 16ff this address, the first recorded confrontation between Christianity and Greek philosophy, Paul quoted not one passage of Scripture. The answer is that he had been preaching “Jesus and the resurrection,” i.e., the gospel, for several weeks in the synagogue and on a daily basis in the agora.⁷ This address, a culminative and summary statement in the form of a Christian World-and-Life View, was meant to put “Jesus and the resurrection” in their proper historical and redemptive context. Every statement he made was thoroughly grounded in Scriptural truth, although such was not explicitly stated.

Others may object by stating that exegetical and expository preaching

would be “over their people’s heads.” The fault lies with the preacher who does not systematically instruct his people in the Word of God. The people will grow in grace, knowledge and spiritual appetite if the preacher himself grows and progresses in his studies, and his studies then develop and enrich his ministry. Rich expository preaching develops the spiritual appetite of God’s people. Remaining limited to spiritual “milk” is a picture of spiritual degeneration, not one of spiritual advancement (Heb. 5:10–14).⁸

The preacher who opens the text will be constantly educated in the Scriptures himself and in corresponding spiritual growth and knowledge. Such a preaching ministry will have at its disposal an infinite store of truth and an inexhaustible room for the growth of the hearers if the text of Scripture is always opened. One should be constantly edified and educated under the ministry. Conversely, ministers who do not habitually open the text deprive themselves and their hearers of spiritual understanding and growth. One may sit under such a deprived ministry for years and learn very little. May we strive to open the text and seek to make the meaning plain for our hearers. Did not our Lord command, not only to “feed my lambs,” but also to “feed my sheep”?

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¹ 2 Tim. 3:16, πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος... The reading is singular “every word, nuance, grammatical construction, syntactical relation of Scripture is God-breathed...”

² Dt. 1:5, “...began Moses to declare this law...” “Declare” is פָּרַשׁ, Pi’el intensive, “to expound, make distinct, clear.” LXX: διασαφήσαι, “to make plain, explain, unfold.”

³ Psa. 1:2, “...in his Law doth he meditate day and night.” מְדַבֵּר, to continually growl, mutter; LXX, μελετήσῃ, “take pains with, practice.” He carefully mulls over the meaning of the words of the Law constantly until they are memorized.

⁴ Matt. 13:52 implies both an instructional ministry and a progression in that ministry. Lk. 24:27 [διερμήνευσεν], unfold the meaning, expound. vs. 32 [διήνοιγεν ἡμῖν τὰς γραφάς] to unfold the sense completely. vs. 45 [τότε διήνοιξεν αὐτῶν τὸν νοῦν τοῦ συνιέναι τὰς γραφάς] to open the thought-process completely to comprehend the meaning of the Scriptures.

⁵ 2 Tim. 2:15, σπούδασον, aor. imp. Give the

utmost diligence! ὀρθοτομοῦντα τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας, cutting straight the word of truth, i.e., carefully opening the text and laying it out.

⁶ Acts 17:2-3, κατὰ δὲ τὸ εἰωθὸς, according to his habit or custom—Paul’s usual method of preaching. διελέξατο αὐτοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν γραφῶν, aor. verb. “reasoned, thoroughly declared.” διανοίγων καὶ παρατιθέμενος. These pres. ptcs. explain the aor. verb. He completely opened the text and then from this he brought forth his reasons. Paul always opened the text as the basis for his preaching.

⁷ Acts 17:18 συνέβαλλον ...ἔλεγον· ... εὐηγγελίζετο. The use of the imperf. verbs reveal a length of time or a continual confrontation as Paul preached the gospel with authority (καταγγελεὺς). His was a biblical ministry. The final address only served to put the truth in the context of both world history and a Christian world-view.

⁸ Heb. 5:10-14 Mark the two perfect verbs, “are dull” and “are become” (γεγόνατε...γεγόνατε), both implying a state of degeneration in the knowledge of Divine truth.

Essential Texts for a Biblical Approach to Apologetics (8) Romans 1:18-21 (cont.)

By P. S. Nelson

Romans 1:18-21 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

In our last article,¹ under the sub-heading *Natural Revelation and Apologetics* we dealt with *The Myth of Neutrality*. We continue under the same subheading, drawing our final apologetic principle from Rom. 1:18-21. This article addresses *Point of Contact*.

Point of Contact

A point of contact in apologetics is the common area of knowledge that exists between the believer and the

unbeliever. If two opponents do not meet with the same initial premises, then nothing can be proven. There must be a starting point for there to be any meaningful discussion. Is there a common area of knowledge between the Christian and non-Christian that will provide a starting point for the enterprise of apologetics?

The unbeliever, in suppressing the reality of his Creator, must necessarily hold to the autonomy of human reason. He ascribes self-sufficiency to the human mind and makes himself the final reference point of all predication. Holding reason to be ultimate, the unregenerate believes he can reason to the truth. He believes, with the right use of reason, he can interpret the world correctly. The ultimacy of human reason is the essential presupposition of his epistemology.² And as a necessary corollary, the unbeliever presumptively assumes neutrality and objectivity. Such are the false presuppositions of the unregenerate’s mindset.

When the *evidential apologist* engages the unbeliever with mere evidences, he is conceding to the unregenerate’s epistemology. It is impossible to argue evidences because the believer and unbeliever do not stand on the same epistemological ground. Yet, Christian evidentialists Sproul, Gerstner, and Lindsley argue that *natural theology*³ is the starting point to engage the unbeliever.⁴ They appeal to the reliability of the unregenerate’s reasoning.⁵ This apologetic method ignores the devastating effects of the Fall upon man’s rational faculties, and exalts the autonomy of human reason as common ground between the believer and unbeliever. However, in a fallen state, natural man lost the ability to rightly interpret natural revelation. He habitually suppresses the truth of God revealed in creation and exchanges the truth of God for the lie (Rom. 1:18, 25). If we do not assert this distinction, we concede to unregenerate man’s conception of himself as the ultimate reference point of knowledge and truth. This is a futile starting point since we have already proven⁶ from Romans 1 that the knowledge of God is inevitably misinterpreted by rebellious creatures that deny and “hold down” the truth. The natural revelation of God in creation

can have no meaning for a mind that thinks itself to be autonomous. How can Christians carry on apologetics by capitulating to the unbeliever’s terms, adopting their worldview, and patronizing their rebellious epistemology?

What then is the point of contact? The point of contact between the believer and unbeliever is not epistemological, but metaphysical. It lies within the very nature of man. Man knows God the Creator internally by the constitution of his nature. All men possess this sense of deity (*sensus divinitatus*); it is present in every man. The point of contact we share with unbelievers lies in a common bearing of God’s image. This sense of deity is indelibly inscribed upon the heart. The fact that every person is made in the image of God assures us of a point of contact.

Gen. 1:26-27 defines man as being made in the image and after the likeness of God. Although this image has been horribly defaced in the Fall, it has not been fully eradicated, else man would cease to be man. There remains an ontological image of God in man (Gen 9:6, Js. 3:9). The apostle Paul speaks of the natural man as possessing a general knowledge of God⁷ (Rom. 1:19-21); a knowledge that is innate and intuitive within him. Man possesses this knowledge of God by virtue of being created in God’s image. Paul says, the knowledge of God is manifest ‘in them’ (ἐν αὐτοῖς), i.e., in their hearts and minds, within the constitution of their nature (Rom. 1:19). The apostle further argues that the law of God, the very expression God’s moral character, is written in the heart of every man, and their conscience bears witness to it (Rom. 2:14-15). It is ineradicably inscribed upon man’s heart. It is impossible for man to separate himself from the reality of his own constitution. Man possesses an inescapable God-consciousness. He cannot escape knowing God.

It is to this sense of deity that the Christian apologist must appeal. This point of contact is within the nature of man, for deep down inside every man knows he is a creature of God and is responsible to God, even though he acts as if it were not so. Unsaved men constantly fight a losing battle to obliterate the truth of God (Rom. 1:18). But

the truth they seek to extinguish is inherent in their very beings.⁸ The knowledge that unregenerate man suppresses is the very knowledge by which he understands God's created world. We must appeal to that which is in man, but denied by every man. The Christian must appeal to the truth the unbeliever suppresses.

The great example of the apostle Paul using the *sensus divinitatus* as the point of contact is found in his address to the philosophers on Mars Hill (Acts 17:18-31). Paul begins his defense by appealing to the inherently religious nature of man. They possessed a sense of deity (v. 22) and were aware of their accountability to God. He noted how they were "very religious,"⁹ yet ignorant of the objects they worshipped. In other words, although they knew God, they were suppressing the truth. He drew their attention to an altar dedicated "To an Unknown God" in order to illustrate how they had a general knowledge of God, but worshipped him ignorantly. This opened the door for Paul to declare the truth of God with authority.

The *sensus divinitatus* that has been implanted within the human heart of all men is correlative to God's natural revelation in creation. Man's self-consciousness always presupposes God-consciousness. The *sensus divinitatus* is permanently involved in his awareness of anything. No area of life is without the witness of God. All men have in common the world created by God, controlled by God, and constantly revealed by God. Man can never escape the witness of God. It is everywhere; all around him and within him. He is face to face with God every day.

Although there is no neutral ground between the believer and the unbeliever, there is indeed this ever-present common ground. Any area of life and any fact becomes common ground with reference to the Creator. For all facts are God-created facts, not brute facts. They are facts defined by God and given meaning by God. Therefore, any fact or observation can be used as common ground when we appeal to the image of God in man. This reality makes the unbeliever susceptible to Christian apologetics at all times.

I close our discussion with a quotation from John Calvin:

"Men of sound judgment will always be sure that a sense of divinity which can never be effaced is engraved upon men's minds. Indeed the perversity of the impious, who though they struggle furiously are unable to extricate themselves from the fear of God, is abundant testimony that this conviction, namely, that there is some God, is naturally inborn in all and is fixed deep within, as it were in the very marrow... I only say that though the stupid hardness in their minds, which the impious eagerly conjure up to reject God, wastes away, yet the sense of divinity, which they greatly wished to have extinguished, thrives and presently burgeons. From this we conclude that it is not a doctrine that must first be learned in school, but one of which each of us is master from his mother's womb and which nature itself permits no one to forget, although many strive with every nerve to this end."¹⁰

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¹ Nelson, Paul S., *PIRSpective*, Vol. 3, Issue 2 (2010).

² Epistemology is the theory or science of the nature, ground, and method of human knowledge. It is an essential element of one's worldview.

³ Natural theology holds that knowledge of God can be acquired by human reason without the aid of divine revelation.

⁴ Sproul, R.C., Gerstner, J.H., and Lindsley, A., *Classical Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1967), p.215.

⁵ Evidentialism assumes the basic reliability of the non-Christian's use of logic and sense perception.

⁶ Nelson, Paul S., *PIRSpective*, Vol. 2, Issue 3 (2009).

⁷ This knowledge of God is a general knowledge, not simply of God's existence, but of his nature, attributes, and moral character (See Rom. 1:19-21, 31; 2:14-15). This is not to be confused with the salvific knowledge of God which is only revealed in special revelation.

⁸ David L. Turner, "Cornelius Van Til and Romans 1:18-21" *Grace Theological Journal* 2:1 (Spring 1982): p.52.

⁹ The Gk. term *δεισιδαιμονεστέρους* translated as "too superstitious" is better rendered as "extremely religious."

¹⁰ Calvin, J., *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, Library of Christian Classics (London: SCM, 1960), 1.3.3.

John Gill: *Anecdotes and Approbations*

By M. A. Carling

For over 51 years Dr. John Gill was a power in London and a religious authority all over Great Britain and America. It is said that no man in the 18th century was as well versed in the literature and customs of the ancient Jews as he was. He was sometimes called the Dr. Lightfoot of the Baptists, but in the estimation of some, this flattered Dr. Lightfoot more than it did Dr. Gill.

From a lecture I gave in 2004 on *The Life and Significance of Dr. John Gill*, I bring some anecdotes and approbations.

Christmas Evans and Robert Hall

On one of his many visits to England, Christmas Evans, the great Welsh Baptist, met with the celebrated Robert Hall. The conversation turned to the glories and expressiveness of the Welsh language. To clinch his argument Christmas Evans concluded by saying how much he wished that Dr. Gill's works had been written in Welsh.

"I wish they had, sir," replied Hall, "I wish they had, with all my heart, sir, for then I should never have read them! They are a continent of mud, sir!"¹

Augustas Toplady

Augustas Toplady, who penned the hymn *Rock of Ages*, and was an intimate friend of Dr. Gill's said,

"If any man can be supposed to have trod the whole circle of human learning, it was Dr. Gill...It would, perhaps, try the constitutions of half the literati in England, only to read with care and attention the whole of what he said. As deeply as human sagacity enlightened by grace could penetrate, he went to the bottom of everything he engaged in...Perhaps no man, since the days of St. Austin, has written so largely in defense of the system of grace, and, certainly, no man has treated that momentous subject, in all its branches, more closely, judiciously and successfully."²

**Concerning Dr. Gill’s Style
in His Commentaries**

Concerning Dr. Gill’s style, Spurgeon wrote the following:

“His frequent method of animadversion is, ‘This text does not mean this,’ nobody ever thought it did; ‘It does not mean that,’ only two or three heretics ever imagined it did; and again it does not mean a third thing, or a fourth, or a fifth, or a sixth absurdity; but at last he thinks it does mean so-and-so, and tells you so in a methodical, sermon like manner. This is an easy method, gentleman, of filling up the time, if you are ever short of heads for a sermon. ...For good, sound, massive, sober sense in commenting, who can excel Gill?”³

**Dr Gill’s Fervor at Times
in Confronting People**

Instance #1

His final remarks in his postscript and reply concerning a writer who went by the name Candidus, went as follows:

“When the Paedobaptists write again, it may be expected they will employ a better hand; or should they choose to fix upon one of their younger sort again; let them take care, first to wring the milk well out of his nose, before they put a pen in his hand.”⁴

Instance #2

When the *Monthly Reviewer* clearly showed its ignorance of the subject of Dr. Gill’s dissertation concerning the antiquity of the Hebrew language, he wrote in his preface to the work the following:

“Should any truly learned gentleman do me the honor to animadvert [comment critically] upon what I have written, I am sure of being treated with candour and decency; but should I be attacked by sci-o-lists [ones with a pretentious attitude of scholarship], I expect nothing but petulance, supercilious airs, and opprobrious language [contemptuous] — such will be righteously treated with neglect and contempt.”⁵

Instance #3

It is said that a talkative young lady once called upon Dr. Gill to find fault with the excessive length of his white bands:

“Well, well,” said the doctor, “what do you think is the right length? Take them and make them as long or as short as you like.”

Having brought scissors for the possibility she proceeded to trim at once and gave his bibs a shortening.

“Now,” said the Doctor, “My good sister, you must do me a good turn also.” “Yes, that I will, Doctor. What can be done?” “Well — you have something about you which is a deal too long, and causes me no end of trouble, and I should like to see it shorter.” “Indeed, dear sir, I will not hesitate,” said the dame, “what is it, here are the scissors, use them as you please.” “Come then,” said the pastor, “Good sister, put out your tongue.”⁶

Instance #4

After an old man asked Dr. Gill rather loudly, “Is this preaching?” and then

asked contemptuously “Is this the great Doctor Gill?”:

“The Doctor, immediately, with the full strength of his voice, looking him in the face, and pointing him to the pulpit, said, ‘Go up, and do better - Go up, and do better.’ This was answering a fool according to his folly. And the answer afforded gratification to all who heard it.”⁷

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¹ Harrison, Graham, *Dr. John Gill and His Teaching*, Evangelical Library, 1971, p.3.

² Armitage, Thomas, *A History of the Baptists*, Volume 1, p.561.

³ Spurgeon, C. H., *Commenting & Commentaries*, 1893, p.9.

⁴ Gill, John, *Infant-Baptism: A Part and Pillar of Popery*, The Baptist Standard Bearer, reprint, 1987, p.40.

⁵ Rippon, John, *Life and Writings of the Rev. John Gill. D.D.*, Gano Books, 1992, pp.85-86.

⁶ Drummond, Lewis, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers*, Kregal, 1992, pp. 182-183.

⁷ Rippon, John, *Life and Writings of the Rev. John Gill. D.D.*, Gano Books, 1992, pp.124-125.

Images from Church History



From *Martyrs Mirror*, Thieleman J. van Braght, p. 132

Given the opportunity to come out of their meeting house and sacrifice to the god Jupiter or be burnt, these believers all remained in their meeting house singing and praising Christ as long as the smoke and vapor permitted, A.D. 237.