

The Nature of the Word Part 2
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Having blurted out what I could no longer repress about what the Bible is not, it is required that I make a statement regarding what it is. There is no compilation of inspired spiritual literature anywhere approaching the genre of our Judeo-Christian scriptures. Their content and structure are so evidently and peculiarly God-given as to leave no doubt in the unbiased mind of their special place in the tool chest of heaven.

I speak of their content (the essential message) and structure (the allowed contribution and arrangement of the material), because I recognize the same divine superintendence governing even the skeletal structuring as reigned in the inspiration of the content. That is, the canon, in respect to both material and arrangement, as accepted by the early and contemporary Christ-community, remains unquestioned by this writer. I include the sovereignly chosen languages of Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic as integral to the idea of structure.

As to the matter of translation, I am increasingly convinced that we still have something of a mess on our hands, and that there is a great need for honest excellence of scholarship without theological agenda and bias before we have a text virtually free of theological tomfoolery. Having said that, I suspect, though, that God will to some degree leave us frustrated in our attempts to provide an accurate translation, so as to crowd us to a living relationship with the living Word.

Nevertheless, there is no question in my mind that the Bible remains central to, and the measuring rod of all literature that is set forth as having something to say in the affirmation and exaltation of "the only true God and Jesus Christ whom (He) has sent" (John 17:3).

But keep in mind, that the Bible, as such, is the inspired, normative, written testimony and record of the One who is the Word of God. I must also say, that to speak of the Bible as the written Word and Christ as the Living Word, suggests an equality that is unwarranted

and which distracts the believer's focus away from the absolute preeminence of the Lord Jesus Christ and sets off prophetic sirens of alarm in my spirit.

Most certainly, we all can testify that the Spirit of Truth does draw from the words that He gave to men of old to reveal Christ to our hearts, but let us acknowledge that He is not bound to do so, and let us not improperly equate, or almost equate the Person with the book.

Great might be the surprise of those who are of a compulsive historical and textual-orientation, to discover that a purer knowledge of Christ can arise in the hearts of some who do not have a clue who Abraham, David and Moses are. There just might arise such ones who are too internally captivated by the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, to need to know such things. The living Christ just might begin to so gloriously reveal Himself to people who are biblically ignorant and completely outside of our Christian culture in order to make us Christians jealous.

I have to say that it brings me to the verge of tears when I compare the centrality of the apostolic community's joyful, celebratory proclamation, "He is risen," to the present obsessive-compulsive insistence of the evangelical in-your-face demand that the unbeliever recognize biblical authority. Gather together all the rantings and ravings of the "the-Bible-says" crowd, and you end up with more confusion than gospel.

In many varying degrees, from blatant to subtle, we have replaced "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ His only Son," with "I believe the Bible to be the inspired, inerrant word of God."

Something's wrong folks! It is one thing for the church, in its commission to herald the good news that death has been vanquished for all men by the death and resurrection of the Savior of the world, to reference the supportive testimony of scripture, especially when addressing those who are Bible-acclimated, but it is quite another thing to demandingly orient the preaching of the gospel and the communion of the saints around the translation, study, knowledge and exposition of scripture.

This has led to a domination of the saints by personalities who are very much in their element in the religious world of "book larnin," but who may be virtual strangers to the living and operative Word of God. Give me, any day, the testimony of the drug addict whose face is aglow with the light of glory that released him from the chains of his addiction.

I thrill to the story of those who can say with the hymn writer, ".....the dungeon flamed with light. My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed Thee." Often there is more of The Message in such testimonies than can be found in a thousand Bible studies, and certainly more than comes from some mealy-mouthed Bible teacher

Hidden beneath the sheep's clothing of new covenant buzz words is the wolf who seeks to feed upon the sheep. In all fairness, he, himself is the victim of the letter that killeth, who, in turn, has become a victimizer of those who have been seduced to wide-eyed admiration of platform personalities and their papal-like pronouncements.

The effect upon institutionalized believers is to keep them ignorant of the anointing within them that teaches all things. Yes, study your Bible, of course, we are told, but don't you dare become a whistleblower exposing the shame of orthodoxy's nakedness.

The evangelical church has really degenerated to a lust-for-Bible-knowledge orientation. In the same way that Catholics look to the Pope speaking "ex cathedra," to be informed as to what they are allowed to believe, evangelicals, dumber than fence posts, swallow hook, line, and sinker whatever their pastor dictates as believable.

There is little difference between the Vatican's blasphemous claim to have the sole right to determine the meaning of the Word of God, with the average Catholic, in effect, turning his mind and soul over to the institution for brain-washing and evangelicalism's version in which the layman is intimidated into never feeling free to even suggest that his church or his pastor might be fundamentally wrong about fundamental issues.

I admit that there has been some discernible improvement in the quest to genuinely hear from God, some turning toward the light, in the switch from "the Pope says" to "the Bible says,"---albeit it while creating its own version of religious hierarchy---but when compared to God's perspective regarding that which is His Word, it is sadly off-center, and still falls far short of what it means to be Christ-centered. To be continued.