

The Bible

John R Gavazzoni

The Bible is a different kind of book, but I wonder how many realize just how different. Oh, I know that it is transcendentally and normatively inspired. That goes without saying; that is, it goes without saying as far as my usual readership is concerned, but the particular unique characteristic that I feel compelled to probe has to do with what was God's ultimate intention in inspiring and compiling the Book of books.

God is a God of instrumentality. He has and uses many instruments, and the Bible is one of those. It is a divine instrument. Imagine an archaeologist uncovering an object that is obviously a device of some sort, an instrument of some sort, which was used by the culture he is investigating. Not knowing all that much about that particular ancient culture, it might not be all that easy to determine the purpose of the instrument.

One could easily erroneously imagine a purpose for the instrument that, in fact, never was the intention of its inventors. Though the use of an instrument is usually quite specific, sometimes with limited success, it can be used for purposes other than the original intention. A shoe, for instance, practically speaking, is meant to provide protection for one's foot, but lacking a hammer, it can be used as a pounding device. Remember Nikita Khrushchev pounding his shoe on the table at the United Nations?

Though knowing, in His omniscience, that the Bible would be used for purposes other than, or inferior to His ultimate intention---and making a place for such misuse or sub-use in His overall plan--- nevertheless, God has a purpose in mind for Holy Writ that, particularly in this age, I believe, only a relative few have and will come to understand, and with that understanding, skillfully use His literary implement.

One sub-use of the Bible that is very difficult to get past and finally to totally discard is that of simplistically looking to the Bible to tell us what to do or what to believe. (I know that statement is shocking, but stick with me, please). This is possibly the most common misunderstanding of its ultimate purpose.

Now God does use our misuse, or sub-use toward His final goal for us, in fact, our misuse is within his penultimate purpose for our encounter with the Bible.

For instance, law is woven through out the text of scripture, whether overtly in the Mosaic Code, or covertly clothed in New Covenant imperatives.

It is easy to assume that by God telling us to do or not do certain things in the Bible, that His intention for doing so was that our behavior might change accordingly. Not so! God gave the law to make sin exceedingly sinful. God gave the law to bring the inner flesh inclinations into outer expression and make them unavoidably and excruciatingly, and embarrassingly apparent.

Once one finds the ultimate purpose of the Bible, one sees beyond what one might too easily conclude is its God-intended purpose, and then begin to read it with a totally renewed mindset. For instance, you could read the Ten Commandments and find nothing but moral and ethical legislation. But you can also, with great joy, read them as promises, and do so at God's delight.

In fact, it is the particular mindset---which God knew we would have--- that makes of the Ten Commandments either legislation or promise. As Brother J. Preston Eby has written, the tree in the midst of the garden of Eden, if partaken of as letter, becomes the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the instrumentality of death, or, if understood as revealing Christ, our life, it becomes the tree of life to us.

Are the words, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and serve only Him"

Matt 4:10 KJV and "Thou shalt have no other gods before me?" Ex 20:3 KJV words of legislation or prophetic promise? I read them as promises to my New Man, who by nature SHALL do what is written. They are most essentially, in terms of unveiling the heart of God to me, precious promises that I shall do rightly by my Father. All those things that I ought to do, or not to do are indicative of the manner of man that I am in Christ.

God promised that His people, by His causation, would have His laws written on fleshly tablets of the heart as features of their true nature. What I'm getting at, dear brethren, is that the Spirit teaches us to approach the written word much more carefully and respectfully than we have previously done. Beware when the Bible seems simply to be telling you what to do, and/or what to believe. Oh no! The Bible, once probed into its heart, is found to be the central and normative literary instrument toward the realization of Christ as its substance.

However else you read it, you are only reading law, and you will find it, in that mode, to be the strength of sin. Only promise releases the potential of righteousness. Only promise releases faith. And Christ is both God's promise to us and the fulfillment of that promise.

We will deny the spirit of disobedience; we will strip off the man of sin, for God has promised. The new covenant is firmly based on nothing but the promise of God which He has sworn, on Himself, to fulfill. Find that promise in every biblical statement. Find that promise in every shadow and type and exhortation.

The great Christian mystic, Jean Guyon, learned how to use the Bible.

She testified that she would read its words until they brought her into the presence of her Lord, and then she would immediately set it aside.

Hey, who wants to continue to read the Bible when enraptured by His presence?

He then becomes my doing and my believing, for we are not called to learn about THINGS and do how to do THINGS, we are called to learn and do CHRIST. We are not called to merely believe correct doctrines; we are called to participate in the faith of Christ, which is total dependence upon our Father. Only one life has that quality, and that is Christ.

Be careful also in your quest for factuality in your study of the Bible. Facts can be used of God to enlighten us, but facts can become an end in themselves and addict us to being right and knowing more, or more accurately, than the next guy. Wow, you have no idea how seductive biblical knowledge can be. Don't equate facts with truth.

Christ is the truth, and there are a lot of dear brethren whose factual knowledge is minimal, but who know Christ intimately.

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