



THE FOREST HILL NEWS

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Forest Hill Church of Christ

3950 Forest Hill-Irene Rd
Memphis, TN 38125

Office: 901-751-2444
Info Line: 901-531-8849

www.foresthillcofc.org
jsanders@foresthillcofc.org

Elders:

Anthony D. Callahan
Warren Davenport
Gregory D. Mangrum
Harold D. Mangrum
Keith B. McAlister

Ministers:

Barry M. Grider,
Pulpit Evangelist

Matthew Jones,
Personal Evangelist

Garrett Olney, Youth
Jordan Pugh, Youth

Sunday:

Bible Study..... 9:30 A.M.
Morning Worship.... 10:30 A.M.
Afternoon Worship.....1:30 P.M.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 P.M.

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Putting First Things First

Barry Grider

To put something first means to prioritize. All of us should set our priorities in order. Not everything we do is equal in importance and we need to wisely discern what are the most important responsibilities given to us.

Recently in his inaugural address, President Donald Trump pledged that in his administration he would always put America first. He is saying that the decisions he makes will always have the goal of what is in the best interest of our nation. I want our governmental leaders to put our country first. This is why we elected them. Governments exist to protect their respective nations and to enact policies that will help these nations be productive and prosperous. Paul wrote,

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor (Rom. 13:1-7).

God has ordained civil government. He expects the Christian to respect civil rulers and be obedient citizens. He expects civil leaders to serve in the best interests of the people.

Likewise, one should also put family first. I know that I have an obligation to "seek and save the lost" just as the Lord took upon Himself that responsibility (Luke 19:10). However, my obligation to my family supersedes all other responsibilities, save that which I owe my Lord. For example a husband is to keep himself faithful to his wife and love her "even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25). I specifically have been given the obligation to rear my children in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). I remember brother Elkins saying, "if every father had been like Noah, there would not have been a flood." Not putting family first brings the judgment of God (1 Tim. 5:8).

We also have to recognize that the kingdom of God must come first in our lives. Remember Jesus words, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Mat. 6:33). Pleasing God ought to be the central focus of our lives. Whatever it is that is loved by Jesus ought to be loved by each one of us. God works through the church which belongs to Christ. Paul expresses this thought beautifully when he writes, "Unto him [God] be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Eph. 5:21). Members of the church are workers together with God (2 Cor. 6:1). When we put the kingdom first, everything else will fall into place.

The nation, the home, and the church are all established by God for the good of mankind. Anything that pertains to these institutions needs to be an interest to all of us. Setting our priorities in order will be easy when we learn to put first things first.

The Bible Is Free from Self-Contradictions

Curtis A. Cates

A question designed to undermine faith in the inerrant, plenary (full), verbally inspired word of God is, "How can one hold the Bible literally to be inspired of God while, at the same time, it contains thousands upon thousands of error and contradictions?" On one hand, if it is God's word, then God is Creator and possesses all authority whereas man is in sin, needs salvation offered only in Christ, and will be judged at the last day. On the other hand, if the original autographs were written by fallible man unaided by divine inspiration and full of errors, the Bible is not infallible, it is not the revelation from God, and the argument for its authority is useless and vain.

Is this a new phenomenon? Actually, the same basic discrepancies were alleged by ancient infidels. And, their accusations were effectively answered in every generation. However, destructive critics refuse to accept the more than adequate defense of the Scriptures in the past; thus, each generation must see the rise of brave defenders of the truth. The humiliation that inevitably comes when the alleged contradictions are resolved seems to thwart the vicious assaults only briefly.

"Contradiction" Defined

The prince of scholars, J. W. McGarvey, defined a contradiction.

Two statements are contradictory not when they differ, but when they can not both be true. If on any rational hypothesis, we may suppose them both to be true, we can not rightfully pronounce them contradictory. We are not bound to show the truth of a given hypothesis; but only that it may be true. If it is at all possible, then it is possible that no contradiction exists; if it is probable, then it is probable that no contradiction exist; and the degree of the latter probability is measured by that of the former.—*Evidences of Christianity*, Part III, P. 31.

Countless millions of hours are spent, many books written, and untold "scholars" are educated and sent forth to undermine faith in the sacred message, but alleged errors are very elusive. About the time the critic thinks he has one in his grasp, it disappears like a mirage; the Bible stands like the Rock of Gibraltar. Is the Bible inerrant (Latin error, "to wander"; in, negating the former), free from error, to be trusted? If one part is held to contain error, the problem is increased—how does one determine what part is erroneous and which part is truly authoritative, life-giving and hope-bestowing?

Type of Contradictions Alleged to Exist

The burden of proof is on the skeptic to demonstrate that no possible explanations exist for his alleged discrepancies. History records, however, that with lower, or textual criticism, archaeology, and more knowledge, the many assertions of contradictions have been disproven.

That some actual contradictions may be discovered need not be feared. Objective, honest, in-depth investigation of the Bible is invited and urged.

Difficulties in the Scriptures are not unexpected. The scriptures are God's profound wisdom. The difficulties of believing that the Bible is of human origin are infinitely greater than to believe its divine inspiration. What types of discrepancies are alleged to exist?

First, Bible writers are alleged to have contradicted each other. Celsius, a second century Epicurean philosopher, alleged contradictions between Matthew, Mark and Luke. Liberal "higher critics" have found "conflicts" between "J," "E," "P," et al. The imaginary priestly writer (Genesis 1) contradicts the much later Yahwist author (Genesis 2). Moses is denied to be the sole author of the Pentateuch. Other examples could be cited.

The following should be considered (1) The author had varied purposes and audiences. Moses' purpose in Genesis 1 was altogether different from that of Genesis 2. The material brought about diverse language style, not a change of author. (2) Omissions from one account to another (as in Matthew, Mark and Luke) are not contradictions. Such is prevalent in current histories and biographies. Such prove individual inspiration, and clearly show that there was no collusion to construct the same story. Variations are not contradictions. (3) Not one gospel writer intended to write a full biography of Christ. Matthew wrote to Jews of the Messiah, Mark to the Romans of the Lowly and Exalted Servant, Luke to the Gentiles of the Son of Man, and John afterward to the church identifying the former as the Son of God—variation with a purpose. (4) Some "errors" involve different occasions, different speeches, in different places, with different audiences, instead of one event the accounts of which are alleged to conflict. (5) Authors sometimes varied in their methods of computation, of counting time, and of order.

Second, Bible writers are alleged to have contradicted science and history. But the saving message is needed by all men in all time. That the Bible did not speak in technical language of the laboratory is a tribute to its perfection. Even today's scientists speak of "sunrise" and "sunset." And, science is not contradicted by miracles, including the creation and the resurrection of Christ. To point to difficulties is not to prove contradictions.

Subsequent enlightenment from archaeology and other research has removed many problems relative to history and geography. No scientific, historical or archaeological discovery has ever contradicted a single statement in the Bible. But, what a marvel to see the pre-scientific statements therein.

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The Bible Is Free from Self-Contradictions (continued from page 2)

Third, the actual writings of Bible authors are alleged not to exist today; the text cannot be restored. That thousands of variances should appear in the thousands of hand-copied manuscripts was not unexpected. However, meticulous and scholarly textual criticism has, through God's providence, produced reliable, virtually error-free restoration of the original. True, the original infallible autographs have not been found, but neither has a fallible one. Why would one wish to exchange thousands of copies for an original with which any heretic could tamper? Some wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction (s Peter 3:16). Why miss the sacred truth seeking the gnats of supposed blemishes? (For further study, consult Gleason Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*.)

Conclusion

What a contrast between the indestructibility of the word and the impermanence of the works of man. Human philosophies, theologies, institutions, dynasties and kingdoms have come and gone, crumbling into ruins. The Eternal Kingdom stands, and the cross marches on. "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 11:15). "The Word of God abideth for ever" (1 Peter 1:25).

(from *Gospel Advocate*, July 1985)

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