

The Foundations of Biblical Criticisms

**By
Ron Dart**

Master of Arts thesis
Ambassador College
Pasadena California
c 1969

The thesis by Ron Dart was published in *Tomorrow's World* as four articles as follows:

"The Bible -- Superstition or Authority?" (December 1969, p.27)

"Theology in Chaos" (January 1970, p.27)

"Here's Why the Critics Can't Ignore the Prophets" (January 1971, p.33)

"The Bible Judges the Critics" (March 1971, p.27)

The Bible Superstition or Authority?

Ronald L Dart

(*Tomorrow's World*, December 1968)

Man would like to get rid of the Bible. He's tried. for some reason, however, that ancient Book refuses to roll over and play dead. It keeps on impartially proclaiming, "Here is Truth," in face of a barrage of criticism unparalleled in the history of literature. There are those who will tell you that the Bible has been discredited. But will they tell you who has performed this feat and how it was done? It's time you learned the real truth about Biblical criticism.

FEW MONTHS ago a man wrote to the editor of his Sunday newspaper: "I honestly try to live the right kind of life, but when we read that so much of what we used to think true in the Bible has been discredited, how do we know what is right? In that one sentence, he brought into focus one of the most serious problems facing modern man.

There was a time when a question of right and wrong was settled by an appeal to the Bible. In spite of all the doctrinal disagreements and inter-church bickering, the Bible still had a profound influence on the lives of millions of people who called themselves religious. They may not have agreed on the meaning of the Bible, and certainly many of them were not willing to do what the Bible said, but at least the Bible was recognized as an authority. It was a source to which man could look to see for himself what was right.

Yet somehow, we have come to the place today that millions of people believe that "much of what we used to think true in the Bible has been discredited."

Is that so? Who discredited the Bible? What proof did he show? Who checked up on his evidence? Do we know that the Bible has been discredited, or is it one of those things that "people say"?

"They say the Bible contradicts itself." "They say you can prove anything by the Bible." "They say the Bible has been discredited."

But if you asked them who had discredited the Bible and what proof they had seen, most simply would not know. Their only answer would be: "Well, they say the Bible contradicts itself." But if you ask them who "they" are, the chances are they simply will not know.

Some people may have a vague idea that "Biblical scholars" or "the higher critics" have found out things about the Bible which would at least seem to discredit it.

Biblical Scholars

The very word "scholar" tends to intimidate the average layman. When he hears of "the assured results of modern criticism," or that "scholars are agreed," he is expected to bow before superior wisdom. Yet scholars are only men and are subject to human failings just like the rest of us. They can be wrong.

For too long now the critics have hidden behind a barrier of complexity which has frightened off the average layman. The Hebrew language, the mysteries of Greek, the complexities of archaeology — all these things seem beyond our comprehension.

But really, the scholars and critics of the Bible are not that difficult to understand. When all the window dressing is removed and the foundation laid bare, anyone can understand.

Who Are the Critics?

The most serious assaults ever made on the authority of the Bible have NOT come from atheists, rationalists, or scientists. They have come from the Christian ministry.

An atheist haranguing against the Bible from a soapbox would hardly receive a hearing from most Christians, but when a minister solemnly steps into the pulpit and begins to criticize the Bible, people are going to sit up and take notice! This is happening week after week in our Western Christian World.

A rector of the Church of England, for example, was quoted as saying that the Old Testament contains passages of "spiritual junk" and "poison" for the people (Daily Express, May 10, 1963).

Another, Dr. Leslie Weatherhead, former president of the Methodist Conference, said he would like to go through the Bible with a blue pencil and cut out certain sections. He said that in his opinion, the Old Testament was out of date and completely outmoded and that many of the Psalms were nonsense (Sunday Pictorial, London, August 12, 1962).

One vicar even went so far as to call the Ten Commandments the "Terrible Ten" and to say that it is often right to BREAK THEM!

With so many clergymen openly challenging the authority of the Bible, is it any wonder that people are wondering what is right?

How can they know what is right when clergymen on every side are rejecting the Bible as the standard for human behavior. They certainly cannot look to the clergy. They are so deeply divided on moral issues that they are becoming confused themselves. Abortion, teenage sex experimentation, trial marriages, divorce, drug addiction, adultery, homosexuality — all these are wide-open controversial subjects among clergymen today.

Why No Agreement?

But why is it that intelligent men are unable to agree on the right or wrong of such vital issues? "Surely," we exclaim, "they must see from the fruits of these things that they are wrong!"

No, they don't. When they threw away the standard which defines right and wrong and attempted to become a law to themselves, they lost the only wisdom they ever had.

As a desperate world looks to these men for help, all they get are opinions. "There are no absolutes," says one minister. "There are no blacks or whites where morals are concerned — only shades of gray," says another.

Meanwhile a hopelessly confused people sink further into moral quicksand.

Well did Jeremiah prophesy of these men, "Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?" ([Jeremiah 8:9](#)).

God has clearly defined what is right and wrong for man. If clergymen would turn to the Bible, and accept its authority on the vital questions pertaining to man's life, all this confusion would disappear. God says: "But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings" ([Jeremiah 23:22](#)).

Assailed by Doubts

But the Bible is no longer accepted by many religious leaders as an authoritative standard.

Having rejected any Biblical authority, much of the Christian ministry has sunk into a morass of doubt and agnosticism.

One of the most eloquent spokesmen of the new "theology of doubt" is Dr. John A. T.

Robinson, Bishop of Woolwich, and author of *Honest to God*. His book has been described as saying "that the concept of a personal God as held in popular Christianity is outmoded — that atheists and agnostics are right to reject it."

Bishop Robinson was asked in an interview by Jack Lucas of the *Daily Herald* whether he believed literally in a virgin birth. He answered frankly: "I am prepared to be agnostic. I do not believe it matters very much. I think the evidence is pretty weak on the whole."

Bishop Robinson, of course, does not intend to speak dogmatically in his book, nor does he really intend to prove anything. In his own words, he is merely "thinking out loud."

He summed up the general confusion in theological circles by admitting to Mr. Lucas: "I do not fully understand myself all that I am trying to say" (*Daily Herald*, March 19, 1963).

These questions that have arisen in the mind of Bishop Robinson are by no means unique in theological circles. Reviewing the book, *Honest to God*, Canon Theodore Wedel said:

The Bishop is not committing a crime in revealing to a wider public what has been going on for a generation and longer in the world of advanced theological learning.... *Honest to God* is simply a bold, and as some theologians may say, premature opening of a Pandora's box of theological novelties under debate among doctors of the schools BEHIND THE SCENES (*The Episcopalian*, August, 1963, emphasis mine).

No Authority

Very few theologians today will accept the Bible as an end to all dispute. In a major American city a group of theologians appeared on television to answer questions about religion for people who telephoned in to the studio. One woman who called, after trying in vain to point out something she thought was very clear in the New Testament, became exasperated and said, "Can't you see it? It's in plain English."

"Well, no," was the theologian's reply, "it's in corrupt Greek."

His answer illustrates the attitude of the modern schools of Biblical criticism. The Bible is not accepted as the infallible Word of God, authoritative in all matters of religion. It is looked upon as the work of men, subject to human error and therefore quite fallible.

A survey commissioned by *Redbook Magazine* in 1961 shows how far this has gone. They assigned Louis Harris and Associates, a public opinion research firm, to interview student ministers in eight leading theological schools. The results were shocking.

It was found that only 44 percent of these future ministers believed in the virgin birth of Christ, only 29 percent believed there is a real heaven and hell, and only 46 percent believed that Jesus ascended physically whole into heaven after His crucifixion!

Of all the figures listed in the article, the most striking concerned the second coming of Christ: Only one percent of these future ministers are convinced that there will be a second coming of Christ, even though Christ specifically said that He would come again to this earth ([Acts 1:11](#), [John 14:3](#)).

Confusion Without Authority

A woman wrote to a minister who writes a column for *The Birmingham Mail* and asked: "If you reject the authority of Scripture, what authority can you speak with or appeal to? Or don't you think there is any need for authority today?"

His answer? "Your own mind is the authority!" Each of us must face any decisions that come our way and "hear again the inner voice, something in US that responds, that whispers 'This is true.' There is your ultimate authority!"

But what if the "inner voice" is wrong? What if it has been the victim of miseducation,

misinformation, or outright falsehood? There are millions of people in the world today telling themselves, "This is true," while, in fact, disagreeing with countless other people who are telling themselves, "This is false." Who is right? Is anybody right? It is this sort of confusion that has led to a sort of "Christian agnosticism" in our day,

Mankind needs a guide, an authority he can turn to with assurance. The Bible has that authority. Why have ministers rejected it?

Trust No Man

When you read a statement about the Bible by a critic, can you rest assured that the man has always approached the Bible with an open, unprejudiced mind — that his research has always been careful, thorough, well documented?

Unfortunately, you cannot.

Far too many of the objections raised against the Bible by critics are firmly grounded in sheer ignorance! Scholars do not always understand everything they write about. Even "learned men" are occasionally guilty of carelessness, false assumption, or even ignorance.

Take, for example, Thomas Paine, who launched one of the most widely read attacks ever made on the Bible with his *Age of Reason* in 1794. Although Paine ripped apart the contemporary philosophy of the Bible held by some churchmen, he left the Bible itself virtually untouched. He wrote:

From whence then could arise the solitary and strange conceit that the Almighty, who had millions of worlds equally dependent on His protection, should quit the care of all the rest and come to die in our world, because they say one man and one woman had eaten an apple? (Thomas Paine, *Age of Reason*, pp. 26, 27, emphasis mine.)

Notice that his objection is not to the Bible itself, but to what "they say" about the Bible. "They," in this case, were the "Christian" teachers whose doctrines he had sampled. The chances are he did not look any more deeply into their teachings than he did into the Bible. He admitted that when he wrote the first part of his book, he did not even possess a Bible! (W. Neil, *Cambridge History of the Bible*, p. 250.)

We might borrow a phrase from Paine and ask: "From whence then could arise the solitary and strange conceit" that leads a man to argue so confidently from a position of ignorance?

It seems strange to hear a man admit that he doesn't know what he's talking about, but we should at least be refreshed by his honesty. A great deal of criticism of the Bible is launched from a similar lack of knowledge but without the candor to admit it.

Check the Source

It is easy to see how Paine made his mistake. After all, if the clergy did not speak for the Bible, who did? It is always risky, however, to take another man's word for something. Thomas Paine simply failed to check up to see if the Bible really did say what he had heard that it said.

A good many errors result from just such a failure. For example, Robert Graves and Raphael Patai published a book called *Hebrew Myths*, the *Book of Genesis* in which they attempt to show the alleged mythological character of much of the Old Testament. In making a point on page 13, the writers state: "A Ugaritic deity worshipped as Baal-Zebuh or Zebul, at Ekron was insulted by King Ahaziah (II Kings 1:2 ff)."

If the reader simply accepts this without checking, he is going to be completely misled. If he checks, he will find the account in the Bible is clear and easy to understand. King Ahaziah sent to inquire of the god of Ekron whether he would recover of his disease. Elijah the

prophet intercepted the messengers and sent them back to tell Ahaziah he would die. There is no indication that the messengers ever got to Baal-Zebub and certainly no insult to Baal-Zebub is mentioned in the text.

The book gives no indication and the reader cannot tell whether this represents an interpretation of the authors or a slip on their part.

This is a particularly interesting example, because the two authors have an impressive record of scholarship in their fields and list no fewer than seventy literary works between them! As one reads through the introduction, he cannot help being impressed by the obvious scholarship, learning and confidence exhibited,

This impression, however, gets damaged a bit when we read on page 15 a reference to the "feast of atonement." Anyone who is going to write with authority about the Old Testament ought to know that the Day of Atonement is a fast day, not a feast!

One thing is clear, however — we can't swallow everything we see in print! It is often necessary to go right to the source to see if it really does say what it is purported to say.

What Kind of God?

If Thomas Paine had done this, he could have saved himself a great deal of misunderstanding.

Where did he get his concept of God? He wrote:

When we read the obscene stories, the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel and torturous executions, the unrelenting vindictiveness with which more than half the Bible is filled, it would be more consistent that we called it the word of a demon than the Word of God (Thomas Paine, *Age of Reason*, p. 7).

Of course, the careful student of the Bible already knows that the cruelty, barbarism, and vindictiveness which we do find in the Old Testament are not the will of God! They are the works of man contrary to the laws of God!

Nevertheless, far too many people who have read Paine's work still share his false impression of the God of the Old Testament. They look upon God as a harsh hanging judge who is all too eager to descend upon man with great wrath every time he deviates from an "impossible law."

As a new PLAIN TRUTH reader from Northampton, England, wrote:

I accept the ethical teaching of Jesus, but I cannot in any way reconcile the God Jehovah of the Jews as having anything in common with such a teaching. There is hardly a page in the Hebrew Scriptures which does not deal with murder, rape, pillage, etc.... No loving or merciful God or being could have allowed or attributed to the acts as reported in the Hebrew Scriptures. I can't read it. It is too bloody. There is too much fear. Didn't Paul write perfect love casteth out all fear? (Emphasis mine.)

Of course, those who have more than a nodding acquaintance with the God of the Old Testament have encountered an entirely different God. They have found in the pages of the Bible the God who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. They have encountered the God who cried out, "Why will you die, O house of Israel?" These students of the Bible have encountered prophets whose main message was a plea to Israel not to destroy themselves.

For some reason, the reader was oblivious to this. Either he had not read the Old Testament carefully, or, like Thomas Paine, he had allowed his mind to be prejudiced against it before he ever started.

But what about you? To what extent have you allowed your opinions of the Bible to be

formed by what others have told you? Have you checked the Bible to see what it really does say about God?

It is a shame, but all too many of the criticisms leveled at the Bible have little or nothing to do with the real message of the Bible. They deal purely with the false concepts and philosophies of man about the Bible.

Science Versus the Bible

Thomas Paine was certainly not the only one to make the mistake of assuming that the teaching of the church was the teaching of the Bible. When the science of geology began to discover evidence in the rocks that the earth was more than six thousand years old, many jumped to the conclusion that the book of Genesis had been discredited. However, as one writer put it, their concept of Creation was not so much that of the Bible as that of Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

In their minds, they had somehow developed a mental image of the creation of man within a week of the creation of the earth out of nothing and the sudden shaping of the sun, moon, and stars.

When this idea clashed head-on with evidence that the earth may be millions of years old, the faith of some was shaken. It was unfortunate, because their faith in the Bible need not have been shaken at all. The Bible simply does not say that the earth is only six thousand years old!

It is not difficult to see how a superficial reading of Genesis might reinforce such an idea. But a careful study of the first chapter makes it clear that Genesis reveals nothing about the actual age of the earth.

The account starts simply in the first verse by saying: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The writer of Genesis does not tell us when "the beginning" was. The very language of it certainly implies antiquity, but it is indefinite,

The writer goes on to say: "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light."

It is obvious from the wording of these verses that there is some time lapse between verse 1 when God created the heaven and the earth, and verse 3, where He said, "Let there be light."

How long did the earth lie without form and void? How long was darkness upon the face of the deep? How long did the Spirit of God move upon the face of the waters before God finally took action, saying, "Let there be light"?

As far as the book of Genesis is concerned, the earth could just as easily be twice as old as the wildest estimates of geologists.

The Full Story

It is only after a careful investigation of the Bible that the full story of what is described at the beginning of Genesis comes to light. An examination of the original Hebrew of Genesis 1:2 reveals that the word rendered "was" by the translators of the Authorized Version should more correctly be translated "became."

Furthermore, the original Hebrew words for "without form, and void," were *tohu and bohu*. The words simply mean "chaotic, in confusion, waste, empty."

Then, we read in Isaiah 45:18 that when God created the heavens and the earth He did NOT create them TOHU — in confusion.

God is not the author of confusion. When He created the heavens and the earth in the first place, He created them perfect and "to be inhabited" ([Isaiah 45:18](#)). It was after this creation that the earth became chaotic and in confusion as a result of Satan's rebellion. We're not told in Genesis how this happened or how long it lasted. For the full story of the earth before Adam, request our articles, "Did God Create a Devil?" and "Dinosaurs Before Adam?"

A Total Misconception

It is a fact that many of the criticisms leveled at the Bible have been made because the critic was misinformed, failed to check the source, misunderstood what the Bible said, or simply did not read it carefully enough. Yet many have read their works and supposed that the Bible couldn't be trusted.

Since the critics have taken it upon themselves to scrutinize the Bible, surely it is only fair that we scrutinize the critics.

What are they trying to prove and why? Do they back up their conclusions with facts, with proof, or only with opinions?

You may be in for a surprise!

THEOLOGY IN CHAOS

Ronald L Dart

(Tomorrow's World, January 1970)

There used to be a measure of unity among the critics of the Bible. Now we find confusion, disagreement, chaos. What was the tie that bound them all together, and who untied it? In this second of a series we get right down to the foundations of Bible criticism.

CHRISTIANITY today is in great confusion! At no time in history has theological thought flowed in so many diverse directions — and all at the same time.

Professor H. H. Rowley of the Victoria University of Manchester said of modern Biblical studies:

In contrast to the large measure of unity that prevailed a generation ago, there is today an almost bewildering diversity of view on many questions.... On a number of subjects contrary tendencies have appeared in various quarters leading to a greater fluidity in the field as a whole than has been known for a long time (H. H. Rowley, *The Old Testament and Modern Study*, pp. xviii-xix).

George Mendenhall of the University of Michigan put it more bluntly:

The "fluidity" in this field referred to by Rowley may with perhaps less courtesy but with more accuracy be called chaos (G. E. Mendenhall, "Biblical History in Transition," *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, p. 33).

We are witnessing the most powerful movement toward Christian unity in modern times. Yet we are simultaneously faced with the greatest-ever turmoil of theological disagreement. Isn't that a contradiction? What happened to the "unity that prevailed a generation ago"?

We are going to find out. But first we must come to see the foundation upon which this "large measure of unity" was built.

Challenging the Old Assumptions

How did the critics of the Bible begin their insidious work? By challenging the assumption upon which the traditional ideas about the Bible were based. There was no reason, the critics thought, why they shouldn't check up on the archaic assumptions of by-gone centuries — and see if they were true.

That's fair enough. We agree. After all, the Apostle Paul exhorted the Thessalonians to "prove all things," and not merely to assume that they were true.

Unfortunately however, too many of the critics sabotaged their own work right from the start by fabricating new false assumptions of their own!

Assumptions come and go, of course, but a generation ago one stood head and shoulders above them all. This presupposition — almost universally accepted by the self-appointed Biblical scholars at the time — was the platform from which they chose to view the very small amount of evidence they had. It was the foundation of all Biblical criticism — and is best expressed by a critic named Kuenen in his book, *Prophets and Prophecy*:

So soon as we derive a separate part of Israel's religious life directly from God, and allow the supernatural or immediate revelation to intervene even in one single point, so long also

our view of the whole continues to be incorrect.... It is the supposition of a natural development alone which accounts for all the phenomena.

Kuenen's "natural development" is merely the application of the philosophy of evolution to the study of the Bible.

Evolution!

That's the heart of Biblical criticism.

Kuenen, Wellhausen, and others first ruled out any possibility of the miraculous. The supernatural was ridiculed. And a direct revelation from God? Well that was so absurd, it was treated as humorous. (Write for our article, "Did Jesus' Miracles Really Happen?") The next step was to apply the philosophy of a natural development of religion to Israel's history.

Most Biblical scholars, having planted their feet firmly on the evolutionary platform, had little difficulty maintaining a semblance of unity.

As Mendenhall and Rowley point out, however, something happened to shatter that unity! In the last generation the field of Biblical studies has been absolutely inundated with new evidence — evidence which has cut the ground from under the evolutionary concept!

Could Moses Write?

One of the best illustrations of this is seen in the once commonly held belief that , Moses could not have written the Pentateuch because writing was unknown in his day. When we look for evidence upon which such a belief could have been founded, we are left empty-handed. The only evidence at hand was the Bible. And the Bible clearly and flatly contradicted any such belief.

Not only did Moses write down God's Law (Exodus 24:4, Deuteronomy 31:9) , along with a detailed account of the travels of the children of Israel after they left Egypt (Numbers 33:2) , but all the Israelites were commanded to write God's Commandments upon the posts of their houses (Deuteronomy 6:9). The Bible tells us that not only did Moses write, but that the entire population of Israel was literate.

Looking back from our vantage point, the very idea that Moses couldn't write seems a bit ludicrous. Since the time this theory was in vogue, whole libraries have emerged from the sands of Babylonia, Assyria, Palestine and Egypt. Many of these not only go back to Moses' time, but all the way back to Abraham's day and before.

The theory that Moses couldn't write has been so thoroughly exploded that we are led to wonder how any intelligent person could have developed such an idea in the first place.

"But Not Israel"

Naturally, in spite of all the evidence, some were still unwilling to believe that a "tribe of Semitic nomads" (the Israelites who invaded Palestine) would have been literate enough to have produced the Pentateuch. They admitted that writing was known in Egypt — no one could deny that — but they refused to admit that it was known among the Israelites!

They refused to admit it, that is, until about 1904 when Flinders Petrie began to decipher some ancient tablets found at Serabit el-Khadem, in the Sinai Peninsula. This was near the route the children of Israel took in coming out of Egypt. After careful examination of the tablets, he concluded that:

Workmen from Retenu, who were employed by the Egyptians and are often mentioned, had this system of linear writing. The inference that follows from that is extremely significant, mainly that about 1500 B. C. these simple workmen from Canaan were able to write and that the type of writing is independent both of hieroglyphics and cuneiform. Further, it invalidates

once and for all the hypothesis that the Israelites that came through this area from Egypt were at that stage still illiterate (Werner Keller, *The Bible as History*, p. 134, emphasis mine).

This provides proof positive that literacy in the time of Moses was not the exclusive property of a group of privileged scribes. These were working-class individuals — men who must have taken some of their spare time to prepare tablets and carve inscriptions in their own script.

Also of interest are the discoveries at Ras Shamra. Over a thousand tablets written in an old cuneiform alphabet have been discovered. The language is an old Northwest Semitic dialect "which was very closely related to the Hebrew of the time of Moses" (W. F. Albright, *New Horizons in Biblical Research*, p. 6).

Notice that Dr. Albright — the leading authority in archaeology today — refers to the Hebrew language at the time of Moses. Not only was writing known in the time of Moses, but the Hebrew language was already a separate, recognized tongue.

Still another authority tells us that during the time Moses was in exile from Egypt, "the Canaanites were familiar with at least eight languages recorded in five completely different systems of writing" (G. E. Mendenhall, "Biblical History in Transition," *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, p. 50).

Proof Moses Wrote

Not only is there no obstacle to believing that Moses could have written the bulk of the Pentateuch, there is every reason to believe that he did. First and foremost, in Exodus 24:4 we read that Moses wrote all the words of the Lord that he had received on Mount Sinai, and later (verse 7), he took the book or scroll in which he had written God's Law and read it in the audience of the people.

Why argue with Exodus? It's only making a simple statement of fact. Moses, having been reared in Pharaoh's court, was obviously a literate man living in a literate age — an age prolific with written records. It is totally illogical to assume that Moses would not have recorded the Law of God as it was given to him, or that he would not have written a history of the Exodus and the wilderness wanderings of the children of Israel! And this is precisely, what he did: "And Moses wrote their goings out according to their journeys by the commandment of the Lord: and these are their journeys according to their goings out" (Numbers 33:2).

Literary Style

Even in the face of mounting evidence and wholly consistent logic, some critics still maintain that the first five books of the Old Testament were composed (from oral traditions) as late as 700-800 B.C. — that's 600 to 800 years after Moses. Why? Their intellectual reason is that the literary style is too highly advanced for any earlier stage in Israel's history. Their real reason is more diabolical: they must destroy the Bible to remove its authority.

Contradicting themselves, even such higher critics as Kautzch, Ewald, and Delitzsch place some of the "best of the poetry" from Genesis, Exodus and Judges back to 1250 B.C. and earlier — within 200 years of Israel's conquest of Jericho (See James Orr, *The Problem of the Old Testament*, p. 76).

Dr. Kautzsch calls the Song of Deborah in Judges 5 "a poem of priceless worth," "genuine, splendid poetry."

The Hebrew language, then, was a fully developed highly expressive language when the Song of Deborah was written. Such a highly developed poetic style does not spring up overnight. What man, having never seen a poem, and writing in a primitive language, is

instantaneously going to become an accomplished poet?

In the opinion of some, the works of Shakespeare represent a high-water mark in the development of the English language and in the power of poetic portrayal — but they came after a long period of literary development.

The point is this: Since it is an established fact that the literary style of the Old Testament represents a very highly developed language, then there must have been a foundation of earlier Hebrew literature. Consequently, why assume that the Pentateuch was composed quite late from ORAL traditions?

It is an absolute certainty that written Hebraic records pre-dated the Pentateuch. Any other conclusion denies the evidence, flouts the logic and displays an ignorance of the highly developed culture which flourished in the Fertile Crescent prior to the time of Moses!

Of course, the evidence is so conclusive that no competent scholar today bases his conclusions on the misconception that there was no writing in Moses' time.

Yet, the fundamental premise which led to this mistaken idea is the very concept which underlies most of today's Biblical criticism — the concept of the Evolution of culture and religion.

Which Came First?

Long-cherished ideas die hard. So it has been with evolution. Having assumed that man evolved, it was not illogical to also assume that Moses could not write. However, once it was proved that Moses could have written, the theory that spawned the idea still did not die. It continued to form the basis of Biblical criticism for nearly one hundred years.

Having assumed a natural development for the religion of Israel, a plausible theory was needed to account for the development of that religion. Fertile minds evolved one quickly.

The philosophers looked at the religions extant in the world and drew their conclusions — conclusions, remember, based upon the assumption that all religions had evolved. This assumption stated that the development of religion gradually progressed from the primitive to the highly developed.

Primitive man supposedly observed the forces of nature around him — wind, fire, rain, thunder, etc. — and attributed these powers to spirit beings. In the passage of time he thought that certain of his actions had either pleased or irritated these gods — since favorable or unfavorable events had seemed to follow as a direct result. Worship involving propitiation of the spirits was the natural reaction.

From this early beginning, it is theorized that religion slowly "matured" to polytheism, and from there to monotheism — monotheism, apparently, being the highest plane of religious development.

It all seemed fairly logical — and so ethnologists, anthropologists and archaeologists mutually congratulated one another.

But what about the facts?

If this theory were true, one would expect to find absolutely no monotheism in the earliest religions. And upon finding polytheism existing at a certain time in a tribe's history, we would not expect to find monotheism preceding it.

Belief in a Supreme Being

As a result of the exhaustive efforts of an army of scientists, the question is no longer in doubt.

Even among the most primitive peoples on the face of the earth — including the Bushmen

of South Africa, most of the aboriginal tribes of Australia, all of the Arctic cultures except one, and virtually all of the primitive peoples of North America — we find a belief in a Supreme Being! (Short, *Modern Discovery and the Bible*, p. 23.)

In fact, it is precisely among the three oldest primitive peoples in North America that "we find the religion of a high God established with the greatest clearness and in quite characteristic forms" (W. Schmidt, *High Gods North America*, p. 22).

A comparison of the beliefs of these very old tribes with the Bible is eye-opening. Going to the oldest section of the oldest tribe, we find that they believe in a "Supreme Being" who is invisible (*ibid.*, p. 28). Compare this with Paul's first epistle to Timothy: "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God..." (1 Timothy 1:17).

Schmidt goes on to say of this Supreme Being of the Yuki religion :

He existed before all other beings and possesses unlimited powers. The highest of these is the power of creation by which He creates heaven and earth and all that it contains, especially men. One of their creation myths states formally that He created everything merely by His own will... Before creation He meditates and plans His work; and after it He expresses loudly His joyful satisfaction in its greatness and beauty (W. Schmidt, *High Gods in North America*, p. 28).

A student of the Bible immediately hearkens back to the first chapter of Genesis: "And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31)

Beliefs of Early Tribes

Turning to another of the early tribes (the Kato), Schmidt gives us the contents of their creation myth.

In this myth the culture hero is present at the same time with the Supreme Being. But the Supreme Being alone commands and directs everything, including the culture hero. Together they make the wide stretched vault of the sky and support it on four great pillars at the cardinal points; they make a way for the sun, openings for rain and mist. The body of man is molded out of clay. Wind and rain, sun and moon are not created until after man. Then comes a narrative of a great flood in which all men and animals perish (W. Schmidt, *High Gods in North America*, p. 29).

Remember that all this forms a part of the religions of the two oldest tribes of North American — religions and people who had no contact with the Bible! It is remarkable that a purely oral tradition would stay so close to the written record of the Hebrews.

However, these tribes did not retain this monotheistic form of religion. As time passed — and their religion "developed" — their concept of God degenerated into polytheism and animism.

This picture is repeated in other parts of the world as well.

Dr. John Ross wrote that scholars could not have hypothesized a "long process of evolution from an original image worship" if "the story of the original religion of China [had] been generally known":

We fail to find a hint anywhere as to the manner or the time when the idea of God originated in China, or by what process it came into common use. The name bursts suddenly upon us from the first page of history without a note of warning. At this point, the very threshold of what the Chinese critics accept as the beginning of their authentic history, the name of God and other religious matters present themselves with the completeness of a Minerva (John Ross, *Primitive Monotheism in China*, pp. 18, 23, 25).

A noted Assyriologist claims that the Sumerians were probably the first people to "emerge from barbarism" some time before 4000 B.C. What was their religion? Some of the oldest writings in the world have been found in the ruins of Sumerian cities, and "the facts point unmistakably to monotheism, and a sky god as the first deity, from whom descended the vast Sumerian pantheon" (A. Rendle Short, *Modern Discovery and the Bible*, p. 26).

One thing becomes abundantly clear: The very oldest religious concepts known to man were monotheistic — but then, consistently greater corruption and degeneracy set in, and monotheism was perverted to polytheism.

Evolution No Longer Accepted

Until shortly after the beginning of the twentieth century, it was commonly held that the culture (which includes the religion) of man had followed certain evolutionary lines. This was held not only by theologians, but by anthropologists, ethnologists, etc.

A change in thinking, however, began to be evident almost immediately after the turn of the century. By 1920 we are told: "The voice of evolutionism is muted to the work of a few die-hards" (Felix M. Keesing, *Culture Change*, p. 20).

As more evidence was assimilated into the study of anthropology, the role of evolution cultural changes faded even further. By 1930 we are told:

Writings in the evolutionist tradition are thinned to a trickle, and are marginal to professional work in anthropology. The vocabulary and assumptions involved in the evolutionary concept continue to make anthropologists unhappy by having some vogue in works by occasional students, especially in other fields as religion, when they write on so-called primitives of cultural origins and early development.... By this time, however, use of the term "evolution," shorn of its old unilinear framework, occasionally creeps back into the vocabulary of some anthropologists to express the larger perspectives of culture process (Felix M. Keesing, *Culture Change*, p. 25, emphasis mine).

By 1940 so much change had taken place that the concept of evolution was referred to as having been "long since dead so far as professional anthropologists were concerned."

Yet "social evolution" is still highly respected by many Biblical critics. It is strange how such speculations survive even when they have conclusively been rejected by competent scholars on the basis of evidence.

Could it possibly be because no one wants to face the alternative?

Unity Gone

Now we can begin to see what happened to the unity theologians enjoyed a generation ago. Since that time literally floods of information have absolutely destroyed the foundation upon which the majority of critics had built their theories. The result has been a complete reshuffling of virtually every idea that they ever held.

But why no unity today? The reason is simple. The most recent evidence, now becoming available, universally points to the fact that the Bible is what it says it is. But most critics have simply not been willing to accept this — and the result is that there are almost as many half-baked theories today as there are self-styled critics to put them forward.

Small wonder that G. Ernest Wright was moved to say: "It must now be admitted that a science of Biblical studies does not exist" (G. E. Wright, "Biblical History in Transition," *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, p. 32, emphasis mine).

▲ [Back To Top](#) ▲

Here's Why the Critics Can't Ignore the Prophets

Ronald L Dart

(*Tomorrow's World*, January 1971)

Bible prophecy is an emotionally loaded subject. In it, a great supernatural Being claims to know EXACTLY what will happen to man in the next few years. Some marvel — most ridicule. Some believe — most criticize. Criticize? That's the "sport of scholars." In this article, we examine "modern theology's critical analysis" of Ezekiel, Daniel and Isaiah — and discover why the critics cannot ignore the prophets!

Why is that man cannot dismiss the Bible with a wave of the hand as he might other writings of the ancient world? The Bible — more than all the other books put together — has drawn unparalleled attention from critics. Nothing in the history of literature can begin to compare with it. It has been examined, dissected, reviled, pulled apart, and even put back together again and defended.

For some reason, man could not simply say, "I don't believe it" and then carry on as always. There are many reasons why. But standing head and shoulders above all the rest is prophecy!

Prophecy Troubles Critics

The human mind, even gifted with the greatest insight and sagacity, can go only so far in predicting future events. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the twelve minor prophets have all gone far beyond the tightly limited boundaries of mortal man. So the critics have a choice: Either they must admit that a power and intelligence greater than their own human mind had inspired those prophecies, or they must find some other way to explain them.

Guess which alternative the critics have chosen!

They have chosen to look for a human explanation. Their usual solution is ridiculously simple — they "re-date" the prophecies! They shove the date of composition forward a few centuries — so that the prophecies appear to have been written after all of the prophesied events had already occurred!

It is significant that no critic has ever attempted to deny the divine origin of these prophecies while leaving them in their own time setting.

Actually, this effort of the critics unequivocally proves the phenomenal accuracy of the prophets. Why else would a materialistic "scholar" feel it necessary to fabricate a new day? If the prophecies were not accurate — if even only one were wrong — critics would love to expose this obvious incompetence and glaring error by retaining the true dates. But they can not do so. They full well realize that Bible prophecy — if they don't tamper with the dates — is unerringly, precisely accurate in even its most intricate details.

So the critics have only one choice — they must alter the date of the prophetic statement and turn it into contemporary history.

But can we know the dates with any certainty?

We certainly can!

In this article, we will demonstrate the absolute prophetic authenticity of three of the most important prophets — Ezekiel, Daniel, and Isaiah.

Date of Ezekiel

Ezekiel is one of the easiest of the prophets to date. No one was any more thorough — he gives us no less than twelve specific dates in his book.

Ezekiel dates his prophecies from the year of "Jehoiachin's captivity" by Nebuchadnezzar's reign which occurred at the time of the spring equinox in 596 B.C. (II Chron. 36:10). Since all historians agree upon the dates of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, we can compose the following dates for the book of Ezekiel:

Chapter 1:1-2 5th day of the 4th month in the 5th year (592 B.C.)
Chapter 8:1 5th day of the 6th month in the 6th year (591 B.C.)
Chapter 20:1 10th day of the 5th month in the 7th year (590 B.C.)
Chapter 24:1 10th day of the 10th month in the 9th year (beginning of 587 B.C.)
Chapter 26:1 1st day of a month in the 11th year (586 B.C.)
Chapter 29:1 12th day of the 10th month in the 10th year (end of 587 B.C.)
Chapter 30:20 7th day of the 1st month in the 11th year (586 B.C.)
Chapter 32:1 1st day of the 12th month in the 12th year (beginning of 584 B.C.)
Chapter 32:17 15th day of the month in the 12th year (584 B.C.)
Chapter 33:21 5th day of the 10th month in the 12th year (end of 585 B.C.)
Chapter 40:1 10th day of the beginning month of the civil year Tishri, the seventh month in the 25th year (572 B.C.)

Now that's evidence! Yet, some critics just toss aside such careful, meticulous dating!

Where Critics Go Wrong

Why, then, do the same critics attempt to place the authorship of the book of Ezekiel between 400 and 230 B.C.?

The answer is twofold. First, they must assume — without proof — that Ezekiel's prophecies are not of divine origin. Then, proceeding from this assumption, they reasoned that Ezekiel had to have had certain historical information available before he could have written these remarkable "histories". His in-depth script for the fall of Tyre, for example, was still being acted out in fantastic detail until about 320 B.C. Consequently, the critics reason, Ezekiel couldn't have written it before that time! But Ezekiel's prophecies about Tyre's destruction were indeed written in 596 B.C. — as is clearly proclaimed. How then could the critics explain it's incredible accuracy for the next 250 years without acknowledging their Creator God in heaven?

(In reality, the prophecy concerning Tyre is still being fulfilled today — so using the critics' own reasoning, we would have to conclude that the Book of Ezekiel has not been written yet!)

Let's put it bluntly: We are asked to believe that Ezekiel's dates are an out-and-out fraud. Furthermore, we are asked to believe that this fraud in dating went undetected until the present day!

A "Pseudo Ezekiel"?

Now let's consider the problems that this imaginary, "pseudo-Ezekiel" would have had to face in getting his spurious book accepted as the work of an original Ezekiel and then have it accepted as Scripture.

During the time of the Babylonian captivity, there was a recognized religious authority among the Jews. Ezekiel refers to them as the "elders of Judah" (Ezek. 8:1).

Later, when Cyrus decided to give permission for the Temple to be rebuilt, "Then rose up

the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites... to go up to build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem" ([Ezra 1:5](#)). The leaders of this expedition were Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest.

A little later, about 457 B.C., Ezra comes to Palestine. Ezra is called a "ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given" ([Ezra 7:6](#)). "Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach Israel statutes and judgments" (verse 10). Notice that Ezra was not a lawgiver, but a scribe — a copier — of an already existing code of law.

Throughout Ezra and Nehemiah, it is quite obvious that there is a ruling body of Jews concerned with ecclesiastical affairs and that there is a "holy scripture" an authoritative body of religious writings (see [Neh. 8:1](#)).

There can be no question that the "law of Moses" was the Torah — the first five books of your Old Testament. Remember this was before 400 B.C.

Now back to the mischievous plot of "pseudo-Ezekiel." He would have had the rather formidable task of palming off on a group of Jewish priests, Levites, and governors, a totally new book which none of them had ever heard before — and convince them that it was written during the Babylonian captivity. Quite an assignment!

The Jews have always been an intelligent, practical people with a great deal of common sense. Would they have accepted a book purporting to have foretold, in advance, the history of the last few years, yet which did not appear until after the event?

Would you have accepted such a book?

Suppose some individual would try to convince you that he has written a book listing in detail all the major events of 1990-1995 and that the book was published in 1960, but he gave you a copy of the book in the year 2000, would you immediately accept this would be prophet?

Wouldn't it seem a little bit contrived?

When one comprehends the exalted position of the Torah among Jews past and present, the obstacles that a "pseudo-Ezekiel" would face becomes insurmountable.

Why was Ezekiel Accepted?

Why then were Ezra and the men of the Great Synagogue (the assemblage of priests and Levites constituting the religious authority) willing to accept the real Ezekiel at all? The answer becomes obvious when we understand that the Canon of the Old Testament — that is, the books making up the Old Testament — was complete by the end of the 5th Century B.C. Ezra and the Jews with him in Babylon were aware of the prophetic work of Ezekiel when they returned.

Ezekiel had been part of the succession of prophets: He had held an office which was honored and respected. His prophecies had already begun to come to pass. And as they continued to be fulfilled before the Jews' very eyes — while the book was their very possession. Nobody could question the authenticity of the book.

Interestingly enough, even the critics have not been willing to call Ezekiel an out-and-out fraud. Their reason is obvious: Frauds have ulterior motives. And any ulterior motive would have been transparent throughout. But no such motive can be found in Ezekiel. And no fraud writes like Ezekiel writes.

Ezekiel rings true. Literature with such a powerful moral force simply does not arise from a hypocritical mind.

Finally, since both Jewish tradition and the Jewish historian Josephus state that the Old

Testament was completed about the end of the 5th Century B.C., there can be no question of a later date for Ezekiel.

Absolutely, the only claim that can be advanced to question Ezekiel's own date is the fact that NO MAN could have made the prophecies that Ezekiel made. This, however, is not evidence for a later date, rather, it is PROOF OF A DIVINE ORIGIN!

Date of Daniel

Daniel was a contemporary of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. He was carried into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar about 604 B.C. and continued to live and write for more than the next 70 years.

Certain critics, however, date Daniel between 165 and 175 B.C.! That shouldn't come as a great surprise. But, just for curiosity, let's examine whatever reasons they have fabricated. Again, topping the list, is the assumption that the Book of Daniel is of purely human origin.

The fundamental axiom of criticism is the dictum that a prophet always spoke out of a definite historical situation to the present needs of the people among whom he lived and that a definite HISTORICAL situation shall be pointed out for each prophecy (George L. Robinson, The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia).

Consider what this means. It is a "fundamental axiom" that every prophet always spoke to and about the present needs of the people among whom he lived. In other words, Daniel is not seen by the critics as a prophet contemporary with Nebuchadnezzar, but rather as a "pious fraud" writing about 175 B.C. This "pseudo-Daniel," it is reasoned, was directing his "prophecies" to the current needs of the people in the second century B.C., since some of his "prophecies" cover that period.

Daniel Is Challenged

When one understands that what was going on about 175 B.C. the critics' motives become embarrassingly obvious.

This was the time of the Maccabean revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes. The book of Daniel covers historical details of the breakup of Alexander the Great's empire into four divisions and the subsequent war between the king of the south, climaxing in Antiochus Epiphanes' invasion of Jerusalem. Daniel's spectacular in-advance description of the minute details of all of this (in Daniel 11 the longest "detailed" prophecy in the Bible) are too absolutely accurate to have been written hundreds of years before they took place, say the critics.

Too accurate to have been conceived by man, that is.

Therefore, the "fundamental axiom of criticism" is applied — and Daniel is quickly put into a "time machine" and "re-materialized" some four hundred years later — as an attempt is made to set his prophecies into the "proper" historical situation of the Maccabean revolt.

There are two things wrong with this hypothesis:

1) Daniel himself did not understand all that he wrote. When he asked for further understanding, he was told: "Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end" (Daniel 12:9).

2) Daniel's words were not directed to the people of his own time nor even primarily to those in the second century B.C., but to those living at the time of the end.

Of course, some will argue that this was an attempt to make the people of his time believe

that the end was near. Fair enough, but why then did they accept the book into the Canon when the end didn't come?

A Critical "Fairy Tale"

Once upon a time (about 175 B.C.) a pious man (really a religious nut or a clever fraud) resolved to avail himself of the traditions surrounding the name of Daniel. He then set about to write the circumstances of his own time. And so, in the name of "Daniel the prophet," this fast-talking "pseudo-Daniel" proclaimed words of admonition and prophecy to the "faithful" (deceived idiots) around him in the second century B.C.

Now ponder what this imaginary situation would have to have been. This wily fellow — living long after the time of Daniel — decided to attempt to foist off a series of spurious prophecies on his gullible contemporaries (perhaps motivated by a dare from his friends). He then proceeded to embellish his phony predictions with a detailed description of life in Nebuchadnezzar's court, including punishment given for certain crimes, details of the religious leaders, customs of the time, etc.

The critics have generally felt that many of these details were fanciful tales, since a Jew living so much later would have had no direct knowledge of these ancient times. He would have had to have been something of a novelist.

The third chapter of Daniel is thought by critics to bear this out. The "story" of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego has been labeled "preposterous." The very idea of throwing men into a furnace seems absurd. It simply doesn't fit the normal pattern of executions.

A letter (dated even before the time of Nebuchadnezzar), however, has been found (and is in the Nies Babylonian collection at the Yale University) which contains a royal decree ordering the death of a slave by burning in a furnace! (John B. Alexander, "New Light on the Fiery Furnace," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 69, 1950, pp. 375-6.)

Daniel's details of Nebuchadnezzar's court have been proven to be remarkably accurate. Sir Henry Rawlinson found that the magicians in Babylon at that time correspond exactly to the three classes of Chaldean doctors which Daniel enumerates.

Fairy tales don't come true.

Daniel's Prophecies for Today!

Daniel's prophecies didn't finish in 175 B.C.! And that's crucial — for this article, and for your life.

Having had Daniel's prophecies in hand since the sixth century B.C., it must have been quite an experience for the Jews of the time to see these things being fulfilled before their eyes. The prophecies of chapters 2, 7 and 8 were proving to be absolutely accurate. The Babylonian Empire was succeeded by the Medo-Persian Empire, which was in turn conquered by Alexander.

When Alexander came to Jerusalem, we are told:

He went up to the temple, where He sacrificed to God under the direction of the high priest, and showed due honor to the priests and to the high priest himself. And, when the book of Daniel was shown to him, in which he had declared that one of the Greeks would destroy the empire of the Persians, he believed himself to be the one indicated (Josephus, *Antiquities*, XI, viii, 5).

With Alexander's rise to power at such a young age and his unbelievable march across the civilized world, it must have seemed impossible to those who were holding the book of

Daniel that his kingdom could be broken at its peak of strength as Daniel had prophesied (chapter 8:8). Yet it happened! Not only was his empire broken, but it was later — as Daniel had said — divided into four primary divisions.

Daniel's Prophecy for Rome

A person living at the time of the degeneration of these four kingdoms and the rise of Rome in the west could — if we allow our imaginations to be stretched — have forecasted what was about to take place. This, of course, is what the critics believe a pseudo-Daniel did about 175 B.C. A man could — at that point in time — have possibly predicted that Rome would become the fourth great world empire. What a man could not have predicted at that time, was that Rome would be the last!

But Daniel did.

And he did not stop there. He went on to describe the nature of the Roman Empire: what it would be like, how it would develop, predicting that the Roman Empire would endure incredibly — being "resurrected" many times rather than being replaced, as the pattern of world history up to that point had been!

And finally, as incredible as it may sound, what it would do before the returning, conquering Creator God would destroy it!

The story is worth reading.

It would have been logical in 175 B.C. to look at the lesson of history and thereby assume that Rome was going to be just like all the rest — another fighting, conquering, pillaging, destroying world empire. Daniel, however, emphasizes that this fourth kingdom would be different from all the kingdoms before it (Dan. 7:7, 19, 23).

The unique strength of Rome, its terrifying nature, its twofold division, and its later history are all foretold by Daniel with stunning accuracy. So are the successive revivals — and a final union of ten European kings prophesied to destroy the English-speaking peoples in this generation.

How could a "pious fraud" have foretold the future beyond the latest dates given by the critics?

Or beyond today's date? Daniel's prophecy is alive in today's headlines — and tomorrow's! Using the critics historical approach to Daniel for a moment, we would have to again humorously conclude that his book is not yet written!

One Isaiah, Two Isaiah, Three Isaiah, Four...

Isaiah is dated by Isaiah himself between 760 and 695 B.C. Notwithstanding, and as we might expect, critics have attempted to alter these dates by as much as 300 years. One even went so far as to place Isaiah in the first century B.C. — but was rather embarrassed when archaeologists discovered a complete scroll of Isaiah, copied and preserved, dated in the second century 125 B.C.

When we examine the reasons for the difficulties that critics have with Isaiah, we find the same answer that we found for Ezekiel and Daniel — Isaiah is just a little too accurate for their materialistic tastes.

But with Isaiah, the problem could not be solved by merely pushing the date forward. The critics had to dissect the book — and have it attributed to the fraudulent writings of between two and five authors!

Jewish tradition informs us that King Manasseh of Judah had Isaiah sawn in two — the New Testament book of Hebrews alludes to this (Hebrews 11:37). But today's "higher critics"

have butchered him into five pieces!

Why were two to five fictitious authors needed by the critics? To understand, we must return to the "fundamental axiom of criticism."

Having decided that a prophet cannot foretell the future, it is essential for the critics that the "pseudo-author" be writing for his own generation. When we have begun with this assumption, it is only natural to look to history for a historical context into which each prophet can be fit. What is strange about Isaiah, however, is that there is no historical situation into which Isaiah AS A WHOLE can be squeezed!

So there's only one "solution." Isaiah must be "sawn asunder."

Critics With Saw in Hand...

According to some, "the conversion of the heathen" lay quite beyond the horizon of any eighth century prophet; consequently, Isaiah 2:2-4 and all similar passages which foretell the conversion of those outside the chosen people are to be relegated to an age subsequent to Isaiah (George L. Robinson, "Isaiah," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, p. 1505).

Other ideas which are supposed to be "beyond the horizon" of Isaiah are those of "universal peace," "universal judgment," "the Apocalyptic character of chapters 24-27," "the return from captivity," and even the poetic character of some passages. All this, according to critics, means that Isaiah couldn't have written the entire book.

The question we have faced in Ezekiel, Daniel and now in Isaiah is whether their prophecies were dreamed up by "religious geniuses," or whether they were inspired by God. The only evidence advanced by the critics to prove a later date for these prophets is the prejudicial "evidence" actually circular reasoning — that no man could have written the prophecies when these men said they did.

That isn't proof!

That's begging the question! We all agree that that concept of the "conversion of the heathen" might have lain completely "beyond the horizons of any eighth-century prophet." But it doesn't lie beyond the horizons of God, nor does it lie beyond the ability of God to convey His concept to a prophet who otherwise could never have understood it! (See II Peter 1:21 and I Cor. 2:9-10.)

Now, what shred of evidence have the critics mustered up to indicate that Isaiah may have been written by more than one prophet?

All their hopes are placed in the one basket of literary criticism. A "first Isaiah" is supposedly distinguished from a "second Isaiah" (and a "second" from a "third") solely on the basis of change in writing style.

But the real crux of the matter is not writing style. Nothing definite can be determined by counting particles, articles, conjunctions, or any other "characteristic traits" of a man's writing. The fact of the matter is that an accomplished author's writing style should and will change through the years — so any evidence based upon writing style is tenuous at best. (Modern computer-based literary analysis has claimed that Paul wrote five of his 14 epistles, that Ian Fleming didn't write James Bond, and that the works of Graham Greene and G. K. Chesterton had "more than one author.")

Obviously, literary analysis of writing style completely fails to take into account the possibility of a purposeful change in form of the literature in question — i.e., a switch from a

prose to poetry, or a switch from one form of poetry to another (in which the writer uses or omits words for the sake of euphony, rhythm, etc.).

The critics must face their own motivations.

The real criteria for breaking Isaiah down into sections are the prophecies themselves. No man could have written them as "prophecies." And any man who wrote them as "histories" would have had to be present in several eras of Israel's history.

Which might be possible for a tree — but not for a man.

Ageless Test of Prophecy

Another reason for the critics' confusion in the prophetic books of the Bible is their failure to understand the simple principle of duality in prophecy.

In the 40th and 41st chapters of Isaiah, God is challenging Israel to prove their idols and false gods. The test He proposes is one of prophecy — foretelling the future. In the process of challenging the idols to prove that they are indeed real gods, an important principle of prophecy is expressed:

Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring forth, and shew us what shall happen: let them shew the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come (Isaiah 41:21, 22).

This is something which God does repeatedly in prophecy. In preparing to give us the understanding of the latter end of a thing, He gives us a prophecy which will have two fulfillments. The former is not the primary purpose of the prophecy, but is merely a "type" a model which we can examine to understand the latter fulfillment. It is this latter fulfillment the "antitype" which, being far more comprehensive in its scope, is the main goal of the original prophecy.

Isaiah's prophecies are this way and Isaiah himself knew it. He not only understood that prophecy was dual, but he understood why it was dual. It was not merely to help us understand the latter end of these prophecies it was also to confound and confuse the skeptics.

In Isaiah 28:9, Isaiah asks: "Whom shall he teach knowledge? And whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts." The spiritually immature will not understand. Isaiah goes on to say:

For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little... that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken (Isaiah 28:9-13).

God did not intend for scornful men to fully comprehend His Truth. Therefore, the prophecies of God are purposely NOT laid out in a simple, straightforward manner but are found "here a little and there a little." And they are dual and it takes a mind imbued with spiritual discernment to understand (I Cor. 2:12-14). (Christ used the same technique when teaching in parables, parables were designed to hide the meaning; see Matthew 13:10-17.)

The critics only confound themselves, because it is utterly impossible to confine Isaiah's prophecy to any one historical context. The prophecies are deliberately dual and are obviously intended for people of other ages.

When the facts are considered, the criticism leveled at all the prophets becomes

transparent. The critics have neither correctly evaluated the evidence nor logically combined it. They have started with an assumption that the authors of the prophets were completely of no divine inspiration. From this point on, all criticism degenerates into a simple effort to explain away the fact that God's prophets foretell the future with stunning accuracy.

But why should anyone want to be rid of the prophet?

Paul characterized a group of men who seemed to want to get rid of God. Perhaps there's a comparison.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress [marginal reading] the truth in unrighteousness... 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. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools...and even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind... (Romans 1:18-28).

The Bible Judges the Critics

Ronald L Dart

(Tomorrow's World, March 1971) For hundreds of years, numerous critics have been sitting in judgment of the Bible. Now it's about time we saw the Bible's judgment of them.

WHY HAVE the majority of scholars — and even theologians — sought to discredit the authority and inspiration of the Bible? What is it about the Bible that has drawn this absolutely unparalleled opposition from so many critics?

The answer might surprise you.

Surely it would be remarkable PROOF OF THE BIBLE if it accurately foretold it's supposed critics two thousand five hundred years in advance.

And that is exactly what many critics want to deny! The Bible describes their actions, defines their motives, and predicts the results of their criticism.

Hiding From the Facts — Or Hiding the Facts?

The opposers of Scripture must deny the validity of these prophecies, or be condemned by the very Book they study. The Prophet Jeremiah precisely characterized today's critics — with all their arguments, attitudes, conduct and bias.

Listen to Jeremiah's cry!

Jeremiah had received a prophecy directed at many in our day. Don't make the mistake of assuming that this prophecy applied only to his own time. In [Jeremiah 23:20](#), we are told: "In the latter days you will understand it clearly" (RSV).

What Jeremiah saw in this prophecy left him stunned and horrified. He saw a land full of adultery, cursing and violence. A land in which "both prophet and priest are profane" — that is, they treat sacred things with contempt (verse 11). God said of those religious leaders who mislead the people and are contemptuous of His authority:

Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness: they shall be driven on, and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them... (verse 12).

Ministers Troubled And something is very wrong with many of today's religious leaders. A glimpse through the veneer of a segment of today's "Christian" ministry was given in a recent book by Dr. Klaus Thomas, a psychotherapist. The book is entitled Handbook of Suicide Prevention.

After being in practice for some years, Dr. Thomas had records of some ten thousand people who had come to him desiring advice. The shocking fact is that ministers, ministers' wives, teachers of religion, and theology students composed "the largest single professional group of desperate people who turned to medical care, sick of life."

Can you grasp the significance of that? Out of such a large, statistically significant number, the largest single group that contemplated suicide was composed of religious workers.

Why?

Dr. Thomas went on to tell of the first two hundred religionists who came to him for help. Five of them were high-ranking ministers of a well-known denomination, one a professor of theology, and another one of the highest church dignitaries. Out of the two hundred, thirty-four suffered from sexual perversions of one sort or another: twenty-one were homosexuals, seven were sadistic perverts, one was an underclothing fetishist, another preferred to wear

female dresses, and two were masochists.

No wonder they had contemplated suicide! And no wonder Jeremiah said: "Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness: they shall be driven on, and fall therein."

Lest you think this is only one man's experience, the German news magazine, *Der Spiegel*, reported on a meeting of psychotherapists in November 1962 when the attending doctors discussed their experiences concerning a total of several hundred sexually perverted persons. They said that "nearly 90% of these patients were religious officers, predominantly ministers."

God thunders through Jeremiah to these tragic individuals :

They commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah (Jer. 23:14).

Now who is the judge?

Law Cast Aside

But how could this happen? How can men who are the religious leaders — the spiritual guides — become candidates for suicide? Listen to Isaiah give us the answer:

Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!... Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel (Isa. 5:20-24).

More and more people who are going to ministers for advice concerning right and wrong are being told that the old moral guidelines (i.e., the Ten Commandments) no longer apply.

One minister, for example, was consulted by a young girl who wanted advice about a boy she had been petting with. She felt guilty about it and asked the minister for help.

Contrary to her expectations, the minister did not rebuke her.... When she assured him that the relationship was serious — they hoped eventually to marry — the minister indicated that she need not feel such terrible guilt. In fact, he added, a total indifference to sex might suggest a denial of the human instinct, something he considered unwholesome (David Boroff, *Coronet*, August 1961).

Is it any wonder God inspired Jeremiah to say, "They strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness"? (Jer. 23:14.)

Again, who is the judge?

What ordinary mortal writing well over 2,000 years ago could have so precisely described the religious leaders of our own day? Remember, that Jeremiah directed these prophecies to the latter days — as well as to his own era.

Free From the Law

What has been the ultimate objective of the critics? No one expresses it any better than the theologian who submitted the Epistles of Paul to examination by computer — Dr. A. Q. Morton. (As we saw last month, his conclusions, unfortunately, were based on inadequate evidence, and his criteria broke down when applied to contemporary writings.) Nevertheless,

having concluded from computer analysis that Paul only wrote five of his Epistles, Dr. Morton reveals what he and fellow critics are driving at:

By far the greatest consequences of the establishment of the authorship of Pauline Epistles is that it has cut the ground from under any notion of absolute religious authority — whether this is expressed as Church or Bible (The Observer Weekend Review, November 10, 1963, emphasis mine).

And there, in a nutshell, is the explicit, if perhaps unconscious, goal, of many Bible critics. They are perhaps unaware that the human mind, by nature, seeks to "cut the ground from under any notion of absolute religious authority."

No wonder we hear the cry, "There are no absolutes." Of course, once individuals are rid of any authority — whether it is Church or Bible — they are free to do as they please — or so they reason. "Free from the law," is the cry that is actually sung in a well-known hymn. The only law that we need concern ourselves with, we are told, is the "law of love." So it matters little, we are assured by theologians who espouse situation ethics, whether we literally commit adultery or fornication, lie, cheat, and steal, as long as we have "love for our neighbor"!

In a prophecy directed at our day, God wrote to our people Israel:

Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? (Jer. 7:8-10.)

This is precisely what is being done by many religious people today. They come and stand before God, falsely believing that their minister has shown the way to be liberated from God's Law! They claim they are delivered from the burden of the Law — to do pretty much as they please as long as they do it out of "love to neighbor." Love to God isn't mentioned.

In this context, the following article appeared in a British paper recently:

A rector who believes the Ten Commandments are obsolete and negative was congratulated by his congregation after yesterday's services. "We all support his opinion," said the church-warden of All Saints, Ascot, Berkshire. "It is a sensible modern approach to religion." The minister stated: "I have not referred to the Commandments in my services for years and no one has objected. I know many clergymen who do the same."

But should we expect these congregations to object? Not if we have read Isaiah. Listen to his indictment of the church-attending public of our day:

Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever: That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord: Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits: Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us (Isa. 30:8-11).

Again, we ask, who is the judge?

Heretofore, we have seen the critics' judgment of the Bible, and now we are seeing the Bible's judgment of the critics.

For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd (John 3:20).

When the Bible so thoroughly condemns everything that a man stands for, it is no wonder we encounter a thinly disguised, quite irrational rejection of the Bible's authority by that man.

Yet, the Bible is the only authority man can turn to in this time of great religious confusion. Satan knows this. It is precisely for this reason that his organization has directed a deliberate and concerted effort to destroy that authority.

Ezekiel describes it:

There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey... they have taken the treasure and precious things:... Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my Sabbaths, and I am profaned among them (Ezek. 22:25-26).

More and more, in the months and years to come, we are going to see religion stripped of all authority. "Situation Ethics" will be preached with ever-increasing volume. And as this conspiracy continues, the result is going to be a plunge in morals that will defy imagination.

Where Is It All Leading?

No one living in this age can be unaware of the fact that we are living in a time of moral crisis. The rising tide of crime, vice, violence, venereal disease, abortion and drug addiction has just about reached our necks, and it is no longer possible to pretend that it isn't there!

It isn't necessary to shock the reader with statistics of the millions of dollars lost in shoplifting, embezzlement, theft by employees, and fraudulent bankruptcies. The figures will be out-of-date by the time you read them, anyway.

Nor does one need to enumerate the hundreds of thousands of illegitimate children born every year; the staggering number of legal and illegal abortions that take place; the hundreds of children whose lives are already ruined at birth by venereal disease and drug addiction; or the hundreds of thousands of premature marriages forced by pregnancy.

You already know these things!

But do you know why?

No Supreme Authority

The editors of Look magazine assigned Senior Editor Robert Moskin to talk with a broad selection of leaders who are concerned about where we are going. His most significant observation was that we live in a society without a supreme moral authority. He said: "The moral guidelines have been yanked from our hands."

He asked Dean Samuel Miller of the Harvard Divinity School where we can get moral standards. "Not from the Church," was the answer. Dean Miller said:

The Church has become almost as monastic as the orders in the Middle Ages. There seems to be no connection between what happens in the Church and what happens in society, except that people living in a desperate age use it to tranquillize their disturbing experiences.... The Church simply does not have a cutting edge (Look, September 24, 1963, emphasis mine).

But what real "cutting edge" has The Church ever had? It has blunted or thrown away altogether the "two-edged sword" of the Bible (Heb. 4:12).

Where is today's younger generation going to look for moral standards? Are they willing to accept the authority of the clergy as the norm by which they will regulate their lives? Why should a minister's opinions stand between them and what they want to do? Can tradition

provide a standard for today's young people?

There is an authority to which they could turn to provide the "cutting edge" that is needed, but that has been laid aside. The theologians have seen to that. That has been the underlying purpose of Bible criticism.

Sir Robert Anderson, writing about the turn of the century, saw clearly where the criticism of his day was leading. He wrote:

And when these pestilent errors have fully penetrated to the unthinking multitude, they will lead to an agnosticism with no saving element whatever — an agnosticism which will soon develop into practical atheism. In this generation the pseudo-criticism is undermining the faith of the Church; in the next it may affect the fabric of society (Sir Robert Anderson, *Pseudo-Criticism*, p. 39).

We are that next generation, and the fabric of our society has nearly rotted away.

The Way of Rome

In the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Edward Gibbon tells us that one of the five main reasons for the collapse of that "Great Society" was the decay of religion into mere form, leaving the people without any guide.

Religion is certainly losing its grip on the American way of life. A Gallup poll was taken in 1957 which asked the question: "At present time do you think religion as a whole is increasing its influence on American life, or losing its influence?"

In 1957 only 14% of the population believed that religion was losing its influence.

In 1967, the question was asked again. This time no less than 57% believed that religion was losing its influence. By 1970, the figure had risen to 75%. George Gallup pointed out: "Significantly, younger adults, 21-29, are more inclined to take a pessimistic view than older persons."

We have been called "a society that cannot agree on standards of conduct, language and manners, on what can be seen and heard." A recent news magazine called us "the permissive society." More and more journalists are drawing parallels between our society and that of Rome just before its fall.

Just Another Cycle?

Some, however, believe that history shows a series of cycles of decay and resurgence, of crisis and recovery. They feel that we are simply in another of these cycles of crises which will be followed by recovery — that we are nearing the bottom, and there will be no way to go but up.

This is certainly not the Biblical summation of history! Look at the world around you. Where are the great civilizations of the past? Have they survived to the present day?

Take the earliest of the great world empires — Egypt. For centuries Egypt went through cycles of crisis and recovery. No doubt during those years there were many who said: "There will always be an Egypt."

But Egypt fell. To this day it is not merely a second-rate power, but a diseased, poverty-ridden, largely uneducated nation. God prophesied that Egypt would never again rise up as a world power, and it is so!

For another example, take the kingdoms of ancient Israel and Judah. Again, for centuries we have a historical record of cycles of decay and resurgence. We have the record of false prophets who predicted the kingdoms would continue and would not be destroyed by Assyria or Babylon.

"There will always be an Israel." Israel fell! "There will always be a Judah." Judah fell.

Is it necessary to continue to rehearse the collective histories of the Babylonian Empire, the Persian Empire, Alexander's Empire and the Roman Empire? Where are they today? There have been cycles all right, but each successive cycle reached lower and lower into the depths of human depravity and moral decay. In each case the nation either tore itself apart or was destroyed by another world power.

The Point of No Return

The lesson of history is clear, and we have seen more and more of the marked Parallels between our own present crises and those of the final plunge of the great empires of the past. There comes a time in a nation's history when they are beyond recovery, and it is becoming clear that we are approaching the point of no return.

Journalists whose life work is keeping a finger on the pulse of our society recognize that we are not merely going through another phase. The editors of the now defunct New York World Telegram and Sun were moved some years back to prepare a special series on teenage immorality. Their conclusion:

It is true that in every era since the dawn of man the elders of each community have accused their young of going to hell in a hand-basket. But most of these indictments of the past were made on the basis of correlating a few bad cases here and there, and using them to stigmatize the whole. Now, however, the whole picture of juvenile behavior must be viewed from a different angle.... There was not a single sociologist, psychologist or youth expert whom we interviewed while preparing this series who did not agree that waywardness among today's juveniles has soared to the point of defying all precedent (New York World Telegram and Sun, July 29, 1963, emphasis mine).

Another witness writing in Look magazine of August 27, 1963, said: "Whatever the mechanism, something new and rougher than we have ever known has crept into misbehavior among the young."

Remember that both of these articles were written years before the current explosion in the use of drugs and the frightening increase in the number of "social dropouts" epitomized by the "hippie" movement.

Lawlessness Foretold

It is significant that Christ indicated that iniquity — lawlessness — would abound on the heels of the deception of false ministers (Matt. 24:11-12). Lawlessness is the natural result of the removal of law, and the removal of law is consistently the object of religious deception (see Deut. 13:1-5).

No one seems to realize it, but when the law is laid aside, there are no protective barriers left for our society. If one law can be broken, why not another? Once God's Laws are laid aside by the ministry, the stage is set. Civil disobedience is the next step, followed by rioting and looting and eventually a total breakdown of society.

The barriers are already down. The floodgates of lawlessness have been opened.

It must be frightening to be a political leader these days. No matter what you decide, it seems bound to turn out wrong.

God's Warning

We have been warned. Through the Prophet Hosea, God told us what would happen when we rejected His authority:

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children (Hos. 4:6).

Through the remainder of this prophecy, God warns of a coming national captivity upon our people because they have turned away from the only authority they can trust — His Word.

We can be thankful, however, that the story doesn't end there. Through this time of captivity Israel — the English-speaking nations — is surely going to learn a lot of bitter lessons. But we have the promise that when those lessons are learned, God will bring Israel back to her own land. The prophecies tell of the return from captivity, and of the Wonderful World Tomorrow.

To what authority are men going to look in that day?

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3).

May God hasten that day.