

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES
Segment 1 : Introduction
By Ildefonso J. Rubrico

Introduction

Welcome to "**Biblical Perspectives**," your new TV program on this channel! This is your host, **Nene Rubrico**, bidding you a pleasant good evening.

Over the next several minutes I hope to be able to bring to you insights from the Book known to us and to many, as *The Bible*. Out of this book I intend to share with you certain important, biblical insights that would: (a) allow us to better understand ourselves and the complexities of the human condition; (b) help us to define our relationship with our fellow human beings in order that we can live in peace with each other; and, more importantly, (c) connect us to the One True God who has willed to love us inspite of our moral brokenness and imperfections.

This three(3)-fold objective - *understanding of self, relating to fellowmen, and connecting with God* - underscores our need to go to the Bible more often than we think necessary. In this program and in the days to come, I shall endeavor to demonstrate the truth of this assertion to our mutual satisfaction.

Many, I am sure, have heard about the Bible, and some no doubt may evince familiarity with it as a book that narrates the story of Jesus and His miracles, the story of Israel or of the Jews; or perhaps about some musty old man with a long, white, beard and flowing robes walking along the desert; or of some shepherds lulling their time away among the sheep and goats. Or, maybe when we think about the Bible we immediately think about Moses and his Egyptian enemies and the movie "The Ten Commandments," or of the latest movie flick "The

Passion of the Christ" that some of you may have already seen in the theatres or in pirated VCDs and DVDs. But what, really, is the Bible?

An obvious answer would be that the Bible is the *sacred book* of the Christian religion (and, in part, of Judaism), as the *Koran* is the sacred book of Islam, or the *Vedas*, the sacred books of Hinduism. If we were to look for a place for it in a well-arranged library, we might put it on a shelf labeled 'Sacred Books'. However, the term 'sacred' is too vague to tell us much about the Bible, and in fact the suggested comparison with the *Koran* and the *Vedas* is far from exact.

From another point of view, the Bible is not a book, but a *collection of books*. Among these books there is a great variety, both in form and in contents. There is prose narrative, both historical and fictitious; there are legal codes; there are proverbs and moral maxims; there is even personal correspondence. Again there is lyrical and dramatic poetry; there is the peculiar genre of literature which can only be described as 'prophetical'; and there is liturgical literature, designed expressly for use in public worship. This list suggests, but does not exhaust, the range of variety.

Nevertheless, a legitimate question may be asked: Why cite the Bible in particular? Would you think having a book that exhibits great variety and vast topics of interest necessarily excite a man's curiosity?

To this rather fanciful question, some would answer 'yes.' A few would say 'no,' and a great majority would reply 'maybe,' or, 'I don't know... You tell me!'

Well, to tell you frankly, I don't really blame you for answering the way you just did! Many of us would rather think of the "truth" being "out there," as what the characters Mulder and Scully sincerely believed in that multi-awarded TV series, *The X-Files*; rather than the truth being "in here" (in the heart). But perhaps we

should take a leap of faith for now and allow others - famous men and women of history - to attest to the Bible's lasting influence to their own lives. . .

Who were some of these famous personages who have publicly acknowledged their biblical leanings and beliefs in the bible?

Let us start with a famous man of science, a man who gave us the laws governing the workings of our physical universe, the Law of Gravitation - Sir Isaac Newton. This is what one writer wrote about Newton:

1)A humble and reclusive figure, Isaac Newton was a Christian who studied the Bible daily and believed that God created everything, including the Bible. He believed that the Bible was true in every respect. Throughout his life he continually tested biblical truth against the physical truths of experimental and theoretical science and never observed a contradiction, according to his many biographers. Newton's writings reflected his belief that his scientific work was a method by which to reinforce belief in biblical truth.¹

And another writer:

2)He loved God and believed God's Word-- all of it. He wrote, 'I have a fundamental belief in the Bible as the Word of God, written by men who were inspired. I study the Bible daily'.²

Another great man of science, Albert Einstein, the discoverer of the General Theory of Relativity and the mathematics that developed the Atom bomb, had this to say about the Bible:

"As a child I received instruction both in the Bible and in the Talmud...No one can read the Gospels without feeling the actual presence of Jesus. His personality pulsates in every word. No myth is filled with such life."³

How about William Shakespeare, considered by many to be the greatest Man of Letters that ever lived? It is said that he was a faithful member of the Church of England. Though he never wrote a play on a Biblical story, the Bible and the *Book of Common Prayer* were the most frequently quoted sources in his work. He quotes or alludes to passages from at least 42 books of the Bible. Shakespeare quoted from Matthew 151 times and from the Psalms 137 times.⁴

A few months before he died, he instructed that his tombstone to be inscribed:

*"Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbear
To dig the dust enclosed here.
Blessed be the man that spares these stones,
And cursed be he that moves my bones."*

Hellen Keller, who overcame her blindness from birth and who became a world-famous writer and lecturer, had this to say about the bible:

*"Unless we form the habit of going to the Bible in bright moments as well as in trouble, we cannot fully respond to its consolations because we lack equilibrium between light and darkness."*⁵

Closer to home, our own National Hero Jose Rizal after two years of tutoring by his mother, was able to read the Spanish version of the Latin Vulgate bible. Attesting to its influence, the title of his novel, the *Noli Me Tangere* ("Touch me not"), is translated from Latin and was spoken by Jesus to Mary Magdalene in John 20:17.(according to an ADMU website).

All 43 U.S. presidents, from George Washington down to George W. Bush, have been listed as members of Bible-believing Christian denominations.⁶

Without a doubt, the resounding testimonies of those notable men and women whom I have cited above are an

affirmation that the Bible had (and, continues to have) a significant impact in their lives.

Why is this so?

Again, the answer lies in the unique character of the Bible as The Book of Books.

For, if, we are to place the biblical collection of books appropriately on the shelves of our mythical library, some of these would not be noticeably religious, contrary to what is commonly believed. For one thing, there are large sections of the biblical literature which reflect the *ordinary secular interests* of mankind. In some of the greatest historical narratives of the Bible the specifically religious element is quite in the background and the secular *human interest* is to the fore; for example, in the moving story of David and Absalom found in II Samuel).

On the other hand, if we isolate those parts which in our proposed classification would have to be labeled 'Religion', or, 'religious,' some of them do not appear to have any particular relevance to the religious life as it is understood by civilized men in our contemporary world - such as the detailed regulations for the ritual slaughter of animals in the Book of Leviticus.

It is characteristic of this sacred book, or religious literature, if you may, that, "in it the religious element emerges directly out of the crude stuff of human life as it is lived in its many phases." The religious purport of the Bible is "found in the whole range of the biblical presentation of life, human and secular as it is." The Bible conveys its rare - indeed, its unique - character - as a body of religious literature in a class all its own.

This very special book very well contains the 'hidden truths' of God, and as we connect its stories and

characters to our modern times and situations, we are struck by their *relevance* and *contemporary* message. It is as if, today, God Himself *directly* speaks to us in our minds as well as in our actions.

And He certainly does! The Bible IS the Word of God, and therefore reliable, and NOT passe. How do we know this? Its message was relevant to the wandering Israelites in the wilderness of Paran 3,500 years ago. It continues to be relevant today in 2004 A.D. in America, in China, in Africa, in the Philippines.

The Bible tells us in the book of Hebrews, chapter 1, verses 1 to 2, that "in the past," (meaning in the Old Testament times) "God *spoke* to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days" (that is, the present times, or, now) "He/God has spoken to us by His Son" (meaning Jesus), "whom He appointed heir to all things, and through whom He made the universe."

The message of this passage is two-fold in that: first, God has been with us from the very beginning, speaking to us through his appointed spokespersons, the prophets. During the New Testament period, the means by which He communicated to us had changed. Now, it is His Son speaking. But Jesus, while a man, also possessed the nature of God, in that he (Jesus) was "heir to all things" and was in fact present when the universe was created - in fact, Jesus was the Creator Himself! (according to Hebrews). This was the other message.

This enigmatic statement about God's way of communicating to His people, meaning us - *then and now* - is corroborated by a companion verse found in the Gospel of John, chap. 1, vv. 1 and 2, which says:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning."

It is clear from both John's statement and that of Hebrews that:

1. God has been "speaking/communicating" to us from the very beginning until now, and on to the future (the "last days"); God has not stopped talking to us, even if some of us had stopped listening to Him; and,

2. God was and is His own Divine Message, or revelation; God Himself is the *message* as well the *messenger* (in short, He is the "Word").

And, not only that, but that God's message (the "Word") is the *same, unchanging, immutable*. In Malachi 3:6 God declares: "*I, the Lord do not change.*" And again, Hebrews 13:8 affirms that: "*Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.*"

What are the implications to us today of these verses?

Let us for a moment pause from this heavy dose of theological musings and evaluate what these biblical verses can mean to our contemporary, secular, situation. But whether or not we are successful in removing the malignant malaise that covers our broken world, or in resolving the issues that darken our relationships with one another, **is really up to us.**

*I submit that what the Bible offers us today is nothing less than **Divine Guidance** to our contemporary, seemingly-unsolvable, problems; it offers us **Godly solutions** to the things that ail us whether as individuals or as a nation.*

Out of the Scriptures comes a well-known promise: "*I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*" (John 10:10). Unfortunately, it has largely remained an *unfilled* promise for many. This "fullness-of-life" scenario that is promised in the Bible continues to elude the great majority of mankind. Instead, what we have in store is another, but gloomy,

promise: the promise of a "sword" to shatter the peace (Matthew 10:34: *"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword."*)

Consider, for example, what many believe is the sad and sorry state of our country, and what the Bible says in Proverbs 29:18, namely: *"A nation without God's guidance is a nation without order. Happy is the man who keeps God's law!"*

Phillip Yancey, author of the bestseller *"What's so Amazing about Grace?"* writes about the time when then-President Bill Clinton told his Evangelical audience in the White House: *"I feel like a spiritual orphan."*

This man, a lifelong Southern Baptist, related how difficult it was to locate a Christian community in Washington, D.C. - "the most secular city I've ever lived in," according to Clinton. When he and his family eventually went to church, he attracted a media circus and he and even his staff found it hardly conducive to a proper worship experience. Moreover, because of his liberal stance on many issues like birth control and gay and lesbian rights, and even because of his own moral failings, he (Clinton) was practically shunned by conservative Christians. Running for reelection then, and while he was jogging through the streets of the U.S. capital, he saw cars with bumper stickers that read:

"A vote for Clinton is a sin against God."

Even his high-profile wife who is a prominent lawyer was not spared. He and his wife Hillary were publicly labeled as "Ahab and Jezebel," in reference to that most cruel king of the Northern kingdom of Israel and his equally-cruel wife. At about that time, the national leadership of the Southern Baptist Conference was under pressure to censure his home church in

Arkansas for its failure to kick him out of its membership rolls.

Clinton told Yancey and the other church leaders: "I've been in politics long enough to expect criticism and hostility. But I was unprepared for the *hatred* I get from Christians."

He then asked the gut question that should disturb all of us who profess to be Christians:

"Why do Christians hate so much?"

In this program that we have dubbed '**Biblical Perspectives**,' we will encounter many more penetrating questions like these, and we will attempt to answer them in the light of biblical teaching.

Basically, we will tackle the so-called "burning issues of the day" - social, economic, political; examining them under the critical eye of Scriptures, yet, bathing them in the warm, loving glow of the Bible; proscribing no human standards except that of God's standards' imposing no arbitrary judgments save God's judgment.

And, while many of our questions may be weighty and profound, we will endeavor to answer them in as simple a manner as possible. A story is told about the famous German theologian, Karl Barth, who was banished to Sweden for his opposition to Hitler's Third Reich, and who later wrote the 10,000-page treatise *Church Dogmatics*. One day, he visited the University of Chicago where he was mobbed by an admiring crowd of students and scholars. Later, one of them asked him:

"Dr. Barth, what is the most profound truth you have learned in your studies?"

To which Barth replied without hesitation: *"Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so."*

This virtually-childlike answer by Barth that we can all associate with that familiar Sunday school melody makes us remember that Jesus Himself taught the motley (and oftentimes, incredulous) crowd 2,000 years ago with astounding truths about Himself and His Father's kingdom with brilliant, yet, simple, clarity.

What we Hope to Accomplish

My work then in this television program is to *propound* and *expound* on the issues that constantly and critically bear upon the life of a Christian community such as ours - social and religious issues that bear watching because they impinge upon the moral fabric of our people and our ability to build a strong, God-fearing nation imbued with strong spiritual values.

To explain the method further, let me borrow an analogy from the biological sciences:

- let us suppose that our laboratory is the contemporary world;
- the experimental animals or guinea pigs kept in the laboratory are the relevant issues confronting us today, or, that which will confront us in the future;
- our microscopes, computers, and other lab paraphernalia is the complete Bible, both the Old and New Testaments;
- and, lastly, the laboratory scientists and workers who will conduct the experiments, measure and record the data, and then make the report, are you and I.

In our search to unravel the truth within this make-believe laboratory of ours, we -you and I- shall use all the tools at our disposal - our knowledge, our experience, our academic and/or professional credentials, our intuitions, and, not in the least, our faith in God who reigns sovereign in our lives.

At the outset, please allow me to unequivocally state that I have no political agenda, that I represent no

vested group or organization. My work is purely voluntary and is plainly dedicated to the notion that a *"nation and a people must have a spiritual vision of itself, otherwise it shall perish,"* to paraphrase Proverbs 29:18a.

In order to achieve these noteworthy goals, I will need your help in these areas:

1. your interactive participation by way of comments and suggestions as to topics and program content; and
2. your feedback is important to keep our discussions lively, relevant and up-to-date, dynamic, and interesting.

From time-to-time, we will be flashing our numbers on the screen of your sets. You may also email us at our address or log on to our website at <http://www.biblical-perspectives.org>

Remember: your feedback to us is crucial!

Summary

The program will therefore be presented as a socio-biblical commentary, with your host as the program Facilitator.

Topics of interest - whether religious or social - will be featured for discussions, in a series or segments spread over several weeks, as necessary. As mentioned in the above, emailed or text questions will be answered in the next program segment. Your questions or queries should contain your full name and address, if possible.

What's in Store for Next Week?

Next week we will begin with a focus on the topic **"Work Ethics and the Dignity of Labor."** More and more, Filipino workers and employees find themselves at a

disadvantage at the local workplace. And this has something to do mainly with their low pay. Many of them are bright and talented, and a growing number want to go abroad, where the financial rewards are much, much greater than in the Philippines. What does the Bible say about all these? Of self-sacrifice and service to fellowman?

Next week, we will take up the case study of two medical doctors - the younger one who topped the medical board only last February this year and wants to work abroad *as a nurse*; and, the older one who opted to stay in the Philippines many years back and made it here (relatively-speaking). It should prove interesting.

Make sure to watch for it next week: **A biblical perspective on labor.**

Closing

And now, my esteemed viewers...It's time for me to bid goodbye.

In closing, let us remember the words found in the Holy Bible, in Proverbs 29:18a, which says:

"Where there is no vision, the people perish."

God bless you!

Notes & References:

¹Isaac Newton, Bible Code Pioneer? <http://www.biblecodedigest.com/page.php/74>.

²J.H. Tiner, *Isaac Newton-- Inventor, Scientist and Teacher*, Mott Media, Milford (Michigan), 1975.

³<http://quotes.telesmanage.ca/quotes.nsf/quotes/2f0b90de4b09213e85256c8d0062c07c>

⁴<http://www.gospelcom.net/chi/DAILYF/2003/04/daily-04-23-2003.shtml>

⁵http://www.entplaza.com/cgi-bin/create/author.pl?cat=Helen_Keller

⁶http://www.adherents.com/adh_presidents.html.

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