

## Welcome To Kurt's Practical Atheist Section

*William Penn; "There are many errors in the bible.  
The learned know it: the unlearned had better not know it."*

### CHARACTER OF THE VOTERS WHO DECIDED WHAT SCRIPTURES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED INSPIRED

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It is now well known that the first authentic collection of Gospels and Epistles, called " the Bible," was made by the Council of Nice 325 A.D.,—a body of drunken bishops and lawless bacchanalians. The Christian writer, Mr. Tyndal, says they got drunk, came to blows, and kicked and cuffed each other; and that " the love of contention and ambition overcame their reason." They claimed to be under the influence of " the spirit." Undoubtedly they were; but it was a kind of spirit that men hold intercourse with by uncorking the bottle, and not the spirit of gentleness and peace. He says, " They fell afoul of each other; " and such was the severity of their blows, that one member was mortally wounded, and died a short time after, It was simply a disgusting and disgraceful row,—a scene of rowdyism of at first seventeen hundred, and finally about three hundred, Christian bishops, without a character for either virtue, sobriety, or honesty. One writer says, " They were abandoned to every species of immorality, and addicted to the most abominable crimes;" and such was their extreme ignorance, that but few of them could write their names. Their method of deciding which Gospels and Epistles were divinely inspired was quite unique. It is stated they were all placed under the communion-table ; and, when the proper signal was given (so say Ircnaous), the inspired Gospels " hopped on to the table," which separated them from the spurioua. Why the spurious Gospels did not possess the hopping power and propensity is not stated. Two of the bishops, Chrysante and Musanius, died during the council, before the vote was taken; but such was the importance of the occasion, that they did not withhold their votes on that account. The proper documents being prepared and carried and placed near their defunct bodies, they mustered all the force their dead bodies could command, and signed them ; and thus, between the living and the dead, we have got a Bible which, it is presumed, contains all "the

scripture given by inspiration of God " under the new dispensation. The Gospels and Epistles thus voted into favor were not arranged together in the form of an authentic Bible until nearly sixty years after. This was done by the Council of Laodicea in the year 363. After this, council after council was called to *vote in or vote out* some of the books adopted by previous councils, and to settle some important church dogmas. The first council voted the Acts of the Apostles and Revelation out of the Bible (i.e., voted them down) ; but the second council, which met in 363, voted them in again. Another council, which met in 406, voted them, with several other books, out of the Bible again And thus were books and dogmas voted in and voted out of " the infallible and inspired word of God," and altered and corrected, time after time and century after century, by twenty-four different councils, composed of bigoted bishops and clergymen, so quarrelsome and belligerent that they resorted to fisticuff fighting in several of the councils; and thus was "God's Holy Word " and " perfect revelation " tossed to and fro like a battledore,—this book voted in, and that one voted out, and sometimes half a dozen at a time. And where was the " all scripture given by inspiration of God " at the end of this revolutionary and demolishing clerical crusade? And where was its author, that he would suffer the whole thing to be taken out of his hands, altered and corrupted till he could not know his own book, and would not have been willing to father it if he had been able to recognize it? William Penn says, that " some of the scriptures which were taken in by one council as inspired were rejected by another council as uninspired; and that which was left out by the former council as apocryphal was taken in by the latter as canonical. And certain it is that they contradict each other. And how do we know that the council which first collected and voted on the scriptures — voting some up, and some down — were able to discern the true from the false?" Here the whole thing is set in its proper light by a devout Quaker preacher. The extract contains a volume of instruction, and shows the impossibility of our determining the "all scripture given by inspiration of God."

## **ADDITIONS, ALTERATIONS, AND INTERPOLATIONS**

We have a vast amount of testimony to prove that councils, churches, and clergymen arrogated to themselves a lawless license to change, insert, and leave out various texts, chapters, and even whole books, from "God's unchangeable

word," till it may now be assumed to be thoroughly changed. From a large volume of testimonies we will cite a few : The version of the Old Testament made under Ptolemy Philadelphus, 287 B.C.,—the most reliable version extant,—Bishop Usher pronounces a spurious copy, full of interpolations, additions, and alterations. He says, " The translators of the Septuagint added to, and took from, and changed at pleasure;" and St. Jerome says that Origen did the same thing with the New Testament. Bishop Marsh testifies, in like manner, that Origen, who first collected the Bible books together, confessed that he made many alterations in them before they fell into the hands of the Council of Nice. Dr. Bentley admits that the best copy of the New Testament contains hundreds of irreparable omissions, errors, and mistakes. The Rev. Dr. Whitby says, " Many corruptions and interpolations were made almost in the apostolic age." Dupin says, " Several authors took the liberty to add, retrench, correct divers things." Some of the clergy and churches rejected books which did not suit them, while others altered them to suit their fancy. We are told that Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury, made countless numbers of alterations in the Bible in the sixth century for the purpose of making them suit his Church. Eusebius says he found so much proof that the Gospel of Matthew had been altered and corrupted, that he rejected it as being unworthy of confidence. Victor Wilson informs us that a general alteration of the Gospels took place at Constantinople in the year 506 by order of the Emperor Anastasius. St. Jerome complains that in his time many alterations had been made in the Bible, and that its different translations were so essentially changed that " no one copy or translation resembled another." Scaliger testifies that the clergy and the churches put into their scriptures whatever they thought would serve their purpose. Michaelis says, "They thrust in and thrust out as best suits fancy." In the name of God, we would ask how any person in his sober reason can think of finding " all scripture given by inspiration of God " in the midst of such a general wreck, ruin, and demolition of the original scriptures. It is as impossible as to raise the dead or to find Charlie Ross. The Rev. Dr. Gregory says that no profane author has suffered like the Bible by profane bands. Where, then, can we find " all scripture given by inspiration of God "?

## **FORGED GOSPELS AND EPISTLES**

The Unitarian Bible says, in its preface, " It is notorious that forged writings, under the name of the apostles, were in circulation almost from the

apostolic age." Mosheim testifies that "several histories of Christ's life and doctrines, full of pious frauds and fabulous wonders, were put in circulation before the meeting of the Council of Nice; " and he states, like William Penn, that he had no confidence in their ability to distinguish the true from the false. We will here quote another statement of William Penn: " There are many errors in the Bible. The learned know it: the unlearned had better not know it." Here is another sad proof of the blinding effect of reading and believing a book which abounds in errors. He would have the unlearned and honest reader swallow all the errors of the Bible, and be thereby morally poisoned by them, rather than have the book brought into discredit by having its errors exposed. This circumstance of itself is sufficient to seal its condemnation. Belsham says, " The genuine books of the Bible were but few compared, with the spurious ones." This would be inferred from the circumstance of only four Gospels being adopted out of fifty, and only seventeen Epistles out of more than one hundred. Daille says, "The Christian fathers forged whole books; " but neither he nor anybody else can furnish any rule for determining which they are.

## **LOST BOOKS FOUND OR RE-WRITTEN**

Dupin says a portion of the books of the Old Testament were burned in wars, and others lost by the Jews themselves; and in the Second Book of Chronicles (xxxiv. 14) we are told that Hilkiyah found the Book of the Law after it had been lost eight hundred years. This law appears to have constituted the most important portion of the Jewish sacred writings. The circumstance gives rise to some very strange reflections and conclusions. It appears from this circumstance that the Lord's holy people had been without any law to guide or govern them for eight long centuries. Now, can we suppose for a moment that their God, Jehovah, was a being of infinite wisdom to write or dictate a law, and base the happiness and welfare of his people if not the world on that law, and then, through carelessness or otherwise, suffer it to get lost, and remain unfound for eight hundred years, so that nobody could have the benefit of it during that long period? The very thought is a trespass upon our good sense, and does violence to our reason. And where was the law during all that time? and how was it preserved for so long a period of time? If written on papyrus or parchment, it would have perished in less than a century from being exposed to the weather: for we can't assume it was preserved in a drawer or box, as, in that case, it would not have been lost; and, if engraven on stone, the weight would

have been fifty times as much as Hilkiah could carry. We are told that when Josiah the king heard the law read, he rent his clothes (2 Chron. xxxiv. 19).

Well, that is strange indeed. It must have been a very curious law, or he must have been a very curious man. Why the reading of a few plain moral precepts should drive a man to insanity, and cause him to tear his clothes, is something hard to understand. And it is evidence that the whole Jewish tribe had never known or read much about the law: otherwise a knowledge of it would have been preserved by tradition, and the king would not have been so profoundly ignorant of it. If the law was the Pentateuch, as some writers assume, the king would have had to stand a week to hear it all read; and it seems strange that " Shaphan the scribe " could pick up a document covered with the mold, rust, and dust of eight centuries, and read it off with sufficient expertness for the king to listen to with patience. But the wonder and difficulty doesn't stop here. It was only about a quarter of a century until this great "holy and divine law " was lost again ; which left " the Lord's holy people" again without any moral code to guide them, of a governing law, for six centuries longer. No wonder they preferred worshiping a calf (see Exod. xxxii.) to paying homage to a God so reckless of their welfare and happiness. On this occasion it became so thoroughly lost, that it never " turned up " again ; and there seemed to be no way to remedy the deplorable loss but to have it written over again. At least that appears to have been the impression of Ezra the priest, who set himself to the onerous task of reproducing the long-lost document from memory or from a second installment of divine inspiration. (See Esdras.) Such a memory does not often fall to the lot of mortals to possess,—a memory that could enable a man to reproduce a document which neither he nor any other person had read for six hundred years. If the world could be furnished with such a mental prodigy at the present day, we might again have the benefit of the numerous books and libraries which have been destroyed by fire in modern times. It would require no previous knowledge of any of those works to achieve the task of reproducing them. Perhaps we may be told that we are becoming "wise above what is written." It would require no mental effort to attain to this eminence, and become obnoxious to such a charge. In this case, a few brief sentences, and the whole thing is dismissed: no details are given. The story of Hilkiah finding the Book of the Law sounds very much like Joe Smith finding the Mormon Bible; and the case of Ezra's re-writing it is matched by the story of " Vyass the Holy " finding the divine law of the Brahmins some three

thousand years before Hilkiah was born. Mr. Higgins says that nearly all ancient religious nations had the tradition of losing and finding their holy books, holy laws, and holy languages. The query is here suggested, that if such an important document could be restored to the people in the manner adopted by Ezra, why was not this expedient resorted to a thousand years sooner, and thus save the demoralization of the Jews? The policy adopted is too much like "locking the stall after the horse is stolen."

## **IMPOSSIBILITY OF POSSESSING A RELIABLE TRANSLATION**

It is quite evident, from the facts presented and from others which will hereafter be presented, that, if God ever gave forth a revelation of his will to the founders of the Jewish and Christian religions, the world is not in possession of it now, and can not find it in a book as old as the Christian Bible, and written by simply stringing consonants together in a line without any vowels, and without any distinction of words, and which must necessarily be an enigma that would puzzle any scholar to decipher. Hence the learned Le Clere says, "Even the learned guess at the sense in an infinity of places, which has produced a prodigious number of discordant interpretations." And Simonton, in his "Critical History," says, "It is unquestionable that the greater part of the Hebrew words of the Old Testament are equivocal in their signification, and utterly uncertain ; and that even the most learned Jews doubt almost every thing in regard to their proper meaning. "To talk of finding " all scripture given by inspiration of God " environed with such difficulties, is to talk nonsense. We will illustrate the nature of these difficulties by citing a case. We will look at the random guessing at the meaning of a single word of a single text by the most learned students and scholars in biblical literature. The word indicating the material of which Noah's ark was composed, our translation says, was gophir-wood: but the Arabic translation says it was box-wood; the Persian translation says it was pine-wood ; another translation makes it red ebony ; and still another declares it was wicker-work; Davidson, assuming to be " wise above what is written" in the case, says it was bulrushes cemented with pitch; another writer translates it cedar-wood, &c. And thus God's Holy Book, designed for the guidance of man, has been the sport and the bauble of learned guessers in all ages of Christendom, who evidently know as much about it, in many cases, as a goose does about Greek.

## MANY DIFFERENT CHRISTIAN BIBLES

Owing to the multiplicity of Bible translations, which differ widely in their doctrines, precepts, and the relation of general events, making a different collection of books to constitute "the word of God," various churches, and even individual professors, have assumed the liberty to compile and make a Bible for themselves. The Roman-Catholic Bible differs essentially from that of the Protestants', having fourteen more books. The Bible of the Greek Church differs from both. The Campbellites have a translation of their own. The Samaritan Bible contains only the Five Books of Moses. The Unitarians, having found twenty-four thousand errors in the popular translation, made another translation containing still many thousand errors. The American Christian Union, having found many thousand errors in King James' translation, are now engaged in a new translation. How many more we are to have, God only knows. Martin Luther condemned eleven books of the Bible, as we have already stated, and thus made a Bible for himself. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews he denounced in strong terms. Eusebius, the learned ecclesiastical writer, throws eight Bible-books overboard, and had a Bible to his own fancy. Dr. Lardner and John Calvin each condemned five or six books, and had a Bible peculiar to themselves. Grotius places the heel of condemnation on several books of the Bible. Bishop Baxter voted down eight books as uninspired, and unworthy of confidence. Swedenborg accepted only the Four Gospels and Revelation as inspired. The German fathers rejected the Gospel of St. Matthew, and I know not how many other books. The Bible of the learned Christian writer Evanson did not contain either Matthew, Mark, or John. The Unitarian Bible does not contain Hebrews, James, Jude, or Revelation. The Catholics denounce the Protestant Bible, and the Protestants condemn the Catholic Bible, as being full of errors. A number of other churches and learned Christians might be named who had Bibles of their own selection and construction. And thus every book in the Bible has passed under the flaming sword of condemnation, and has been voted down by some ecclesiastical body or learned and devout Christian. Each church has either made out a Bible for itself, or accepted that which came the nearest teaching the doctrine of their own peculiar creed. In the midst of this rejection, expulsion, and expurgation of Bibles and Bible-books, where can we find "the scripture given by inspiration of God"? We have it upon the authority of Dr. Adam Clark, Eusebius, Bishop Marsh, and other writers, that many texts

and passages contained in our Bible can not be found in the earlier editions; thus allowing that many gross interpolations and forgeries have been practiced by the Christian fathers. Christ's prayer on the cross, "Father, forgive them," &c., the story of the woman taken in adultery, the passage relative to the three that bare record in heaven, &c., they assure us, can not be found in any early translation of the Bible. Where, then, are " the scriptures given by inspiration of God "? Who can tell?

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