

## 4 *No Throwing Away of Reason*

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### *Irrationality Is Irresponsible*

Torrey in *How To Study The Bible* incredibly encourages you to throw out reason when reading the Bible. This is perhaps the most dangerous advice imaginable in reading scripture. Here is what Torrey says:

Studying the Bible as the word of God involves four things: 1. ***It involves the unquestioning acceptance of its teachings when definitely ascertained even when they may appear unreasonable or impossible.*** Reason demands that we submit our judgment and reasonings to the statements of infinite wisdom. Nothing is more irrational than rationalism which makes the finite wisdom the test of infinite wisdom and submits the teachings of God's omniscience to the approval of man's judgment. "This cannot be true, even though God says it, for it does not approve itself to my reason." *Id.*, at 19.

Torrey is deliberately encouraging you to accept impossible and wrong notions, as your reason apprehends them, because it is "definitely ascertained" to be what a passage means. However, the fact something appears wrong is the first clue that you have ***not definitely ascertained*** its meaning. What Torrey's ideas lead you to is an unquestioning acceptance of what *others* insist is true when your own reasoning cannot prove it to be true but your own reason tells you that it is false.

To accept as true something your reason tells you is false is to deliberately live by a lie. You will never honor God by such gullibility.

Torrey weaves into this some points that are wholesome so we must carefully tease out the valuable part of what he says. It is true that if you do not *like* a command of God, you obey it no matter what the cost. But if you think a command of God written in Scripture is wrong in your conscience then indeed you should pause. The Bible's words are not the same as God's voice speaking to Abraham, telling him to sacrifice his son. Abraham had no doubt that what he was hearing were the words of the Almighty from Heaven. Thus, even though the request appeared wrong or harsh, Abraham followed it. (God at the last second told Abraham not to kill Isaac; it was just a test.) At the same time, there was no quibbling for Abraham with what the words meant nor *its source*.

But the Bible is still the canon assembled by men. And this is why the unquestioning faith of Abraham cannot be extended to you treating everything you read in the Bible as the same authenticity as the voice speaking from heaven to Abraham. The reasons are multiple:

First, a book may have been added to canon incorrectly. For example, for the longest time, the King James Bible of 1611 until 1825 included seven more books than we read today. They are called the Apocrypha, which means *hidden*. These were books that Jews added to the Septuagint (Greek translation) of the Bible in 247 B.C. They did not regard them as inspired, but sometimes as having inspired messages. Jerome added the Apocrypha to the Bible in 411 A.D., and intended them to be added for edification, not as the inspired word of God. However, in time, this purpose was forgotten. The Roman Church to this day teaches these are inspired texts. Based on the Apocrypha, it is sensible to believe in a place called Purgatory. Without the Apocrypha, it is not only *not* sensible to believe in Purgatory, but it is also wrong to believe in a second chance place after you die where relatives can pray your way out of it so you enter heaven.

Hence, if you had the mindset of Torrey, you will accept what is unreasonable (Purgatory), contradicting other principles in Scripture, and never ask whether the canon itself has been mixed with non-inspired materials.

The same is incidentally true of Psalms. The Jews kept it outside the Torah (Law) and Prophets, because they did not regard it as inspired 100%. It sometimes was inspired, but other times not. Thus, Christians today cannot read the Precatory Psalms that vent hatred at enemies and claim that is God's inspired word merely because it is in canon. The Christian Bible eliminated the three-fold division of canon that Jews had, and thus lost the memory of why the canon was divided the way it was — precisely to assist the student to not treat as inspired what was added merely for edification or because it is mixed with some inspired portions, such as the Psalms written by Moses.

The founders of the Reformation were also adamant that certain portions of the current New Testament do not belong. Luther could not solve the contradiction between James and Paul. Rather than eject Paul and keep James, Luther said James' epistle must be regarded as not canon. Luther also could not resolve the contradiction between the salvation doctrine on works in Revelation, especially Revelation 3:1-3, and that of Paul. Rather than eject Paul and keep Revelation, Luther said the Book of Revelation was not inspired. Calvin in reading Second Peter could not reconcile its position that God wanted all men to be saved with Paul's statements that God predestines the lost to damnation. Rather than eject Paul, Calvin insisted that Second Peter is not inspired canon.<sup>1</sup>

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1. See my prior book, *Jesus' Words Only* (2007) at 33-34. It is my view that none of Paul's writings are inspired canon, and that is the correct solution to what Luther and Calvin were trying to resolve. This is thoroughly discussed in my book, *Jesus' Words Only* (2007).

Lastly, one cannot accept everything that appears violative of reason in the Bible as if God was speaking to you the way He spoke to Abraham because of the possible transmission of the text with errors. There are indeed errors in the copyists' works. The variants are small, affecting perhaps 1-2% of the text. Yet, they can be isolated, and likely solutions offered. Because of the risk of this 1-2% transmission error one must ask reason too to examine each verse. It is always possible, although highly unlikely, that a corruption took place.

Hence, keep reason as a friend at all times. God gave you reason for a reason. When you read the Bible, you must never forget you are also reading a book. If God talks to you from heaven, Torrey's advice is sound. But if you are reading something in the Bible, you have the right to skepticism which Abraham did not enjoy because of the twin possibilities that you are reading material added for edification, such as the Psalms or the Apocrypha, or there is a textual transmission error. It's too bad that our forefathers were not angels or were fallible creatures. But it would be foolish of us to not remember those facts whenever we read the Bible.