

To Err is Human

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

- A. From Latin: “errāre hūmānum est.”
 - 1. “To err is human; to forgive, divine” (*Alexander Pope, “An Essay on Criticism”*).
 - 2. Horace (65 - 8 B.C.), a Latin poet, wrote “Sometimes even the noble Homer nods.” Homer was a blind Greek poet of the eight century B.C. known for the Iliad and the Odyssey. As accomplished as Homer was, he sometimes erred with reference to the facts of the incidents that he mentioned.
 - 3. It is true of every human author; regardless of their genius and skills, they are still fallible. Even though they take great care in writing, they will “nod” or err on occasion.
- B. In contrast to this, the authors of the Bible never made a mistake.
 - 1. They were not great scholars - Acts 4:13
 - 2. Yet they wrote with such great precision, we can only conclude that God oversaw their work.

I. HUMANS ERR; GOD DOES NOT

- A. Examples of fallible humans
 - 1. Herodotus, a Greek historian of the fifth century B.C. and considered the father of written history, wrote nine books dealing with the Greek and Persian wars together with a history of the customs and geography of those empires. He claimed that the reason the oxen in Scythia did not grow horns was due to the extreme cold. He obviously never heard of reindeer.
 - 2. Aristotle, a famous Greek scholar, teacher, and philosopher of the fourth century B.C. was world renowned for his knowledge, but he stumbled at times. In “Parts of Animals,” he argued that a man’s soul is lodged in a substance of a fiery nature. He claimed the brain is a compound of earth and water. He suggested that sleep is caused by the blood flowing into the brain, making it heavy. He reasoned this from observing a drowsy person hanging his head.
 - 3. Flavius Josephus was a gifted Jewish historian. Though a respectable historian of his day, he frequently slipped. He declared that during the siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, a heifer led to be sacrificed in the temple, gave birth to a lamb. He spoke of a place in Egypt where fierce serpents ascend out of the ground and fly through the air.
 - 4. Samuel Johnson, the author of the first English dictionary, stated that the letter “H” seldom, perhaps never, begins any but the first syllable of a word. In his very statement, he did not notice that perhaps begins with “H” in the second syllable. Talk about embarrassing!

II. HUMANS ERR IN DOCTRINE; GOD DOES NOT

- A. The Qur'an, which Muslims claim to be inspired by God, states that a human fetus results from "seed" (no mention of an egg) that changes into a clot of congealed blood, which then becomes bones, later to be covered by flesh (Sura 23:14).
- B. The Book of Mormon, revered by millions as an infallible revelation of God given to Joseph Smith, is filled with errors of doctrine and fact.
 - 1. Alma 7:10 says Jesus Christ was born in Jerusalem. But everyone knows the Savior was born in Bethlehem - Micah 5:2; Matt. 2:1
 - 2. 1Nephi 16:10 and 2Nephi 5:12 tells of Nephi using a compass to find his direction in the sixth century B.C. The problem is that the mariner's compass was not developed until 1000 A.D., 1600 years later.
 - 3. Joseph Smith, their prophet, once taught that there were people living on the moon, six feet tall, dressed like Quakers, and with a life-span of 1,000 years. When Brigham Young, Smith's successor, was asked about this, he agreed and said that such beings also lived on the Sun.
- C. Mary Baker Eddy, founder of the "Christian Science" movement stated in "Science and Health with Key to the Scripture" that she claimed was co-authored by God, stated "Man is not matter, made up of brains, blood, bones, and other material elements, man is spiritual and perfect; and because of this, he must be so understood in Christian Science. Man is incapable of sin, sickness, and death." Mrs. Eddy died December 3, 1910.

III. BIBLE WRITERS NEVER ERRED

- A. 2Sam. 23:2; Luke 1:70; 2Peter 1:20-21; 2Tim. 3:16-17
 - 1. Their work is characterized by accuracy that defies explanation save that God is the author.
- B. The Beginning
 - 1. The first two chapters of the Bible record the beginning of the Universe, including the Earth and its inhabitants. Written over 3,500 years ago.
 - 2. Any book on astronomy or Earth science penned fifty years ago is already obsolete.
 - 3. The Bible says the universe had a beginning. The second law of Thermodynamics says the universe is decaying. In order to decay, there must be some starting point in the past where decay began.
 - a. In contrast, the Babylonian creation account asserts that matter is eternal.
 - 4. The Bible affirms that creation was completed on the sixth day. The first law of Thermodynamics says that nothing is being created today.
 - 5. Ten times the Bible states that biological organisms replicate after their own kind. It is perfectly in harmony with the known laws of genetics; unlike the general theory of evolution.
- C. Medicine
 - 1. The ancients' knowledge of medicine came from myths & superstitions.

2. An Egyptian remedy for hair loss was to apply a mixture of five fats (horse, hippopotamus, crocodile, cat, and ibex) with the tooth of a donkey crushed in honey.
3. They had a spell for transforming an old man into a youth of twenty.
4. Even though Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22), no pagan charms or potions are found in his writings. Instead, Moses was ahead of his time in medicine and sanitation.
 - a. Lev. 13 contains detailed information for the diagnosis, treatment (disinfectant with soap), and quarantine of the diseased all which would reduce the spread of disease.
 - b. In the Law of Moses, a leper was required to cover his upper lip (Lev 13:45). Dr. J. S. Morton has noted, "Since the leprosy bacilli are transmitted from nasal drippings and saliva, this practice of having lepers cover the upper lips was good hygienic policy."
 - c. Dr. William Vis - "To show how far Moses was ahead of modern

society we need only to remind ourselves that the word quarantine originated in the fourteenth century when the Italian ports of Venice and Genoa first refused admission to immigrants who might be harboring plague and required them to stay on board forty days, hence the word quarantine. Even in the 17th and 18th centuries, leprosy spread over southern Europe until the principles of Moses were re-enacted successfully."

D. Geography

1. Then the Encyclopedia Britannica was first published it contained so many mistakes relative to American geography and topography, that a rival publisher issued a special pamphlet correcting the numerous blunders of its British rival.
2. In ancient Rome, Tacitus wrote a book on the geography, manners, customs, and tribes of Germany. It contained so many flaws, that it was noted by contemporaries that "geography was its weak point."
3. The Bible contains literally hundreds of references to geography and topography, all of which are correct.
 - a. We often say we will travel from Atlanta up to Chicago, whereas Chicago is 500 feet lower than Atlanta. We do this because we refer to north as up and south as down.
 - b. The Bible does not use such terms. One travels from Jerusalem (in the south) down to Antioch, some 150 miles to the north (Acts 15:1-2). It uses the more accurate relative elevation rather than arbitrary direction
4. Luke mentions 32 countries, 54 cities, and 9 Mediterranean islands. There is not a single mistake in any of his references.

E. History

1. The Bible has been said to be inaccurate, but every time, it has been proven true.
2. The Genesis record declares Pharaoh presented Abraham with camels.
 - a. Gen 12:16
 - b. In 1899, T.K. Cheyne wrote, "The assertion that the ancient Egyptians knew of the camel is unfounded."

- c. In 1980, Professor Kenneth Kitchen proved that “the extant evidence clearly indicates that the domesticated camel was known in Egypt by 3,000 B.C.”; 1,300 years before Abraham.
3. Genesis mentions Abraham and Isaac associated with Philistines.
 - a. Gen. 21:34, 26:1
 - b. In 1964, H.T. Frank called these allusions historical inaccuracy.
 - c. In 1983, R. K. Harrison noted some Philistines had begun to migrate to Canaan before the main body arrived in the early 12th century B.C. He “suggests that it is a mistake to regard the mention of the Philistines in the patriarchal narratives as an anachronism.”
4. This pattern of events has been repeated with every challenge to the historical accuracy of the Bible. There are no mistakes in it.

Conclusion:

- A. The noble Homer nodded, but those guided by the Spirit of God never did.
- B. Humans err; God does not; neither did those men He inspired to deliver His word to us.
 1. We can trust the Bible in every point of fact.
 2. And if we can trust the Bible in every point of fact, we can trust it in every point of faith, including those matters that address salvation from sins and eternal life in heaven.