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PRINCIPLES DERIVED FROM THE SACRED WRITINGS
By Adam Clarke

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ABOUT THE SOURCE OF THIS FILE

Today, July 18, 2005, I received a book that I ordered online from Alibris. The seller had listed it as: "The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments" by Adam Clarke. Supposing that I had purchased a translation of the entire Bible by Adam Clarke, entirely separate from his Commentary, I was disappointed to discover that what I had actually purchased was Volume VI of Clarke's Commentary -- the final volume of a set of six volumes -- published in London by William Tegg And Company, 85 Queen Street, Cheapside, in 1851.

Realizing that Sulu Kelley of Wesleyan Heritage has long been publishing his entire digital edition of the Clarke's Commentary, I entertained no notion of digitizing this entire volume. But, in browsing through the volume I did discover the data in this file at the close of the Commentary, and decided to digitize it for this HDM publication.

All of this is to assure any and all that might wonder, that this little portion of Adam Clarke's Commentary was digitized by Duane V. Maxey on July 18, 2005 from my own copy of Volume VI of that Commentary. -- DVM

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PRINCIPLES DERIVED FROM THE SACRED WRITINGS -- Which, On Carefully Reading And Studying The Sacred Writings, I Think I Find Unequivocally Revealed There.

1. That there is but one uncreated, unoriginated, infinite, and eternal Being; the Creator, Preserver, and Governor, of all things.

2. That there is in this Infinite Essence a plurality of what are commonly called Persons, not separately subsisting, but essentially belonging to the Godhead; which Persons are commonly termed Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; or God, the Logos, and the Holy Spirit: and these are generally named the Trinity, which term, though not found in the New Testament, seems properly enough applied, as we never read of more than three persons in the Godhead.

3. That the sacred scriptures, or holy books which form the Old and New Testaments, contain a full revelation of the will of God in reference to man; and are alone sufficient for every thing relative to the faith and practice of a Christian; and were given by the inspiration of God.

4. That man was created in righteousness and true holiness, without any moral imperfection, or any kind of propensity to sin; but free to stand or fall.

5. That he fell from this state, became morally corrupt in his nature, and transmitted his moral defilement to all his posterity.

6. That, to counteract the evil principle, and bring man into a salvable state, God, from his infinite love, formed the purpose of redeeming man from his lost estate by Christ Jesus, and in the interim sent his Holy Spirit to enlighten, strive with, and convince men of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

7. That in due time the Divine Logos, called afterwards Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour, &c., became incarnated, and sojourned among men, teaching the purest truth, and working the most stupendous and beneficent miracles.

8. That this Divine Person, foretold by the prophets, and described by evangelists and apostles, is really and properly God; having, by the inspired writers, assigned to him every attribute essential to the Deity; being one with him who is called God, Jehovah, &c.

9. That he is also perfect man in consequence of his incarnation, and in that man or manhood dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; so that his nature is twofold -- divine and human, or God manifested in the flesh.

10. That his human nature is derived from the blessed Virgin Mary, through the creative energy of the Holy Ghost; but his divine nature, because God, infinite and eternal, is uncreated, underived, and unbegotten; which were it otherwise, he could not be God in any proper sense of the word; but as he is God, the doctrine of the eternal Sonship must be false.

11. That, as he took upon him the nature of man, he died for the whole human race, without respect of persons; equally for all, and for every man.

12. That on the third day after his crucifixion and burial he rose from the dead; and after showing himself many days to his disciples and others, he ascended to heaven, where, as God manifest in the flesh, he continues and shall continue to be the Mediator of the human race, till the consummation of all things.

13. That there is no salvation but through him; and that throughout the scriptures his passion and death are considered as sacrificial, pardon and salvation being obtained by the shedding of his blood.

14. That no human being since the fall either has or can have merit or worthiness of or by himself, and therefore has nothing to claim from God, but in the way of his mercy through Christ; therefore pardon, and every other blessing promised in the gospel, have been purchased by his sacrificial death, and are given to men, not on account of any thing they have done or suffered, or can do or suffer, but for his sake, or through his merit alone.

15. That these blessings are received by faith, because not of works, nor of sufferings.

16. That the power to believe, or grace of faith, is the free gift of God, without which none can believe; but that the act of faith, or actually believing, is the act of the soul, under the influence of that power. But this power to believe, like all other gifts of God, may be slighted, not used, or misused; in consequence of which is that declaration, "He that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

17. That justification, or the pardon of sin, is an instantaneous act of God's infinite mercy in behalf of a penitent soul, trusting only in the merits of Jesus Christ; that this act is absolute in respect of all past sin, all being forgiven where any is forgiven.

18. That the souls of all believers may be purified from all sin in this life; and that a man may live under the continual influence of the grace of Christ, without sinning against his God, all evil tempers and sinful propensities being destroyed, and his heart filled with pure love both to God and man.

19. That unless a believer live and walk in the spirit of obedience, he will fall from the grace of God, and forfeit all his Christian privileges and rights; in which state of backsliding he may persevere, and, if so, perish everlastingly.

20. That the whole period of human life is a state of probation, in every part of which a sinner may repent and turn to God, and in every part of it a believer may give way to sin and fall from grace; and that this possibility of rising, and liability to failing, are essential to a state of trial or probation.

21. That all the promises and threatenings of the word of God are conditional, as they regard man in reference to his being here and hereafter; and that on this ground alone the sacred writings can be consistently interpreted or rightly understood.

22. That man is a free agent never being impelled by any necessitating influence either to do evil or good, but has "it continually in his power to choose the life or death that is set before him; on which ground he is an accountable being, and answerable for his own actions; and on this ground also he is alone capable of being rewarded or punished.

23. That his free will is a necessary constituent of his rational soul, without which man must be a mere machine, either the sport of blind chance, or the mere patient of an irresistible necessity; and, consequently, not accountable for any acts to which he was irresistibly impelled.

24. That every human being has this freedom of will, with a sufficiency of light and power to direct its operations; and that this powerful light is not inherent in any man's nature, but is graciously bestowed by Him who is the true light that lighteneth every man that cometh into the world.

25. That, as Christ has made, by his once offering himself upon the cross, a sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world; and that, as his gracious Spirit strives with and enlightens all men, thus putting them in a salvable state; therefore every human soul may be saved, if it be not his own fault.

26. That Jesus Christ has instituted, and commanded to be perpetuated in his church, two sacraments; baptism (sprinkling, washing with, or immersion in water) in the name of the Holy and Ever-Blessed Trinity, as a sign of the cleansing and regenerating influences of the Holy Ghost, producing a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness; and the Eucharist, or Lord's Supper, as commemorating the sacrificial death of Christ. That by the first, once administered, every person may be initiated into the visible church; and by the second, frequently administered, all believers may be kept in mind of the foundation on which their salvation is built, and receive grace to enable them to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things.

27. That the soul is immaterial and immortal, and can subsist independently of the body.

28. That there will be a general resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust; that the souls of both shall be reunited to their respective bodies; and that both will be immortal, and live eternally.

29. That there will be a day of judgment, after which all shall be punished or rewarded, according to the deeds done in the body; the wicked being sent to hell, and the righteous taken into heaven.

30. That these states of reward and punishment shall have no end, forasmuch as the time of probation or trial is for ever terminated, and the succeeding state must necessarily be fixed and unalterable.

31. That the origin of human salvation is found in the infinite philanthropy of God; and that on this principle the unconditional reprobation of any soul is absolutely impossible.

32. The Sacred Writings are a system of pure unsophisticated reason proceeding from the immaculate mind of God; in many places, it is true, vastly elevated beyond what the reason of man could have devised or found out, but in no case contrary to human reason. They are addressed, not to the passions, but to the reason of man; every command is urged with reasons of obedience, and every promise and threatening founded on the most evident reason and propriety. The whole, therefore, are to be rationally understood, and rationally interpreted. He who would discharge reason from this, its noblest province, is a friend in his heart to the anti-Christian maxim, "Ignorance is the mother of devotion." Revelation and reason go hand in hand: faith is the servant of the former, and the friend of the latter, while the Spirit of God, which gave the revelation, improves and exalts reason, and gives energy and effect to faith.

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THE CONCLUSION

To conclude: the doctrines or principles which I have stated above, and defended in this work, I believe to be the truths of God. Those against which I have argued I believe to be either false or unproved. The doctrine which cannot stand the test of rational investigation cannot be true. The doctrines or principles already enumerated have stood this test; and those which shrink from such a test are not doctrines of divine revelation. We have gone too far when we have said, "Such and such doctrines should not be subjected to rational investigation, being doctrines of pure revelation." I know no such doctrine in the Bible. The doctrines of this book are doctrines of eternal reason, and they are revealed because they are such. Human reason could not have found them out; but when revealed, reason can both apprehend and comprehend them. It sees their perfect harmony among themselves, their agreement with the perfections of the divine nature, and their sovereign suitableness to the nature and state of man; thus reason approves and applauds. Some men, it is true, cannot reason; and therefore they declaim against reason, and proscribe it in the examination of religious truth. Were all the nation of this mind, Mother Church [The Roman Catholic Church] might soon reassume her ascendancy, and "feed us with Latin masses and a wafer God."

Men may incorporate their doctrines in creeds or articles of faith, and sing them in hymns, and this may be all both useful and edifying if the doctrine be true; but in every question which involves the eternal interests of man, the Holy Scriptures must be appealed to, in union with reason, their great commentator. He who forms his creed or confession of faith without these may believe any thing or nothing as the cunning of others, or his own caprices, may dictate. Human creeds and confessions of faith have been often put in the place of the Bible, to the disgrace both of revelation and reason. Let those go away, let these be retained, whatever be the consequence, *Fiat justitia: ruat coelum.*

No man either can or should believe a doctrine that contradicts reason; but he may safely credit (in any thing that concerns the nature of God) what is above his reason, and even this may be a reason why he should believe it. I cannot comprehend the Divine nature, therefore I adore it, if I could comprehend I could not adore, forasmuch as the nature or being which can be comprehended by my mind must be less than that by which it is comprehended, and therefore

unworthy of its homage. The more knowledge increases, the more we shall see that reason and learning, sanctified by piety towards God, are the best interpreters of the sacred oracles.

O Thou, who dwellest between the cherubim, Shine forth, and in thy light we shall see light!

I have but two words more to add at the conclusion of this long and severe work; one concerning myself:

Like travelers, when they see their native soil,
Writers rejoice to terminate their toil.

And one to my readers:

My latest labour's end at length is gained,
My longest journey's welcome goal obtained,
By God's assistance has the work been wrought
By his direction to your dwellings brought.

Adam Clarke
Millbrook, July 26th, 1817

Finished correcting for a new edition, Jan. 9th, 1882. -- A. C.

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THE END