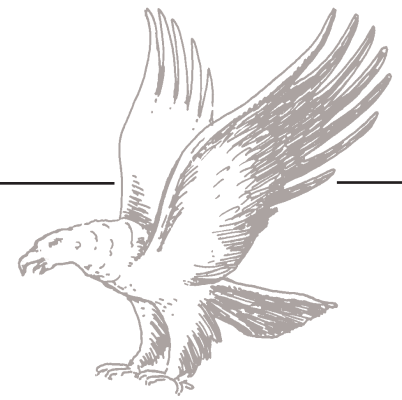


Wings

*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”
Isaiah 40:31*



June 8, 2014

Is the Bible Propaganda?

Critics of the Bible often dismiss it as Jewish and Christian propaganda designed to deceive readers into accepting a fake history. If so, the authors did a pretty poor job of it.

“Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your law, and has departed so as not to obey Your voice; therefore the curse and the oath written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against Him. And He has confirmed His words, which He spoke against us and against our judges who judged us, by bringing upon us a great disaster; for under the whole heaven such has never been done as what has been done to Jerusalem” (Dan. 9:11-12).



One of the problems that historians have in studying ancient civilizations is the notoriously biased records they left behind. The steles, clay tablets, and other documentation that describe the conquests of these long-dead empires are so hopelessly one-sided that historians usually have to assume they are reading a heavily redacted version of real events. The rulers routinely boast of obliterating this or that nation, while conveniently ignoring any defeats they may have suffered along the way. Consequently, the best chance we have

of reconstructing the true history is to compare the records of competing empires, and match up the events as best we can. It's tough to do history when all you have to work with is propaganda.

But there is one ancient text that does not fit that pattern. The Bible chronicles the history of one nation, Israel, in a manner unlike any other ancient source. Daniel's description of his people's sins and the awful destruction that befell them is just one example of the kind of humiliating history that dominates the Old Testament. If the Old Testament is just another propaganda piece designed to make the home team look good, the authors certainly failed in their efforts.

The same can be said of the New Testament and its history of the founding of Christianity. The apostles were deeply involved in either writing or dictating most of the New Testament; but they don't come off looking too good in the finished product. The foul-ups, failures, and general incompetence displayed by these men—in the very records they themselves wrote—don't fit

the pattern of manufactured history that is so common in ancient sources.

Consider the end result: In both the Old and New Testaments, the key people involved are tagged with a level of negative PR that is simply inexplicable. Why would people trying to leave their mark on history do such a sorry job of doctoring the records they left behind?

Ah, but maybe they weren't trying to doctor the records. Maybe there was another influence at work in the creation of these stories, an influence whose purpose was not to propagandize, but to instruct, to warn, and to encourage. What if the record of Israel's "great disaster" was left to later generations, not to besmirch an ethnic group, but as a warning not to make the same mistakes? And what if the stories of the stumbling, bumbling apostles was recorded, not to give the world something to laugh at, but to illustrate what God can do with imperfect human beings?

There are many reasons I believe the Bible to be the Word of God, but one of the greatest is the refreshing honesty with which it records history.

— David King