

ARTS

Wrinkles ironed out of the Bible

The Fundamental Bible
Joshua Steadfast, Editor
Judah House Press, 1981

review by Jens Andersen

A lot of strange books and book notices cross this desk, and I'm not just talking about poetry either.

Robert Clay Brand and his company, Claystar Publishing, occasionally send us notices from Costa Rica for his book *Twilight of the Worlds*, wherein he reveals the astounding fact that the residents of Atlantis did not depend on oil as an energy source. Brand also states that clouds are not natural phenomena, and Christ has "broken the bonds" of the sky gods.

Another frequent correspondent is Eugene Changey, a 61-year-old bachelor from Maple Heights, Ohio, who writes letters to the *Gateway* in which the Lord GOD (always capitalized) speaks through him to us lowly journalists. Last week we received a thick pamphlet (or a thin book) from him entitled *The Hare's Relier*, which contains pearls of wisdom like:

Be not a knave of destiny, but know a desirous virtue, to blemish a whore in plight. A blight of remorse is disdainful gain to a wicked servant of hell, who abhorred a nature of virtue to live in a glory in sin.

Yes, indeed, there certainly are a lot of wackos running around loose in this world.

But the most audacious piece of religious bladerdash to cross my path recently is a thing called *The Fundamental Bible*, which quite by chance arrived a day after Changey's screed.

The Fundamental Bible is a radical departure as bibles go; unlike the *Revised Standard Bible*, the *New English Bible* et al, it is not just another translation based on ancient scriptures, and retaining a few of the poetic liberties of the *King James Bible*. Rather, although it uses the ancient scriptures and *King James* as a base, it is drastically and liberally rewritten from bow to stern, the changes being based on recent "revelations."

The alterations were done by one Joshua Steadfast (sounds like a pseudonym to me) who is the leader of the True Scripture Congregation, a group which split from the Southern Baptist Conference a little over a year ago, and which claims a membership of 90,000 (I am quoting the attached press release—the group isn't listed in *The World Almanac*. But then I guess

there are so many crackpot groups around that a few are bound to be overlooked.)

The True Scripture Congregation believes that all present bibles (except their own, of course) in spite of being divinely inspired originally, were tampered with over the course of time by humans under the influence of the devil. The result is a "depraved" bible which has split the church, and made criticism easy for agnostics and atheists.

The only example given in the press release (other examples are available by mail on request) is the case of John 1:18, which states: "No one has ever seen God."

As the press release notes, Genesis 32:30 states that Jacob saw God, and Exodus 24:10-11 states that Moses, Nadab, Aaron, Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel saw God.

Joshua Steadfast, knowing that God does not contradict himself, realized instantly that either the Old Testament passages or the excerpt from John was the work of the devil. After prayerful consideration God revealed to him that it was John that had been falsified, and that in reality what had been said was, "No one has seen God but the appointed few."

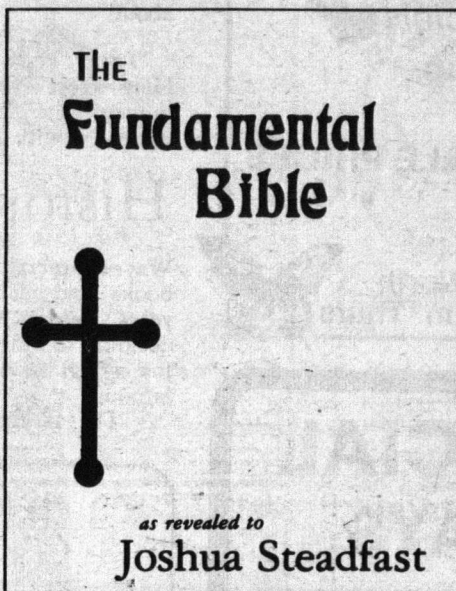
Being something of an amateur theologian, this example only whetted my appetite, and, unable to wait for the mail order pamphlet, I dug up my *Revised Standard Bible* and began making some comparisons. I started with Ecclesiastes, figuring there would have to be something in that almost-agnostic book that a fanatic Christian would itch to improve. Sure enough there was. Take this original passage from the *Revised Standard Bible* (Eccl. 11:15):

As you do not know how the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything.

A great maxim for creationists! In Steadfast's *Fundamental Bible*, however, the quote becomes:

As only the true believer knows how the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so only the true believer knows the work of God who makes everything.

I soon found that this know-it-all attitude permeated the *Fundamental Bible* much more so than the *Revised Standard*, which is only intermittently cocksure. That vast unknowableness of the universe; what Mencken called "the impenetrable enigma that is life," is often treated with awe and respect in the *Revised Standard*. The *Fundamental*



Bible, on the other hand, seems suspiciously eager to prove that only the infidel is baffled by life; that the True Scripturalist is virtually omniscient.

Here is another example from the *Revised Standard* (Romans 11:33):

O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements and how inscrutable his ways!

To which Steadfast adds: "except to those who worship him."

Prudery, as might be expected, is another feature of the *Fundamental Bible*. Take, for instance, this lovely, lyrical verse from the Song of Solomon (Sol. 7:1-3):

How graceful are your feet in sandals

O queenly maiden

Your rounded thighs are like jewels

the work of a master hand

Your navel is a rounded bowl

that never lacks mixed wine

Your belly is a heap of wheat

encircled with lilies

Your two breasts are like two fawns

twins of a gazelle.

In the *Fundamental Bible*, this becomes bowdlerized to:

How beautiful you are from the feet up

O holy woman

Your eyes are merry

giving cheerfulness to friends

Your hands are tender

for patting your husband's back

And your arms are sturdy

for the labors of the home

And your breasts give milk

to babes in arms.

Or this passage (Proverbs 30:18-19):
*Three things are too wonderful for me;
four I do not understand
the way of an eagle in the sky
the way of a serpent on a rock
the way of a ship on the high seas
and the way of a man with a maid.*

Lest anyone get any adulterous ideas, Steadfast changes the last words to husband and wife." Husband and wife!!! Why, the whole thing smells of curlers and dirty undershirts. Sex to such a prude is not the delightful and disturbing thing it was to the original authors of Proverbs, it is something degraded and smutty, to be swept under the rug of holy matrimony.

A good deal of the genocidal gore is also cleaned out of the Old Testament (e.g. Numbers 31, Deuteronomy 2, and Joshua 6). After reading Steadfast's revisionism one almost suspects that the bloody Israelites were signatories to the Hague Convention.

Another embarrassment that has made countless theologians squirm is solved in one easy stroke: in Matthew 1:1-17 it is stated that Jesus is a descendant of David, and, to prove it, the genealogy from David from Joseph is listed. However, in Matthew 1:18 it is stated that the Holy Spirit got into the sack with Mary before Joseph did, and therefore Joseph is not the father, nor is David an ancestor.

Steadfast solves the knotty problem by simply changing the account to say that Joseph was indeed the father, and that he was infused with the Holy Spirit when he impregnated her. The technical details are omitted, but as best as I can tell the new type of copulation still leaves Mary virginal. A neat trick indeed!

If Steadfast was really inspired by God in making all these drastic changes in scripture he has certainly done a noble job of cleaning up the Bible. But that fact that other scriptural writers before him made mistakes due to satanic influences causes me to wonder if Steadfast isn't simply another diabolic meddler.

Which brings us to the crucial question: how does one tell whether a writer is inspired by the devil or by God? With the multitude of people running around nowadays claiming to be God's exclusive messengers, it seems like a pretty pertinent question.



ROUNDABOUT

by Michael Skeet

I can't believe they're doing this to us, y'know. I mean, if they take the *Getaway* from us, who's going to print my egotistic ramblings? I need a soapbox!

Andersic is raving about deadlines, and this is the mother of them all, so I guess I should treat you to a winner of a final column: My greatest moments as a *Getaway* music reviewer!

I would have to say that, over the past two years, my biggest thrill has been my most acclaimed piece — the interview I did with Vanessa, the groupie whose theme song is "Thanks For the Mammaries". Her delicate insights into the real world of rock 'n' roll were a real eye-opener, and my delicate probing into the mind and soul of this interesting creature were enough to convince me that I should be shooting for Honours Psych.

Second on the all-time Great list would be last week's Loverboy concert. Really marv sounds. I'd have to say that getting the members of the band to proof-read my review was a stroke of genius — darned good thing they agreed with me, eh?

Speaking of which, isn't the MacKenzie Brothers album a real classic? Something even engineers can sing along to. I just had to give it a 10. Real commercial too, eh guys?

I thought the *Doug Christie Live Album* was terrific, too, and it's a shame the big guy's career has gone downhill in the past year. That's the way it goes, though,



Earwax and the Visigoths in a more sober moment.

and since he hasn't sent me the usual Christmas freebies, that's the last I'm going to say about the sonofabitch.

Hats off also to Edmonton's rock 'n' roll radio stations, especially CKRA and K-97 FM. Who'd have thought that you could make an AM format work on the

FM band? For that matter, who'd have thought the CRTC would allow it? Congrats, you guys — it really warms my heart to know that, no matter when I turn on the old Electrohome, I can listen to AC/DC firing off all those cannons. Almost got the words memorized, too.

My conscience won't let me end this column, won't let me allow the *Getaway* to die, without giving you one last tip. Watch out for a new group called Earwax and the Visigoths.

They're Canadian, doncha know, and the marketing plan is perfect. The band is made up of session men or ex-players from prairie and maritime bar-bands. The lead singer, whose name is being kept secret for publicity reasons, used to voice commercials in Toronto. A PR man for A&P Records tells me they've got eight tracks from two albums all ready to go as singles and A-rotation cuts. And Edmonton is going to be the proving ground!

Somebody's obviously caught on to the fact that both Loverboy and Toronto, real giants of the Canadian recording scene, got their starts playing for Edmonton audiences. The plan, then, is for Earwax and the Visigoths to play the Riv-K-97 Rock Room every night from now until they get a hit record. The name Earwax and the Visigoths, incidentally, is the product of an extensive survey by one of Toronto's biggest consulting firms. Now that's creativity!

I'm out of space; oh, woe. And up to this point, I haven't been able to get Wayne Gretzky's name into this thing once! Ah well, I anticipate a hit single from him before long; if that happens, then I can consider my tiny efforts over the past two years to have been worthwhile.

Next week: