

# **More Ravings of a Mad Man**

by

Sam Aurelius Milam III  
c/o 4984 Peach Mountain Drive  
Gainesville, Georgia 30507

This essay was first completed on Friday, October 20, 1989 and was most recently revised on Friday, May 15, 2015.

This document is approximately 6,522 words long.

This essay is LiteraShare.

That means that it isn't for sale and that it isn't protected by a formal establishment copyright. As the author, I ask you to extend to me the courtesy that is reasonably due. If you copy the essay, then copy all of it including my name and address as shown on each page, and this LiteraShare Statement. I invite you to provide such copies for other readers. If you quote from the essay, then do so accurately and give me credit. If you care to make a voluntary contribution to me, then I prefer cash. For checks, money orders, or PayPal payments, please inquire.

*caveat lector*

If you'd like to read the previous essay in this series, then ask for  
*The Ravings of a Mad Man*

This page was intentionally left blank.



## DEDICATION

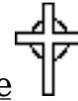


If Christians could create the supernatural Hell that  they advocate, then their concurrently created sins would surely send them there and the place would be populated only by its Christian inventors. The best that I could wish the creators of such an evil place is that, while there, they should enjoy the evil fruits of their evil tree. But for now, and with a thankful certainty that the awful place doesn't exist, I dedicate this essay to all of those others who've been beset by the evangelistic advocates of sin and Hell. May those hateful ideas be recognized as the ugly creations of tyrants, which is exactly what they are.

This page was intentionally left blank.



The Infamous Tower of Bible



Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

—Genesis 11:9

*Holy Bible*, Revised Standard Version

It's interesting that we're told in the *Holy Bible* that God confused the language, and then we're told that the *Holy Bible* is the Inspired Word of God. If the *Holy Bible* really is the Inspired Word of God, then we have to believe everything that's in it. Right? Then we have to believe the part about the Tower of Babel. But how much confidence can we have in something written and translated by people who were using confused languages, and Inspired by the God who confused those languages? Kind of confusing, isn't it? If somebody tells you "everything that I say is an absolute lie, including my present statement," then what do you believe?

Who says that the *Holy Bible* is the inspired word of God? The people who wrote it? What would you expect them to say? They wrote it. What about the preachers? Shouldn't they know? After all, they went to seminary.<sup>1</sup> If I told you that this present essay is the Inspired Word of God, would that make it so? The fact is that unless you heard it from the Horse's Mouth, then the only proof that you have is what somebody told you. If you claim that you heard it from the Horse's Mouth then, with equal authority, so did I.

Let's look at this from somebody else's point of view. Here's a quote.

This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

—Matthew 13:13

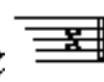
*Holy Bible*, Revised Standard Version

What can you say to that? Like Father, like Son, I suppose. Chip off tha ol' Block, I guess. All the way from *Genesis* to *Matthew* and they're still playing mind games. I'd like to mention in passing that many people who say that the *Holy Bible* is the Inspired Word of God are making a living from that belief. That doesn't necessarily prove that they're lying but it might make you wonder. Incidentally, I don't charge anything for my essays.

---

<sup>1</sup> From "semi," meaning half in quantity or value, and "nary," meaning none.

This page was intentionally left blank.

 Academic Interlude 

The “Some Things Can’t Be Put Into Writing” Department

Examine this simple verse.

Having survived a theology and a war,  
I am beginning to understand  
The rain. —*Survival In Missouri*  
by John Ciardi<sup>2</sup>

Something so simple would seem to be unambiguous. Yet, verbal intonation might give the verse many possible meanings, none of which are visible in the written form. For example, an emphasis on the conjunction *and* might imply that surviving **both** a theology **and** a war were necessary for the beginning of understanding. An emphasis on the word *survived* might imply that the **survival** was important, but that it need not necessarily have been both a war and a theology. After all, how does one survive a theology? (On second thought, it might be easier to survive a war.) An emphasis on the word *I* might imply a dispute over **who** was beginning to understand, and the survival of the war and the theology might be a supporting argument in favor of the speaker. Even different meanings might follow from an emphasis on *beginning* or *understand*. None of that can be determined by reading the written version and, indeed, in the written verse the potential ambiguity is invisible. The statement appears to be clear and simple. Even the context might not reveal all possible meanings, or even the intended meaning. And now...



Much of what is contained in the *Holy Bible* is a written version of what people allegedly said. We don’t have any voice recordings. Therefore, we can only hope that the written record is accurate. Even if it is, we must still surmise what they intended when they uttered the words, thousands of years ago. Sometimes, how you say a thing is as important as what you say. Look at an example.

Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.  
—Matthew 26:41  
*Holy Bible, King James Version*

and

Watch and pray that ye may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.  
—Matthew 26:41  
*Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version*

Those two translations might seem to agree but are they identical? No. Then they probably don’t say the same thing. The King James Version indicates some sort of emphasis on *is* in two places, while no such emphasis occurs in the Revised Standard Version. Also, “...that ye enter not into temptation...” might be taken as a command or at least as an assurance but “...that ye may not enter into temptation...” could

---

<sup>2</sup> *LITERATURE*, James Burl Hogins, page 579. See the References section for complete reference.  
Sam Aurelius Milam III, c/o 4984 Peach Mountain Drive, Gainesville, Georgia 30507 Page 3

## More Ravings of a Mad Man

---

very well be a conditional statement indicating uncertainty as to the outcome. Clearly, we don't know exactly what the Nazarene intended by the statement. Any ambiguity, **however small**, is significant in a body of belief that has resulted in wars, pogroms, persecutions, excommunications, and executions, all in the name of heresy. Assumptions regarding emphasis can radically transform the meaning yet, even today, Christians continue to pursue, judge, and condemn sin and heresy, based on such translations.



### Understanding Christianity Through Newspeak

If you can control what people think, then you can control what people do. Such control has been attempted, sometimes successfully, throughout history. An example of such control was eloquently fictionalized in the novel *1984*, by George Orwell. Depicted therein is a secular system of control, called Ingsoc, that employed all of the traditional tools of religion.

Significantly, one of the primary goals of Ingsoc was the control of language. Ingsoc's primary tool for such control was the *Newspeak Dictionary*. The philosophy of the *Newspeak Dictionary* was eloquently summarized by Orwell through a fictional character named Syme.

Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thought-crime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it. Every concept that can ever be needed will be expressed by exactly *one* word, with its meaning rigidly defined and all its subsidiary meanings rubbed out and forgotten.... Every year fewer and fewer words, and the range of consciousness always a little smaller.

—*1984*, Chapter One, Section V  
by George Orwell

Control of language implies control of thought. Religion has been attempting to do that at least since the book of *Genesis*, and Christianity at least since the writings of Matthew.

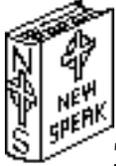
Efforts to control what people think are more likely to succeed if the fear of some overpowering authority can be invoked. In Ingsoc, it was the Thought Police. In Christianity, it is God. The similarity is easier to recognize if Christianity is viewed in terms of Newspeak.



### The Newspeak Version

He could not help feeling a twinge of panic... Whether he wrote DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER, or whether he refrained from writing it, made no difference. Whether he went on with the diary, or whether he did not go on with it, made no difference. The Thought Police would get him just the same. He had committed — would still have committed, even if he had never set pen to paper — the essential crime that contained all others in itself. Thoughtcrime, they called it.

—*1984*, Chapter One, Section I  
by George Orwell



### The Christian Version

He could not help feeling a twinge of panic.... Whether he wrote DOWN WITH CHRISTIANITY, or whether he refrained from writing it, made no difference. Whether he went on with the diary, or whether he did not go on with it, made no difference. God would get him just the same. He had committed — would still have committed, even if he had never set pen to paper — the essential sin that contained all others in itself. Heresy, they called it.

—with thanks to George Orwell

When people are prevented from saying certain things, or using certain words, that's an attempt at thought control. Some words are branded as obscene, then some statements are branded as blasphemous, and finally some actions are prohibited as sinful. God is invoked, and Presto! The people are being controlled.

This page was intentionally left blank.

  
**Christ Died for Our  
Nonsense**

A Christian is someone who is terribly afraid that someone, somewhere, might be committing a sin, and enjoying it.  
—Sunday, August 20, 1989, *Milam's Notes*  
With thanks to H. L. Mencken

How about sin? How do Christians feel about it? Let's get our answers from the Inspired Word of God. One thing that Christians believe about sin is that they can't avoid it.

...for there is no man who does not sin...  
—2 Chronicles 6:36  
*Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version*

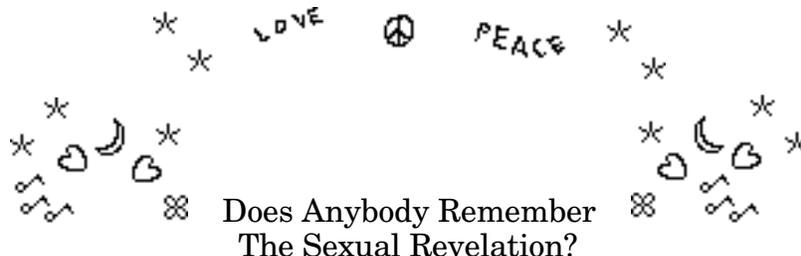
They can't deny it.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.  
—1 John 1:8  
*Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version*

They also believe that their unavoidable, undeniable sins caused their hero to get crucified.

...that Christ died for our sins...  
—1 Corinthians 15:3  
*Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version*

Christians are taught that not only are they unavoidably sinners, but that it's their fault that their hero got killed. Drummed into them is the message that Jesus died for sinners living today, for the sins that they routinely commit. No wonder they're so defensive. How could they not be? They're taught that they're so rotten that the only way that God could save them was to have somebody else die for them. They're so *incredibly* rotten that not just anybody would do. It had to be Jesus Himself.



What is the Paramount Sin of modern Christianity? I've received several suggestions such as pride and criticism of holy doctrine. However, in the eyes of your garden variety Christian, nothing is more embarrassing when they're caught at it, or will get them to Hell faster and more surely, than unapproved sex. That is, the most natural, human, loving, and beautiful thing that people can do together, the crucial action of human survival, is the central sin in Christian doctrine as it is commonly understood.

## More Ravings of a Mad Man

---

It would be ludicrous if it didn't have such a devastating effect on people. Here again, the ugly hand of Christianity can be seen more clearly in its fictional analog.



### Understanding Christian Sex through Newspeak

The aim of the Party was not merely to prevent men and women from forming loyalties which it might not be able to control. Its real, undeclared purpose was to remove all pleasure from the sexual act. Not love so much as eroticism was the enemy, inside marriage as well as outside it. ...The only recognized purpose of marriage was to beget children for the service of the Party. Sexual intercourse was to be looked on as a slightly disgusting minor operation, like having an enema.... There were even organizations such as the Junior Anti-Sex League which advocated complete celibacy for both sexes.... The Party was trying to kill the sex instinct, or, if it could not be killed, then to distort it and dirty it.... And so far as the women were concerned, the Party's efforts were largely successful.

—1984, Chapter One, Section VI  
by George Orwell

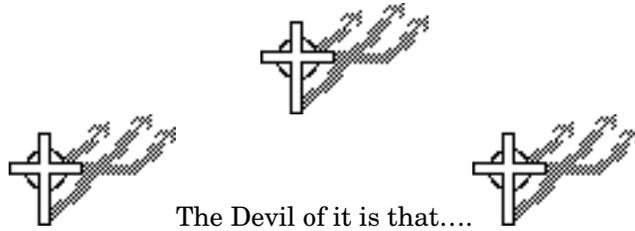
Substitute the word *church* for the word *party* and you'll pretty much get the idea.

So what's the result of the doctrine of sin? Does it make people nicer? No. It creates fear and guilt. Christians must fear themselves and the sins that they'll surely commit and they must feel guilty when they commit them. The doctrine of sin doesn't cause Christians to behave any better. It only forces them to choose between suppressing their desires or feeling guilty. In practice, they usually fail at the suppression and make up for it by succeeding at the guilt.

What eventually becomes clear is that when people are controlled by sin, rather than by love, they don't become pure. They become sinners. Human sexuality could, if uncorrupted by the idea of sin, be the greatest physical expression of human love. Unfortunately, Christians have not been content to degrade their own sexuality but have exported the contagion. Thus, not only Christians but all people can be disgusted by one of their most innate and irrepressible characteristics. Ultimately, a culture composed of such people is a fundamentally sick culture.

Who sees with equal eye, as God of all,  
A hero perish or a sparrow fall,  
Atoms or systems into ruin hurled,  
And now a bubble burst, and now a world.

—*An Essay on Man*, Epistle I  
by Alexander Pope



The Devil of it is that....

It's better to be safe and sorry than just sorry.

—Monday, November 20, 1978, *Milam's Notes*

So Christians are unavoidably and undeniably sinners and, because of that, Jesus died. Tithing and going to church don't relieve the guilt so how do Christians deal with the ongoing process of sin? One way is to shift the blame. It isn't the Christians' fault. The Devil Made Them Do It. Christian's are Tempted and they yield. They're still sinners but they don't have to be responsible.

This page was intentionally left blank.



### Grammar Was Tense, But She Was Past Perfect

Some grammarians<sup>3</sup> acknowledge six tenses in the English language: present tense, past tense, future tense, present perfect tense, past perfect tense, and future perfect tense. There are also so-called progressive forms of verbs, emphatic forms of verbs, simple futurity, using shall and will, determination, threat, or promise, using will and shall (they arbitrarily reverse places in the conjugation with respect to simple futurity), and special cases of shall, will, should, and would. I wouldn't be surprised if the grammarians are more tense than the verbs are.

There are a lot of gaps and inconsistencies in the structure of English tenses and I believe that the grammarians are wrong in some cases. Consider this simple sentence.

I eat.

Does it mean that I'm eating now, I do nothing but eat, I have been eating and I'm not through yet, or I periodically eat? To clarify what I'm getting at,<sup>4</sup> suppose a mechanic is taking a break and is asked what job he's presently doing. He might say, "I'm working on the 1988 Camaro." Actually, he's eating a beef burrito. What he means is (simultaneously), "I have been working on the Camaro," (first person present perfect tense using the verb to be) and "I will be working on the Camaro again after I finish my burrito," (first person future tense using the verb to be). The mechanic's use of the present tense to describe something that he isn't presently doing is correctly understood by his supervisor without any conscious recognition of the grammatical complexity of what has happened. He uses what I call the present absent tense to describe the situation. The grammarians don't acknowledge the present absent tense, but my guess is as good as theirs.

The tenses that they do acknowledge (present perfect tense for example) are not as advertised. Consider this sentence.

I have earned a reputation.

The tense of the verb form *have earned* will be described by a grammarian as present perfect.<sup>5</sup> However, it describes something that is done, over with, finished, and in the past. If it's completed, then it's past. Now, consider this sentence.

By the time that I became pregnant, I had earned a reputation.

---

<sup>3</sup> *Instant English Handbook*, Chapter 13.

<sup>4</sup> ". . . that at which I'm getting," if you want to be really picky about prepositions.

<sup>5</sup> "The present perfect tense denotes action that is completed at the time of speaking or writing," *Instant English Handbook*, page 149.

## More Ravings of a Mad Man

---

The tense of the verb form *had earned* will be described as past perfect. The only difference between the so-called present perfect and the so-called past perfect is that the past perfect must follow some other past tense verb. I believe that both tenses are past tenses and need new names. The more you examine English tenses, the more bizarre it gets.

Some grammarians<sup>6</sup> recognize fourteen basic English tenses, with at least twice as many modal forms. Those tenses are conveniently shown in a table.<sup>7</sup>

	<i>past</i>	<i>present</i>	<i>future</i>
(simple)	I saw	I see	I shall see
emphatic	I did see	I do see	(lacking)
progressive	I was seeing	I am seeing	I shall be seeing
perfect	I had seen	I have seen	I shall have seen
perfect progressive	I had been seeing	I have been seeing	I shall have been seeing

How about the past perfect progressive got-caught-ive tense “I had been seen?” How about the present perfect progressive got-caught-ive tense “I have been seen”? They ain’t even in the table! You see what I mean? Should you have seen what I meant? Shall you have been seeing what I will mean?

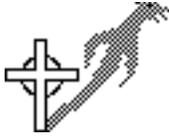
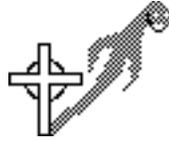
Each language handles tenses differently. For example, the past tense of Russian inflects by gender: *byl*, I (masculine) was; *byla*, I (feminine) was; and *bylo*, I (neuter) was. Every verbal concept in Russian is either perfective or imperfective and therefore requires at least two verbs. Some verbal concepts in Russian require a third verb to indicate that an action is usual or habitual. The English verb *walk*, for example, has three conjugations in Russian: *idti* (to be in the act of walking), *paidti* (to have completed the act of walking), and *khodit* (to walk frequently or habitually). According to one source, in Japanese there aren’t any plurals. If that is really true, then the same Japanese sentence could just as easily mean “The man propositions the woman,” “The men proposition the woman,” “The man propositions the women,” or “The men proposition the women.” The implications, as they say, are astounding. Clearly, there are things that cannot be translated exactly from one language into another.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> *target: language*, Lawrence A. Perkins.

<sup>7</sup> *target: language*, Lawrence A. Perkins.

<sup>8</sup> For lots more on this subject, see *target: language*, listed in the References at the end of this essay.



Heah kum da Judge! Heah kum da Judge!  
Let it all hang out, kuz heah kum da Judge!

Government is a good example of man's inhumanity to man. Religion is another.

—Saturday, January 6, 1979

*Milam's Notes*

Christians claim to be loving, forgiving, and non-judgmental, yet they believe that God is going to send non-believers to Hell. That might make it a little difficult for a Christian to love his enemy, to turn the other cheek, to walk the extra mile, and so forth. However, it makes it **really easy** for him to justify why missionaries ought to go forth and preach the Word.

You've heard of the missionaries. They're the ones who save the heathens of the world. The heathens are the ones who have cultures evolved over many generations, societies that have survived for hundreds of years, and who don't know about Jesus. Missionaries go teach those folks how to live. At this point, I'd like to mention psychoneurosis.

**psychoneurosis** a neurosis based on emotional conflict in which an impulse that has been blocked seeks expression in a disguised response or symptom

— WEBSTER'S Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary<sup>9</sup>

Maybe. Maybe not. But with sex being such a big sin, it does give you something to ponder. Missionary-mania might not represent a re-direction of a repressed sex drive but clearly Christians haven't yet learned how to run their own affairs. That being the case, it's presumptuous beyond belief that they send out missionaries.

Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?

—Matthew 7:3

*Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version*

Why don't they practice what they preach?

Christian missionaries don't even restrict their intrusions to so-called heathens. They try to tell all of us that our beliefs are false, that we will suffer eternal punishment for our actions, and that what we've been doing for pleasure and procreation is a disgusting, filthy sin. It's a sad comment on the gullibility of people that so many have been converted. It's a surprising example of uncharacteristic tolerance that so many missionaries have survived.

---

<sup>9</sup> For those who are curious, a neurosis is "a mental and emotional disorder that affects only part of the personality, is accompanied by a less distorted perception of reality than in a psychosis, does not result in disturbance of the use of language, and is accompanied by various physical, physiological, and mental disturbances (as visceral symptoms, anxieties, or phobias)", also from Webster's. Reminds me of some Christians I've known.

## More Ravings of a Mad Man

---

When you consider that life is already sufficiently filled with anguish, then it's appalling that Christian missionaries insist upon adding theirs, along with all of the other burdens that we must already bear.

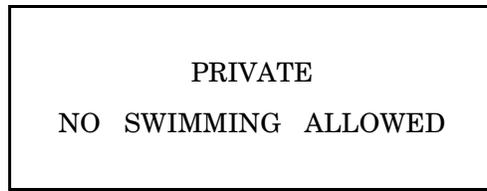
To each his suffrings: all are men,  
Condemned alike to groan,  
The tender for another's pain,  
Th' unfeeling for his own.  
Yet ah! why should they know their fate,  
Since sorrow never comes too late,  
And Happiness too swiftly flies?  
Thought would destroy their paradise.  
No more; where ignorance is bliss,  
'Tis folly to be wise.

—*On a Distant Prospect of Eton College*, Stanza 10  
by Thomas Gray

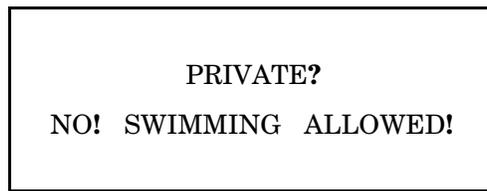


To Shall Have Been, or  
Not To Shall Have been  
That Will Have Become the Question

Punctuation can be very important. An example is a sign that was once posted near a country pond.



The sign was modified by local boys.



Another example was reported to me by a chemistry professor, Dr. Cottingham I believe, at San Antonio Junior College. During his study of chemistry, he attempted to reproduce an experiment that was documented in his class workbook. He reached a point at which the instruction was to add to his concoction one drop of Bromine, which he did. The beaker immediately disintegrated into smithereens. He picked himself up, dusted himself off, and took a second look at the instruction. It happened that *Bromine* was the last word on the page and then he noticed that there wasn't a period after the word. He turned the page and the sentence continued. The instruction had been to use Bromine **solution**, diluted to a specified concentration. Finally, here's an extra example, free of charge. Notice the different meanings (and the **very** different implications) of these two sentences.

She has freckles on her but she's cute.  
She has freckles on her butt. She's cute.

This page was intentionally left blank.

 And Now   
Back to the Bible

For yet another example, notice in the following translations of scripture two differences in punctuation.

Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.  
—Matthew 26:41

*Holy Bible*, King James Version

Watch and pray that ye may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.  
—Matthew 26:41

*Holy Bible*, Revised Standard Version

In the King James Version, the comma sets off “that ye enter not into temptation” as a nonrestrictive clause. A nonrestrictive clause isn’t essential to complete the meaning of the sentence. According to that comma the King James translation could have been, without an essential change in meaning:

Watch and pray: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.

In the Revised Standard Version, the part about temptation is an essential part of the first clause and cannot be eliminated.

Since “Watch and pray” is set apart in the King James Version, it appears that **both** watching **and** praying are prerequisites to not entering temptation. The Revised Standard Version, however, lacks that comma. In that translation, the statement about temptation has a definite connection with *pray* but not necessarily with *watch*. That is, it could be two separate instructions, depending upon how you interpret the grammar. The statement might tell us to watch and also tell us to pray that we may not enter into temptation. In that case, we don’t know what we’re supposed to watch.

In the King James Version, the main clauses are separated by a colon. The second main clause is therefore an appositive clause and explains or supports the first clause. Presumably, weak flesh explains the need to watch and pray. The Revised Standard Version uses a semicolon. That means that the second clause does not directly support the first one but only provides further information. In that translation, it appears that weak flesh is incidental to the need to pray but is perhaps of interest for other reasons.

Christians ignore such disparities between translations yet persist in claiming that the *Holy Bible* is the Inspired Word of God. Indeed, some Christians collect as many versions of the *Holy Bible* as possible and search out the differences. They believe that by examining the evidence of faulty translation they are achieving a better understanding of God’s True Word. George Orwell might have referred to such mental gymnastics as Doublethink. I refer to them as Utter Nonsense.

This page was intentionally left blank.



...like a woman scorned.

—*The Mourning Bride*, act III, sc. viii  
by William Congreve

...like a righteous Christian.

—me, in this essay

What use is Hell to a loving, forgiving God? Good question. If He was malicious, sadistic, and hateful then He might want a place for folks who didn't appease His frail ego with sufficient supplications, offerings, prostrations, and effacements. On the other hand, if God is self-confident, secure in His position, understanding, loving, supportive, forgiving, and considerate, then He doesn't need to resort to spiteful, vengeful retribution. So, what use is Hell to God? You guessed it. None.

What use is Hell, on the other hand, to a preacher who's losing his grip on his congregation? Maybe he can use Hell to scare the pants back onto them. Maybe he can keep the offering plate full, and thereby his own belly. Maybe he can keep the pews loaded. Hell could be a real motivator for people who might otherwise carouse on Saturday night and sleep late on Sunday morning.



### Understanding Power Through Newspeak

(O'Brien asked) "How does one man assert his power over another, Winston?"

Winston thought. "By making him suffer," he said.

"Exactly. By making him suffer. Obedience is not enough. Unless he is suffering, how can you be sure that he is obeying your will and not his own? Power is in inflicting pain and humiliation. Power is in tearing human minds to pieces and putting them together again in new shapes of your own choosing. Do you begin to see, then, what kind of world we are creating?"

—1984, Chapter Three, Section III  
by George Orwell

Orwell's description seems less abstract, more plausible, and (I dare say) more familiar, when slightly modified.



### Understanding Orthodoxy Through Newspeak

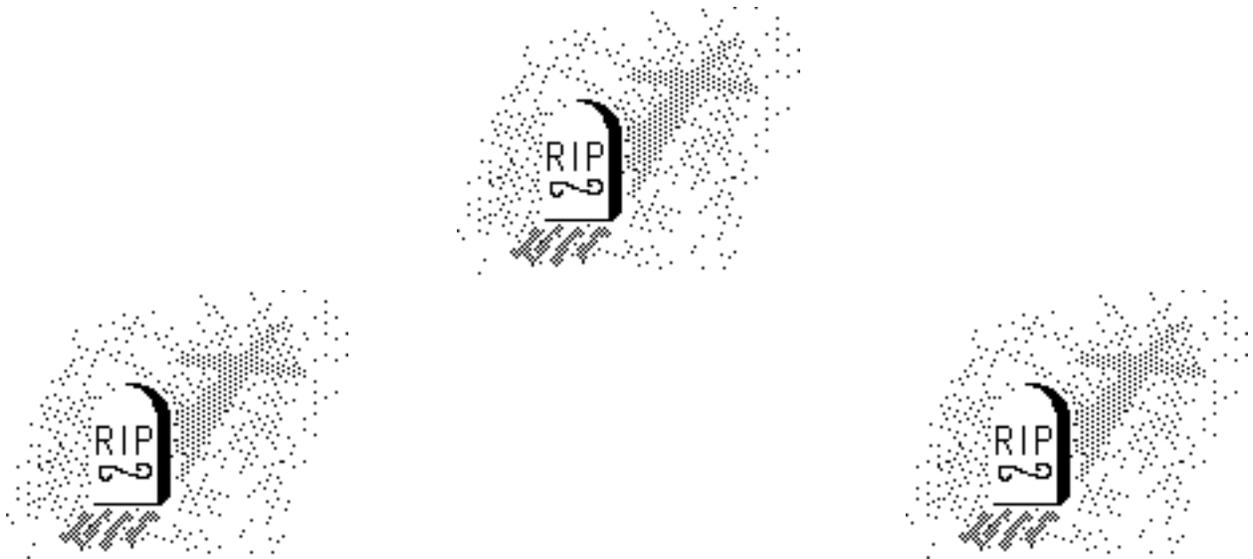
(O'Brien asked) "How does the Clergy assert its power over its congregation, Winston?"

Winston thought. "By making them suffer," he said.

## **More Ravings of a Mad Man**

---

“Exactly. By making them suffer. Obedience is not enough. Unless they are suffering, how can you be sure that they are obeying the Clergy’s will and not their own? Orthodoxy is in inflicting pain and humiliation. Orthodoxy is in tearing human minds to pieces and putting them together again in new shapes of its own choosing. Do you begin to see, then, what kind of religion we are creating?  
—with thanks to George Orwell



## SOULS LOST IN THE TRANSLATION

Ambiguity, confusion, and misunderstanding can lurk when an attempt is made to translate something from one language to another. Suppose you tried to translate “the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak” into another language, idiomatically and otherwise different from English (and they all are). What if you ended up with “the ethyl alcohol is disposing of the estate after death but the skeletal muscle is dilute,” a literally accurate translation. Would you be willing to burn someone at the stake for heresy, based on such a translation? Would you dare to consign a non-believer to Hell, knowing what you now know about the vagaries of punctuation, syntax, context, oral emphasis, and plain old misunderstanding? Based on the presumed original teachings of ancient people, allegedly translated under Divine guidance, Christians have done exactly that over and over again. Today, they continue to do so. But suppose, just suppose, that on his sixtieth birthday, after turning a little too much water into wine, the Nazarene had fallen to reminiscing. “I’m gonna tell you what,” He might have said, “I got so **cross** with those damned Romans that I darned near **died** of frustration. Finally decided to just **sacrifice** the whole **blessed** thing. Searched my soul, an’ decided it was time to go **underground**. **Move up** in the world, if ya git ma meanin’. Since then, **I’ve been livin’**, I can tell you that, really livin’!” What if the story was embellished in a couple of different languages by believers for 20 years before it was written down and then finally translated into English in the fifteenth century by people who’d heard it from several sources but hadn’t really been there. Suppose the version we got said Jesus **died** on a **cross**, was **buried**, then **rose to live again**. Our version has most of the key words and who can prove that I’m wrong?

There’s nothing wrong with reading the *Holy Bible* and deriving from it whatever comfort, wisdom, pleasure, or entertainment might be contained therein. However, there

## More Ravings of a Mad Man

---

have been many translations of the *Holy Bible* into English, every one of them different from the others.<sup>10</sup> If one of them was accomplished under Divine Inspiration, then which one was it? If they all were, then God has indeed created a Tower of Bible and confounded man's understanding. Comfort, wisdom, pleasure, and entertainment are all well and good but what of judgment and execution of non-believers? What of coercive control of people's behavior? What of condemnation and corruption of the beliefs of others? I think not.

What can you conclude from all of this? Anything that you want. I guess that's the point, isn't it? One of my conclusions is that an exact translation of the *Holy Bible* into English from the original spoken word would be a more profound miracle than the resurrection itself. The record of events and statements in the *Holy Bible* (you choose the version) cannot possibly be a true, accurate, and unambiguous account of actual events. We can't reliably know what happened yesterday. How can anybody presume to know accurately what happened 2000 years ago? Nobody knows what was originally said, or done, at or before the time of the Nazarene. Given that, I think that Christians are way out of line to act so holy. Their claim to be God's pipeline to man is insolent beyond belief. Their persistent persecution of unbelievers is well within the bounds of criminal mania.

If God speaks to men, then it is when and as He chooses. He might speak directly, through others, through events, or in ways that we never imagined. No one has unique access to God and no one has a charter more sacred than my own to save me from sin, from damnation, or from myself. The most useful lesson to be learned from 2000 years of Christianity is to be wary of someone who wants to save your soul. He probably wants to use it for his own purposes.

I'll close with a bit of advice from the work of William Shakespeare.

This above all: to thine own self be true,  
And it must follow, as the night the day,  
Thou canst not then be false to any man.  
—*Hamlet*, I, iii, 75

I have my own version of that advice, modified into a warning specifically for Christians.

This above all: to thine own self be false,  
And it must follow, as the night the day,  
Thou canst not then be true to any man.  
—with thanks to William Shakespeare

If you'd like to read the next essay in this series, then ask for

*The Lone Raver*

---

<sup>10</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica* (see the References section), article "Bible, English".

### Addendum

Here are some additional examples of language translation problems, sent to me by an associate on June 25, 2004.

The American Dairy Association was so successful with its “Got Milk?” campaign, that it was decided to extend the ads to Mexico. Unfortunately, the Spanish translation was “Are you lactating?”

Electrolux, a Scandinavian vacuum manufacturer, used this ad in the U.S.: “Nothing sucks like an Electrolux.”

Colgate introduced a toothpaste called “Cue” in France, but it turned out to be the same name as a well-known porno magazine.

When Braniff translated a slogan touting its upholstery, “Fly in leather,” it came out in Spanish as “Fly naked.”

Coors put its slogan, “Turn it loose,” into Spanish, where it was read as “Suffer from diarrhea.”

Chicken magnate Frank Perdue’s line, “It takes a tough man to make a tender chicken,” sounds much more interesting in Spanish: “It takes a sexually stimulated man to make a chicken affectionate.”

Bacardi concocted a fruity drink with the name “Pavian” to suggest French chic ... but “pavian” means “baboon” in German.

A hair products company, Clairol, introduced the “Mist Stick”, a curling iron, into Germany only to find out that mist is slang for manure.

When Kentucky Fried Chicken entered the Chinese market, to their horror they discovered that their slogan “finger lickin’ good” came out as “eat your fingers off.”

Parker Pens translated the slogan for its ink, “Avoid Embarrassment — Use Quink” into Spanish as “Evite Embarazos — Use Quink” ... which also means, “Avoid Pregnancy — Use Quink.”

When Pepsi started marketing its products in China a few years back, they translated their slogan, “Pepsi Brings You Back to Life” pretty literally. The slogan in Chinese really meant, “Pepsi Brings Your Ancestors Back from the Grave.”

In Italy, a campaign for “Schweppes Tonic Water” translated the name into the much less thirst quenching “Schweppes Toilet Water.”

Chinese translation proved difficult for Coke, which took two tries to get it right. They first tried Ke-kou-ke-la because when pronounced it sounded roughly like Coca-Cola. It wasn’t until after thousands of signs had been printed that they discovered that the phrase means “bite the wax tadpole” or “female horse stuffed with wax,” depending on the dialect. Second time around things worked out much better. After researching 40,000 Chinese characters, Coke came up with “ko-kou-ko-le” which translates roughly to the much more appropriate “happiness in the mouth.”

## **More Ravings of a Mad Man**

---

The Chevy Nova never sold well in Spanish speaking countries. “No va” means “it doesn’t go” in Spanish.

When Gerber first started selling baby food in Africa, they used the same packaging as here in the USA — with the cute baby on the label. Later they found out that in Africa companies routinely put pictures on the label of what’s inside since most people can’t read.

### References

1. (Copyright Date Not Shown)  
*The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, Translated out of the original Greek: and with the former translations diligently compared and revised, by His Majesty's special command, Authorized King James Version, INTERNATIONAL BIBLE SOCIETY, East Brunswick, New Jersey
2. 1948  
*ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA*, A New Survey of Universal Knowledge, THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO, ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA, INC, CHICAGO LONDON TORONTO, COPYRIGHT 1948 BY ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA, INC.
3. 1961  
*1984*, A Novel by George Orwell, With an Afterword by Erich Fromm, A SIGNET CLASSIC, Published by THE NEW AMERICAN LIBRARY, Copyright, 1949, by Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc. Afterword © 1961 by The New American Library of World Literature, Inc.
4. 1962  
*THE Holy Bible*, REVISED STANDARD VERSION, CONTAINING THE Old and New Testaments, TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL TONGUES, BEING THE VERSION SET FORTH A.D. 1611, REVISED A.D. 1881-1885 AND A.D. 1901, COMPARED WITH THE MOST ANCIENT AUTHORITIES AND REVISED A.D. 1946-1952, THE WORLD PUBLISHING COMPANY, CLEVELAND AND NEW YORK, © 1962 by The World Publishing Company
5. 1967  
*target: language*, Lawrence A. Perkins, *Analog Science Fiction/Science Fact*, May 1967
6. 1968  
*INSTANT ENGLISH HANDBOOK*, by Madeline Semmelmeier and Donald O. Bolander, An Authoritative Guide and Reference on GRAMMAR, CORRECT USAGE, and PUNCTUATION, Published by CAREER PUBLISHING, INC. 1500 Cardinal Drive, Little Falls, New Jersey 07424, 1981 Edition, ISBN 0-911744-03-7, © 1968 by CAREER PUBLISHING, INC.
7. 1973  
*LITERATURE*, A Collection of Mythology and Folklore, Short Stories, Poetry, Drama, and Literary Criticism, James Burl Hogins, SCIENCE RESEARCH ASSOCIATES, INC., Chicago, Palo Alto, Toronto, Hanley-on-Thames, Sydney, Paris, © 1973
8. 1980  
*Familiar Quotations*, A collection of passages, phrases and proverbs traced to their sources in ancient and modern literature, FIFTEENTH AND 125TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION, REVISED AND ENLARGED, John Bartlett, Edited by EMILY MORISON BECK and the editorial staff of Little, Brown and Company, LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY, BOSTON, TORONTO, COPYRIGHT 1980 BY LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY (INC.)

## **More Ravings of a Mad Man**

---

9. 1987  
*WEBSTER'S Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, A Merriam-Webster, MER-RIAM-WEBSTER INC., Publishers, Springfield, Massachusetts, U.S.A., © 1987 by Merriam-Webster Inc.
10. 1989  
*The Ravings of a Mad Man*, Tuesday, March 28, 1989, Sam Aurelius Milam III
11. 1990  
*The Lone Raver*, Friday, March 23, 1990, Sam Aurelius Milam III