

You probably will not have owned a motor vehicle before, say, the mid-1980s, without also having had a Haynes Workshop Manual for it. Marvellous, detailed drawings/photos and, usually, reasonable instructions. (My first one was for an Austin A40 Farina.) However, I don't expect I'm alone in remembering the struggle sometimes to make what's on the page relate to the reality of the dim inners of a clutch's bell housing dangling above your nose or irritation that, actually, the brake shoes do *not* come away cleanly with a short tap...

It would be an understatement to say that advice from someone with more experience was often the only way to get into the mind of the person who wrote the instructions - or indeed to point out that perhaps it's the wrong model! Still, having one of these manuals was the only realistic way of undertaking maintenance of the vehicle without ending up with a pile of nuts, bolts, springs and piston rods lying in a heap on the roadside (I grew up where houses did not have garages).

The Holy Bible is Life's "Haynes Workshop Manual." Several people have asked me recently how the Bible can possibly be true, accurate or relevant. Remaining with the workshop analogy, the Bible is also a tool box. You wouldn't use a hammer to bang in a screw; sure, it might get the screw into the wood but it would damage both. So it is with the Bible: the 66 books which comprise it are all written from different perspectives, at different times, with different purposes. Even the Gospels are only fully the gospel truth if we understand the writer's point. Jesus says a lot of things in them that are really helpful regardless of background - but also says things that aren't helpful at all, when taken literally in English (after translation from several ancient languages).

Again, like the hammer and screw, you can pull bits out of the Bible and use them to bang home your point but unless there is understanding, this can often result in great damage - usually to people's lives. This is when it's good to have some advice about what might have been in the mind of the writer, perhaps from someone who has had to make that repair himself. Well, don't

overlook the obvious: I do that sort of stuff, so you can talk to me about it!

Within the covers of the Bible can be found amazing literature, boring lists, crazy rules, lots of “human interest stories” but most importantly, knowledge of all that is necessary for salvation. There are a lot of test cases, too.

So, is every word in it the word of God? God certainly does speak through this mini library; however, the phrase, “lost in translation,” would be appropriate for hateful things said or done, quoting the Bible.

Car maintenance would, once in a while, find me hopelessly out of my depth: an alternator replaced, points reset, dynamo brushes cleaned, engine still dead, oily Haynes dispassionately esoteric in the critical piece of information! So I would simply go to a mechanic for help.

When you’re doing a bit of life maintenance, don’t overlook the Bible’s record of humanity’s relationship with itself and with God. It will have an answer for you - but you might want some pointers in getting the steering rack-and-pinion re-greased...