

Reformation Fellowship Notes • Spring 2014
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A Case for Biblical Inerrancy
Handout #1

I. What is the doctrine of biblical inerrancy?

- A. No errors whatsoever in the Bible.
- B. Don't assume that you know what is and is not implied by this doctrine.
 - 1. There are several inaccurate caricatures of this doctrine.
 - a) Don't assume that I am defending a caricature of the doctrine that might come readily to mind for you.
 - 2. Hopefully in the course of this series I can spell out the implications of the doctrine more clearly.
- C. My purpose in this series is to defend and clarify the doctrine of biblical inerrancy.

II. Why is this a critical doctrine?

- A. Inerrant source of irrelevant facts is NOT the reason to be interested in this doctrine.
 - 1. No one wants or needs an authoritative record of trivial, irrelevant information.
- B. If I am right, the Bible is an infallible, authoritative record of the truth mankind needs to know (the truth that pertains to the way to attain eternal Life).
 - 1. Therefore, it is very important that we not disregard what the Bible teaches.
 - 2. Yet,
 - a) the Bible is becoming increasingly irrelevant to our culture; AND,
 - b) our culture is encouraging us to discard the Bible as both irrelevant and untrustworthy.
- C. For that reason, it is very important that WE HAVE A SOUND BASIS for viewing the Bible as an infallible, authoritative record of the truth.
 - 1. To resist the influence of our culture on our view of Scripture, we need personally to have a firm, confident grasp on why we can grant authority to the Bible.
- D. Hence, we need to have a sound argument for our belief in the inerrancy of Scripture.
 - 1. Long gone are the days when we could just accept biblical inerrancy (authority) because everyone else around us did

III. A second way to frame my purpose in this series:

- A. My purpose in this series is to make a case for the absolute authority of the Bible.
- B. Important distinction: absolute authority versus ordinary authority:
 - 1. Most believers can agree that the Bible has authority.
 - 2. Many believers today are reluctant to say that the Bible is inerrant.
 - 3. This stems from a failure to recognize a distinction between absolute authority and ordinary authority.
 - a) The Bible cannot possess absolute authority without being inerrant.
 - b) If the Bible has errors, it can only have ordinary authority; it cannot possess absolute authority.
- C. It would be fine and dandy if God had given us a Bible that possessed ordinary authority (rather than absolute authority), but such a Bible would have to play a very different role; it could not play that role that the Bible God has given us is able to play.

IV. A third way to frame my purpose in this series:

- A. God's purpose in giving us the Bible was that it might serve as a challenge to our false beliefs and values and invite us to correct them.
- B. My purpose in this series is to make a case for the Bible being able to serve exactly this purpose.
- C. Only an absolute authority is capable of playing this role in our lives; an ordinary authority could not effectively play this same role.

V. Heart of my argument: What was Jesus' view of biblical authority?

- A. If Jesus granted authority to the Bible, then I ought to grant authority to the Bible. He is the messiah!
- B. If Jesus granted absolute authority to the Bible, then I ought to grant absolute authority to the Bible. He is the messiah!
- C. Starting point: John 10, where Jesus tells us explicitly what he thinks of biblical authority.

VI. Objection: But you are going to be involved in circular reasoning.

- A. You can't assume what you need to prove!
- B. You can't trust the Bible to prove that the Bible is trustworthy!!

VII. Answer to objection:

- A. THIS would be a circular argument:
 - 1. The Bible is the inerrant word of God.
 - 2. The Bible says it is the inerrant word of God.
 - 3. Therefore, if the Bible tells me it is the inerrant word of God (and the Bible, being inerrant, cannot be wrong), then it is the inerrant word of God.
- B. But THAT is not my argument.
- C. Here is my argument:
 - 1. The Bible can be assumed to be a generally reliable historical document.
 - 2. Assuming its general reliability, we can glean from the Bible the attitude that Jesus took toward Scripture.
 - 3. As I will try to show, Jesus' attitude toward Scripture was that it was inerrant and absolutely authoritative.
 - 4. Hence, if I am to conform my views to those of Jesus, I ought to grant absolute authority to the Scriptures as well.
- D. I don't begin by assuming absolute authority; I begin by assuming only the Bible's general reliability. From there, I come to conclude that it is more than generally reliable: the Bible is inerrant.

VIII. But why is it reasonable to assume that the Bible is generally reliable as a historical document?

- A. The character of the Bible is such that only a SKEPTIC would doubt its general reliability.

By "skeptic" I do not mean the person who is inclined to investigate claims that he has legitimate reasons to believe are spurious and does so rather than gullibly accept them. Such a person is operating in accord with human intelligence. I mean the philosophical "skeptic" who calls into doubt that which no intelligent person would ever have any reason to call into doubt.

 - 1. There is no serious conflict between the biblical accounts and history known through other sources.
 - a) Archaeology continues to confirm the historicity of the Bible.
 - 2. The character and motives of the biblical authors give us no reason to suspect their reliability and trustworthiness.
 - a) We can stipulate that they have unhealthy motives and lack integrity, but why would we say that? On what basis would we conclude that? Are we right to conclude that?!

- B. CONTRARY TO A POPULAR PREJUDICE that we become "educated" to accept, skepticism is not a superior commitment to reason. Rather, it is anti-intelligent.
1. Skepticism is NOT employing human intelligence in a way that is better than how the non-skeptic is employing it. Rather, skepticism involves sabotaging human intelligence altogether. (Skepticism is not being more responsible exercising more integrity in intellectual inquiry; rather, it is the undermining of intellectual inquiry altogether.)
 - a) If I do not permit a person to assume what every intelligent person must necessarily assume in order to employ their intelligence at all, then I am attacking human intelligence itself.
 - (1) I am not exercising "due diligence" in my use of reasoning; I am simply undermining the possibility of reasoning.
 - b) SKEPTICISM is attractive to a person because it promises to protect me from having to reach a conclusion that I don't want to reach. But it doesn't do so by reasoning to a better alternative. Rather, it does so by blocking the possibility of reaching any conclusion at all.
 - (1) Hence, it may be an effective strategy for blocking the arguments of the person I am debating with, but it is anti-intelligent and worthless as a method of discovering truth.
 2. Principle of credulity.
 3. How principle of credulity applies to biblical records (especially gospel accounts).