

Grace Church
Roanoke, Virginia
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Elementary Apologetics
Lesson #4

WHY I BELIEVE

The Bible is Inspired by God

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Once a person has determined that God has disclosed Himself to men in special revelation through the Bible, the next major questions are, “How can I trust the Bible if it was written by men?” “Is the Bible inspired of God and are the written words of the Bible authoritative?”
 - a. Liberals would like us to think that a belief in an infallibly inspired Bible is committed spiritual suicide, for all that we know about Christ is found in the Bible, and, if the Bible is filled with errors and totally untrustworthy, then we can have no assurance about anything the Bible says and we are forced to reject the teachings of Christ. To reject the teachings of Christ is to reject Christianity, for Christianity is Christ.

II. THE EVANGELICAL POSITION ON INSPIRATION

- a. The historic view of inspiration held by the Church in general has been that the Bible, in its original manuscripts, was verbally (words) and plenary (fully) inspired by God in an objective form. NOTE: This position was never even seriously challenged until the age of criticism (1750-1830) when men, enamored with intellectualism and excited about science, set out to question the validity of scripture. Great scholars have held to verbal-plenary inspiration such as Augustine, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Gaussen, Machen, Warfield, etc., and this view is held today in the main by those who call themselves evangelicals or fundamentalists.
- b. Evangelicals believe that God so supernaturally directed the minds of the writers of scripture that without waiving their intelligence, literary style or personal feelings, or any other human factor, that His complete and coherent message to man was recorded with perfect accuracy, the very words of the original manuscripts bearing the authority of Divine authorship. NOTE: The Bible is a product of both God and man. God kept the authors from error when writing. Inspiration guarantees that the final product, written revelation, was without error.

II. THE MAJOR VERSES ON INSPIRATION

- c. II Timothy 3:15-16: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God.” This means that all and every scripture is God-breathed. The word “inspiration” speaks of a spring or spiration. The thought is that scriptures originated with God because they are breathed out or spring out from God. Scriptures are not a product of God and man (man cooperates), not God in man (an inspired man), but God through man. The finished product, not the man, is inspired. We have, therefore, inspired scripture, not inspired men. NOTE: The inspired Bible is profitable for: doctrine (teaching is basic to all spiritual growth), reproof (The Word brings conviction to the individual soul), correction (The Word is able to set straight one who has fallen into sin), and instruction in righteousness (The Word trains and disciplines the believer as a child of God). NOTE: The purpose of the inspired Word is to bring the Christian to maturity (perfect) and to equip him to do good works.
- d. II Peter 1:20-21
1. The origination of Scripture: “No prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation (comes out of private unfolding).” Peter is not talking about interpretation of scripture but origination of it. Scripture has a divine origin. This section is primarily talking about oral prophecy given by the Old Testament prophets. But it does not have to be limited to oral revelation. Some prophecies were written. Therefore this applies to all written scripture.
 2. Scripture does not originate in man: “For the prophecy came not in the old time by the will of man.” Man did not think up this scripture himself but God revealed to men what He wanted to say in the Bible.
 3. The method of inspiration: “But holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” These writers of scripture were borne along or carried along by the Holy Spirit so that the exact things God wanted written were written. NOTE: Writers of scripture were all believers but because of sin nature were able to sin. However, because the Holy Spirit sovereignly controlled them, they were able to give revelation in written form that was inspired, authoritative and without error. The Holy Spirit is the agent of scripture; therefore we have an infallible Bible. There are no infallible interpreters but there is an infallible Bible.
- e. Conclusion: While II Timothy and II Peter 1 are references to the inspiration of the Old Testament seeing there was no New Testament at that time, these portions of scripture can be directly applied to the New Testament as well. There are many claims to the inspiration of the New Testament (Matt. 24:35; John 17:17; 16:13; II Pet. 3:16; I Thess. 5:17-18; 2:13; I Cor. 14:37; 2:9-13; II Pet. 3:2; I Pet. 1:24-25; I Tim. 4:6, 11, 16; I Thess. 4:15; Rev. 21:25; 22:6; Gal. 1:8-9).

II. BIBLICAL ARGUMENTS FOR INSPIRATION

- f. Writers Were Conscious of Writing God’s Word: Old Testament: More than 3,000 phrases in the Old Testament with such words as “Thus saith Jehovah,” or “the Word of Jehovah came saying,” or “This is the utterance of Jehovah.” New Testament: (I Cor. 2:13; I Thess. 2:13).
- g. Writers Wrote at the Command of God: Old Testament: (Ex. 17:14; 34:27; Jer. 30:1, 36:1b-2; 36:27-28). New Testament: (I Cor. 14:37; Rev. 1:10-11). NOTE: These verses emphasize the writing of words. We cannot escape the verbal character of revelation as modern theology seeks to do.
- h. Writers Claim Absolute Authority and Perfection of Their Writings: Old Testament: (Deut. 28:58-59; Isa. 8:19-20; Psa. 19:7-9). New Testament: (Gal. 1:20; 1:6-8; Rev. 22:18-19; 21:5; 22:6).
- i. Writers Claim the Authority of Other Writers. Old Testament: (Josh. 1:8; Neh. 8:1; Dan. 9:2; 9:11, 13; Zech. 7:12). New Testament: (Acts 1:16; 28:25b-27; Matt. 2:15; I Tim. 5:18; II Pet. 3:15-16).
- j. Writers Claim the Holy Spirit is the Author. This is seen mainly in the introductory formulas (Acts 28:25-27; 1:16).
- k. Equation of Scripture with God (Rom. 8:17 cf. Ex. 9:16; Gal. 3:8 cf. Gen. 12:1-3). God and scripture are put on the same plane.
- l. Promise of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 16:13-14). The Holy Spirit would teach the disciples and bring to remembrance things the disciples were to remember about Christ. This was a supernatural stirring of the memory.
- m. Christ’s Use of the Old Testament. Christ claimed that every jot and tittle of the Law (Old Testament) would come to pass (Matt. 5:17-18) and that scripture cannot be broken (John 10:34-35). He used the scriptures constantly in His own ministry (Luke 24:27, 44-45). Christ put the Old Testament scripture on the same plane with His own words (John 5:47). Christ said of His own words that heaven and earth shall pass away but His words will never pass away (Matt. 24:35). NOTE: If we accept the authority of Christ, we must accept the authority of the whole Bible. If Christ taught an inerrant scripture, then we can trust His claims of deity, for God could not lie or err. But if scripture is shot through with holes (errors) as liberals claim, then there is no reason to believe that Christ’s words can be trusted in any realm.
- n. Conclusion: We can see that there is a reasonable basis to believe in the inspiration of scripture. Paul Little says,

There are, then, a number of pieces of evidence on which one can reasonably base his belief that the Bible is the Word of God. As helpful as these evidences are, the testimony of the Holy Spirit is what finally makes one believe that the Bible is the Word of God. As he surveys the evidence and as he reads the Bible, “it dawns on him,” to use Gordon Clark’s phrase, that the Bible is the Word of God. This realization is the work of the Holy Spirit. But the work of the Spirit is always toward some purpose. This involves the giving of reasons for belief, and the explanation of the Scripture message itself. (Know Why You Believe)

II. LIBERAL POSITIONS ON INSPIRATION

- A. Modernism (Liberalism): The Bible was written by sinful men and therefore full of errors even in the original manuscripts and is not reliable in matters of faith and practice. It is the finest book ever written but it is just another book. The Bible gives people a good set of ethics to live by, but so do other great religious books. The Bible is inspired in that inspired men wrote it – inspired in the sense that any great book, secular or religious, is written by inspired authors.
- B. Neo-orthodoxy: The Bible was written by sinful men and has errors in the original manuscripts. It is not reliable in some things but it is still the Word of God because it is God’s Word. That which the Holy Spirit teaches a person is the Word of God to that person alone. In other terms, the Bible becomes the Word of God when the Holy Spirit teaches the person the thoughts of Scripture. The Bible is a human product full of errors, but when God uses it to overpower the reader, it becomes the Word to us.

VI. EVANGELICAL POSITION ON ERRORS IN THE BIBLE

- A. Evangelicals speak of inspired scripture in the original manuscripts. Evangelicals admit problems and difficulties in transmission of the text but nothing warrants throwing out the concept of inspiration in the original manuscripts. They admit the possibility of error in transmission of the text and see in a few cases apparent contradictions, but the problem is not with God’s inspired Word but with our limited knowledge. Daily Biblical criticism and archeology are throwing new light on the reliability of the Word. Paul Little says,

There are some other problems which as yet do not yield a ready explanation. We must freely admit this, remembering that many times, in the past, problems resolved themselves when more data became available. The logical position, then, would seem to be that where there are areas of apparent conflict, we must hold the problem in abeyance, admitting our present inability to explain but awaiting the possibility of

new data. The presence of problems does not prevent our accepting the Bible as the supernatural Word of God. (Know Why You Believe)

- B. Since there are some corruptions of the original text in transmission of the Bible, Christians through lower criticism should work very hard to restore the true text. NOTE: Some ask why it is necessary to argue about inerrancy of the original manuscripts when we do not have any existing original manuscripts today. The answer is that the foundation for believing in inspiration is sound when one believes in an errorless Bible in the original manuscripts and today we can practically reconstruct the New Testament and much of the Old Testament. NOTE: There is no corruption or apparent contradiction that has any effect upon any major Christian doctrine, so the problem is not as severe as many liberals would like us to believe.

VII. CONCLUSION

- A. For an evangelical the issue of verbal-plenary inspiration is a matter of life and death for the Christian Faith. Liberals often resort to slander when they cannot intellectually put down a learned evangelical and call him a “Bible-thumper” or “Bibliolator,” and claim that evangelicals are guilty of worshiping a paper pope.
- B. Yet the evangelical knows that the Christ of history is intimately bound up in the Christ of scripture. That is, one can know no more about Christ than what the scriptures teach.
- C. Verbal-plenary inspiration is essential to have an authoritative Bible, for, if the Bible is full of errors, then no man can be sure that the Bible can be trust in any part. To leave verbal inspiration is the first step towards liberalism because the authority of scripture is weakened.
- D. The evangelical clearly sees that behind the issue of inspiration lies the possibility of denying the sovereignty of God and supernaturalism. If God is God, then He would have no trouble writing the Bible in the originals in a perfect form. Edward J. Young says,

If the Scriptural doctrine of inspiration were better known, the newer views would have more difficulty lodging themselves in the modern Church. It will be necessary therefore to examine in more detail what the Bible itself teaches concerning inspiration. If what we have been saying in the preceding chapter is true, the great issue before the Church today is whether to listen to the voice of God or of man. That expresses itself, we have seen, in the question whether one may any longer regard the Bible as a trustworthy teacher of doctrine. Throughout the course of Church History the Church has derived her doctrines from the Bible. Is she now, at long last, when so many alternatives and substitutes are being proposed, to reject the testimony which the Bible gives concerning itself?

Since the Bible is God's Word, to reject what the Bible has to say about itself is to reject the voice of God Himself. What lies before the Church at the present time is the old issue of supernatural versus man-made religion.
(Thy Word is Truth)

- E. If the Bible is not verbally inspired, then we can no longer say, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so."