

Biblical Inerrancy - Part 2

Authority and Accuracy of the Bible

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Introduction.

A. Throughout early church history no serious scholar questioned the accuracy of the word of God.

B. When did men begin to question the accuracy of the Bible? We will look at three factors:

1. Psychological roots.
2. Philosophical roots in the 17th century.
3. Effects of such interpretations.

I. The psychological roots of questioning the accuracy of the word of God.

A. The serpent placed questions in Eve's mind. (Genesis 3:1-3)

1. The serpent accused God of withholding something good from Adam and Eve.
2. The serpent's raised a question about the accuracy of what God has said.
3. The serpent's question was not really accurate, and his comment that they would not die by disobeying God was a lie.
4. The serpent opened a question regarding knowledge outside God's dominion.
5. The lie appealed to the woman's desires and ambitions.
6. The righteousness of God demands that the righteous live by faith and insists that the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. (Romans 1)
 - a. People are without excuse for disobeying God because God made his existence known to all men.
 - b. When people pursue their own ways they become fools.

B. The wrath of God is especially reserved for those who withhold the truth of God and this psychological need to become wise in our own eyes is no excuse in light of who God is.

II. Philosophical roots of unbelief in the word of God.

A. Inductivism.

1. Francis Bacon (1561-1626) published *Novem Arcanum* (1620) presented a new approach to knowledge called inductivism, similar to the scientific method of repeatable, observable experiments.

a. Bacon made a serious mistake, however, by stating that all truth is determined by this scientific method.

b. God is outside the realm of science.

c. Though Bacon believed in God he thought the Bible was not totally accurate, yet he thought the Bible was sometimes contrary to human reason.

2. Thomas Hobbs (1588-1679) said the deity of Christ and the Trinity were unreasonable absurdities that could not be inductively determined and therefore not true.

3. Benedictus de Spinoza (1632-1677) said the Bible contains the word of God but is not the word of God itself.

a. In places it is true but in other places it is false.

b. This idea that the Bible “contains” the word of God has become fashionable these days.

4. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) divided knowledge into two parts.

a. Experience, subject to senses that are limited to what is tangible.

b. Metaphysical, that which is beyond the physical and cannot be known.

1. Faith and religion are metaphysical in nature.

2. These are areas in which man can know nothing.

3. God’s existence cannot be known.

4. Religious language must be relegated to morality only.

B. Existentialism of the 19th cent.

1. Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) believed that life occurred in certain stages.

a. A physical stage when people enjoy the physical world around them.

b. An ethical stage when one is open to the needs of others.

c. The religious stage when one contemplates the mystical aspect of life.

1. Adam and Eve do not tell us how sin entered the world. Their story is the story of every man, which is only a half truth.

2. But if Adam was not a historical figure Paul's analogy between Adam and Christ is not true and perhaps Christ was not a historical figure either. (1 Corinthians 15)

d. Kierkegaard maintained that the NT cannot be normative for us; it is only a record of revelation of God's ways, not revelation itself.

e. Kierkegaard said God wants the discrepancies in the Bible to be accepted only by faith.

2. Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) was part of the Inner Circle that questioned the meaningfulness of God.

a. They especially questioned whether the Bible could be taken seriously.

b. Now we had a division among scholars.

1. Some rejected divine revelation completely.

2. Others held to the accuracy of the word of God.

c. But scholars too began to apply a scientific method to the Bible called the historical, critical method of study.

3. Johann Semler (1725-1791), the father of the historical critical method of Bible study said the root of evil in theology is the interchangeable use of the word Scripture and the word of God.

a. The Scripture as the word of God is evil, he maintained.

b. The word of God is in the Scripture but the two are not equal.

c. He felt the historical critical method would weed out the errors in the word.

d. Cumo said the more a text points to Christ, and the less it has been changed over time, the more sure it must be normative canon.

1. The whole canon is not normative.

2. A historical revelation of Christ is good if we can disengage it from later Christianity that embellished the truth.

3. This is the search for a canon within the canon, which is subjective.

4. There is no sure method of determining the original canon.

5. Judaism and Christianity cannot survive if their texts are reduced to subjective analysis of men.

e. Conservative scholars have sought to defend the Scriptures from critical scholars but it is no easy task.

III. The effects of rejecting the accuracy of the word of God; four ways.

A. Dr. Hensen of Southern Baptist Seminary in Kentucky evaluates the Gospels and says the healing and miracles stories of Christ are rejected as embellishment by early Christians.

1. He maintains a modern man would have recorded these events differently.
2. Though Hensen seeks to defend the Gospels from direct attack of critical scholars, he gives too much ground by saying the miraculous accounts of Jesus' ministry were embellished.
3. What parts have been embellished and what parts are accurate?
4. This line of reasoning leads to subjectivism.
5. Hensen also claims that Jesus was mistaken about his return to earth.
 - a. Jesus' mission seemed so urgent he thought God would send him back within his own lifetime.
 - b. This statement is both logically fallacious and wrong headed in that it accused Jesus of error.
 - c. Hensen also questions the deity of Jesus by insinuating that he was mistaken about his return.

B. Frank Eaken Jr. wrote *The Pelages and the Crossing of the Sea* saying the J source and Miriam couplet contradict in their accounts of the Exodus.

1. One source indicates the Egyptian chariots were bogged down in the shallow water of the sea and only some Egyptians drowned.
2. One source claims a wall of water formed to the right and the left of the Egyptians that collapsed on them drowning them all.
3. Bultman popularized the idea of demythologizing the text to determine the kernel of spiritual truth to be preserved.
 - a. This analysis is subjective.

C. Writing on the disparity of Darwin and Genesis C.W. Christian decided in Darwin's favor.

1. But if the Scriptures cannot be trusted in Genesis how can it be trusted in any matter.
2. He concluded that we are not bound by the Bible at all.
3. He is saying our own experiences and doctrines of the church and science should judge the Bible record as to its truthfulness.
4. Once again this methodology is subjective.

D. Roy Lee Honeycap, president of Southern Seminary discusses Moses at the burning bush saying that it is possible that Moses had a subjective, inner experience and not a real encounter with God at all. Honeycap also writes of Elijah that his experience with the angel of the Lord was probably a non-literal encounter. He also sees Elisha's raising of a child from death should be read in the manner in which they were intended, a wonder story in the category of saga and legend. Honeycap's analysis is a result of historical, critical study and results in subjective conclusions that cannot be substantiated.

E. Unfortunately this historical critical method of analysis affects people profoundly.

1. Dr. Clayton Sullivan wrote that he was more certain of what he didn't believe after studying the historical critical method, though he had no certain faith in what he did believe. He described himself as an overcooked seminary student and that knowledge had become an end in itself; the pursuit of knowledge had become a pursuit in itself. He had been called to be a Southern Baptist minister but after subjecting himself to the historical critical method he had no heart for ministry.

2. John P. Jewel has a different story, however, who found his way home by returning to faith in the word of God.

F. Institutions also suffer, like Andover Theological Seminary, which was founded in 1807 to combat Unitarianism.

1. An imperceptible drift to the left led to a collapse by 1900. Orthodoxy had been protected by the need of faculty to sign the Andover creed every five years, and by an outside board that examined each faculty member in relation to faithfulness to this creed on a regular basis. Five factors led to its dissolve.

- a. Academic reputation became more important than faith.

- b. Inclination to academia became more important than ministry.

- c. Loss of faculty members with pastoral experience.

- d. Leadership passed from the president to the board itself.

- e. The requirement of signing the creed was abolished.

2. One bright spot; Joseph Thayer resigned when he no longer believed what the school taught.

- a. He could not honestly remain at his post when he could no longer agree with the inerrancy and accuracy of the word of God.

- b. Would that all men and women of God would refuse to compromise with unbelief concerning the Bible.

G. The effects of historical, critical methodology not only damage institutions and individuals, but it damages the emphasis on missions to the world as well.