

Presuppositions And Biblical Inerrancy

"In apologetic argument, as in everything else we do, we must presuppose the truth of God's Word. We either accept God's authority or we do not, and not to do so is sin"¹

It is supposed by some that we cannot and should not approach any issue with presuppositions. First of all, that in itself is a presuppositional approach; one that supposes one can be absolutely neutral and objective, which is impossible. We may be able to come near to objectivity and neutrality, but we must honestly accept that we all have presuppositions and biases. Those who argue against presuppositions actually live their lives by presuppositions. Simply by scheduling their activities they live by the presupposition that the world is ordered by a uniform movement of the earth in relation to the sun. They live by the presupposition that a week is seven days long and that each month is regulated by the lunar cycles. One simply cannot live without presuppositions. Thus it is that I shall attempt to lay out some presuppositions relating to the inerrancy of the Scriptures.²

Presupposition One: God As The Source Of All Knowledge And Truth

We all assume that we have knowledge. Even the person who seeks to tell us that we cannot know anything thinks that he knows what he is saying, and he expects us to understand him.

Where does knowledge come from? Is knowledge based upon certain nervous impulses and hormonal changes? Is knowledge simply the result of observation? If this is the case, knowledge for one person will certainly not be necessarily the knowledge that another thinks that he has. In fact, knowledge would be relative and thus be only opinion. On the other hand, if knowledge is something that can be held in common by humans, knowledge must have an absolute and objective source that determines the truth or falsity of a matter.

For there to be an absolute source and standard of knowledge and truth that source must possess all knowledge and truth. The Christian Theist understands this source of all knowledge and truth to be the God of the Bible.³

If God is the source and standard of all truth and all knowledge, then we have a standard by which we can measure all truth claims. If we do not have God as this source and standard of knowledge and truth, we descend into relativism and irrationality.

Presupposition Two: God Reveals Himself To His Creatures

When we presuppose God as the source of knowledge and truth we are led to consider that God also is the source of all the media in which knowledge and truth reside: i.e. He is the creator of all things. If God is the creator of all things, then He is also the source of the persons that are human.⁴ If that is so, God must be the ultimate person; otherwise how could God relate to us on a personal level if He were not a person?

If we presuppose the personhood of God, then we are left wondering about God relating His purposes to man. How will man know what God wants from him? We don't see God with our eyes. We don't physically feel God. How, then, can we know God and His will for us? This leads us to the presupposition that God reveals Himself to His creatures.

Presupposition Three: The Lordship of God

If God is the source of knowledge, truth, personhood, and all of creation, we then find ourselves

1 John Frame, *Apologetics to The Glory of God*, pg 9, P&R Publishing

2 For those who think that we should not hold to the presupposition of inerrancy we say, there is only one alternative: the presupposition of errancy. One cannot be neutral on this issue.

3 Deuteronomy 32:4; 1 Samuel 2:3; John 1:1-4, 14; Colossians 2:3 and many more.

4 I say, "Persons that are human" not to say that there are non-human persons, but so that I don't attribute to God the creation of the persons that humans are; i.e. sinful persons.

confronted with the idea that God is Lord and ruler of all. Thus the presupposition of the lordship of God.

The lordship of God means that He must be obeyed. We must yield to Him and His demands, commands, wishes, and purpose for us.⁵

Presupposition Four: The Inerrancy Of The Bible⁶

Why presuppose the inerrancy of the Bible? Why not attribute this to the Koran, or the Hindu holy books, or the holy books of other religions?

The inerrancy of the Bible should be presupposed for two reasons:

1. The one who accepts the authority of the Bible and does not approach it skeptically can easily tell that it is a book that is coherent and reliable in what it says.

2. Since the Bible is coherent and reliable we can with good reason take it at its word that it is inspired⁷, and thus is the Word of God and that it is God's revelation of Himself and that His plan for us is contained in it⁸. In fact, it is this very inspiration that provides for us the unity and reliability of the Bible.

Since the Bible is the Word of God, we should remember that God is true. It then follows that God's Word is true⁹.

Those who believe that God is the source of all truth, and that He is the Lord who reveals Himself, have no problem establishing the inerrancy of Scripture. It is only in Scripture that we find a God-centered worldview that teaches us that the supreme being is a person who reveals truth. It is no surprise, then, that we find Scripture claiming to be true. Neither is it surprising that we find Scripture claiming to be pure and without error. To deny inerrancy is to throw doubt upon the Scriptures and leave us asking where the Word of God is to be found, and which parts of the Scripture can we determine to be the Word of God.

Practical Considerations

The practical side of this is the one to which we should turn. While we do well to accept the inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures, we can certainly profess that we believe them without obeying their teachings. There is certainly a need for us to move from theory to practice.

We are bound to yield to God's Word. God has spoken and man must listen. If we are to learn, we must certainly do so with God's Word setting the standard for us. This does not mean that we approach the Bible as a science or mathematics textbook. It does mean that we allow the Word of God to guide us as we study mathematics, science, history, etc. Scripture tells us that "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: A good understanding have all they that do his commandments: His praise endureth for ever." (Psalm 111:10) And again, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge." (Proverbs 1:7) Our learning should be shaped by the Word of God.

Inerrancy means, too, that our Bible can be trusted. We do not have to wonder whether or not God has spoken. He has. We need not live in doubt about which parts of Scripture are true and which are not. Scripture is truth. We should trust God because He has spoken to us plainly and truthfully.

5 Jesus said, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46) See also Psalm 95, which tells us that our Creator is to be worshiped and obeyed.

6 We attribute inerrancy to the original manuscripts of the biblical books and not to copies and translations of them, though we are convinced that we have reliable copies and translations available to us.

7 2Timothy 3:16-17; 2Peter 1:16-21

8 We do not mean that the Bible is the only revelation of God. Christians believe that Jesus is the ultimate revelation of God.

9 See John 17:17; Romans 3:1-3; 2Timothy 2:11-13; Revelation 21:5; 22:6

