

STUDY PACK 25

SUPPOSED CONTRADICTIONS IN THE BIBLE

"For if once the authenticity of the Scriptures is taken away (which would result even from _____) how could our faith rest on what remains."

~~ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elentic Theology*, p. 70 ~~

II. THE MATTER OF ALLEGED CONTRADICTIONS SHOULD BE STUDIED FROM A POSITION OF FAITH

- A. Lutheran theologian, Johann Gerhard guaranteed his readers that all contradictions are _____ and _____, "All Scripture is inspired, and accordingly all the things in Scripture are in agreement and are not contrary or opposed to one another."

~~ *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, p. 349 ~~

- B. It was taken for granted by Orthodox Lutherans that anytime someone thought that they found a contradiction in Scripture - that they should know that the mistake was theirs - not the Bible's. For example, one Lutheran theologian writes:

"There is absolutely no true contradiction anywhere in the Scripture (just as Quintilian says about laws), but those things that seem to conflict with each other are so regarded because of _____ (*culpa*) and extreme ignorance, inasmuch as we do not have an adequate understanding of the subject matter or the language of Scripture or do not consider sufficiently the attendant circumstances. Therefore, those matters in Scripture that seem to be contrary to each other are so only to those who do not consider the background, persons, times, and relative circumstances of those matters. Meanwhile the matters themselves do not conflict with each other according to any tacit or expressed diversity of background, circumstances, places, times or persons."

~~ *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, p. 349 ~~

- C. Surely, Baptists should be just as loyal to the Scriptures as Orthodox Lutherans.

II. EVERY GENERATION HAS THOSE WHO CLAIM TO FIND CONTRADICTION IN THE BIBLE

- A. In the 17th Century, Francis Turretin wrote:

"Although when the divinity of the Scriptures is proved (as in the preceding question), its infallibility necessarily follows, yet the enemies of true religion and of Scripture in every age flatter themselves that they have found not a few contradictions in it and boast of their discoveries in order to overthrow its authenticity; as Porphyry, Lucian (of Samosata), Julian the Apostate and others formerly of the Gentiles, and many atheists of the present day who declare that

they have met with many contradictions and difficulties in it which cannot in any way be reconciled."

~*Institute of Elentic Theology*, p. 70 ~

- B. Turretin described the different reactions to these claims of contradiction and he also draws the correct conclusion:

"The learned pursue different methods in answering them. Some think that they can get rid of all difficulties by saying that the sacred writings could slip in memory or err in smaller things; so Socinus, "De sacrae Scripturae auctoritate," *Opera omnia* (1656), 1:265-80; Castellio, *Dialogorum sacrorum* (1651) and others. But instead of being a defense against the atheist, _____ . Others confess that the Hebrew and Greek originals are corrupted in some places by the wickedness of the Jews or of heretics, but that a remedy can easily be found in the Vulgate version and the infallible authority of the church. This opinion is held by many of the papists against whom we will argue when we speak of the purity of the sources. Others again think that a few very slight errors have crept into the Scriptures and even now exist which cannot be corrected by any collation of manuscripts. These are not to be imputed however to the sacred writers themselves, but partly to the injuries of time, partly to the fault of copyists and librarians. Yet on this account, the authenticity (*authentia*) of the Scriptures cannot be weakened because they occur only in things less necessary and important (thus Scaliger, Capellus, Amamus, Vossius, and others think). Finally, others defend the integrity of the Scriptures and say that these various contradictions are only apparent, _____ that certain passages are hard to be understood, but not altogether inexplicable. This is the more common opinion of the orthodox, which we follow as safer and truer."

~*Institute of Elentic Theology*, p. 70 ~

III. GUIDELINES FOR UNDERSTANDING SUPPOSED (OR ALLEGED OR APPARENT) CONTRADICTIONS IN THE SCRIPTURES

- A. Take into consideration figures of speech. Henry Morris writes:

"Much of the Bible (especially the book of Psalms, for example) is written in poetry, and the manner of conveying a given truth may be different in poetry than in a straightforward prose narrative. When David speaks of the Lord as his rock (Ps. 28:1), as his shepherd (Ps. 23:1), as his light (Ps. 27:1), and as his shield (Ps. 28:7), these are not contradictory descriptions. God is not literally, either a rock or a shepherd or a light or a shield, but, to the believer, He is symbolically all of these and much more. Skeptics make a practice of ridiculing "literalists" by using references of this type. Actually, the literalist is one who believes the writer _____, and does not try to intrude some alien figurative meaning of his own into the passage. When the writer clearly intended to convey a real fact by use of some figure of speech, he makes this clear in the context and by his manner of writing. This is true of secular writings and it is true of Biblical

- F. Scriptural accounts are not always _____ because God is not bound by time. Future events are sometimes described as if they had already happened. Sometimes things that have already happened are spoken of in the present tense.
- G. Many places and individuals have _____.
- H. The events of Scripture are not always presented _____ - even in the same book.
- I. Pronouncements of condemnation in Scripture can _____.
- J. Comparing _____ will make many supposed contradictions evaporate. For example, Gen. 39:1 and Gen. 37:28, 36 are often presented as a contradiction. But a quick look at Judges 8:24 solves that problem.

IV. SOME WOULD SUGGEST THAT THERE WERE NO CONTRADICTIONS IN THE ORIGINAL SCRIPTURES BUT THAT A LACK OF PRESERVATION HAS ALLOWED THEM TO DEVELOP

- A. See *Verbal Preservation* by the syllabus' author.
- B. Francis Turretin answers this charge completely!

"The question is not as to the particular corruption of some manuscripts or as to the errors which have crept into the books of particular editions through the negligence of copyists or printers. All acknowledge the existence of many such small corruptions. The question is whether there are universal corruptions and errors so diffused through all the copies (both manuscript and edited) as that they cannot be restored and corrected by any collation of various copies, or of Scripture itself and of parallel passages. Are there real and true, and not merely apparent, contradictions? We deny the former.

The reasons are:

1.) The Scriptures are inspired of God (*theopneustos*, II Tim. 3:16). The word of God _____, Ps. 19:8-9; Heb. 6:18; _____ or be destroyed, Matt. 5:18; _____, I Pet. 1:25; and is truth itself, Jn. 17:17. For how could such things be predicated of it, if it contained dangerous contradictions, and if God suffered either the sacred writers to err and to slip in memory, or incurable blemishes to creep into it?

2.) Unless unimpaired integrity characterize the Scriptures, they could not be regarded _____, and the door would be thrown wide open to atheists, libertines, enthusiasts and other profane persons, like them for destroying its authenticity (*authentian*) and overthrowing the foundation of salvation. For since nothing false can be an object of faith, how could the Scriptures be held as authentic and reckoned divine if liable to contradictions and corruptions? Nor can it be said that these corruptions are only in smaller things which do not affect the foundation of faith. For if once the authenticity (*authentia*) of the Scriptures is taken away (which would result even from the incurable corruption of one passage), how could our faith rest on what remains? And if corruption is admitted in those of lesser importance, why not in others of greater? Who could assure me that no error or blemish had crept into fundamental passages? Or what reply could be given to a subtle atheist or heretic who should pertinaciously assert that this or that passage less in his favor had been corrupted? It will not do to say that divine providence wished to keep it free from serious corruptions, _____. For besides the fact that this is gratuitous, it cannot be held without injury, as if lacking in the necessary things which are required for the full credibility (*autopistian*) of Scripture itself. Nor can we readily believe that God, who _____ and _____ each and every _____ to these inspired (*theopneustois*) men, would not take care of their entire preservation. If men use the utmost care diligently to preserve their words (especially if they are of any importance, as for example a testament or contract) in order that it may not be corrupted, how much more must we suppose, would God take care of his word which he intended as a testament and a seal of his covenant with us, so that it might not be corrupted; especially when he could easily foresee and prevent such corruptions in order to establish the faith of his church?"

~~ *Institutes of Elentic Theology*, p. 71 ~~