

Inerrancy... Christian Style

We keep hearing from believers that the bible is "inerrant" - i.e., free of internal contradiction, errors and any type of getting facts wrong. These assertions indicate either that the believer has accepted an assessment of the bible before even examining it in the first place, that he is speaking about something he has not read very carefully, that he is committed to denying any instance of contradiction no matter what evidence is presented to him, or that he simply does not know when one statement contradicts another. Of course, some combination of these could also be in play.

Let's look at three passages in the New Testament:

[Rom. 14:23](#) - "whatsoever is not of faith is sin"

[Gal. 3:12](#) - "the law is not of faith"

[Rom. 7:7](#) - "is the law sin? God forbid. Nay"

So, is the law sin, or not sin? The author of Romans, Saul aka Paul, apparently suffered a lapse in memory, which is often the case among those who have a habit of lying. Even liars with a sharp memory slip up here and there. The standing of "the law" in Christianity has long been a cauldron of confusion for those who are committed to inerrancy. The tendency is just to sweep it under the rug and hope no one looks under it. But if one should probe the issue, believers may very well give some very plausible-sounding (albeit rehearsed) explanations for contradictions such as this. But what is interesting is to compare explanations from different believers. Ask two believers a straightforward question, and you just might be amazed at how their responses directly conflict with one another.

Recently for instance, a question was posed to a group of presuppositionalists. The question was:

On the nature of justification there are two kinds: internalism and externalism. Would presuppositionalism fall in more with internal justification? What do you guys think?

The first to respond to this question answered as follows:

No, presuppositionalism is emphatically and explicitly opposed to internalism. Critics of presuppositionalism slip up at exactly this point. If Van Til were committed to internalism, he would have concluded that inf act [sic] unbelievers cannot know anything, His critics falsely claim that this is where his philosophy leads, but it doesn't, precisely because it is an externalist philosophy.

This responder is confident and his answer gives no hint of any willingness to backpedal. His mind is firmly made up, and he's ready to stick his neck out for it.

But as soon as that steadfast answer was submitted, another replied with the following statement:

Yep, internal. However, one might try questioning the coherence of the distinction.

While the first responder answered that "presuppositionalism is emphatically and explicitly opposed to internalism," the second responder was a little more nonchalant, but just as confident. "Yep, internal." He does suggest "questioning the coherence of the distinction," but his response clearly indicates that, if "the coherence of the distinction" between [internalism and externalism](#) is granted, then "yep," presuppositionalism would weigh in on the side of internalism.

The conflict has yet to be resolved in favor of either internalism or externalism, and I suppose gridlock will get the better of each side in the end. Indeed, it could cause a rift within Vantillian presuppositionalism as controversial as the disputes between Calvinists and Arminians, lasting hundreds of years and occupying endless volumes of overheated exchange.

I'm sure glad these aren't my problems.

by Dawson Bethrick

Labels: [the bible](#)

posted by Bahsen Burner at [5:00 AM](#)