



"We account the Scriptures of God to be the most sublime philosophy. I find more sure marks of authenticity in the Bible than in any profane history whatsoever."

—Isaac Newton

13-Mar-09

The Necessity of Biblical Infallibility

The authority of the Bible has been under constant assault from biblical "scholars" and theologians. The attacks began within a century of the canonized Bible's circulation through the early church. "Learned" men, assuming God's Word to be malleable, adapted its teachings to man's philosophical systems. Using humanity's innate pride and each person's desire to make an impact, [Satan](#) has worked to undermine our estimation of the Bible. Incredibly, the history of "Christian" thought is a history of man's war against God's Word.

Early syncretic assaults—[Gnosticism](#) being most significant—led generations of theologians successively further from what the Bible itself teaches. Down through the centuries, that distance has grown so great that one contemporary "Christian" theologian, Marcus Borg, has even absurdly argued, paraphrasing, "Biblical infallibility is itself a great heresy."

Borg's words identify an attitude within all men, anti-authoritarianism, which is particularly prevalent in our culture today. Lest our reading of the Bible be influenced by our culture's skepticism toward authority, it is important to understand exactly why Borg's statement is absurd. Biblical infallibility is a prerequisite to any Christian's relationship with [God](#), for the Bible stands as the basis of believing God, knowing God, and following God.

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The major manifestation of biblical skepticism in contemporary Christian thought is the belief that the Bible should be read metaphorically, not literally. Yet, without being able to trust every verse of God's inspired revelation, a person really cannot believe God. Supporters of the metaphoric approach argue that a figurative reading loosens the Bible from its contextual ties. Metaphor, they would argue, is just as relevant to the third century as the twentieth. This line of reasoning contains a hint of truth, but also several blaring faults. The Bible is relevant to any time because its *truths* are eternal, but only by understanding the literal event can we really grasp the eternal truths. Assuming that the Bible is not literal requires the individual to place the authority behind the words in the human author, as well as in the human reader, over God.

At best, a metaphoric reading means that the biblical writers have merely portrayed inspired truths within pseudo-historical stories crafted by men. This reduces the Bible to the level of mere literature—to sit on the shelf between Homer and Shakespeare. Like literature, the emphasis of understanding God's Word falls on the reader instead of the Speaker. Value, then, is found in how each individual interprets the metaphor, rather than God's Word containing intrinsic value. Because of each person's unique experience, every reading of the Bible would conform to the reader's particular perspective, rather than the reader's perspective conforming to the Bible.

If God's authority is ranked below the human author's and reader's, then the reader will believe in his personal, and thus inherently false, conception of God. Figurative interpretation may appeal to Christians who prefer to reduce the Bible and God to politically correct ideas that correspond to their opinions about how [the world](#) ought to be, but it is simply a form of idolatry. Peter warns against "private interpretation" in [II Peter 1:20](#). The Bible *must* be read as absolutely true to serve as the sure foundation of our belief in God—one through which the body of Christ can be united, rather than splintered through varying interpretations.

Once our relationship with God is formed through belief, knowledge of God becomes possible. However, arguing for a metaphoric reading implies that God's revelation is moderated through the subjective minds of men. In the same way that humans interpret according to unique perspectives, to a greater degree do authors write literature according to their unique perspective. Therefore, knowledge of God would merely be the knowledge of other men about what they personally conceive God to be like.

God reveals Himself to us in two major ways: through His Word and [Jesus Christ \(Psalm 19:7-9; John 14:9; II Timothy 3:15-17\)](#). Nature also testifies to God's character, but its value is secondary to the primary two ([Psalm 19:1-6](#)). Our knowledge of Christ, the Chief Cornerstone of our [faith \(Ephesians 2:20\)](#), comes through Scripture. Thus, we receive all

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that we know of Jesus Christ and God the Father through the written revelation, and we base our entire lives of faith on that belief and knowledge. If Scripture is reduced to literature, which abolishes God's authority, then it becomes mere artistry of men, causing our knowledge of Jesus Christ, as well as our access to eternal life, to have no authoritative basis. Reducing the truth of God's Word from infallible to metaphoric destroys the foundation of Christianity.

Once we possess knowledge of God, we strive to follow Him using that knowledge as our guide. The Christian life is one of constant trial to grow in God's character, but this growth requires the tested person to know God's character. God reveals His character to us through His Word—not one or two books but the entire Bible. [Isaiah 28:9-10](#) instructs us:

Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breast? For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little.

To reveal God completely, all of the books of the Bible must be interdependent. If each of its books were written by different individuals, each with his own subjective understanding of God, then the highly interwoven structure of Scripture falls apart. This distorts the Bible into a compiled group of metaphoric stories that would reflect God as well as a mirror in sixty-six pieces reflects a face. That the Bible demonstrates a coherent, complex unity throughout all of its books displays God's inspiration behind the biblical authors and the Bible's infallibility.

Marcus Borg's statement could not be more heretical. Believing God's Word to be anything but absolutely true prevents a person from ever forming a true relationship with God. Either we believe the Bible or we do not. If we do, God gives us His Spirit to deepen our understanding of His Word and character. If we do not, we frankly do not believe in the true God.

This is no small matter. On this theme of the unity and infallibility of Scripture, the apostle John warns in the Bible's closing words:

For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part in the Book of Life, from the holy city,

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and from the things which are written in this book. ([Revelation 22:18-19](#))

Though Satan has used this persuasive teaching to sow doubt and distrust in countless people, we can take heart knowing that God's Word is perfect and complete.

- Staff

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Studying the Bible](#)

by John O. Reid (1930-2016)

John Reid, reminiscing on the first love of our calling, admonishes us to rekindle our ardency for Bible study, God's personal instruction to us on the big questions of life. Because of the busy times in which we live, we may feel overwhelmed, forgetting the awesome intent and responsibility of our calling. Bible study provides a personal means of attaining the mind of God, growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. This message provides a practical alphabetical, mnemonic guide to systematically and analytically process (including asking questions, outlining and analyzing the books, chapters, paragraphs, verses, and individual words, understanding their contexts) biblical information we may have otherwise discarded. Alternate methods (themes, topics, principles, proverb indexing, and scripture cards) are also modeled.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Essays on Bible Study](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Bible study is an essential tool for Christian growth, but sometimes people get off track in their studies. Richard Ritenbaugh provides a few guidelines in three essays originally written for the *CGG Weekly* newsletter:

'The Jewish Testament?'

'Prophecy's Place'

'Putting Out Flawed Study Practices'

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