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Do the Sins of Christian Authority Figures Refute What They Believe?

Eric V. Snow, sermonette, 1-29-2010, Ann Arbor, MI, UCG

Do the personal failings of ministers disprove their teachings? If your Christian father didn't always live according to his beliefs, does that prove that his beliefs are wrong? If a deacon offends you, does that show his church's doctrines are false? So in general, do the sins of Christian authority figures refute Christianity?

In point of fact, the existence of God, the truth of the Bible, and the correct interpretation of Scripture logically aren't proven or disproven by the sins of Christians with authority.

S.P.S. The sins of Christian authority figures don't refute the teachings of Scripture.

Normal reasoning in world: The Catholic church killed thousands of people through the Inquisition and the Crusades, therefore, there's no God and the Bible is false. Of course, this logic can be inverted: Atheists, meaning the communists, killed roughly a hundred million people in this past century alone. Therefore, their sins prove that God exists and that the Bible is true, right? After all, the number of people killed by the Spanish Inquisition by one estimate is 32,000 (1478-1834), by the witch hunts during a similar time frame (1400-1800), 50,000-60,000, and the Crusades perhaps 2,000,000. For all the blood they spilled, the Catholics were mere pikers compared to the Communists.

But now let's zero in on a key point: Do the sins of the Bible's heroes refute what they believed? The Bible covers well the failings of Abraham, Samson, and David, **which we shall very briefly review today**. So if their sins don't shake our faith, why should the

sins of ministers, deacons, sermonette men, or older family members cause us to doubt the church's teachings? Why do we falsely expect perfection from other believers?

The Bible objectively covers the sins and errors of those whom God worked through. That's a key reason why we should be willing to believe in it. The sins and failings of God's chosen people, Israel, are put on full display constantly. There is no attempt to cover up or put a positive "spin" on their problems. When ancient kings wrote about themselves on the monuments they had built, they puffed themselves up by boasting about what they had done during their reigns. By contrast, the Bible plainly isn't a one-sided propagandistic document that focuses on the "good news" and ignores the bad.

Abraham: Genesis 20:9-13

He had lied similarly to Pharaoh also. How many politicians have spoken similar half

truths? When he said Sarah was his sister, the impression this gave to others was that “she is available,” which was totally false. She had been his wife for decades at this point.

If we caught a minister, a deacon, or some respectable “pillar” of the church lying, would that shake our faith? ***Do we anchor our faith to what other Christians do and say rather than to God and the Bible?***

David: 2 Samuel 12:13-14

We know the story well: David had Uriah killed on the battlefield in order to take his wife Bathsheba for himself. David did this after she became pregnant and David couldn't cover up his adulterous affair with her by getting Uriah to lie with his wife.

Notice David admitted his sin right away when challenged. People inevitably sin, including those with authority in the church. So then, does that authority figure ever

admit to his weaknesses? If he can, at least privately to friends and family, not truly a hypocrite since admits his own problems. After all, none of the Pharisees who opposed Christ could give an inch, could they? “Well, you know, Jesus, I really do have some problems I’ve got to work on.” Is it “hypocrisy” if someone can stop putting up a front of being righteousness? Is someone a “phony” if they sometimes can apologize for their sins? Do we mistakenly demand more moral perfection from others than we demand from ourselves?

Samson: Judges 16:1

Suppose you heard about a minister, deacon, or older family member in the church who committed adultery. Would that shake your faith? Would that make you stop coming to church? Does that man’s sin remove God from His throne in heaven? Does that man’s sin refute the Bible’s authority?

Excuse-making: He's a sinner, so then I can do what I please. Shouldn't we instead conclude: I shall do better. God will judge each of us individually, regardless of the sins of others. Their sins don't let us off the hook from having to keep the Sabbath. The sins of any minister, deacon, sermonette man, or any older family member in the church, don't logically cancel God's law for everyone else. For example, we should continue to come to church services regardless of the sins of others at church because God commands it.

So In Conclusion:

The sins of other Christians with authority don't logically prove there is no God or that the Bible is false. Since our primary relationship is with God, we shouldn't allow the sins of other Christians to cause us to lose faith in God and in the Bible. So we should continue to obey God and come to church regardless of the sins and failings of others.

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