



Preparing Souls To Serve The Lord

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“Necessary Inferences” Reflections

By

Jackie M. Stearsman

I received a letter from a brother who preaches for a church in Florida. The letter is dated August 2, 2004. In the letter the charges are made against the brotherhood in general and the school in particular.

I am not authorized to speak for any segment of the brotherhood that this brother has labeled as being divisive. Therefore, meeting with him as a “representative” of a segment of the brotherhood is not possible.

However, since the false charges are leveled against the school where I serve as director, and since the charges, if unanswered, may be assumed to have merit, I propose to briefly answer them.

Absurd Inferences

The following two consecutive paragraphs are cited here for the reflections that follow.

The reason for my letter, which is being sent to congregations and schools on both sides is to attempt to resolve this problem in a way acceptable to God by sitting down and discussing Bible Authority which I believe has been mis-taught and misused. My personal belief is that both sides have gone too far and are out of step with God. So to any minister or elder who believes their way of using Necessary Inference as part

of Bible Authority to hold to the doctrine that makes their conclusions correct to the exclusion of other brethren, I offer the opportunity for us to meet and discuss their conclusions as representatives of both sides. I firmly believe that the binding of conclusions through the use of Necessary Inference is the cause of the misunderstanding of Bible Authority and thus division.

I propose that two men, institutional, non-institutional, meet in an open discussion to present the Bible Authority that they use to authorize their position. I would be the third and I will take the position that there is no Bible Authority for either of the divisive positions. [sic]

Reflections

All actions that the Bible authorizes are either stated explicitly (by a direct statement) or by implication (necessary inference). If Bible authority is not authorized by implication (necessary inference) then the Bible does not authorize any action from individuals today. Why? Because there are no explicitly addressed statements to people today. If you think this is false, find Jackie Stearsman explicitly named in the Bible.

An inference is an opinion asserted, and it may be in written

form or it may be made orally. An inference is either true or it is false. It is true if evidence can be shown to justify the inference, it is false if the inference is not justified.

Assertions about Bible Authority are true if the Bible authorizes them, they are false if the Bible does not authorize them. To state that an inference is “necessary” is to assert that the inference is sustained by rightly dividing the Word of Truth (2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Thess. 5:21-22).

Is the position asserted in the letter from our brother, “I firmly believe that the binding of conclusions through the use of Necessary Inference is the cause of the misunderstanding of Bible Authority and thus division” an explicit statement from the Bible or is it an inference he has drawn?

Since it is not an explicit statement from the text of the Bible, and since our brother denies necessary inference, then he must by implication deny any inference he has drawn. Therefore, it follows that he has no platform from which to sustain his “necessary inference.”

With whom is our brother who writes us the letter identified? He labels brethren with whom he differs, and whom he states are not pleasing to God in two camps: “institutional” and “non-

institutional." We would like to know in what "institution" he resides.

Making unfounded charges with no authority to sustain the charges is no innocent matter, and could never promote the one faith in the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:1-6; Jude 3).

Who will authorize "representatives" to speak for those whom our brother labels as "institutional" brethren? Who will authorize "representatives" to speak for those whom our brother labels as "non-institutional" brethren?

Some brethren need instruction in congregational autonomy, and Bible authority.

The Bible teaches that some unity is sinful just as some division is honorable (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; Eph. 5:11). Only by rightly dividing the Word will anyone be able to know the difference (2 Tim. 2:15). We do not rightly divide the Word by denying the implicit teaching (necessary inferences) of the Bible.

We do not rightly divide the Word by making unjustified inferences as if they are authorized by the Bible, and we are wrong to label brethren as being divisive without Biblical justification.

Hugo McCord

On

Necessary Inference

The late brother Hugo McCord answered false assertions about "Necessary Inferences," and mailed me a copy of his reply to them dated March 10, 2001. The following is a reproduction of his reply:

Another gospel preacher scorns the "doctrine of necessary inferences," asserting that it is "tragic," resulting in "splits and factions," and that it is "clumsy" and "dangerous." Unfortunately, he and others with faulty advanced scholastic degrees, have strayed

after empty talk, wanting to be teachers of the law, but understanding neither what they are saying, nor the things about which they are so sure (1 Timothy 1:6-7).

But God, "the only wise" (Romans 16:27), says, "Come now, let us reason together" (Isaiah 1:18). When people reason together, inescapable truths, not expressly stated in a text, show themselves.

1. The Existence and Eternity of God. Paul taught pagan idolaters that they should necessarily infer from "rain and fruitful seasons" that there is "a living God who made heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them" (Acts 14:15-17). To Paul, God's "eternal power and divine nature" are necessarily inferred ("clearly seen," *kathoratai*), "being understood" (*nooumena*, a mental act, an inference) "by the things that are made" (Romans 1:20).

Not only is the existence of God a necessary inference from observing the things that are made, but also the necessary inference follows that he has always existed, for "out of nothing, nothing comes" (*ex nihil, nihil fit*, a proverb coming down from ancient times).

2. The Deity of Jesus.

Augustine (author of *CONFESSIONS*, and *CITY OF GOD*, 354-430 A. D) inferred, *si Christus non deus, non bonus*, "If Christ is not God, he is not good." Long before Augustine some Jews in Jerusalem inferred that a good man could not deceive: "Some were saying, 'He is good'; but others said, 'No! He deceives the people'" (John 7:12). Since all people acquainted with the life of Jesus through two thousand years have agreed that Jesus was a good man, the necessary inference is that his claim is true: "I said, 'I am the Son of God'" (John 10:36).

Also, the gospel of Matthew alone records 42 quotations from

the Old Testament cited by Jesus as he taught among the people. "The Jews were astonished, saying 'How does one who has never learned know letters?'" (John 7:15), and "Is not this the carpenter's son?" (Matthew 13:55). The knowledge of the unschooled "carpenter" (Mark 6:3) leads to the necessary inference that Jesus was divine.

3. The God-breathed Scriptures. The Bible affirms that the Scriptures were divinely inspired (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21), but how do we know that it is telling the truth? We know it by a necessary inference because only the possessor of divine knowledge can predict the future. The Bible, alone among all books, unerringly foretold hundreds of years in advance the coming of the Messiah. Three hundred and thirty-two Old Testament predictions of Christ have been counted (Floyd E. Hamilton, *THE BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH*: New York: Harper & Brothers, 1946). That chance would settle all these on one man is one over 84 plus 97 ciphers. That astonishing mathematical fraction leads to the necessary inference that the Bible is God-breathed.

4. An Animal Sacrifice. To

The Harvesters

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Florida School of Preaching
1807 South Florida Avenue
Lakeland, Florida 33803
(863) 683-4043

Editor: Jackie M. Stearsman, Director
Brian R. Kenyon, Associate Director
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say that Cain's sacrifice was rejected because it was not costly is an inference (Genesis 4:1-7), but not a necessary one. To say that God gave a command both to Cain and to Abel to bring an animal sacrifice, though not specifically mentioned in the Scripture, is a necessary inference, for Abel's sacrifice was by "faith" (Hebrews 11:4) and "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

5. Inherited sin. Nowhere does the Bible say that children are born pure and sinless, but such is a necessary inference from Jesus' words: "Permit the little children to come to me, and do not forbid them, for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:14).

6. Believer's baptism. Nowhere does the Bible say that one must be old enough to believe before being baptized. But teaching must precede baptism: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them" (Matthew 28:19). If teaching must precede baptism, it is a necessary inference that infants are not scriptural subjects for baptism.

7. Immersion. Since baptism requires a burial (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12), an unavoidable implication is that immersion is necessary.

8. Preaching Jesus includes preaching baptism. The Bible does not say that preaching Jesus includes preaching baptism, but since a man who had never heard of baptism asked for it after he had heard a sermon on "Jesus," one infers necessarily that Jesus cannot be fully preached without baptism being preached (Acts 8:35-36).

9. In and out of grace. The Bible does not say that one "fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:4) has been in grace, but since one cannot fall out of something unless he has been in that something, it follows

that the Galatian Christians who fell out (ek) of grace had been in grace.

10. No women preachers. Not because men are more important than women, but because the God of all wisdom planned for men to be leaders and women to be helpers of the men (Genesis 2:18), the necessary inference is that women preachers are not in God's plan.

11. No women elders. Since every elder must be "the husband of one wife" (1 Timothy 3:2), the necessary inference is that a woman cannot qualify.

12. No women deacons. Since every deacon must be "the husband of one wife" (1 Timothy 3:12), the necessary inference is that a woman cannot qualify.

13. No nicotine or other non-prescription drugs. God has not given a direct command forbidding tobacco and other non-prescription drugs, but since a Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), the necessary inference follows that body abuse is sinful.

14. Gambling. The Bible does not forbid Christians buying lottery tickets and putting money in slot machines, but since it commands them to "maintain good works" (Titus 3:14; Ephesians 4:28), the necessary inference is that Christians will abstain.

15. Dancing. The Bible does not forbid Christian boys and girls intertwining themselves in dancing, but since such behavior, among red-blooded young people, easily leads to mental and physical fornication, the necessary inference is that Christians will abstain.

16. Goodness and salvation. The Bible does not say that a good man unbaptized will be lost. However, since Cornelius was a good man (Acts 10:2) but unsaved (Acts 11:14) until his baptism in "water" (Acts 10:47-48), one has to

infer that goodness alone will not save a person.

17. Conscience and salvation. The Bible does not say that a good conscience is insufficient to save a sincere person. However, since Paul with a "good conscience" (Acts 23:1) was the "chief of sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15), one has to infer that something besides a good conscience is required for salvation.

18. Marriage and divorce. When a divorce occurs because of fornication, the necessary inference from Jesus' words (Matthew 19:9) is that only the innocent spouse may remarry.

19. The finality of the New Testament. Since "the faith" was committed "once for all time" (hapax, Jude 3) to the saints in the first century, and since the saints at that time received "all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3), the necessary inference is that nothing new by way of a revelation or communication has come from God since the last word of the New Testament (Revelation 22:18-19) was written.

20. The resurrection. Jesus himself, in a debate with "the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection" (Matthew 22:33), drew an inference from the tense of the verb in Exodus 3:6, "I am," not "I was," to prove that the dead will be raised (Matthew 22:32).

If God had said to Moses "at the thorn-bush" (Mark 12:26-27) in 1446 B.C. "I was the God of Abraham 330 years ago (1776-1446 B.C.), and I was the God of Isaac 225 years ago (1671-1446 B.C.), and I was the God of Jacob 198 years ago (1644-1446 B.C.) before they died," using the past tense "was," then there is no resurrection.

But God said to Moses, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exodus 3:6),

using the present tense "I am," thus saying that "after all these years I still am their God." Jesus said that he was speaking of "the resurrection of the dead" (Matthew 22:31). Therefore, God "is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matthew 22:32), and "all people are alive to him" (Luke 20:38).

Thus Jesus believed that one of the ways that the Bible teaches is by a necessary inference.



Preacher Training By Correspondence

By

Gene Burgett

One of my roles with the Florida School of Preaching is to contact and sometimes visit men who are thinking about attending the school. My goal is not to convince these men to attend a preaching school, rather it is to provide them with the information they need to make an informed decision. It is a lot like reasoning with someone who is considering being baptized.

It is not something you want someone to do because you talked them into doing it. Whether the decision is to be baptized or to attend a preacher training school, you want the individual to understand what is to be gained and what sacrifices must be made, then allow him to choose his course of action.

One of the biggest concerns of potential students is moving. Moving can be a difficult thing to do, especially for someone with a family. The longer an individual stays in a location the more roots he puts down. A house may be purchased. Friends are made. The children don't want to move. As a result, many potential students are asking me if we offer our courses by some kind of distance learning method. Distance learning is the current rage in higher education. People are earning degrees without leaving the privacy of their own home.

Distance learning is an adequate way to transmit facts from one person to another. It is a great innovation for busy people already established in the work place to further their education. It minimizes the impact going back to school has on the rest of one's family. For these reasons I applaud distance learning.

Why doesn't the Florida School of

Preaching offer its courses by correspondence? Our name contains the best answer I have to offer. We are the Florida School of *Preaching*. Our goal is much higher than merely transmitting Bible knowledge. If that were the case, then we could change our name to the Florida School of Biblical Studies and start mailing our courses to all who ask to receive them. We want our graduates to know what it means to "do the work of an evangelist." We do more than transmit Bible facts. We train men to preach. Learning to communicate the word of God effectively is more than merely regurgitating facts. We provide hands on experience and the necessary critiques and correction to lead men to becoming effective preachers.

Perhaps one day we will adopt some form of distance learning. Perhaps one day the technology will be adequate to obtain our goals. In the meantime, I urge those who would like to take classes to check into the many locations where extension classes of the Florida School of Preaching are being taught. Perhaps there is one near you.

Gene Burgett
burgett@atlantic.net
352-339-3195

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WEB SITE: www.fsop.net/
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