



Inerrancy of the Bible



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Stephen L. Andrew examines what different people say about Biblical inerrancy and the doctrine as a whole. Paul D Feinberg defined Biblical inerrancy as meaning that the Scriptures in their original autographs and properly interpreted will be shown to be wholly true in everything that they affirm, whether that has to do with doctrine or morality or with the social, physical, or life science. We can say simply that the Bible is free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit. This inerrancy includes fields of history and science, especially that which is concerned with creation and the flood. Three supposedly theories of inerrancy as stated by Millard Erickson is 'absolute inerrancy', 'full inerrancy' and 'source inerrancy'. Gleason L. Archer presents us with an article named, 'the Witness of the bible to Its Own Inerrancy.' His information comes from James Montgomery Boice, 'The Foundation of Biblical Authority. Vern S. Poythress provides us with information on the problems for those who accept a limited inerrancy. The last article by William c. Placher asks the question, 'Is the Bible True. Plascher wants to approach this question from a non-fundamentalism viewpoint.

According to one definition of Inerrancy from 'Believe', it is the view that when all the facts become known, they demonstrate that the Bible in its original autographs and correctly interpreted is entirely true and never false in all it affirms, whether that relate to doctrine or ethics or to the social, physical, or life science. This definition came from, 'A Christ Walk church Public Service: <http://mb-soft.com/believe/indexaz.html>.

The idea of inerrancy has been debated over since that late 19th century. Arguments for Inerrancy, for example, show a difference between objective inerrancy and subjective inerrancy. Objective inerrancy would say in Matthew 13:31-32 that the mustard seed is the smallest seed in the entire world but subjective inerrancy points out the need to understand the text from the point of view of the author. Clark Pinnock comments on the importance of the intent of the author. Its degree of precision is determined by the cultural milieu. Lindsell argues that surrendering inerrancy undermines the foundation of orthodoxy. Without the doctrine of inerrancy we are on a slippery slope. It will be like a cancer, spreading everywhere. He further says that the sola scriptura cannot be maintained without it. One such argument called the epistemological argument contents that if any ideas towards inerrancy are allowed, Scripture will become untrustworthy. The author states that the historical view has always held a view of inerrancy. For example, Augustine believed that the Bible had no errors in writing. Luther stated that Scripture cannot err. However, the author also states that

the Bible doesn't explicitly claim inerrancy. But at the same time, 2 Timothy 3:16 teaches that all Scripture is inspired by God and then in 2 Peter 1:20-21 it says that Scripture did not originate from human will but from God's will. And Pinnock also points out that if a person believes the Scripture to be God's Word, how is it that the person can believe it not inerrant. As Gleason L. Archer puts it, 'we either receive the Scripture as completely reliable and trustworthy in every matter it records, affirms, or teaches, or else it comes to us as a collection of religious writings containing both truth and error. '

For those who don't accept the inerrancy doctrine, they argue against the above points that support it. They point out that just because a person doesn't support inerrancy, that doesn't mean they reject orthodox doctrine. They advocate some kind of Limited inerrancy. They point out from an epistemological point of view that it is circular reasoning to believe that if Scripture is inspired by God, there are no errors in it. Even though God inspired people to write the Scriptures, people make mistakes and by not accepting this, one takes the human element out of it. In providing more support for their argument, they say that Scripture never supports inerrancy plus there is a variant in claiming that inerrancy apply only to the original autographs, since we have none of those.

Archer asks, does the Bible really claim freedom from error in all that it affirms in theology, history or science? Before answering the question, Archer looks at what he calls basic issues such as inerrancy is only attributed to the original manuscripts. The oldest book is the Book of Isaiah which is part of the Dead Sea Scrolls collection that dates mid-second century BC. The comparisons between these documents with various later documents provide ample proof of inerrancy. The author also asks, what's the point of the argument as we no longer have the originals? He then answers the question by saying that textual criticism needs a trustworthy original or standard by which to go by. This standard is supported by the Bible itself; for example, over 400 years later, Psalm 105 reaffirms the historicity of the ten plagues on Egypt as earlier written about in Exodus. Psalm 106 confirms the parting of the Red Sea. In addition, the Scriptures point to the words written by the prophets as the words of God. For example, Acts 4:24-26 points that, 'Sovereign Lord ... who by the mouth of our father David, thy servant, didst say... 'The Gospel writers recognized this truth as stated in Matt 1:22, 'All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the Prophet.' Jesus confirmed inerrancy with his reference to the literal, historical Adam and Eve in establishing the tradition of marriage. Jesus also compared His own death and resurrection to that of Jonah, 'For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth,' as written in Matt 12:40.

Not only did Jesus believe the Scriptures were correct, He knew they were correct. He was with God when Jonah spent three days and three nights in the belly of the whale! So we see that the attitude of Christ and the apostolic authors of the inerrancy of the Bible were of one of complete acceptance and to contrast this with those scholars of today saying that it isn't, who are we to believe? Paul says in 2nd Timothy 3:16, 'All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.' Those of the early church and indeed the apostles often quoted the Greek Septuagint except for Matthew and Hebrews in their quotations of the Old Testament. They had to do this because this was the accepted Bible of the day. But Christ often based his quotes directly from the Hebrew translations. To point out, a completely literal translation of Hebrew does not make clear sense in Greek, and therefore, as the author points out, some minor adjustments must be made for the sake of good communication. However, the Septuagint is quite faithful to the Hebrew wording in the Old Testament.

Let's state some facts. Inerrancy is not presently demonstrable and human beings misinterpret the data that already exist in the Bible. Inerrancy applies equally to all parts of the Bible. Sceptics often refer to the differences in wording between different English translations of the Bible. They have their particular verses which seem to contradict other known verses and details. However, Biblical scholars don't claim that any modern translation of the Bible is absolutely inerrant. The claim is only made toward the original manuscripts which are beyond any real proof! First, the original documents were written by the authors themselves, from those originals Scribes made copies using a most difficult authentication process. From these, translations were eventually made from the copied originals. As the original copies were meticulously made so were translations of the Bible. The Old Testament books which we have today are pre-Christ. These books were virtually identical to the set which were made a thousand years later.

Two theological words associated with authority are 'inerrant' and 'infallible'. Infallibility as Stephen T Davis puts it, 'the bible makes no false or misleading statements about matters of faith and practice.' So the two terms are in every way synonymous. The Bible does not apply these terms to itself but the meanings of them are obvious within context such as the word, 'trinity' is a theological word but its application is obvious in the Bible. It is taught implicitly in the Bible as it teaches about inspiration which requires inerrancy. 2 Tim 3:16, the Scriptures are the breath of God. One mark of a divine message is the truthfulness of it. The Bible also teaches its own authority. Jesus himself said that heaven and earth will pass away before the smallest detail of the law fails to be fulfilled.

Poythress contends that there is vagueness with the idea of limited inerrancy. 'What concessions are made to take such a stand,' he asks? How does one decide what is errant or even non-essential? If the Bible is inerrant in things necessary or for the sake of salvation only, this place decisions in the hands of people. Does this mean the things that help us establish and maintain our relationship to Christ or things that affect our attitudes or actions or those things that help us in life? How can the Lordship of Christ still remain effective? Even the authors often didn't fully understand why they were writing the things they wrote. If you say that the Bible is inerrant in what it intends to teach, then you're making the Bible a person but even if you say that it inerrant in what the authors teach; how does one distinguish between important narratives that we should understand or what is being taught? We can easily see that 'Revelation' in regards to classic inspiration can easily become 'downgraded' to things that we could learn through ordinary means. Who establishes the boundary between what is not inerrant and what is inerrant? Things said about morality and righteousness could be considered rubbish or 'muck' as this is the word the author uses. Limited inerrancy would take away the security of knowing that God is concerned about us and even the order of the universe. Scepticism about God's sovereignty would rule. The author argues that nothing has higher ethics than what the Bible has and from the moment the canon was completed there's been nothing given with the same inspired status, purity and authority. If this is in anyway denied then we deny the sola Scriptura of the Reformation.

In this paragraph, Placher approaches the authority of the Bible from a different point of view. He says that arguments and fights between American Protestants usually boil down to Biblical truth. Some considers 'authority' a bad word while others sum up 'Truth' as being what their interpretations are. In defining the phrase 'the Bible is true', the author describes what the word truth means and this is shaped by the genres expressed in the Bible such as attitudes to history and cultural contexts. Truth is expressed in trust in specific claims about God's faithfulness and how we should live our lives. But different genres state different types of claims for truth. An example given by Placher, *Oliver Twist* is a novel; the story is fictitious but there is truth represented by the story. Being a novel, it makes no claim to reporting historical facts accurately. However, a history book is a book about facts. The Bible story of the Good Samaritan is a story to illustrate a moral point and not actual events. The story of creation is a saga that communicates truths about the origins of humans and earth. The Gospels writers weren't necessarily interested in exact order of a date when they wrote about Jesus but that doesn't affect the truth of the Gospels. One of the problems in interpreting the Bible understands the cultural difference from our own and how people show

and portray that difference in language. The author gives us an example of the difference in American slavery and Israelite slavery, two different institutions. One was race while the other wasn't. In Israelite slavery there were different reasons to be enslaved and they were to be released after seven years. To summarize, to understand the truth in the Bible, we must understand its genres and attitudes toward historical details and the social context in which it was written. The author states that we can trust the Bible on things that really matter, especially as a guide to Christian faith and life. We trust the Bible to be true because we trust God who makes it true.

In conclusion, this essay discusses the idea of inerrancy in referring to the Bible. The basic premise of inerrancy refers to the original autographs. Even though we don't have the original autographs the importance is the standard which they represent. Some people advocate a limited inerrancy where by one picks what is truth and what isn't. To conclude, in the essay Placher presents us with information as to what it means to say that the Bible is true. I believe the stated objectives were basically met by the writers and I agreed whole heartedly with the theme of the Module. All were well supported academically.

I believe Lindsell comments on surrendering inerrancy undermines the foundation of orthodoxy. I agree with what Lindsell says but I have seen examples of what I think may be subjective inerrancy in Scripture. For example, Augustus ordered the whole world to be taxed but it wasn't the whole world, it was only the Roman World. I have often wondered about such comments. The problem as I see it is, if we don't claim that the Scriptures in their original autographs were without errors then we are still saying that there is no infallible translation. For me seeing that Jesus and the Apostles fully accepted the same Scriptures as we have today as being the infallible, inerrant authority of the original autographs supports my stand on infallibility and inerrancy of the Scriptures. The Old Testament books which we have today are pre-Christ just the same as the ones Jesus had. These books were virtually identical to the set which were made a thousand years later.

The idea of Limited inerrancy is no different than not believing in inerrancy. It basically leaves the decision of to the individual to decide what is corrupt and what is not corrupt. The question that still bothers me is why there is a need for Limited Inerrancy? What would be its purpose? Is it just to satisfy those liberal scholars because of their non-belief? Any type of limited inerrancy would cause the authority of the Bible to descend into nothingness. It would take away from who God really is.

My resolve has always been to trust in the scriptures even though I was never sure as to what that exactly meant. These articles have clarified a few questions I had in my own

mind about inerrancy and the doctrine of inerrancy of the Bible was presented in such a way as I had never thought about it before. It provided a definition of inerrancy and presented problems with the idea of limited inerrancy of which I could never accept. It also provided some very interesting points to use in such a defence to support inerrancy. Thankyou!

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