

Part 3: Inerrancy

Inerrancy means that the Scriptures are without error, mistake or untruth. This means that when all the facts are in and the Bible has been properly interpreted, it will be seen that it is completely true in all areas (doctrine, ethics, history, and science).

■ The Basis for Inerrancy

- Inerrancy is the direct result of divine truthfulness. What Scripture says is true because God said it — even if no one believes it.
 - Romans 3:3-4
- Inerrancy is based upon the authority of Jesus Christ Himself.
 - Matthew 5:17-19
 - John 10:34-36 (especially v. 35)

If Scripture cannot be detached from Christ, it cannot be detached from his authority. If it cannot be detached from his authority, it cannot be detached from his reliability.

—Douglas Farrow, *The Word of Truth and Disputes About Words* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Carpenter Books, 1987), 67

■ The Bible's Testimony to Its Own Inerrancy

- Inerrancy is based upon the integrity and self-witness of Scripture.
 - Psalms 19:7; 119:42, 96, 140, 142, 151, 160, 172; John 17:17
 - ✓ The Old Testament declares 3,808 times that it conveys the words of God Himself.
 - ✓ The Scripture never corrects itself.

■ The Extent of Biblical Inerrancy

- Inerrancy does not mean uniformity in all the details given in parallel accounts written by different authors.
 - ✓ Compare the resurrection accounts of the 4 Gospels.
 - ✓ **Question:** What would a judge or jury conclude if four witnesses to a crime gave testimony that was word-for-word, syllable-for-syllable the same?

- Biblical inerrancy does not exclude the use of pictures and symbols.
 - ✓ Revelation 1:12-20 employs symbolism (“girded about the chest with a golden band” is symbolic of priesthood, v. 13), metaphor (“golden lampstands” are a metaphor for the light-bearing = Scripture-bearing function of the church in the world, vv. 12, 20), simile (“white like wool, as white as snow,” v. 14), and figurative language (“out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword,” v. 16).

- Biblical inerrancy does not imply the use of an exact technical vocabulary, conformed to present scientific terminology.
 - ✓ We do not expect Genesis 24:63 to read, “When the revolution of the earth upon its axis caused the rays of the solar luminary to impinge horizontally upon the retina, Isaac went out to meditate.”

- Biblical inerrancy requires the placing of the biblical message into its own historical setting.
 - ✓ In Matthew 13:31-32 Christ referred to the mustard seed as “the least of all the seeds.” But, the orchid seed is now known to be the smallest seed. Is this an error?

- Inerrancy does not imply omniscience or perfection on the part of the biblical authors.
 - ✓ Just as “inspired” is a quality of the Scriptures themselves, so also inerrancy is a quality of the Scriptures, not of the writers.

- Objections to Inerrancy
 - Inerrancy is irreconcilable with the human nature of the biblical authors.
 - ✓ The ultimate author is God, not man.

 - Modern science has definitely destroyed the old idea of a perfect Bible.
 - ✓ Examine the science carefully to determine what is but theory as opposed to fact.
 - ✓ 1 Thessalonians 5:21

- Mistakes made by copyists are evident from the variations in the different manuscripts.
 - ✓ Inerrancy applies to the original Scriptures, not to man-made copies of those originals.
 - ✓ Copying errors that amount to anything other than variations in spelling affect less than 1/1000th of the text of Scripture.

- Since they appear to take liberties with the text, New Testament citations of the Old Testament don't seem to consider it inviolable.
 - ✓ Upon closer examination this claim proves to be due to misinterpretation rather than true conflict. For example, consider the use of Joel 2:28-32 in Acts 2:16-21. The Day of Pentecost was not the (or even "a") fulfillment of the prophecy. The point of comparison was the "pouring out" of the Holy Spirit (vv. 17, 18, 33). It was obvious that it wasn't fulfillment because the signs of blood, fire, and smoke did not occur (vv. 19-21).

- The doctrine of inerrancy hinders the exercise of faith — it produces a "paper pope" or the danger of "bibliolatry."
 - ✓ Putting one's faith in someone or something is to trust the authority of that object of our faith. This boils down to a matter of authority. There are 3 forms of authority:
 - the authority of God and His written revelation;
 - the authority of the church and its "infallible pope(s)"; or,
 - the authority of man and the self-appointed sovereignty of his own reasoning.

- Didn't Paul himself admit that he was not always inspired?
 - ✓ 1 Corinthians 7:10, 12, 17, 25, 40
 - ✓ "Inspired" is a quality of Scripture, not of the writer.
 - ✓ In some cases God allows His people the freedom to decide according to gift (vv. 6-9), conscience (v. 36), or circumstance (v. 39). Paul offered sound Christian counsel out of his experience and his knowledge of God's will. Nothing he wrote was false. The Spirit of God guided its inclusion in Scripture as valid and truthful counsel from a godly man.

- Doesn't the Bible report some things, which are false in themselves?
 - ✓ In John 18:25 Peter denied being a disciple of Christ — he lied. The lie is recorded accurately as a lesson for the reader (see 1 Corinthians 10:6-13).

■ Difficulties in the Bible

- We must distinguish carefully between difficulties and errors.
- Are there really any new biblical difficulties, problems, or “errors” unknown centuries ago?

📖 Imaginary Difficulties

- ✓ Cain's wife (Genesis 4:17; 5:4)

📖 Difficulties Resolved through Better Information

- ✓ What do all of the following have in common?: King Belshazzar (Daniel 5), the Hittites (Genesis 15:20; 23:10), the Horites (Deuteronomy 2:12), and Tartan and Sargon (Isaiah 20:1).

📖 Possible Harmonizations

- ✓ 2 Samuel 24:1 and 1 Chronicles 21:1
The LORD “moved David” vs. Satan “moved David”
- ✓ 1 Samuel 28:6 and 1 Chronicles 10:13,14
“Saul inquired of the LORD” vs. “did not inquire of the LORD”

📖 Real Difficulties

- ✓ Copyists' errors
- ✓ Citations of the Old Testament in the New Testament

... commitment to inerrancy, even in its broader terms, doubtless requires faith in the *future* resolution of a number of problems in Scripture, through a deeper penetration of the text itself and of the realities to which it refers.

—Douglas Farrow, *The Word of Truth and Disputes About Words* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Carpenter Books, 1987), 207