

Systematic Theology: Bibliology

Inerrancy and Authority (From the notes of Dr. S. Wellum, by permission)

What does GCBC teach?

We teach that the Bible is God's written revelation to man, and thus the sixty-six books of the Bible given to us by the Holy Spirit constitute the plenary (inspired equally in all parts) Word of God.¹

We teach that the Word of God is an objective, propositional revelation,² verbally inspired in every word,³ absolutely inerrant in the original documents, infallible, and God-breathed. We teach the literal, grammatical-historical interpretation of Scripture which affirms the belief that the opening chapters of Genesis present creation in six literal days.⁴

We teach that the Bible constitutes the only infallible rule of faith and practice.⁵

We teach that God spoke in His written Word by a process of dual authorship. The Holy Spirit so superintended that human authors that, through their individual personalities and different styles of writing, they composed and recorded God's Word to man⁶ without error in the whole or in the part.⁷

What are we talking about?

A definition of Inerrancy: "When all the facts are known, the Bible in the original _____ and properly _____ will be shown to be wholly _____ and never _____ in all that it _____, whether that has to do with doctrine, ethics, the physical, social or life sciences."⁸

What has the Church throughout history taught?

Augustine: "On such terms we might amuse ourselves without fear of offending each other in the field of Scripture, but I might well wonder if the amusement was not at my expense. For I confess to your Charity that I have learned to yield this respect and honour only to the canonical books of Scripture: of these alone do I most firmly believe that the authors were completely free from error. And if in these writings I am perplexed by anything which appears to me opposed to truth, I do not hesitate to suppose that either the manuscript is faulty, or the translator has not caught the meaning of what was said, or I myself have failed to understand it." (Augustine's letter (#82) addressed to Jerome)

The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy: Harold Lindsell's *Battle for the Bible* was a response to the growing liberalism, particularly in the Southern Baptist Convention. One of the results of that movement he started was this document: http://library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/ICBI_1.pdf

¹1 Corinthians 2:7-14; 2 Peter 1:20-21

²1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Corinthians 2:13

³2 Timothy 3:16

⁴Genesis 1:31; Exodus 31:17

⁵Matthew 5:18; 24:35; John 10:35; 16:12-13; 17:17; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20-21

⁶2 Peter 1:20-21

⁷Matthew 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:16

⁸Paul Feinberg, "The Meaning of Inerrancy" in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 267-304.

What does the *Bible* say?

Does Scripture have anything to say about 'autographs?'

1) *The authority and usefulness of _____ and _____ of Scripture is a given in Scripture.*

- a) Deut 17:18; 1 Kgs 2:3.
- b) Ezra 7:14.
- c) Copies of texts were treated as _____ scripture. (Luke 4:16-21; John 5:39; Acts 17:2, 11; 2 Timothy 3:15-16)

2) *Although copies and translations had a practical authority and adequacy for the purposes of divine revelation, Scripture also makes it clear that these copies/translations are authoritative in that, and to the extent that, they _____ the _____, autographic text.*

- a) Scripture constantly brings the people of God back to the _____ text of God's written _____. (Judges 3:4; Isaiah 8:1, 30:8; Daniel 9:2, Matthew 1:22, 4:4, 19:4)
- b) The emphasis in 2 Timothy 3:16 is on the _____ of Scripture, and thus on their autographic form.
- c) In particular there are 3 OT situations which demonstrate that the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture must be found in the autographical text.
 - i) *Textual restoration in Exodus 32-34.*
 - ii) *Jeremiah 36:1-32:*
 - iii) *Deuteronomy 17:18*
- d) *Other texts which imply the controlling status of the autographa for subsequent copies.*
 - i) Scripture warns us throughout against _____ the text of God's Word (Dt 4:2; 12:32; Prov 30:6; Rev 22:18-19).
 - ii) Paul instructs Christians not to _____ with the Word of God (2 Cor 4:2).

3) *Explanation of the Restriction of Inerrancy/Inspiration to the Original Autographs*

- a) 'It stands written'
- b) When we restrict inerrancy to the autographic text, we are not left with the misguided notion that either the Bible in our pulpits is God's Word or, it is the uninspired word of man. We must not forget that the restriction is one of autographic *text* and we must not confuse the autographic *text* (=the words) with autographic *codex* (=the manuscript itself). Loss of the *codex* does not entail loss of the *text*, for the *text* is preserved in the extant copies. That is why none of this implies that our present Bibles, because they are not the original autographs, fail to be the Word of God. Our present texts and translations are still the very Word of God, inspired and inerrant – **to the degree that they reflect the original work of God.**

A Biblical Argument for Inerrancy

The Bible's Own _____. When we investigate what the Bible claims for itself, it is hard to arrive at any other conclusion than – Scripture is the inerrant Word of God. E.g.

1. Matthew 5:17-20.
2. John 10:34-35.

Biblical tests for a _____ (Dt 13:1-5; 18:20-22). The prophet was:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Can the Bible meet any less stringent standards??

The way the Scripture uses _____.

1. Cases where the argument rests on a single word [Matthew 22:43-45 (citing Ps 110:1); John 10:34-35 (citing Ps 82:6)]
2. Instances where the argument turns on the tense of a verb (= use of the present tense of the verb, Mt 22:32).
3. Argument in Galatians 3:16 depends on the use of a singular rather than a plural

The _____ of God. Num 23:19; 1 Sam 15:29; Titus 1:2; Heb 6:18; Rom 3:4, 2 Tim 3:16, Jn 17:17

What does this mean?

Inerrancy is related to _____.

Inerrancy is defined in terms of all that Scripture _____.

Inerrancy applies equally to every area of _____ that the Bible touches.

Further caveats regarding inerrancy.

1. Scripture can be inerrant and still speak in the ordinary language of everyday speech – phenomenological language. This is especially true in “scientific” or “historical” descriptions.
2. Scripture can be inerrant and still include loose or free quotations. The method by which one person quotes the words of another is often culturally dependent. In North America, we are used to quoting a person’s exact words. But was this standard that of the NT? Greek at the time of the NT had no quotation marks or equivalent kinds of punctuation, and an accurate citation of another person needed to include only a correct representation of the content of what the person said: it was not expected to cite each word exactly. Thus, when the NT quotes the OT, or the gospel writers quote Jesus, so long as the content is not false to what was originally stated, we have inerrancy.
3. It is consistent with inerrancy to have unusual or uncommon grammatical constructions in Scripture. Some of the language of Scripture is elegant and well written. Other texts contain the rough language of ordinary people. Furthermore, the rules of grammar are merely statements of normal usage of the language. Every day skilled writers break them in the interest of communication. Why should the biblical authors be denied this privilege?
4. Inerrancy does not exclude the use either of figures of speech or of given literary genres. Involved in this caveat is the understanding that biblical writers must be understood in the light of their particular culture, time, standard of precision and linguistic patterns.

How does this doctrine relate to the Gospel?

“The truthfulness and authority of the Holy Scriptures must ... rank as a first-order doctrine, for without affirming the Bible *as the very Word of God*, we are left without any adequate authority for distinguishing truth from error.”⁹ (emphasis added)

What difference does it make?

How does the concept of *authority* apply to the issue of inerrancy and inspiration?

How should we respond?

ANSWER KEY

What are we talking about?

autographs interpreted true false affirms,

What does the *Bible* say?

Does Scripture have anything to say about ‘autographs?’

copies translations authoritative reproduce original original Word origin altering tamper

A Biblical Argument for Inerrancy

Claims prophet Scripture character

What does this mean?

hermeneutics affirms knowledge

⁹Mohler, Albert R., “Confessional Evangelicalism” in *Four Views on The Spectrum of Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 79.