

Inerrancy

We believe the Bible is completely truth in everything it teaches, whether explicitly or implicitly. It more than accomplishes its purpose without failure, it does so without communicating erroneously. If the belief in the inerrancy of Scripture is in anyway denied or limited, then the necessary result is damage to the authority of God and His Word. To diminish the authority of the Bible has definite negative affects upon mankind and more importantly, is dishonoring to God Himself. If God said it, it is true.

The philosophical basis for the inerrancy of the Bible

1. God cannot err:

It is impossible for God to lie (Hebrews 6:18).

God cannot deny Himself (2 Timothy 2:13).

God Himself is truth (John 14:6).

God is not a man that he should lie (Numbers 23:19).

God's Word is truth (John 17:17).

All of God's Word is truth (Psalm 119:160).

2. The Bible is God's Word:

New Testament documents are historically accurate.

- New Testament manuscripts are reliable copies.

- New Testament authors are reliable witnesses.

Jesus calls the Old Testament the Word of God (John 10:35).

Paul wrote that the Scriptures are the Word of God (Romans 9:6).

The writer of Hebrews declared the Scriptures to be the Word of God (Hebrews 4:12).

Paul wrote that all Scripture is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16).

- The Scripture proceeds from God's mouth (Matthew 4:4).

- Men wrote the Word of God through the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21).

3. Conclusion: If God cannot err, and if the Bible is God's Word, then the Bible cannot err.

4. Key Point: God can allow error, but He cannot produce error. This can be compared to Jesus who was sinless Himself but did not prevent people from sinning around Him.

Valley Bible Church Theology Studies

Although humans are quite prone to error, they are not necessarily untruthful about everything they say. It is possible for men to communicate truthfully. God worked through man to communicate His inspired truth in the Bible without error.

The Biblical basis for inerrancy

Definition: God superintended the human authors so that using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error His revelation to man in the words of the original manuscripts.

(Charles Ryrie)

1. The Scripture carries divine authority:

"It is written" (Matthew 4:4,7,10)

It is unbreakable (John 10:35)

It is imperishable (Matthew 5:17-18)

2. The Scripture is God's Word:

It specifically claims to be the Word of God (John 10:34; Hebrews 4:12)

It is inspired or breathed out by God (2 Timothy 3:16)

It is called the "oracles of God" (Romans 3:2; Acts 7:38)

3. The Scripture claims to be completely truthful (Numbers 23:19; John 17:17; Romans 3:4; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18; 1 John 1:5-6)

4. The Bible is historically and scientifically true:

Jesus testifies to the accuracy of Jonah (Matthew 12:40).

Jesus testifies to the creation of Adam and Eve (Matthew 19:4).

Jesus testifies to the account of Noah (Matthew 24:34-39).

It is inconsistent to believe what God says regarding spiritual truth, which we cannot verify, and not believe what God says other matters, which can be verified (John 3:12).

5. What the Bible says, God says:

One of the most compelling reasons to accept the Bible is that often when it quotes itself it relates its words as God's words. This further shows that God's Word is the Bible and the Bible is God's Word.

Genesis 2:24 = Matthew 19:4-6

Psalm 95:7 = Hebrews 3:7

Valley Bible Church Theology Studies

Psalm 2:1 = Acts 4:24-25

Psalm 2:7 = Hebrews 1:5

Psalm 97:7 = Hebrews 1:6

Psalm 104:4 = Hebrews 1:7

Isaiah 55:3 = Acts 13:34

Psalm 16:10 = Acts 13:35

6. What God says, the Bible says:

Conversely, there are two occasions when the Bible quotes the words that God spoke in the Old Testament and assigned those words to being what the Scripture spoke. The Scripture and the Word of God are interchangeable references.

Genesis 12:3 = Galatians 3:8

Exodus 9:16 = Romans 9:17

7. There is a direct comparison between Christ and the Bible:

Both Jesus and the Bible have human and divine aspects.

In both Jesus and the Bible the divine and human are united. The two natures of Christ are united in the same person. The two natures of Scripture are united in the same propositions.

In both Jesus and the Bible, the human side is without error.

Both Jesus and the Bible are called the Word of God.

Conclusion: If Christ can be human and without flaw, then the Bible can be human and without flaw. Of course there are many differences and the Bible is not to be worshiped.

Defective views concerning the inerrancy of the Bible

1. The Biblical writers were great inspirational men, much like other inspirational authors of other works throughout history.

Problem: God would not have revealed himself to man.

2. The Biblical writers were inspired by God, not the text itself.

Problem: 2 Timothy 3:16 says the text is inspired. Also, other inspired believers today could write a book or song with the authority of the Bible.

3. Certain portions of the Bible are inspired by God.

Problem: Which parts are inspired? How do we know? The Bible expressly says, "All Scripture is inspired" (2 Timothy 3:16)

Valley Bible Church Theology Studies

4. Only the Biblical concepts are inspired but not the words.

Problem: There is a necessary link between correct words and correct concepts. Jesus argued for His deity on the basis of the word "Lord" from Psalm 110:1 (Matthew 22:41-46). Jesus vindicated himself from the charge of blasphemy on the basis of one word from Psalm 82:6 (John 10:34). The Lord noted even the tense of a word (Matthew 22:32) and Paul argued from point of the grammar (Galatians 3:16). Even the smallest stroke of the pen is Scripture (Matthew 5:18).

5. The Bible is inspired by God and points to Christ, but in a fallible way.

Problem: This would make God guilty of communicating error.

6. The Bible is inspired in its purpose and is inerrant in its communication of God's purpose. It is not necessarily accurate in all its historical facts and parallel accounts.

Problem: If God is not reliable in the details that we can understand and evaluate apart from God's specific revelation (i.e. earthly matters), what confidence do we have in what he has told us that cannot be known apart from God's specific revelation (i.e. spiritual matters)? Cf. John 3:12.

Common Criticisms of Inerrancy

1. It is not taught in the Bible.

Answer: Yes it is (see above).

2. It is derived deductively, not inductively.

Answer: It is true that inerrancy is a conclusion derived from direct teachings of Scripture. However, the doctrine of the Trinity is also arrived at by the deduction of two teachings. The Scripture says there is one God and calls the three persons God, therefore the doctrine of the Trinity. The Scripture says God cannot err and the Bible is the word of God, therefore the doctrine of inerrancy. Deduction is not invalid.

3. It is important but not essential.

Answer: While it is not technically essential to salvation, inerrancy is logically essential to salvation. If you lose this fundamental doctrine, you place all other doctrines in jeopardy.

To deny inerrancy is to attack:

- a. The character of the Father who originated the Word.
- b. The reliability of the Son who affirmed the Word.
- c. The ministry of the Holy Spirit who inspired the Word.
- d. The stability of the Church which is built on the Word.

There is a logical connection between inerrancy and salvation but not an essential one. For example, the Jehovah's Witnesses believe in inerrancy, but this does not mean they are saved. You can be

Valley Bible Church Theology Studies

saved without explicitly believing in certain crucial doctrines (e.g. the virgin birth), but you cannot be consistent and do so.

4. It is a recent invention, not taught by the church fathers.

Answer: It was taught by the church fathers. Nowhere in the church fathers do we see any evidence that they doubted the inerrancy of the Scripture. The reason there is not a strong defense of the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture is because the divine origin, the authority and the inerrancy of the Bible were never questioned.

5. It is limited in scope to spiritual truths.

Answer: Historical truth and spiritual truth are inseparable. Many spiritual doctrines are based on historical events (virgin birth, crucifixion, resurrection). The New Testament affirms the historical and factual truth of the Old Testament.

6. It is a bad term because it is negative and not found in the Bible.

Answer: Negative terms are often clearer. For example, many of the ten commandments are negative. How do you say "thou shalt not murder" in positive terms?

7. Inerrancy is a divisive doctrine.

Answer: All doctrines divide the adherents from the opponents. Also, it is better to be divided by truth than united by error. Finally, it is not the one who affirms the doctrine who causes division but the one who denies the doctrine of inerrancy.

8. It involves a non-existent authority since we do not have the original text.

Answer: The original exists in good copies. It is not that the copies provide us with only 99% of the original but more like 101%. In other words, we have too much not too little. We have all of what existed in the original text but occasionally, due to error in the copying process, we have to decide which reading was actually in the original text.

9. Why must there be flawless originals if flawed copies are sufficient?

Answer: Because God cannot speak error and He spoke the original. God can permit error but He cannot produce error. For example, God cannot create a fallen Adam but He can create a perfect Adam and allow him to fall. Likewise, errors by copyists do not mean the original was in error.

10. Why did God not preserve the copies from error?

Answer: He did preserve the copies from all doctrinal error and all substantial error. This is like asking why God did not preserve man from sin. Just because we don't know the purpose does not mean God does not have one.

11. Inerrancy dies by a thousand qualifications.

Answer: There are only two qualifications: Only the original documents are inerrant and only what is taught as true is true.

Valley Bible Church Theology Studies

12. It is impossible to prove inerrancy wrong.

Answer: If we could find an unquestionable error in either a good copy or in an original it would render this doctrine false (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:12ff.). In actuality, it is the errantist view that is really unfalsifiable since only the spiritual aspects are considered to be true. How can you prove a spiritual belief in the Bible to be wrong?

13. It is wrong to conclude that if one error is found then none of the Bible can be accepted or true.

Answer: Do not confuse a fallible book that may make a mistake with a divine book which cannot make a mistake. If there is one error in the Bible then it undermines its claim to be the Word of God, since God cannot speak error. It still may, as only a human book, contain much truth. It just cannot be considered absolutely trustworthy.

14. There are contradictions and errors in the Bible.

Answer: Name one.