

“Christ in Print - the Word of God”

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Introduction

Isaac Newton once made a prediction that man would travel faster than 40 miles an hour. He based this prediction off a verse in the Old Testament that indicated this to him. Voltaire heard of Mr. Newton's predictions and reacted with this statement, "See how the Bible can make fools out of brilliant men! Anyone knows that a man would suffocate at that speed."¹ Voltaire turned out to be the man who was mistaken. The speed limit for travel on interstate highways across the United States ranges from 55 – 70 miles per hour and no one has ever suffocated to death as a result of these speed limits.

Newton and Voltaire represent a great contrast present not only in their day, but also in modern times. This contrast centers upon an agreement concerning the nature of the Scriptures. If the Bible is the Word of God then it must be inerrant. If it is God's inerrant Word, then by its very nature it must be the final authority in the affairs of mankind. Those who would disagree with those statements must undermine the authority of Scriptures. Just as Voltaire attempted to subvert the Bible, there are many modern skeptics who would seek to do the same.

Therefore, the question begs to be answered. Is the Bible truly the infallible Word of God? If it is not, then many Christians are miserably deceived. If it is, then the skeptics are fools for evading the truth. The answer to this question is monumental and life changing and must be examined and discovered.

The Controversy

There is a controversy raging over the inerrancy of the Scriptures. Some claim that the Scriptures are nothing more than man-made fairy tales. Some claim that Scripture is inspired and authoritative only in regard to its primary scope, but errant in regard to science, history, geography, etc. The fundamentalists or traditionalists claim that the Scriptures are totally inerrant down

1 Basic Typing PACE 108, Lewisville, TX, Accelerated Christian Education, 1981

to each word. Thus, the question looms as to whether or not the Scripture is the inerrant Word of God.²

But why the controversy? If the Scriptures are the inspired Word of God, should not accuracy be assumed? Perhaps the greatest reason for this controversy is the exacting implications of Biblical inerrancy. If the Bible is inerrant then reason would state that any actions, opinions, or statements contrary to It are wrong. Biblical inerrancy mandates that man take the back seat to God. Such an implication is too much for many men who desire to be their own sole authority.

The controversy is no doubt due in part to Satanic activity. “In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” 2 Corinthians 4:4. Matthew Henry comments on this verse as follows:

And as he is the prince of darkness, and ruler of the darkness of this world, so he darkens the understandings of men, and increases their prejudices, and supports his interest by keeping them in the dark, blinding their minds with ignorance, and error, and prejudices, that they should not behold the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God.³

A third reason for the controversy is the existence of a reprobate mind within many men. Romans 1:19-32 speaks of men who are aware of God's existence yet repress that awareness for the satisfaction of their own sinful cravings. Matthew Henry comments:

The blindness of their understandings was caused by the willful aversion of their wills and affections. They did not retain God in their knowledge, because they did not like it. They would neither know nor do any thing but just what pleased themselves. It is just the temper of carnal hearts; the pleasing of themselves is their highest end. There are many that have God in their knowledge, they cannot help it, the light shines so fully in their faces; but they do not retain him there. They say to the Almighty, Depart (#Job 21:14), and they therefore do not retain God in their knowledge because it thwarts and contradicts their lusts; they do not like it.⁴

2 Certain scholars, such as Mark Mattison of Auburn University, try to distinguish the terms “Scripture” and “Word of God”. They claim that “Scriptures” is a better term because the “Word of God” tempts people to place all areas of expression in the Bible on equal level giving credence to inerrancy. This paper will use the terms interchangeable regardless of the objections of some scholars.

3 Henry, Matthew, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary*, [CD-ROM] (Lewisville, TX: Accelerated Christian Education, 2002)

4 Henry, Matthew, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary*

The Inspiration and Inerrancy Connection

There is a strong connection between the inerrancy and the inspiration of the Bible. Each of these must be examined to arrive at a proper conclusion concerning the inerrancy of Scripture.

The doctrine of Bible inspiration is based in large part on 2 Timothy 3:16 which states, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:” Inspiration can be a confusing term, however. It is used to describe speeches, poems, athletes, and a score of other things, but how does Paul use this term? The Greek word *theopneustos* is used for “given by inspiration of God” and means divinely breathed in. God breathed His Words into the human authors of the canon so that they wrote only that which the Holy Spirit guided them to write (2 Peter 1:21). William Evens defines the term inspiration as used in 2 Timothy 3:16 as follows:

Inspiration, then, as defined by Paul in this passage, is the strong, conscious inbreathing of God into men, qualifying them to give utterance to truth. It is God speaking through men, and the Old Testament is therefore just as much the Word of God as though God spake every single word of it with His own lips.⁵

A detailed definition of inerrancy is not necessary for a simplistic one will suffice. Inerrancy in its simplest form means without any error at all. The claim to inerrancy is a claim to perfection in every detail. It is a claim to absolute truth as Jesus indicated in John 17:17, “...Thy word is truth.” Inerrancy provides the Scriptures its ultimate authority.

Inerrancy is a mandate of divine inspiration. It would stand to reason that anything inspired by God would be perfect truth and devoid of error. Any writings inspired by Almighty God must be universally applicable to all of Creation and its principles must function as prescribed.

Inerrancy is not necessarily proof of divine inspiration, although it is a necessary result of it. For instance, if a student takes a test and receives a perfect score it does not mean that the answers he recorded were divinely inspired. His test may be inerrant, but that alone does not

5 Evans, William, *The Great Doctrines of the Bible*, Chicago, Moody Press, 1974, pages 194-195

prove that it was divinely inspired. This is by no means meant to minimize the importance or reality of the inerrancy of the Scriptures. The Scriptures must be inerrant to even be considered the inspired Word of God.

Defending Inspiration

Since divine inspiration is the foundation of the inerrancy claim it is important to take a position on inspiration. That the Bible is inspired is rarely contested. However, opinions concerning the nature of the inspiration are varied. A concise understanding of the nature of the inspiration of the Bible is a necessary clarifier.

The first concept of the nature of the inspiration of the Word of God is that it is inspired equally throughout. All passages in both Testaments and all verses regardless of their subject matter were divinely inspired. The genealogies of Chronicles are no less inspired than the four Gospels. This is called plenary inspiration of the Scriptures. Plenary inspiration of the Scriptures is supported by 2 Timothy 3:16, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” In this passage all means all and that's all, all means. There is no exclusion of any portion of Scripture from the inspiration of God. The Authorized Version correctly renders this verse while the Revised Standard translation of this verse implies only partial inspiration of Scripture.⁶

The second important aspect of the nature of the inspiration of the Scriptures is that every individual word of the Scriptures is inspired by God. This is called verbal inspiration. This is often contested with a concept of inspiration known as conceptual inspiration. Conceptual inspiration limits inspiration to the thoughts or ideas of the verses and excludes the individual words. Perhaps the greatest defense of verbal inspiration of the Scriptures comes directly from Jesus. In Matthew 5:18 Jesus said, “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tit-

⁶ Evans, William, *The Great Doctrines of the Bible*, page 201

tle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” A jot is the eighth letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Jesus considered even the letters of the Scriptures to be eternally inspired and inerrant. A tittle is a mark on a letter. Jesus considered punctuation to be eternally inspired and enduring. Not only did Jesus consider letters and punctuation to be inspired, He also viewed the tense of a verse to be inspired. In correcting the Saducees false views of the resurrection Jesus predicated His entire argument on the tense of an Old Testament verse. In Matthew 12:26-27 Jesus quotes Moses' encounter with God at the burning bush when God told Moses, “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”. Because this Old Testament passage uses the present tense verb “am” Jesus stated that God is the God of the living not the dead, proving the resurrection of the dead to eternal life. Every single word of the Scriptures is inspired by God.⁷

Verbal and plenary inspiration is something that should only be applied to the Scriptures in the original language in which it was written. Verbal and plenary inspiration should not be applied to any language translations of the Scripture. It must be confined to the original manuscripts due to human influences in translating.

One of the arguments against verbal inspiration of the Scriptures is the evident variety of writing styles exhibited by the human writers of the Scriptures. It is argued that if God allowed this, and it is obvious that He did, it is impossible for every word to be God-breathed. Opponents of verbal inspiration would argue that it relegates the human writers to mere typewriters plucked by God. They argue that verbal inspiration would not allow for unique writing styles exhibited by the authors. William Evans provides a very solid reconciliation for verbal inspiration and writing style.

If the question be asked whether or not inspiration affected the words, it must be answered in the affirmative. It is hardly possible that inspiration could insure the correct transmission of thought without in some way affecting the words. Yet it affected the words not directly and immediately by dictating them in the

7 Towns, Elmer L., *Theology for Today*, Belmont, CA, Wadsworth Group, 2002, 60-61

ears of the writers, but mediately, through working on their minds and producing there such vivid and clear ideas of thoughts and facts that the writers could find words fitted to their purposes.⁸

The entire Word of God was fully inspired, verbally and plenary, from Genesis to Revelation.

Defense of Inerrancy

Defending the inerrancy of Scripture is like working backwards. The ultimate goal of a Christian would be to convince unbelievers that the Word of God is the verbal-plenary inspired Word of God. As such it would be assumed inerrant. This is why so many skeptics seek to undermine the Bible's claim to inerrancy. If it is accepted as inerrant then it will lead one to embrace its inspiration. This would then require absolute submission to the written text of Scripture at the expense of personal desires. However, to get to a place where inspiration can be accepted it is often necessary to exhibit facts relating to the inerrancy of Scripture. This is something that can be readily and easily done.

For the Bible to be inerrant it must be completely accurate in every area it touches upon. An exhaustive study of the inerrancy of the Scriptures is beyond the scope of this paper and would require volumes of books. A brief overview of a few of the realms of proofs will need to suffice.

One of the simplest defenses of Bible inerrancy is the test of non-contradiction. One of the tests of truth is internal consistency. If a statement is made that contradicts itself it cannot be true. For instance the phrase “icy hot” is internally inconsistent because it opposes itself. In the same way if the Bible is inerrant and only truth then it must not make statements in any part that contradicts statements in any other part. The Bible faces and masters this challenge. There are many seemingly contradictory passages that skeptics would point to in the Bible to dishevel the claims of inerrancy, but each of these passages can be consistently understood through study of the original language and when taken in proper context.

⁸ Evans, William, *The Great Doctrines of the Bible*, page 209

Another proof of the Bible's inerrancy is its perfect historical accuracy. The Bible contains much history. In fact, it takes the reader from the beginning of the world to its end. Although it is not a concise history, the history it does record must be accurate to retain the position of inerrancy. Perhaps no other historical accounts of the Bible are as significant as the life of Christ. The Gospel writers reports many historical details concerning the time of Christ. Specific leaders, times, and events are listed. These records can also be corroborated with non-Biblical historical sources. The Jewish historian, Josephus, mentioned Jesus in his *Antiquities*.

About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was one who wrought surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Christ. When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing among us, had condemned him to be crucified, those who had in the first place come to love him did not give up their affection for him. On the third day he appeared to them restored to life, for the prophets of God had prophesied these and countless other marvelous things about him. And the tribe of Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared.⁹

This is a significant verification of the actual historic existence of Jesus. Other historians, such as the Roman Tacitus, also mention Christ.

Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome.... Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty: then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind.¹⁰

The writings of historians like Josephus and Tacitus verify the historical accuracy of the Gospel records.

In addition to these corroborations, archeology has verified the accuracy of the Bible's history. Whether it confirms the leaders mentioned during certain Bible periods or the actual occurrence of such events as the parting of the Red Sea¹¹, archeology has proven the accuracy of the

9 Stobel, Lee, *The Case for Christ*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1998, page 79

10 Stobel, Lee, *The Case for Christ*, page 82

11 Coral formations in the shape of chariots in the Gulf of Aquaba have led archeologists to conclude the accuracy of the Exodus account of the parting of the Red Sea and drowning of Pharaoh's army. See webpage "Pharaoh's Chariots Found in Red Sea?", WorldNetDaily, <http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?>

Bible, confirming its inerrancy.

One of the most fascinating and convincing realms of Bible accuracy involves science. Although not primarily a science book, the Bible asserts many sound scientific truths and principles. These science statements were recorded hundreds and thousands of years before scientists discovered them. Isaiah 40:22 spoke of the “circle of the earth”, but man thought that the earth was flat for centuries until Christopher Columbus defied the science of his day and discovered that the Bible was right and the earth was round. Leviticus 17:11 states that blood is the life of the flesh. At one time doctors thought that a person could be sick due to bad blood in their body. Leaches would be used to drain “bad blood” from a patient. This was done to the retired President George Washington, however, too much blood was drained from him and he died. Doctors now know that this was a bad practice and recognize that the life of the body is in the blood. Medicine, physics, astronomy, and oceanography are just a few of the sciences that have “discovered” principles that the Bible mentioned thousands of years in advance.¹² Only a divinely inspired and inerrant book could contain such truths.

In addition to being internally consistent and historically and scientifically accurate, the Bible has proven itself prophetically accurate. One-fourth of the Scriptures written were prophetic at the time of their writing.¹³ Since such a large portion of the Scriptures are prophetic, it is essential that they be fulfilled to validate inerrancy claims. This is a tough challenge, but inerrancy demands its master. There are over 333 Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah. Since the New Testament claims Jesus as the Messiah it is necessary for Him to fulfill these prophecies. But what are the odds of one man fulfilling all of these prophecies? The odds of one

[ARTICLE_ID=33168](#), [Internet]

12 Comfort, Ray, “Scientific Facts in the Bible”, Living Waters Publications, 2003-2004, <http://www.livingwaters.com/witnessingtool/scientificfactsintheBible.shtml> [Internet], accessed May 10, 2004

13 Towns, Elmer L., *Theology for Today*, page 714

man fulfilling 50 prophecies made 400 or more years before his birth is one in 1,125,000,000,000,000. Add two more elements with specific time and place and the odds exceed the ability of the mind to comprehend. Jesus fulfilled 333 Old Testament prophecies in His life including prophecies of specific time and place.¹⁴ How could this be possible apart from divine inspiration resulting in inerrancy? Throughout the Bible specific prophecies involving names, places, and dates have been made and fulfilled. The prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled can be believed based on the Bible's record of fulfilled prophecy.¹⁵

One final proof to validate the inerrancy of the Bible is the fact that it works. Countless multitudes of men and women, boys and girls, have all found that the truths contained within Its pages work when applied to their lives. Whether they be rich or poor, black or white, male or female, the Bible's contents apply to them. Inerrant truth must be universal. The Bible has been translated into thousands of languages and integrated into every kind of culture affectively. The drug addict has found restoration within Its pages. House wives have found Its advice to be true in running a successful home. Businessmen have found success by applying Its principles to their professional life. The Bible works because it is the inspired inerrant Word of God.

Conclusion

The inerrancy debate will continue until the Lord's return. Sinful man will always try to justify himself by discrediting the Word of God. This, however, cannot be done successfully. A divinely inspired Bible is perfect in its entirety and without error. Such a book may be analyzed and criticized till the end of the world, but it will remain the inspired and inerrant Word of God.

Voltaire spent a lifetime trying to discredit the Scriptures. He believed that the Bible would

14 Meldau, Fred John, *Messiah in Both Testaments*, Denver, The Christian Victory Publishing Company, 1967, page 8

15 Towns, Elmer L., *Theology for Today*, page 715

only be a dusty book in a museum by the end of his life. It is rather ironic that, after Voltaire's death, the building used as his headquarters for launching his attacks against the Bible was turned into a printing press where Bibles were printed.¹⁶ The Bible is indeed the eternally inspired inerrant Word of God. The prophet Isaiah stated it best in chapter 40 verse eight, “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.” Men like Voltaire may come and go, but God's inspired, inerrant Word will remain – forever. Martyred missionary Jim Elliot said of this book, “Christ in print, the Word of God!”

¹⁶ Basic Typing PACE 108, Lewisville, TX, Accelerated Christian Education, 1981

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