

2011 Grace School of the Bible Family Bible Conference—Inerrancy and the King James Bible

Is it possible or proper to claim inerrancy for a translation of the Scripture?

Introduction

- How many of you believe that the Bible is inerrant? How many of you believe that the KJB is inerrant?
- What do we mean when we say that the KJB is inerrant? In what sense is the KJB inerrant? Can we even sustain such a claim? Most of evangelical Christians fancy us fools for claiming that a translation of the Bible can be inerrant.
- Please turn with me to every verse where the Bible uses the term(s) inerrant or inerrancy. The word(s) inerrant/inerrancy do not appear in Scripture, however, neither do the words trinity nor rapture and yet many accept these terms as orthodox given how these terms are understood. This ought to lead us to consider if there is a better, more scripturally accurate term that the Bible uses to describe itself.
- In short, just because the Bible does not explicitly declare itself to be inerrant does not mean that the Bible is full of errors.
- Psalm 12:6-7—declares that the words of the Lord are “pure.” The Hebrew word for “pure” occurs 94 times in the Old Testament. The King James translators rendered the word in English as follows: clean (50 times), pure (40 times), fair (2 times), purer (once), variant (once)
 - Clean—Genesis 7:2, 8; 8:20
 - Pure—Exodus 25:11, 17, 24, 29, 31, 36, 38-39
- Clean—in a general sense, free from extraneous matter, or whatever is injurious or offensive; hence its signification depends on the nature and qualities of the substances to which it is applied. 4) Free from moral impurity; innocent. “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?” Job 14. Acts 18. 5) Free from ceremonial defilement. Lev. 10; Numb. 19. 6) Free from guilt; sanctified; holy. John 13. Ps 51. 7) That might be eaten by the Hebrews. Gen. 7; Gen. 8.
 - Clean (verb)—to remove all foreign matter from; to separate from any thing whatever is extraneous to it, or whatever is foul, noxious, or offensive, as dirt or filth from the hands, body or clothes, foul matter from a vessel, weeds, shrubs and stones from a meadow; to purify. Thus, a house is cleaned by sweeping and washing; a field is cleaned by plowing and hoeing. (*Webster’s 1828 Dictionary*)
- Pure—separate from all heterogeneous or extraneous matter; clear; free from mixture; as pure water; pure clay; pure sand; pure air; pure silver or gold. Pure wine is very scarce. 2) Free from moral defilement; without spot; not sullied or tarnished; incorrupt; undebased by moral turpitude;

holy. “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil.” Hab.1. Prov.20. 3) Genuine; real; true; incorrupt; unadulterated; as pure religion. James 1. 4) Unmixed; separate from any other subject or from everything foreign; as pure mathematics. (*Webster’s 1828 Dictionary*)

- The words of the Lord given by inspiration of God were/are pure and clean, that is they are without defect, spot, or filthiness in any way. They do not report things about God or his creation that are false. They are not wrong or errant in anything they teach. While the Bible does not explicitly use the term(s) inerrant/inerrancy to describe itself, the concept can be clearly demonstrated from Scripture.

Scriptural Argument for Inerrancy

- Traditionally the argument for inerrancy has been stated using the following logical syllogism.
 - God Cannot Err
 - The Bible is the Word of God
 - Therefore, the Bible Cannot Err
- In other words, if one could prove that God cannot err and that the Bible is the Word of God, it would logically follow that the Bible cannot err and is, therefore, inerrant. Geisler and Howe summarize the situation as follows, “The conclusion, then, is inevitable. The Bible cannot err. If the Bible erred in anything it affirms, then God would be mistaken. But God cannot make mistakes.” (Geisler and Howe, 11)
- Premise One—the Bible clearly supports the claim: God Cannot Err.
 - Hebrew 6:8
 - Titus 1:2
- Premise Two—asserts that the Bible is the Word of God. The fact that the Bible is the Word of God can be discerned from the following five Biblical affirmations: 1) the Bible is God-breathed, 2) the Bible is a prophetic writing, 3) the Bible has divine authority, 4) the Bible claims to record what God has said 5) the Bible is called the Word of God.
 - II Timothy 3:16
 - II Peter 1:20-21
 - Jeremiah 1:9, 5:14, 36:1-4—according to the Holy Spirit’s own testimony, the very words of God were placed into the mouth of human authors who subsequently recorded exactly what God had given them to say. In short, the prophets as the mouthpieces of God, spoke only the words that God put in their mouths.
 - Genesis 12:1-6, Galatians 3:8--not only does the Bible claim to be the Word of God, but it also attributes to the Scriptures the qualities of God himself. The Bible equates the words of God as synonymous with the words penned by human authors. Notice that Genesis 12:3 tells us what God himself said to Abram, “in thee shall all families of the

earth be blessed.” In contrast, Galatians 3:8 states that the Scriptures said unto Abraham, “in thee shall all nations be blessed.” In addition to proving that God’s written Word is equally authoritative as His spoken Word, Galatians 3:8 also ascribes the very attributes of God to the Scriptures. The Scriptures, like God Himself, can see the future.

Moreover, the Bible is explicitly called the Word of God in multiple places throughout Scripture and claims to have divine authority. All of this proves, for those who wish to function by faith, that when one reads the written Word he reads God’s very words to humanity.

- **Conclusion**—finally, having proven the accuracy of Premise One that God cannot err and Premise Two that the Bible is the Word of God, it logically follows that a book written by God would reflect His nature and thus be inerrant. Therefore, the doctrine of inerrancy includes historical and scientific matters and not just moral and spiritual teachings. If the Bible does not speak accurately about the physical world, how can it be trusted when it speaks about the spiritual world? Inspiration and inerrancy apply not just to what the Bible explicitly teaches but also to that which the Bible touches. “This is true whether the Bible is touching upon history, science, or mathematics. Whatever the Bible declares is true—whether it is a major point or a minor point. The Bible is God’s Word, and God does not deviate from the truth in any point.” (Geisler and Howe, 12-13)

A Short History of Inerrancy

- It is critical to point out that a formal doctrine of inerrancy did not exist until about one hundred years ago. “The modern debate arose between 1900 and the 1920s, and was developed into the 1970s, as a defense against historical skeptics who were launching some very scathing attacks against the authority of Scripture from the perspective of historical positivism and scientific naturalism.” (Bratcher)
- As a result, of the Scientific and Technological Revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries, various Biblical events (i.e., literal 6 day creation, worldwide flood, Jonah, etc.) were questioned by modern scientists and philosophers. This led to an increasing questioning of the veracity of Biblical texts and events.
- “The scientific premise that forms the basis for modern historiography, and the basis for challenge by skeptics is that only empirically verifiable events can be accepted as true. They contended that since many biblical events could not be verified by external documents or records or empirical data to have happened, then they never happened. Therefore, the accounts were not true and therefore in error.” (Bratcher)
 - Note: This premise is irrational. Consider the age old question: If a tree falls in the woods does it make a sound if no one is around to hear it? The obvious answer is yes, there is a sound. This scientific premise confuses whether something is true with the issue of whether someone was there to witness it.
- Defenders of an inerrant Bible assumed that the Bible was true as a starting point; however, their

defense took shape as a logical syllogism that worked backward toward the rationalists. Since the Bible is true as an assumption, and since only verifiable historical events can be true (thus accepting the premise of the rationalists), then the Bible must contain only actual and verifiable historical events and can contain no error. Thus inerrancy as a very rationalistic response to the rationalists was born. (Bratcher)

- In our day, inerrantists believe the Bible’s authority is verified by its content. In other words, it is reliable because it is factually accurate. No longer is the Bible’s reliable because it was authoritative, it is reliable because of its content. Stated another way, because it is assumed in our day that the Bible cannot stand on its own as a foundation within modern philosophy, it needs a further foundation: inerrancy. Therefore, a certain view of the Bible supersedes (or at least exists alongside) the Bible itself as the foundation of evangelical Christianity. We need to ask ourselves the following question, does the Bible inform one’s view of authority or does one’s view of authority inform the Bible? “It is too often the case that what is authoritative is not really the Bible at all but the particular theology that is brought to the Bible and rules magisterially over the text.” (Perry)
- In an essay titled, “The Meaning of Inerrancy,” Paul D. Feinberg admits that the word inerrancy is a relatively young word in the English language. The Latin word, *inerrans* was used by Cicero and Lactantius during the Roman period in reference to fixed or none wandering stars. The *Oxford English Dictionary* says that it was not until 1837 that the English word inerrant was used in the modern sense of “exempt from error, free from mistake, infallible.” This explains why the word(s) inerrant/inerrancy are not found in the *Webster’s 1828 Dictionary*. Moreover, the noun inerrancy is said to have occurred for the first time in Thomas Hartwell Horne’s formidable four-volume *Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures* (1780-1862). (Geisler, 292)
- Pre-modern theologians and reformers found the Bible’s authority in its author, not in its inerrancy. (Perry) Therefore, there was no formal doctrine of inerrancy until the second half of the 19th century. In his essay, “The View of the Held by the Church: The Early Church Through Luther,” author Robert D. Preus makes the following statement regarding the emergence of the modern doctrine of inerrancy, “Not until the divine, origin, authority and veracity of the Scripture were somehow undermined or threatened did these issues receive direct attention from Christian theologians.” (Geisler, 357)
- Until the modern era, Christian thinkers founded the Bible’s trustworthiness not in the doctrine of inerrancy but in the fact that the Bible is the word of God. Consider the following statements:
 - Irenaeus—“We must believe God, who has given us the right understanding, since the Holy Scriptures are perfect, because they are spoken by the Word of God and the Spirit of God.” (Geisler, 360)
 - Augustine—“Only to those books which are called canonical have I learned to give honor so that I believe most firmly that no author in these books made any error in writing. I

read other authors not with the thought that what they have thought and written is true just because they have manifested holiness and learning.” (Geisler, 365)

- Luther—“You are so to deal with the Scriptures that you bear in mind that God Himself is saying this.”
- Luther—“It is cursed unbelief and the odious flesh which will not permit us to see and know that God speaks to us in Scripture and that it is God’s Word, but tells us that it is the merely of Isaiah, Paul, or some other man, who has not created heaven and earth.”
- Luther—“Natural reason produces heresy and error. Faith teaches and adheres to the pure truth. He who adheres to the Scriptures will find that they do not lie or deceive.”
- Luther—“Scripture cannot err.” “The Scriptures have never erred.”
- Luther—“Whoever is so bold that he ventures to accuse God of fraud and deception in a single word and does so willfully again and again after he has been warned and instructed once or twice will likewise certainly venture to accuse God of fraud and deception in all of His words.” (all Luther citations are quoted in Geisler, 372-382)
- Calvin—The following is a listing of Calvin’s statement regarding Scripture: “The sure and infallible record,” “The inerring standard,” “The pure Word of God,” “The infallible rule of His Holy Truth,” “Free from every stain or defect,” “Infallible oracles”
- Calvin—“He commanded also that the prophecies be committed to writing and be accounted part of His Word. To these at the same time histories were added, also the labour of the prophets, but composed under the **Holy Spirit’s dictation** . . . Yet they were not to do this except from the Lord, that is, with Christ’s Spirit going before them and in a sense **dictating their words** . . .”
- Calvin—“. . . that the law and the prophecies are not teaching delivered by the will of men, but **dictated by the Holy Ghost**. . . Moses and the prophets did not utter at random what we have from their hand, but, since they spoke by divine impulse, they confidently and fearlessly testified as was actually the case, that it was the mouth of the Lord that spoke. . .” (all Calvin citation are quoted in Geisler, 391-395)
 - It should be noted that Augustine and others used the verbs inspire and dictate interchangeably when describing the Holy Spirit’s role in communicating the form and content of the sacred writings to the human authors of scripture. (Geisler, 364)
- *Westminster Confession Chapter 1 Article V*—“We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture. And the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the

consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it does abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God: yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.”

- *Westminster Confession Chapter 1 Article VII*—“The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), and the New Testament in Greek (which, at the time of the writing of it, was most generally known to the nations), **being immediately inspired by God, and, by His singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages**, are therefore authentical; so as, in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal unto them. But, because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have right unto, and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded, in the fear of God, to read and search them, therefore they are to be translated in to the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come, that, the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship Him in an acceptable manner; and, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, may have hope.
- All of these men believed the Bible to be inerrant simply because it was the word of God.
- The Civil War in the United States in the 1860s and changes in science after Charles Darwin published *The Origin of the Species* in 1859 led many to challenge the idea that the Bible was literally the word of God and factually true in every respect. Arguments about evolution and biblical authority for slavery divided churches and led to a revised view of inerrancy among some factions that claimed only the original manuscripts of the Bible to be without error.
- Consider the following statement on the Bible taken from the *1878 Niagara Creed*.
 - “We believe "that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," by which we understand the whole of the book called the Bible; nor do we take the statement in the sense in which it is sometimes foolishly said that works of human genius are inspired, but in the sense that the Holy Ghost gave the very words of the sacred writings to holy men of old; and that His Divine inspiration is not in different degrees, but extends equally and fully to all parts of these writings, historical, poetical, doctrinal, and prophetic and to the smallest word, and inflection of a word, provided such word is found in the original manuscripts.” (Sandeem, 273)
- When compared with the *Westminster Confession* it is obvious how Darwinian Evolution and modern philosophy were affecting the articulation of doctrine within the church. The fundamentalists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries took the bait and formulated an inerrancy doctrine based on terms set by their opponents rather than simply standing on the authority of Scripture. The following three results have done major damage to the Body of Christ during the intervening century:

- Divine or Mechanical Dictation was ridiculed and replaced with Verbal Plenary Inspiration.
- The Doctrine of Preservation has been almost completely lost.
- The inerrancy of the Bible was limited to the original autographs.

Modern Evangelical View of Inerrancy

- In their attempt to defend the inerrancy of Scripture modern evangelical scholarship undermines their own position.
- In October 1978, 300 scholars, pastors, and laymen meet in Chicago, IL to discuss the subject of Biblical inerrancy. The International Conference on Biblical Inerrancy drafted The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, a 19 Article statement of their position along with a detailed explanation of their findings.
- Please consider their statements regarding Transmission and Translation:
 - “Since God has nowhere promised an inerrant transmission of Scripture, it is necessary to affirm that only the autographic text of the original documents was inspired and to maintain the need of textual criticism as a means of detecting any slips that may have crept into the text in the course of its transmission. The verdict of science however, is that the Hebrew and Greek text appear to be amazingly well preserved, so that we are amply justified in affirming, with the Westminster Confession, a singular providence of God in this matter and in declaring that the authority of Scripture is on no way jeopardized by the fact that the copies we possess are not entirely error-free.” (Geisler, 502)
- The book *Inerrancy*, edited by Norman Geisler contains edited copies of 14 scholarly papers presented at the ICBI in October 1978. Please consider the following quotations from the sixth chapter titled, “The Inerrancy of the Autographa” by Greg L. Bahsen.
 - “. . . the view that has persisted throughout the centuries and is common among evangelicals today is that the inerrancy (or infallibility, inspiration) of the Scriptures pertains only to the text of the original autographa.” (155-156)
 - Carl F. Henry—“Inerrancy pertains only to the oral or written proclamation fo the originally inspired prophets and apostles. . . Inerrancy does not extend to copies, translations, or version however.” (157)
 - “We can believe our copies of Scritpure and be saved without having the autographic codex, for the Bible itself indicates that copies can faithfully reflect the original text and therefore function authoritatively. Second, the paramount features and qualities of Scripture—such as inspiration, infallibility, and inerrancy—are uniformly identified with God’s own original word as found in the autographic text, which alone can be identified and esteemed as God’s own word to man.” (169-170)
 - “God has not promised in His Word that the Scriptures would receive perfect transmission, and thus we have not ground to claim it. . .Consequently we cannot be theologically blind to the significance of transmissional errors, nor can we theologically

assume the absence of such errors. We are therefore theologically required to restrict inspiration, infallibility, and inerrancy to the autographa.” (175)

- “. . . Scripture nowhere gives us ground to maintain that its transmission and translation would be kept without error by God. There is no scriptural warrant for holding that God will perform the perpetual miracle of preserving His written Word from all errors in its being transcribed from one copy to another.” (176)
- Psalm 12:6-7 (NIV) clearly there is no understanding of the promise of preservation or the process by which that preservation would occur.
- In the end, modern evangelical scholarship has articulated a doctrine of no practical consequence. Why bother arguing for the inerrancy of the originals when everyone knows that they no longer exist?

Inerrancy and the King James Bible

- The question of whether or not it is proper to claim inerrancy for a translation (KJB) depends on how one defines inerrancy. When modern evangelicals limit inerrancy to the originals only they are postulating a definition of inerrancy that demands “exact sameness.” In other words, the reason only the originals are inerrant is because the copies do not all read exactly the same. This is true even within the Majority Text/TR textual tradition. While the mss that comprise the TR agree amongst themselves in 95% of the readings there are still obvious spelling errors, copyist mistakes, and variant readings in the remaining 5% according to textual critics.
- In my view, the problem is that many defenders of the King James position have used “exact sameness” as their definition of inerrancy. The only way the text could have traversed the seas of time and history and maintained “exact sameness” is if God was physically intervening throughout the dispensation of Grace to ensure that no errors entered into the copies. If God were directly intervening in this manner why not just preserve the originals and remove all doubt? This is why the multiplicity of copies (taught by the doctrine of preservation) becomes so vital in identifying the true Biblical text.
- The real question when discussing inerrancy should not be do we possess today exactly every word (verbatim, or exactly the same) as penned in the original autographs but rather do we possess the pure word of God? In others, do the words we possess communicate the clean and pure words of God?
- As we have already seen, the majority of professing Christendom do not believe that any translation of the Word of God can rightly be called inerrant. The fact that there are clear printer errors in 264 verses (number does not include the Preface, chapter summaries/headings, or the Apocrypha) in the 1611 text is enough proof for modern evangelicals that a translation cannot be inerrant. (Norton, 167-172)
- Until very recently, I was under the impression that the only differences between the various

editions of the KJB were the correction of printer errors or the updating of spelling and punctuation. Consequently, I had no problem with demanding “exact sameness” as my definition of inerrancy. However, new research has caused me to refine my position slightly.

- There are more differences between the 1611 edition and the standard 1769 edition of the KJB that you can buy in the store today than simply correct of printer errors and updates in the spelling of words. Please consider the following examples:
 - Genesis 15:18
 - Genesis 19:21
 - Genesis 22:7
 - Matthew 3:12
 - Matthew 9:34
 - Matthew 12:23
 - Romans 4:12
 - Romans 6:12
 - Romans 7:2
 - Romans 12:2
 - I Corinthians 12:28
 - I Timothy 1:4
 - Revelation 1:4
 - Revelation 5:13 (Norton, Appendix 8)

- Norton devotes Appendix 8 of his book to this subject. It consists of 155 pages and identifies approximately 952 verses where differences in words exist (numbers do not include the Apocrypha). (Norton, 200-355)

- Does everyone see the problem for demanding that inerrancy mean “exact sameness”? If inerrancy means exact sameness than one is forced to determine which edition of the King James text is inerrant and which one is not. How could one even make such a determination?

- Likewise there are differences between the Oxford and Cambridge edition of the 1769 text. Do all of you who utilized an Oxford text not possess the Word of God?
 - II Chronicles 33:19
 - Jeremiah 34:16

- In sum, the 1611 does not have the same words as the 1769. The Oxford and Cambridge editions of the 1769 do not have the same words.

- If the scriptural doctrine of preservation required the exact same words, then we would be forced into concluding that either the 1611 or the 1769 was not the word of God. It would be inconsistent with the believing viewpoint that God has allowed his word not to exist for hundreds of years in the most widely-spoken language in the world.

- The faith viewpoint concludes that the 1611 and both the Oxford and Cambridge editions of the 1769 are all the word of God because the scriptural doctrine of inerrancy does not require exact sameness but that the words accurately reflect the meaning of the original.
- We need to be careful not to demand more from our doctrine than the Bible claims for itself. There are many places where Christ quotes from the Old Testament but does not use the exact same language. Yet the believing viewpoint would affirm that what the LJC spoke was an accurate representation of the Old Testament verse. Please look at the following comparisons.
 - Matthew 2:18—Jeremiah 31:15
 - Matthew 22:31-32—Exodus 3:6
 - Matthew 26:31—Zechariah 13:7
 - Mark 7:6—Isaiah 29:13
 - Luke 4:16-19—Isaiah 61:1-2
- What these comparisons illustrate is that different words can have the same meaning. The words we possess convey the exact same meaning expressed in the originals without necessitating we possess the exact same words.
- Consider Jude 25 as an example.
 - “I threw the ball to Andrew and Daniel.”
 - “I threw the ball to **both** Andrew and Daniel.”
 - “I threw the ball to Andrew.”
- This does not diminish the issue of the words on the page. Rather it takes into account the facts as we have them before us. To what end are the words the issue? To the end that if you alter the words you alter their meaning. Jude 25 means exactly the same thing in a 1611 as it does in a 1769 one is just another way of saying the same thing.
- Use the example of 4
 - 4, **4** (font size), **4** (bold), *4* (italics), 2+2, 2², 4 x 10⁰ (scientific notation), 100_{base2} (binary), iv (roman)
- Modern versions err because the words have been altered so drastically that their meaning is changed. In short modern versions and their underlying Greek text report information about God that is false. In other words, they are not pure in what they teach.
 - II Samuel 21:19—David did not kill Goliath
 - I Samuel 17:48-51

- Isaiah 14:12—Jesus Christ fell from heaven
 - Revelation 22:16
 - Matthew 5:22—leaves out the phrase “without a cause.”
 - Mark 3:5—Jesus gets angry. By leaving out the phrase “without a cause,” in Matthew 5:22 modern versions have Jesus Christ condemning himself out of his own mouth.
 - Mark 1:1-2—modern versions are mistaken and err when they read “as it is written in Isaiah the prophet.”
 - Luke 2:33—undermines the doctrine of the virgin birth of Christ by teaching that Joseph was the father of Jesus. The KJB clearly protects this vital doctrine.
 - John 1:18—the NASB teaches heresy, by undermining the deity of Christ.
 - Mark 16:9-20, John 5:3-4—omitting verses is the most fundamental change in meaning of the words of God.
- The KJB and its underlying Greek text are pure because they reflect the meaning of the words contained in the originals without deviation.
 - If God could translate the throne of Israel from Saul to David (II Samuel 3:10), or translate Enoch directly to heaven (Hebrews 11:5), then as the author of language God is perfectly capable of stating something in one language (Egyptian), recording it in another (Hebrew, i.e., translating it), and then calling the translation Scripture (Luke 24:27, 44). God has the ability to express the exact same meaning in any language. As the inventor of language, God also has the ability to express the exact same thought multiple different ways in the same language.

Conclusion

- Preparing for this study has led me to a deeper appreciation of the doctrine of preservation. I think this understanding of inerrancy is more in line with textual facts and does not overreach and demand more than the Bible claims for itself.
- The KJB is the pure word of God for the following reasons:
 - It was translated from the Preserved Text.
 - It was translated using the correct translation method/philosophy: literal equivalence.
 - It was translated by the most educated and qualified group of men ever assembled.
 - It was translated using a superior methodology: company method with built in checks and balances to ensure accuracy.
 - It was translated during the height of the English Renaissance by a group of men who were products of the literary culture who tried and tested every word to ensure the majesty and grandeur of the finished product.

- The end result of this process is a Bible that possesses all the words necessary to reflect the words of the original without deviation.
- The King James Bible truly is the pure Word of God for English speaking people.

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