

Sunday, April 15, 2012—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 64
The History of the Doctrine of Inerrancy, Part 2

Review/Introduction

- 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 reliable because it is 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)
- When one compares the *1878 Niagara Creed* 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.
- There is evidence that suggests that not all Presbyterians (or other Evangelicals for that matter) were in agreement with the inerrancy doctrine coming out of Princeton Theological Seminary. The minutes from the Presbyterian General Assembly for 1893 reveal that eighty ministers and elders protested the suspension of Charles Augustus Briggs from the ministry on the grounds that his condemnation had been possible only because the Presbyterian clergy and elders had accepted the Princeton doctrine of inerrancy as the equivalent of a confessional standard. They proceeded to file the following lengthy protest:
 - “The undersigned enter respectful and earnest protest against the action of this Assembly, which declares the inerrancy of the original autographs of Scripture to be the faith of the church. We protest against this action.
 - Because it is insisting upon a certain theory of inspiration, when our Standards have hitherto only emphasized the fact of inspiration. So far as the original manuscript came from God, undoubtedly it was without error. But we have no means of determining how far God controlled the penmen in transcribing from

documents in matters purely circumstantial. . .

- Because it is setting up an imaginary Bible as a test of orthodoxy. If an inerrant original Bible is vital to faith, we cannot escape the conclusion that an inerrant present Bible is vital to faith.
- Because it is disparaging the Bible we have, and endangering its authority under the pressure of a prevalent hostile criticism. It seems like flying for shelter to an original autograph, when the Bible we have in our hands today is our impregnable defense.
- Believing these present Scriptures to be “The very Word of God” and “immediately inspired by God,” “kept pure in all ages” and “our only infallible rule of faith and practice,” notwithstanding some apparent discrepancies in matters purely circumstantial, we earnestly protest against the imposing of this new interpretation of our Standards upon the Church, to bind men’s consciences by enforced subscription to its terms.” (Sandeem, 170-171)

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 met 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. Bansen.
 - “. . . 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 of the originally inspired prophets and apostles. . . Inerrancy does not extend to copies, translations, or versions however.” (157)
- “We can believe our copies of Scripture 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 no 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?

Inerrant or Pure: The Question of Terminology?

- 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.

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 other words, 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 corrections 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 then 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 editions 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.

Works Cited

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