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THE ARGUMENT FOR INERRANCY AND THE KING JAMES BIBLE

BY BRYAN C. ROSS



In recent years, popular books and movies such as Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* have done much to popularize the secular view that the Bible is riddled with mistakes and therefore should not be trusted. A causal stroll through the local Barnes and Noble turns up many volumes, such as *Misquoting Jesus* by Bart D. Ehrman, all of which seek to paint the Bible as less than trustworthy as a source of truth in modern society. While these attacks on the veracity of the Scriptures are nothing new, they do appear to be increasing in our day as the notion of absolute truth continues to be challenged by postmodern thought. As a result, many sincere although ungrounded believers have had their faith rocked by assertions that the Bible is full of mistakes as well as political and sexist conspiracies. How should one respond to these attacks on the accuracy and reliability of the Bible? Simply stated, is the word of God inerrant?

Christian philosophers and theologians have spilt much ink debating the doctrine of the inerrancy of the Scriptures. In his book, *Basic Theology*, Charles C. Ryrie outlines the ongoing debate amongst Evangelical Christians regarding this issue. In Chapter 12 entitled "The Inerrancy of the Bible," Ryrie asks the following important questions with regard to inerrancy:

How important is this doctrine then? If it is a biblical teaching, then to deny it is to deny part of the truthfulness of the Bible. But consider this: If the Bible contains some errors, however few or many, how can one be sure that his understanding of Christ is correct? Perhaps one of those errors concerns something about the life of Christ. It would not be impossible that there might be an error about the crucial matter of His death and resurrection. What then would happen to one's Christology? It would be changed, perhaps so drastically that there would be no Christian faith to embrace.(1)

The modern critics referred to above are endeavoring to sow the seeds of doubt in order to overthrow the faith or some and/or cause people to view the Bible as unreliable. Consequently, a detailed study on the issue of the veracity of the Scriptures is paramount given the state of our current culture.

Unfortunately, much of professing Christendom is not equipped to deal with the issue of inerrancy because their own teaching on the subject is inconsistent. For example, conservative evangelical theologians will argue for the inerrancy of the original autographs and then admit that the original manuscripts have been lost and all that remains are copies which are subject to error. If only the originals were inerrant and they are lost, how can the Bible still be without error? While in Bible College, this author was ridiculed for holding the position that the King James Bible was God's perfectly preserved word for English-speaking people. Apparently, only uneducated believers were foolish enough to believe that the same God that could exercise the supernatural energy to verbally inspire every word of scripture could also exert the same supernatural force to preserve that which He inspired.

In short, if only the originals were inerrant, then maybe the modern critics are correct. Perhaps the Bible has been altered by the work of a sexist church leadership bent on oppressing woman and maintaining male authority as suggested by Dan Brown in *The Da Vinci Code*. While my former professors would dispute Dan Brown's ideas and affirm that the Bible is inerrant and reliable, something is drastically wrong because these same men also teach that there is no such thing as a perfect Bible. Herein lies the goal of the current essay, to utilize scholarly arguments for inerrancy in an attempt to show the logical inconsistencies of those who would assert that a perfect Bible does not exist. In short, why argue for inerrancy if what you're arguing for has been lost?

"hath God said society" for centuries. Despite their best efforts, the Bible remains preserved and inerrant in the King James Bible for English-speaking people. It is unfortunate that potential allies in the Evangelical scholar's union leave the Bible susceptible to their unscriptural and incomplete notion of inerrancy.

Endnotes

- 1) Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1986), 77.
- 2) Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe, *When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook On Bible Difficulties*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 11.
- 3) Geisler and Howe, *When Critics Ask*, 11.
- 4) In Volume One of his four volume Systematic Theology, Dr. Geisler goes into greater detail describing how God Cannot Err. Geisler states, "There are two lines of evidence that God cannot err: general revelation and special revelation." Under the category of General Revelation, Geisler offers both the general revelation written on the hearts of humanity (Romans 2:12-15) and the moral argument for the existence of God as further proof of God's inability to make mistakes. While the author found Geisler's thoughts on these matters enlightening and informative they were deemed outside of the scope of the current essay and are therefore not discussed in the current volume. However, the ambitious reader is encouraged to consider them; they can be found in the following volume. Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology: Volume One Introduction, Bible*, (Minneapolis: Bethany House: 2002), 496.
- 5) Geisler, *Systematic Theology: Volume One*, 495.
- 6) "For ever, O LORD, they word is settled in heaven." Psalms 119:89
- 7) Geisler, *Systematic Theology: Volume One*, 495.
- 8) Verses where the Bible is called the word of God-- Matthew 15:6, John 10:35, Romans 9:6, I Thessalonians 2:13, Hebrews 4:12
Verses that support the Bible's divine authority—Matthew 5:17-18, Matthew 15:3-6.
- 9) Geisler and Howe, *When Critics Ask*, 12.
- 10) *Ibid.*, 13.
- 11) Geisler, *Systematic Theology: Volume One*, 498.
- 12) Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 80.
- 13) Paul Enns. *The Moody Handbook of Theology*. (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1989), 167.
- 14) Walter A. Elwell. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology 2nd Edition*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 156-157.
- 15) Geisler, *Systematic Theology: Volume One*, 503.
- 16) Samuel C. Gipp. *An Understandable History of the Bible*. (Macedonia, OH: Bible Believers Baptist Bookstore, 1987), 18.
- 17) *Ibid.*, 21.
- 18) *Ibid.*, 21.
- 19) *Ibid.*, 22.
- 20) *Ibid.*, 27.
- 21) Geisler and Howe, *When Critics Ask*, 13.
- 22) Norman L. Geisler. *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1999), 250.
- 23) *Ibid.*, 251.

The Principle of Noncontraction, it asserts, being is not nonbeing (B is Not Non-B)--being cannot be nonbeing, for they are direct opposites, and opposites cannot be the same.(22) A second foundational principle that is pertinent to our discussion is the Principle of Excluded Middle. Excluded middle states, either being or nonbeing (Either B or Non-B)--"Since being and nonbeing are opposites, and opposites cannot be the same, nothing can hide in the cracks between being and nonbeing. The only choices are being and nonbeing."(23)

The relevance of these principles is paramount as we reach the climax of the argument presented in this essay. The principles of Noncontradiction and Excluded Middle clearly establish that two things that are different cannot be the same. Furthermore, we have already seen that our English Bibles have contradictory readings. Moreover, these divergent readings in modern versions contain mistakes that undermine the fundamentals of the Christian faith irrespective of the average believer's ignorance of their existence. Therefore, it is the height of absurdity to call all of these Bibles the word of God. They may all contain some of the words of God but cannot legitimately all be the Word of God because they teach opposites. In other words, basic logic demonstrates when two things are different the only possible options are that one is right and the other is wrong or they are both wrong. Clearly, one cannot conclude that they are both wrong in this case for that would leave us without a Bible and no final authority. Consequently, by default, the only conclusion that logic and revelation will both accept is that one Bible and its readings are correct while those versions which disagree are in error.

How many Bibles did God inerrantly inspire as a reflection of his nature? The obvious answer is only one. Does inerrancy extend merely to the original manuscripts (which no longer exist) or did God promise to providentially persevere the very words of his inspiration? In the final analysis, it is only the King James position that maintains the integrity of inspiration and is consistent with both logic and Scripture. The King James Bible and its translators were not inspired; rather, they made a literal word for word translation of the preserved text into English. Scholars have long ridiculed the notion that a translation can be inerrant. However, for the Bible believer, this is not far fetched. Moses spoke to Pharaoh in Egyptian despite recording his words in Hebrew. The Holy Spirit made a translation that even Evangelical scholars argue was inerrant since the original autographs of the Torah were written in Hebrew. In the end, the scholars union is boxed into admitting on the basis of its own doctrine that a translation can be inerrant.

Conclusion

Eloquent arguments aside, the prevailing wisdom within Christendom regarding the inerrancy of the Scripture is meaningless because leading theologians only apply the doctrine to the originals which no longer exist. The Bible teaches that God has promised to preserve the inerrant words of his inspiration through a multiplicity to accurate copies that are just as authoritative as the originals. A side by side examination of modern versions with the King James text reveals startling differences that impact the major doctrines of the faith. These differences cannot be attributed to differences in how words are translated out of Greek and Hebrew into English. Rather the underlying manuscripts used by the translators are different thereby resulting in different readings. Logic dictates that when two things are different they cannot be the same thus making it impossible for divergent translations to both be the Word of God. Rather than contravening reason, the King James position is consistent in its application of the doctrine of inerrancy. God did not go through all the trouble to perfectly inspire his word only to have it disappear with the originals.

Skeptics and critics such as Dan Brown and others like him have been part of the Satanic

The Logical Argument for Inerrancy

In *When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook On Bible Difficulties*, Dr. Norman Geisler and co-author Thomas Howe articulate the argument for the inerrancy of the scriptures using the following logical syllogism:

- Premise 1: God Cannot Err
- Premise 2: The Bible is the Word of God
- Conclusion: Therefore, the Bible Cannot Err(2)

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."(3)

To evaluate whether this conclusion is correct we will examine each premise under the microscope of Scripture. The Bible clearly supports the claim of Premise 1: God Cannot Err.

- Hebrews 6:18—That by two immutable things, **in which it was impossible for God to lie**, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:
- Titus 1:2—In hope of eternal life, **which God, that cannot lie**, promised before the world began;

In John 14:6, Jesus Christ states, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the father but by me." Notice that Jesus Christ, who calls himself the truth in this passage uses the same terminology in reference to the word of God in John 17:17. The verse states, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." It is therefore clear that Premise One: God Cannot Err is true.(4)

Premise Two asserts that the Bible is the Word of God. As shown by Dr. Geisler, 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.(5)

In II Timothy 3:16 the Apostle Paul writes, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." Inspiration is the process whereby God breathed through the pen of human authors the very words that He wanted written down. Before God moved to inspire even one word of Scripture, it had already been settled in heaven according to Psalms 119:89.(6) Consequently, inspiration is the process whereby God, communicates through human authors to mankind the words he had previously settled on. Accordingly, Jesus responds to the devil's temptation to turn stones into bread in Matthew 4:4 by quoting the Old Testament, ". . .man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeded out of

Settled on. Accordingly, Jesus responds to the devil's temptation to turn stones into bread in Matthew 4:4 by quoting the Old Testament, "...man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God."

How then did God accomplish the communication of his very words to mankind? II Peter 1:20-21 clarifies how God took his eternally established Word and communicated it to humanity.

"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

These verses and many others illustrate what Geisler calls the prophetic nature of the Bible. In short, the prophets as the mouthpieces of God, spoke only the words that God put in their mouths.(7) Consider the following passages:

- Exodus 4:14-15--And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart. 15) And thou shalt speak unto him, **and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do.**
- Numbers 22:38--And Balaam said unto Balak, Lo, I am come unto thee: have I now any power at all to say any thing? **the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak.**
- II Samuel 23:1-2-- Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, 2) the **Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue.**
- Jeremiah 1:9--Then the LORD put forth his hand, **and touched my mouth.** And the LORD said unto me, Behold, **I have put my words in thy mouth.**
- Jeremiah 5:14--Wherefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold, **I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them.**
- Jeremiah 36:1-4--And it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, [that] this word came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2) Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day. 3) It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin. 4) Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah: and **Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the LORD, which he had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book.**

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.

Not only does the Bible claim to be the word of God, but it also attributes to the scrip-

counterfeit to God's Word. What else is one left to conclude when the NIV along with other modern versions obscure Satan's true identity by substituting "morning star" for "Lucifer" in Isaiah 14:12 when Revelation 22:16 clearly identifies Jesus Christ as the morning star. Is this merely a minor difference in translation that does not affect any of the doctrines of the faith? Can a book be the word of God if it teaches that Jesus Christ fell from heaven? The virgin birth of Jesus Christ is considered by most believers to be one of the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. The NIV and other modern versions obscure this doctrine by implying that Joseph was Jesus's father. Please compare the NIV and KJV readings of Luke 2:33:

- Luke 2:33--The child's **father and mother** marveled at what was said about him (NIV)
- Luke 2:33-- And **Joseph and his mother** marvelled at those things which were spoken of him (KJV).

The King James reading upholds the virgin birth by clearly stating that Joseph was not Jesus's father. In contrast, the NIV subverts the virgin birth by calling Joseph the father of Jesus. In the quotation from Charles C. Ryrie at the beginning of this paper, He stated that the doctrine inerrancy was necessary because without it one's Christology or doctrine of Christ might be damaged thereby undermining their faith. By failing to acknowledge that inerrancy through the doctrine of preservation applies to the copies as well as the originals the modern scholars have promoted the use of Bibles that attack and subvert Christ's identity. Moreover, these new versions contain mistakes, such as the one observed in Mark 1. In the end, the scholars cannot have it both ways. It is impossible for them to maintain their intellectual integrity when they hold to the doctrine of inerrancy and simultaneously extol versions that contain errors as the most accurate.

Logic Supports the King James Position

Despite the deep appreciation this author has for Dr. Norman Geisler as an apologist he along with the majority of conservative scholarship have argued for the inerrancy of something that by their own admission does not exist. Meanwhile, they have criticized those who believe the King James Version to be God's perfect inerrant word for English-speaking people as uneducated and backwards. In the introduction to *When Critics Ask: Popular Handbook of Bible Difficulties*, Geisler and Howe articulate the following definition of error:

By truth we signify that which corresponds to reality. An error, then, is what does not correspond to reality. Truth is telling it like it is. Error is not telling like it is. Hence nothing mistaken can be true, even if the author intended the mistake to be true. An error is a mistake, not simply something that is misleading. Otherwise, every sincere utterance ever made is true, even those that were grossly mistaken. Likewise, something is not true simply because it accomplished its intended purpose, since many lies succeed.(21)

At this point a couple of questions are in order. Is the NIV mistaken when it teaches that Joseph was the father of Jesus? Are the modern versions making a mistake when they teach that Jesus Christ fell from heaven in Isaiah 14? The obvious answer to both of these questions is yes. Jesus did not have an earthly father nor did he fall from heaven. Any belief to the contrary would be considered heresy by the same Evangelical scholars who teach that there are no real differences in doctrine between various Bible versions.

First principles are the foundation upon which all logical thought is based. Without these fundamental precepts no thought would be possible. One of these first principles is called The Prin-

A simple stroll through the Bible section at the local Christian bookstore could not help but leave the honest Christian confused. If God only authored and inspired one Bible, how can there be so many translations all claiming to be God's Word? The New International Version (NIV), New American Standard Version (NASV), King James Version (KJV), New King James Version (NKJV), and many others all claim to be accurate and faithful translations of the "original" manuscripts. As a result, the average Christian thinks modern translations such as NIV, NASV, NKJV or the New Living Translation are simply an updating of the "archaic" language of the King James Version; therefore, all versions are essentially the same.

Unfortunately, upon further investigation a serious and glaring problem becomes apparent. The modern translations are not simply updates of the King James language, but totally different Bibles altogether. For example, compare Mark 1:2-3 in the King James Version and the New International Version. First, the KJV;

- Mark 1:2-3--As it is written in the **prophets**, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. 3) The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

Notice the use of the word "prophets" in verse 2. This is a critical point because Luke is quoting in these verses from more than one prophet. In verse 2, the quotation "Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare the way before thee," is found in Malachi 3:1. Verse 3, on the other hand, is a quotation from Isaiah 40:3. Thus the King James Version is accurate in its use of "prophets" in verse two because Mark is referencing more than one prophetic book.

In contrast, the NIV offers a reading that is demonstrably wrong.

- Mark 1:2-3--It is written in **Isaiah the prophet**: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way" 3) "a voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"

According to the NIV reading, both quotations come from the book of Isaiah. Notice that the NIV's use of "Isaiah the prophet," is singular when according to their own footnotes, Mark is quoting from both Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3. In contrast, the KJV's use of "prophets" is plural thus correctly identifying Mark as quoting from more than one prophet.

The reason the NIV and KJV differ in their rendering of Mark 1:2 has nothing to do with the translation of individual Greek words. Simply stated, the Greek manuscripts used by the King James translators contain the Greek word "prophetes" which is correctly translated prophets. In contrast, the Greek manuscripts used by the NIV translators contain the Greek word for Isaiah, which explains the verse's incorrect reading.

The real issue at stake in the version debate is not how to translate individual words from Greek into English but which set of manuscripts are translated. In the brief example cited above, the reason the KJV and NIV say different things is because their underlying Greek texts are different. Common sense says that one cannot translate a verse that is not in the Greek manuscript one is trying to translate. For example, the reason the NIV leaves verses out of the Bible, such as Matthew 23:14, is because the entire verse is missing from the Greek texts being translated. The reason the King James includes Matthew 23:14 is because the Greek text used by its translators contained the verse. One is left to conclude that the real issue in the version debate is which set of Greek Manuscripts are utilized when translating.

All of this proves Dr. Gipp's point that Satan has succeeded in providing a competing

True the qualities of God himself. The Bible equates the words of God as synonymous with the words penned by human authors. Consider the following cross references:

- Genesis 12:1-3--Now the **LORD had said unto Abram**, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: 2) And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: 3) And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: **and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.**
- Galatians 3:8--**And the scripture**, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, **saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.**

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.(8) 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.

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. Geisler and Howe conclude, "Yes God has spoken, and He has not stuttered. The God of truth has given us the Word of Truth, and it does not contain any untruth in it. The Bible is the unerring Word of God."(9) 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 Word, and God does not deviate from the truth in any point."(10)

A Self-Defeating Argument: Inerrancy and Original Manuscripts

After eloquently and convincingly presenting the argument for inerrancy, Geisler and Howe along with about 98% of professing evangelical Christianity defeat their own argument by asserting that inerrancy only applies to the original manuscripts. In Volume One of his *Systematic Theology*, Professor Geisler tries to explain the relationship between inspiration and inerrancy by offering the following expanded definition:

The inspiration of Scripture is the supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit who, through the different personalities and literary styles of the chosen human authors, **invested the very words of the original books of Holy Scripture, alone and in their entirety, as the very Word of God without error in all that they teach** (including history and science) and is thereby the infallible rule and final authority for the faith and practice of all believers.(11)

At this point, astute readers will perceive a major problem. Evangelical theologians readily admit that none of the original autographs still exist. Therefore, if inerrancy applies only to the

At this point, astute readers will perceive a major problem. Evangelical theologians readily admit that none of the original autographs still exist. Therefore, if inerrancy applies only to the originals, it is a doctrine of no practical consequence. Since the originals have long been lost and since inerrancy only applies to the autographs, we no longer possess an inerrant copy of God's inspired word, according to accepted orthodoxy.

Before proceeding any further, it is important to firmly establish the nearly universal agreement amongst evangelical scholars on this issue, lest we be accused of misrepresenting their position. Three examples from prominent theological reference works should suffice.

Charles C. Ryrie, author of *Basic Theology*, recognizes that many view the doctrines of inerrancy and inspiration as of only theoretical consequence if they only apply to the original autographs. Notice how Ryrie struggles to defend the importance of these doctrines, given their application only to items that no longer exist.

The second excuse for diluting the importance of inerrancy is that since we do not possess any original manuscripts of the Bible, and since inerrancy is related to those originals only, the doctrine of inerrancy is only a theoretical one and therefore nonessential. **We do not possess any of the original manuscripts of the bible, and the doctrine of inerrancy, like inspiration is predicated only on the original manuscripts, not on any of the copies.** The two premises in the statement above are correct, but those particular premises do not prove at all that inerrancy is a nonessential doctrine.

Obviously, **inerrancy can be asserted only in relation to the original manuscripts because only they came directly from God under inspiration.** The very first copy of a letter of Paul, for instance, was in reality only a copy, and not the original that Paul himself wrote or dictated. **Both inspiration and inerrancy are predicated only on the originals.**(12)

This is a prime example of human viewpoint. Notice how there is no mention of the doctrine of preservation. Once again, inerrancy is irrelevant if it only extends to documents that no longer exist. If one accepts this prevalent teaching, upon what basis does one argue that Dan Brown's accusations of Bible tampering are incorrect?

In *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, Paul Enns offers the following definition of inerrancy:

In a final definition it is noted that inerrancy extends to the original manuscripts: **"Inerrancy means that when all the facts are known, the Scripture in their original autographs and properly interpreted will be shown to be wholly true in everything they teach, whether that teaching has to do with doctrine, history, science, geography, geology, or other disciplines or knowledge."**(13)

Again, by the scholars' own admission, the originals are long gone and the existing copies are prone to scribal errors and mistakes. Is it not ironic how those who have spilt so much ink arguing for inerrancy ultimately teach that they do not currently possess a perfect Bible?

Lastly, the popular *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* edited by Walter A. Elwell records the following definition for inerrancy:

the copies Daniel had must have been inerrant, infallible, and just as much the word of God as the original manuscripts.

- Luke 4:16-21--"And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue of the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. . . 21)And he began to say unto them, this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." In Nazareth, they possessed a copy of the prophet Isaiah that Christ himself referred to as scripture.
- Acts 8:26-38—The Ethiopian Eunuch possessed a copy of the same book Christ read from in Luke 4. How far away is Ethiopia from Nazareth? Did the Ethiopian eunuch go up the Nazareth and steal their copy of the book of Isaiah? No. He possessed his own copy of the book. The reader should further observe that Philip calls this copy of Isaiah Scripture in verse 35.

The above texts lead to three conclusions: 1) God inspired every word of Scripture; 2) God promised to preserve these inspired words forever, 3) Preservation does not take place in the original autographs but in a multiplicity of accurate reliable copies that carry as much authority as the originals.

If God has not preserved His words as He said that He would (Psalms 12:6-7), then He has done two things He has never done before. First, he has wasted His own time. Second, God did not do that which He promised he would which would make him a liar.(18) Dr. Gipp summarizes the believing viewpoint regarding the connection between inspiration, inerrancy, and preservation when he writes, "it is always to be remembered that the Bible is a spiritual book which God exerted supernatural force to conceive, and it is reasonable to assume that he could exert that same supernatural force to preserve." (19)

Mistakes and Errors in Modern Versions

How many mistakes would one have to demonstrate in the Bible to disprove inerrancy? The obvious answer is one. Is it possible to have an inerrant Bible in English? Not according to current Evangelical orthodoxy. While attending Bible College, this author heard on numerous occasions that there is no such thing as a perfect Bible in English. As a result, many believers have succumbed to Protestant popery which suggests that one must know Greek in order to understand the Bible properly. Bible teachers and preachers routinely correct the Bible by claiming that the words in the King James Bible are mistranslations of the "original Greek," which, by their own admission, does not exist.

Despite the pervasiveness of this line of thought, there are those who choose to take preservation to its logical conclusion and believe that God's perfect word does exist in the English language. This is the viewpoint of faith not modern scholarship. In an effort to mask the real issue, Satan has created a smoke screen of misinformation aimed at distracting believers from the real issues. From the earliest portions of Scripture Satan has been interested in and actively distorting God's message to mankind. Even a cursory study of Genesis Three demonstrates Satan's primary tactics of questioning God's word, adding to and subtracting from God's word, and flat out denying God's word. Once again, Dr. Gipp offers an excellent summary of the situation, "Satan desires to be worshipped. He has the ability to counterfeit God's actions, and definitely will be involved actively in attempting to destroy God's Word and/or our confidence in that Word, while seeking to replace it with his own version."(20)

the scriptures. Does this mean they did not possess the original manuscripts? Certainly not, it means, as verse 31 states, they did not know the Scriptures because they had not read the copies they had in their possession.

In Exodus 31:18, God gave to Moses an original manuscript “written with the finger of God.” On his way down Mount Sinai Moses saw the sin of the children of Israel and destroys the original autographs that God had just given him (Exodus 32:15-19). How does God respond to this destruction? Does He get upset and curse or punish Moses for the destroying the tables? No, in Exodus 34:27-28 God gives Moses a copy of the original Ten Commandments that Moses had previously destroyed in Chapter 32. Jeremiah 36 records a similar scenario. In verses 22-24, Jehudi the scribe takes a scroll of the written word of God, cuts it with a knife and casts it in the fire in the hearth. God does not get upset. He simply has Jeremiah make a copy of what Jehudi destroyed. Jeremiah 36:27-28 reads,

Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, after that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah saying, Take thee again another roll and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burned in the fire.

These passages clearly teach that God’s determined to preserve his word, not in the original text, but rather through a multiplicity of accurate, reliable copies of the original.

Mobility is the primary reason for preservation taking place through a multiplicity of copies. God never intended for his word only be read, studied, and possessed by those fortunate enough to have an original. For the purposes of illustration consider the following verses and the author’s accompanying commentary:

- Proverbs 25:1 “These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah **copied out.**”
- Daniel 9:2—“In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.” Daniel is in Babylon studying copies of the book of Jeremiah.
- Daniel 9:11-13—“Yea, all Israel have transgressed they law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him. 12) And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us and against our judges that judged us, by brining upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem. 13) As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth.” Daniel also possessed copies of the Law of Moses.
- Daniel 10:20-21— “The said he, knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee: and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come. 21) But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is not that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince.” Notice what Daniel’s angelic messenger calls the texts that Daniel had been studying in verse 21, “scripture of truth.” Is there any error in the truth? No. In order for the angel’s statement to be correct,

Inerrancy is the view that **when all the facts become known, they will demonstrate that the Bible in its original autographs and correctly interrupted is entirely true and never false in all it affirms**, whether that that relates to doctrine or ethics or to the social, physical, or life sciences.

A number of points in this definition deserve discussion. **Inerrancy is not presently demonstrable.** Human knowledge is limited in two ways. First, because of our finitude and sinfulness human beings misinterpret the data that exists. For instance, wrong conclusions can be drawn from inscriptions or texts. Second, we do not possess all the data that comes to bear on the Bible. Some of that data may be lost forever, or they may be awaiting discovery by archeologists. By claiming inerrancy will be shown to be true after all the facts are known, one recognizes this. The defender of inerrancy argues only that there will be no conflict in the end.

Further, inerrancy applies equally to all parts of the Bible as originally written. This means that no present manuscript or copy of scripture, no matter how accurate, can be called inerrant.(14)

This entry by Paul D. Feinberg is truly puzzling. First, according to this definition it is totally pointless to affirmatively argue for inerrancy since all of the information is not known. This so called definition proves nothing. All Mr. Feinberg has done is leave the doors open for modern textual critics such as Bart D. Ehrman, author of *Misquoting Jesus*, and his troop to attack the veracity of God’s written word. Second, Feinberg’s attitude regarding the existing copies does not mirror the viewpoint the Holy Spirit teaches in scripture. In the next section we will study the doctrine of preservation and what the scriptures teach about how the copies factor into the preservation process. Lastly, it is truly fascinating that Feinberg, along with all of the authors quoted in this section, feel the need to call upon Biblical authority for the veracity of inerrancy yet they are totally silent when it comes to the doctrine of preservation, regarding which they are either ignorant or purposefully misleading.

Preservation An Overlooked Doctrine

Perhaps sensing the inconsistency of his position Geisler hedges as to the reliability of the available copies. In Volume One of his *Systematic Theology*, Dr. Geisler seeks to debunk ten of the most common objections to the doctrine of Inerrancy. In the section, “The Objection That Inerrancy Is Based on Non-Existent Originals,” Geisler offers the following counterpoint:

Some object to inerrancy because it affirms that only the original text is inerrant (there being admitted errors in the copies), and the originals are not extant. Hence, all the doctrine of inerrancy provides is a non-existent authority; supposedly, this isn’t any different than having no Bible at all.

This allegation is unfounded. First of all, it’s not true that we do not possess the original text. We do possess it in well-preserved copies; it is the original manuscripts we do not have. We do possess it in well-preserved copies; it is the original manuscripts we do not have. We do have an accurate copy of the original text represented in these manuscripts; the nearly 5,700 New Testament manuscripts we possess contain all or nearly all of the original text, and we can reconstruct the original text with over 99 percent accuracy.

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(15)

A careful reading of the above paragraphs yields a couple of interesting observations. First, the author of the current essay has not been the only one to point out that the current orthodoxy regarding the doctrine of inerrancy ultimately does not prove anything thereby leaving the Bible open to critical and skeptical attack. Second, while Geisler calls these allegations unfounded by referring to an abundance of what he calls accurate copies, he stops short of calling those copies infallible. Consequently, Professor Geisler has not done anything to reassure his readers that inerrancy can still be a viable doctrine despite the absence of the original manuscripts.

Despite these glaring problems, by mentioning the “well-preserved copies,” Dr. Geisler does throw open the doors to discuss the long overlooked and extremely pertinent doctrine of preservation. What does Geisler mean when He mentions “well-preserved copies?” Is he referring to the physical condition of these manuscripts or their trustworthiness with regard to containing the very words God inspired? Based on what Geisler says elsewhere, it is clear he means the former, not the later.

By limiting inerrancy to the originals and failing to acknowledge the doctrine of preservation the Evangelical scholars neglect to protect the doctrine of inspiration. Dr. Samuel C. Gipp, discusses how inspiration without preservation renders inspiration incomplete. Dr. Gipp demonstrates this reality by asking and answering a couple of questions. “Why did God inspire His word perfectly? Obviously the answer comes back, So that man could have every word of God, pure, complete, trustworthy, and without error.” (16) If God went to the trouble to perfectly inspire his word only to allow errors and mistakes to creep into the text it would be inconsistent with His nature and character. Gipp demonstrates the foolishness of limiting inerrancy only to the originals when he asks:

The question is: Could God who overcame time (about 1,700 years transpired from the writing of the oldest Old Testament book and closing of the New Testament in 90 A.D.) and man’s human nature to write the Bible perfectly in the first place, do the same thing to preserve it?

The obvious answer to this question is yes since God can do one he is perfectly capable of doing the other. In fact, just as the Bible internally claims to have been given by inspiration of God it also says that God intends to preserve the very words God breathed. However, one does not learn about preservation in the evangelical systematic theology books because the topic has been totally overlooked.

Despite this oversight by the evangelical leadership there is an option for those who desire to believe the Bible over incomplete scholarship. Consider Psalm 12:6-7, “The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth purified seven times. 7) “Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.” In verse six we see that the words of God’s initial inspiration were pure words. They were inerrant and without mistakes in the original writings. Notice how verse seven qualifies the statement made in verse six. The antecedent to the word “them” in verse 7 is “the words of the LORD,” in verse six. Therefore, the only logical reading of the passage is that God intends to preserve the infallible and inerrant words from “this generation for ever.” Consequently, God extends inerrancy beyond the originals.

Believers are thus forced into an interesting predicament. One can either believe Psalm 12:6-7 or not. If a believer chooses to deny what these verses say, they must conclude that God cannot be taken at his word. This is not a reasonable option since Titus 1:2 says that God cannot lie. On the other hand, it does not make any sense to believe, as many do, that God inspired and preserved his word in the original manuscripts since all the originals were destroyed long ago. All of this proves that God did not preserve his word only as long as the originals were in existence. Dr. Gipp offers the following assessment of the situation, “. . . if God wrote the Bible perfectly in the originals, but we cannot have those same words in a volume of that book today, then it would seem that He wasted His time inspiring it perfectly in the first place.”(17)

The testimony of the Scriptures is quite clear: God has promised and intends to preserve the words of his inspiration throughout all eternity.

- Psalm 33:11--The counsel of the Lord **standeth for ever**, the thoughts of his heart to **all generations**.
- Psalm 119:152--Concerning thy testimonies, I have know of old that thou hast **founded them for ever**.
- Psalm 119: 89--**Forever**, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.
- Isaiah 30:8--Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, **that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever**.
- Matthew 5:18--For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, **till all be fulfilled**.

As we have already established, none of the original autographs remain, yet God promises that his words will remain throughout all eternity. Therefore, God did not use the original manuscripts as the vehicle through which preservation would take place.

So then, where does this eternal preservation take place if not in the original autographs? The believing Bible student will let the Word of God answer this question as well. Consider II Timothy 3:15. “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” Paul, writing under the influence of the Holy Spirit, tells Timothy that from the time of his childhood he knew the Holy Scriptures. Did Timothy’s family possess the original manuscripts for every book of the Bible written at that time? No, they had copies. Notice that Paul calls the copies Timothy’s family possessed Scripture. In other words, the copies in their possession were just as authoritative as the original manuscripts.

It is God’s design to preserve His word through a multiplicity of accurate, reliable copies that are just as authoritative as the original. During his earthly ministry, Jesus Christ expressed the same attitude as Paul in regard to the copies that were available to Him.

Matthew 22:29-31--Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err not knowing the **scriptures**, nor the power of God. 30) For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angles of God in heaven. 31) But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying

Christ rebukes the Sadducees because they did not know the Scriptures. Does this mean they did not possess the original manuscripts? Certainly not, it means, as verse 31 states, they did not know the