

## A DEFENSE OF THE INERRANCY OF THE SCRIPTURE

### Introduction

The doctrine of the prime authority of the Bible has been attacked on its historical and scientific authenticity and by allegedly tracing its teaching to finite (fallible) man. David Horton noted that majorly some liberal apologists have posited that, based on the human works on the text of the Bible, it cannot be inerrant.<sup>1</sup> However, in dealing with such claim, then there is need to explore the verbal plenary<sup>2</sup> views of inspiration (though beyond the scope of this paper in a sense). These are internal evidences in it that the Bible is inspired and inerrant. As a matter of fact, we (evangelicals) have contended that the scriptures, because they come from God himself, must like their divine author, be infallible and inerrant. Infallibility<sup>3</sup> must not be confused with inerrancy. The focus of this paper is on inerrancy which connotes no error in simple term.

### Inerrancy Defined

As put by Grudem, inerrancy of the scriptures means that “the scripture in the original manuscript does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact.”<sup>4</sup> By this word we mean that the Scriptures possess the quality of freedom from error. They are exempt from the liability of mistake, incapable of error.<sup>5</sup> In all their teachings they are in perfect accord with the truth. From this definition, there is an inference that the Bible is not anti-truth; it tells the truth about all historical details in it. In a more simplified sense, Young posits that the

---

<sup>1</sup> David Horton, *The Portable Seminary* (Grand Rapids: Bethany House Publishers, 2006), 38.; also in Norman L. Geisler ed., *Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1979); H.D. McDonald, “The Inspiration of the Bible” in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol., 1 (Walter A. Elwell, ed., (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1988), 306-308.

<sup>2</sup>David Horton, 32; the verbal plenary inspiration is the view of orthodox Christianity. The word *plenary* means “complete or full,” and *verbal* means “the very words of Scripture.” So verbal plenary inspiration is the view that every single word in the Bible is the very word of God. God did not leave man unguided for the work of reavealing the divine truth. It is not just the ideas or thoughts that are inspired, but the words themselves. Second Timothy 3:16–17 uses a unique Greek word, *theopneustos*, which literally means “God-breathed.” Scripture is “breathed out” of the mouth of God. The Bible’s words are God’s words” Benjamin Warfield, *Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (London: SPCK, 2010), 39; A.M. Amodu, *Theological Foundation Course note* (ETSI, 2017), 65.

<sup>3</sup> Simply put as “not faulty”.

<sup>4</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Nothingham, England: Intervarsity Press, 2000), 91.

<sup>5</sup> E.J. Young, *Thy Word is Truth: Some Thoughts on the Biblical Doctrine of Inspiration* (Edinburgh: William B. Eerdmans, 1957), 113.

scriptures possess the quality of freedom from error.<sup>6</sup> They are devoid of vulnerability to mistakes and incapable of error.

### **Accuracy of the Bible**

Some Bible critics argue that we should disregard the Bible because it's impossible that our modern versions could match the original texts. But how does this argument stand up to scrutiny? The Bible was not translated into English until the late 1300s. Did the Bible change over the many centuries up until then? How was the Bible actually put together? How do we know that the Bible contains the books that it should have? These are important questions, and many books have been written to address them. These questions concern the canon—the group or list of books that are considered to be inspired by God. The word canon is originally from a Semitic word, *qanehin* Hebrew. It meant “reed” or “stalk,” which is how it is used in Job 40:21 and 1 Kings 14:15. From this it conveys a secondary meaning of something with which to measure, a standard or benchmark. The word then found its way into Greek, where it took the form *kanon*. And through Greek and into the Latin *canna*, it comes to us in the English form of canon – not to be confused, of course, with the large, heavy military gun known as a cannon (a word which also derives from the root meaning “reed” because it is a tube).<sup>7</sup>

The dictionary states that other meanings of canon include regulations, principles, rules or standards of judgment. These bring us back to the ancient meaning of a measure, standard or benchmark—in this case the issue of which writings meet the standard or benchmark of being considered part of the inspired, hand-recorded Word of God. The word Bible comes to us again through Latin from the Greek word *biblia*, meaning “books.” It contains the books (originally written on scrolls) that are acknowledged or understood to be the canonical—divinely inspired—books of God. One might say, accurately, that they are the standard by which every human being should live. As the apostle Paul wrote to his fellow minister Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:15-17: “From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”<sup>8</sup>

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” “Holy Scriptures” in verse 15 means “sacred writings”—words that were divinely inspired by God. Verse 16 says literally in Greek that

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 113.

<sup>7</sup> [www.thefreedictionary.com/inerrancy](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/inerrancy) in the Bible.

<sup>8</sup> J.B. Green, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Grand Rapid: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989), 76.

“all Scripture is God breathed” (NIV), emphasis added throughout]. And indeed we find the Bible to truly be the breath of God for human beings in whom He placed the breath of life. The Bible is a manual intended by God to show human beings two things: It shows us how to live, and it is a guide to God’s plan for the salvation of mankind.<sup>9</sup>

In congruence to the brief analysis above, Aremu and Malomo, culling from Enns did a comprehensive analysis of an explanation of inerrancy. It goes thus:

1. Inerrancy allows for variety in style – John’s gospel has a simple style; Luke has more sophisticated vocabulary; Paul’s writings reflect the logic of a philosopher.
2. Inerrancy allows for variety in details in explaining the same event. This is observed in the Synoptic gospels.
3. It does not demand verbatim in reporting of events.
4. Inerrancy also allows for departure from standard forms of grammar, for instance, the mixing of metaphor in John 10:9 and vs 11
5. Inerrancy allows for problem passages
6. It demands that the account does not teach error or contradictions (Matt. 5-13 & Luk. 7:1-10).<sup>10</sup>

On this subject matter, to Calvin the theologian an error in scripture is unthinkable. Hence the endless harmonizing, the explaining and interpreter of passages that seems to contradict or to be inaccurate.<sup>11</sup> Torrance opines that “Calvin would fault an apostle for poor style and bad grammar but not for substantive inaccuracy.”<sup>12</sup> An overview of Calvin’s position on inerrancy made John D. Hannah to conclude that John Calvin was an inerrantist and defended the infallibility state of the scripture to the later despite the frailty of the human writer.<sup>13</sup> The researcher submits that; when the Holy Spirit is involved in an issue, laws of nature and human frailty are suspended for the supremacy of the Holy Spirit.

## Conclusion

---

<sup>9</sup> David Horton, *The Portable Seminary* (Minesota: Bethany House, 2006), 23.

<sup>10</sup> Tunde Aremu and Emmanuel O. Malomo, *Christian Theology in African Context* (Ilorin: Amazing-Grace Print Media, 2016), 36.

<sup>11</sup> John Dowey, *Inerrancy of the Scripture* (London: SPCK Press, 2003), 104.

<sup>12</sup> David and Thomas Torrance, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans and Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids: Eedmans Publishers, 1960), 114.

<sup>13</sup> John D. Hanna, *Inerrancy and the Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984), 184.

The fact that there are some things in the Bible that are untruth does not mean the Bible is errant (Job 42:7). The crux of the matter is that; if we subscribed to the inspiration of the scriptures and deny inerrancy, it will be synonymous to denying God because the scripture is God's breath (1 Tim. 3:16) and God cannot be separated from His breath. There are several evidences both internally and externally that the Bible is a unique book entirely different from other books. One significant issue Paul Enns points at is the phrase "thus says the Lord" that runs more than over thirty thousand times in the Bible (e.g. Ex. 14:1; 20:1; Lev. 4:1; Numbers 4:1; Deut. 4:2; 1 Cor. 14:37 etc).<sup>14</sup> These and more are underlying factors to support biblical inerrancy. Denying inerrancy will also amount to humanistic ideology. This is one of the major negative effects of enlightenment. Finally, if we deny inerrancy, we thus say that the scripture is wrong not only in some minor details but also in its doctrine as well. The unfortunate thing is that majority of the Christians today barely have deep understanding of the scripture unlike the nineteen century Christians.<sup>15</sup> That is why it is possible to sway many who have not taken their feet on biblical knowledge away. Emphatically, the researcher subscribed to the inerrancy of the scriptures. On the final note the researcher wishes to allude to the work of Andrew McGowan. McGowan is a dynamic authority with regard to biblical inerrancy and the infallibility of the Holy writs. The author contends that the time-honored language of "infallibility and inerrancy" applied to Scripture was and is adequate for elaborating what evangelical Christians mean when they speak of biblical veracity.<sup>16</sup> This affirms the research's position that the Bible is inerrant. If we all admit that God is infallible, then, we should have no iota problem with the seeming variants in the Bible and should not assume them to be error.

---

<sup>14</sup> Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1989), 155.

<sup>15</sup> Gareth Crossley, *The Old Testament expanded and Applied* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2002), 18.

<sup>16</sup> Andrew McGowan, *The Divine Authenticity of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: InterVarsity, 2007).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Amodu, A.M. *Theological Foundation Course Note*. ETSI, 2017.
- Aremu, Tunde and Malomo, Emmanuel O. *Christian Theology in African Context*. Ilorin: Amazing-Grace Print Media, 2016.
- Dowey, John. *Inerrancy of the Scripture*. London: SPCK Press, 2003.
- Enns, Paul. *The Moody Handbook of Theology*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1989.
- Gareth Crossley, *The Old Testament expanded and Applied*. Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2002.
- Green, J.B. *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Grand Rapid: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989.
- Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology*. Nothingham, England: Intervarsity Press, 2000.
- Hanna, John D. *Inerrancy and the Church*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1984.
- Horton, David. *The Portable Seminary*. Grand Rapids: Bethany House Publishers, 2006.
- McDonald, H.D. "The Inspiration of the Bible" in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol., 1. Walter A. Elwell, ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1988.
- McGowan, Andrew. *The Divine Authenticity of Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Intervarsity, 2007.
- Norman L. Geisler ed., *Inerrancy*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1979.
- Torrance, David and Thomas. *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans and Thessalonians*. Grand Rapids: Eedmans Publishers, 1960.
- Warfield, Benjamin. *Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*. London: SPCK, 2010.
- [www.thefreedictionary.com/inerrancy](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/inerrancy) in the Bible.
- Young, E.J. *Thy Word is Truth: Some Thoughts on the Biblical Doctrine of Inspiration*. Edinburgh: William B. Eerdmans, 1957.