

The Doctrine of Inerrancy and Infallibility of Scripture

I. Introduction

A. Here are several questions I want ask as we look at the doctrines of inerrancy and infallibility.

1. What is the doctrine of inerrancy of Scripture?
2. What is the doctrine of the infallibility of Scripture?
3. How does inerrancy and infallibility relate to one another?
4. Is the Bible truthful?
5. If it is truthful, is it truthful in the whole or in part?
6. Is the Bible trustworthy?
7. How does Jesus view Scripture and how should that impact our view of Scripture?

B. In the introduction to the commentary of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, it states: “The authority of Scripture is a key issue for the Christian church in this and every age. Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are called to show the reality of their discipleship by humbly and faithfully obeying God’s written Word. To stray from Scripture in faith or conduct is disloyalty to our Master. **Recognition of the total truth and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture is essential to a full grasp and adequate confession of its authority.**” (International Council on Biblical Inerrancy 1978)

1. Notice the two things that we should recognize about Scripture: truth and trustworthiness.

a) *Historically, this recognition of the total truth and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture was never a major controversy within the church until the 17th and 18th Centuries. By the time you get to the 19th and 20th century, liberal Christianity has abandon any notion of the truthfulness and trustworthiness of Scripture.*

2. What is truth? (Merriam-Webster: the body of real things, events, and facts)
3. What is trustworthiness? (Merriam-Webster: worthy of confidence, dependable)
4. One author wrote that “a true statement is not just accurate, eliciting a detached kind of assent: it is reliable, worthy of personal commitment and trust.” (A. H. Holmes 1988, 695)

II. Jesus’ View of Scripture

A. **Matthew 16:21** ^{“21} From that time **Jesus began to show** his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

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1. In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus predicted his death and resurrection three times. This is the first time.

2. Notice that is says, “Jesus began to show his disciples.”

a) *How do you think Jesus began to show? What did that look like?*

(1) Jesus was showing them through the Old Testaments Scriptures.

B. **Matthew 17:22-23** ^{“22} As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, “**The Son of Man** is about to be delivered into the hands of men, ²³ and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day.” And they were greatly distressed.”

1. This is the second prediction of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

2. Notice that Jesus refers to the Son of Man? From where does that come language come?

a) *Read Daniel 7:13-14*

C. **Matthew 20:17-19** ^{“17} And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them, ¹⁸ “See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And **the Son of Man** will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death ¹⁹ and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day.”

1. This is the third prediction and Jesus references the Son of Man again.

D. **Luke 24:44-49** ^{“44} Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that **everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.**” ⁴⁵ **Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,** ⁴⁶ and said to them, “Thus it is written, that **the Christ** should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷ and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ **You are witnesses of these things.** ⁴⁹ And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

1. We referenced this passage a couple of weeks ago. When Jesus mentions the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms, this is another way of saying all of the Scriptures.

2. In this case, all of the Old Testament Scriptures point to Jesus and his fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah.

3. Notice also how it points to the dead and resurrection.

4. Jesus points to the **truthfulness and trustworthiness** of the Old Testament to substantiate his position as the promised Messiah and his work on the cross as seen in his death and resurrection.

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E. **John 16:12-15** ¹² “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ **When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth**, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, for **he will take what is mine and declare it to you**. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that **he will take what is mine and declare it to you**.

1. I bring this passage to your attention because it gives us a glimpse into the **truth and trustworthiness** of the New Testament.
2. Jesus is speaking in this passage. To whom is he talking? His disciples.
3. Who would eventually write the New Testament? His disciples.
4. Who will “guide [the disciples] into all truth?” The Holy Spirit.
5. Jesus then says twice, “he [the Holy Spirit] will take what is mine and declare it to you.”
6. This passage helps us understand that after the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Holy Spirit will declare truth to Jesus’ disciples. This truth is embodied in New Testament.

III. Modern Period

A. The Age of Reason (the Enlightenment: c. 1650-1800) (Evans 2010)

1. Human reason was **adequate**: As such, human reason could discover truth using modern techniques.
2. Human reason was **autonomous**: Human reason no longer answered to God. It answered to itself.
3. The Bible was merely a human document subject to the same criticism as any other ancient book.
4. Events in the Bible were either irrational or naturalistic explanations were used to understand what really happened.

a) *Examples*

- (1) The Exodus
- (2) The Incarnation of Jesus Christ
- (3) The Bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ

B. Higher Criticism and the Documentary Hypothesis

1. Did Moses Write the Pentateuch? This is one of the dominant and underlying questions that led to the Documentary Hypothesis.

C. Protestant Liberalism (19th and 20th Century)

1. As Higher Criticism becomes firmly rooted in academia, Darwinism also added to this soil further invigorates the academics to ask questions beyond the authorship of the Scriptures. Their skeptical minds are now asking questions about the trustworthiness of the stories themselves.

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2. The theologians are accepting alternate ideas and explanations about the origins of man. This led them to reject God as the creator of man and the universe. Natural and scientific theories are accepted as explanations.

D. Neo-Orthodoxy (Evans 2010)

1. Another response to liberalism or modernism was Neo-orthodoxy. In the wake of the First World War many found the optimism of the older liberalism, with its notions of human perfectibility, to be hopelessly naïve.

2. One thing that the Neo-orthodox theologians did have in common was a rejection of inerrancy. For example, for Karl Barth the only divine revelation, strictly speaking, is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, and the Bible is but a fallible human "witness to revelation" which "becomes" the Word of God as the Holy Spirit uses it to illumine hearts and minds.

3. Frequently, among the Neo-orthodox, one finds the formula: the Bible is not revelation; it is "witness" to revelation and by the power of the Holy Spirit it becomes revelation.

E. The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy

1. Article IX: Inerrancy

a) We affirm that **inspiration**, though not conferring omniscience, **guaranteed true and trustworthy** utterance on all matters of which the biblical authors were moved to speak and write.

b) We deny that the finitude or fallenness of these writers, by necessity or otherwise, introduced distortion or falsehood into God's Word.

(1) Inspiration [plenary, verbal inspiration] leads to truthfulness and trustworthiness of the Bible.

(2) It needs to be noted that it is the autographs that are without error (Article X).

2. Article XI: Infallibility

a) We affirm that Scripture, having been given by divine inspiration, is infallible, so that, **far from misleading us, it is true and reliable in all the matters it addresses.**

b) We deny that it is possible for the Bible to be at the same time infallible and errant in its assertions. **Infallibility and inerrancy may be distinguished, but not separated.**

3. Article XII: Inerrancy of the Whole

a) We affirm that Scripture **in its entirety** is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit.

(1) This correlates with the doctrine of inspiration be plenary (whole).

b) We deny that biblical infallibility and inerrancy **are limited** to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science.

(1) This is a denial of the idea of limited errancy.

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c) We further deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood.