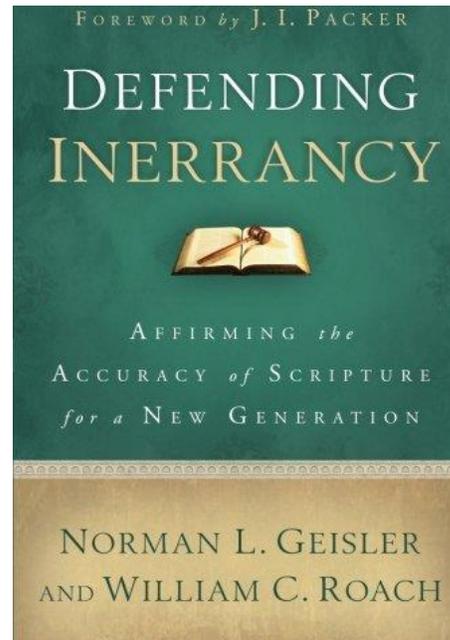
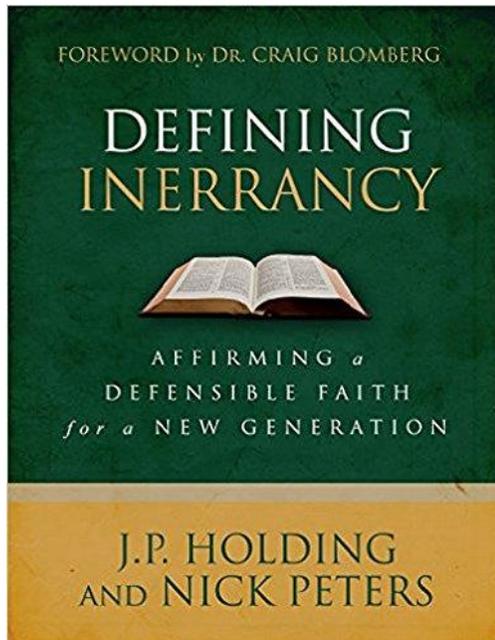


Another Battle for the Bible (The Debate Over Inerrancy of Scripture)

Pastor Kelly Sensenig



Another battle and heated debate has been brewing today over the doctrine of inerrancy. The main issue is the question, "To what extent is it appropriate to make use of information from outside of Scripture, in order to interpret Scripture?" The battle for the accuracy and authenticity of the Bible continues to spark much interest among the evangelical community and has in some sense come to a boiling point. This debate continues to erupt because a new meaning has been assigned to inerrancy (contextual inerrancy). The two schools of thought are said to be traditional and contextual. Holding and Peter's has written an eBook entitled "Defining Inerrancy" which is a new approach to understanding inerrancy. This was written not only to express their views on this subject but to counter a previously written book by Geisler and Roach that defends traditional inerrancy.

Many who claim to be evangelicals will not affirm the Bible to be without error. In fact, a growing number of professors in evangelical colleges do not accept the Biblical account of creation as true. Some believe that there are historical errors in the Bible and contradictions between parallel accounts. A few have gone so far as to say that the Bible errs on doctrinal and moral issues, such as Paul's teaching on

the role of women or his condemnation of homosexuality. They advocate re-interpreting these issues in light of modern knowledge.

In this study, I would like to share my thoughts regarding the revised and progressive understanding of inerrancy that is being promoted by Holding and Peters, as well as others, in their current writings. One thing is certain; using this contextualization method or approach to understanding the Bible has caused a giant controversy in our present evangelical landscape. The reason for all the fuss is because this new approach to inerrancy actually has an eroding effect on inerrancy and leaves inerrancy in the hands of scholars and sources outside the Bible. In the 20th century, liberal theologians redefined inerrancy, and this is a trend that is still with us today. My firm belief is that any decision to mistrust God's words is a decision to trust someone else's!

Contextual Inerrancy

The authors put forth their thesis in a clear fashion by saying that many are “reading it (the Bible) as a text out of time, and therefore without respect to critical defining contexts during the time of its writing.” The book also suggests: “In our view, traditionalists make inerrancy harder (e. g., woodenly literalistic) to defend by refusing to admit to contextualizing solutions (e.g., recognizing literary genres to help reveal deeper contextualized meaning).”

The contexts these authors are talking about are not contexts related to *who* wrote a text of Scripture and *why* they wrote it. Holding and Stevens are referring to looking at contexts which are foreign to the Biblical text, such as Roman, Grecian, and other Far Eastern literature of ancient societies, whose findings might confirm that a non-literal meaning should be assigned to a historical narrative presented in the Bible. When looking at the contexts of these extrabiblical sources, it is sometimes necessary to superimpose a literary device on a Bible text to dehistoricize it or negate its literalness, so one can better understand the author's original intent and teaching.

In a nutshell, those who embrace “contextualization inerrancy” portray the Bible as possessing limited inerrancy (limited truth), instead of unlimited inerrancy (total truth) as it relates to certain historical events, science, chronologies, geography, etc. The literal and historical narrative is not the only way to report history

truthfully. According to this view, some Bible passages and events presented in Scripture, as literal or historical narratives, are not necessarily historically or scientifically accurate, since God is not always concerned about exactness and accuracy regarding certain statements found in the Bible, even those statements that appear in the gospel records.

Listen to Holding: “Of particular relevance are arguments like: that because the Gospels fit into the genre of Greco-Roman biography, they had a certain degree of flexibility in terms of how they reported material. Portions that seem like straight narrative history, therefore, may not be” (Holding, J. P. *Defining Inerrancy: Affirming a Defensible Faith for a New Generation* - Kindle Locations 456-458).

Listen to Peters: “Do we exclude sources outside of Scripture? This is problematic, as it assumes Scripture is written in a vacuum. Scripture, at times, points to other sources including including, unfortunately, some we don’t have like the Book of Jasher. It is also apparent that whoever wrote 1 and 2 Kings used other sources, as he frequently asks, “Are not all the acts of X recorded in Y?” (Holding, J. P. *Defining Inerrancy: Affirming a Defensible Faith for a New Generation* - Kindle Locations 1405-1407).

According to these writers, God was less concerned with precision and chronological order than the modern world is today. For this reason, various Bible texts can be viewed as presenting truth in a “coded” or “hidden” way that can only be discovered by looking at different contexts outside Scripture such as different cultures, literature, ancient commentaries like the Midrash, rabbinic interpretation, experts in rhetoric in the Biblical world, and different societal genres within the ancient world. Holding concludes: “The social and cultural values of the Biblical world were such that a literary production could act as a sort of coded message to report an entirely different truth than what one would get if a text were read as historical narrative” (Holding, J. P. *Defining Inerrancy: Affirming a Defensible Faith for a New Generation* - Kindle Locations 224-225). This approach seems to fit within the category and parameters of the Biblical warning: “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit” (Col. 2:8).

We must remember, as Geisler states:

“The genre of a text is not to be understood by looking outside the text. Rather, it is determined by using the historical-grammatical hermeneutic on the text in its

immediate context, and the more remote context of the rest of Scripture to decide whether it is history, poetry, parable, an allegory, or whatever.”

In other words, the Bible does use different genres of literature (history, poetry, parable, etc.). But these are all known and revealed from *inside* the Bible by use of the traditional “grammatical and historical exegesis.

This same contextual view concludes that there are some discrepancies and contradictions in the Bible which further proves that God was not that concerned with minute details. These errors confirm that we should be open to viewing certain narratives and events in the Bible as non-literal. We should also apply literary devices to these texts and allow them to teach something else, other than literal history. Denying literalism helps us solve some of these problematic passages.

According to this view, God did not necessarily give us all the information we need in the Bible; therefore, we need to fill in the gaps at certain places, figure out what the Bible is actually teaching, and confirm the truth, when looking at literary contexts outside the realm of Scripture. We need to compare extrabiblical sources outside the Bible, with the Bible, and this enables us to determine the true meaning of Scripture, regarding the literalness of certain events mentioned in the Bible, the creation of the universe and the origins of life, and other historical events, including those involving Jesus’ life and ministry.

This methodology seeks to import foreign ideas into the Biblical text, which can at times deny factual accuracy and historical events, viewing certain statements and events as only symbols aimed to teach us some specific truth. In doing this, the contextualizers will sometimes take passages, which present literal truths, and by using various literary devices, turn them into only a symbolic representation of something else. They will at times take historical narratives and rework them into nonliteral accounts and dehistoricize them.

In this view, inerrancy is propped up by other sources, such as ancient literature in other societies, Near East culture, and other outside contexts, which help one to better understand the meaning of the Bible. In essence, as a stand-alone document, the truth of the Bible is limited, but the truth and inerrancy can be determined in some cases by further research and the application of other contexts outside the Bible (ancient cultures and societies, literature, different Grecian and

Roman genres). This contextual approach, they say, will help us correct, interpret, and understand what the Bible is teaching.

Essentially, this view says that we must view the Bible through the lens of different contexts outside the Bible in order to better understand its meaning. Hence, we have the birth of contextual inerrancy. However, I like to refer to it as methodological madness! Richard Land has called this contextual approach as “dangerous flirtation with erroneous philosophies, higher criticism, and faulty hermeneutical methodologies.” He is correct. This kind of methodology poisons the well of inerrancy. I must agree with John MacArthur who gives us the traditionalist view as one in which is “simple, childlike trust in Christ and belief in His word.”



Many today are either “dancing on the edges” of denying inerrancy or they are simply out-right denying it. We used to say, “If you want the truth then read the Bible.” However, today we are led to believe that we must also read other ancient documents that shed light on the Bible, which might correct it, or give us a better understanding of its content, and the

author’s real understanding and intent behind his words. This is the strange theory of contextualization. We must remember that culture, ancient literature and commentaries, or considering the contextual genre of different societies should never undo the clearly revealed facts, historical narratives, and literal statements of the Bible. The inscripturated word is more sure (2 Pet. 1:19) than the Apostle’s own eye witness accounts. That pretty much leaves out room for human creativity or contextual adjustments at any level!

There are three ways in which the contextualizing method denies inerrancy (a completed Bible without error). First, it denies inerrancy by claiming that there may be truth outside the Bible that we need to know about in order to better understand the Bible. Therefore, we need access to other facts to understand the Bible properly. The contextual methodology reaches outside the Bible for added information to interpret and understand the Bible. As previously mentioned, it feels the need to import foreign contexts (outside the Bible) into the text of Scripture,

such as comparative literature, ancient historiographical reporting, genre, and culture, in order to better understand and grasp its meaning.

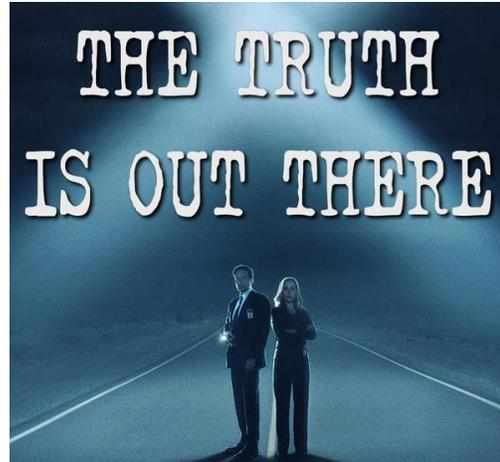
The tragedy of this approach is that it can often place tradition above the text. It can also replace Biblical revelation with biased evolutionary myth. For instance, this type of methodology takes people to the contexts of flawed evolutionary science, which supposedly helps them to better understand Genesis and the creation account, blending evolution with the origins of life. The claim is made that we need to observe the ancient, social, and literary world of the Bible, and other sources that help explain creation, and then apply these outside sources and contexts to the Bible, so we can better understand the intended meaning of Scripture. But this denies inerrancy by asserting the Bible is not fully complete, as it is written, and that there may be truth outside the Bible to enable us to better grasp its meaning.

Second, this method denies inerrancy (a completed Bible without error) by opening up a Pandora's box, when claiming that God did not reveal all of His words to us. In other words, we don't really possess all the words that God intended us to have. This is a rather bold way of denying inerrancy. Since there is likely some things that God missed, we need to, in some cases, fill in the blanks to better understand what was being taught in the Bible. We do this by searching other contexts outside the Bible (other cultures, societies, and literature) to get a better idea about what was being revealed to us in the Bible.

Third, this concept of contextualization also denies inerrancy (a completed Bible without error) by assuming that there are specific errors and discrepancies in the Bible, which of course strengthens their position on contextualization inerrancy. Since there are problem passages in the Bible, we need to investigate outside sources to figure out what is wrong with them, and then discover the real truth that God wanted to convey to us. The answers to these Bible discrepancies and other problem passages can be found by looking at literary contexts outside the Bible.

Sadly, today there are many within the broad spectrum of evangelicalism, which are dismissing Bible texts as being inaccurate, on the basis that they are non-literal and non-historical. They arrive at this conclusion by using their debunked theory of contextualization. This type of methodology (looking in contexts outside the Bible) has caused some to begin to question the supernatural, historical accuracy in the Gospels, the literal interpretation of Bible passages, subordination in marriage, a

literal creation account, the historicity of the Fall and a global Genesis Flood, along with other important truths revealed in the Bible. We must remember that “the truth is not out there” – it’s in the Bible! The assumption that truth might be found or confirmed outside the Bible sounds more like a science fiction movie where people are searching for aliens!



The reason why some evangelicals search for truth outside the Bible is simple. They don't believe in inerrancy. When you fail to embrace inerrancy (a completed Bible without error) and want to support the alleged findings of science and scholarship, the door is open for rejecting clear and unmistakable propositional truths. No one can tell how far people will drift from clearly revealed truth when this methodology is taught and embraced. But right now, the major seminaries are rejecting the creation account, as God revealed it, by reading evolutionary myth into it, a philosophy which is based upon this type of contextual methodology. When it comes to science, we must always remember that we do not measure the Bible by science, but science by the Bible. Many will say, "The Bible is not a textbook of science." While this is true, such a statement should not be used to deceive people into thinking that when the Bible speaks on a matter that is related to science, that it might be in error.

Two great influences against inerrancy were the Swiss Reformed theologian Karl Barth (1886–1968) and German Lutheran theologian Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976). Barth developed the theory of Neo-Orthodoxy. They taught that Scripture is not the revelation of God's Word but, rather, a witness to God's Word. Thus, fallible men wrote the Bible, and it is not without error. This dangerous mindset that the Bible contains errors prevails in evangelicalism today.

Of course, there will obviously be degrees of departure from revelatory truth found in the written Word (2 Tim. 1:19-20) when one departs from a Biblical understanding of inerrancy. However, the ultimate end of this has already been seen in the movements of Modernism, Liberalism, and Neo-Orthodoxy, which all deny in one degree or another the unlimited verbal inspiration and unlimited inerrancy of the Bible. However, when people begin to deny unlimited inspiration

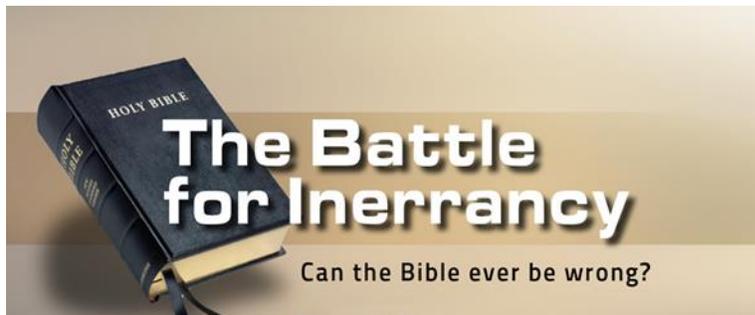
and inerrancy of Scripture, they open the door to denying doctrinal truth, literal truth, and the clear propositional truths and statements presented in the Bible.

Randall Price gives this important advice:

“Consequently, if Scripture is not totally inerrant with reference to the things of this world, it has no authority to command men in the world of men and has no claim above any other religious texts produced by mankind.”

A New Generation

The cover of this eBook also suggests that a new meaning for inerrancy (contextualization inerrancy) has been recently discovered for a “new generation” of Christians, so they can better defend their faith. This sounds like the old generations of Christians, who lived since the days of the apostles, and up to the time of the writing of this book, could not properly defend and share their faith. However, this was not the case as the Scriptures clearly reveal (Acts 8:4; 1 Pet. 3:15). The text of 1 Thessalonians 1:8 says, “For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.”



Christians have historically embraced a different view of inerrancy than what is being taught today by some within the evangelical community. Christians have firmly believed and taught that the Bible is

completely accurate, not riddled with errors or discrepancies, not a partial revelation of truth, but entirely true, and that its words and meaning can be fully accepted as being reliable and trustworthy, “as it is in truth, the word of God” (1 Thess. 2:13).

Walter C. Kaiser wrote:

“The Inerrancy of the Bible seeks to represent the claims of the Biblical text that all it says is true and accords with the actual and the real in life and history as it was intended by the writers of Scripture. The total truthfulness of Scripture is claimed

because this is what Scripture teaches and without it we are left to our own devices to try to figure who God is and what he has said.”

Geisler and Roach, in their book, are trying to teach a new generation of Christians the time-tested definition of inerrancy and the Biblical basis for inerrancy (a Bible without error), while Holding and Peters are attempting to redefine inerrancy for a new generation of Christians, which in some ways fits in with the popular culture, and which makes it more palatable to the masses. The fact that there must be truth outside the Bible in various cultures and other literature (inclusivism), which helps us to understand the true message of the Bible (especially controversial passages), sounds more respectable and palatable to many people than the words: “There is no truth outside the Bible.”

Christians have historically accepted the writings of the Bible as being untainted, without error, and completely true. They have throughout history agreed with the statements of Scripture that support the doctrine of inerrancy and which confirm the Bible is completely true and trustworthy.

2 Corinthians 13:8

“For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.”

Ephesians 4:15

“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ.”

2 Timothy 4:4

“And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”

2 Peter 1:12

“Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know *them*, and be established in the present truth.”

1 John 4:6

“We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.”

2 John 1:1

“The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth.”

The Bible does teach its own inerrancy. Inerrancy is not simply a logical deduction from reading the Bible. To say the Bible is the Word of God and is therefore without error because the Bible itself makes this claim is seen by many evangelicals as circular reasoning. However, the Bible is a divine revelation given by God Himself (2 Tim. 3:16). Therefore, it is a self-proclaimed and self-contained inerrant, divine revelation, which repeatedly claims that it is true. It’s statements about itself reveal that it can be trusted as God’s truthful witness to mankind. This is why the church has historically embraced the doctrine of inerrancy and it’s why the Church has been called “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). This means that Christians should never deny the truth and trustworthiness of Scripture. We are called upon to “rightly divide the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

Psalm 12:6 confirms inerrancy:

“The words of the LORD *are* pure words: *as* silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.”

Psalm 19:7-10 also supports the doctrine of inerrancy:

“The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD *are* true and righteous altogether. More to be desired *are* *they* than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.”

Jesus taught in John 17:17, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” This should settle the debate over inerrancy once and for all! To deny that the Bible is without error (inerrant) and it’s not fully complete and trustworthy, due to a loss in contextualization, is to tread on a slippery slope that can lead to doubt, diversion, and even denial. In the words of the devil, “Yea, hath God said...” (Gen. 3:1).



James Boice sounds an alarm that ought to awaken and arouse every evangelical alive today, when he writes: “For the last hundred years Christians have seen the Bible attacked directly by modern liberal scholarship and have recognized the danger. Today a greater danger threatens—the danger of an indirect attack in which the Bible is confessed to be the Word of God, the only proper rule for Christian faith and practice, but is said to contain errors.

“This threat is greatest because it is often unnoticed by normal Christian people. If a liberal denies the virgin birth, questions the miracles of Christ or even declares that Jesus was only a man (as many are still doing), most Christians recognize this for what it is—unbelief. They see the hand of Satan in it. He is the one who questioned the Word of God in the first recorded conversation in the Bible, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’ ... You will not surely die ... God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:1, 4). But if someone pretending to be an evangelical says, “Sure I believe in the Bible as you do, but what difference does it make if there are a few mistakes in it? After all, the Bible isn’t a history book. It’s not a science book. It only tells us about God and salvation.” Many Christians fail to see that this is also an attack on the Bible and so have their faith undermined without their even knowing it” (James Montgomery Boice, *Does Inerrancy Matter?* p. 28).

Geisler, in responding to a contextualization of Matthew, shows a slippery-slope fallacy in which he says, “if Matthew can create myths about Jesus’ life that are not true, then he can also create sayings of Jesus that Jesus never said. If this were the case, then we would be left with no assurance as to the truth of what Jesus actually did or said.” He is right. When you start questioning the words, historical narratives, literalness, and complete trustworthiness of certain portions of God’s Word, then Satan will grease the tracks and there is no telling where you will end up in your faith and practice. Beware of this!

J. Hampton Keathley states:

“If the Bible teaches inerrancy, then to deny it is to deny that which the Scripture claims is true. Further, if the Bible contains some errors, how can we be sure that its claims concerning Christ, salvation, man, etc., are true? Also, the chronology, geography, and history of the Bible are often woven together like strands of a basket with vital spiritual truths. As you cannot start pulling strands out of a woven basket without doing damage to the whole, so it is with the Bible.”

Once you go down the road of limiting inerrancy, it does not stop with inconsequential errors. If you have followed some of the recent discussions about homosexuality that have been going on, you will see that people are now suggesting that Paul was a first century Jew, who had a limited understanding of sex in general, and homosexuality in particular. It's now being suggested that some of his negative statements on homosexuality should only be placed in the *context* of pagan relationships, not loving and committed homosexual relationships. This is the kind of rotten fruit that comes from those who teach that the Scriptures have contradictions and they are not inerrant.

Hampton Keathley mentions some doctrinal matters which may be affected by denying inerrancy, include the following.

- (1) A denial of the historical fall of Adam.
- (2) A denial of the facts of the experiences of the Prophet Jonah.
- (3) An explaining away of some of the miracles of both the Old and New Testaments.
- (4) A denial of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.
- (5) A belief in two or more authors of the Book of Isaiah.
- (6) A flirting with or embracing of liberation theology with its redefining of sin (as societal rather than individual) and salvation (as political and temporal rather than spiritual and eternal).

Some lifestyle errors that may follow a denial of inerrancy include the following.

- (1) A loose view of the seriousness of adultery.
- (2) A loose view of the seriousness of homosexuality.
- (3) A loose view of divorce and remarriage.
- (4) Cultural reinterpretation of some of the teachings of the Bible (e.g., teaching on women, teaching on civil obedience).
- (5) A tendency to view the Bible through a modern psychological grid.

Inerrancy is an important doctrine, the denial or even diluting of which may result in serious doctrinal and life errors.

John Ankerberg once said:

“The Bible provides the foundational beliefs of Christianity. Biblical inerrancy, properly understood, affirms Scripture’s accuracy in every area it addresses.”

Errantists and inerrantists approach the Bible from two different perspectives. The individual who rejects inerrancy includes the possibility and probability that errors can be found in the Bible. The person who embraces inerrancy concludes that the Bible contains no errors, which when properly explained, can be understood. There may be some problems that are yet unexplainable to this person. However, the person who wholeheartedly embraces inerrancy believes these “seeming contradictions” are not errors and that further research will demonstrate this fact, or he will understand the solution someday when he gets to Heaven.

Inerrancy allows for variety in the style or writing and variety in the details of explaining the same event. Inerrancy does not demand verbatim reporting of Biblical events. Inerrancy also allows for departure from some standard forms of English grammar. Inerrancy allows for problem passages which may not all have solutions in our minds. Inerrancy doesn’t mean everything in the Bible is true. We have the record of men lying (Joshua 9) and even the lies and words of the devil himself (Gen. 3:4). In other words, God has chosen to reveal some errant statements in His inerrant Word but we can be sure these are accurate records of what took place. One thing is certain; inerrancy demands the Biblical account does not teach errors or contradictions. Both the recording and the content of the inspired words result in inerrancy (absence of errors) and infallibility (incapable of error).

J. Hampton Keathley wrote this about the seeming contradictions and inerrancy: “In some cases the solution awaits the findings of the archaeologist’s spade; in another case it awaits the linguist’s research; in other cases the solution may never be discovered for other reasons. The solution to some problems must be held in abeyance. The answer, however, is never to suggest there are contradictions or errors in Scripture. If the Scriptures are God-breathed they are entirely without error.”

An Errant Bible



There are several major objections being circulated today, within the broad spectrum of evangelicalism, which assert that we cannot view the Bible as being completely accurate in every detail and in all matters related to science, numbers, chronologies, geography, cosmology, etc. Let me mention a few of these arguments.

First, some conclude that inerrancy is not mentioned in the Bible. This is a strawman argument. Everyone agrees that the words Trinity and Bible are not mentioned in Scripture either. However, this fact does not negate their validity. We often develop terminology to explain what we see taught in the Bible, and the Bible teaches that it is a completely true revelation that is without error and can be fully trusted (Ps. 100:5; 119:160; John 17:17; 2 Cor. 6:7; 2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Thess. 2:13; James 1:18).

Second, it's also taught that inerrancy is a recent doctrine not held by earlier theologians in the development of Bibliology. This certainly is not true. Early theologians believed in Scripture's inerrancy and embraced this doctrine wholeheartedly.

Coming out of the Dark Ages, the Reformers taught the inerrancy of Scripture.

Martin Luther once declared:

"I have learned to ascribe this honor, i.e., infallibility, only to books which are termed canonical, so that I confidently believe that not one of their authors erred" (M. Reu, Luther and the Scriptures, p. 24).

Again, he writes:

"The Scriptures have never erred" (Works of Luther, XV: 1481).

John Calvin referred to the Scriptures as:

"The sure and infallible record" and the "unerring standard" (Institutes, I, 149).

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, wrote:

"Nay, if there be any mistakes in the Bible there may well be a thousand. If there is one falsehood in that book it did not come from the God of truth" (Journal VI: 117).

Theologians down through the years, from various backgrounds, have always mentioned and espoused the belief in inerrancy. This is not a new doctrine.

Jonathan Edwards said:

"Hence we may learn that all the Scripture says to us is certainly true . . . Consider how much it is worth the while to go often to your Bible to hear the great God Himself speak to you. There you may hear Christ speak. How much better must we think this is than the word of men . . . Here all is true; nothing false."

The American Theologian, B. B. Warfield, wrote:

"Thus in every way possible, the church has borne her testimony from the beginning, and still in our day, to her faith in the divine trustworthiness of her Scriptures, in all their affirmations of whatever kind. At no age has it been possible for men to express without rebuke the faintest doubt as to the absolute trustworthiness of their least declaration ... The church has always believed her Scriptures to be the book of God, of which God was in such a sense the author that every one of its affirmations of whatever kind is to be esteemed as the utterance of God, of infallible truth and authority" (Works, I, pp. 57-58).

Lewis Sperry Chafer wrote:

"The Bible claims for itself that on the original parchments every sentence, word, line, mark, point, pen stroke, jot, or tittle was placed there in complete agreement with the divine purpose and will. Thus the omnipotent and omniscient God caused the message to be formed as the precise reproduction of His Word. The original text was not only divine as to its origin, but was infinitely perfect as to its form. It is both necessary and reasonable that God's book – the book of which He is the Author and which brings the revelation and discipline of heaven down to earth – shall, in its original form, be inerrant in all its parts" (Lewis Sperry Chafer, Systematic Theology, Volume 1).

Henry Thiessen adds:

"Not only is Scripture inspired and authoritative, it is also inerrant and infallible. By this we mean that it is without error in the original manuscripts. It is inerrant in all

that it affirms, whether in historical, scientific, moral, or doctrinal matters. Inerrancy extends to all of Scripture and is not limited to certain teachings of Scripture.”

The list of theologians, both Reformed and Dispensational, who espoused and taught inerrancy, could go on and on. Inerrancy was not an invented doctrine of the fundamentalists, which came out of the modernism/fundamentalist controversy, as some of the critics of inerrancy teach. Inerrancy was simply reconfirmed during their period of history in view of the modernistic attacks on the Bible. Inerrancy was the belief of all Christians and the subject of theological confirmation down through the church centuries, from the early Christians who wholeheartedly embraced the truth of God’s revelation (2 Cor. 13:8), to the early church fathers, the Reformers, the revival period of American history, and both past and present-day theologians.

A third argument put forth by errantists is that inerrancy is based on the “original autographs” and they do not exist, so the doctrine cannot be proven or disproven. This argument cannot be defended simply because thousands of manuscripts do exist and agree with each other without disproving inerrancy. For instance, we can confirm that the New Testament has survived in more manuscripts than any other book from antiquity and that among the manuscripts, there is agreement to the truthful witness of Scripture. In other words, we can be sure that the Bible is inerrant in the original manuscripts and that it has been passed down to us without compromising inerrancy.

We do know that if the ancient copyists made an error, they burned the manuscript! This is how precise they were in transferring and maintaining the copies of ancient Scripture. With the thousands of accurate manuscripts available that have been thoroughly analyzed, there has been no so-called error which has been verified to disprove inerrancy.

These arguments are put forth to try and discredit those who fully embrace an inerrant Bible. Holding seems to suggest that inerrancy is not the bedrock issue that others make it out to be. We can have disagreements about it. Here is what he states: “Fundamentalism had the questionable virtue of having a set list (the ‘fundamentals’) of things you had to believe before you peeled the backing from the sticker and put it on your forehead. It doesn't look to me like there's any such

list for 'Evangelical,' leaving us with multiple competing standards that 'Evangelicals' disagree on" (Holding, J. P. *Defining Inerrancy: Affirming a Defensible Faith for a New Generation* - Kindle Locations 1141-1144).

Stevens takes a shot at inerrantists: "In the final analysis, the wrangling over these articles has shown us that there may be a need to further define and discuss the particulars of inerrancy. Those who framed the Chicago Statement were no doubt earnest in their work, but they were also undeniably a group of a certain limited vision and knowledge" (Holding, J. P. *Defining Inerrancy: Affirming a Defensible Faith for a New Generation* - Kindle Locations 1427-1429).

Stevens also states: "Geisler also finds it scary that when Blomberg examines the gospels, he does not presuppose inerrancy. I don't. I find that good scholarship. If you are to approach the text seriously, you have to be willing to examine arguments against it seriously" (Holding, J. P. *Defining Inerrancy: Affirming a Defensible Faith for a New Generation* - Kindle Locations 1539-1540).

Holding argues against the traditional view of inerrancy and those who attack his position, in this way: "The average traditionalist in the pew might either have never heard of something like *Age of Reason*, or if they did hear of it, they were so surrounded by reinforcing traditionalist dogma that their immediate inclination was to simply dismiss Paine as a heathen (Holding, J. P. *Defining Inerrancy: Affirming a Defensible Faith for a New Generation* - Kindle Location 1590). Well, if the shoe fits, wear it! Thomas Paine was an apostate who issued a book in the year 1794, entitled, "The Age of Reason." This book was a severe attack on Christianity and the Bible.

It's clear that both Holding and Stevens, among other evangelicals today, possess a low view of inerrancy and Biblical authority by these rather candid and revealing statements. They are content with historical criticism and placing certain texts of the Bible in suspicion. Like so many today, they seem to deny the historic evangelical doctrine of inerrancy. The title of this book "DEFINING INERRANCY" should actually be retitled as "DENYING INERRANCY." It's very sad, but many Christians who were blogging about this newer book have been singing its praises. However, what is being taught in this book and in many Bible-based institutions of today is an outright denial of inerrancy. Hidden behind the veil of scholarship, credentials, and the spinning of words is the age-old practice of questioning what

God has said and written to us from His “more sure word of prophecy” (2 Pet. 1:19). Apparently Holden and Stevens did not get this memo for they are sure that truth can be found outside the Bible!

A Perfect God and a Perfect Bible

Dr. Lehman Strauss has written:

“Admitting that God has spoken through the Scriptures, of necessity it follows that He expressed Himself accurately. The very nature of God demands that this be so. It is unreasonable to imagine that God would even allow His communication to man to go unguarded. Because the Scriptures came from God Himself, they must, like their Author, be inerrant. Inspiration and inerrancy are inseparably linked together. There is no point in claiming inspiration for the Scriptures if they do not possess the quality of freedom from error or if they are liable to mistake. To say that there are errors in the Bible is to say that there are errors in God Himself. The very nature of the case demands inerrancy.”



Dr. Strauss, one of my favorite Bible teachers, was correct in this assessment. The doctrine of inerrancy actually stems from the doctrine of God and His perfections.

Premise #1: God is true (Romans 3:4).

Premise #2: God breathed out the Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16).

Conclusion: Therefore, the Scriptures are true (John 17:17).

One cannot affirm the truthfulness of God and at the same time deny the truthfulness of the Bible. This is because a truthful God “that cannot lie” (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18; Numb. 23:19) gave us a truthful Bible in all matters related to theology, science, historical narratives, and living the Christian life. The Holy Spirit is also called “the Spirit of truth” (John 14:26), who is the real author of Scriptures, and He is the One who gave the Scripture’s to the authors to record. The divine author of Scripture can only give us a Book that is divinely inspired and without error. This is what the Bible affirms about itself (2 Tim. 3:16).

“The Bible stands every test we give it,
For its Author is divine;
By grace alone I expect to live it,
And to prove and to make it mine.”

The very character of the triune God demands that His verbal revelation in Scripture is truth. A truthful God can only give us a truthful Bible. He would not call His impeccability into question by giving us a Bible that was untrue. A flawed Bible answers to a flawed God. Perish the thought! A God of truth, who cannot lie, could not and would not authorize error. God cannot err, and the Scripture that proceeds from Him is the inspired, verbal, infallible Word of God. “Let God be true, but every man a liar” (Romans 3:4)!



Rolland McCune said:

“The kind of Bible one believes in is directly proportionate to the kind of God one believes in.”

Deuteronomy 32:4 declares:

“*He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.*”

Psalm 86:15 adds:

“But thou, O Lord, *art* a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.”

Revelation 15:3 is a heavenly scene affirming inerrancy:

“And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous *are* thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true *are* thy ways, thou King of saints.”

Can this kind of God give us a document (the Bible) which contains discrepancies, errors, and which promotes things that are not true? Can a God of absolute truth and perfection give us something that has imperfections and flaws? Heaven knows the answer to this (“just and true are thy ways”) and we should echo the same

sentiment in our declaration and defense of the “word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). The Bible’s teaching regarding its inspiration (2 Tim. 3:16), the accreditation of its messengers (Deut. 13:1-5; 18:20-22; 2 Pet. 1:21), the declaration of its own authority (Matt. 5:17; John 10:34-35), and the character of God (Titus 1:2) teach that the Bible is inerrant.

Ravi Zacharias, President, Ravi Zacharias International Ministries, wrote:

“The Bible is the Word of God, and God cannot err. So, to deny inerrancy, rightly understood, is to attack the very character of God. Those who deny inerrancy, soon enter the dangerous terrain of denying all Scriptural authority for both doctrine and practice.”

The English Language



The accepted meaning of the word “inerrancy” in the English-speaking language means to be without error. If words mean something, then we must arrive at this understanding of the word inerrancy. Synonyms of inerrancy would include certainty, assuredness, and infallibility. To try and *redefine* this meaning, as Holding and Peters do in their book, is to *reinvent* the English language. Christians have historically believed, based on the statements of the Bible, fulfilled prophecy, and archaeological findings, that the Bible is true from cover to cover in all matters of faith and practice, and in its historical, chronological, creative, and scientific accuracies. However, one liberal went so far as to say that “the theory of inerrancy that adopts the slogan, ‘The Book, the whole Book, and nothing but the Book,’ is blinded by a superstitious bibliolatry.”

As I read and reviewed this book, it’s as if Holding and Peters are saying that the Bible is inerrant (without error) only as ancient documents, literature, and cultures revealed outside the Bible are applied to it, which give us the truer picture, fuller understanding, and meaning of Scripture. In other words, we can arrive at Biblical inerrancy only when we apply the contexts of ancient and historical writings, which exist outside the Bible, but we cannot believe in inerrancy by simply submitting ourselves to the writings of Scripture themselves.

This whole matter of contextualization involves interpreting the Bible on the basis of ancient culture, the understanding of literature outside the Bible, and understanding the extensive social customs during the days of Moses, Jesus, and the apostles. However, this flawed hermeneutical approach has the potential to override the clearly revealed statements and literal understanding of the Bible, and places doubt on the Bible, instead of maintaining a belief that God preserved the integrity of the words and factual statements of Scripture. If something may not be true on the basis that it has not been fully recorded, revealed and explained, or is not a totally accurate reflection of the entire truth that Moses, Jesus, or Paul intended to teach (leaving some things out), as the contextualization theory suggests, then this places suspicion and doubt on Scripture.

The contextualization approach to inerrancy readily admits that the Bible has discrepancies, errors, and contradictions. It also reasons that these errors and Scripture itself, which is sometimes lacking in its complete meaning and full revelation, can be correctly understood only when plugging ancient contexts into the Bible. It maintains that the Bible needs to be properly interpreted and understood in light of ancient customs and literature, which gives us the truer and proper understanding of what was being said in its historic context. If this contextual theory is true, then we have lost the inerrancy of the Bible – a Bible that is completely true and without errors. Sadly, how can you trust a Bible that contains errors, and a Bible which may not have all the truth that God intended to give us? Furthermore, how can you trust a Bible that needs to be reinterpreted and understood by literature and contexts outside the clear revelation, facts, and teachings found in the sacred Scripture?

- a. Inerrancy governs our confidence in the truth of the Gospel.

If the Scripture is unreliable, how can we offer the world a reliable Gospel? How can we be sure of the Gospel truth of Christ's death and resurrection if we are suspicious of errors anywhere else in the Bible? It's been said that a pilot will ground his aircraft even on suspicion of the most minor fault, because he is aware that one fault destroys confidence in the complete airplane. If the history contained in the Bible is wrong, how can we be sure that we got the Gospel right?

- b. Inerrancy governs our faith in the value of Christ.

We cannot have a reliable Savior without reliable Scripture. If, as many suggest, the stories in the Gospels are not historically true and the recorded words of Christ are only occasionally His, how do we know what we can trust about Christ? Must we rely upon the conflicting interpretations of a host of critical scholars before we know what Christ was like or what He taught?

c. Inerrancy governs our response to the conclusions of science.

If we believe the Bible contains errors, then we will be quick to accept scientific theories that appear to prove the Bible wrong. In other words, we will allow the conclusions of science to dictate the accuracy of the Word of God. When we doubt the Bible's inerrancy, we have to invent new principles for interpreting Scripture that for convenience turn history into poetry and facts into myths.

d. Inerrancy governs our attitude to the preaching of Scripture.

A denial of Biblical inerrancy always leads to a loss of confidence in Scripture both in the pulpit and in the pew. If the Bible's history is doubtful and its words are open to dispute, then people understandably lose confidence in it. People want authority. They want to know what God has said.

e. Inerrancy governs our belief in the trustworthy character of God.

Hebrews 6:18 says that it is "impossible for God to lie." If God cannot lie, but He allowed His God-breathed Scriptures to contain errors, this implies that God mishandled inspiration. It would mean that He has allowed His people to be deceived for centuries until modern scholars untangled all of the confusion about inerrancy. It would mean that God left His Word and words open for debate, concerning what Biblical narratives should be understood figuratively or literally by imposing literary devices on the Bible, what should be considered historically true or dismissed as historically inaccurate based on outside sources, and concerning how to contextualize the Bible in the 21 century. It's simple. God is true and therefore the Bible is true. To deny the inerrancy of the Bible is to attack the very trustworthy character of God Himself who has breathed out His own Scriptures and given His seal of approval upon them (John 17:17).



A Different Starting Point

There are evangelicals today who have come to the conclusion that we need a different starting point to determine what is true in the Bible, instead of just believing the Bible is true from cover to cover. In other words, we need to start with historical data, outside literature, and other extra Biblical sources to actually confirm the truth of the Bible in regard to history, geography, science, cosmology and other matters. In other words, we need something else, other than the statements found in the Bible, to confirm what is true and accurately stated in the Bible.

Of course, these evangelicals are not simply talking about manuscript evidence, archeological findings, fulfilled prophecy, and the internal evidence which confirms and verifies the authenticity of Scripture. They are suggesting that we begin with *critical thinking* toward the authenticity of the Bible and always seek to find outside support to authenticate its claims and statements, with the goal of either approving or disproving what it says. Many evangelicals are saying that we need to be broadminded in our thinking about the Bible, question its inerrancy, even if we do accept the Bible as being true, in most areas.

Daniel Wallace, who endorses contextualization and limited inerrancy, reveals his starting point, when he states: “My starting point for inerrancy is Christ himself” ... “Suffice it to say that many evangelicals believe that without an inerrant Bible we can’t know anything about Jesus Christ. They often ask the question, ‘How can we be sure that anything in the Bible is true? How can we be sure that Jesus Christ is who he said he was, or even that he existed, if the Bible is not inerrant?’ (“My Take on Inerrancy” - Bible.org).

My response is this: “Yes, we should ask how the claims of Jesus Christ can be true without the Bible being true!” My starting point for inerrancy is the factual statements of Scripture which are without error. Until I accept inerrancy, how can I be sure about Jesus Christ? In trying to look at history and other sources outside the Bible, in order to support the claims of Jesus Christ, Wallace casts doubt and suspicion on inerrancy and separates a belief in inerrancy (the absolute truth of the Bible) from a belief in Jesus Christ and what He taught. However, these two realms (inerrancy and doctrine), which includes the doctrine of Christ’s death, burial, and

resurrection, cannot be separated, as some are suggesting today. Inerrancy (truth and a trustworthy Bible) and doctrine (what the Bible teaches and confirms) are essentially welded or bound together in one package. Jesus sets us straight on this matter when He said, “Thy word is truth” (John 17:17).

In this one simple and yet profound sweeping statement, Jesus taught the inerrancy of Scripture, and that we should wholeheartedly begin our search for truth in the Scriptures themselves. This is why Jesus said, “Search the scriptures” (John 5:39). He did not say that we should discover truth about Himself through contextualizing the Scriptures, or by searching documents outside the Scriptures that mention His name, since Christ said “they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39). The Bible is the final authority on who Jesus Christ is and what is truth.

Jesus did not start with contextualization, the Roman and Grecian documents in His day, the culture in which He lived, or extra-Biblical literature that would shed light on the Bible. He said, “It is written” (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10). If we want to be more like Jesus, we should have the same believing approach to Scripture that Jesus had (John 10:35), instead of casting doubt on what is written regarding marriage, creation, cosmology, historical narratives, or anything else that the Bible declares.

Our starting point is the Bible! This is why we cannot separate our Gospel witness from the Biblical verification of the Gospel message. This is why we never must begin our search for the truth outside the Bible. Jesus said that the truth is found in Scripture and this is what frees people from their sins (John 8:32). This means that the unsaved must hear the revelatory statements of Scripture itself regarding Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection, and embrace this message, in order to be saved (Romans 10:15-17).

It’s not good enough to share the Gospel without confirming its trustworthiness, by invoking the authority of the Bible (“The Bible says”), which records the actual sayings of Jesus, Paul, and other Gospel writers. Christians must share the Gospel with the unsaved, by basing it on God’s revelation (the Bible), so the truth can be authenticated and substantiated by God’s inerrant revelation. There can be no regeneration without revelation (John 3:3, 7).

For the saved, those who already know Christ as Savior, who have embraced the truth, they should not think for one moment that they must always be looking

outside the Bible to authenticate it, and ultimately to approve or disapprove its claims in certain areas. The Bible speaks for itself – it is true (2 Tim. 2:15; 4:4). Jesus said it was true (John 17:17). That should be good enough for us. But apparently it's not good enough for Wallace.

Wallace disagrees about starting with the mindset that the Bible is true and affirming inerrancy. He states: "Making a pronouncement that scripture is inerrant does not guarantee the truth of such an utterance. If I said the moon is made of green cheese, that doesn't make it so. At most, what such pronouncements can do is give one assurance. But this is not the same as knowledge. And if the method for arriving at such assurance is wrongheaded, then even the assurance needs to be called into question."

This sounds more like "philosophy and vain deceit" (Col. 2:8) or "vain jangling" (1 Tim. 1:6). In an attempt to limit the truth of the Bible (limit inerrancy), Wallace takes the "outside approach" (historical documents and literature in different genres of the ancient world, etc.) to either prove or disprove, various historical statements, narratives, chronologies, and other things that are stated in the Bible. However, in doing this type of contextualization, he casts a shadow over the inerrancy, trustworthiness, and authority of Scripture. If we don't get our starting point right, we will inevitably have a wrong ending point! Sadly, this is what happens when people criticize the Bible, instead of believing what it says.

In all my days as a Christian, before I even went for Biblical training, and after I finished my training, I never once doubted anything that was stated in the Bible. I firmly embraced inerrancy (even before I heard the name!). Why? I think it is the internal witness that the Spirit gives (John 14:26) to the eternal truth of God's Word (Isa. 40:8). A childlike faith is not necessarily an unintelligent faith. It's simply possessing the same confidence that Jesus possessed in the Bible and making everything else, outside the revelation of the Bible, correspond to its content and message (not vice versa or the other way around).

John Warwick Montgomery wrote that the "total trust that Jesus and the apostles displayed toward Scripture entails a precise and controlled hermeneutic. They subordinated the opinions and traditions of their day to Scripture; so must we. They did not regard Scripture as erroneous or self-contradictory; neither can we. They took its miracles and prophecies as literal fact; so must we. They regarded Scripture

not as the product of editors and redactors but as stemming from Moses, David, and other immediately inspired writers; we must follow their lead. They believed that the events recorded in the Bible happened as real history; we can do no less. (Christianity Today [7/29/77], pp. 41-42).

Our presuppositional faith should be rooted in the truth of Scripture – not in the literature and traditions outside the Bible. By the way, the Bible will be in existence long after the contextualizers have passed off the scene (1 Peter 1:23). God’s truth in the Bible is timeless. So, we need to have a right viewpoint regarding the Bible and a correct starting point. Start with the Bible and stick with the Bible on every detail.

Many are so worried about defending the Bible today, with other sources, that they sometimes fail to use the Bible to defend the Bible! I fully understand that there are times when we must make a solid defense for the Bible (1 Pet. 3:15). However, defending the Bible does not mean I must look for truth outside the Bible, in order to fix the Bible in some way. This is not defending the Bible; it’s destroying it! And when it comes right down to it, the Bible really needs no defense, especially when it comes to changing the lives of people. The late Dr. Pettingill used to say that it was not necessary to defend a lion, but if you would release the lion he would defend himself. In like manner the Bible needs only to be released, read, preached and taught, and it will defend itself.

The Domino Effect

If all the doctrines of the Bible were compared to dominoes standing in a line, then obviously the credibility of the Bible would stand first in line. Whether the first domino stands or falls inevitably affects all the other doctrines. The first doctrinal domino is inerrancy. If the doctrine of Bibliology is questioned, which confirms



the credibility and absolute truth of the Bible, then this has a domino effect on the rest of Bible doctrines, bringing into question Theology (study of God), Christology (study of Christ), Soteriology (study of Salvation), Pneumatology (study of the Holy Spirit), Ecclesiology (study of the Church), Hamartiology (study of sin), Eschatology

(study of prophecy), Ecclesiology (study of the Church), and angelology (study of angels). It also questions creationism and the literal creative days and acts of God found in Genesis. Everything rests on inerrancy which teaches the credibility and total accuracy of the Bible in every matter (doctrine, history, geography, science, prophecy, earth's creation, chronologies, etc.). How can anyone who lets the domino of inerrancy fall be sure that it will not knock over some other doctrine as well?

Ron Rhodes writes:

“It is ONLY because the Bible is inerrant that we can trust what it says about God, Jesus Christ, the gospel of salvation, and all other doctrines.”

If “all scripture is given by the inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16), then God must have given “all” of it to us, while at the same time accurately recording Scripture without any error. If “the scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35), as Jesus said, then no person, including Holding and Peters, can ever point to a Biblical text and say that it is broken, contains errors, and lacks inerrancy. Just the opposite is true; the Bible is a fully inspired, inerrant, and an infallible Book, as God gave it in the original writings, and as it's been preserved in the ancient manuscripts which reflect these writings.

The Bible reveals that the writers and recorders of Scripture wrote while being superintended by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21). However, if what they wrote might not always be an accurate or exact reflection of the truth, then how can we ever know for sure what the apostles and Jesus taught, and if their teachings can be trusted? Unlimited inspiration and unlimited inerrancy are interrelated because you cannot have one without the other.

What I have discovered over the years is that the watered-down version of *contextual inerrancy is similar to concept inspiration*. They are two peas on the same theologically-inept pod, which categorically deny that all of the words of Scripture are true, which leads to questioning and countering the truth of God's Word in various places and ways – cosmologically, scientifically, ethically, geographically, theologically, etc.

Theologian Charles Hodge has given a strong argument for verbal inspiration (every word in the Bible is inspired – not just concepts) and how this Biblical view of

inspiration (2 Tim. 3:16) is directly tied or linked to inerrancy. He wrote: "Men think in words, and the more definitely they think the more are their thoughts immediately associated with an exactly appropriate verbal expression. Infallibility of thought can not be secured or preserved independently of an infallible verbal rendering" (A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, p. 67.).

Both concept inspiration and contextual inerrancy express the same old *mood* of liberal tolerance toward the Bible which historically denied verbal inspiration and inerrancy. Both contextualization inerrancy and concept inspiration, like classic liberalism, denies the verbal, total truth, and accuracy of the Bible. History repeats itself. There is nothing new under the sun!

Daniel B. Wallace, condemns Fundamentalism as a non-thinking movement, when he states: "One of the hallmark differences between a fundamentalist and an evangelical is willingness to dialog over the issues. A fundamentalist condemns; an evangelical thinks" ("My Take on Inerrancy" - Bible.org). According to Wallace, those who firmly hold to inerrancy are not good thinkers! Well, maybe he needs to stop tooting his academic credentials and stop pushing the old New Evangelical argument that scholarship overrides fundamentalism and its stand on inspiration, inerrancy, and Biblical authority. Neo-Evangelicalism has always taught the importance of being open to dialogue instead of resting firmly on the issues of inspiration and inerrancy. Here is the point, a Bible that has limited inerrancy (a Bible that contains errors) is suspect and can be condemned on almost every level.

One Jot or Tittle

Jesus said in Matthew 5:17-18:

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. 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."

We should observe that Christ does not start with the fulfillment of Scripture based upon general concepts and the contextualizing of outside sources. He appeals to the very words themselves as being fulfilled. The promises of fulfillment are based on the words and these same words can then be relied on fully for every detail of truth. This is because "Every word of God is pure" (Prov. 30:5).



The words of Scripture can be trusted completely, down to the “jot” (the smallest of all the letters in the Hebrew alphabet which is the same amount of space that an English apostrophe takes) and the “tittle” (only a part of a letter or the lines and strokes by which Hebrew letters differ). In other words, Jesus was teaching that not one promise will be fulfilled in any way different from how it was spelled out in the very words of Scripture. Here is the point; the only way Scripture can lose its authority is if Scripture contains errors, but Christ taught that all the words of Scripture will result in prophetic fulfillment and that the Scriptures themselves, which contain these words, cannot be broken (John 10:35). Therefore, Jesus must have believed the Scriptures did not contain errors (inerrancy) based upon the enduring nature of these words (preservation).

Today there are many scholars who do not embrace the same confidence that Jesus had in the Bible. For instance, it seems that Holding and Peters must sometimes arrive at the truth by respecting the social and literary contexts within which the Bible was written. This is a fancy way of saying that contextual thinking trumps the actual words and factual statements of Scripture and that God’s Words are not the final answer to everything. Considering the context of a passage of Scripture is helpful in understanding why it was written, but the context will never override the actual words and clearly stated facts of the Scriptures themselves.

Holding and Peters want us to believe that the new wave of "inerrantists" are not "wooden" literalists in their interpretation and understanding of the Bible like the old traditionalists. Holding conveys this: “The traditional method involves, as we’ve stated, erecting a fence around the Biblical text so that no unsafe meanings (not approved of by modern literalism) can be admitted” (Holding, J. P. *Defining Inerrancy: Affirming a Defensible Faith for a New Generation* - Kindle Locations 693-694). Of course, denying a literal approach to the words, meanings, and historical narratives of Scripture, and refusing to believe that a literal truth is being taught, even when a symbol is conveyed, opens up the door to a contextual interpretation of the Bible that places doubt on the very words and integrity of Scripture.

It's as if Holding and Peters are saying that we may know with "a reasonable certainty" that the Bible is true while at the same time placing "a reasonable doubt" on various sayings, historical narratives, and events mentioned in the texts of Scripture. This is a very compromising and dangerous position which once again casts a dark shadow on the truthfulness of the Bible. It also places God's Word and eternal truth in the hands of so-called experts and scholars, who after practicing contextualization, can tell us whether the text and narrative is errant or inerrant.

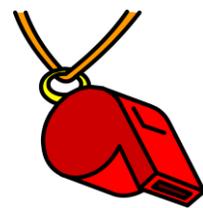
Ed Hindson addresses this very thing:

"No one defended the inerrancy of the Scriptures more than Jesus. He quoted biblical passages in responding to His disciples (Mt 16:21), His critics (Mt 22) and the devil himself (Mt 4:4,7,10). He referred to almost every controversial story in the Old Testament including: Noah, Jonah, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, and Daniel. He emphasized technical details of interpretation (Ps 110:1) and dared to claim the entire Old Testament message was all about Him (Lk 24:44). We are ultimately left with one of two choices: poor dumb Jesus or poor dumb scholars. I'll stick with Jesus every time."

Blowing the Whistle

In Andy Stanley's sermon, "The Bible told me so," He begins by quoting the beloved song, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so," and contends, "This is where our problem began." No! The problem begins with Stanley's view of the Bible and how he has been articulating this view the past several years. Stanley says the song is fine for children but not appropriate for adults. He believes we have been naively taught, "'The Bible says it, that settles it' and that kind of simplistic reasoning is why many walk away from the faith as adults."

Sometimes we need to blow the whistle on popular speakers of our own day. Andy Stanley is one of them who has more recently cast a shadow on the Bible by his strange statements. Sometimes a popular speaker might misspeak, and he needs to retract what he says. However, I have never heard Stanley retract his words; therefore, he must wholeheartedly embrace what he shared with thousands of people. And no, I'm not guilty of "taking his words out of context" which is the famous counter argument that people use when they in one sense worship celebrity preachers and writers. Popular speakers make great blunders sometime. The context is the resurrection and salvation and here is what Stanley said.



“We believe Jesus rose from the dead not because the Bible says so. It is way better than that! Christianity does not hang by the thread of ‘The Bible told me so’.” And: “The original version [of Christianity], the pre-Bible version, was defensible, it was enduring, it was persecutable, it was fearless, it was compassionate, and it was compelling,” but he claims “it is next to impossible to defend the entire Bible.” He also states: “For the first 300 years of the existence of Christianity, the debate centered on an event, not a book.” (<http://northpoint.org/messages/who-needs-god/the-bible-told-me-so/>).

It’s as if Stanley is apologizing for the Bible! Andy made the decision to move away from such expressions as, “the Bible says” and “the Bible tells me so.” Stanley claims to believe in the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy. He makes this known for he realizes now that his words have stirred up a hornet’s nest. However, his own words defy what he claims to actually believe. Stanley cannot have it both ways. A Bible that cannot be used to *confirm* truth is a Bible that is *suspect* of truth. And a Bible that has no authority on all matters of doctrine, science, and history is a Bible that is not true.

H. Wayne House wrote:

“The doctrine of inerrancy is foundational to all other Christian doctrines, and can never be set aside without great peril to the Church. Without Scripture being without error, an interpreter of Scripture could never be sure what teaching of the Bible should be believed. In accepting the teaching of the Word of God on inerrancy, we can be confident that what God has revealed to us is in fact truthful and reliable regarding what we believe and how we live.”

Stanley no longer wants to share with people the expression, “The Bible says.” Maybe Stanley is weary of being a Bible thumper or is so concerned about the reaction of people to Biblical authority, that he wants to accommodate the culture and be more fashionable in his approach to evangelism. Whatever the case might be, without establishing the revelation of the Bible, we have no witness about the resurrection. When reaching out to the lost we need to establish the truth and validity of the Bible for it is the “holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:15).

Stanley sounds out, “Christianity does not hang by the thread of ‘The Bible told me so.’” It most certainly does! If the Bible is not true, which informs us about the

resurrection of Christ, then the foundations are lost, “and If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (Psalm 11:3). Without the authority of the Bible, we cannot declare that anything is authoritative, since we lost the basis of our authority and credibility!

Concerning the resurrection, Stevens says: “One of the key points made by traditionalists is that if you come up with one interpretation of the New Testament in which you say a certain text wasn’t meant to be taken as historical, such as the raising of the saints in Matthew 27, you end up totally eviscerating the case for the Resurrection of Jesus. But how is this so?” (Holding, J. P. *Defining Inerrancy: Affirming a Defensible Faith for a New Generation* - Kindle Locations 1482-1485).

Well, you don’t have to be a rocket scientist or a contextualizer to figure out how this can be so! Norman Geisler reminds us how it can be so when he states: “The inerrancy of Scripture is the foundational doctrine in which all other doctrines rest, and the Psalmist rightly said, ‘If the foundation be destroyed, then what can the righteous do?’” If one historical narrative and miracle is discarded, then who is to say another one might not be true, such as the resurrection of Christ.

At this point, let’s follow Stanley’s line of reasoning and see how it breaks down. He makes the claim that it’s impossible to defend the Bible (“it is next to impossible to defend the entire Bible”). This is absolutely not true unless you believe the Bible is in error. Furthermore, defending the Bible may be necessary if a person rejects its claims (1 Pet. 3:15). How can a person possess faith in a resurrected Christ if the Bible that proclaims this message is not true? Stanley seems to think that defending the Bible is not really important. This would be true if the Bible were just an ordinary document, but it is the word of God (1 Thess. 2:13). Stanley seems to possess a low view regarding the authority of the Bible.

Someone might say that they place their faith in the resurrection but not in the Bible. However, this same person cannot have faith in the resurrection of Christ, if they don’t have a faith in the inerrancy of Scripture or that the message of the Bible is true. The one presupposes the other. If the Bible is not true, then Christ’s resurrection may very well not be true. The resurrection has no authority if the Bible has no authority. In essence, the fact that “the Bible told me so” is not ineffective in witnessing for it’s the Bible that confirms the validity of the

resurrection accounts. One cannot get to faith in the resurrection without possessing faith in the revelation about the resurrection.

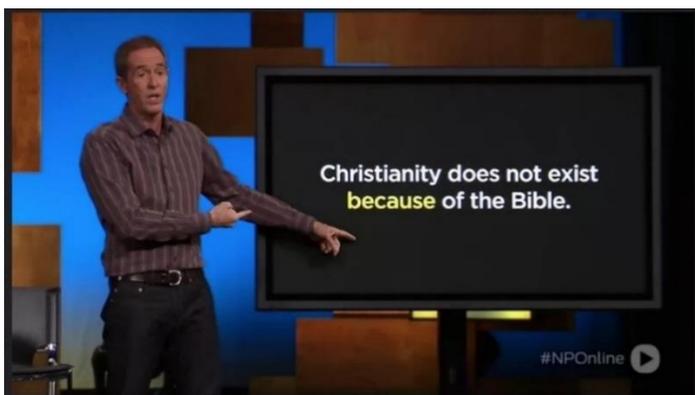
Theological liberals have always attempted to separate Jesus from the Scriptures. This is because if there is no authority behind *who* Jesus is and *what* He has done, then Jesus might be a lunatic and liar! You would think Stanley knows this. However, he argues that our faith is based on the resurrection and not the Bible. But severing the Scriptures from the resurrection is the very thing that Jesus said could not be done.

Luke 16:31

“And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”

Commenting on this passage, Walter Elwell explains, “Those who do not put credence in the Scriptures will not be persuaded by a resurrection.... No miracle can convince anyone of the credibility of the kingdom message. The Scriptures are sufficient for salvation, and those who reject their message will rationalize miraculous phenomena as well” (Evangelical Commentary on the Bible, vol. 3, Luke 16:31, Grand Rapids, Baker, 1995). Another way to explain it would simply be: “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.”

Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:15: “And that from a child, though hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” When Paul devoted an entire chapter to the resurrection, he began by clarifying that it was “according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:4). The resurrection can never be separated from the authoritative word of God which confirms the resurrection.



In his sermon, Stanley says, “Christianity does not exist because of the Bible any more than you exist because of your birth certificate. Your birth certificate documents something that happened.” This kind of logic minimizes the uniqueness of the

Word of God and is right out of the classic, theological, liberal playbook. Liberals have historically asserted that the Bible is not the Word of God but that it is merely a witness to the Word of God. To the contrary, as B.B. Warfield argued, the Bible is “a book which may be frankly appealed to at any point with the assurance that whatever it may be found to say, that is the Word of God” (Works, 1:52). The fact of the matter is this, Christianity does exist because the truth of the Bible has been around since the infant days of Christianity, which included the message of the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:23-47).

Stanley’s argument also breaks down regarding the early church not possessing the Bible. They may not have possessed a Bible bound in 66 books as we possess today, but they most certainly did possess the “apostles’ doctrine” which was well known and taught (Acts 2:42; 2 Thess. 2:15). This body of truth was being handed down to them in copies and it was very precious (2 Tim. 4:13). The words of the apostles were based upon God’s revelation and everyone knew this. Therefore, the faith of unsaved people was rooted in the revelation given to them by God. Faith always is based upon the authority of God’s revelation.

This was true even during apostolic days. It was not mere faith in the apostles, but the revelatory message that the apostles taught, which resulted in the conversion of the unsaved. So, the revelation given to the apostles, regarding the death and resurrection of Christ, which was being transferred to Scripture and circulating among the ancient world, is what generated faith in the hearts of lost people. It’s always been authoritative words rooted in God’s revelation that changes the lives of people.

Romans 10:17 declares:

“So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

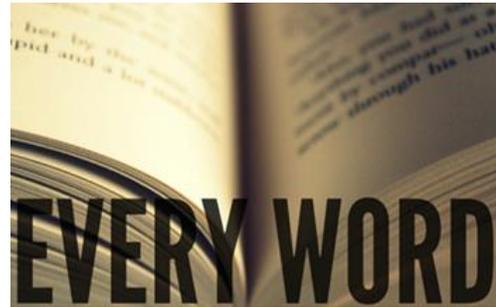
Any questions? Seriously, there can be no questions about this unless you become lost in the subjective sea of contextualization and limited inerrancy, or better, limited errancy. It would seem that Stanley has imbibed in some measure the contemporary idea that we don’t need the authority of the Bible when witnessing to the unsaved. I don’t know where Andy Stanley actually stands on inerrancy, but his statements reveal someone who has a low view of inerrancy and the importance of Biblical authority. We must weigh our words (Prov. 21:23) and the

consequences of sharing things which cause many within the Christian community to doubt our personal view of inerrancy.

Every Word

In Matthew 4:4, Jesus said:

“It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

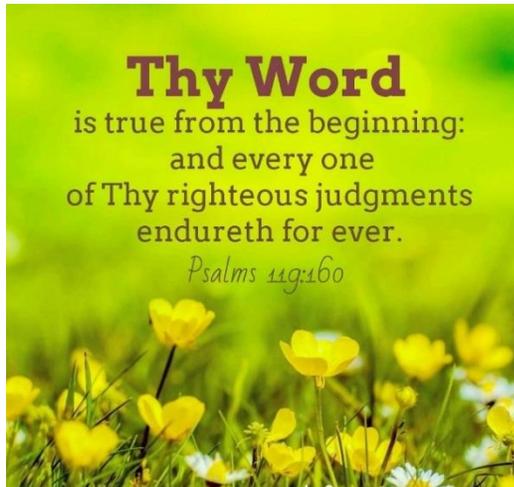


Our Lord believed in the verbal, plenary, and unlimited inspiration of the Bible (Matt. 5:18, John 6:63, John 17:8) which results in the unlimited inerrancy of Scripture (John 10:35; 17:17). Christ's response to Satan's attacks also proves His belief in unlimited inspiration and inerrancy. He said, "It is written" (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10). Jesus did not say, "It witnesses" or "It is contextualized" and needs more information and backing before I can claim its authenticity. No, the words were good enough for Jesus and they are good enough for me!

Charles Ryrie once stated:

“The Bible is inerrant in that it tells the truth, and it does so without error in all parts and with all its words. If it were not so, then how could the Lord affirm that man lives on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4), especially if all Scripture is breathed out by God (2 Timothy 3:16)?”

The contextual inerrancy methodology causes people to sometimes question the historical accuracy of the Bible because they believe something stated in the Bible cannot scientifically occur and therefore must be deemed as historically untrue. Many conclude that Moses was using a literary device when teaching the creation account and was speaking symbolically and not literally about creation. This gives them the self-imposed liberty to deny a literal 24-hour day and the seven days of creation, choosing rather to adopt the theory that it took God billions of years to evolve animals and man (progressive creationism). It is very difficult to impose old-earth theories on the Biblical creation account. In order to do this, they must begin by obscuring the obvious historical sense of the passage, and instead turn it in to literary devices such as allegories, poetic expressions, or myths and legends found in cultures outside the Bible (contextualization).



Instead of denying the literalness and historicity of the Genesis creation account, one should believe the Bible is inerrant on the matter of creation and boldly confess that “Thy word is true from the beginning” (Psalm 119:160). It’s interesting that Jesus used historical incidents in the Old Testament, many of which are miraculous in origin, including the literal creation of man (Matthew 19:3-5), in order to prove that He had complete confidence in their factual historicity. In short, Jesus did not embrace contextual methodology

which muddies the water of unlimited or total inerrancy. He believed in every historical event as being true and never once questioned anything scientifically, factually, or historically.

Here is a sample of how Jesus’ believed and declared that everything in the Bible is true and without error.

- Matthew 19:4-5 - Creation was a literal fact
- Luke 11:51 - Abel was a real individual
- Matthew 24:37–39 - Noah and the flood were real (Luke 17:26, 27)
- John 8:56–58 – Abraham was real
- Matthew 10:15; 11:23, 24 (Luke 10:12) - Sodom and Gomorrah were real cities
- Luke 17:28–32 - Lot (and wife!) were real people
- Matthew 8:11 - Isaac and Jacob were real (Luke 13:28)
- John 6:31, 49, 58 – Manna was real
- John 3:14 – Serpent was real
- Matthew 12:39–41 - Jonah was real
- Matthew 24:15 - Daniel was real

Louis Gaussen remarks on Jesus’ confirmation of the Old Testament and His belief in inerrancy: “We are not afraid to say it: when we hear the Son of God quote the Scriptures, every thing is said, in our view, on their divine inspiration—we need no further testimony. All the declarations of the Bible are, no doubt, equally divine; but this example of the Savior of the world has settled the question for us at once.

This proof requires neither long nor learned researches; it is grasped by the hand of a child as powerfully as by that of a doctor. Should any doubt, then, assail your soul let it behold Him in the presence of the Scriptures!”

Dr. Charles Ryrie summarizes Christ’s belief in inerrancy this way:

“He acknowledged that Adam and Eve were created by God, that they were two living human beings, not merely symbols of mankind and womankind, and that they acted in specific ways (Matthew 19:3-5; Mark 10:6-8). He verified events connected with the Flood of Noah's day; namely, that there was an ark and that the Flood destroyed everyone who was not in that ark (Matthew 24:38-39; Luke 17:26-27). On two different occasions, He authenticated God's destruction of Sodom, and the historicity of Lot and his wife (Matthew 10:15, 23; Luke 17:28-29). He accepted as true the story of Jonah and the great fish (Matthew 12:40). He acknowledged the historicity of Isaiah (Matthew 12:17), Elijah (Matthew 17:11-12), Daniel (Matthew 24:15), Abel (Matthew 23:35), Zechariah (Matthew 23:35), Abiathar (Mark 2:26), David (Matthew 22:45), Moses and his writings (Matthew 8:4; John 5:46), Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Matthew 8:11; John 8:39).

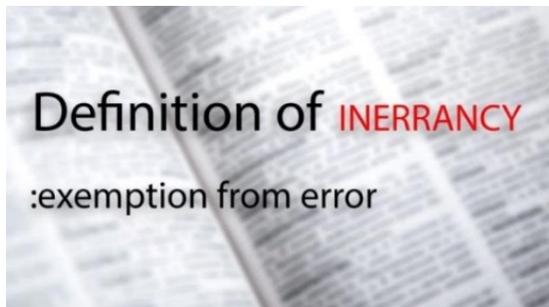
“Some very important conclusions must be drawn: Christ did not merely allude to those stories, but He also authenticated the events in them as factual history to be completely trusted. Those events include many of the controversial passages of the Old Testament—creation, the Flood, the major miracles including Jonah and the fish. Obviously, our Lord felt He had a reliable Bible, historically true, with every word trustworthy” (What You Should Know About Biblical Inerrancy).

Yes, God’s Word is true from the beginning!

It can be added at this point in our study, that Old Testament writers regularly claimed divine authority for their words (Lev. 1:1; Hos. 1:1) and also acknowledge the authority of other OT books (Josh. 1:7–9; 1 Kings 2:3; Dan. 9:2). The New Testament writers quote from every OT book but one, often explicitly calling them Scripture or attributing to them absolute authority (Luke 1:70; Gal. 3:8; Heb. 1:1-2; Jam. 2:8; 1 Pet. 1:10-12). As we have already seen, Jesus Himself verified that the OT books were Scripture (Matt. 5:17-18; Luke 24:44-45) and promised that new revelation would come through the apostles (John 14:26; 16:13). The NT writers also regarded their own writings and other NT books as Scripture (1 Cor. 14:37; 1 Tim. 5:17-18; 2 Pet. 3:16) and authoritative (1 Thess. 4:15; 2 Pet. 3:2; Rev. 1:1-2).

All of these facts argue for and not against inerrancy. Jesus and the recorders of Scripture all embraced and accepted the doctrine of inerrancy which results in the complete authority of the Bible over other secular writings and findings.

Defining or Redefining?



Once again, the title of this eBook is “Defining Inerrancy: Affirming a Defensible Faith for a New Generation.” However, defining inerrancy is not the aim of this book. Its goal is to *redefine* the word by concluding the Bible has limited inerrancy (limited truth) based upon the contextualization of outside sources. In

other words, the Bible must sometimes be plugged in to foreign sources, so we can better interpret it and understand its meaning.

These outside sources are to allegedly help us to determine what is literal, what is figurative, and what is ultimately true in Scripture. The very name of “contextual inerrancy” reveals that it is a diversion from the historical definition and Biblical understanding of inerrancy. Therefore, Holding and Stevens are not defining Biblical inerrancy as *exemption from error* but redefining inerrancy as contextual inerrancy, which is theological doubletalk, and is basically saying that the truth and meaning of the Bible sometimes exists within the framework of outside contexts and extrabiblical sources. This view of contextual inerrancy actually teaches *limited inerrancy*, or that the Bible is errant (contains errors) regarding some historical narratives, chronologies, and literal events and that the Bible needs contextual correction.

In this view, the Bible is in one sense taken hostage by outside sources and the truth is hidden in the codes and corrections we find in these sources. As previously mentioned, if outside literature and findings contradict the literalness of a historical narrative, a literary device of some kind must then be imposed



upon the text to help allegorize the narrative, create symbols, and give a person the correct understanding and intent of the original writer. As we have seen, Holding and Stevens have not given us the definition of inerrancy but have reworked and *redefined* it to mean “errant inerrancy,” which is not only a contradiction in words, but a complete diversion from the true meaning of inerrancy.

Of course, a redefinition of inerrancy is not actually a definition. It’s a reworking of the original and socially acceptable definition of a word, which according to every source I’ve read, including dictionaries that reveal an understanding of the English language, means something that is free from error. The word inerrancy means “freedom from error or untruths.”

Dr. Charles C. Ryrie comments on the definition of inerrancy in this way:

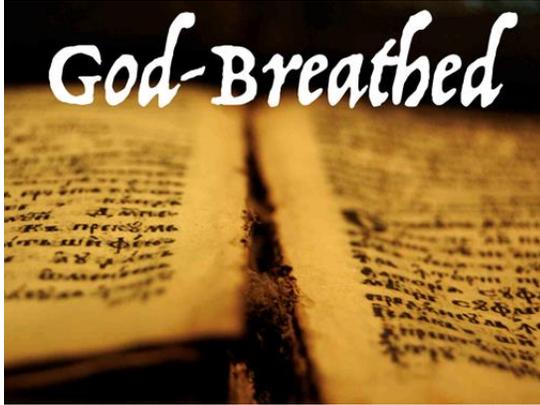
“Inerrant means ‘exempt from error’ and dictionaries consider it a synonym for infallible which means ‘not liable to deceive, certain.’ Actually there is little difference in the meaning of the two words, although in the history of their use in relation to the Bible, ‘inerrant’ is of much more recent use” (Charles C. Ryrie, *The Bible: Truth without Error*, revised edition, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1977, p. 1.).

E. J. Young, in his classic work on the inspiration of the Bible, gives us good definition of inerrancy: “By this word we mean that the Scriptures possess the quality of freedom from error. They are exempt from the liability to mistake, incapable of error. In all their teachings they are in perfect accord with the truth.”

Inerrancy teaches that Scripture does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact and truth. It means that the Bible is without error in all areas – science, cosmology, creation, history, historical narratives, chronologies, etc. Contextualization inerrancy is an academic term designed to compromise the true meaning of inerrancy.

Al Mohler wrote:

“Inerrancy is nothing less than the affirmation that the Bible, as the Word of God written, is totally true and totally trustworthy.”



2 Timothy 3:16 declares that “All scripture is given by inspiration of God” which means it was literally “God-breathed.” This means God’s words were given through men, as they were superintended by the Holy Spirit, so that these writings were actually God speaking and recording down His own words, which makes them without error. Inerrancy rests on the foundation of inspiration.

Christ taught the Old Testament was inspired in:

- (1) Its entirety – it’s verbally and fully inspired (Matt. 4:4; 5:17-18)
- (2) Its historicity – it’s literal and accurate (Matt. 10:15; 12:40; 19:3-5; 24:38-39; Mark 10:6-8).
- (3) Its reliability – it’s prophecies must be fulfilled (Matt. 26:54).
- (4) Its sufficiency – an unobjectionable and perfect witness of the truth (Luke 16:31).
- (5) Its indestructibility – nothing will stop its fulfillment (Matt. 5:17-18).
- (6) Its unity – its central theme (Luke 24:27, 44).
- (7) Its inerrancy – it is completely true (Matt. 22:29; John 17:17).
- (8) Its infallibility – it stands the test (John 10:35).

Unlimited inerrancy stands upon the structure or foundation of unlimited inspiration. As Bible believers, we should believe in the verbal (every word - Matt. 5:18; 22:31-32; Luke 16:17; Ps. 12:6), plenary (all-inclusive or equal - 2 Tim. 3:16; Num. 23:19; Psa. 12:6; 119:89, 96; Prov. 30:5; Matt. 24:35), unlimited inerrancy (*truthful* and therefore without error and accurate in every area including doctrines, miracles, historical facts, genealogies, geography, science, dates, accounts of creation, the Flood, and all factual statements – 2 Tim. 2:15) and infallible (incapable of error and therefore *trustworthy* - Ps. 119:160; Tit. 1:2) inspiration of Scripture as recorded in the 66 books of the Bible.

We used to say, "I believe in the inspiration of the Bible." Now we must tack on a lot of things because of the constant attack against the Bible. We began to say, "I believe in the verbal, plenary, infallible, inerrant, unlimited inspiration." But now we must add one more thing to the lineup and make another clarifying point. "I

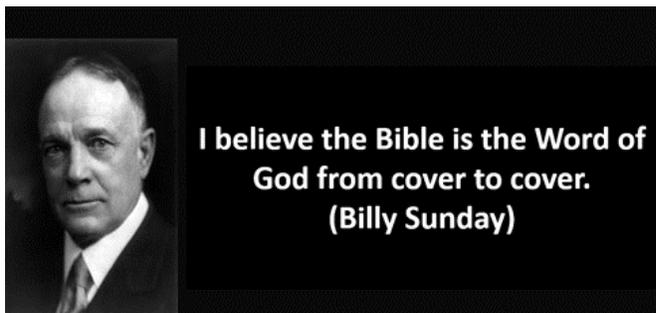
believe in the verbal, plenary, infallible, *unlimited* inerrancy, and unlimited inspiration of the Bible.” The ideas floating around today seem to limit the extent of inerrancy. In other words, many will conclude that the Bible possesses only “limited inerrancy.” However, if the Bible has limitations on its inerrancy, then obviously it is errant in various places. So “limited inerrancy” (the more palatable saying) is really “limited errancy” for they both amount to the same thing.

Defending the Faith

Norman Geisler is correct when he states:

“We do not oppose scholarship, but only scholarship whose presuppositions and methodological procedures are opposed to the Faith once for all committed to the saints.”

The book says that Holding and Peters’ interpretive approach will help us maintain a “Defensible Faith.” However, it is impossible to defend “the faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3) when you cannot be sure what the faith is, based on a debunked contextualization hermeneutic, where one must look into ancient literature and other sources outside the Bible that contain “hidden codes and messages” to enable us to discover the true meaning and understanding of Scripture. The fact that the body of revealed truth “was delivered” speaks to the issue of inerrancy and accuracy of the Biblical text in all areas. The “faith” or revelation of truth that Christians believe, embrace, follow, and which comes from the Bible, has been accurately transferred to us and it has been kept intact.



The point is obvious. The truth has been delivered to the Church today and we can be reassured that it is completely true, trustworthy, reliable, and authoritative in every area. The Bible is true and can be trusted from cover to cover, on every

level, and in every way. A Bible that is not completely true cannot be reliable in revealing correct and trustworthy doctrine. However, since the Bible is inspired by God it is said to be “profitable for doctrine” (2 Tim. 3:16). Of course, there is sometimes an attempt by various authors to distinguish between historical accuracy and doctrinal integrity or accuracy, but this is a false dichotomy.

Stephen Davis takes this view:

“The Bible is infallible, as I define that term, but not inerrant. That is, there are historical and scientific errors in the Bible, but I have found none on matters of faith and practice” (Stephen T. Davis, *The Debate about the Bible*; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977, p. 115).

If there are historical and scientific inaccuracies, however minute, then one can have no guarantee of doctrinal integrity. Those who claim the Bible is inerrant in doctrinal revelation but not in the matters of historical narratives, science, the origins of life and the universe, cannot have it both ways. If the Bible is true, it must be completely true, since nobody can cherry pick what is true and what is not true. For some, it becomes almost like a “Buffet Christianity.” However, it’s all or nothing, it’s unlimited inerrancy, or no inerrancy. To declare inerrancy in one area but not another brings everything under the quicksand of uncertainty.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum wrote:

“If the doctrine of inerrancy is not true, then the Scriptures become an untrustworthy document. To claim that it is inerrant in areas of faith and practice but errant in other areas is simply a self contained contradiction.”

B. B. Warfield also correctly observed:

“The authority which cannot assure of a hard fact is soon not trusted for a hard doctrine” (B. B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of The Bible*, Philadelphia, PA: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1970, p. 442).”

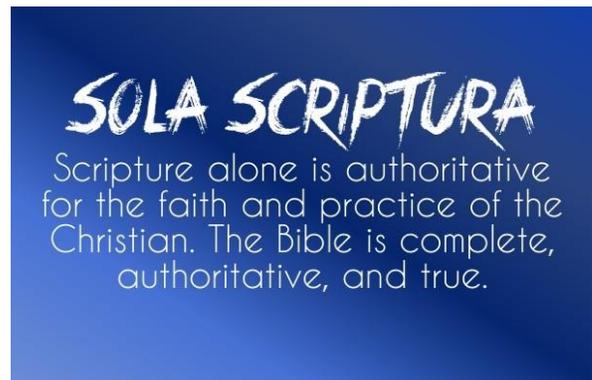
Limited or partial inerrancy (partial errancy!) does not qualify one as holding to the authority of the Bible. By the way, who sets the boundaries or limits regarding what is literal, which portion of a Biblical narrative is true, or who chooses which parts are errant and which ones are not? Is it a committee of authors trained to perform contextualization that helps us determine the truthfulness and accuracy of the Bible? Is the reliability of the Bible relegated to ancient documents, the literary world outside the Bible, myths, legends and the overuse of literary devices?

Paige Patterson is on record as saying:

“The inerrancy of Scripture is an essential and not optional doctrine for the church. Otherwise we are cast on a raging sea of subjectivism with a high priesthood of scholars who assume the position of God, telling what we should and should not believe.”

Even the authors of the book I am critiquing readily admit they don't always get it right. "But what's the real issue here, with the question at hand? The contextualizer responds that their readings are neither hostile nor alien, but rather, an attempt to restore to the text some original context that defined it for readers in its own day. That doesn't mean we always get those contexts correct, of course. Contextualization isn't immune to mistakes" (Holding, J. P. *Defining Inerrancy: Affirming a Defensible Faith for a New Generation* - Kindle Locations 394-396). This does not give me much confidence in contextualization and the contextualizers!

The phrase "Sola Scriptura" (Latin – meaning Scripture alone) is understood as having no other authority, or higher authority, than the Bible itself. This means we must study the Bible to understand its content, not ancient cultures, myths, legends, literature, debunked science, or any other outside sources that take precedence over what the Bible actually says and teaches. Here is God's command for those who are attempting to contextualize and rewrite God's truth under the guise of finding out its true meaning: "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (Prov. 30:6).



The fact that the truth "was delivered" (Jude 3) also speaks of a completed revelation which cannot be added to in any way (Rev. 22:18), which includes bringing outside sources beside the Bible, essentially adding to the Bible, in order to determine its meaning. All of God's truth is contained in the Bible which is "the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). There is no truth which needs to be discovered in the outside context or framework of the ancient world and its literature, so we can "add it" to the Bible and better understand it. The Bible is an infallibly complete and closed revelation. It is essentially "that which is perfect" (1 Cor. 13:10) because it is the completion or finalization of previous piecemeal and ongoing revelatory truth. Our Bible is the whole truth, nothing but the truth, and is the final authority on what is true theologically, doctrinally, scientifically, historically, archeologically, geographically, ethically, prophetically, chronologically, cosmologically, and spiritually.

Both sides (the traditionalists and contextualizers) agree that context is required to interpret Biblical texts. However, the area that divides the two is disagreement over the *extent* to which external information may be used to interpret the Bible. Nobody is against studying and teaching the Bible in context (a context of salvation, prophecy, sanctification, giving, etc.) to arrive at a proper meaning. And yes, sometimes social customs are *clearly revealed* in a Biblical passage, which enables one to better understand what instructions are based on a custom (1 Cor. 11:4-7, 13) and which ones are not (1 Cor. 11:1-3, 14-15; 1 Tim. 2:12-13). However, whatever light outside information may shed on the Biblical text, such as Bible customs in a given locality, no information should determine the overall meaning of a text or deny the meaning of what is actually being taught.

In addition, it must be remembered that when the student of Scripture studies the context of a Bible passage, he is not doing the same thing that the contextualizers are doing. When traditionalists conclude that they must study the Bible in context, they are not implying nor teaching the same thing as the contextualizers, who look outside the Bible to prove or disprove a historical narrative, or a literal event, and who place doubt on the Bible's inerrancy or truthfulness in its divine revelation. What the traditionalists are saying (who got it right) is that you cannot base the meaning of God's Word and Words on the *foundation* of contextualization, a methodology that involves studying the extrabiblical and outside contexts of ancient cultures, commentaries, and literature, and then imports these findings into the text of Scripture.

Hugh Ross, who espouses contextualization, states:

"To interpret the Bible literally is not enough, one must also interpret it with internal (as well as external) consistency ... People who seem most concerned with defending biblical inerrancy may be the most resistant to any information derived outside the Bible that might help illuminate what the Bible means."

The purpose and end result of this methodology (discovering truth outside the parameters of the Bible) is to allegedly discover the original intent of the author, and in doing so, discover the truth by often de-literalizing it and rewriting historical narratives, questioning certain parts of the records of the Gospels, and sometimes creating symbols out of them. Robert Thomas, writing in "The Jesus Crisis," insisted that such an approach "inevitably leads to diminishing historical accuracy in the

Gospels." He is correct! Of course, this method allows human reason to replace divine revelation in order to determine the validity and interpretation of Scripture.

Essentially, the Bible should be read in a literal sense and this is one way we “rightly divide the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). Unless there are clear in-text clues that something is to be taken otherwise, the reader is to regard the text as literally true. If the Bible is clearly using the literary tool of allegorical speech (Gal 4:24; Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23), or if something is only “like” what it is being spoken about (Jer. 23:29), then there are grounds for taking it in a non-literal sense. Even then, the symbols and other figures of speech are designed to contain a literal truth about a specific thing, literal event, or true happening.

Holding is against literalism: “In the end, the ‘grammatico-historical method,’ as used by Geisler, is itself artificial. It is a construct of a form of Western literalism, which places texts like the Gospels into artificial (and otherwise unknown) genre categories, for no other purpose than to preserve its own method” (Holding, J. P. *Defining Inerrancy: Affirming a Defensible Faith for a New Generation* - Kindle Locations 896-898).

The old adage is still true: “When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense.” However, those who embrace contextualization see things differently. They would argue that comparative literature, social implications, Roman, Grecian and other cultures that existed in the day of writing, along with other features outside the Bible text are often important keys to determine the literal nature of a Bible text, the exact meaning of the truth, whether something is true, and understanding the meaning of the Bible. However, traditionalists argue that they do not depend upon the social and literary world of the Bible to help them determine the truthfulness of a historical narrative, whether something is literal or non-literal, and to determine the validity or soundness of the statements in the Bible.

In addition, traditionalists do not impose literary devices upon Biblical texts, which results in distorting the meaning and truth of what is being taught in the Bible, and understanding a Biblical event literally. Traditionalists do not look outside the Bible to understand the primary teachings of the Bible or to discover some hidden or coded truth that was not fully revealed in a text. This is because God has not

shortchanged us! We have all the words that God wanted to give us, so we could understand all the things that He intends to teach us.

John 20:30-31 is a case in point:

“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”



Jesus performed many miracles which are not written or recorded in the Bible. However, the Bible says that “these are written” to convince people that He is the Christ and

Savior of mankind. You will notice what was important and what should be our focus. Our focus is to be on the things that are written about in the sacred Scriptures. We should not be worried about the miracles or the words of Jesus that were not recorded. What we should be concerned about, what we should center our study and attention on, are those things which are recorded in the Bible! This means I don’t have to try and plug outside sources into what has been written in Scripture in order to better understand the Bible. I don’t need to interpret the Bible by using an outside textual code that appears in some ancient literature found in the Near East.

When studying the Bible, we should consider the background and the culture, to whom a passage was written, and even why it might have been written. We are to compare Scripture with Scripture (1 Cor. 2:13); however, we are not to compare Scripture with ancient documents in other societies, with Egyptian hieroglyphics, or any other source outside the Bible, to give us added information and help us arrive at the truth of Scripture. Instead, we are to look at the whole counsel of God’s Word (Acts 20:27) on a given subject to help determine its meaning. The only proper way to interpret the Bible is by the Bible. Scripture interprets Scripture. We are not at the mercy of contexts outside the Bible, or hidden codes behind the texts, in order to learn and know what the Bible teaches. J. I. Packer stated: “The initial quest is always for what God’s penman meant by what he wrote.” He then goes on to say that one should not include attempts to go “behind the text.”

We are to study the original languages, out of which the Biblical text flows, to better understand some words, and we should observe the grammar of God's Word, always seeking to perform proper exegesis, so we are "rightly dividing the Word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). However, we don't use the outside contexts of ancient literature and pagan cultures of the Egyptian, Grecian, and Roman world (what they might have believed and taught in their societies) as the foundation or basis to understand what the Bible text means. We are not to view the clearly revealed and literal truths of the Bible, and historical narratives of the Bible, as only symbolic literature designed to teach us something other than what appears on the surface.

Holding and Stevens adversely react to the "liberal" stigma placed upon them by some within the evangelical community because of their departure from traditional inerrancy. In trying to dismiss this stigma, I find it hard to stomach the bashing of those who actually taught and fought against the liberals, while believing in the inerrancy of Scripture. Here is one statement that took me back: "Though a renowned preacher, Spurgeon was in truth an exceptionally poor exegete of Scripture, and in his sermons can be found the seeds of much of what we today see in teachers like Joel Osteen and Joyce Meyer, who turn God into a personal friend, and the Bible into a personal message" (Holding, J. P. *Defining Inerrancy: Affirming a Defensible Faith for a New Generation* - Kindle Locations 910-912).



Charles Spurgeon wrote:

"I believe that there is no mistake whatever in the original Holy Scriptures from beginning to end."

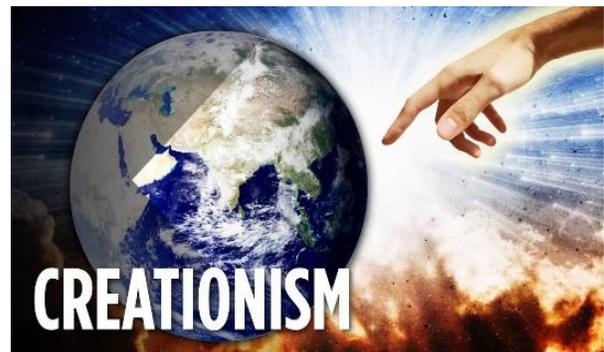
"These words come from him who can make no mistake, and who can have no wish to deceive his creatures. If I did not believe in the infallibility of the Book, I would rather be without it. If I am to judge the Book, it is no judge of me."

“I am perfectly satisfied myself to believe what he writes to me; and if it be so written in his Book, it seems to me to be quite as true and sure as if he had actually come from heaven, and had talked with me, or had appeared to me in the visions of the night.”

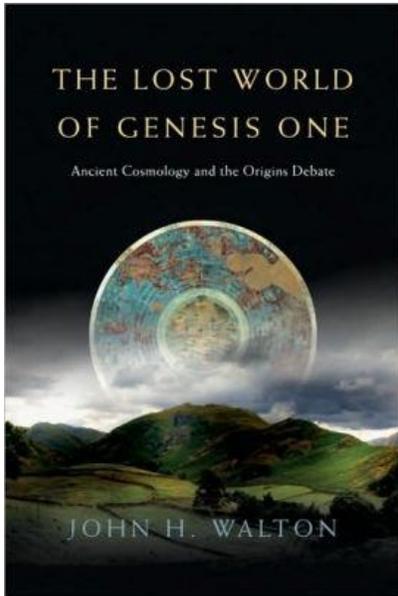
I’ll stick with Spurgeon, instead of Holding and Stevens, on the inerrancy of Scripture!

Creation and Contextualization

Certain Biblical scholars and apologists of today are going way too far with the teaching of “contextualizing” and they are importing foreign ideas and contexts into the Biblical text, thereby denying its factual accuracy. Instead of an inerrant Bible they have settled for an errant Bible which needs to be contextually understood in many places. One prime example would be the literal understanding of the six 24-hour creation days, creation without evolution, and the first six chapters of Genesis, which is being scrapped and reinterpreted by the methods of contextualization, embracing Near East ancient literature, which supposedly sheds light on a non-literal understanding of Genesis.



John Walton is a proponent of this type of view. His “Framework Hypothesis” theory is essentially an attempt to explain Genesis 1 as being something other than a historical narrative on creation. In short, the creation “week” should be viewed within the boundaries or framework of a figurative structure but not as a literal event. Walton supports this conclusion upon the common use of figurative language, semi-poetic devices, ancient literature, and the culture in which Genesis was written. According to Walton, Genesis chapter one simply reveals that God created everything and made man in His own image, but it gives us no true information or order, regarding how or when He did this. This leaves the door open for millions and billions of years to be included in God’s creation.



Walton's book, "The Lost World of Genesis One," was written to promote the secular tables and time periods of evolutionary scientists. In the book he claims that we must understand what Genesis chapter one would have meant to anyone (Israelite or non-Israelite) in the ancient world. In doing so, he uses a mythological creation motif known in the ancient world (a deeper understanding of creation). In other words, we must think in ancient Near Eastern terms to determine the exact meaning of the creation account. Really? Walton suggests that this thinking (or his way of thinking) has been lost for thousands of years and now a few academic people like Walton have unearthed this new wave and way of thinking,

so they can tell us what the writer of Genesis chapter one really meant. This man is a loon! The only thing that is lost is Walton's mind!

In the words of E. J. Young:

"If the 'framework' hypothesis were applied to the narratives of the Virgin Birth or the Resurrection or Romans 5:12 ff., it could as effectively serve to minimize the importance of the content of those passages as it now does the content of the first chapter of Genesis."

This quote is coming from an amillennialist! This proves that those who sometimes allegorize the Bible can still believe in inerrancy, that God's Word is absolutely true, and that we should never use the contexts of pseudo-science, atheism, and God-denying people to discover Bible truth.

A website called biologos.org, which fully endorses contextualization methods, gives us reasons why Christians should consider evolutionary creation. It declares: "Evolution is a means by which God providentially achieves his purposes in creation." This sounds like doubletalk. God creates through evolution? This is like saying that my wife baked and created a cherry pie without putting all the ingredients together and turning on the stove!

On the website homepage it states: "BioLogos is committed to the authority of the Bible as the inspired word of God, and believes it is compatible with new scientific

discoveries.” It goes on to say: “BioLogos invites the church and the world to see the harmony between science and biblical faith as we present an evolutionary understanding of God’s creation.” But how can anyone really be committed to the authority of the Bible when they reject the clear revelation of Scripture regarding creation! Those embracing the welding together of falsified science (a flawed context outside the Bible) and creation (what the Bible actually states about creation) are shooting themselves in their own foot.

The website goes on to say: “The term BioLogos comes from the Greek words bios (life) and logos (word), referring to the opening of the Gospel of John. ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made.’”

Again, these people shoot themselves in the foot. If everything was made by God, then it did not evolve by God! How can something be made through evolution? It is absolute madness to come to this conclusion and the entire theory undermines the meaning of the word “create.” But this kind of thinking is the product of contextual inerrancy, which attempts to understand the Bible by incorporating foreign writings, views, and non-literal conclusions of other ancient documents and cultures into the literal narratives of the Bible, which ultimately denies the literalness and truthful statements of the Bible.



Contextualization says that when there is truth outside the Bible, which helps explain the Bible, then one must embrace that context (be it ancient literature, evolutionary science, or Near Eastern culture), even when it seems to conflict with the clearly revealed and stated facts of Scripture. Of course, this theory opens a can of worms, which can result in bringing doubt and suspicion upon the truthfulness and accuracy of the Bible. It finds a context outside the Bible (evolutionary science) to replace the literal events of the Bible. It discovers another literary context outside the Bible that was part of the culture, when the Bible was written, and tries to plug this new finding into the Bible to dismiss Paul’s teaching on heterosexual marriage, homosexuality, or female submission in the marriage relationship. Of course, this kind of hermeneutical methodology ultimately denies the truth. So much for contextual inerrancy, or should I say, contextual compromise and errancy!

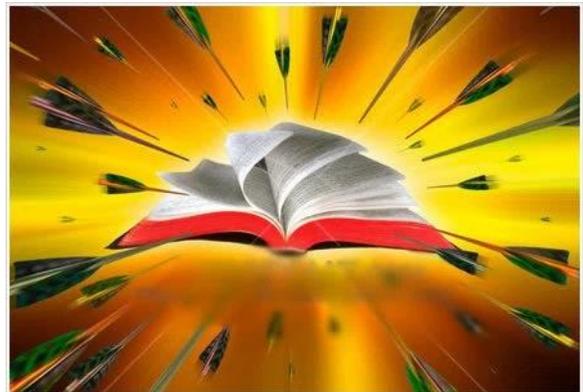
If we do not believe that God in a straightforward manner says what He means, but sometimes contextualizes His message for us to decode via outside sources, then we do not have to acknowledge that He means what He actually says. As a result, we can begin to drift into mindless speculations and subjective conclusions instead of receiving propositional truth from the mind of God to the mind of man.

Christians of all generations from the days of the apostles to the present time have always espoused the unlimited inerrancy of Scripture. To deny inerrancy would be comparable to denying the faith! God's Word was delivered without error (2 Timothy 3:16) and all Christians down through the ages were considered to be "Bible believers" for embracing the truthfulness and authority of Scripture (1 Thess. 2:13).

Harold Lindsell wrote:

"There is no evidence to show that errancy was ever a live option in the history of Christendom for eighteen hundred years in [any] branch of the Christian church that had not gone off into aberrations" (The Battle for the Bible, p. 69).

There really is a battle for the Bible taking place today. The Bible has always been under siege from the fiery darts of Satan (Gen. 3:1), unbelief, skepticism, and now through the redefinition of inerrancy. The stakes in this debate over inerrancy are high and far-reaching for it has a direct bearing on maintaining the revealed truth that is given to us in the Bible and the integrity of Scripture. The Bible says that people can



"turn away their ears from the truth (inerrancy) and shall be turned unto fables (2 Tim. 4:2) or to that which is untrue. They will follow "cunningly devised fables" (2 Pet. 1:16) instead of the inerrancy or absolute truthfulness of the Bible. We see this taking place by those who embrace a contextual hermeneutic. The drift away from the truth is sometimes subtle, while at other times it is very blatant and open.

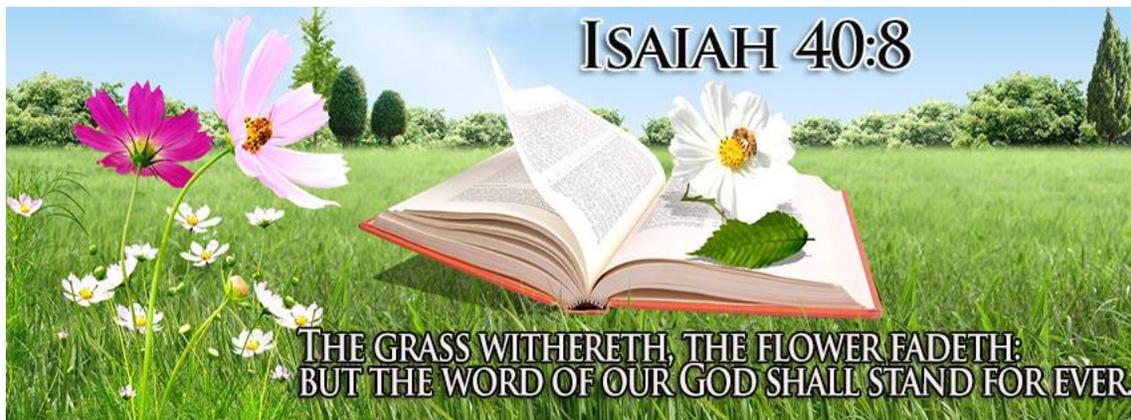
As far as a “new generation” is concerned, as the book cover of Holding and Peters suggests, it seems that from the author’s perspective, the old generation of Christians were robbed from understanding the full revelation of truth and was



incapable of defending the faith (Jude 3), since they got the wrong definition of inerrancy! However, it seems rather bizarre to think that Holding and Peters have been given a new revelation and view (“some new thing” – Acts 17:21) regarding inerrancy that everyone else has missed in the previous Christian generations, since the days of the apostles! It was the beloved Harry Ironside who once said: “If it’s new, it’s not true, and if it’s true, it’s not new.”

During a particular commencement address, the late Dr. E.V. Hill held up his big, black, well-worn, leather preaching Bible and declared loud and proud, “I believe the Bible is the inerrant, infallible, unchanging Word of God. And the reason I believe ... is my momma told me!” Well, that’s good enough for me! The Biblical admonition applies: “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned *them*” (2 Timothy 3:14).

There is a new war or battle occurring that centers around the meaning of Biblical inerrancy. If you are on the wrong side of the war, you just might lose faith in the inerrancy, truthfulness, and authority of Scripture. Beloved, we cannot afford to forsake the Biblical foundation of inerrancy which our fundamental forefathers reconfirmed for us during the days of Modernism and Liberalism. We need to pick up the torch and continue to declare that we have a Bible that is true from cover to cover and that it is the final authority on all matters of faith, practice, science, history, archaeology, chronology, and prophecy. Here is God’s promise:



The fact that God's Word endures forever, which is composed of His words, gives us the assurance of its accuracy and authority. To deny inerrancy is to deny God's promise to give us His enduring truth to all generations.



A line is drawn in the sand today. On which side do you stand? Do you believe in an inerrant or errant Bible? You cannot be neutral on this matter and in this battle. Do you have faith in a Bible that is true and trustworthy in all areas of science, archeology, geography, cosmology, creation, genealogies, history, ethics, and doctrine or a Bible that has errors and which needs to be validated and corrected by outside sources and historical criticism? The united witness of the Scripture and Christians down through the centuries have always believed in an inerrant Bible. This is because inerrancy of the Bible is a watershed issue.

Joseph M. Holden declared:

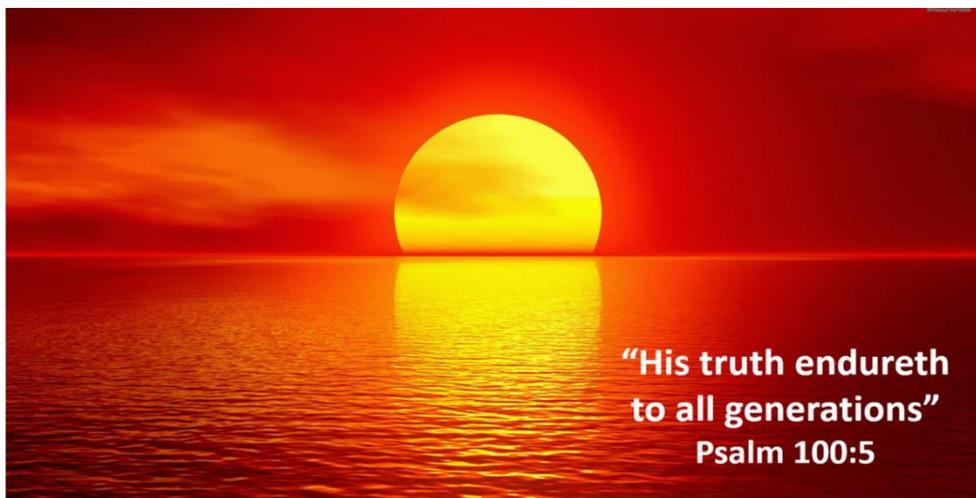
“Inerrancy is the fundamental of the fundamentals. Only divinely inspired and inerrant Scripture guarantees the truth and authority of the doctrines that flow from them. Only then can the Church rest assured that when the Bible speaks, God speaks.”

Psalm 119:105 promises, “Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” Since this is true, Ray Comfort correctly observes: “To forsake the inerrancy of Scripture is to snuff humanity’s only candle of truth. Inerrancy is the ship’s rudder, the traveler’s compass, the lamp to our feet and light to our path.”

The question is where will contextualization inerrancy take the church? This concept of "contextualizing" can cause the Bible to literally sink into oblivion and be lost as God's authoritative and final word on all matters. History shows that there is always a downward spiral, which results in a greater rejection of God's

everlasting truth, when one adopts speculations regarding the Bible as the movements of Modernism, Liberalism, Neo-Orthodoxy, and even Neo-evangelicalism have confirmed. The Scripture itself terms these speculations as “oppositions of science (knowledge) falsely so called” (1 Tim. 6:20), which means contradictions created from what is falsely labeled as knowledge.

Contextualization inerrancy contradicts the truth regarding the Bible’s full and unlimited inerrancy. It also robs the Bible of its truthfulness by denying parts or whole historical narratives and events presented in the Bible, by rewriting the truth after observing the ancient literature and customs outside the Bible, and by imposing literary devices upon Biblical texts, which would make better sense out of the Bible, when considering the cultural times when it was written. In many ways this methodology with its contextual conclusions is nothing more than “profane and vain babblings” (1 Tim. 6:20). How wonderful that the Bible repeatedly claims that “his truth endureth to all generations” (Ps. 100:5; 117:2).



This is why Harold Lillenas wrote:

“The Bible stands like a rock undaunted
 ’Mid the raging storms of time;
Its pages burn with the truth eternal,
And they glow with a light sublime.

The Bible stands like a mountain tow’ring
 Far above the works of men;
Its truth by none ever was refuted,
And destroy it they never can.”