

trustworthiness of the Bible today that at any time in the past century.”

Even the famous archeologist Nelson Glueck, though not considered conservative, admits,

“It may be stated categorically that no archeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference. Sources of archeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or in exact detail historical statements in the Bible.”

Brown further testified:

“An hundred and fifty years ago we knew virtually nothing about the ancient Near East, except what the Bible itself reported. As our accurate knowledge of Biblical times has advanced, opinions downgrading the authority of the Bible have had to be abandoned in case after case. Werner Keller has presented this in popular form in the ‘The Bible as History’ and more scholarly treatments are readily available. The work of Kenneth A. Kitchen of the University of Liverpool shows how many of the results of nineteenth and twentieth century Biblical (higher) criticism, tending to minimize the reliability of the Old Testament, have themselves been refuted by genuine historical research on the basis of archeological discoveries.”

It is generally understood in statements on inerrancy that the doctrine applies to the original autographs penned in the Hebrew and Greek by the divine writers. Errantists make much of this by saying we do not have the original autographs so we have no inerrant Bible.

Several facts should be brought out here. First, for all practical purposes we do have the original autographs, at least of the New Testament, and the Dead Sea Scrolls have done much to confirm the Old Testament manuscripts. From the thousands of ancient manuscripts available, years of diligent research by textual critics has delivered to us for all practical purposes the original text of the New Testament. (Remember that through the words of Jesus himself and the Spirit-inspired apostles under the promise of Jesus, the Old Testament was accepted and quoted as infallibly inerrant.) As to the text of the New Testament the testimony of Frederick Kenyon is quite conclusive:

What About Inerrancy?

By
Dr. Donald A. Nash



Some writers on this subject have claimed that it is impossible to define inerrancy. This is ridiculous. Inerrancy plainly means without error or mistakes. It does not deal with a method of inspiration by the result of inspiration – a faultless Bible with no mistakes either historically or doctrinally. The Bible claims to be the inspired word of God, it is inevitable and logical that it is without error. Dr. Benjamin B Warfield explained inspiration thus, “Inspiration is, therefore, usually defined as a supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God, by virtue of which their writings are given divine trustworthiness.”

Biblical scholars from earliest times accepted this as meaning that there are no errors in the Bible. Irenaeus, taught by Polycarp, a student of the apostle John, said, “The Holy Spirit was co-worker with the evangelists in the composition of the gospels and therefore eliminates lapses of memory, error or falsehood.” Augustine said, “I believe most firmly that not one of these authors erred in any respect in writing.” Calvin stated, “The Scriptures are the certain and unerring rule.” Alexander Campbell affirmed, “Everything God has spoken is true. ‘God is truth’... nothing is so certain, so durable, so unchangeable as the Word of the Lord. There is no error in it. There can be no error in the most strict and exact conformity to it; for it shall stand forever.” W.E. Garrison, in the preface to the book on the history of the Restoration Movement by A.T. DeGroot, “Disciple Thought: A History”, wrote, “In the earliest history all of them (restoration forefathers) held to such a theory of inspiration as would guarantee the absolute inerrancy of the Bible in every particular. Virtually all Christians held this view.”

Alexander Campbell said, “Revelation and inspiration properly so called have to do only with such subjects as are supernatural or beyond the reach of human intellect in its most cultivated and elevated state. In this sense ‘Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.’ But besides this inspiration of original and supernatural ideas, there was another species of supernatural aid afforded the saints who wrote the historical part of the Scriptures. There was a revival in their minds of that they themselves had seen and heard; and in reference to the traditions handed down, such a superintendency of the Spirit of wisdom and knowledge which excluded the possibility of mistakes of the matter of facts which they recorded.”

the Bible, but the examples they cite, for the most part, were discovered long before our time.”

In “Why We Believe” James Jauncey, M.D. denies the higher Biblical criticism that finds these errors by testifying:

“I was fortunate to study Biblical criticism after a thorough training in scientific method. I was appalled at what I found. Conclusions were either formed on the most inadequate premises, or the methods were hopelessly unscientific. The worst feature was prejudice. In many cases it was glibly assumed that God never acted in a supernatural way, that Biblical writers were ignorant or deceivers and that our armchair guesswork is so much more accurate than their own estimates of times and events. The Bible has shown itself capable of standing up to any test. Thus those of us who are convinced that the Bible comes from God welcome any study on the Bible or any text of the Bible. But for us to take serious note of the results the studies have to be objective and solidly based on facts.”

Actually through historical study and archeological research, so-called errors of the past are being proven true. Benjamin Warfield says in his book, “Inspiration and Authority of the Bible”, “Moreover, as every student of the history of exegesis and criticism knows they (the alleged mistakes) are progressively vanishing in quantity. Those who seemed most obvious and intractable a generation ago remain today as only to readily forgotten warning against the inordinate dogmatism of the opponents of the inerrancy of the Bible who override continually every canon of historical and critical caution in their eager violence against the doctrine they assail.” William F. Albright, the famous archeologist, remarked in his book, “The Archeology of Palestine, “Archeology after a long silence has finally corroborated Biblical tradition in no uncertain way.” In another place he said, “Biblical historical data are accurate to an extent far surpassing the ideas of any modern critical student. New discoveries continue to confirm the historical accuracy of the literary antiquities in detail after detail.” Because of such findings, Dr. Harold O.J. Brown says, “It is easier to believe in the complete trustworthiness of the Bible today than at any time in the past century.”

evidently because he was a physician, but this does not mean the story is not true. New Testament writers might loosely quote an Old Testament prophecy but guided by the Holy Spirit they were quoting it to show the real point of the prophecy. Some of these free citations can be accounted for by the fact that they sometimes used the original Hebrew, sometimes the Septuagint Greek text, or sometimes, combined Scriptures under divine guidance to illustrate and prove the point they were making. If we accept the fact of inspiration by the Holy Spirit these should not be considered errors.

In regard to reporting of falsehoods, the well-known and logical hermeneutical rule must be followed that when studying Scriptures you ask who is speaking and to whom and why. A sacred writer might report under divine inspiration a statement of an uninspired person that is obviously false, and any reasonable reader realizes this. The Gospel writers tell us that Herod said Jesus was John the Baptist raised from the dead. Obviously this is not true but is told to us under inspiration to show how ignorant Herod was.

With these so-called exclusions in mind where are the so-called mistakes of the Bible? Who discovered these mistakes? One writer says the uncovering of these “errors” is the result of “modern historical research, which began to flourish with the nineteenth century.” In reply to this Harold O.J. Brown in, *The Protest of a Troubled Protestant* replies:

“On the one hand, it is true that nineteenth century scholarship puts its finger on a large number of problematical passages in the Bible which challenge the concept of inerrancy. On the other hand, it is surprising how long Christians have known most of them. The alleged factual error and internal contradictions in Scripture which are currently cited to demonstrate the impossible archaic nature of inerrancy are themselves impossibly archaic in a high proportion of instances. Explanations of them have been known for centuries. Whether or not the explanations are accepted as convincing or whether one finds the evidences for errors and contradictions too strong usually depends on other factors besides the evidences and the arguments. Modern theologians have a different set of reasons why they believe in the fallibility of

Elsewhere he said, “The persons who are employed to make these communications are so supernaturally guided as to make them infallible witnesses in all the facts they attest, as well as all communications concerning supernatural things.”

Some errantists affirm that “the Bible does not claim to be without mistakes.” Jesus plainly said in John 10:35, “The Scripture cannot be broken.” This can mean nothing more or less than that He took the Old Testament Scriptures as infallibly accurate in every respect. A modern translation could easily render it, the Scriptures are without error. In fact, the Living Bible does translate it “which (Scriptures) cannot be untrue.” In John 16:13 Jesus promised the disciples He would guide them into all truth. This has to mean their writings would be without error. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 2:10-13 says that he speaks with words the Holy Spirit teaches. This would be a declaration of a very close verbal inspiration that was without error if even the words were guided by the Spirit (this point will be discussed later). F.F. Grant, in his *Introduction to the New Testament*, even though an admitted liberal, confesses, “Everywhere in the New Testament it is taken for granted that what is written in the Scriptures is the work of divine inspiration and is therefore trustworthy, infallible and inerrant. No New Testament writer would dream of questioning a statement contained in the Old Testament.”

One reason errantists claim that inerrancy cannot be defined is that the Chicago Conference on Inerrancy made what was called exceptions or exclusions that left the definition too broad. These so-called exclusions were just rebuttals to charges of mistakes in the Bible, claiming they were not really mistakes so they in no way changed the basic definition of inerrancy as meaning the Bible is without mistakes. What were these exclusions?

1. The lack of technical precision.
2. Irregularities of grammar or spelling.
3. Observational descriptions of nature.
4. Reporting of falsehoods.
5. The use of hyperbole.
6. Round numbers.
7. Topical arrangement of materials in parallel accounts.
8. Use of free citation in prophecy quotations.

Are these mistakes? Let us consider them.

If the New Testament writers had spoken in modern technical language the people of that day would not have understood them. Such expressions as the four winds and the four corners of the earth are still used illustratively today. Yet the Bible is accurate on many points of science far beyond its times. As an example Isaiah speaks of the Lord sitting on the circle of the earth. Many of the observational descriptions of nature are poetic in nature and would not be considered errors in modern writings.

Irregularities of grammar are not errors but the idiomatic expressions of the day and are used for rhetorical style. They were understood by the people of the day and did not convey falsehood to them. For example, in Greek a neuter plural noun takes a singular verb. This would be a grammatical mistake in English but was the acceptable and regular idiom of the day. Child is a neuter noun in Greek. So the statement is written, "Children is coming" instead of the proper English "are coming". This was a correct idiom of the day. The so-called Pindar construction would be incorrect grammatically in English in which a compound subject such as "winds and waves" takes a singular verb "obeys" His will. The purpose of this idiom was to give a unitive force to the compound subject and was perfectly understandable to the original readers. So, also incomplete sentences called anacoluthon were used rhetorically as often is done today and as long as they conveyed no false idea to the reader are not to be considered errors. Misspelled words could be the result of two different spellings or an error in scribal transmission which is easily detected as we will see later. Peter's name is spelled both Simon and Simeon in original manuscripts. I saw a man win a large prize on TV with the spelling of through as thru. No one considered this an error but a variation of spelling.

One writer attacking inerrancy said rather blasphemously, "It is difficult to take inerrantists seriously when they cannot even trust God to spell correctly or use proper grammar!" I think the shoe is on the other foot. The evangelical errantist who still claims he believes the Bible to be inspired and authoritative is the one who is calling these so-called grammatical mistakes errors, not the inerrantist. The inerrantist is saying these are not errors but God using the style of the author in the language of the day to convey

truth which was understandable to the people and not considered mistakes by them.

Why should round numbers be considered errors? We cannot force God to give us the exact number if He did not see fit to do so. There is no mistake in the historical fact that about 3,000 were saved on the day of Pentecost. It would only be a mistake if it were about 25,000, but who is to prove such a difference? Even when round numbers seem contradictory there can be an explanation. I read two different newspaper accounts of attendance at a ball game. One said 54,700, another 49,800. Was one figure in error? On investigation, one was giving the total attendance and one was giving the paid attendance. If we would take on faith the Bible-stated fact that it is without error (John 10:35) we would try to reconcile seeming contradictions and find that generally they are just as easily reconciled as the ball game figures.

Hyperbole's have been accepted and recognized in every language and not considered in other writings as errors, so why criticize the Bible for them? John said the world could not contain the books if all were written about Christ (John 21:25), but prefixed his remark with "I suppose" showing it was hyperbolic in nature, which everyone understands. Even this remark has some prophetic truth to it for "I suppose" that if all the books written about Christianity were put together in one place no library in the world could hold them. Luke said the people were gathered at Pentecost from all nations under heavens (Acts 2:5). Though a hyperbole, it was understood to mean the entire known Roman world, and Josephus attests to this quoting Herod Agrippa as saying, "There is no nation in the world that does not contain some of us (Jews)."

It is true the Gospel writers arrange their materials differently, but nothing they say is untrue or historically in error. Different teachers will teach the same subject but arrange their material differently, yet both teach the same truth. Some will leave out material others use. This, for example, is the purpose of the four Gospels, to give us variant testimonies, yet all of them true. Only Luke sees fit to tell of Jesus healing Malchus' ear, evidently because he was a physician, but this does not mean the story is not true. New Testament writers might loosely quote an Old Testament prophecy but guided by the Holy Spirit they were quoting it to show the real point of the prophecy. Some of these free citations

This booklet is offered courtesy of:
The Discipleship Ministry at
The Church of Christ at Mountain View.
153 Narrow Lane
Winchester, VA 22602

Questions: call Chris Straley at (540)664-2146
(540)869-2244

no other work of Greek or Latin literature do we possess manuscripts so plentiful in number or so near the date of composition."

Add to this the conclusions of famous Greek scholars Wescott and Hort whose Greek New Testament edition was for years used as the authoritative Greek New Testament for students of the original language. They testify:

"This brief account of the text of the New Testament would be incomplete without a word of caution against a natural misunderstanding. Since textual criticism has various usages as its subject, and the discrimination of genuine readings from corruptions as its aim, discussions on textual criticism almost inevitably obscures the simple fact that variations are but secondary incidents of a fundamentally single and identical text. In the New Testament in particular it is difficult to escape an exaggerated impression as to the proportion which the words subject to variation bear on the whole text, and also, in most cases as to their intrinsic importance. It is not superfluous to state explicitly that the great bulk of words of the New Testament stand out above all discriminative processes of criticism, because they are free from variation and need only to be transcribed. Much to of the variation which it is necessary to record, has only an antiquarian interest, except insofar as it supplies evidence as to the history of textual transmission, or as to the character of some document or group of documents. The whole area of variations between readings that have been admitted or are likely to be admitted into any printed texts is comparatively small; a large part of it due merely to differences between earlier uncritical editions and the texts formed within the last half of century with help of the priceless Documentary evidence brought to light in recent times. A small fraction of the gross residue of disputed works alone remains after application of the improved methods of criticism won from two centuries of investigation and discussion."

Why the necessity of an infallible, inerrant, original autograph if we do not have the original? In addition to what was said above about having that autograph for all practical purposes, Gleason Archer has given us a very good answer to such a question in his book, "Witness of the Bible to Its Own Inerrancy. He says:

"In answer to this, it should be pointed out, first of all, that there is a great difference between a document that was corrupted with error at the start and a document that was few from mistake at its original composition. If the original authors were confused, mistaken, or deceitful, then there is little to be gained by employment of textual critical methods to get back to an approximation of the original form. The errors and misinformation inhere in the archetype itself and serve only to the disadvantage and hurt of the reader. Only if the original was correct and trustworthy is any useful purpose served by elimination of the copyists' errors. The pursuit of textual criticism itself implies a trustworthy original, the original working of which has decisive importance."

Archer goes on to illustrate the principle by the fact that we have such inerrant models controlling our daily lives even though we do not have access to the original. In the Bureau of Standards in Washington, D.C., there is preserved a perfect pound, foot, quart by which all other such measurements are to be judged. Though we do not see the standard models, none deny that they are essential to the validity of the copies.

If there were not an originally inerrant autograph from the pens of the divinely inspired writers, then we would not know where the mistakes supposedly in the originals were. We would have to decide what is, or is not an error from our own fallible wisdom, prejudicial decisions and human reasoning. Then the Bible would become worthless as an objective standard of revelation for a religion based on truth. But if there were an inerrant original, we can find the mistakes of copyists in transmission through the highly scientific methods of textual criticism discussed previously and be certain of the reliability of the accepted text and make reasonable decisions as to the trustworthiness of various translations.

Another final point, in regard to the necessity of the inerrant original autograph, is the seeming hypocrisy of the errantists who bring up the idea that we do not have such an original autograph as an argument against inerrancy. Yet, every so-called error they claim is based on the contents of an assumed or accepted original autograph.

resurrection stories. He scoffs at higher criticism attributing the works of Luke to the literary product of the post-apostolic church. He then concludes, "It is my serious conclusion we have in the New Testament words that bear the hallmark of reality and the ring of truth." I do not know to what extent he is using the word of truth or what force he put on it, but to me it means without error.

will follow the Scriptures as the road laid out by inspiration and authority of God. If he does not accept the infallibility of the Bible, he must blaze a trail of man's own making, perhaps crossing and re-crossing the truths of the Scriptures, but never certain of the beginning or end of his journey. The one who accepts infallibility makes God's Word, the Bible, the rule of faith and practice; the one who rejects it, elevates his own mind to the position of final arbiter in his search for right and wrong. But it seems strange that these very Liberals who speak well of Jesus as the rallying point, the very Word of God, will reject His testimony concerning the infallibility of the Scripture. (He cites John 10:35b)

One errantist accused those advocating inerrancy of having a Maginot line mentality. I don't know what he meant by this, but I suppose when one stops reasoning he begins calling names. The French Maginot Line may have fallen but the principle is valid. We need a final line of defense beyond which the enemy must not pass, the bottom line as it were for the Christian faith. Surely this is the authority, trustworthiness, integrity and infallible inerrancy of the Bible as God's Word. Some might say, "I thought the bottom line was that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the Living God," and they would be right. But where do we learn this and find the evidence for it except in the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, (for the Old is the New concealed and the news is the Old revealed, with Christ the center of it all and the scarlet cord of salvation the seam that binds them all together)? As Roger Chambers once said in a letter to the editor of the "Christian Standard", "How can we have an inerrant Christ without an inerrant Bible?"

J.B. Phillips, translator of "The New Testament in Modern English", in a book entitled, "The Ring of Truth" tells of the spiritual renewal he experienced from the work of translating the sacred words from the original Greek. In it he claims that as a scholar of literature of the ancient world he is confident the New Testament stories are not myths. He says he is utterly convinced of the reliability of the

**"HOW CAN WE HAVE
AN INERRANT CHRIST
WITHOUT AN
INERRANT BIBLE?"**

ROGER CHAMBERS

The claimed historical or scientific errors of any nature are not based on any one version or translation we have today, but on the accepted original autograph. To illustrate what I mean, several years ago critical scholars said Luke made a mistake in the term he used about the officials who arrested Paul at Philippi. Now, they did not mean that King James was in error by the word magistrates, for this is an English word about which Luke knew nothing. They didn't mean any other version, which might translate the term, officers, policemen, or soldiers. They meant the Greek word used by Luke in the original autograph that is accepted by all versions even at the time of the King James translation. Of course, archaeological research, mainly through William Ramsey, has proven Luke to be accurate in every term he uses in what is the accepted text of the original autograph. However, every claimed error of history in the Bible is based on a commonly accepted original, so it is inconsistent to raise this argument against inerrancy on the basis that we have no such original.

The errantists say that you have to take in the human element in inspiration and this allows for or demands errors. God used the humanity of Jesus to bring about the wonderful story of redemption, and Jesus never sinned nor erred. If so the message of His atoning death for our salvation is useless. Why should it seem so incredible that the omnipotent God who raised up Jesus from the dead could not inspire men to write without making mistakes? As Harold O.J. Brown asked, "Is it unthinkable for men to make reliable statement about God, if He is real and His Holy Spirit is assisting them?" He continues, "In part modern theology's charge of errors in the Bible is based on its conviction that to err is human rather than its conviction of its humanity being based on discovering and proving actual error." Brown is correct in saying, "The human participation is taken into account in the traditional Protestant doctrine of inspiration, which teaches that the writers of the Bible kept their integrity as responsible human beings, while the Holy Spirit preserved them from all error and directed them in all that was necessary to fulfill that purpose. The writer's educational background, literary and linguistic skills, personal stylistic traits, and so on, all had full opportunity to express themselves. Orthodox doctrine has always officially recognized the mystery of the joint human-divine origin of the Bible."

In this regard Campbell said, "But while this inspiration precluded the selection of incorrect or unsuitable words and sentences, the inspired men delivered supernatural communications in their own peculiar modes of expressing themselves."

A graphic illustration of the guidance of the Spirit in the use of the correct word is seen in the use of the Greek words *theiotes* (Romans 1:20) and *theotes* (Colossians 2:9). These are the only two places these words are found in the New Testament. They are both built from the same root word, *theos*, meaning "God". In the King James Version both are translated "Godhead". The NIV differentiates between them, and rightly so, with *divine nature* in the first instance and *Deity* in the second. Richard Trench, the famous lexicographer says there is a real distinction between them. The first means merely to have the characteristics of God and the second means to be in reality, God. If Paul had used the second word in Romans where he is talking about the revelation of God in nature there would have been an erroneous implied pantheism. On the other hand, if he had used the first word in Colossians he would have been denying the absolute deity of Christ. So, although only one letter differentiated between the two words on their original forms, Paul in each instance used exactly the right word. Being a learned man he might have known which was the right word to use in each instance and written accordingly but if he had been inclined to use the wrong word the Holy Spirit would have given him "words which the Holy Spirit teaches." (1 Corinthians 2:13)

A certain type liberal theologian who would deny inerrancy teaches that the Bible is not the Word of God but contains the Word of God or, as some express it, becomes the Word of God to the individual as he reads. In this manner they separate the historical human section which might contain errors from the doctrinal and ethical material which would be the truth about and from God. As we shall note later this makes each person's own subjective views or existential experience the sole criteria of what is truth and what is not. However, Jesus called the Old Testament the Word of God in Mark 7:13. Jesus said His words should not pass away and they are contained and recorded for us only in the New Testament Scriptures, which Jesus promised would be guided by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13). Thus, He is equating whosoever

should be ashamed of His words in this world He would be ashamed of him in the coming judgment. At least 42 times the preached words of the apostles which are recorded for us only in the New Testament are called therein the *word of God* or *of the Lord*.

It is not the purpose, plan or possibility of this discussion to take up any of the so-called mistakes of the Bible, for to discuss one would open the gate to the necessity of discussing all, which would be an interminable task. Gleason Archer, in "Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties" gives an answer to many of the so-called discrepancies or contradictions. To one with an open mind a little research can solve many of the so-called problems. Harold Lindsell in his book "The Battle for the Bible" tells of a certain Dr. Mounce who presents four mistakes in the New Testament which he must feel were the most obvious and easily proven. Dr. Lindsell discusses these and gives obvious and simple answers to the problems they present. However, even if we found what seemed to be a matter that is inexplicable to us, humble faith ought to make us realize our own fallibility and lack of all knowledge and wisdom, and admit that there may be an explanation we cannot fathom, or evidence for the Bible account that has not yet been unearthed in archaeological research.

Harold O.J. Brown has said, "The authority and trustworthiness of the Bible is the crucial issue in Protestantism today, beside which all others are of lesser importance." Why is it so critical an issue? John Wesley gave a simple answer to this many years ago, "If there be any mistake in the Bible there may well be a thousand. If there be one falsehood in the book, it did not come from the God of truth." If the story of the crossing of the Red Sea is a historical myth, then how can we depend on the Ten Commandments, which followed it as a message from God? If the Gospel writers made mistakes in history, how can we depend on the resurrection and the salvation it implies? If there are any errors in the Bible, our personal subjective opinion becomes the arbiter of truth as to what to accept and what not to accept, and we lose any common objective truth which all Christians can hold valid as the common denominator of unity. As Lewis Foster wrote in 1968 in the "Seminary Review, Vol. XIV-No. 2": "The acceptance or rejection of the Bible infallibility stands at the cross roads of a person's belief. If he accepts the Bible as true, he