

Biblical Inerrancy

What is biblical inerrancy?
Somebody tell me...please?

I became a Christian at 17yrs old.
I quickly learned from several
preachers and other men that I
needed to believe that the Bible
was perfect.

I never fully understood what they
meant by that...

BUT after I was taught HOW to
exegete...

And after I had been teaching as a pastor for 5-6 years – I started seeing a lot of conflicting passages...

The more I studied the text intensely, the more tension I found. But I also began to see that these inconsistencies almost never threatened "the message" of the text...the word of God.

In the empty tomb texts we saw that in Matthew and Mark – there is one angel.

In Luke, there are two angels.

Does this matter? No.

The point of the story is not how many angels – it was the empty tomb.

We learned doing exegesis together: the texts do not always tell the whole story – we have to ask questions and get to the *word of God* **behind** the text.

It's NOT the words that we are searching for...it's the *message*.

Now, if you read the Chicago Statement you can better follow me.

In 1978 over 300 conservative, evangelical men (there were a couple of women)...from around 200 different "denominations" gathered to draft a document on biblical inerrancy.

Many of these were from conservative Bible colleges and seminaries. Many were well-known

preachers, but there were several well-known "scholars."

Article VI states, "We affirm that the whole of Scripture and all its parts, down to the very words of the original, were given by divine inspiration."

Here is where I really begin to think, "this makes no sense."

"...down the very words of the original [the autograph]..."

Well...we DO NOT have ANY autographs!

"Apparent inconsistencies should not be ignored" and "one day they will be seen to have been illusions."
(Section C.) Section E begins,
"Since **God has nowhere promised an inerrant transmission of Scripture**, it is necessary to affirm that **only the autographic text** of the original documents was inspired..."

Article VII admits "The mode of divine inspiration remains largely a mystery to us."

They could have cut this conference to a one day event, drafted that simple admission and been consistent with the prior 1,900 years of Christian history.

When you search through the names of those who signed the document...it is missing some of the greatest biblical and early

Christian historian scholars of the day:

FF Bruce

Roger Olson

Gordon Fee

Henry Chadwick

Bruce Metzger

Kurt Aland

Harold Attridge

CK Barrett

Marcus Barth

JD Dunn

Gary Habermas

Eugene Merrell

Merrill Unger

I have not named a dozen more great contemporary scholars who do not ascribe to the Chicago Statement – these are giants in the field, but would have been in their

20's when this statement was drafted, thus they were NOT yet known.

NT Wright Ben Witherington
Richard Bauckham
Larry Hurtado

British and European scholars are noticeably missing...

WHY?

As Roger Olson, a professor at Baylor has written,

"When I look at the Chicago Statement on inerrancy and [those who signed it] I believe it is more a political...statement than a clear, precise, statement of perfect agreement among [those who signed]...what was really going on... was...a shared concern to establish and patrol 'evangelical boundaries'."

[10 min]

They had every right to do that...

"If you want to teach at our schools, you must sign a document stating that you agree with us."

That is exactly what is going on here.

My movement has a similar thread with our "doctrines."

They were going to hire me at one of our universities...

They were excited to get an Early Church Historian with a degree from a school like St Andrews in Scotland...

But I had to sign a statement that I had not "used" tobacco or alcohol in the last 12 months.

I have really never used tobacco. My dad was a chain-smoker and I just never wanted to smoke.

But I did drink and an occasional beer or glass of wine.

So none of our schools would hire me. I have an article on my website "Wine in the Ancient World" that has been downloaded over 10,000 times...

explaining how the wine in the NT is indeed alcoholic.

Sadly, many of those who believe in biblical inerrancy also teach that the "wine" in the Bible was really just grape juice.

The twisting of the biblical text to fit a narrative that we think protects us...is not good scholarship.

**A True Doctrine Must be True
ALL the Time.**

The early Christians did not have a NT – therefore, they couldn't believe in this doctrine.

The early Christian writers who first had the MOST of the Bible we have today...DID NOT believe this doctrine.

They had their own arguments over the inconsistencies in the text.
They disagreed with each other.

Tertullian in N.Africa disagreed with many things Clement of Egypt taught.

He never names Clement, but he makes it clear that he did not agree with Clement's reading of the NT.

Both of these men had MOST of the same NT we have...yet did not agree on many things.

This doctrine of inerrancy is not to be found in ANY of the ancient creeds of the Church:

- not in the Apostle's creed
- not in the Nicene creed

- not in Athanasian creed
- not in the Creed of Chalcedon

Even the Westminster Confession (1643) never clearly espouses this doctrine of "inerrancy."

The scriptures are said to be "inspired," The Holy Spirit directed the whole process: "the writers of the Holy Scriptures [were] inspired to record infallibly the mind and will of God."

BUT, that is not inerrancy.

I am seen as a liberal by some of the more conservative Christians I know...because I do not hold to "inerrancy."

Even though I believe the scriptures are "inspired,"

- virgin birth
- the physical resurrection of Jesus
- I even believe in the trinity
(NOT clearly taught in NT)

Our Faith is NOT in the Bible

THIS is my biggest concern.

We are taught that the Bible is perfect...that there are no errors in

it and that everything contained in it is good.

I think the NT is trustworthy.

I believe it's message.

But, there are places where it is NOT clear.

You can get 5 men who all believe in biblical inerrancy....give them a difficult text to explain – and you will get three different answers.

OR they will admit that we just do not know what a the text means exactly.

Where the text is clear – as a believer, I am bound to follow the text.

QUESTIONS?