

Inerrancy of the Bible: Defined and Defended

Definition of Inerrancy: “By this word [Inerrant] 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.” [E.J. Young, *Thy Word Is Truth* (Eerdmans, 1957), p. 113]

Inerrancy Index	Representatives	Context & Features
Inerrancy affirmed dogmatically	Stereotype of American Fundamentalists	“These writers certainly claimed that what they say is of God. To them the inspiration is not just plenary but verbal. They were not left to choose their words promiscuously. Their individuality was preserved, but the words used were given them of God. Not just the thought came from God, but every word with every inflection. Every verse and line, and even upon the tense of the verb, every number of the noun, and every little particle they regarded as coming from God and demanded in the pain of grave disaster that we should preserve it in its entirety”. J.B. Tidwell, Chairman, Bible Department, Baylor University (1910-1946).
Inerrancy affirmed & defended	Early Princeton Theology (A.A. Hodge & B.B. Warfield) and Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy	<p>“Inerrancy means that when all facts are known, the Scriptures in their original autographs and properly interpreted will be shown to be wholly true in everything that they affirm, whether that has to do with doctrine or morality or with the social, physical, or life sciences.” Paul Feinberg, <i>The Meaning of Inerrancy in Inerrancy</i>, ed. Norman Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1979), 294.</p> <p>David Dockery – The Bible in its original autographs, properly interpreted, will be found to be truthful and faithful in all that it affirms concerning all areas of life, faith and practice. “Varieties of Inerrancy,” <i>SBC Today</i> (March 1985), p. 16.</p>
Inerrancy affirmed but not defended as doctrine not challenged	Early and medieval church	“It would be pointless to call into question that biblical inerrancy in a rather absolute form was a common persuasion from the beginning of Christian times, and from Jewish times before that. For both the Fathers and the rabbis generally, the ascription of any error to the Bible was unthinkable;... if the word was God’s it must be true, regardless of whether it made known a mystery of divine revelation or commented on a datum of natural science, whether it derived from human observation or chronicled an event of history. [Bruce Vawter. <i>Biblical Inspiration</i> (Westminster 1972), pp. 132-133). Vawter himself is not a proponent of biblical inerrancy].
Inerrancy limited and downplayed	British-Australian evangelicals.	“The CSBI’s focus on reconciling the minutia of detail is a dead end. Infallibilists do not take the unity of Scripture to rest on our abilities to resolve all apparent discrepancies (p. 146). The language of revelation is accommodated to the worldview and expectations of its audience in matters of cosmology and historiography, but the accommodation is never a capitulation to error... Against the inerrantist position as articulated in the CSBI, I do not agree that inerrancy is established by our ability to demonstrate that the Bible is without error. I say that simply because there are, honestly speaking, bits of Scripture, inconsequential for the most part, that do not agree in their precise details.” (Michael Bird, <i>FVBI</i> , p. 159-160).”
Inerrancy denied but concealed	‘Progressive evangelicals’ or liberals in concealment	Hard to pin down this scholars as they avoid making a clear stand on Scripture when preaching in a conservative church, but they usually deny plenary inspiration and advocate ‘limited inerrancy’. Limited inerrancy views the Bible as containing errors in historical and scientific matters while remaining infallible in matters of faith and salvation. Names of protagonists withheld in the spirit of concealment
Inerrancy denied and attacked.	Atheists and lapsed fundamentalists-evangelicals – Peter Enns, Kenton Sparks & Bart Ehrman	<p>Kenton Sparks – “Scripture exhibits all of the telltale signs of having been written by finite, fallen human beings who erred in the ways that human beings usually err”... “Even though conservative Evangelicals can create ad hoc scenarios that seem to preserve the doctrine of inerrancy, the cognitive dissonance created is considerable. In fact, I would argue that straightforward evidence against this doctrine is demonstrable... it is clear that inerrancy is an intellectual disaster.” (“After Inerrancy”, in <i>Biologos Website</i>)</p> <p>Peter Enns – “The concept of inerrancy thwarts rigorous inquiry, including historical and scientific inquiry. Inerrancy cannot be “effectively nuanced to account for the Bible’s own behavior as a text produced in ancient cultures” (91). It also obscures the finitude of the text. All the statements in the Bible are not by default timeless and therefore applicable to us. If any language of inerrancy can be retained it should be as “<i>descriptive</i> observation rather than <i>prescriptive</i> declaration” (<i>FVBI</i>, p. 114). Text case: The book of Joshua contains historical errors as archaeology shows no evidence of a swift and violent conquest of Canaan). Deuteronomy 20 should be understood as tribal war rhetoric.</p>