

## Doctrine of Bible

### Inspiration, Infallibility, and Inerrancy

1. Three important concepts are used in trying to understand the Bible. Each of these concepts are emotionally debated.
2. The term inerrancy has become a shibboleth, in order to determine if a person is orthodox or not.

***Special Note.***

A shibboleth refers to a “password”. In the Bible, it was a word given which the enemy could not pronounce, and so immediately identified him.

“Shibboleth was the password used by the Gileadites at the fords of the Jordan River to detect the fleeing Ephraimites (Judges 12:6). In a conflict between the people of Ephraim, who lived west of the Jordan, and the people of Gilead, who lived east of the Jordan, the Gileadites were victorious. Led by the judge Jephthah, the Gileadites seized the fords of the Jordan, where they met the fleeing invaders and asked them to say "Shibboleth."

Because of a difference in dialect, an Ephraimite "could not pronounce it right" (v. 6), saying "Sibboleth" instead. Betrayed by his own speech, the unlucky Ephraimite was then killed at the fords of the Jordan by Jephthah and his men” (Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary)

3. Many who defend the Biblical doctrine of inerrancy are viewed as being nothing more than an uneducated, and uninformed, Fundamentalist.
4. In the late 1970's, an organization was formed in America of scholars to study the concept of Biblical inerrancy. It was called The International Council on Biblical Inerrancy.
5. After years of study, publications, and conferences, in 1978, in Chicago, a document was presented stating 20 affirmations, and denials, concerning Scripture.

***Special Note.***

In 1980, Dr. R. C. Sproul published his own work on the subject, “Explaining Inerrancy: A Commentary on the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.

6. When Paul said that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. The term for inspiration is “theopneustos” (theh-op'-nyoo-stos), and refers to something that is divinely breathed in. A more accurate translation would be expiration because the reference is to the origin of Scripture, and not to the means, or methods, God endowed, or enabled individuals to be the instrument of recording Scripture.
  - *2 Timothy 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:*

7. The Scriptures were given by the superintendence of God so that the human author is enabled to be a vehicle for God's word to be set forth.
8. In classical Christian theology, the church has not defined in detail how that inspiration takes place. As a result, there is much misunderstanding.

### **The Mechanical View of Inspiration**

9. Some believe that the human authors had their pens seized by the Holy Spirit and controlled in such a way as to bypass the humanity of the writer. But the authors of Scripture were not merely a machine in the hands of God.

### **The Dictation Theory**

10. Some Christians believe that the authors of Scripture were simply human scribes who were dictated to by the Holy Spirit. A secretary might write down what a boss dictates, but in so doing, the secretary is the writer, but not the author, of what is being communicated.

#### ***Special Note.***

At the Roman Catholic Council of Trent, in the fourth session, the word "*dictanta*" was used with reference to the Scriptures. However, the concept of "*dictanta*" was not that of God whispering His words to a scribe. There is a parallel between human authors and human secretaries, but not in the sense that their individual style and vocabulary was violated. So the mode of how God communicated His word to men is still a subject for discussion.

11. The doctrine of infallibility is united to the concept of inerrancy. The term infallible means "unable to fail", or "incapable of making a mistake".
12. The term "inerrancy" means "no error". The concept is defended that the Bible is without error.
13. Moreover, the Bible is infallible in that it is incapable of having error. Such a document could only be produced by God. Humans might write a document that is without error, much like a person is able to spell all the words correctly on a spelling exam. But no human is infallible.
14. Infallibility is a stronger argument for the Scripture than inerrancy. It is a good term because infallible does not have the emotional baggage that the term inerrancy has.
15. What Christians want to prove is that the Bible is true and trustworthy. Therefore, the Bible must be without error, and it must be incapable of being without infallibility.
16. J. I. Packard noted that there has never been a document written that an individual could not sign but with mental reservations knowing they could interpret the text according to their own understanding.

***Special Note.***

Liberal theologians balk at inerrancy. There is no way to redefine the term. Either a person believes the Bible is without error, or a person does not.

17. Unfortunately, 1870, Pius IX, ascribed infallibility to the church. The term, the concept rightly belongs to the Word of God.
18. Inerrancy must be carefully defined. It does not mean there are no grammatical crudities. The word does not mean the Bible speaks with scientific precision. Inerrancy means there are no errors of truth in the Bible. There is no deceit. There is no fraud. There are no lies.

***Special Note.***

Inerrancy allows for the use of round numbers, such as the feeding of the five thousand, when there may have been only four thousand seven hundred and eight people present. It allows for the use of hyperbole, illustrated by Jesus calling the mustard seed the smallest of all seeds. What is plain, is that the Bible uses literary forms to convey truth.