

A Few Thoughts on Inerrancy, the Scriptures and the Power of Christ by Ward Fenley

The following is a response to a Facebook friend who believes in the inerrancy of the Scriptures. It is not my purpose in my response to prove inerrancy as false. Rather, it is my purpose to relate faith, the Gospel, and the power of Christ to the Scriptures. This person has implied that a view which does not uphold "inerrancy" undermines the Scriptures. I will show that this is not the case. I have not posted his original note here, for it is not my intention to make this a debate. I wrote my response to him on Facebook with the intention of posting it as an article (after I realized I was spending way more time than I wanted to for a simple Facebook exchange at 3:30 in the morning). For the sake of Facebook privacy (if there is such a thing), we shall call my friend Lancelot.

Hi Lancelot, I am assuming your agreement is with my last statement: "Again, it's about faith, not so much that the KJV is perfect or inerrant." Therefore I don't think you and I are that far apart. I believe as Paul told Timothy that the "Scriptures are able to make you wise *unto* salvation. I believe that God's sovereign grace uses the Scriptures to make those who will believe (by His grace) wise unto salvation. That is, the message of grace and the power of the Gospel are communicated by the Scriptures. And God, in His sovereignty, has sustained those truths necessary for eternal life. He has spelled out the cross, resurrection, and parousia in the Scriptures. But there have been plenty who have read the Bible many times and yet don't believe. This is proof positive that belief in the Gospel does not come by reading an inerrant Bible. Belief in the Gospel (which, of course, is outlined in the Bible) comes by the power of God. You see, trying to prove original apostolic infallibility is like trying to prove God exists. We can't. For if we could, salvation wouldn't be by grace. It would be by proof. Philosophically we may see how logical our belief is, but one cannot *prove* it. In other words, one cannot convince someone by a preponderance of evidence to *believe* the Gospel. You see, believing in Christ as the true and living God, by whose finished work we have eternal life *in spite of* a Bible which has gone through thousands of years of translations, takes much more *faith* (God-given) than being convinced of this fact by a perfectly inerrant Bible. For, if inerrancy is *proven* to me (which it cannot be), then suddenly I am back to a "faith" which is intellectually proven and not miraculously given. Granted, one could turn around and say it takes supernatural faith to believe the KJV or the NIV is the inerrant word of God, but I don't believe either of them are. And it is pretty easy to demonstrate they are not. So, obviously the burden is on the inerrantists to show these, or any other 20th century (or 15th century) translation is *inerrant*. I am not, as you seem to imply, "undermining" the Scriptures. Actually, I believe they contain the information—*the truth*--necessary to "make [me] wise unto salvation." That's hardly undermining them. While at the same time, I thoroughly acknowledge certain transcription or translation errors. I, by faith, am not worried about that. That might be the difference between me and those who are "waning" in their view of the Scriptures. Well, my faith is in God that He kept intact the Scriptures *enough* to make me wise unto salvation. So therefore, my faith (by God's grace) is in the Gospel.

I cannot emphasize how important God's sovereignty is in this matter. You see, I have seen many in my same place "lose" their faith in Christ as the living and saving

God. I have gone through many doubts, fears, etc. (and yes, to my Clarkian opponents, I believe those doubts were sovereignly caused by God to give me compassion on others who have battled with doubts). But through all those doubts and fears and struggles, He keeps bringing me back to one empirically obvious (to me) truth: I was hell-bent on self-righteousness, arrogance, self-worship, and then He broke me as "a hammer that breaks a rock into pieces" and showed me His overruling mercy and finished work on the cross. I just can't seem to shake that. Why? Because "we believe according to the working of His mighty power." And as Christ prayed for Peter, "I have prayed for you that your faith will not fail;" so I believe Christ, who "ever lives to make intercession for us," also prays for His children today, that their "faith will not fail." If I one day "lose" my faith, then it was merely that: *my* faith, not the "faith of Christ." May I fall into this category: "I pray for them;" and not the opposite: "I do not pray for the world." But with all that said, how do we assure our hearts? I believe the Scriptures are clear (and who will oppose this?):

1 John 3:18-23 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. 19 And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. 20 For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. 21 Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. 22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. 23 And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

So we know how to "assure our hearts." But may it be known that love is not (as the old teen poster used to read) "a warm puppy." Then what is "in deed and in truth?":

Galatians 6:1-2 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. 2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

It is demonstrating the spirit of forgiveness Christ so abundantly lavished upon us. In other words, if Christ has truly forgiven us, we will forgive others (which is loving them). For even Christ said, "He who has been forgiven much, loves much."

I would like to add that sometimes affirmations of "inerrancy" are based upon fears because of the unbelieving opposition and their arguments. Fear will often move us to suddenly embrace unwise (and many times illogical) conclusions. If an unbeliever shows me through science that the world revolves around the sun, and yet I continue maintaining that the sun revolves around the earth because the "church" told me so based upon the idiom, "from the rising of the sun to the setting of the same," then I become motivated out of fear—fear which has been placed on me by perhaps the church *and* the unbeliever. But now, do I fear losing my faith that God created the universe just because someone proved that the earth revolves around the sun? In the same manner, if an unbeliever shows me that there are some transcription errors in the Scriptures, do I suddenly defect from belief that I was a hopeless and self-glorying rebel in hatred of a holy God. Not at all. That last statement was a fact revealed to me in the Scriptures by a sovereign and merciful God who is full of compassion and loving-kindness. Do I let the statement of the

unbeliever or the inerrantist shake me with their challenge: "If you believe there is one error, then might there be errors all over?" No. That not only would be an illogical conclusion, inasmuch as throwing out all of the value of the Windows operating system just because Bill Gates is not a Christian; it would also void the Gospel as well as some of the greatest ethical and moral teachings in the world such as, "love thy neighbor as thyself," and "do unto others as you would have them do unto you." With Windows, there may be some glitches in the system, but as a whole, Windows has literally changed my life. And so, the Bible may have some transcription errors, but it has literally, by the grace of God, changed my life.