

May 2020

The Essential Biblical Witness to the Inerrancy of Scripture – An Exegetical Compendium

Paul R. Beausoleil

Liberty University, prbeausoleil@liberty.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/djrc>



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), and the [Christianity Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Beausoleil, Paul R. (2020) "The Essential Biblical Witness to the Inerrancy of Scripture – An Exegetical Compendium," *Diligence: Journal of the Liberty University Online Religion Capstone in Research and Scholarship*: Vol. 5 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/djrc/vol5/iss1/5>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Divinity at Scholars Crossing. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Diligence: Journal of the Liberty University Online Religion Capstone in Research and Scholarship* by an authorized editor of Scholars Crossing. For more information, please contact scholarlycommunications@liberty.edu.

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

The Essential Biblical Witness to the Inerrancy of Scripture – An Exegetical Compendium

Submitted to Dr. Martin Sheldon

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the completion of

RLGN 490 – D01

Research and Scholarly Capstone

by

Paul Beausoleil

April 17, 2020

Contents

I. Introduction	4
II. Prominent Ideologies.....	4
A. Limited Inerrancy.....	4
B. Universal Inerrancy	5
III. Exegetical Evaluation	5
A. Inspiration – 2 Timothy 3:16	5
1. Historical-Cultural Context.....	6
a. Author(s) & Date.....	6
b. Occasion.....	6
c. Geopolitical Climate	6
d. Recipient(s).....	7
e. Intentions.....	7
2. Literary Context	8
a. Genre	8
b. Canonical Context.....	8
c. Text Linguistics.....	9
d. Immediate Context.....	10
e. Translation.....	10
3. Interpretation.....	11
4. Interrelationship to Inerrancy	11
B. Characterization – Psalm 119:160.....	12
1. Historical-Cultural Context.....	12
a. Author(s) & Date.....	12
b. Occasion.....	13
c. Geopolitical Climate	13
d. Recipient(s).....	13
e. Intentions.....	14
2. Literary Context	14
a. Genre	14
b. Canonical Context.....	15
c. Text Linguistics.....	16
d. Immediate Context.....	17

e. Translation.....	18
3. Interpretation.....	19
4. Interrelationship to Inerrancy.....	19
C. Attestation – John 17:17.....	20
1. Historical-Cultural Context.....	20
a. Author(s) & Date.....	20
b. Occasion.....	21
c. Geopolitical Climate	22
d. Recipient(s).....	22
e. Intentions.....	23
2. Literary Context	24
a. Genre	24
b. Canonical Context.....	25
c. Text Linguistics.....	25
d. Immediate Context.....	26
e. Translation.....	27
3. Interpretation.....	27
4. Interrelationship to Inerrancy.....	28
IV. Explicatory Application.....	28
A. Effects on doctrinal affirmations.....	28
B. Effects on biblical studies	29
C. Effects on relational motives.....	30
V. Conclusion	31
Bibliography	33

I. Introduction

One of the issues facing contemporary evangelicalism is a progressive departure from the concept of the inerrant nature of Scripture. Presently, diluted views of the sanctity of God's written word are prevalent. This is resultant of alleged discrepancies within the canon of Scripture. Numerous biblical scholars have now discarded the concept of universal inerrancy, in favor of a limited perspective on inerrancy. Therefore, the premise for this research is to clarify whether the veracity of the Bible is universal or limited in scope.

The objective of this research is to illuminate the biblical witness regarding the doctrine of the inerrant nature of Scripture. The method employed will involve performing exegetical evaluations on biblical passages which are relevant to this issue. The two leading theories on inerrancy, within the evangelical domain (universal and limited), will be distinguished based on systematic exegesis and interpretation. The tentative solution for this issue, then, is that, based on exegetical inquiry, the Bible's internal witness affirms the universal inerrancy of Scripture.

II. Prominent Ideologies

A. Limited Inerrancy

The contemporary scholars who adhere to the limited inerrancy sentiment, propose that Scripture is accurate on primary doctrines but not on subordinate or minor subjects. That is, the Bible is only without error on issues of redemption, not on historical or scientific topics.¹ This is due to God's utilization of fallible human agents in the compositional process of the biblical canon.²

¹ Norman Geisler, "Is Belief in Biblical Contradictions Consistent with Inerrancy?," *Defending Inerrancy*, July 8, 2016, accessed April 17, 2020, <https://defendinginerrancy.com/what-is-limited-inerrancy/>.

² John MacArthur, *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 108.

Similarly, proponents of limited inerrancy have accommodated antithetical statements within the canon of Scripture. For example, they frequently cite the suspected discrepancies between Mark 14:12 and John 19:14. To limited inerrantists, these passages contain contradicting narratives, regarding the date of Jesus' crucifixion. Moreover, they insist comparable historical or scientific discrepancies occur throughout the entire biblical canon (e. g. Luke 2:1; Song of Songs 6:8; Hab. 3:3; 1 Cor. 2:8, etc.).

B. Universal Inerrancy

Advocates of universal (or unlimited) inerrancy maintain that the Bible is entirely devoid of error. According to John MacArthur, a universal inerrantist, "It (the Bible) is free from affirming anything that is untrue or contrary to fact".³ In the matter of human instrumentality, universal inerrantists uphold that God was not incapable of conveying absolute truth in every written word simply because he used imperfect human authors.

Furthermore, universal inerrantists vehemently promote the scope of inerrancy including the most infinitesimal grammatical components. They allege that the authority and inerrancy of Scripture encompasses every element of the text, including not only the tiny jots and tittles that were used to spell the actual words, but also verb tenses.⁴ Thus, accurate exegesis, which will attest to the truthfulness of Scripture, must include an examination of all aspects of the passage, from the historical-cultural climate, to the grammar and syntax of the proposed text.

III. Exegetical Evaluation

A. Inspiration – 2 Timothy 3:16

³ Ibid., 109.

⁴ John MacArthur, "Just How High Was Jesus View of Scripture?," *Expositor* 1, (2014): 15.

*“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness...”*⁵

1. Historical-Cultural Context

a. Author(s) & Date

Internal evidence, within the text of 2 Timothy, alludes to Pauline authorship (1:1).⁶ Contemporary scholarship has proposed an approximated date range for compilation between A.D. 64 – 68. However, a more definitive date of A.D. 66 has been resolved.⁷ This compositional date suggests that, despite the Bible’s canonical sequence, 2 Timothy was actually composed at the conclusion of Paul’s fourth missionary journey (4:6-18).⁸

b. Occasion

Paul’s occasion for producing this letter comprises his second Roman imprisonment, implied within the text (e.g. “δέσμιον” and “δεσμῶν,” 1:8; 2:9, respectively).⁹ He is, at that moment, awaiting his impending trial and martyrdom (c. A.D. 67) (4:6, 16-18). Furthermore, several of Paul’s closest companions had abandoned him (4:10-11); presumably, as a result of the danger of upholding Christian confessions during the Neronian administration.¹⁰

c. Geopolitical Climate

⁵ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the *English Standard Version* (Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2015).

⁶ Some modern scholars have challenged Pauline authorship. They contend that the epistle was composed under a pseudonym. However, there has been insufficient evidence to substantiate this assertion.

⁷ *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (2011), s.v. “Pastoral Letters.”

⁸ Walter A. Elwell and Robert W. Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 317.

⁹ All Greek references are from *The Zondervan Greek and English Interlinear New Testament (NASB/NIV)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 2011.

¹⁰ Elwell, *Encountering the New Testament*, 320.

Two years prior to Paul's imprisonment, in A.D. 64, a considerable portion of Rome was ravaged by fire.¹¹ In the aftermath, a group of Roman citizens accused Nero of ordering the devastation. Equitably or not, suspicion of Nero's involvement impelled him to divert suspicion to a patsy, namely, Christians. This launched the Neronian oppression of Christians. The relentless persecution of Christians continued until the late first century (revived by Domitian in A.D. 81)¹², decades after Nero's death in A.D. 68.

d. Recipient(s)

The opening of this epistle identifies the primary recipient as Timothy (1:2). At that time, Timothy was residing in Ephesus, where Paul had left him (4:19, c.f. 1 Tim. 1:3). Ephesus was sorely in need of Timothy's ministry; accordingly, he had been functioning as Paul's delegate there for some time.¹³

Timothy was not the only intended recipient, however. In the cessation of the text, Paul employs the pronoun “ὐμῶν,” in 4:22, which is the plural form of “you”. This nuanced, linguistic deviation suggests that Paul expected this epistle to be further disseminated to the church in Ephesus.

e. Intentions

The apostle had several motives for assembling this letter. Chiefly, it was designed to embolden and exhort Timothy. In the opening pericope, Paul incites Timothy to persist in his Christian convictions (1:5-7). Furthermore, in the corpus, there are admonitions to: resist false

¹¹ *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (2011), s.v. “Nero.”

¹² *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (2011), s.v. “Domitian.”

¹³ Mark E. Matheson, “Timothy, Second Letter to,” *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Trent C. Butler (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), no page number given, accessed April 18, 2020, Wordsearch Bible.

teachers (2:14-19); hold to sound doctrine (4:1-5); and to anticipate persecution (2:3-4; 3:10-12). These exhortations emanated from the doctrinal turmoil rampant in Timothy's Ephesus.

In addition to providing encouragement and incitement, Paul desires to see his beloved protégé one final time. Consequently, he instructs Timothy to gather John Mark, in addition to his belongings (4:6-22), and depart for Rome before winter sets in (4:21). Both Paul and Timothy would have been aware of the hazards of the journey. J. Scott Duval and J. Daniel Hays report, "Travel by ship was considered dangerous from mid-September through the end of May and was completely closed down from early November to around early March".¹⁴ No historical documentation exists that suggests Timothy arrived in Rome before Paul's execution.

2. Literary Context

a. Genre

Second Timothy's literary genre is categorized as an epistle and, consequently, follows standard first-century epistolary conventions (e. g. introduction, body, conclusion). Additionally, intrinsic to the Epistles are their occasional nature. Gordon Fee defines this concept, stating, "[T]hey were occasioned by some *special* circumstance, either from the reader's side or the author's".¹⁵ Paul's imprisonment was the catalyst that contributed to the assembly of this epistle (discussed above).

b. Canonical Context

¹⁴ J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2012), 115.

¹⁵ Gordon D. Fee, *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*, 3rd. ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 18.

In the broader, canonical scope, this letter is classified as one of the three “Pastoral Epistles.” It is situated near the conclusion of the New Testament chronology (c. A.D. 66). As a Pastoral Epistle, the content typifies pastoral concern for the recipient(s) and discusses ecclesiastical matters such as spiritual care and orderly conduct.¹⁶ These themes are interspersed throughout the text (e. g. 2:14-26; 4:1-5).

c. Text Linguistics

In the larger purview of the epistle, the passage under consideration is contained within the body of the text (1:6-4:18). More specifically, it resides in the concluding section of Paul’s appeals (2:1-3:17) and precedes his solemn charge to Timothy (4:1). The boundary markers, which delineate the pericope, are: the initial marker consisting of the contrastive conjunction “ὁὐ” (*de*, “But”) in 3:10; and the final marker comprising the indicative verb “Διαμαρτύρομαι” (*diamartyromai*, “I solemnly charge”) in 4:1.¹⁷

The initial marker, in 3:10, indicates an interchange. An interchange is an intentional contrast (or comparison) between narrative figures or events.¹⁸ The contrast Paul is referencing is the distinction between the character of the “men” in 3:2-9 and himself. Furthermore, there is a divergence in grammatical forms; namely, the shift in personal pronouns from “they” and “their” (3:1-9) to “you” (3:10, 14-15).

An indicative verb in 4:1 is the final boundary marker for this unit. The presence of this expression indicates a change in the flow of thought. Categorically, the construct represents a

¹⁶ Elwell and Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament*, 317.

¹⁷ William D. Mounce and Robert H. Mounce, *Greek and English Interlinear New Testament (NASB/NIV)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 1041.

¹⁸ Richard Alan Fuhr Jr. and Andreas Kostenberger, *Inductive Bible Study: Observation, Interpretation, and Application through the Lenses of History, Literature, and Theology* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016), 173.

hinge statement. Hinge statements, in prose literature, are major breaks in a line of argument within a discourse.¹⁹ Moreover, this marker illustrates a tonal change. Paul's mood transitions from expression to injunction.

d. Immediate Context

For prose literature, the immediate context typically consists of the verses preceding, and proceeding from, the text. However, in instances where the verse is situated at the conclusion of a grammatical unit, the antecedent verse(s) function as the immediate context.

The grammatical-syntactical context, for this passage, begins with another contrastive conjunction (“σὺ δὲ,” “but you”), in 3:14. There, Paul is emphasizing the dissimilarities between Timothy and the “evil people” and “imposters.” The “but you” phrase also contains a call to Timothy to be consistent in doctrine and conviction.²⁰ These verses function as a preface to the assertion at the inception of 3:16.

e. Translation

Grammatically, the opening expression in 3:16 is uncommon (e. g. adjective-noun-adjective). In koine Greek, the passage is rendered “πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος καὶ ὠφέλιμος...” (transliterated, “*pas graphē theopneustos*”). The word “πᾶσα” (all) is an attributive adjective and “θεόπνευστος” (God-breathed) is a predicate adjective.²¹ On the whole, this construction belongs

¹⁹ Ibid., 176.

²⁰ Walter L. Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 279.

²¹ Ibid., 280.

to an equative clause. In an equative clause, the central point, syntactically, is an assertion about the subject.²² In short, both terms are modifying the noun, “Scripture.”

3. Interpretation

From a biblical and theological perspective, Paul is advocating the divine inspiration of Scripture. Warren Wiersbe clarifies, stating, “What we mean by biblical *inspiration* is the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit on the Bible’s writers, which guaranteed that what they wrote was accurate and trustworthy”.²³ This doctrinal assertion is derived from the word *theopneustos*. The term “θεόπνευστος” (*theopneustos*) is formed from the Greek *theo* (which is the root form of “God”) and *pneustos* (an onomatopoeic, Greek root, having to do with breathing).²⁴ Moreover, Paul does not place a limitation on the scope of “God-breathed;” rather, he ascribes this designation to the entire canon. Thus, the description “God-breathed” is true of *all* (“πᾶσα”) Scripture, as is presented in the text.

4. Interrelationship to Inerrancy

Biblical inspiration, formulated in 2 Timothy 3:16, and affirmed in correlating passages (c. f. 2 Pet. 1:19-21), is the infrastructure upon which the doctrine of inerrancy is established. John MacArthur proposes, “Inspiration deals with the means by which the text was composed, but it also directly implies that it is the work of God. As such, the final product is attributed to him”.²⁵ In other words, the doctrine of inspiration is inextricably linked to the character of God.

²² Daniel B. Wallace, “The Relation of θεόπνευστος to γραφή in 2 Timothy 3:16,” Bible.org, June 30, 2004, accessed April 18, 2020, <https://bible.org/article/relation-2-timothy-316>.

²³ Warren Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary: New Testament*, 2 vols., Ephesians – Revelation (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 1989), 2:252.

²⁴ Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 279.

²⁵ John MacArthur, *Biblical Doctrine*, 109.

As all Scripture is divinely “breathed out by God,” the words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and books are, necessarily, of the same origin. Sinclair Ferguson notes, “This is often referred to as the *autopistic* character of Scripture. The Bible provides us with self-conscious indications that it is God’s Word”.²⁶ For this reason, any affirmations about the essence of Scripture, either limited or universally inerrant in scope, must be analyzed in view of the *autopistic* nature of God’s Word.

B. Characterization – Psalm 119:160

“*The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.*”

1. Historical-Cultural Context

a. Author(s) & Date

The English term “psalter” is derived from the Greek term *psaltērion* which means “a collection of harp songs”.²⁷ Numerous authors contributed to the composition of the psalter. There is information encapsulated within 116 of the 150 psalms, of which 103 connect the psalm to a specific individual.²⁸ Verified among these are – Moses, David, Solomon, Asaph, Korah, Heman, and Ethan. However, the composer of Psalm 119 in particular, is anonymous.²⁹

On the whole, the period of formation, for the psalter, ranges from the Davidic age (c. 1000 B.C.) to the post-exilic era (c. 400 B.C.). The outlier being the psalm attributed to Moses (Psa. 90) which was transcribed sometime between the fifteenth and thirteenth centuries, B.C.³⁰

²⁶ Sinclair Ferguson, “The Bible: The Living Voice of God,” *Expositor* 1, (2014): 26.

²⁷ *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (2011), s.v. “Psalms, Book Of.”

²⁸ Ed Hindson and Elmer Towns, *Illustrated Bible Survey: An Introduction* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), 184.

²⁹ Attempts have been made to affix Moses or a post-exilic Levite to the authorship of this psalm. However, there is not enough internal, or external, evidence to endorse these claims.

³⁰ *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (2011), s.v. “Psalms, Book Of.”

Most of the psalms were composed between the epoch of David and Solomon (c. 1010 – 930 B.C.).³¹ Concerning Psalm 119, the absence of decisive authorship means allocating a precise date of production is problematic.

b. Occasion

Analogous to the varying authorship of the Book of Psalms, the individual authors' occasions differ as well. Part of these include: the Edomitic campaign (Psa. 60); David's fear at Gath (Psa. 56); and David's guilt with Bathsheba (Psa. 51).³² For Psalm 119, though, internal testimony proposes the author was experiencing duress (v. 50, 67, 71, 83). More specifically, the writer was oppressed by those in positions of authority (v. 22-23, 39, 41, 51).³³

c. Geopolitical Climate

The psalter's geopolitical climate bridges numerous eras (depending on the psalmist and the individual psalm). This includes the period of Moses, during the post-Exodus, to the Davidic and Solomonic kingships. In addition, some of the psalms were compiled amid particular occurrences. For instance, the destruction of Jerusalem (c. 586 B.C.) contextualizes Psalms 88-89, and the restoring of Jerusalem's walls (c. 444 B.C.) underpins the text of Psalm 147:13.³⁴ Psalm 119's geopolitical atmosphere, however, is undetermined, due to an anonymous author and no categorical date of composition.

d. Recipient(s)

³¹ David M. Fleming and Russell Fuller, "Psalms, Book Of," *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Trent C. Butler (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), no page number given, accessed April 19, 2020, Wordsearch Bible.

³² *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (2011), s.v. "Psalms, Book Of."

³³ Daniel J. Estes, *Psalms 73-150*, 42 vols., New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2019), 13:401.

³⁴ *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (2011), s.v. "Psalms, Book Of."

As the psalter is composed of several individual psalms, the recipients are diverse. For some, they are directed to the “choirmaster” (e. g. Psa. 36; 70; 139, etc.), visibly addressed in the psalm’s title. The recipients of others, however, are more subtly alluded to. Psalm 119 is identified in the latter. In verse 9, there is a reference to “young man” which echoes an appeal in Proverbs (“Hear, my son”) which would suggest that the psalm is likely intended for young men on the cusp of adulthood.³⁵

e. Intentions

Generally, the Book of Psalms was intended to provide God’s people with an assortment of hymns and poems to evoke praise, thanksgiving, lament, or confidence. Thus, the intentions fluctuate from unit to unit.

Considering Psalm 119, the psalm’s classification (a “wisdom psalm,” with elements of lament, see 2.a.) indicates the author’s intent. Primarily, the composer was intending to prompt contemplation and meditation by the reader or singer.³⁶ Especially, the psalmist expected the audience to consider the vital ministry of the word of God.³⁷ Additionally, by virtue of the inclusion of lament, the psalmist predetermined to make a personal appeal, to God, for deliverance (v. 41, 81-82, 94, 107).

2. Literary Context

a. Genre

³⁵ Estes, *Psalms 73-150*, 399.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 400.

³⁷ Warren Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary: Old Testament Wisdom and Poetry*, Job – Song of Solomon (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2004), 308.

The Old Testament, primarily, is categorized as either prose or poetry. Collectively, the psalter's genre is regarded as Hebrew poetry. This type of literature is a collection of phrases, where each expression is a line of thought.³⁸ In addition, the Hebrew word for the book is תהלים (tēhillîm) which means “praises”.³⁹ Accordingly, the Book of Psalms is further classified as a book of poetic songs, hymns, or praises.

Psalms 119 is variegated in its genre. It is primarily designated as a “wisdom psalm,” which is more meditative in mood and didactic in intention.⁴⁰ Furthermore, this psalm is also characteristic of wisdom poetry in its epigrammatic form, extensive vocabulary of wisdom, and subject matter (v. 1-2, 12, 24, 27, 48, etc.).⁴¹ Customarily, this class of psalms: describes God and individuals' relationships to Him; and presents truths as self-evident descriptions of the way God intends life to be.⁴²

Besides conventional wisdom components, Psalm 119 patterns aspects of the lament psalms within its corpus as well (v. 50, 67, 71, etc.). This is demonstrated in the concluding “vows of praise” synonymous with other lament psalms (v. 16, 32, 44, 55, 62, etc.).⁴³ The diversified nature of Psalm 119 is also evident in the author's assertions of innocence (v. 81-82), confessions of trust (v. 42, 57), and petitions (v. 121-122).

b. Canonical Context

³⁸ Ibid., 83.

³⁹ Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyer, *Encountering the Old Testament: A Christian Survey*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 280.

⁴⁰ William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg and Robert L. Hubbard Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 458.

⁴¹ Estes, *Psalms 73-150*, 399.

⁴² Arnold and Beyer, *Encountering the Old Testament*, 284.

⁴³ Estes, *Psalms 73-150*, 400.

In the expansive canonical framework, the Book of Psalms belongs to the division of the eleven books of Writings, namely: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles (according to the Jewish Talmud).⁴⁴ Specifically, the psalter is situated in the concluding section of the Hebrew Old Testament.

Within the Book of Psalms, a further subdivision exists which partitions the psalter into five smaller “books.” Each book is concluded with a doxology or a terminal ascription (e. g. Psa. 41:13). Psalm 119 is located in book five of the psalter (this section begins in Psalm 107 and concludes in Psalm 150).

c. Text Linguistics

Psalm 119 adheres to an elaborate alphabetic acrostic, demonstrating careful intention and rhetorical creativity. Each of the eight verse strophes begins with a sequential letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Verse 160 is positioned at the conclusion of the *resh* strophe, three stanzas from the end of the psalm. Furthermore, there is cohesion, based on common diction, which defines the unit beginning in verse 153 and concluding in verse 160.

The initial boundary marker, which defines the sense unit, is a natural division located in verse 153. The preceding verse, which begins with the word קָדְשׁ , concludes the *qoph* (“ק”) strophe while the term $\text{הַשֵּׁשׁ$ initiates the *resh* (“ר”) strophe. These verses indicate a marked shift in phonology.

⁴⁴ *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (2011), s.v. “The OT canon.”

In addition, the words רָאָה (“*r’h*” translated “look”) and רִיבָה (“*ryb*,” translated “plead”) indicate a transition in verb form.⁴⁵ The preponderance of verbs in the *qoph* strophe are in the *qātal* (perfect) form (the exception being רָאָה, in v.149). This structure is frequently used for actions or states reported in the past, often requiring past tense translations.⁴⁶ Conversely, in the *resh* strophe the psalmist shifts to *qal*, fientive, where the voice of the primary subject is active (e. g. “look” in v. 153).⁴⁷

The final boundary marker for this unit is situated at the terminating stich (line) in verse 160. In the proceeding couplet (verse), there is a distinct shift in phonology, where the psalmist progresses from introducing each verse with *resh* (“ר”) to *sin* and *shin* (“ש”). Appropriately, the alliteration, or the repetition of consonants, within the couplet switches. Moreover, verse 161 denotes another shift in verb form. There, the psalmist changes the verb form from *qal*, fientive back to *qātal* (perfect) and complements with *qal*, participle (e. g. v. 161, 162, 165 etc.).

d. Immediate Context

Concerning the grammatical-syntactical context, verse 160 is the terminating couplet for the *resh* strophe. Thus, the immediate context for the verse would, seemingly, be verse 159. However, semantic context in Hebrew poetry operates differently than in prose. In poetry the lexical-semantic framework is comprised of the entire sense unit.⁴⁸ Thus, verse 160’s immediate context is the entire *resh* strophe (v. 153-159).

⁴⁵ Richard Whitaker and others, *The Abridged Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1906), no page number given, accessed April 21, 2020, Logos Bible Software.

⁴⁶ Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 67.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁴⁸ Klein, Blomberg and Hubbard Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 458.

The unit functions as a cohesive lament for deliverance. It commences with a plea to the Lord (v. 153 “לְדַלֵּג” translated “deliver”)⁴⁹ and concludes with a conviction of confidence in the word of God (v. 160). Furthermore, each couplet, throughout the strophe, alludes to God’s word. The author implements eight different synonymous expressions for Scripture, which are located in the concluding stich of each couplet (e. g. “your commands,” “your precepts,” etc.).

e. Translation

In Hebrew, the focal point of verse 160 is recorded ראש־דְּבָרָךְ אֱמֶת (transliterated “*rōš dā·bār ’ē·mēṭ*”). This stich is introduced by the word “ראש־” (“*rōš*”) which means “take the sum of, or enumerate”.⁵⁰ In addition, “דְּבָרָךְ” (“*dā·bār*”) is a synecdoche, which indicates the term “word” embodies the entire Old Testament canon of Scripture.

What the psalmist postulates, then, is that the sum of God’s word is “אֱמֶת” (“*’ē·mēṭ*” translated “truth”).⁵¹ Morphologically, the term “אֱמֶת” takes the form of a predicate nominative (or *copula-complement*). The predicate nominative is often a clause of identification, where the noun or pronoun is equated with the subject by a “to be” verb (stated or implied).⁵² Thus, the psalmist composes a nominal clause, with the noun “אֱמֶת.”

The psalmist also employs two categories of poetic parallelism, specifically, continuation and intensification. Parallelism of continuation is a grammatic structure where the succeeding stich presents a progression of thought.⁵³ In verse 160, then, the statement: אֵלֶּיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ כָּל־מִשְׁפָּט צְדָקָה:

⁴⁹ Whitaker and others, *Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, no page number given.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, no page number given.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, no page number given.

⁵² Arnold and Choi, *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 9.

⁵³ Klein, Blomberg and Hubbard Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 382.

(translated as, “and every one of your righteous rules endures forever”) is a conceptual progression, emanating from the leading stich, affixed by the *waw* conjunctive “וְ” (“and”).⁵⁴

Parallelism of intensification occurs when the secondary stich, in a couplet, reiterates the primary stich in a more direct or forceful manner.⁵⁵ Essentially, the psalmist is expounding the preeminent concept in the leading stich by adhering a subordinate phrase. Thus, there is the formation of a binary argument (see below).

3. Interpretation

In this couplet, the psalmist is advocating at least two fundamental concepts. Firstly, everything that God affirms in His word is trustworthy and reliable because the God who has proclaimed it is trustworthy.⁵⁶ This notion is implied by the initiating statement in the first stich (e. g. “רִאשׁוֹן דְּבָרָיו אֱמֶת”). Moreover, the whole of God’s word is truth. Warren Wiersbe aptly states, “The *totality* of God’s written revelation is not just true – it is truth” (emphasis added).⁵⁷

Second, through the use of parallelism (both continuation and intensification) the psalmist discusses the enduring nature of God’s truth. Included in the terminating stich is the expression “עוֹלָם” (“*ô-lām*”). This term is translated “everlasting or enduring forever”.⁵⁸ Consequently, the author is proposing that all of the Lord’s righteous standards are everlasting, never failing or expiring.⁵⁹

4. Interrelationship to Inerrancy

⁵⁴ Arnold and Choi, *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 157.

⁵⁵ Klein, Blomberg and Hubbard Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 386.

⁵⁶ Estes, *Psalms 73-150*, 436.

⁵⁷ Wiersbe, *Old Testament Wisdom and Poetry*, 331.

⁵⁸ Whitaker, *Hebrew-English Lexicon*, no page number given.

⁵⁹ Estes, *Psalms 73-150*, 436.

At the crux of Psalm 119:160 is an attributive declaration regarding the character of God's word. What the psalmist postulates develops, rationally, from the concept of inspiration. If, in fact, the canon of Scripture is God-breathed, then it is an output of His nature, namely, truth (John 14:6; 16:13). In other words, since God is true, so is his revelation in Scripture.⁶⁰

Furthermore, the psalmist declares that, in its *totality*, Scripture is trustworthy and enduring. As a result, everything encompassed within the biblical canon is true. Logically, this would extend to primary and secondary historical, scientific, and doctrinal matters. Herman Bavinck contends, “[I]n Scripture, doctrine and history are completely intertwined”.⁶¹ Thus, the inerrant nature of the doctrines of redemption is also inseparably infused within the historical reports as well.

C. Attestation – John 17:17

“Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.”

1. Historical-Cultural Context

a. Author(s) & Date

While this gospel narrative is, theoretically, anonymous, internal evidence points, unequivocally, at Johannine authorship (John, son of Zebedee) (e. g. 13:23; 19:26 “the disciple whom Jesus loved”).⁶² This appellation of authorial modesty does not directly reveal John as the author. However, the writer does introduce all of the other disciples by name, throughout the narrative (1:40, 43-46, 45-49; 11:16; 14:22; 18:2). Moreover, the author concludes the gospel

⁶⁰ John MacArthur, *Biblical Doctrine*, 110.

⁶¹ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Abridged in One Volume* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 100.

⁶² Andreas Köstenberger, *Encountering John: The Gospel in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 5, accessed April 25, 2020, Wordsearch Bible.

account with the phrase “Οὗτός ἐστιν,” which includes the present tense verb “ἐστιν” (“*eimi*” translated “is”) (21:24).⁶³ This expression refers to the disciple mentioned in verses 20 and 23, namely, “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”

In addition, external evidence exists which supports John as author of this narrative. The witness of the early church historians and theologians, such as Eusebius, Clement, Origen, Tertullian, Irenaeus, and Theophilus, all endorse John as the author.⁶⁴ In other words, the early church fathers uniformly ascribed Johannine authorship.

Biblical scholarship proposes a date of composition sometime toward the close of the first century A.D. Most contend for the period following the martyrdom of Peter in A.D. 65 (alluded to in 21:19) and the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (see sections 1.b-1.d).⁶⁵ Thus, the presumed date is A.D. 90.

Unquestionably, though, the date of composition does not eclipse the first century. This is based upon the archaeological discovery of a papyrus fragment of the gospel of John, which was uncovered in Middle Egypt. The fragment belonged to a codex that was circulating in the first half of the second century.⁶⁶ Furthermore, the fourth gospel was extensively accepted, throughout Christendom, in Africa, Asia Minor, Italy, Gaul, and Syria in the last quarter of the second century.⁶⁷ In order for this gospel to be so widely disseminated, it required a compositional date within the first century A.D.

b. Occasion

⁶³ Mounce and Mounce, *Interlinear New Testament*, 1051.

⁶⁴ *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (2011), s.v. “John, Gospel of.”

⁶⁵ Köstenberger, *Encountering John*, 7.

⁶⁶ *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (2011), s.v. “John, Gospel of.”

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 750.

According to the church historian Irenaeus, the apostle John was assembling his gospel account while residing in Ephesus.⁶⁸ The destruction of the temple in Jerusalem (c. A.D. 70) has been associated with the occasion prompting John's writing of his gospel narrative. It is conceivable that John considered this event an opportunity to present Jesus as the one to fill the void left by the temple's destruction.⁶⁹

c. Geopolitical Climate

With a presumed compilation date in A.D. 90, this would place John's writing during the reign of Domitian (A.D. 81-96). Domitian, comparable to Nero, was a systematic persecutor of Christians during his governance. Furthermore, Domitian's ethos resulted from his inheritance of the policies and legislation established by Nero, decades earlier.⁷⁰ Consequently, the political climate for discernable Christians, during this period, was perilous.

Another pertinent event which shaped the political climate during this epoch was the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem (c. August, A.D. 70). During the second Jewish revolt, the Romans, under the command of Titus, desecrated the temple. Without a temple, the Palestinian and Diaspora Jews would have had no operational sacrificial system or established priesthood.⁷¹ This would have caused a substantial, spiritual void in first century Jewish life.

d. Recipient(s)

The Ephesian churches would have been the intended readers of John's gospel. Demographically, the audience was a conglomerate of Gentiles, attracted to Judaism, and

⁶⁸ Hindson and Towns, *Illustrated Bible Survey*, 384.

⁶⁹ Köstenberger, *Encountering John*, 9.

⁷⁰ *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (2011), s.v. "Domitian."

⁷¹ Köstenberger, *Encountering John*, 9.

diaspora Jews (non-messianic Jews who were dispersed into the surrounding countries).⁷² John's inclusion of certain cultural elements, within the narrative, alludes to the intended recipients. First, he dedicates effort to explaining Jewish customs in 4:9, 7:2, and 10:22, due to the Gentiles limited knowledge of Jewish culture. Second, scattered throughout the first half of the gospel narrative, John emphasizes the Jews' rejection of Jesus (John 2-12), in an effort to persuade the Jews who were skeptical of Christ. These details are indicative of the audience whom John intended to reach.

As a gospel (see section 2.a.), the scope of the audience would have exceeded the diaspora Jews and Gentiles of the first century.⁷³ John's gospel is not limited to the intended readers or recipients; rather, the gospel narrative is designed for the entire New Testament church, which includes contemporary Christians.

e. Intentions

John's motives for recording his gospel are introduced within the corpus of the narrative (20:31). He describes his intention to equip believers in order to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ to their unbelieving neighbors.⁷⁴ Moreover, John was subtly pursuing indirect, proselyte and diasporic, Jewish evangelism.

Additionally, John wrote to discuss various teachings imposed by a first century opponent of Christianity, namely, Cerinthus. According to Cerinthus, at baptism, the Christ-spirit descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove.⁷⁵ Subsequently, that same spirit would have

⁷² *Ibid.*, 7.

⁷³ *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (2011), s.v. "John, Gospel of."

⁷⁴ Köstenberger, *Encountering John*, 9.

⁷⁵ *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (2011), s.v. "John, Gospel of."

departed from Jesus preceding his suffering. John, thus, intended to depict Jesus as the Christ (1:1-18), Messiah, and incarnate Logos in order to refute Cerinthus' doctrine.

2. Literary Context

a. Genre

In the early church, a “gospel” was not considered a literary form. Before the composition of the New Testament, when the phrase *euangelion* (see 2.b.) was used, it referred to the proclamation of an emperor's military victory. However, contemporary scholarship has suggested that the four evangelists created a new literary genre when they composed their gospels.⁷⁶ Categorically, the gospel genre is prose literature in the form of biographical, historical narrative. Additionally, this literary category contains some shared features found throughout all four gospels, namely: parables; miracle stories; pronouncement stories; announcement and nativity stories; legal maxims; beatitudes and woes; calling and recognition scenes; and farewell discourses.⁷⁷

John's account is considered the “spiritual” gospel, which is focused on the glory of the Lord Jesus, his deity, and his messianic office.⁷⁸ Characteristic of John's gospel is a careful balance in sentence structure, including a rhythmic, chiasmic flow found, most notably, in the prologue (1:1-18). John was also committed to including certain elements less defined in the other narratives, specifically: Christ's work in Judea; detail surrounding the time and place of

⁷⁶ Klein, Blomberg and Hubbard Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 512.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 531.

⁷⁸ *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (2011), s.v. “John, Gospel of.”

related events; particular emphasis on the impending work of the Holy Spirit; and the abundance of non-parabolic teaching.⁷⁹

b. Canonical Context

This book is categorized as one of four “gospels” (e. g. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) which were among the first writings quoted as sacred and authoritative.⁸⁰ The term “gospel” is derived from the Greek word “εὐαγγέλιον” (transliterated “*euangelion*” meaning “good news”).

The gospels are subdivided into John’s gospel, and the “synoptics.” Matthew, Mark, and Luke are defined as the “synoptics” because, when placed side-by-side, they form a comparable account of Jesus’ life and ministry (*syn* meaning together and *optics* meaning see).⁸¹

Sequentially, John’s gospel is located at the beginning of the New Testament canon. However, with a proposed compositional date in A.D. 90, this gospel narrative would, chronologically, be at the conclusion of the New Testament. As a result, John’s gospel narrative would be the final gospel account composed. This would substantiate claims that John intentionally included aspects of Jesus’ ministry that were not explored in the synoptics.

c. Text Linguistics

Considering the purview of the gospel, John 17:17’s surrounding context is enclosed within the corpus referred to as the “High Priestly Prayer” (John 17:1-18:1). The unabridged unit of discourse is defined by two boundary markers, namely – the initial marker in 17:1, and the terminal marker in 18:1.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 752.

⁸⁰ *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (2011), s.v. “Gospels.”

⁸¹ Duvall and Hays, *Grasping God’s Word*, 271.

The initial indicator for the pericope is situated in John 17:1. There, the scene is initiated by a pivot episode, indicating a break in the narrative. This is determined by the temporal shift, based on the simple active verb “ἐλάλησεν” (*laleō* meaning “spoke, said”) in the phrase “Ταῦτα ἐλάλησεν Ἰησοῦς,” at the initiation of 17:1. At this point in the report, Jesus’ prayer marks the end of the disciples’ time with Jesus in the upper room.⁸²

The terminal marker for the unit is located in 18:1, following the conclusion of Jesus’ prayer (17:26). John employs the past participle “εἶπον” (*legō* meaning “spoken”) to indicate another pivot episode. This temporal shift terminates the “Farewell Discourse” (John 13-17) and introduces the “Passion” narrative (18:1 – 19:42).

d. Immediate Context

Immediate, grammatical-syntactical context, for this pericope, begins in verse 13. There, the passage is initiated by a contrasting conjunction “δὲ” (“but”). Jesus is juxtaposing the antecedent statement in verse 12 “ὅτε ἤμην μετ’ αὐτῶν” (“while I was with them”) with “νῦν δὲ” (“but now”), connoting a temporal shift.

Semantically, the immediate context concludes in verse 20. At this junction, there is a transition in pronouns, from “εἰσὶν” (“they”) and “αὐτούς” (“them”) to “τούτων” (“these”) indicating a shift in narrative subjects. The antecedent for the phrase “τούτων” is located in verses 6-19. More specifically, the transition in subjects introduces another group distinct from the then-living disciples for whom He had just prayed.⁸³

⁸² John MacArthur, *John 12-21*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2008), 236.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 287.

e. Translation

John 17:17 is translated “ἀγίασον αὐτοὺς ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ· ὁ λόγος ὁ σὸς ἀλήθειά ἐστιν”. The emphasis of the verse, for the sake of this study, is in Jesus’ concluding assertion, specifically, “λόγος ὁ σὸς ἀλήθειά ἐστιν” (“your word is truth”). Syntactically, the subject of the phrase is “λόγος” (*logos* translated “word”), followed by the possessive pronoun “σὸς” (*sos* meaning “your”). This possessive pronoun refers to the antecedent “Holy Father” reference in verse 11 (e. g. “πάτερ ἅγιε”). Moreover, the term “ἀλήθειά” (*alētheia* translated “truth”) is a nominative noun joined to the subject via the equative verb “ἐστιν” (“is”), forming a predicate nominative structure.

The semantic relationship of this terminal phrase is a subset proposition. A subset proposition means the “is” does not necessarily mean “equals” (e. g. there is truth that exists outside the confines of the biblical canon).⁸⁴ However, what is contained within the canon of Scripture *is* truth.

3. Interpretation

Jesus is postulating a succinct expression regarding the nature of Scripture. Essentially, he is forming a synonymous statement about God’s Word and truth. John MacArthur maintains, “[I]n referring to the word that is truth, Jesus was speaking not only of his immediate words, but of the entirety of Scripture...All of it, from Genesis to Revelation, is truth”.⁸⁵ In effect, Jesus is accentuating the perception of the psalmist in Psalm 119:160 (c. f. *Psa.* 19:7). However, the magnitude of the declaration is now sanctioned by the incarnate Truth (John 14:6).

⁸⁴ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics – An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 41.

⁸⁵ MacArthur, *John 12-21*, 283.

Still, Jesus adds a secondary component to the inference. He correlates the word that is truth, to the process of sanctification. Sanctification is defined as the process or result of being made holy.⁸⁶ Consequently, it is the holiness (which necessitates inerrancy) of God's Word that compels holiness in Christians. An unholy word could not regulate holiness in believers.

4. Interrelationship to Inerrancy

John 17:17 is the premier attestation in terms of biblical inerrancy. The authority, inspiration, and inerrancy of God's word is, predominantly, a doctrine that is verified by Jesus Christ (c. f. Matt. 5:18; John 10:35; Luke 16:17). R. C. Sproul justly contends, "Since Jesus is God, he is infallible and does not teach error...If God is infallible and always speaks the truth, and if He inspired the entire Bible, then the Bible must be true in all that it affirms".⁸⁷ Therefore, inerrancy must be accepted above all, on Jesus' authoritative teaching regarding the veracity of Scripture, found in this text.

For Jesus, the validity of Scripture was always assumed. Throughout his ministry, he only corrected misinterpretations of the biblical text, he never alluded to errancy within the canon.⁸⁸ Thus, we cannot take Jesus seriously as a teacher and reject his own teaching concerning Holy Scripture.⁸⁹

IV. Explicatory Application

A. Effects on doctrinal affirmations

⁸⁶ *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (2011), s.v. "sanctification."

⁸⁷ R. C. Sproul, "The Classical Defense of Scripture," *Expositor* 1, (2014): 19.

⁸⁸ MacArthur, *Biblical Doctrine*, 111.

⁸⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 93.

One of the preeminent realms, affected by the shifting inerrancy perspective, is the area of doctrinal affirmations. Biblical history and doctrinal affirmations are intrinsically intertwined. John MacArthur states, pointedly, “How can one be sure that God can rightly convey to man spiritual truths concerning matters of faith and practice if he cannot guarantee that the facts of history are rightly recorded?”⁹⁰ The inerrancy of recorded historical facts is essential to Christian doctrines. If the historical witness of Christ was unreliable, then doctrinal affirmations, affixed to the Christian faith, would be diminished to esotericism.⁹¹

Another realm of doctrine influenced by the implications of limited inerrancy, is biblical theology. Biblical theology relates to the development of theology within the historical progression of the Bible.⁹² The progressive revelation of Christ, throughout the canon, is, inherently, biblical theology. Should universal inerrancy be dismissed, in favor of limited inerrancy, then essential biblical theology, established in history (e. g. Christ’s virgin birth, atoning death, resurrection, and ascension), becomes baseless.

B. Effects on biblical studies

The doctrine of inerrancy has a marked effect on how biblical analysis is conducted. A preeminent principle in biblical hermeneutics is the process of interpretive correlation. In short, this system insists that Scripture functions as its own best commentary. Biblical scholars must, then, interpret the more difficult passages by considering the less obscure ones. As a result, the whole meaning of Scripture becomes coherent by studying its parts and its parts by studying the whole.⁹³

⁹⁰ John MacArthur, *Biblical Doctrine*, 108.

⁹¹ Sproul, “The Classical Defense of Scripture,” 19.

⁹² Klein, Blomberg and Hubbard Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 579.

⁹³ Michael S. Horton, “Interpreting Scripture by Scripture,” *Expositor* 11, (2016): 21.

This technique was founded in Rabbinic Judaism and transformed into the cross-referencing system employed in several Bible translations today.⁹⁴ If the canon of Scripture contains any error, then the traditional cross-reference procedure becomes unreliable. However, if the Bible is universally inerrant, this strategy is an effective method for clarifying paradoxical passages.

Basic hermeneutical principles and processes are not the only aspects of Bible study to suffer should limited inerrancy be acknowledged. The truth of Scripture also includes every valid implication that can be drawn from the text, not just the explicit statements.⁹⁵ Thus, adopting limited inerrancy means truthful and valid connotations, deduced from Scripture, cannot be applied and contemporary contextualization becomes irrational.

C. Effects on relational motives

A Christian's relationship with God is equally affected by the doctrine of inerrancy. The timeless indictment from the enemy concerns the authority and inerrancy of God's word (e. g. ("You will not surely die," Gen. 3:4). By contending that God is untrustworthy, Satan deposits obstacles of mistrust between humanity and God. A distortion of the biblical witness of inerrancy functions in a similar manner, attributing falsehood to a Holy God and His inspired, authoritative word.

An acceptance of errant Scripture distorts the character of God and the nature of Christian discipleship.⁹⁶ It fosters skepticism which, inevitably, leads to a lack of motivation toward obedience. Thus, trust in the character of God and His faithfulness, via His written word, is

⁹⁴ Ibid., 76.

⁹⁵ MacArthur, "Just How High Was Jesus View of Scripture?," 15.

⁹⁶ Derek W. H. Thomas, "Does Inerrancy Matter?," *Expositor* 1, (2014): 30.

where the doctrine of inerrancy and the Christian life naturally intersect. Albert Mohler asserts, “If God has spoken, we must trust His Word because we trust Him”.⁹⁷ Consequently, universal inerrancy, based on God’s Word, leads to a life of thanksgiving, praise, obedience, and service, all derived from trust in the inerrant Word of God.

V. Conclusion

Contemporary evangelicalism is facing a detrimental shift regarding the inerrancy of Scripture. Limited inerrantists have proposed a perspective on the Bible which has limited the scope of its veracity to concepts of redemption only. These notions are derived from the alleged discrepancies throughout the biblical canon. Conversely, universal inerrantists advocate the complete inerrancy of Scripture, maintaining that the Bible is entirely devoid of error. They postulate that inerrancy expands to encompass primary and subordinate matters (e. g. revelation, history, and science) as well as the smallest grammatical units within the text.

Through exegetical evaluations, on relevant biblical passages, God’s Word has functioned as its own witness in the inerrancy debate. First, the passage in 2 Timothy 3:16 provided the framework for inerrancy, namely, the divine inspiration of Scripture. Divine inspiration obliges any deductions regarding the veracity of Scripture to be channeled through God’s self-revelation in his word. Second, Psalm 119:160 emphasized the reliability of Scripture. In its totality it is truth because it is God-breathed. Not only is it divinely inspired truth, but it is an everlasting, enduring truth. Finally, John 17:17 is the decisive passage in the inerrancy debate. Jesus insists that the word of God is truth. If he makes such an assertion, it must, necessarily, be the authoritative, orthodox position on the matter.

⁹⁷ R. Albert Mohler, Jr. “The Bible and the Believer,” *Expositor* 1, (2014): 22.

Therefore, based upon the biblical witness, the doctrine of universal inerrancy is the equitable solution. The veracity of the Bible is not limited but universal in scope. Inerrancy extends to all matters contained within the biblical canon, including matters of revelation in addition to historical and scientific subjects.

Bibliography

Arnold, Bill T., and Bryan E. Beyer. *Encountering the Old Testament*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015.

———, and John H. Choi. *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Bavinck, Herman. *Reformed Dogmatics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011.

Duvall, J. Scott and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2012.

Elwell, Walter A. and Robert W. Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013.

Estes, Daniel J. *Psalms 73-150*. New American Commentary. Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2019.

Fee, Gordon D. *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*, 3rd. ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.

Ferguson, Sinclair. "The Bible: The Living Voice of God." *Expositor* 1, (2014): 25-27.

Fuhr Jr., Richard Alan and Andreas J. Kostenberger. *Inductive Bible Study: Observation, Interpretation, and Application through the Lenses of History, Literature, and Theology*. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016.

Geisler, Norman L. "Is Belief in Biblical Contradictions Consistent with Inerrancy?." *Defending Inerrancy*. July 8, 2016. Accessed April 17, 2020. <https://defendinginerrancy.com/what-is-limited-inerrancy/>.

Hindson, Ed and Elmer L. Towns. *Illustrated Bible Survey: An Introduction*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013.

Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary. Edited by Trent C. Butler. Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003. No page number given. Accessed April 18, 2020. Wordsearch Bible.

Horton, Michael S. "Interpreting Scripture by Scripture." *Expositor* 11 (2016): 21-26.

Klein, William W., Craig L. Blomberg and Robert L. Hubbard Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 3rd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017.

Köstenberger, Andreas J. *Encountering John: The Gospel in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspective*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013. Accessed April 25, 2020. Wordsearch Bible.

Liefeld, Walter L. *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*. NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999.

MacArthur, John and Richard Mayhue. *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017.

———. "Just How High Was Jesus View of Scripture?," *Expositor* 1, (2014): 13-15.

———. *John 12-21*. The MacArthur New Testament Commentary. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2008.

Mohler Jr., R. Albert. "The Bible and the Believer," *Expositor* 1, (2014): 20-22.

Mounce, William D. and Robert H. Mounce. *Greek and English Interlinear New Testament (NASB/NIV)*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.

Sproul, R. C., “The Classical Defense of Scripture.” *Expositor* 1, (2014): 17-19.

Thomas, Derek W. H. “Does Inerrancy Matter?,” *Expositor* 1, (2014): 29-30.

Wallace, Daniel B. “The Relation of θεόπνευστος to γραφή in 2 Timothy 3:16.” Bible.org. June 30, 2004. accessed April 18, 2020. <https://bible.org/article/relation-2-timothy-316>

———. *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics – An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996.

Whitaker, Richard, Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, Charles Augustus Briggs. *The Abridged Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1906. Accessed April 21, 2020. Logos Bible Software

Wiersbe, Warren. *The Bible Exposition Commentary: New Testament*, 2 vols., Ephesians – Revelation. Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 1989.

———, Warren. *The Bible Exposition Commentary: Old Testament Wisdom and Poetry*, Job – Song of Solomon. Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2004.

Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary. Rev. ed. Edited by Moises Silva. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011.