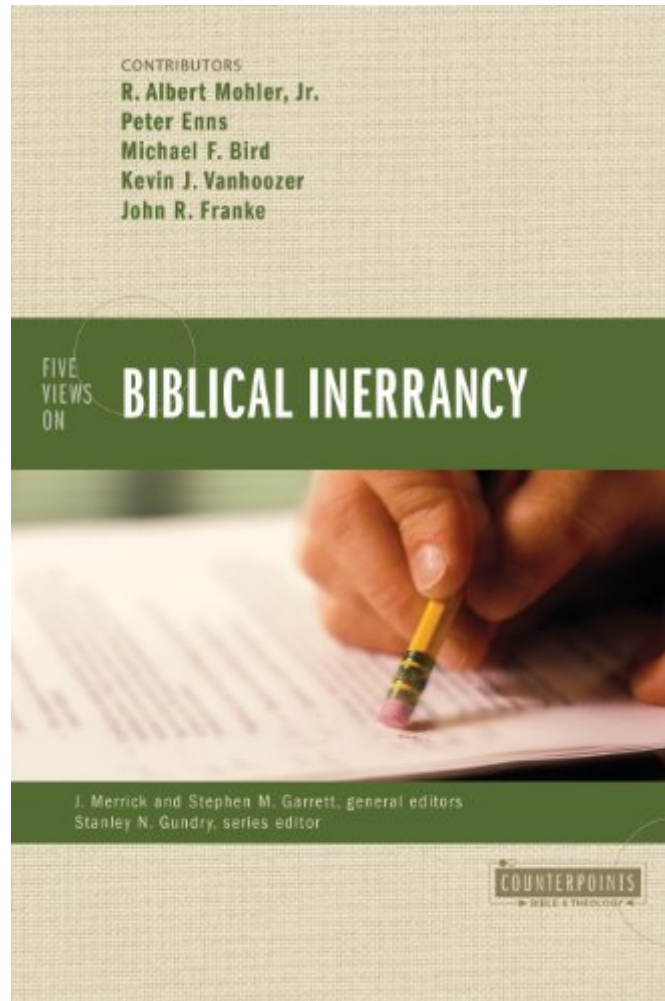


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Five Views On Biblical Inerrancy (Counterpoints: Bible And Theology)



Synopsis

There is little doubt that the inerrancy of the Bible is a current and often contentious topic among evangelicals. *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy* represents a timely contribution by showcasing the spectrum of evangelical positions on inerrancy, facilitating understanding of these perspectives, particularly where and why they diverge. Each essay in *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy* considers: the present context and the viability and relevance for the contemporary evangelical Christian witness; whether and to what extent Scripture teaches its own inerrancy; the position's assumed/implied understandings of the nature of Scripture, God, and truth; and three difficult biblical texts, one that concerns intra-canonical contradictions, one that raises questions of theological plurality, and one that concerns historicity. *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy* serves not only as a single-volume resource for surveying the current debate, but also as a catalyst both for understanding and advancing the conversation further. Contributors include Al Mohler, Kevin Vanhoozer, Michael Bird, Peter Enns, and John Franke.

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Customer Reviews

I bought this book after reading Enns' "The Evolution of Adam" and "When God Spoke Greek," two very recent works that significantly challenge the "traditional" doctrine of scriptural inerrancy. I've read about a dozen other books on the subject (as my degrees and career are in this area) as well. But since my own view of the subject is undergoing reconstruction, it was delightful to have this volume come in the mail. It was very helpful - and in fact, I just finished reading it about an hour ago (read it in two days straight, phew! Christmas breaks are great). The editors of the volume established an internal framework within which the contributors had to address: (1) the Chicago Statement of Inerrancy, (2) the historicity of the fall of Jericho (case study 1), (3) an alleged contradiction in the book of Acts (case study 2). This helped limit the discussion a bit and keep things focused. It appeared to work well. What follows is a highly opinionated, but hopefully helpful review.

Specific Remarks

Mohler - His essay was well written, and had little "new" to say on the subject from his perspective. But it was interesting to me that Mohler's case appeared to be the weakest argued (because he's a rather bright guy). A large portion of his essay was dedicated to describing the historical background to the formation of the Chicago Statement, and the consequences of denying inerrancy (e.g., the fall of evangelicalism as we know it). I realize that he is presenting the "classic case for inerrancy," but it was still a bit musty, and he kind of set himself up for a royal smack-down - which virtually every other contributor delivered, fair and square.

Four primary topics are treated in this multi-view book: (1) God and his relationship to his creatures, (2) the doctrine of inspiration, (3) the nature of Scripture, and (4) the nature of truth. Instead of allowing the author's to simply give a defense of their positions - each scholar tackles the same outline and passages from their own perspective with reference to the Chicago Statement of Biblical Inerrancy (ISBI). Therefore, specific scriptures are handled to demonstrate each view along the lines of three specific categories: (1) The factuality of Scripture, (2) canonical coherence, and (3) theological coherence. The scholars therefore all interact with the following texts: Joshua 6, Acts 9:9 compared with Acts 22:9, and Deuteronomy 20 in relation to Matthew 5. Joshua 6 was chosen since current details of historical and archaeological evidence have called into question the accuracy of the text's account of the destruction of Jericho. The Acts passage which describes Paul's conversion was chosen due to the apparent discrepancy between what the witnesses saw and heard during this event. For theological coherence the author's grapple with the question "How is it that Deuteronomy 20 instructs Israel that the complete extermination of Yahweh's enemies is a matter of Israel's purity before and obedience to Yahweh, while Jesus subsequently says faithfulness

to God requires nonretaliation and sacrificial love of enemies (Matthew 5:38-48)?"The scholars addressing these biblical, theological, and historical concerns are two biblical scholars (Michael Bird and Peter Enns), two systematic theologians (John Franke and Kevin Vanhoozer), and one historical theologian (Albert Mohler).

No one is indifferent to the doctrine of inerrancy, and what follows are some of my rambling thoughts about the matter after reading through Zondervan's latest 'counterpoints' book *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy*. On the contributors. Al Mohler loves inerrancy--the more of it the better; Peter Enns thinks it's stupid; Michael Bird really hates the word 'inerrancy,' but affirms everything it traditionally stands for; Kevin Vanhoozer actually tries to flesh out its content; and John Franke thinks it's all a language game. As usual, the essays are uneven in quality. Vanhoozer's the best, Enns' is the most provocative, Bird's is funny at moments, but isn't that interesting, Franke's makes little sense, and Mohler's is frustrating. Inerrancy as deduction. I think it is relatively clear that inerrancy is not a conclusion drawn from a long inductive investigation of each and every text in the Bible; rather it is a conclusion of a deductive argument that goes like so: [1] Whatever God inspires is inerrant. [2] The Bible is inspired by God. [3] Therefore, the Bible is inerrant. This makes inerrancy an implication of perfect being theology, and an article of faith that guides the interpretation of Scripture. No reading of Scripture that calls into question the truthfulness of the text is compatible with the belief that God is truthful. This explains why inerrancy is so hard to give up; it is near the center of one's theology informed more by our intuitions about a perfect being rather than the text itself. Consequently, this explains why Mohler says, "The point is that I do not allow any line of evidence from outside the Bible to nullify to the slightest degree the truthfulness of any text in all that the text asserts and claims.

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