

When Inerrancy Becomes Moot

Coherence, Conceptual Contradiction, and the Limits of Textual Perfection

Phil Stilwell

Independent Scholar

ORCID: 0009-0009-3725-8682

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Central claim

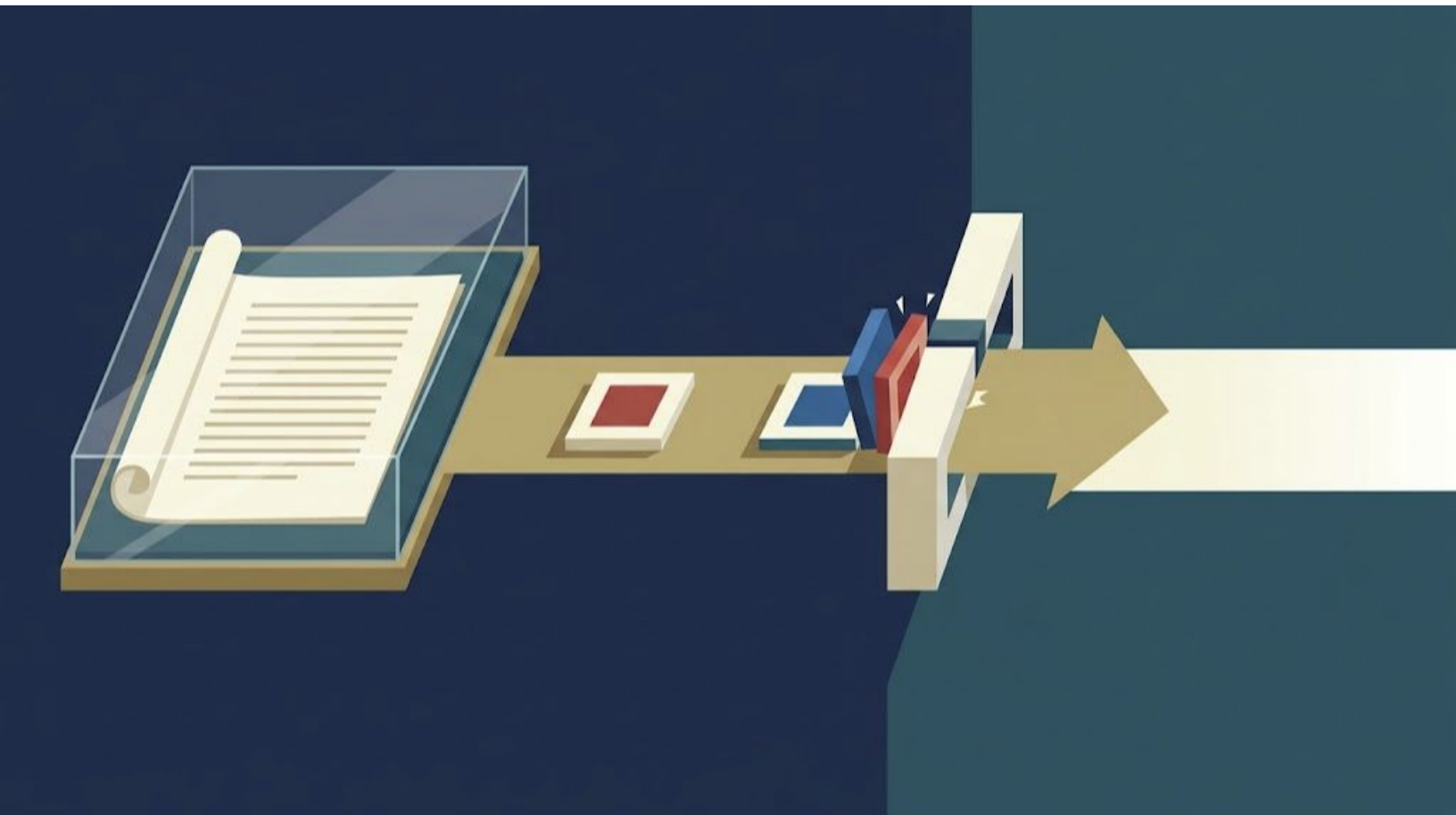
Calling a corpus inerrant can add warrant to a disputed doctrine only if an interpretation identifies that doctrine as part of what the corpus affirms and the resulting content is jointly satisfiable under the logic the defense employs. When no supported interpretation meets both conditions, inerrancy may remain a theological predicate but is epistemically idle in that dispute. Coherence is necessary, not sufficient; this argument neither proves every Christian doctrine contradictory nor denies that an inerrant corpus is possible.

Preview: From perfect text to warranted doctrine

Textual predicate	Semantic condition	Logical condition	Epistemic result
All that the corpus affirms is true.	Identify what it affirms under a supported interpretation.	Show that the affirmed set is jointly satisfiable under the stated logic.	Only then can inerrancy transmit warrant to a particular doctrine.

The test is conditional. Interpretive disagreement does not by itself prove indeterminacy, and consistency does not establish truth, inspiration, or authority.

Visual preview:



Read the image from left to right. The sealed manuscript stands for a perfectly preserved text; the loose tiles stand for the claims a reader interprets that text as making; the gate asks whether those claims can all be true together; and the arrow beyond the gate stands for the further move to a warranted doctrine. Before inerrancy can support a disputed doctrine, the claims must be identified through a justified interpretation and pass this consistency test. The diagram does not claim that any particular biblical teaching is contradictory.

Abstract

Biblical inerrancy is commonly formulated as the complete truthfulness of Scripture in all that it affirms. That formula already contains two conditions that appeals to inerrancy cannot replace: an interpretation must identify what the text affirms, and the resulting propositions must be capable of being jointly true under the logic being used. Perfect preservation, divine authorship, or a general truth guarantee cannot make an indeterminate assertion determinate or a classically inconsistent set jointly true.

This paper develops a conditional argument about the epistemic use of inerrancy rather than an unconditional refutation of the doctrine. It distinguishes textual reliability, semantic determination, logical coherence, and warranted uptake. If an interpretation yields both a proposition and its negation in the same respect, classical inerrancy is false of that interpreted content. If several live interpretations yield incompatible doctrines and no justified rule selects among them, a shared inerrancy premise does not discriminate between them. In either case, inerrancy alone is epistemically moot in the dispute: further semantic, logical, hermeneutical, and evidential work must do the decisive work.

The analysis grants that genre, context, analogy, progressive revelation, canonical unity, and a rule of faith can resolve apparent conflicts. Each is a substantive repair or selection principle, not an automatic consequence of inerrancy. Stress tests involving divine love and commanded violence, freedom and foreordination, faith and testing, punishment and proportionality, and universal salvific desire and hiddenness are therefore presented as burden maps, not as compressed proofs of contradiction. The conclusion is limited. Coherence does not prove truth, disagreement does not prove incoherence, and nonclassical logics remain available if adopted explicitly. What fails is the use of inerrancy as an epistemic fortress before the content inside it has been made determinate and logically habitable.

Keywords: biblical inerrancy; coherence; contradiction; hermeneutics; scriptural authority; paraconsistent logic; philosophy of religion

1 The Strong Claim and the Narrower Question

Inerrancy promises more than reliable copying. In its influential Chicago formulation, Scripture is to be believed in all that it affirms, is free from falsehood in all it teaches, and possesses unity and internal consistency. The same statement says that literary forms must be considered through grammatical-historical exegesis and that the Spirit opens believers' minds to meaning (International Council on Biblical Inerrancy 1978). These clauses matter because they block an easy caricature. A sophisticated inerrantist does not normally claim that bare strings of words are true independently of genre, speaker, intention, or context. The doctrine concerns what the text *affirms*.

That qualification is correct, but it creates the problem examined here. Before the predicate *inerrant* can transmit warrant to a doctrine, a reader must answer at least three questions:

1. What content does the relevant text affirm?
2. Can that content be jointly true under the logic the defense employs?
3. What justifies this reader or community in treating the proposed interpretation as the content affirmed?

Inerrancy answers none of these questions merely by being repeated. It is a truth predicate applied to interpreted content; it is not itself a complete theory of meaning, consistency, or interpretation. The governing thesis is therefore narrower than some stronger presentations of the doctrine suggest.

The Conditional Mootness Thesis

For a disputed doctrine q , an appeal to scriptural inerrancy is epistemically useful only if a supported interpretation R makes q part of the text's affirmed content and that content is jointly satisfiable under the logic being used. If no supported interpretation satisfies both conditions, inerrancy alone cannot warrant q . It may remain a sincere confessional commitment, but it is idle as a discriminator in that dispute.

The target is not every use of inerrancy. The doctrine may organize a community's stance toward Scripture, constrain permitted interpretations, or express trust in a divine author. Nor does the argument infer falsity from disagreement. Readers can disagree even when one answer is determinate and accessible. The claim concerns what an inerrancy premise can establish *by itself* when the content or its coherence remains under dispute.

For clarity, a *God-concept* will mean the structured set of attributes, intentions, and relations that a particular theistic system predicates of the deity. Different traditions may use the same devotional vocabulary while specifying different God-concepts. The paper evaluates relations among those specifications; it does not assume that one unqualified word settles them.

2 Four Questions That Must Not Be Collapsed

Debates about Scripture often move too quickly between distinct objects of assessment. Separating them prevents both skeptical overreach and apologetic evasion.

2.1 Textual reliability

The textual question concerns which words a manuscript or critical edition contains and how faithfully copies or translations represent earlier forms. A transmission can be exact while its content is false, vague, ironic, fictional, or inconsistent. Conversely, a damaged copy can imperfectly preserve a coherent truth. Textual reliability is therefore neither identical with semantic clarity nor sufficient for it.

The classic Protestant account defended by Warfield emphasizes inspiration and authority, while the Chicago Statement restricts inspiration strictly speaking to the autographic text and treats copies and translations as authoritative insofar as they faithfully represent it (Warfield 1948; International Council on Biblical Inerrancy 1978). The present argument grants perfect autographs for the sake of analysis. The conceptual problem survives that grant because an autograph still requires interpretation.

2.2 Semantic determination

The semantic question concerns what a text says or does in context. Assertions are not recovered by consulting word meanings alone. Genre, discourse situation, speaker, audience, irony, metaphor, quotation, narrative perspective, and communicative purpose can change what is affirmed. Theological hermeneutics has developed precisely because moving from human words to divine discourse is not automatic. Wolterstorff analyzes the claim that the deity speaks through human discourse by using speech-act theory; Vanhoozer defends author-oriented meaning while acknowledging the reader's situated task; Thiselton maps the wider historical and philosophical field in which such interpretation occurs (Wolterstorff 1995; Vanhoozer 1998; Thiselton 2009).

This literature supports rather than defeats the paper's first distinction. Even a realist about textual meaning must supply an account of how meaning is identified. The existence of a correct interpretation does not entail that every proposed interpretation is correct, nor that a general truth guarantee identifies it.

2.3 Logical coherence

The logical question asks whether the interpreted propositions can be jointly true. Under classical logic, a set containing both p and $\neg p$ in the same sense, time, and respect has no model. If inerrancy means that every member of the affirmed set is true, then classical inerrancy entails that the set is consistent. This is not an external demand smuggled into the doctrine; the Chicago Statement itself affirms internal consistency (International Council on Biblical Inerrancy 1978).

Not every tension is a contradiction. Two passages can concern different times, agents, senses, scopes, or conversational purposes. One can report a falsehood without affirming it. A general statement can admit an exception. Figurative predication can differ from literal predication. A critic who alleges contradiction must therefore specify the propositions, stabilize the relevant terms, and block these distinctions. The defender, however, must do more than name a possible distinction: the distinction must fit the text and the surrounding theory.

2.4 Warranted uptake

The epistemic question concerns what a reader is justified in believing on the basis of the text. Suppose there is a unique coherent meaning known perfectly by the divine author. A human reader still needs a defensible route to it. Interpretive virtue, ecclesial tradition, the Spirit's witness, canonical context, authorial intention, and critical scholarship are possible routes. They are not interchangeable, and each carries further assumptions.

The distinction between divine and human discourse sharpens this point. Childs argues that speech-act approaches can differ over how canonical and ecclesial constraints govern the move from biblical sentences to divine speech; he warns that one account can make content too flexible while another treats the canon's rule of faith as a guide (Childs 2005). This disagreement does not prove that no interpretation is correct. It does show that a doctrine of inerrancy cannot simply stand in for the disputed hermeneutics.

Level	Question	What a positive answer does not yet establish
Textual	Which words are preserved?	What those words affirm, whether the claims cohere, or which doctrine a reader should accept.
Semantic	What is affirmed under interpretation R ?	That the affirmed claims are jointly true or that R is the best-supported interpretation.
Logical	Can the claims be jointly true under logic L ?	That they are actually true, inspired, authoritative, or correctly attributed to the text.
Epistemic	Is a reader warranted in adopting R and its doctrinal consequences?	Infallibility of the reader, institution, or interpretive method.

Table 1: Four levels that appeals to textual perfection often compress.

3 Why Coherence Has Logical Priority

Let T be a text and R an interpretation. Let A_R be the set of propositions that T affirms under R . A classical inerrancy claim can be represented as:

$$I_R : \quad \forall p (p \in A_R \rightarrow \text{True}(p)).$$

If both p and $\neg p$ belong to A_R , then I_R is false under classical semantics. A truth guarantee does not repair the set; it raises the pressure to show that at least one member was misidentified, qualified, or assigned the wrong sense. The available moves are familiar:

- revise the interpretation so that one proposition is not affirmed;
- distinguish senses, times, respects, agents, or scopes;
- reject or weaken one doctrinal premise;
- treat the language as analogical, figurative, or otherwise nonliteral;
- adopt a nonclassical logic in which some contradictions do not trivialize the theory.

Each can be legitimate. None is delivered by the word *inerrant*. The repair does the logical work and must be evaluated on its own evidence. A distinction introduced only after a conflict appears is not automatically ad hoc, but its support must extend beyond its usefulness in saving the theory.

The priority at issue is modest. Coherence is an entry condition for classical truth, not a certificate of truth. Infinitely many coherent stories are false. Nor does failure to produce a model establish that no model exists; it may reflect limited ingenuity. The asymmetry is nevertheless important: a demonstrated classical contradiction defeats the conjunction as stated, whereas a consistency proof shows only that this particular obstacle has been removed.

4 Why Interpretation Has Epistemic Priority

Inerrancy is often used in a simple practical inference:

1. Scripture is inerrant.
2. Scripture teaches q .
3. Therefore, q is true.

The inference is valid if both premises are understood strongly enough. But the second premise is not supplied by the first. It contains the interpretive bridge. If communities agree that the text is inerrant while one concludes q and another concludes $\neg q$, the shared first premise cannot discriminate between them. Evidence about genre, language, canon, intention, tradition, historical setting, or spiritual discernment must select the interpretation.

This point should not be confused with global semantic skepticism. Vanhoozer argues that textual meaning can be known with relative adequacy and that readers are accountable to authorial communicative action (Vanhoozer 1998). The conditional mootness thesis can grant that position. Relative adequacy still comes from interpretive reasons, not from a blanket truth predicate. Likewise, Wolterstorff's account of mediated divine discourse distinguishes the human act from the further act attributed to the divine speaker; identifying the latter requires a second hermeneutic (Wolterstorff 1995).

The strongest form of the problem is not ordinary disagreement but *undefeated doctrinal underdetermination*. This occurs when:

1. two or more interpretations remain live after relevant evidence is considered;
2. they attribute incompatible doctrinal content to the text; and
3. the proposed selection rules either fail to discriminate or presuppose the disputed doctrine.

In that situation, inerrancy may constrain the options—perhaps by ruling out an interpretation the tradition regards as false—but it cannot noncircularly select the conclusion. The result is suspension,

qualified confidence, or reliance on an additional authority. Calling the text perfect does not make the extra authority disappear.

5 Four Ways Inerrancy Can Become Moot

The word *moot* can now be made precise. It does not mean meaningless in every context. It means unable to decide the present epistemic dispute.

5.1 No stable target

If the relevant affirmation cannot be specified with enough stability to distinguish what would count as affirming or denying it, then the truth predicate lacks a usable target. The text may still perform expressive, liturgical, narrative, or formative functions. The narrower claim is that an indeterminate doctrinal proposition cannot be warranted merely by calling the underlying text inerrant.

5.2 Classical inconsistency

If the best-supported interpretation includes both p and $\neg p$ in the same respect, then not all its members can be true under classical logic. The inerrantist must revise the interpretation, revise the doctrine, or revise the logic. Until that work succeeds, repeating the truth guarantee preserves the collision rather than resolving it.

5.3 Equivocal rescue

A contradiction can disappear because a key word silently changes meaning. Sometimes this is correct: context can warrant polysemy or analogy. But a rescue becomes epistemically costly when the revised term no longer excludes anything relevant. If *loving*, *free*, *just*, or *desires* is stretched to include every apparent contrary, the doctrine may become consistent by losing contrastive content. A meaningful repair must state what the revised predicate still rules out.

5.4 Unresolved selection

Several coherent interpretations may remain. Inerrancy can be true under each while they yield incompatible doctrines. If the available selection rules are equally compatible with the rivals, the truth guarantee is common background rather than discriminating evidence. The dispute is then about interpretation, authority, or method, not about whether a perfect text would be valuable if its content were known.

6 Doctrinal Stress Tests Without Compressed Verdicts

Five familiar tensions provide stress tests for the framework. None is presented as a one-paragraph proof of contradiction. Each illustrates the additional premise a critic would need and the repair a defender would need to justify.

Pressure point	Bridge needed for contradiction	Live coherent repair	Cost to state openly
“God is love” and commanded violence	Perfect love excludes the attributed act under every morally sufficient description.	Reinterpret the command, defend a sufficient reason, or qualify the sense of love.	Specify what love still excludes and why the repair fits the text.
Freedom and exhaustive foreordination	Moral freedom requires an alternative possibility incompatible with exhaustive determination.	Adopt compatibilism, limit foreordination, or distinguish causal levels.	Stop using libertarian implications if compatibilism is doing the work.
Faith and testing	The same belief is both insulated from and answerable to evidence in the same context.	Treat faith as evidence-sensitive trust, loyalty, or context-limited confidence.	State when testing governs and what would count as a defeater.
Perfect justice and endless punishment	Justice necessarily requires proportionality that endless punishment violates.	Reject that proportionality rule, revise the account of hell, or defend continuing culpability.	Supply the independent theory of desert and agency that bears the burden.
Universal salvific desire and hiddenness	Sincere universal desire plus perfect ability entails sufficient access for every nonresistant seeker.	Distinguish kinds of desire, propose overriding goods, or deny nonresistance.	Explain the distribution of access without making the desire merely verbal.

Table 2: Stress tests map inferential burdens; they do not announce contradictions.

Consider the first row. The exact claim “God is love” appears in 1 John 4:8, while 1 Samuel 15:3 attributes a command to kill adults and children. A formal contradiction does not follow from those sentences alone. It requires a moral-semantic principle connecting perfect love to excluded actions, plus an interpretation that treats the command as an accurate expression of the deity’s will. A defender can reject either bridge. Yet inerrancy by itself does not show which bridge is false. It can even increase the urgency of the problem by making simple textual error unavailable.

The freedom case displays the same structure. Libertarian freedom, understood as an agent’s power to do otherwise under the same total prior conditions, conflicts with some forms of exhaustive determination. Compatibilist freedom does not. The question is not whether the word *freedom* appears beside foreordination texts. It is which account the doctrine requires and whether the surrounding moral claims survive that account.

The remaining rows are conditional in the same way. Eternal punishment is inconsistent with perfect justice only given a defensible principle of proportionality and an account of attributable agency. Hiddenness conflicts with universal salvific desire only given bridge premises about ability, access, nonresistance, and overriding goods. Faith conflicts with testing only when the system applies incompatible epistemic rules to the same belief in the same setting. These are substantial philosophical debates. Treating them as mere textual discrepancies understates them; declaring them contradictions without their bridges overstates them.

Critical scholarship also complicates the human side of the equation. Enns emphasizes the historically situated and diverse character of Old Testament discourse, while Sparks argues for an evangelical appropriation of critical scholarship and its implications for divine and human discourse (Enns 2005; Sparks 2008). One need not accept their larger theological proposals to see the methodological point: genre, history, and development affect what propositions should be assigned to a text. Inerrancy cannot replace that assignment.

7 The Strongest Replies

7.1 Inerrancy was never meant to be a hermeneutic

This is the cleanest reply, and it concedes the paper's central result. If inerrancy is one doctrine within a larger account of Scripture rather than a method for recovering content, it should not be asked to resolve interpretation or coherence by itself. The paper does not show that the larger account fails. It shows why the larger account is indispensable.

The Chicago Statement already points in this direction by pairing inerrancy with claims about literary form, exegesis, the Spirit, and internal consistency (International Council on Biblical Inerrancy 1978). Those additions may be sound. Their presence demonstrates that textual perfection alone is not the full epistemic mechanism.

7.2 The Spirit, church, canon, or rule of faith supplies the bridge

Each is a serious proposal. The Spirit may illuminate; a church may preserve interpretive competence; a canon may constrain part-whole relations; a rule of faith may organize readings. Childs's criticism of some speech-act approaches explicitly presses the canonical and ecclesial dimension (Childs 2005). The conditional thesis does not exclude these routes.

It asks how the route discriminates. When communities invoking the same Spirit or canon reach incompatible results, a defender must identify the reliable practice, institution, virtue, or evidential signature that separates successful uptake from sincere error. Appeal to the route cannot be validated solely by the doctrine it was introduced to secure without creating a circle. A circular system may guide insiders, but it has not yet supplied a public reason for preferring its interpretation.

7.3 The conflict is mystery, not contradiction

Mystery can name limited understanding of a coherent reality. A contradiction is a specified pair p and $\neg p$ under stabilized meanings. The paper agrees that ignorance of a reconciling account is not itself proof that none exists. The appropriate epistemic response may be suspension rather than rejection.

But mystery cannot function as a universal solvent. If a defender continues to assert both propositions classically, the burden is to show a relevant distinction or model. If the content is withdrawn into a form too indefinite to model, the contradiction charge may recede while the doctrine's public informativeness recedes with it. Humility is compatible with saying less; it does not license asserting an unexplained classical conjunction as already vindicated.

7.4 Unresolved discrepancies do not defeat future resolution

Correct. A presently unresolved tension may later be resolved by better manuscripts, history, semantics, or theory. The conclusion is temporal and epistemic: an unavailable resolution cannot presently do warranting work. The believer may retain trust on other grounds, but should distinguish that trust from a demonstrated solution.

7.5 Some contradictions can be true

Dialetheism holds that at least some contradictions are true, and paraconsistent logics block the classical explosion from a contradiction to arbitrary conclusions (Priest 2006). This is not a merely hypothetical theological option. Beall offers an explicitly contradictory Christology and evaluates it under a nonclassical logic (Beall 2021).

Such a move directly answers the claim that every contradiction is impossible. It also changes the object under discussion. The defender must identify which contradictions are true, which consequence relation governs doctrine, how arbitrary claims remain excluded, and why the nonclassical treatment

is independently motivated. Ordinary arguments cannot alternate silently between classical inference when establishing doctrine and paraconsistency when protecting it. The renewed thesis is therefore logic-relative: classical inerrancy requires classical consistency; a nonclassical inerrancy must state and defend its alternative constraints.

7.6 Coherence is far too weak to establish truth

Agreed. A coherent doctrine can be false, poorly evidenced, morally unattractive, or unrelated to the text. The paper gives coherence priority only as a necessary condition within a classical truth claim. It offers no inference from consistency to inspiration, authority, or actuality.

8 A Constructive Coherence-First Protocol

The critique yields a practical method that both defenders and critics can use.

1. **Fix the target.** State the passage, genre, speaker, audience, and doctrinal proposition at issue. Separate what the text reports from what it affirms.
2. **Name the interpretation.** Give the semantic and hermeneutical reasons for assigning that proposition to the text. Do not let inerrancy serve as one of the reasons unless the step is independent of the disputed content.
3. **State the logic.** Classical logic may be presumed in ordinary argument, but a nonclassical alternative should be explicit. Define the relevant negation, scope, time, and respect.
4. **Reconstruct the conflict.** Display the premises needed to derive both p and $\neg p$. Mark which come from text, moral or metaphysical theory, and interpretive bridges.
5. **Test repairs.** Consider genre, analogy, polysemy, contextual restriction, causal levels, progressive development, revised doctrine, and alternative logic. Ask what independent evidence supports each repair.
6. **Record the cost.** State which earlier implication, ordinary contrast, or auxiliary claim has been qualified. A coherent revision is progress, not defeat, but it should not be described as preserving everything unchanged.
7. **Calibrate the verdict.** Distinguish demonstrated inconsistency, unresolved tension, multiple coherent interpretations, and mere discomfort. Match confidence to the achieved result.

Audit result	What has been shown	Proportionate conclusion
Consistent model	The specified claims can be jointly true under the model's assumptions.	This contradiction charge fails; truth and textual fit remain open.
Valid derivation of p and $\neg p$	The specified package is inconsistent under the stated logic.	Revise a premise, interpretation, or logic; inerrancy cannot repair the package unchanged.
Several live coherent models	Rival interpretations survive and yield incompatible doctrines.	Inerrancy common to all rivals does not select among them.
No model or derivation yet	The issue remains unresolved.	Suspend the formal verdict; do not advertise either coherence or contradiction as established.

Table 3: Verdicts produced by a disciplined coherence audit.

This protocol treats revision as intellectual honesty rather than embarrassment. A tradition that adopts compatibilism, analogical predication, conditional immortality, a canonical rule, or a paraconsistent logic may have produced a more coherent account. The question is whether the revised account is supported and whether its costs are acknowledged. Calling the outcome *what the text always meant* may be correct, but that historical and semantic claim requires evidence too.

9 Conclusion

Inerrancy is a strong claim about truth. Precisely for that reason, it cannot precede every question about content. The phrase *all that the text affirms* requires an account of affirmation. The phrase *all is true* requires content capable of being jointly true under the governing logic. The move from either phrase to a reader's doctrine requires a justified interpretive bridge.

The paper's conclusion is therefore strict but limited. Perfect preservation does not determine meaning. A truth guarantee does not reconcile a classical contradiction. A shared inerrancy premise does not select among live incompatible interpretations. When those tasks remain undone, inerrancy is epistemically moot in the dispute, even if it remains confessionally important.

The correct order is not skepticism first. It is specification first: identify the content, state the logic, test the conjunction, defend the interpretation, and only then ask what an inerrancy predicate adds. If the doctrine-set is coherent and the interpretive bridge is warranted, inerrancy may matter greatly. If neither condition is met, the fortress has been named before its contents are habitable.

Formal Reconstruction of the Central Thesis

Syllogistic reconstruction

1. If a reader is warranted in accepting q from the inerrancy of T , then some interpretation R is justified, q follows from the content affirmed under R , and every member of that content is true.
2. Under classical logic, if the content affirmed under R contains both p and $\neg p$ in the same respect, then not every member of that content is true.
3. If relevant live interpretations yield incompatible doctrines and no selection rule justifies one over the others, the inerrancy premise common to those interpretations does not discriminate among them.
4. Therefore, where the selected content is classically inconsistent or the interpretive selection remains undefeatedly underdetermined, inerrancy alone does not warrant q .
5. Consequently, inerrancy is epistemically moot in that dispute until further logical or interpretive premises are supplied and defended.

Symbols

- T : a text.
- R : an interpretation of T .
- A_R : the set of propositions that T affirms under R .
- q : a disputed doctrine.
- p : an arbitrary proposition.
- I_R : every proposition in A_R is true.
- C_R : A_R is jointly satisfiable under the stated logic.
- $D(q, R)$: doctrine q is entailed by A_R under that logic.
- $J(R)$: the available evidence justifies selecting R over relevant rivals.
- $W(q)$: the reader has warrant for q from the text through the inerrancy route.

Symbolic form

$$A_R = \{p \mid T \text{ affirms } p \text{ under } R\} \quad (1)$$

1 - Interpreted content. This is a definition: A_R collects the claims attributed to text T by interpretation R . It does not yet say that R is correct or that any member of A_R is true.

$$W(q) \rightarrow \exists R [J(R) \wedge D(q, R) \wedge I_R] \quad (2)$$

2 - Necessary conditions for warrant. If q is warranted through inerrancy, some interpretation R must be justified, its attributed content must entail q , and every member of that content must be true. The one-way arrow does not claim that these conditions are sufficient by themselves.

$$I_R \rightarrow C_R \quad (\text{classical semantics}) \quad (3)$$

3 - Truth requires consistency in the classical setting. If every member of A_R is true, then the members of A_R must be capable of being true together. This step is explicitly logic-relative.

$$(p \in A_R \wedge \neg p \in A_R) \rightarrow \neg I_R \quad (\text{classical semantics}) \quad (4)$$

4 - The classical contradiction test. If A_R contains both p and its negation in the same sense, time, and respect, not every member of A_R can be true. A nonclassical account must replace this step with its own consequence relation.

$$(D(q, R_1) \wedge D(\neg q, R_2) \wedge \neg J(R_1) \wedge \neg J(R_2)) \rightarrow \neg W(q) \wedge \neg W(\neg q) \quad (5)$$

5 - Interpretive underdetermination. If one live interpretation entails q , another entails its negation, and the evidence justifies neither interpretation over its rival, the shared inerrancy premise warrants neither disputed conclusion.

Together, lines 2–5 identify two independent failure points. The inerrancy route to q is blocked when either its truth condition I_R fails through classical inconsistency or its interpretive condition $J(R)$ is unavailable among genuinely live rivals.

Validity and support

Line 1 is stipulative. Line 2 is an epistemic bridge principle rather than a theorem of logic; it is supported by the claim that a text can warrant a doctrine through inerrancy only if the doctrine is among what the text is justifiedly taken to affirm. Lines 3 and 4 are valid under classical semantics, while dialetheists and other nonclassical theorists must supply different constraints. Line 5 is conditional on the rivals being genuinely live and the lack of justified selection being established rather than inferred merely from disagreement. Given those premises, the limited conclusion follows. What remains contestable is whether any particular interpretation actually is inconsistent or underdetermined.

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