

CAN WE TRUST THE BIBLE?

I. Does it matter?

A. Isn't the Bible filled with myths and legends?

Does it really matter if the Bible is true? Why get caught up in all the debate about literalism and the details of historical accuracy? Let's focus on the Living Word not the Written Word. The letter kills. The Spirit gives life. What really matters is the **Christ of faith** not the **Jesus of history**. Right?

This line of thinking would make sense if Christianity were only a system of ethics, a philosophy of life, or if the Bible were simply a book of abstract theological principles or liturgical patterns of worship. But such is not the case. The Bible tells a story, a story rooted in **time** and **space**. It claims to be the historical record of how God has revealed his salvation through the nation of Israel, through his only Son Jesus Christ, and through the church. If the history is wrong, **everything** is wrong.

The Bible is packed with historical details that simply beg the reader (whether in the first century or the 21st) to **check out the facts** for himself:

- *A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross. (Mark 15:21).* There would be no reason for the author to include the names of the sons of Simon unless the readers knew these men and could verify that the information is correct.
- *After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. (1 Cor. 15:6).* The author seems to be pleading with his readers: ask these men and women yourself!
- *"I am not insane, most excellent Festus," Paul replied. "What I am saying is true and reasonable. The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. (Acts 26:25-26).* Again, Scripture is confidently asserting that the events of Jesus' life are public knowledge, verifiable to any who take the time to examine the evidence.

B. Isn't the Bible culturally obsolete?

Many would dismiss the importance of the Bible's truthfulness by pretending that the Bible is **out-dated** and irrelevant. While it may have been "true" for a previous generation, today we simply can't believe the accuracy of a book that seems to support slavery, the subjugation of women and other regressive views. But consider:

- Are you sure the offending passage of Scripture actually promotes what you claim it promotes? Many questions can be cleared up by simply looking at a good commentary which puts the issue in its **historical context**. (slavery, the wars of extermination, gender roles, etc.)

- Are you sure that our cultural views on controversial issues today are superior to those of older cultures? Beware of what C. S. Lewis called "**chronological snobbery**" (the newer the truer, the later the greater).
- Even if you disagree with what you think the Bible teaches on certain controversial issues, have you come to grips with its central, uncontested affirmations about God, sin, Jesus, salvation, etc.? Are you saying that because you don't like what the Bible says about sex you refuse to believe that Jesus rose from the dead?

Think of it like this. If you dive into the shallow end of the Biblical pool, where there are many controversies over interpretation, you may get scraped up. But if you dive into the center of the Biblical pool, where there is consensus – about the deity of Christ, his death and resurrection – you will be safe. It is therefore important to consider the Bible's core claims about who Jesus is and whether he rose from the dead before you reject it for its less central and more controversial teachings (Keller, p. 113).

- If the Bible can't challenge and correct your thinking, what does this say about your attitude toward God? If you claim the right to believe only those things that conform to your personal preferences, doesn't this imply that you have created God **in your own image**?

II. God Speaks.

A. God's self-disclosure.

It is impossible to **truly know** another person unless that person speaks and reveals who they are. Without such self-disclosure, all our information about that person will be merely conjecture and educated guesses. The same is true for God. We will never really know who God is unless God chooses to reveal himself... unless God speaks.

1. God has spoken through **creation**.

- *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
² Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.
³ There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. ⁴ Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world (Psalm 19:1-4).*
- *.... what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse (Romans 1:19-20).*

In creation, God reveals to all mankind both that he exists and that he is great and glorious. However, this "general revelation" does not tell us:

- a. **God's name.**
- b. **God's will.**
- c. **How to be saved.**

2. God has spoken through **the Scriptures** (our topic of study today).
3. God has spoken through **His Son, Jesus Christ**.

It is not a coincidence that Jesus is called the "**Word of God**". Jesus is God's ultimate and final self-expression. The written Word points to the Incarnate Word. We don't worship a book (bibliolatry). We worship One revealed in the book.

- *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).*
- *In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways,² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word (Hebrews 1:1-3).*

B. Satan's primary plan of attack.

From the beginning, Satan has had a profoundly simple strategy. He will accomplish all his objectives if he can only cause men to **doubt God's Word**.

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "**Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'**"² The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,³ but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'⁴ "**You will not surely die.**" the serpent said to the woman.⁵ "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and **you will be like God, knowing good and evil**." (Genesis 3:1-4).*

Look at the progression of Satan's work:

- First step – doubt **God's word**. *Did God really say...? (v. 1)*. You can't be sure about what God really wants. How can you know for sure what God thinks?
- Second step – doubt the **consequences of sin**. *You will not die... (v. 4)*. What's the big deal with eating a piece of fruit? Nothing will happen to me.
- Third step – doubt **God's character**. *You will be like God... (v. 5)*. God is keeping something from you. He doesn't have your best interests at heart. He can't be trusted.

C. Jesus' primary counter-attack.

When Jesus was tempted (much like Adam was tempted in the Garden), he stood strong and did not doubt what God had said. In fact, God's Word was his primary weapon!

*Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.² After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.³ The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."⁴ Jesus answered, "**It is written:** Man*

does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' (Deut. 8:3). "5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 6 "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." 7 Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' (Deut. 6:16)." 8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." 10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.' Deut. 6:13)" 11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him. (Matthew 4:1-11).

Conclusion: The most important thing a person can do to protect himself against the lies and distortions of Satan is to:

- **know** the Word of God.
- **trust** the Word of God.
- **use** the Word of God... it is our only offensive weapon (Eph. 6:17).

Warning: Satan knows how to use Scripture too (v. 6)!

D. The Purpose of Scripture.

It would be a mistake to read a biology textbook hoping to find romantic poetry, or to read a phone book looking for the plot, or to read a novel looking for information about how your computer works. A book must be read and interpreted in terms of its **intended purpose**. The purpose of Scripture is expressed in verses such as the following:

- *You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, 40 yet you refuse to come to me to have life (John 5:39-40).*
- *Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name (John 20:30-31).*
- *...and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (II Timothy 3:15).*

The purpose of Scripture is to **lead us Jesus Christ**. The written Word is meant to lead us to the Incarnate Word. The Bible is not a collection of proof texts given to help you prove your own personal theology. To read the Bible as a book of science, liturgy, or even systematic theology is to miss the point! It is a **divine romance** that tells the story of God's search for a wife! An old hymn by Mary A. Lathbury (1877) says it well.

*Break Thou the bread of life, dear Lord, to me,
As Thou didst break the loaves beside the sea;
Beyond the sacred page I seek Thee, Lord,
My spirit pants for Thee, O Living Word*

III. Insufficient Answers.

Can we trust the Bible? Throughout history men have answered the question in various ways.

- A. The Bible is **partially true**.

Why say *everything* is inspired and inerrant? Let's not get hung up about numbers, dates, names, and obscure facts. Let's just say that some (even, most) of the Bible is true.

The problem: But who decides which parts are true and which parts are not? Do we all get to pick and choose?

- B. The Bible **contains** the Word of God.

Let's affirm that we encounter God's message as we read the Bible but let's not pretend that every letter and word is inspired. Isn't it enough to claim that the Bible contains God's Word. Do we have to say that the Bible **is** God's Word?

The problem: Although this position sounds spiritual, it is open to the same problems as position A mentioned above.

- C. The **ideas** are inspired but not the **words**.

The problem: But how does one go about separating ideas from the words? Again, we are put in a position where the reader becomes sovereign over the text and has the power to pick and chose what belongs in Scripture and what doesn't.

- D. What's important is this: "Is the Bible **true for you**?"

The problem: Such a position robs the text of any objective value. The Bible is thereby deconstructed so that it says virtually anything the reader chooses to make it say. Again, the interpretation becomes more important than the text.

- E. The Bible is indeed inspired... like Shakespeare's writings.

What this position really asserts is not so much that the Bible is inspired but rather that it is **inspiring** (not at all the same thing!).

The problem: Although the Bible is indeed an inspiring piece of literature, it claims to be much more than that. The Bible claims to be God's very words and thoughts. God speaks to the reader through Scripture. Certainly, Shakespeare never made such a claim.

- F. The Bible is **man's words** about God.

Like other great works of religious literature (Bhagavad Gita, the Analects of Confucius, the Confessions of Augustine, the Institutes of Calvin, etc.), the Bible is simply a record of the thoughts of great and godly men about God and how he works in the world.

The problem: This is not what the Bible says about itself. Over and over we read, "Thus says the Lord." The Bible is not man's word about God, but God's word about man.

TABLE TALK

1. What are the major stumbling blocks that hinder people today from believing the Bible?
2. Were you ever in a group (church, small group, college class, etc.) when one of the "Insufficient Answers" (p. 5) was expressed? Describe that experience.
3. Share about your own struggle with coming to a place of confidence in the Bible? Was there a time when you didn't believe the Bible was true? Was there a time when you were full of doubts? Have you come to a place of victory over your doubts? How?
4. Is it possible to know the Incarnate Word (Jesus) without knowing the Written Word (the Bible)? Is it possible to know the Written Word without knowing the Incarnate Word?
5. Discuss the meaning of Deuteronomy 29:29. *The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.*

IV. Definition of terms.

A. The Canon.

This term describes the officially accepted list of books that belong in the Bible. Those books included are deemed "canonical." The early church soon discovered the need to determine which books were authoritative and which were not, because of other documents in circulation that claimed to be part of God's inspired Word. Several principles guided the process that determined which works would be accepted and which wouldn't:

- Is it written by an apostle?
- Does manuscript evidence place its date at the right time?
- Was it accepted by the people of God early and widely?
- Does the book contain historical or geographical inaccuracies?
- Does it teach false doctrine?
- Does it have "the ring of truth"? (J. B. Philips).

According to these criteria, the canon of Scripture should be limited to the 66 books in our Bibles and works such as the following should be excluded:

- The Apocrypha.
- The Gospel of Thomas.
- The Gospel of Judas.

It would be false to say that the Church created the canon. It would be more accurate to say that **the canon created the Church!** The Church simply recognized those books which were inspired and authoritative. The Bible has authority over the Church (not vice versa). This is one of the most fundamental issues that divide Protestants and Catholics.

B. Plenary verbal inspiration.

It is not enough to say the Bible is inspired. We need adjectives to explain what sort of inspiration we are talking about:

- "Plenary" means that **all** of the Bible is inspired, not just part of it.
- "Verbal" means that the **words** themselves are inspired, not just the ideas and concepts.

C. Inerrancy, infallibility, veracity.

Though some want to debate the nuances between these terms, the basic meaning is the same for each: the Bible is **without error** in all that it affirms. The Lausanne Covenant (1974, Article #2 entitled "The Authority and Power of the Bible") says it well:

We affirm the divine inspiration, truthfulness and authority of both Old and New Testament Scriptures in their entirety as the only written word of God, without error in all that it affirms, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice. We also affirm the power of God's word to accomplish his purpose of salvation. The message of the Bible is addressed to all men and women. For God's revelation in Christ and in Scripture is unchangeable. Through it the Holy Spirit still speaks today. He illumines the minds of God's people in every culture to perceive its truth freshly through their own eyes and thus discloses to the whole Church ever more of the many-colored wisdom of God.

(II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 1:21; John 10:35; Isa. 55:11; 1 Cor. 1:21; Rom. 1:16, Matt. 5:17,18; Jude 3; Eph. 1:17,18; 3:10,18)

V. Internal Evidence for the Bible's veracity.

A. What the Bible claims for itself.

- 1) The Bible claims to be **inspired** by God.

*All Scripture is **God-breathed** and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,¹⁷ so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (II Timothy 3:16-17).*

The word "God-breathed" or "inspired by God" is the Greek *theopneustos* (God + spirit/breath). It refers more to breathing out (**exhaling**) than to breathing in (inhaling). Paul is describing the process by which the words of Scripture (all the words!) are the result of God's breath, his Spirit. What the Scripture says... God says.

*Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation.²¹ For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were **carried along** by the Holy Spirit (II Peter 1:20-21).*

The process of inspiration did not suppress the personality of the human authors. To believe in inspiration does not require one to believe in a theory of **mechanical dictation**. Authors of Scripture had their own distinctive styles, vocabularies, genres. But they wrote in a manner that allowed God's Word to be conveyed through them. Like our incarnate Lord, the Bible is fully **human** yet fully **divine**.

2) The Bible claims to be **without error**.

- *Jesus answered them, 'Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are gods'?³⁵ If he called them 'gods,' to whom the word of God came - and the Scripture **cannot be broken**—³⁶ what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'? (John 10:34-36).*
- *"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."¹⁸ I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished (Matthew 5:17-18).*

3) The Bible claims to be a **complete** and **finished** work.

*I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone **adds** anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book.¹⁹ And if anyone **takes words away** from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. (Revelation 22:18-19).*

B. Unity and harmony of the Scriptures.

In contrast to most other writings of the world that claim to be of divine origin (i.e. The Koran), the Bible is indeed unique. Consider: **66** different books. Written over a span of **1,500 years**, by more than **40 authors** (kings, peasants, prophets, poets, fishermen, etc.). Written in different places and in three different languages (Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic). And yet the unity and harmony of the message from Genesis to Revelation is unmistakable!

VI. External evidence for the Bible's veracity.

A. The witness of **the manuscripts**.

1) The sheer number of manuscripts (McDowell, p. 38).

AUTHOR	BOOK	DATE WRITTEN	EARLIEST COPIES	TIME GAP	NUMBER OF COPIES
Homer	<i>Illiad</i>	800 BC	c. 400 BC	c. 400 yrs	643
Herodotus	<i>History</i>	480-425 BC	c. 900 AD	c. 1,350 yrs	8
Thucydides	<i>History</i>	460-400 B C	c. 900 AD	c. 1,300 yrs	8
Plato		400 BC	c. 900 AD	c. 1,300 yrs	7
Caesar	<i>Gallic Wars</i>	100-44 BC	c. 900 AD	c. 1,000 yrs	10
Tacitus	<i>Annals</i>	100 AD	c. 1,100 AD	c. 1,000 yrs	20
Pliny	<i>Natural History</i>	61-113 AD	c. 850 AD	c. 750 yrs	7
New Testament		50-100 AD	c. 114 fragment c. 200 (books) c. 250 (most of NT) c. 325 (complete NT)	50 yrs 100 yrs 150 yrs 225 yrs	5,366

2) The accuracy in transmission.

Numerous examples could be given, but the most impressive perhaps is the discovery of the **Dead Sea Scrolls** in 1947. Prior to their discovery, the oldest manuscripts for the Old Testament were dated about 900 A.D. The date for most of the scrolls was about 100 B.C., almost 1,000 years earlier! Yet when the scrolls were compared to those upon which our Bibles are based, virtually no significant errors of transmission were noted!

3) The original autographs.

In technical terms, only the original copy is said to be inerrant. Occasionally minor corruptions of the text have occurred through transmission over the centuries. Most modern Bibles acknowledge these textual questions in the **footnotes**.

- I Samuel 13:1.
- Mark 16:9-20.
- John 8:1-11.
- I John 5:7-8.

B. The witness of **archeology**.

- Archeological finds in places like Ebla, Amarna, Mari, and Nuzi have confirmed many cultural aspects of the Old Testament that before were difficult to understand (covenants, customs, legal matters, etc.).
- Luke's nautical vocabulary and description in Acts is confirmed by archeological discoveries dating to that period.
- In 1929 a tablet was discovered at Corinth that said "Erastus, curator of public buildings laid this pavement at his own expense." (see Romans 16:23).

Charles Colson summarizes:

Before then end of the 1950s, no less than 25,000 biblical sites had been substantiated by archaeological discoveries; there has been no discovery proving the Bible false. No other religious document in history has ever been found that accurate. The Book of Mormon, for example, talks about a civilization in North America in 400-600 BC. Not a single artifact of that civilization has ever been discovered (The Faith. p. 51).

C. The witness of **fulfilled prophecy**.

Event	Prophecy	Fulfillment
Born of a virgin	Isaiah 7:14	Matt. 1:18, 24-25
Born in Bethlehem	Micah 5:1-2	Matt. 2:1
Herod kills the children	Jer. 31:15	Matt. 2:26
Preceded by a messenger	Isaiah 40:3	Matt. 3:1-2
Ministry to begin in Galilee	Isaiah 9:1	Matt. 4:12-13, 17
Ministry of miracles	Isaiah 35:5-6	Matt. 9:35
Teacher of parables	Psalm 78:2	Matt. 13:34
Enter Jerusalem on a donkey	Zech. 9:9	Luke 19:35-37
Resurrection of Jesus	Psalm 16:10	Acts 2:31

Ascension	Psalm 68:18	Acts 1:9
Betrayed by a friend	Psalm 41:9	Matt. 10:4
Sold for 30 pieces of silver	Zech. 11:12	Matt. 26:15
Price given for potter's field	Zech. 11:13	Matt. 27:7
Wounded and bruised	Isaiah 53:5	Matt. 27:26
Hands and feet pierced	Psalm 22:16	Luke 23:33
Crucified with thieves	Isaiah 53:12	Matt. 27:38
Garments parted and lots cast	Psalm 22:18	John 19:23-24
Suffers thirst	Psalm 69:21	John 19:28
Gall and vinegar offered	Psalm 69:21	Matt. 27:34
Bones not broken	Psalm 34:20	John 19:33
His side pierced	Zech. 12:10	John 19:34
Buried in a rich man's tomb	Isaiah 53:9	Matt. 27:57-60

D. The witness of Jesus.

To follow Jesus as Lord means that we accept all that he said and taught. What then did Jesus believe about the Bible (what we call the Old Testament)?

- John 10:35. *Scripture cannot be broken....*
- Matthew 5:17-18. *Not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished....*
- John 17:17. *Your word is truth...*

E. The witness of the Church.

Through the history of the church there has been a strong and consistent testimony to the veracity of God's Word. Ancient, modern, Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, the message has been the same: we can trust the Bible.

F. The witness of the Holy Spirit.

At a personal level, the most important witness to the truthfulness of the Bible will be the inner confirmation from the Spirit that silently attests to the truthfulness of God's Word.

Our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, divine authority thereof (of the Bible), is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts. (The Westminster Confession of Faith).

The testimony of the Holy Spirit is superior to all reason.... It is necessary therefore, that the same Spirit who spoke by the mouths of the prophets, should penetrate into our hearts, to convince us that they faithfully delivered the oracles which were divinely entrusted to them.... (John Calvin. Institutes.)

V. Summary.

A. The Bible is necessary.

Unless God speaks, our ideas about who he is and what he wants will only be guesses. The only way to know God and his ways is if God chooses to reveal his thoughts and actions. He has! And the record of this self-disclosure is our Bible.

B. The Bible is **true**.

We can trust in the accuracy of Scripture because God can be trusted not to communicate in a manner that is false or inaccurate.

C. The Bible is **authoritative**.

Human reason, spiritual experiences, and the church can err and lead people astray. No one should put blind faith in such faulty instruments. However, the Bible can be trusted. It has priority even over the church. *Sola Scriptura!* Martin Luther said it well: *My conscience is captive to the Word of God.*

D. The Bible is **clear**.

The Bible is not too difficult to understand. God communicates in ways that even a child can comprehend.

E. The Bible is **sufficient**.

The Scriptures contain all we need to know for life and godliness. Nothing needs to be added. Nothing needs to be taken away.

TABLE TALK

1. Look again at the Internal Evidences and the External Evidences mentioned in this study (pp. 7-10). Which pieces of evidence do you find most convincing?
2. What is implied by saying the Church establishes the canon.... and by saying that the canon establishes the church? Why is this important? What do you believe? What does LCC believe?
3. Is your confidence in God's Word a matter of settled conviction? Growing certainty? Lingering doubt?
4. If indeed, God has spoken... and recorded his words and thoughts in a book that is accessible to every man and woman... what difference does it make? What difference should it make?

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CHICAGO STATEMENT ON BIBLICAL INERRANCY

Background

The "Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy" was produced at an international Summit Conference of evangelical leaders, held at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare in Chicago in the fall of 1978. This congress was sponsored by the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy. The Chicago Statement was signed by nearly 300 noted evangelical scholars, including James Boice, Norman L. Geisler, John Gerstner, Carl F. H. Henry, Kenneth Kantzer, Harold Lindsell, John Warwick Montgomery, Roger Nicole, J. I. Packer, Robert Preus, Earl Radmacher, Francis Schaeffer, R. C. Sproul, and John Wenham.

Preface

The authority of Scripture is a key issue for the Christian church in this and every age. Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are called to show the reality of their discipleship by humbly and faithfully obeying God's written Word. To stray from Scripture in faith or conduct is disloyalty to our Master. Recognition of the total truth and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture is essential to a full grasp and adequate confession of its authority.

The following Statement affirms this inerrancy of Scripture afresh, making clear our understanding of it and warning against its denial. We are persuaded that to deny it is to set aside the witness of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit and to refuse that submission to the claims of God's own Word which marks true Christian faith. We see it as our timely duty to make this affirmation in the face of current lapses from the truth of inerrancy among our fellow Christians and misunderstandings of this doctrine in the world at large....

We offer this Statement in a spirit, not of contention, but of humility and love, which we purpose by God's grace to maintain in any future dialogue arising out of what we have said. We gladly acknowledge that many who deny the inerrancy of Scripture do not display the consequences of this denial in the rest of their belief and behavior, and we are conscious that we who confess this doctrine often deny it in life by failing to bring our thoughts and deeds, our traditions and habits, into true subjection to the divine Word....

— The Draft Committee

A Short Statement

1. God, who is Himself Truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself.

2. Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it affirms; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.

3. The Holy Spirit, Scripture's divine Author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.

4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.

5. The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the Church.

Articles of Affirmation and Denial

Article I.

WE AFFIRM that the Holy Scriptures are to be received as the authoritative Word of God.

WE DENY that the Scriptures receive their authority from the Church, tradition, or any other human source.

Article II.

WE AFFIRM that the Scriptures are the supreme written norm by which God binds the conscience, and that the authority of the Church is subordinate to that of Scripture.

WE DENY that Church creeds, councils, or declarations have authority greater than or equal to the authority of the Bible.

Article III.

WE AFFIRM that the written Word in its entirety is revelation given by God.

WE DENY that the Bible is merely a witness to revelation, or only becomes revelation in encounter, or depends on the responses of men for its validity.

Article IV.

WE AFFIRM that God who made mankind in His image has used language as a means of revelation.

WE DENY that human language is so limited by our creatureliness that it is rendered inadequate as a vehicle for divine revelation. We further deny that the corruption of human culture and language through sin has thwarted God's work of inspiration.

Article V.

WE AFFIRM that God's revelation within the Holy Scriptures was progressive.

WE DENY that later revelation, which may fulfill earlier revelation, ever corrects or contradicts it. We further deny that any normative revelation has been given since the completion of the New Testament writings.

Article VI.

WE AFFIRM that the whole of Scripture and all its parts, down to the very words of the original, were given by divine inspiration.

WE DENY that the inspiration of Scripture can rightly be affirmed of the whole without the parts, or of some parts but not the whole.

Article VII.

WE AFFIRM that inspiration was the work in which God by His Spirit, through human writers, gave us His Word. The origin of Scripture is divine. The mode of divine inspiration remains largely a mystery to us.

WE DENY that inspiration can be reduced to human insight, or to heightened states of consciousness of any kind.

Article VIII.

WE AFFIRM that God in His work of inspiration utilized the distinctive personalities and literary styles of the writers whom He had chosen and prepared.

WE DENY that God, in causing these writers to use the very words that He chose, overrode their personalities.

Article IX.

WE AFFIRM that inspiration, though not conferring omniscience, guaranteed true and trustworthy utterance on all matters of which the Biblical authors were moved to speak and write.

WE DENY that the finitude or fallenness of these writers, by necessity or otherwise, introduced distortion or falsehood into God's Word.

Article X.

WE AFFIRM that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original.

WE DENY that any essential element of the Christian faith is affected by the absence of the autographs. We further deny that this absence renders the assertion of Biblical inerrancy invalid or irrelevant.

Article XI.

WE AFFIRM that Scripture, having been given by divine inspiration, is infallible, so that, far from misleading us, it is true and reliable in all the matters it addresses.

WE DENY that it is possible for the Bible to be at the same time infallible and errant in its assertions. Infallibility and inerrancy may be distinguished, but not separated.

Article XII.

WE AFFIRM that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit.

WE DENY that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science. We further deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood.

Article XIII.

WE AFFIRM the propriety of using inerrancy as a theological term with reference to the complete truthfulness of Scripture.

WE DENY that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage or purpose. We further deny that inerrancy is negated by Biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of material, variant selections of material in parallel accounts, or the use of free citations.

Article XIV.

WE AFFIRM the unity and internal consistency of Scripture.

WE DENY that alleged errors and discrepancies that have not yet been resolved vitiate the truth claims of the Bible.

Article XV.

WE AFFIRM that the doctrine of inerrancy is grounded in the teaching of the Bible about inspiration.

WE DENY that Jesus' teaching about Scripture may be dismissed by appeals to accommodation or to any natural limitation of His humanity.

Article XVI.

WE AFFIRM that the doctrine of inerrancy has been integral to the Church's faith throughout its history.

WE DENY that inerrancy is a doctrine invented by scholastic Protestantism, or is a reactionary position postulated in response to negative higher criticism.

Article XVII.

WE AFFIRM that the Holy Spirit bears witness to the Scriptures, assuring believers of the truthfulness of God's written Word.

WE DENY that this witness of the Holy Spirit operates in isolation from or against Scripture.

Article XVIII.

WE AFFIRM that the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis, taking account of its literary forms and devices, and that Scripture is to interpret Scripture.

WE DENY the legitimacy of any treatment of the text or quest for sources lying behind it that leads to relativizing, dehistoricizing, or discounting its teaching, or rejecting its claims to authorship.

Article XIX.

WE AFFIRM that a confession of the full authority, infallibility, and inerrancy of Scripture is vital to a sound understanding of the whole of the Christian faith. We further affirm that such confession should lead to increasing conformity to the image of Christ.

WE DENY that such confession is necessary for salvation. However, we further deny that inerrancy can be rejected without grave consequences, both to the individual and to the Church.