

THE CHICAGO STATEMENT ON BIBLICAL INERRANCY

A Summarization written by Dr. Murray Baker

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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.

SUMMARY: The Bible is the authoritative word of God. The authority of the Bible doesn't come from something outside it (like the Church, tradition, and so on).

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.

SUMMARY: The Bible is the standard which one must follow. Even a church's teaching/beliefs must fall in line with it and they cannot make one go against the teaching of the Bible.

This is what Martin Luther meant when he defended himself: "Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Amen."

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.

SUMMARY: All of the Bible is revelation from God. It doesn't become revelation only when someone feels it is revealing something to him or her.

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.

SUMMARY: God uses normal human language in the Bible as way of communicating. The fact that it is human language doesn't get in the way of clearly communicating what is needed to be known about God.

ARTICLE V

We affirm that God's revelation in 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.

SUMMARY: As one goes through the Bible from start to finish what God is showing gets more and more clear without contradicting the earlier parts. The Bible is the complete written revelation from God.

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.

SUMMARY: All of the Bible including the very words has been given by God.

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.

SUMMARY: The author of the Bible is both God by his Spirit and the human author. Scripture comes from God.

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.

SUMMARY: Although the authors of the Bible were inspired by God, they still used their own style in writing.

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.

SUMMARY: God by inspiring the human authors made sure that what is written in the Bible is true and trustworthy. Just because they are human doesn't mean that the Bible is untrustworthy or has errors.

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.

SUMMARY: It is only the original first copies of the books of the Bible that are, strictly speaking, inspired. However, the copies and translations which we have are faithful and accurate representations of the originals.

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.

SUMMARY: Because it is inspired by God the Bible will not mislead us and so it cannot have errors.

ARTICLE XII

We affirm that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from 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.

SUMMARY: The Bible has no errors, not only in things concerning salvation but also in the areas of history and science. Science does not overturn the teaching of the Bible 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.

SUMMARY: Inerrancy is a proper term for complete truthfulness of the Bible. However, in understanding what 'the complete truthfulness' means, the following must be kept in mind:

- The standards for truth and error are those which: 1) we find in the use of the terms in the Bible; 2) we see in the way that the Bible actually records items; and 3) are in accord with the purposes of the authors in the Bible
- The Bible does have: a lack of modern scientific precision, irregular grammar and spelling, observational descriptions of nature (for example, the sun rising), reports of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole (for example, the mustard seed as the smallest seed), the rounding of numbers, the topical (rather than chronological) arrangement of narrative material, the selection of different material to include in parallel accounts (for example, in Kings-Chronicles and the Gospels) and free (non-exact) quotations. These do not mean that the Bible has errors.

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.

SUMMARY: The Bible is internally consistent and so an apparent inconsistency (which so far have not been resolved) does not mean that the Bible has errors.

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.

SUMMARY: The Bible is inerrant because it is inspired by God. Jesus didn't make any mistakes in his views of scripture.

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.

SUMMARY: The doctrine of inerrancy has always been part of the Church's view of scripture.

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.

SUMMARY: As believers we are assured of the truthfulness of the Bible through the work of the Holy Spirit in us. The Holy Spirit never works against the Bible.

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.

SUMMARY: To interpret the Bible a method which takes into account the grammatical (the meaning of the words and grammar), literary (the immediate and book context of a passage), canonical (the whole Bible context) and historical context should be used. This includes the fact that various literary devices and genres (forms of writing) may be used. This method should not lead to avoiding the teaching of the Bible or to denying the truth of statements regarding 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.

SUMMARY: Belief in the authority and inerrancy of the Bible is necessary for a sound understanding of the Christian faith and should lead to being more like Christ. However, these doctrines are not necessary for salvation, though their rejection does have serious consequences.