

## **CHICAGO STATEMENT ON BIBLICAL INERRANCY**

The “Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy” (CSBI) 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. This landmark document is considered to be the “first systematically comprehensive, broadly based, scholarly, creed-like statement on the inspiration and authority of Scripture in the history of the church.”<sup>1</sup>

### **STATEMENT ON BIBLICAL INERRANCY**

#### **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.

## **CHICAGO STATEMENT ON BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS**

The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics (1982) is a continuation and elaboration of the meaning of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978), particularly of Articles XIII, XIV, and XVIII. It is a fuller statement on the relation of inerrancy to hermeneutics, especially of the meaning of the “grammatico-historical exegesis” mentioned in Article XIII of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy which reads:

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.

### **STATEMENT ON BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS**

#### **Articles of Affirmation and Denial**

Article I. WE AFFIRM that the normative authority of Holy Scripture is the authority of God Himself, and is attested by Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church. WE DENY the legitimacy of separating the authority of Christ from the authority of Scripture, or of opposing the one to the other.

Article II. WE AFFIRM that as Christ is God and Man in one Person, so Scripture is, indivisibly, God’s Word in human language. WE DENY that the humble, human form of Scripture entails errancy any more than the humanity of Christ, even in His humiliation, entails sin.

Article III. WE AFFIRM that the Person and work of Jesus Christ are the central focus of the entire Bible. WE DENY that any method of interpretation which rejects or obscures the Christ-centeredness of Scripture is correct.

Article IV. WE AFFIRM that the Holy Spirit who inspired Scripture acts through it today to work faith in its message. WE DENY that the Holy Spirit ever teaches to anyone anything which is contrary to the teaching of Scripture.

Article V. WE AFFIRM that the Holy Spirit enables believers to appropriate and apply Scripture to their lives. WE DENY that the natural man is able to discern spiritually the biblical message apart from the Holy Spirit.

Article VI. WE AFFIRM that the Bible expresses God’s truth in propositional statements, and we declare that biblical truth is both objective and absolute. We further affirm that a statement is true if it represents matters as they actually are, but is an error if it misrepresents the facts. WE DENY that, while Scripture is able to make us wise unto salvation, biblical truth should be defined in terms of this function. We further deny that error should be defined as that which willfully deceives.

Article VII. WE AFFIRM that the meaning expressed in each biblical text is single, definite and fixed. WE DENY that the recognition of this single meaning eliminates the variety of its application.

Article VIII. WE AFFIRM that the Bible contains teachings and mandates which apply to all cultural and situational contexts and other mandates which the Bible itself shows apply only to particular situations. WE DENY that the distinction between the universal and particular mandates of Scripture can be determined by cultural and situational factors. We further deny that universal mandates may ever be treated as culturally or situationally relative.

Article IX. WE AFFIRM that the term hermeneutics, which historically signified the rules of exegesis, may properly be extended to cover all that is involved in the process of perceiving what the biblical revelation means and how it bears on our lives. WE DENY that the message of Scripture derives from, or is dictated by, the interpreter's understanding. Thus we deny that the "horizons" of the biblical writer and the interpreter may rightly "fuse" in such a way that what the text communicates to the interpreter is not ultimately controlled by the expressed meaning of the Scripture.

Article X. WE AFFIRM that Scripture communicates God's truth to us verbally through a wide variety of literary forms. WE DENY that any of the limits of human language render Scripture inadequate to convey God's message.

Article XI. WE AFFIRM that translations of the text of Scripture can communicate knowledge of God across all temporal and cultural boundaries. WE DENY that the meaning of biblical texts is so tied to the culture out of which they came that understanding of the same meaning in other cultures is impossible.

Article XII. WE AFFIRM that in the task of translating the Bible and teaching it in the context of each culture, only those functional equivalents which are faithful to the content of biblical teaching should be employed. WE DENY the legitimacy of methods which either are insensitive to the demands of cross-cultural communication or 'distort biblical meaning in the process.

Article XIII. WE AFFIRM that awareness of the literary categories, formal and stylistic, of the various parts of Scripture is essential for proper exegesis, and hence we value genre criticism as one of the many disciplines of biblical study. WE DENY that generic categories which negate historicity may rightly be imposed on biblical narratives which present themselves as factual.

Article XIV. WE AFFIRM that the biblical record of events, discourses and sayings, though presented in a variety of appropriate literary forms, corresponds to historical fact. WE DENY that any event, discourse or saying reported in Scripture was invented by the biblical writers or by the traditions they incorporated.

Article XV. WE AFFIRM the necessity of interpreting the Bible according to its literal, or normal, sense. The literal sense is the grammatical-historical sense, that is, the meaning which the writer expressed. Interpretation according to the literal sense will take account of all figures of speech and literary forms found in the text. WE DENY the legitimacy of any approach to Scripture that attributes to it meaning which the literal sense does not support.

Article XVI. WE AFFIRM that legitimate critical techniques should be used in determining the canonical text and its meaning. WE DENY the legitimacy of allowing any method of biblical criticism to question the truth or integrity of the writer's expressed meaning, or of any other scriptural teaching.

Article XVII. WE AFFIRM the unity, harmony and consistency of Scripture and declare that it is its own best interpreter. WE DENY that Scripture may be interpreted in such a way as to suggest that one passage corrects or militates against another. WE DENY that later writers of Scripture misinterpreted earlier passages of Scripture when quoting from or referring to them.

Article XVIII. WE AFFIRM that the Bible's own interpretation of itself is always correct, never deviating from, but rather elucidating, the single meaning of the inspired text. The single meaning of a prophet's words includes, but is not restricted to, the understanding of those words by the prophet and necessarily involves the intention of God evidenced in the fulfillment of those words. WE DENY that the writers of Scripture always understood the full implications of their own words.

Article XIX. WE AFFIRM that any preunderstandings which the interpreter brings to Scripture should be in harmony with scriptural teaching and subject to correction by it. WE DENY that Scripture should be required to fit alien preunderstandings, inconsistent with itself; such as naturalism, evolutionism, scientism, secular humanism, and relativism.

Article XX. WE AFFIRM that since God is the author of all truth, all truths, biblical and extrabiblical, are consistent and cohere, and that the Bible speaks truth when it touches on matters pertaining to nature, history, or anything else. We further affirm that in some cases extrabiblical data have value for clarifying what Scripture teaches, and for prompting correction of faulty interpretations. WE DENY that extrabiblical views ever disprove the teaching of Scripture or hold priority over it.

Article XXI. WE AFFIRM the harmony of special with general revelation and therefore of biblical teaching with the facts of nature. WE DENY that any genuine scientific facts are inconsistent with the true meaning of any passage of Scripture.

Article XXII. WE AFFIRM that Genesis 1-11 is factual, as is the rest of the book. WE DENY that the teachings of Genesis 1-11 are mythical and that scientific hypotheses about earth history or the origin of humanity may be invoked to overthrow what Scripture teaches about creation.

Article XXIII. WE AFFIRM the clarity of Scripture and specifically of its message about salvation from sin. WE DENY that all passages of Scripture are equally clear or have equal bearing on the message of redemption.

Article XXIV. WE AFFIRM that a person is not dependent for understanding of Scripture on the expertise of biblical scholars. WE DENY that a person should ignore the fruits of the technical study of Scripture by biblical scholars.

Article XXV. WE AFFIRM that the only type of preaching which sufficiently conveys the divine revelation and its proper application to life is that which faithfully expounds the text of Scripture as the Word of God. WE DENY that the preacher has any message from God apart from the text of Scripture.

1 See "Records of the International Council On Biblical Inerrancy," Dallas Theological Seminary, accessed May 12, 2014, <http://library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/ICBI.shtml>.