

Why We Believe in the Bible

The Inspiration, Inerrancy,
and Authority of the Bible

By John Piper

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Why Are We Concerned with the Bible? Its Inspiration, Inerrancy, and Authority

Our Conviction

Bethlehem Affirmation of Faith (Article One) (Baptist General Conference, Bethel)

We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, fully inspired and without error in the original manuscripts, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct. (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20,21; Mark 13:31; John 8:21, 22; 20:31; Acts 20:32)

The Evangelical Tradition

Westminster Confession of Faith 1646 (Article One, Paragraph Eight)

The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), and the New Testament in Greek (which, at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God, and, by His singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic; (1) so as, in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal unto them. (2)

(1) Matt. 5:18.

(2) Isa. 8:20; Acts 15:15; John 5:39, 46.

Keach's Catechism (1689)

Question 4. What is the Word of God?

Answer: The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, being given by divine inspiration, are the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice. (2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16,17; Isaiah 8:20)

The Evangelical Theological Society

The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written and is therefore inerrant in the autographs. God is a Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each an uncreated person, one in essence, equal in power and glory.

The Lausanne Covenant (1974) Article Two

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 mankind. 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. (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21; John 10:35; Isaiah 55:11; 1 Corinthians 1:21; Romans 1:16; Matthew 5:17-18; Jude 3; Ephesians 1:17-18; 3:10, 18)

Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy 1978 (Summary Statement)

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. . . . 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.

Wheaton College Statement of Faith (Article Two) (October 17, 1992)

We believe that God has revealed Himself and His truth in the created order, in the Scriptures, and supremely in Jesus Christ; and that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are verbally inspired by God and inerrant in the original writing, so that they are fully trustworthy and of supreme and final authority in all that they say.

Many in our day deny the existence of Truth.

Michael Novak (*First Things*, Sept. 1994, p. 21)—Templeton Prize Address

“There is no such thing as truth,” they teach even the little ones. “Truth is bondage. Believe what seems right to you. There are as many truths as there are

individuals. Follow your feelings. Do as you please. Get in touch with yourself. Do what feels comfortable.” Those who speak this way prepare the jails of the twenty-first century. They do the work of tyrants.

One trait of secularism is the criticism of the Bible as a mixture of truth and error.

Star Tribune, Oct. 17, 1992—Letter from Minnesota Atheists

One of the few worthwhile statements in the Bible is, “You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.” . . . Knowledge of the Bible is hindered by the informal censorship imposed by religious leaders who would rather their followers didn’t know what’s in it – the innumerable contradictions, historical errors, plagiarism, absurdities, meaningless prophecies, myths presented as historical fact, and countless instances of divinely ordered or approved atrocities. . . . It is true that the Bible has some worthwhile material, including entertaining stories, inspirational sentiments and astute observations about human behavior. However, those worthwhile parts could probably be contained in a pamphlet.

The competing holy books of other religions are increasingly close.

Kenneth Cragg, “Contemporary Trends in Islam” in *Muslims and Christians on the Emmaus Road*, ed. J. Dudley Woodberry (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1989)

Islam is essentially fundamentalist in a way that biblical Christian faith could never properly be. For the Quran is understood as the *ipsissima verba* of God himself, given in *Tanzil* [the “sending down”] to Muhammad, in Arabic, as a transcribing of the Divine Book in heaven. (p. 28)

One trait of liberal Christianity is the rejection of the infallibility of the Bible and the call for us to find a canon within the canon.

Ernst Kaesemann, quoted in Gerhard Maier, *The End of the Historical Method* (St. Louis: Concordia Pub. House, 1974)

The Scripture which one gives over to itself and to which one . . . gives himself up uncritically without the “principal key” leads not only to a multiplicity of confessions but also to the inability to distinguish between faith and superstition, the Father of Jesus Christ and the idol. . . . Does the New Testament canon establish the unity of the church? . . . No . . . If (the formal canon) establishes also a variety of Christologies which are in part incompatible . . . the canon as a such also legitimates more or less all sects and false doctrines. (pp. 37-38)

If it is true, the message of the Bible is the only message of eternal life.

Psalm 96:5

For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the LORD made the heavens.

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."

John 6:67-68

Jesus said therefore to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life."

Acts 4:12

And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.

John 8:42

Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God"

1 John 2:23

Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.

1 John 5:12

He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

Building our lives of sacrificial service on a mistake would be pitiable.

1 Corinthians 15:19

If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.

The Bible makes claims to inspiration and authority and inerrancy.

One example: 2 Timothy 3:15-16

From childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

Yet the most devout believers meet Scriptures that do not seem coherent with other parts or with our experience.

James and Paul

James 2:24

You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone.

Romans 3:28

We maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

God's Repentance

1 Samuel 15: 11

The word of the LORD came to Samuel: "I repent that I have made Saul king; for he has turned back from following me."

1 Samuel 15:28-29

The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you. And also the Glory of Israel will not lie or repent; for he is not a man, that he should repent.

Which Books Make Up The Bible And Why?

The Old Testament Canon

The Meaning of "Canon"

The word "canon" means straight staff, or measuring rod, and then a guide or a model or a test of truth or beauty.

Galatians 6:16

And those who will walk by this rule (*kanon*), peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

The earliest use is the sense of a group of books that function as a rule or measuring rod of faith and life: Council of Laodicea in AD 363 (Schaff-Herzog, I, 385):

No psalms of private authorship can be read in the churches, nor *uncanonical* books, but only the *canonical* books of the Old and New Testaments.

Jewish Understanding of Canon between the Testaments

Other Jewish books besides the ones we have in our Old Testament were written after the Old Testament times. These include:

- The First Book of Esdras
- The Second Book of Esdras
- Tobit
- Judith
- The Addition to the Book of Esther
- The Wisdom of Solomon
- Ecclesiastitcus (or Sirach)
- Baruch
- The Letter of Jeremiah
- The Prayer of Azariah
- Suzanna
- Bel and The Dragon
- The Prayer of Manasseh
- The First Book of the Maccabees
- The Second Book of the Maccabees

The Jews did not accord to the Apocrypha the authority of the canonical books.

The Rabbinical literature (Babylonian Talmud, *Yomah* 9b):

After the latter prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi had died, the Holy Spirit departed from Israel, but they still availed themselves of the *bath quol*.

1 Maccabees 4:45-46 (about 100 BC) on the cessation of prophecy:

So they tore down the altar and stored the stone in a convenient place on the temple hill *until there should come a prophet* to tell what to do with them.

1 Maccabees 9:27:

He refers to great distress “such as had not been *since the time that prophets ceased to appear among them.*”

Josephus, *Against Apion* 1:41 (Josephus born AD 37/38)

From Artaxerxes [end of OT era] to our own times a complete history has been written, but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier records, because of *the failure of the exact succession of the prophets.*

Note: He knew the writings of the Apocrypha but did not regard them as canonical.

The Make-Up of the Jewish Canon

The Hebrew canon has traditionally had 24 books which include all of our 39 and no more, and these are divided into three sections: Law, Prophets, and Writings (Tanach: Torah, Nebiim, Chetuvim)

Torah: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

Prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel (1/2), Kings (1/2), Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, The Minor Prophets (= one book: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi)

Writings: Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah (= one book), Chronicles (1/2)

Thus the canon of the Jews began with Genesis and ended with 2 Chronicles, not (as we have it today) with Malachi. Our order follows the Greek translation of the Old Testament called the Septuagint, but the earliest Christian witnesses as well as Josephus and Philo (who used the LXX but did not accord the Apocrypha authority) show that the Apocryphal books included in the LXX were not counted as canonical.

New Testament Pointers to the Existence and Extent of the Old Testament Canon

Paul assumed the legitimacy of the “Scriptures” that were being taught to Jewish children.

2 Timothy 3:14-15

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with *the sacred writings* which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

There is no record of any dispute between Jesus and the Jewish leaders of his day over what the extent of the Scriptures was. He seemed to assume that their Bible was his Bible, and he made remarkable claims about its authority (“The Scripture cannot be broken,” John 10:35).

The three-part Jewish division of the Old Testament was assumed by Jesus.

Luke 24:44

Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the *Law of Moses* and the *Prophets* and the *Psalms* must be fulfilled.”

The Jewish order of the closed Jewish canon is assumed by Jesus.

Luke 11:49-51

“Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute, that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary.’”

But chronologically the last martyr in the Old Testament was Uriah the Son of Shemaiah, whose death is described in Jeremiah 26:20-23. He died during the reign of Jehoiakim who reigned from 609 to 598 BC.

However in 2 Chronicles, the last book of the Jewish OT canon, there was a Zechariah killed in the temple court.

Then the Spirit of God took possession of Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest; and he stood above the people, and said to them, “Thus says God, ‘Why do you transgress the commandments of the LORD, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, he has forsaken you.’” But they conspired

against him, and by command of the king they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the LORD. (2 Chronicles 24:20-21)

This strongly suggests that the canon Jesus was familiar with was the Jewish OT canon that includes the books we have today.

According to one count by Roger Nicole, the New Testament quotes various parts of the Old Testament as divinely authoritative over 295 times, but not once do they cite any statement from the books of the Apocrypha or any other writings as having divine authority. ("New Testament Use of the Old Testament" in *Revelation and the Bible*, ed. Carl Henry [London: Tyndale Press, 1959], pp. 137-141)

Jude 14-15 does quote 1 Enoch 60:8 and 1:9, and Paul quotes pagan authors in Acts 17:28 and Titus 1:12, but these citations are not said to be from Scripture or to be authoritative because of their sources.

Early Christian Witness to the Completed OT Canon

Melito, Bishop of Sardis, about AD 170:

When I came to the east and reached the place where these things were preached and done, and learnt accurately the books of the Old Testament, I set down the facts and sent them to you. These are their names: five books of Moses, Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Joshua the son of Nun, Judges, Ruth, four books of Kingdoms, two books of Chronicles, the Psalms of David, the Proverbs of Solomon and his Wisdom, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, Job, the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, the Twelve in a single book, Daniel, Ezekiel, Ezra. (cited in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 4.26.14)

No Apocryphal books are mentioned, and the only missing book from our OT canon is Esther, which was controversial for some time and may have been suppressed for political reasons at the time because it spoke of a Jewish uprising.

The New Testament Canon

The New Testament assumed the existence of canonical Scriptures. The concept was not foreign to them or added later.

Luke 24:27

And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all *the Scriptures*.

John 5:39

“You search *the Scriptures*, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me.”

Acts 17:2

And according to Paul’s custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from *the Scriptures*.

Romans 15:4

For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of *the Scriptures* we might have hope.

The point here is that for the church to begin to govern its life and doctrine by more than this authoritative canon of Scriptures (Old Testament), something similar in authority and limitation would be necessary, namely, a supplementary canon.

Jesus was recognized by the early church as having authority equal to and beyond the Old Testament Scriptures.

Matthew 7:29

He was teaching them as one having *authority*, and not as their scribes.

Matthew 5:38-39

“You have heard that it was said, ‘AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.’ *But I say to you*, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also.”

Mark 13:31

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but *My words will not pass away.*”

Matthew 12:41-42

“The men of Nineveh shall stand up with this generation at the judgment, and shall condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, *something greater than Jonah is here*. The Queen of the South shall rise up with this generation at the judgment and shall condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, *something greater than Solomon is here.*”

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and *the truth*, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.”

Matthew 28:18

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.*”

Hebrews 1:1-2

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, *in these last days has spoken to us in His Son*, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

The point here is that the teaching of Jesus would inevitably lead to an expansion of the canon of the early church. The Old Testament would not be supplemented by what Jesus taught and did. The challenge is opened then for the early church how to limit what is inevitably opened by the coming and teaching of Jesus.

Theologically, a closed canon of the New Testament is what we would expect in accord with what God has inspired and preserved for us in the Old Testament.

If we accept [Jesus’] testimony to the God-given authority of the Old Testament, it would seem intrinsically unlikely that the most stupendous event in human history – in the life, death and resurrection of its incarnate Lord . . . would have been left by the God who had revealed it in advance without any authoritative record or explanation for future generations. (Norman Anderson, *God’s Word for God’s World* [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1981], p. 124)

Jesus himself pointed in this direction and prepared the early church to expect that he not only planned a canon of teaching concerning himself and his word, but that he would provide for it as well through authorized *apostles* and *inspiration*.

Luke 6:13-16

And when day came, He called His disciples to Him; and chose twelve of them, *whom He also named as apostles*: Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James and John; and Philip and Bartholomew; and Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot; Judas *the son* of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Acts 1:26

And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

John 14:24-26

“He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me. These things I have spoken to you, while abiding with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.”

John 16:12-14

“I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you.”

The early church saw the teaching that emerged from Jesus and the apostles as comprising a completed body of truth about the faith.

Jude 3

Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

Paul saw the apostolic teaching as the unrepeatably foundation of the church (= canon) and saw his own teaching as the expression of the Lord’s very words and commands.

Ephesians 2:19-20

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built upon the *foundation of the apostles and prophets*, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone.

2 Corinthians 13:3

You are seeking for proof of the Christ who speaks in me, and who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you.

1 Corinthians 14:37

If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment.

1 Corinthians 2:12-13

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.

Peter saw Paul's writings as part of an enlarging canon of Scripture along side the Old Testament Scriptures.

2 Peter 3:16

[Paul wrote to you] In all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of *the Scriptures*, to their own destruction.

With this built in trajectory toward a new canon that would give authorized record of the life and teaching of Jesus and the foundational teachings of his authoritative spokesmen, what remained for the early church to do was to discern which writings were the fulfillment of Jesus' promise to the apostles. The rise of heretical teachings and the use of distorted books (Marcion, about 140 AD) spurred the process of canonization. How did the church do that?

The main criterion was *apostolicity*. Not just, "Was the book written by an apostle," but also, "Was it written in the company of an apostle, presumably with his help and endorsement."

Matthew: apostle

Mark: Peter's interpreter and assistant (Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis 60-140: "Mark became Peter's interpreter and wrote accurately all that he remembered" in Eusebius, *EH III*, 39.15)

Luke: close associate and partner of Paul (known from Acts)

John: apostle

13 epistles of Paul: apostle

Hebrews: from the Pauline circle (Hebrews 13:22-24, "But I urge you, brethren, bear with this word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. Take notice that *our brother Timothy* has been released, with whom, if he comes soon, I shall see you. Greet all of your leaders and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.")

James: Jesus' brother called an apostle probably in Galatians 1:19 ("But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother.")

1 & 2 Peter: apostle

1, 2, & 3 John: apostle

Jude: brother of James

Revelation: by John the apostle

The most controversial books that took the longest to confirm themselves for the whole church were Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 & 3 John, and Jude. But in the end the church discerned their harmony with the others and their antiquity and essential apostolicity.

The core list apart from the controversial books was known at the latest in the latter second century (Irenaeus, about 180 AD).

The first list known to us with all 27 books is in the Festal Letter of Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria in AD 367. This list was affirmed by the Synod of Hippo in 393.

Did the church create the canon?

Dr. Foakes-Jackson expresses my view:

The Church assuredly did not make the New Testament; the two grew up together. (*A History of Church History*, p. 21)

F. F. Bruce puts it like this:

What is particularly important to notice is that the New Testament canon was not demarcated by the arbitrary decree of any Church Council. When at last a Church Council – the Synod of Hippo in AD 393 – listed the 27 books of the New Testament, it did not confer upon them any authority which they did not already possess, but simply recorded their previously established canonicity. (*The Books and the Parchments*, pp. 112-113.)

What is the New Testament Canon?

Five Books of Narrative: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts.

Twenty-One Letters: Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2 & 3 John, and Jude.

A Book of Visions: Revelation

Do We Have the Very Words Written by the Biblical Authors?

Do we have any of the original manuscripts of the New Testament?

We do not have the actual piece of paper or papyrus or parchment that a Biblical writer actually wrote on.

How were the manuscripts of the New Testament preserved?

The first printed Greek New Testament was published 1516 by Erasmus. Before that, all copying was by hand. We owe our Bible to the meticulous love and care given by countless monks and scholars of the first 1500 years of the Christian era.

How many manuscripts of the New Testament writings do we possess today?

Over 5,000

As of 1967 the statistics were:	266 uncial texts
	2,754 minuscule texts
	2,135 lectionary portions
	<u>81</u> papari
	5,236 TOTAL

How does this amount of evidence compare with other ancient writings of the same era?

We have no original manuscripts of any other writers from this period of history. Moreover the textual evidence of other writings cannot compare with the wealth of New Testament manuscripts. For example:

Caesar's *Gallic Wars* (composed between 58 and 50 BC). There are about 10 manuscripts available and the oldest is 900 years after the event.

Parts of the *Roman History* of Livy (composed between 59 BC and AD 17) is preserved in about 20 manuscripts, only one of which, containing only fragments, is as old as the fourth century.

The *Histories* and the *Annals* of the Roman historian Tacitus (composed around AD 100) are preserved (partially) only in two manuscripts, one from the ninth and one from the eleventh century.

The *History* of Thucydides (who lived 460-400 BC) is known to us from only eight manuscripts, the earliest belonging to AD 900, and a few papyrus scraps from the beginning of the Christian era.

The same general picture is true of Herodotus (who lived about AD 480 - 425).

Does this small number of manuscripts cause secular scholars to despair that we can know what these writers wrote?

As F. F. Bruce says:

No Classical scholar would listen to an argument that the authenticity of Herodotus or Thucydides is in doubt because the earliest manuscripts of their works which are of any use to us are over 1,300 years later than the originals. (*Are the New Testament Documents Reliable*, pp. 16-17)

So are you saying that the New Testament is the unique in having so many manuscripts?

Yes. No other ancient book comes close to this kind of wealth of diverse preservation.

What are some of the oldest manuscripts?

The oldest is a papyrus and comes from about AD 130 and contains John 18:31-33, 37f.

Two of the only full early manuscripts of the New Testament comes from AD 350, called Codex Sinaiticus because it was discovered in a monastery on Mt. Sinai.

Are manuscripts the only source of our knowledge of the original wording of the New Testament Writings?

No. In addition to manuscripts, there are quotations from the New Testament in very early writers outside the New Testament. For example, in the *Didache* and *The Epistle of Barnabas* and Clement's letter to the *Corinthians* were produced around AD 100, and quote extensively from the New Testament writings.

The letters of Polycarp and Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, from about AD 120 contain many quotes from both Gospels and letters.

Do all these manuscripts create problems or solutions for getting back to the original writings?

The huge numbers of manuscripts of the New Testament results in two things: 1) there are *many variations* in wording among them because they were all copied by hand and subject to human error; 2) there are so many manuscripts that these *errors tend to be self-correcting* by the many manuscript witnesses we have to compare.

F. F. Bruce:

Fortunately, if the great number of MSS increases the number of scribal errors, it increases proportionately the means of correcting such errors, so that the margin of doubt left in the process of recovering the exact original wording is not so large as might be feared; it is in truth remarkably small. (*The New Testament Documents*, p. 19)

Is there a branch of Biblical Studies that focuses on this problem of getting back to the wording of the original writings?

Yes. The branch of Biblical Studies that works with all these sources to determine the best manuscript of the Bible is Textual Criticism.

Illustrations of Discrepancies and How They Came About and Are Resolved:

Misreading: Revelation 1:5

Marginal glosses: 1 John 5:7

Harmonization: Acts 9:6

Does the doctrine of inerrancy in the original manuscripts matter?

From our Affirmation of Faith:

We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, fully inspired and without error in the original manuscripts. . .

Yes, it matters, because it affirms the reality of objective, historical inspiration. There is an objective measuring rod for us to return to. To the degree that we come close to the wording of the original we come close to the very words of God. We are there for all practical purposes.

B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort:

The proportion of words virtually accepted on all hands as raised above doubt is great; not less on a rough computation than 7/8ths of the whole. The remaining 1/8th . . . formed in great part by changes of order and other comparative trivialities constitutes the whole area of [textual] criticism . . . The words in our opinion still subject to doubt only make up about 1/60th of the whole New Testament. Substantial variation is but a small fraction of the whole residuary variation and can hardly form more than 1/100th part of the entire text. (*The New Testament in the Original Greek*, pp. 2-3)

F. F. Bruce:

The variant readings about which any doubt remains among textual critics of the New Testament affects no material question of historic fact or of Christian faith and practice. (*The New Testament Documents*, p. 20)

Does It Matter Whether We Affirm the Verbal Inerrancy of the Original Manuscripts?

“We believe that the Bible is the Word of God,
fully inspired and without error *in the original manuscripts*. . .”
From Bethlehem’s Affirmation of Faith

To deny the verbal inerrancy of the original manuscripts would imply one of three things:

- that we do not believe in verbal inerrancy at all, or
- that we think inerrancy refers only to inerrant Biblical ideas, not to the very words of the Bible, or
- that we do not believe the doctrine of verbal inerrancy is important enough to affirm.

If we do not believe in the verbal inerrancy of the original manuscripts, then we deny the doctrine of verbal inerrancy entirely, and impugn the doctrine of inspiration.

Denying the inerrancy of the original manuscripts of the Bible means denying the inerrancy of Scripture entirely because there is no consistent way to affirm the inerrancy of our present Greek and Hebrew versions or our present English translations while denying the inerrancy of the originals. There is no reason to think that books of the Bible became inerrant in the process of being copied from errant manuscripts. So to deny the inerrancy of the original manuscripts is to deny the verbal inerrancy of Scripture entirely.

If we deny the doctrine of verbal inerrancy entirely then we also impugn the inspiration of Scripture, because it suggests that God inspired Biblical writers to say erroneous things. But since that creates a moral problem for God’s truthfulness, it suggests that God did not really inspire the books of the Bible.

Another reason for denying the *verbal* inerrancy of the original manuscripts is because we think inerrancy refers only to inerrant Biblical ideas and not to the very words of the Bible.

The first problem with this is that the Biblical teaching about inspiration is that it is an inspiration of the very words of Scripture. In other words, God’s inerrant ideas were given to us in words that God himself appointed. (2 Timothy 3:16; Matthew 5:17-18; 1

Corinthians 2:13; etc.) We would go against the teaching of Scripture to say that God's *ideas* are inerrant, but the *verbal assertions* in the original manuscripts are not.

The second problem with asserting the inerrancy of ideas but not words is that it cuts ideas free from the means God has chosen to communicate them to us. I admit that a word is only a symbol for an intention. But to say that the intentions of God are true but have no sure connection with the wording of Scripture cuts us off from those intentions and makes them unknowable. God has given us access to his ideas through the words of Scripture. God's words are the anchor of our thoughts in the mind of God. If we cut our minds free from those words, we will be adrift and have no sure anchor in the knowledge of God.

A third reason for denying the verbal inerrancy of the original manuscripts is that some do not believe it is *important* enough to affirm, even though they believe it is true. This is generally asserted by saying: "We don't have the originals, so what good does it do to assert anything about them; we should make assertions about what we have."

Suppose I wrote you a letter with careful instructions how to get to my house for an important meeting. And I asked you to share this information with others who need to come. Then suppose you scanned the letter into a computer twice on two different days, and then sent out the files in two batches of e-mails to those who should come. But suppose that in one set of e-mails the scanner misread the original and converted "Fanny Street" to "Parry Street" and in the other set "Fanny Street" came through accurately. Then suppose that the original letter was lost.

The people receiving the e-mails discovered that their instructions do not agree; so they come to you and ask which is correct. But you say that you have lost the original. Does anyone say: "Oh well, it doesn't matter whether the original was correct or not; we'll just guess?" No, some research is done. For example, a computer whiz tests the scanner and discovers that in dozens of tries it never converts a P to an F but often converts an F to a P. And it never converts "rr" to "nn" but often converts "nn" to "rr." So you conclude that the original letter must have read, "Fanny Street," that got converted to "Parry Street," and not the other way around. And so you all get to the important meeting.

Now everyone getting to the meeting depended on the belief that the original letter was true and that every effort to get back to that wording was crucial – *even though the original letter no longer existed*. If the original wording of Scripture is not affirmed as inerrant, there would be little incentive to try to get back as close as possible in our text-critical studies, which form the basis of all our translations.

There is a strange cynicism that often accompanies this assertion that affirming the inerrancy of the originals is unimportant. It sometimes expresses itself with rhetorical questions like: "Don't you think the Bible in your hand today is inerrant?" And thus this question postures as a higher view of inerrancy.

The answer to the question is: *Our Greek and Hebrew versions and our translations are inerrant to the degree that they faithfully render the divine meaning that the words of the original manuscripts carried.*

I believe this reflects a higher (= more accurate) view of inerrancy than is reflected in saying that every translation is inerrant and that the inerrancy of the original manuscripts doesn't matter. The reason I say this is that translations differ from each other in some matters. So to say that they are all inerrant (in spite of their differences) is to weaken the meaning of inerrancy to the point where it loses objective reality.

On the other hand, to say that the inerrancy of the original manuscripts matters elevates the objective reality of inerrancy. It is a historical reality. God really did inspire the writings of the Bible so that his ideas were inerrantly carried in the words of the original manuscripts. This historical reality is an objective standard which we can approach through textual criticism. Without this conviction the contemporary versions and translations are set adrift in a sea of subjectivism with no objective standard to measure their faithfulness. Thus affirming the inerrancy of the original manuscripts is a higher, more faithful, view of inerrancy.

Therefore, let us rejoice to affirm, "We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, fully inspired and without error *in the original manuscripts. . .*"

What Does the Bible Claim for Itself

Jesus' View of the Old Testament

Jesus Believed the Psalmist Spoke by the Holy Spirit

Mark 12:35-36

And Jesus answering began to say, as He taught in the temple, “How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? David himself said *in the Holy Spirit*, ‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT THINE ENEMIES BENEATH THY FEET.’””

Jesus Believed That What Moses Wrote in the Law God Himself Said

Matthew 19:3-6

And some Pharisees came to Him, testing Him, and saying, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause at all?” And He answered and said, “Have you not read, that *He who created them from the beginning* MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, and *said*, ‘FOR THIS CAUSE A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER, AND SHALL CLEAVE TO HIS WIFE; AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH’? Consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.”

And the man said, “This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. (Genesis 2:23-25)

Jesus Put the Authority of Scripture Above Satan and Above His Own Human Preferences

Matthew 4:3-4, 7, 10

And the tempter came and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” But He answered and said, “*It is written*, ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.’”

Jesus said to him, “On the other hand, *it is written*, ‘YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.’”

Then Jesus said to him, “Begone, Satan! For *it is written*, ‘YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.’”

Jesus Believed That All Scripture Would Be Fulfilled

Matthew 5:17-18

“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, *until all is accomplished.*”

Jesus Saw Moses and the Prophets as Speaking Compelling Truth on How to Avoid Hell

Luke 16:28-31

“I have five brothers – that he may warn them, lest they also come to this place of torment.’ But Abraham said, ‘*They have Moses and the Prophets*; let them hear them.’ But he said, ‘No, Father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!’ But he said to him, ‘*If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets*, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.’”

Jesus Believed That the Small Affirmations of Scripture Cannot Be Broken

John 10:33-36

The Jews answered Him, “For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God.” Jesus answered them, “Has it not been written in your Law, ‘I SAID, YOU ARE GODS’? If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (*and the Scripture cannot be broken*), do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?”

Jesus Put the Authority of Moses Above the Distortions of the Scribes

Matthew 23:1-3

Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying, “The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in *the chair of Moses*; therefore *all that they tell you, do and observe*, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things, and do not do them.”

Jesus Taught That Moses' Writings Are to Be Believed

John 5:39 –47

“You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and *it is these that bear witness of Me*; and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life. I do not receive glory from men; but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves. I have come in My Father’s name, and you do not receive Me; if another shall come in his own name, you will receive him. How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another, and you do not seek the glory that is from the *one and only God*? Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. *For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?*”

Jesus Contrasted the Traditions of Men with the Word of God in the Old Testament

Mark 7:9-13

He was also saying to them, “*You nicely set aside the commandment of God* in order to keep your tradition. For Moses said, ‘HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER’; and, ‘HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER, LET HIM BE PUT TO DEATH’; but you say, ‘If a man says to his father or his mother, anything of mine you might have been helped by is Corban (that is to say, given to God),’ you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or his mother; *thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down*; and you do many things such as that.”

Jesus Believed That Knowing the Scriptures Would Keep You from Doctrinal Error

Mark 12:19-24

“Teacher, Moses wrote for us that IF A MAN’S BROTHER DIES, and leaves behind a wife, AND LEAVES NO CHILD, HIS BROTHER SHOULD TAKE THE WIFE, AND RAISE UP OFFSPRING TO HIS BROTHER. There were seven brothers; and the first took a wife, and died, leaving no offspring. And the second one took her, and died, leaving behind no offspring; and the third likewise; and *so* all seven left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. In the resurrection, when they rise again, which one’s wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife.” Jesus said to them, “*Is this not the reason you are mistaken, that you do not understand the Scriptures, or the power of God?* For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. But regarding the fact that the dead rise again, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the burning bush, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE

GOD OF JACOB’? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; you are greatly mistaken.”

Jesus Devoted His Life to Fulfilling the Scriptures About the Messiah

Face set toward Jerusalem: Luke 18:31

And He took the twelve aside and said to them, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and *all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished.*”

Cleansing of the temple: Mark 11:15-17 (compare to Isaiah 56:7)

And they came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple and began to cast out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who were selling doves; and He would not permit anyone to carry goods through the temple. And He *began* to teach and say to them, “*Is it not written, ‘MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL THE NATIONS’? But you have made it a ROBBERS’ DEN.*”

Even those I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; for My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples. (Isaiah 56:7)

The people’s blindness in response to the parables fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah: Matthew 13:13-14

“Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, ‘YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; AND YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE . . .’”

His ministry is fulfillment of the Old Testament: Luke 4:16-21

And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book, and found the place where it was written, “THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE DOWNTRODDEN, 19 TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD.” And He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon Him. And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

The ministry of Jesus and John the Baptist are being played out according to Scripture: Mark 9:11-13

And they asked Him, saying, “Why is it that the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” And He said to them, “Elijah does first come and restore all things. And yet how is it written of the Son of Man that He should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? But I say to you, that Elijah has indeed come, and they did to him whatever they wished, *just as it is written of him.*”

Jesus saw his betrayal as fulfillment of Scripture: Mark 14:21; John 3:18

“For the Son of Man *is to go, just as it is written of Him*; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.”

“I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘HE WHO EATS MY BREAD HAS LIFTED UP HIS HEEL AGAINST ME.’”

Jesus saw the disciples abandonment as fulfillment of Scripture: Mark 14:27

And Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away, *because it is written*, ‘I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP SHALL BE SCATTERED.’”

Jesus saw his arrest as a criminal as fulfillment of Scripture: Luke 22:37; Matthew 26:53-54

“For I tell you, that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, ‘AND HE WAS NUMBERED WITH TRANSGRESSORS’; *for that which refers to Me has its fulfillment.*”

“Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? *How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled*, that it must happen this way?”

Jesus taught that we should not be slow to believe all that the Old Testament prophets have spoken: Luke 24:25

And He said to them, “*O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!*”

The Old Testament Claims for Itself

God's Very Words Are Delivered to Man and Recorded

Exodus 20:1-4 (Ten Commandments, etc.)

Then God spoke all these words, saying, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.

Isaiah 6:8-11

Then I heard the voice of the LORD, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I. Send me!" And He said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on listening, but do not perceive; Keep on looking, but do not understand.' Render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears dull, and their eyes dim, lest they see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and return and be healed." Then I said, "LORD, how long?" And He answered, "Until cities are devastated and without inhabitant, houses are without people, and the land is utterly desolate."

Prophets Are Commissioned by God to Say What God Says

2 Samuel 7:4-5

But it came about in the same night that the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying, "Go and say to My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD, "Are you the one who should build Me a house to dwell in?"'"

Isaiah 38:4-5

Then the word of the LORD came to Isaiah, saying, "Go and say to Hezekiah, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of your father David, "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will add fifteen years to your life.''"

Jeremiah 35:13

Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, "Go and say to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, 'Will you not receive instruction by listening to My words?'" declares the LORD.

There are 416 Old Testament uses of "Thus Says the LORD" (NASB).

For example:

Amos 1:3

Thus says the LORD, “For three transgressions of Damascus and for four I will not revoke its punishment.”

Micah 2:3

Therefore, thus says the LORD, “Behold, I am planning against this family a calamity from which you cannot remove your necks.”

Nahum 1:12

Thus says the LORD, “Though they are at full strength and likewise many, even so, they will be cut off and pass away.”

Haggai 1:5

Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts, “Consider your ways!”

Zechariah 1:3

“Therefore say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Return to Me, declares the LORD of hosts, that I may return to you,” says the LORD of hosts.’”

There Are 336 uses of “. . .Declares the LORD” in the Old Testament (NASB).

For example:

Hosea 2:21

“And it will come about in that day that I will respond,” declares the LORD. “I will respond to the heavens, and they will respond to the earth.”

Joel 2:12

“Yet even now,” declares the LORD, “Return to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping, and mourning.”

When a Man Speaks as a Prophet of the Lord It Is the Speaking of God's Very Words

Exodus 4:12

“Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say.”

Deuteronomy 18:18-20

“I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And it shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him. But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he shall speak in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.”

Numbers 22:38

So Balaam said to Balak, “Behold, I have come now to you! Am I able to speak anything at all? The word that God puts in my mouth, that I shall speak.”

Ezekiel 2:7

“But you shall speak My words to them whether they listen or not, for they are rebellious.”

Often Prophets Spoke for God in the First Person.

Isaiah 45:5

“I am the LORD, and there is no other; besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me.”

Often God Is Said to Speak "Through" a Prophet.

1 Kings 16:12

Thus Zimri destroyed all the household of Baasha, according to the word of the LORD, which He spoke against Baasha through Jehu the prophet.

Trusting the Words of Prophets Is Trusting God.

2 Chronicles 20:20

Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Listen to me, O Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, put your trust in the LORD your God, and you will be established. Put your trust in His prophets and succeed.”

We See God Commanding That His Words Be Written

Exodus 17:14

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Write this in a book as a memorial, and recite it to Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.”

Exodus 24:4

And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD.

Exodus 34:27

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.”

The Introductions to Written Prophetic Books Portray Them as God's Word

Hosea 1:1

The word of the LORD which came to Hosea the son of Beeri, during the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

Micah 1:1

The word of the LORD which came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

Zephaniah 1:1

The word of the LORD which came to Zephaniah son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah son of Amon, king of Judah.

Old Testament Claims for the Complete Truthfulness of God's Word

Numbers 23:19

God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent; has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?

1 Samuel 15:29

And also the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind.”

Psalm 119:160

The sum of Thy word is truth, and every one of Thy righteous ordinances is everlasting.

Psalm 12:6

The words of the LORD are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times.

Psalm 119:89

Forever, O LORD, Thy word is settled in heaven.

Proverbs 30:5

Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words lest He reprove you, and you be proved a liar.

The Truth and Authority of the Apostles

Jesus Created a Limited, Authorized Band of Apostles

Luke 6:12-13

And it was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. And when day came, He called His disciples to Him; and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles.

Meaning of “apostle” in the New Testament:

One chosen and sent with a special commission as the fully authorized representative of the sender. (Norval Geldenhuys, *Supreme Authority: The Authority of the Lord, His Apostles and the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1953] pp. 53-54)

Applied to a person, *apostolos*, denotes more than *aggelos*. The ‘apostle’ is not only the messenger but the delegate of the person who sends him. He is entrusted with a mission, has powers conferred upon him. (J. B. Lightfoot, *Epistle to the Galatians* [Macmillan, 1865, p. 89]).

By calling the twelve men whom He chose out of the wider circle of disciples by the name “apostles” (*sheluhim*) and not merely “messengers” or “heralds,” Jesus thus made it clear that they were to be His delegates whom He would send with the commission to teach and to act in His name and on His authority. That this was indeed what He meant is shown by the whole history of His dealings with the Twelve. (Geldenhuys, p. 54)

The Authorized Ministry of the Apostles Began under Jesus' Earthly Oversight

Luke 9:1-2, 6, 10

And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons, and to heal diseases. And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God, and to perform healing. . . . And departing, they began going about among the villages,

preaching the gospel, and healing everywhere . . . And when the apostles returned, they gave an account to Him of all that they had done.

Jesus Promises Inspiration and Authority for His Apostles after His Departure

John 14:25-26

“These things I have spoken to you, while abiding with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.”

John 16:12-14

“I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you.”

The Risen Jesus Gives Orders and Proofs to His Apostles for Their Ministry

Acts 1:1-4

The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. To these He also presented Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. And gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, “Which,” He said, “you heard of from Me.”

From this it is clear that our Lord primarily directed Himself to His chosen apostles during the days between His resurrection and ascension -- preparing them to act as His authoritative representatives through whom He was to lay the foundations of His Church. (Geldenhuis, p. 62)

The Apostles Saw Themselves as a Unique Band Authorized by the Lord to Witness to His Resurrection

Acts 1:15-17, 21-26

And at this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together), and said, “Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was counted among us, and received

his portion in this ministry . . . It is therefore necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us – beginning with the baptism of John, until the day that He was taken up from us – one of these should become a witness with us of His resurrection.” And they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias. And they prayed, and said, “Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show which one of these two Thou hast chosen to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Paul Saw the Apostles as Foundational for the Church

Ephesians 2:19-20

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone.

God Strengthened the Witness of the Apostles with Signs and Wonders

Acts 5:12

And at the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon’s portico.

Acts 14:3

Therefore they spent a long time there speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands.

Acts 2:43

And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.

Paul Saw Himself as an Apostle with Authority Equal to the Twelve's

Galatians 1:1

Paul, an apostle, not sent from men, nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead.

Galatians 2:7-8

But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles.

Acts 9:3-6

And it came about that as he journeyed, he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who art Thou, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but rise, and enter the city, and it shall be told you what you must do."

Acts 26:16-18

"But arise, and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; delivering you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me."

Paul Saw His Message as Taught by the Risen Christ as Absolute

Galatians 1:8-12

But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed. For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ. For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Paul Assumed the Right as an Apostle to Command the Churches

2 Thessalonians 3:6

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us.

2 Thessalonians 2:15

So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.

The Lord Gave Him His Authority for Building up the Churches

2 Corinthians 10:8

For even if I should boast somewhat further about our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I shall not be put to shame.

2 Corinthians 13:10

For this reason I am writing these things while absent, in order that when present I may not use severity, in accordance with the authority which the Lord gave me, for building up and not for tearing down.

Paul Sees His Preached Word as God's Word

1 Thessalonians 2:13

And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe

Paul Sees Himself as a True Apostle over against the "False Apostles" (2 Corinthians 11:13)

2 Corinthians 12:11-12

For in no respect was I inferior to the most eminent apostles, even though I am a nobody. The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles.

Paul's Authority Put Him above All Professed Prophets of His Day

1 Corinthians 14:37-38

If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment. But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.

Paul Believed His Words Were "Taught by the Spirit"

1 Corinthians 2:12-14

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to spiritual people. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

Peter Teaches That Paul's Apostolic Writings Are Scripture Like the Old Testament

2 Peter 3:15-16

Regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also *the rest of the Scriptures*, to their own destruction.

Peter Teaches That the Apostles Are Spokesmen for the Lord as the Old Testament Prophets Were

2 Peter 3:1-2

This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and *the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles*.

Summary

The New Testament claims that Jesus founded the apostolate as a band of authoritative representatives who would act and speak on his behalf in a unique role as founders of the church through an inspiration and an authority that is now preserved in their writings which is the way the Lord continues to use their ministry to sustain and guide the church.

How Can We Justify the Claim That the Bible Is God's Word?

Westminster Confession of Faith

1.5 We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture, and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole, (which is to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God; yet, notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts.

Westminster Larger Catechism

Question Four: How doth it appear that the Scriptures are the word of God?

Answer: The Scriptures manifest themselves to be the word of God,

- 1) by their majesty
- 2) and purity;
- 3) by the consent of all the parts,
- 4) and the scope of the whole, which is to give all glory to God;
- 5) by their light and power to convince and convert sinners, to comfort and build up believers unto salvation.
- 6) But the Spirit of God, bearing witness by and with the Scriptures in the heart of man, is alone able fully to persuade it that they are the very word of God.

The Scriptures manifest themselves to be the word of God . . .

1) . . . by their majesty

Hosea 8:12 (KJV)

I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing.

1 Corinthians 2:6-9 (KJV)

Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

Psalm 119:18 (KJV)

Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

Psalm 119:129 (KJV)

Thy testimonies *are wonderful: therefore* doth my soul keep them.

2) . . . [by their] purity;

Psalm 12:6 (KJV)

The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.

Psalm 19:7-11 (KJV)

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.

3) . . . by the consent of all the parts,

Acts 10:43 (KJV)

To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

Acts 26:22 (KJV)

Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come.

4) . . . [by] the scope of the whole, which is to give all glory to God;

Romans 3:19 (KJV)

Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

Romans 3:27 (KJV)

Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

John 7:16-18 (Inserted by John Piper)

Jesus therefore answered them, and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself. He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him."

John 5:41-44 (Inserted by John Piper)

"I do not receive glory from men; but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves. I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another shall come in his own name, you will receive him. How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another, and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God?"

5) . . . by their light and power to convince and convert sinners, to comfort and build up believers unto salvation.

Acts 18:28 (KJV)

For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

Hebrews 4:12 (KJV)

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

James 1:18 (KJV)

Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

Psalm 119:79 (KJV)

Let those that fear thee turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies.

Romans 15:4 (KJV)

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

Acts 20:32 (KJV)

And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

2 Corinthians 4:4-6 (Inserted by John Piper)

In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

1 Peter 1:23 - 2:3 (Inserted by John Piper)

You have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God. For, ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF, BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ABIDES FOREVER. And this is the word which was preached to you. Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

1 Corinthians 1:18-25 (Inserted by John Piper)

For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE. Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For indeed Jews ask for

signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

1 Corinthians 2:3-16 (Inserted by John Piper)

And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; but just as it is written, THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND WHICH HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM. For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man. For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE SHOULD INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.

6) But the Spirit of God, bearing witness by and with the Scriptures in the heart of man, is alone able fully to persuade it that they are the very word of God.

John 16:13-14 (KJV)

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

1 John 2:20 -27 (KJV)

But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth. Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the

one who confesses the Son has the Father also. As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life. These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. And as for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

John 20:31 (KJV)

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

1 Corinthians 2:13-15 (Inserted by John Piper)

. . . which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to spiritual people. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised [properly] by no man.

John 10:27

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”

The Meaning of the Bible's Inerrancy

Bethlehem Affirmation of faith, Article One:

We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, fully inspired and without error in the original manuscripts, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

What Does "Without Error" Mean?

The Bible is "without error" in the sense that all that the Biblical authors intended to teach is true and does not conflict with reality or with the will of God.

Explanation:

"... intended to teach . . ."

I use this phrase for two reasons:

1) A writer should not be accused of error because someone construes their words in a way the writer does not "intend." The meaning of a text is not whatever anyone can construe from the words, but what the writer intends for the language to teach. For example, if I say to a friend in Detroit, "I'll be there at 10 A.M.," meaning Eastern Standard Time; and he construes the words to mean 10 A.M. Central Standard Time, I have not erred if I arrive an hour earlier than he expects. I may have been unclear, but I was not wrong. So the meaning of a writer should not be considered false just because the words *could* be used to express error.

2) The word "teach" reinforces this point by implying that a writer might say things which he is not teaching. For example, I may say to my son, "Pick your mother up at the town square." My teaching is that he should get his mother at the place known as the "town square." I am *not* teaching that he should lift her off the ground in his arms, nor am I teaching that the town square is the same length on all four sides. If the "town square" is 100' by 105' I have not erred, and if my son never touches his mother, but brings her home from there, he has not disobeyed. Both the word "intended" and the word "teach" are meant to protect a writer from accusation of error when there is none.

Some Implications for Reading Scripture:

Accurate descriptions of natural events as what one simply sees are not scientific errors. (E.g., "The sun rises in the east.")

Joshua 10:13

So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation avenged themselves of their enemies.

Revelation 6:13

The stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind.

Idiomatic exaggerations are not errors. (E.g., “It scared me to death.”)

Genesis 22:17

“I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is on the seashore.”

Jeremiah 33:22 (Explaining the idiom)

“As the host of heaven cannot be counted, and the sand of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the descendants of David.”

Reported error is not necessarily error. (E.g., Mohammed Ali said, “I am the greatest.”)

Luke 22:56-60

And a certain servant-girl, seeing him as he sat in the firelight, and looking intently at him, said, “This man was with Him too.” But he denied it, saying, “Woman, I do not know Him.” And a little later, another saw him and said, “You are one of them too!” But Peter said, “Man, I am not!” And after about an hour had passed, another man began to insist, saying, “Certainly this man also was with Him, for he is a Galilean too.” But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are talking about.” And immediately, while he was still speaking, a cock crowed.

[NOTE: Is every word of Scripture God’s word? Yes, but in the sense that it is God’s will that this word carry the truth being intended by the writer. It’s meaning and truth are judged not in isolation from, but by use in the context.]

Metaphorical descriptions of nature are not scientific errors.

Revelation 20:7-8

And when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and

Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore.

Using the same word with different and contrary meanings is not necessarily an error. (E.g., “There was not rock in Leicester.” “Most houses in Leicester are built with rock.”)

1 Kings 15:14

The high places were not taken away; nevertheless the heart of Asa was wholly devoted to the LORD all his days.

2 Chronicles 14:1, 5

And Asa did good and right in the sight of the LORD his God . . . He also removed the high places and the incense altars from all the cities of Judah. And the kingdom was undisturbed under him.

Romans 3:28

For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

James 2:24

You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone.

Limited, local meaning cannot be given a general meaning and then called error. (E.g., “Everyone came to class today.” “Bugs weigh over 1,000 pounds.”)

Matthew 13:31-32

Another parable he put before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”

Local definition: “That which people plant in the ground to grow crops.”

General definition: “A fertilized and ripened plant ovule containing an embryo capable of germination to produce a new plant” (*American Heritage Dictionary*, e.g. orchids).

Appendix One

The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978)

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 misunderstanding of this doctrine in the world at large.

This Statement consists of three parts: a Summary Statement, Articles of Affirmation and Denial, and an accompanying Exposition*. It has been prepared in the course of a three-day consultation in Chicago. Those who have signed the Summary Statement and the Articles wish to affirm their own conviction as to the inerrancy of Scripture and to encourage and challenge one another and all Christians to growing appreciation and understanding of this doctrine. We acknowledge the limitations of a document prepared in a brief, intensive conference and do not propose that this Statement be given creedal weight. Yet we rejoice in the deepening of our own convictions through our discussions together, and we pray that the Statement we have signed may be used to the glory of our God toward a new reformation of the Church in its faith, life, and mission.

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.

We invite response to this statement from any who see reason to amend its affirmations about Scripture by the light of Scripture itself, under whose infallible authority we stand as we speak. We claim no personal infallibility for the witness we bear, and for any help which enables us to strengthen this testimony to God's Word we shall be grateful.

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 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.

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.

* The Exposition is not printed here but can be obtained by writing us at the Oakland office: ICBI / P.O. Box 13261 / Oakland, CA 94661 / (415)-339-1064.

Appendix Two

The Immediate Knowledge of God That Comes with Human Consciousness in the World

“That which is known about God is evident within them”
(To. gnwsto.n tou/ qeou/ fanero,n evstin evn auvtoi/j)

Romans 1:19-21

That which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks.

Notes on Romans 1:19-21:

- 1) “Invisible attributes” (v. 20) translates *aorata* which means “invisible things” – things about God that are invisible. These are “evident” (v. 19), because God has “made it evident” (v. 19).
- 2) So the existence of the invisible God is known. And things about him are known (v. 19).
- 3) The things that are known about God are things that make us accountable to “to honor him as God and give thanks” (v. 21). So this must include his existence, his beneficence and our indebtedness to him for life, and enough of his nature or excellence so that honor would be called for.
- 4) These known things about God come through “what has been made” (v. 20). Our immediate consciousness of the world that is given to us by virtue of our existence constitutes a knowledge of God.
- 5) The effect of sin is to make us resist honoring and thanking God (v. 21). This resistance is so damning that we cannot live with the consciousness of it. The result is that we “suppress the truth” (v. 18) and become futile in our thinking and dark in our hearts (v. 21). That is, there is either a denial of God, or a distortion of God to make him tolerable.

Appendix Three

My Own Experience of God as an Immediate Effect of My Consciousness in the World as a Human Being

My existence in the world confronts me as soon as I am conscious of it with:

- A Single Originator of all that is.
- One who is totally self-sufficient with no dependence on anything outside himself to be all that he is.
- One without beginning or ending or progress from worse to better, and therefore absolute and perfect.
- One on whom I am dependent moment by moment for all things, none of which I deserve, and who is therefore beneficent.
- One who is Personal and accounts for transcendent personhood in human beings.
- One who accounts for the intelligent design manifest in the macro (galaxies) and micro (molecules and cells) universe.
- One who knows all.
- One who deserves to be revered and admired and looked to for guidance and help.
- One who sees me as guilty for failure in not rendering him what he deserves, and who thus gives ultimate explanation to universal bad conscience.
- One who might save me, but would need to do it in a way that overcomes my evil impulse to resist him, and would have to make a way for his honor to be sustained while not punishing me for treason.

Appendix Four

Note on How the Immediate Knowledge of God Relates to the Self-Attestation of Scripture

There is something written on our hearts and in the world that bears witness to the absolute supremacy of God and to the truth that all the glory in the universe belongs to him.

There is implicit in our personhood, our conscience, our dependence, and our guilt that God is a personal Being, with moral expectations, whom we have dishonored, and from whom we deserve wrath.

What's the point of all this in relation to the Westminster Catechism's question four about how the Scriptures "manifest themselves to be the word of God"?

When the answer says that the Scriptures manifest themselves to be the word of God "by the scope of the whole, which is to give all glory to God," it is linking up with something in us that we know immediately from our own created existence in the world (unless we suppress it as Romans 1:18) – that all glory belongs to God not us, and that we are guilty before him for not giving him this glory, and that the only hope of salvation will be by the initiative of this God to preserve his glory while finding away to forgive our sins.

This is in fact what we find in the whole Bible – the centrality of the glory of God and a history of salvation that makes his glory the center and goal of all things. Therefore, this is one way that the scriptures manifest themselves to be the word of God – they present a vision of God and man and salvation that fits with what we know immediately from God's self-revelation in nature and in our own personhood and conscience.

Appendix Five

Thoughts on How to Know If a Writing Is From God

How might you know if I wrote the advent poems I give each year at Bethlehem?

- 1) Consider that I said I did. This involves having access to my word separate from the poem and involves trusting me. So you move the question back a step to how you might come to trust me.
- 2) Consider that someone, say Noël, told you that I wrote it. This would involve access to Noël and would involve not only trusting her, but believing that she is competent to make justifiable claims.
- 3) Analyze the style and vocabulary and theology to see if it fits with what you know of me from other sources. This would involve having access to other things that I have written or said. And the question of knowing that I said them or wrote them would be pushed back a step.
- 4) You saw me write it. You were there during enough of the 19 hours to satisfy yourself that this was really coming out of my head.

Now compare the similar question: How might you know that God wrote (i.e. inspired the writing of) the Bible?

- 1) God says he wrote it. But this involves the problem that the only access we have to the word of God is the Book we are trying to decide is the word of God.
- 2) Others say he wrote it. This pushes the question back onto the way we would credit their testimony and the way we would have access to that knowledge.
- 3) It fits with all we know about his style and vocabulary and theology. The problem with this is that we have no access to God's theology except in the Book in question.
- 4) You saw him write it. This is not possible because he is outside of space and sense perception. Anything we would see – like a hand on a wall writing in human language would have the same question as the Bible we are trying to decide on. God is outside our sense experience and in another category of being from us. We cannot see him directly do anything.
- 5) This leaves us with one other way of knowing: that there would be a sense or taste or seeing of God and his glory that is not natural or merely physical but is spiritual, as the seeing in 2 Corinthians. 4:4, 6.

Appendix Six

An Argument from the Fulfillment of Prophecy

The Nature of the Argument Endorsed by Jesus

John 13:18-19

“I am not speaking of you all; I know whom I have chosen; it is that the scripture may be fulfilled, ‘He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’ I tell you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he.”

John 14:29

“And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place, you may believe.”

Jesus Directs Us to Consider Fulfilled Prophecy of His Suffering

Luke 24:45-47

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”

Peter Taught That Christ Enabled OT Prophets to See the Future

1 Peter 1:10-11

The prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired about this salvation; they inquired what person or time was indicated by the Spirit of Christ within them when predicting the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory.

The Case of Isaiah 53

Isaiah 53:1

Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

Romans 10:16

But they have not all obeyed the gospel; for Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?”

John 12:37-38

Though he had done so many signs before them, yet they did not believe in him; it was that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: “Lord, who has believed our report, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

Isaiah 53:2-3

For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Mark 9:12

And he said to them, “Elijah does come first to restore all things; and how is it written of the Son of man, that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt?”

Isaiah 53:4

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. (see Isaiah 53:10)

Acts 2:23

This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

Acts 4:27-28

Truly in this city there were gathered together against thy holy servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever thy hand and thy plan had predestined to take place.

Isaiah 53:5

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed.

Matthew 8:16-17

That evening they brought to him many who were possessed with demons; and he cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases."

1 Peter 2:24

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

Romans 4:25

Who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

Matthew 26:67

Then they spat in his face, and struck him; and some slapped him.

Matthew 27:26

Then he released for them Barabbas, and having *scourged* Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.

Isaiah 53:6-7

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.

Matthew 26:62

And the high priest stood up and said, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?"

Matthew 27:12-14

But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he made no answer. Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?" But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge; so that the governor wondered greatly.

1 Corinthians 5:7

Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed.

John 1:29

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Isaiah 53:8

By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?

Acts 8:32-33

Now the passage of the scripture which he was reading was this: "As a sheep led to the slaughter or a lamb before its shearer is dumb, so he opens not his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken up from the earth."

1 Corinthians 15:3

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures.

Isaiah 53:9

And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

Luke 23:33

And when they came to the place which is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on the right and one on the left.

1 Peter 2:22

He committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips.

1 John 3:5

You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.

Matthew 27:57-59

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. And Joseph took the body, and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud,

Isaiah 53:10-11

Yet it was the will of the LORD to bruise him; he has put him to grief; when he makes himself an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand; he shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous; and he shall bear their iniquities.

1 John 2:1

My little children, I am writing this to you so that you may not sin; but if any one does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Acts 13:38-39

Let it be known to you therefore, brethren, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him every one that believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.

Isaiah 53:12

Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Hebrews 9:28

So Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Luke 23:34

And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments.

Appendix Seven

How Do We Credit Paul's Testimony?

Why Do We Want to Credit Paul's Testimony?

He Claimed to Write with Words Taught by the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:12-14

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God.

He said that the Old Testament Scriptures were inspired and profitable.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

He made stunning claims about the universal authority of Jesus.

Philippians 2:6-7, 9-11

Although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant. . . . Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Colossians 1:16-18

For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.

Colossians 2:9

For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.

How does Paul argue for his credibility as a spokesman for the living God and risen Christ?

Galatians 1:11-24

For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure, and tried to destroy it; and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. But when He who had set me apart, even from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus. Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days. But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother. (Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying.) Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ; but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy." And they were glorifying God because of me.

Is There Some Historical Control Here That Shows Paul Is Not Free to Fabricate?

Historians agree that Paul wrote Galatians.

The description of his pre-Christian days includes his passionate persecution of the church of Christ (Galatians 1:13).

You have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure, and tried to destroy it.

Confirmed by Luke:

Acts 9:1-2

Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he

found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

This would be public knowledge especially among those who oppose Christianity.

The description of his pre-Christian days includes his passionate devotion to the Jewish law and traditions (Galatians 1:14).

I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.

This too would be public verifiable knowledge. It is extremely unlikely that he could not be fabricating this in a time and setting where falsification would be so easy.

Now after his Damascus road experience he is 180 degrees opposed to what he gave his life to before and is claiming Jesus to be the Son of God and the Christian Gospel to be the truth.

Galatians 1:23-24

They kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy." And they were glorifying God because of me.

This change in Paul was also public among those who know him on both sides of his conversion.

Now Paul is making claims for Jesus that are so universal and so demanding on the allegiance of everyone that he seems to have lost his mind (a serious psychosis), or become a great con-man, or be making an honest mistake as a sober and reasonable man, or be speaking the truth as a reasonable and honest man.

The writings of Paul do not fit the way lunatics or psychotics speak.

- His writings, like Romans, are reasoned in an extended and coherent way.
- His writings bear the marks of many warm personal relationships.
- His writings bear the mark of much interest and concern with others.
- His writings evidence a wide range of normal emotions.
- In general no one would get the impression from these 13 letters that this man is insane.

The price Paul was paying to be a Christian and an apostle rule out the idea that he using it as a platform to con others.

He proved repeatedly that he was not being driven by money:

- tent making,

- not taking offerings for himself,
- having others handle the offering for the poor,
- living simply.

He accepted suffering constantly and documented it in a way that it could be publicly verified.

2 Corinthians 6:3-10

We give no cause for offense in anything, in order that the ministry be not discredited, but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger. . . regarded as deceivers and yet true; as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.

2 Corinthians 11:23-28

Are they servants of Christ? (I speak as if insane) I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure upon me of concern for all the churches.

To say that Paul is making an honest mistake of a reasonable man is to miss the point: the problem is not just he might have made an honest mistake in his conversion, which would be inexplicable enough. The problem is that he goes on year after year making the most outrageous claims about his own revelatory experiences and the reality of Christ and the Holy Spirit and the nature of reality. This is not an honest mistake. This is a lifetime of sustained delusion, if he is not telling the truth.

The evidence is strong that Paul is speaking as a reasonable and honest man who knows what he is saying and why.

His explanation is that Christ appeared to him and that he receives revelation. With such revelation he credits the Old Testament and speaks a full message about the person and work of Jesus Christ as God's truth.

We must decide if we believe he is a credible witness. There is good reason to believe he is.

Appendix Eight

John Calvin on Scripture and the Internal Testimony of the Spirit

“That fearful abandonment . . .”

I at length perceived, *as if light had broken in upon me*, in what a sty of error I had wallowed, and how much pollution and impurity I had thereby contracted. Being exceedingly alarmed at the misery into which I had fallen, and much more at that which threatened me in the view of eternal death, I, as in duty bound, made it my first business to betake myself to thy way, condemning my past life, not without groans and tears. And now, O Lord, what remains to a wretch like me, but, instead of defense, earnestly to supplicate thee not to judge according to its deserts *that fearful abandonment of thy word* from which, in thy wondrous goodness thou has at last delivered me. (*Selections*, 114-115)

Calvin’s new conviction: “The same reverence we owe to God . . .”

Whoever wishes to profit in the Scriptures let him first of all lay down as a settled point this -- that the law and the prophecies are not teaching delivered by the will of men, but dictated by the Holy Ghost . . . Moses and the prophets . . . testified as was actually the case, that it was the mouth of the Lord that spoke . . . we owe to the Scripture *the same reverence which we owe to God*, because it has proceeded from Him alone, and has nothing of man mixed with it. (Packer 162)

What does he mean by “dictation”?

Calvin’s reference to the Holy Spirit’s dictating Scripture (a frequent phrase with him), and to the apostles as His “amanuenses”, does not, of course, imply anything as to the psychology of inspiration. Warfield, Doumergue, and others have shown that this is simply a theological metaphor conveying the thought that what is written in Scriptures bears the same relation to the mind of God which was its source as a letter written by a good secretary bears to the mind of the man who dictated it — a relation, that is of complete correspondence, and thus of absolute authenticity. (Packer 163)

Sample sermon series

Sunday Sermons

189 sermons on Acts
72 sermons on Psalms
46 sermons on 1 and 2 Thess.
55 on 1 Timothy
31 on 2 Timothy
110 on 1 Corinthians
66 on 2 Corinthians
43 on Galatians
48 on Ephesians

Weekday sermons

271 on Jeremiah
25 Lamentations
28 Micah
17 Zephaniah
65 on Hosea
17 on Joel
43 on Amos
5 on Obadiah
52 Daniel
174 Ezekiel
159 on Job
200 Deuteronomy
343 on Isaiah
123 on Genesis
107 on 1 Sam
87 on 2 Sam.

Story of three year break (Easter Day 1538 - September 1541)

The problem with relying on the church

A most pernicious error widely prevails that Scripture has only so much weight as is conceded to it by the consent of the church. As if the eternal and inviolable truth of God depended upon the decision of men! . . . Yet, if this is so, what will happen to miserable consciences seeking firm assurance of eternal life if all promises of it consist in and depend solely upon the judgment of men? (*Institutes*, I, vii, 1)

How then shall we know? The inward testimony of the Spirit.

The testimony of the Spirit is more excellent than all reason. For as God alone is a fit witness of himself in his word, the Word will not find acceptance in men's hearts before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit. The same Spirit therefore who has spoken through the mouths of the prophets must penetrate into

our hearts to persuade us that they faithfully proclaimed what had been divinely commanded . . . because until he illumines their minds, they ever waver among many doubts!” (*Institutes*, I, vii, 4)

Let this point therefore stand: that those whom the Holy Spirit has inwardly taught truly rest upon Scripture, and that Scripture indeed is self-authenticated; hence, it is not right to subject it to proof and reasoning. And the certainty it deserves with us, it attains by the testimony of the Spirit. For even if it wins reverence for itself by its own majesty, it seriously affects us only when it is sealed upon our hearts through the. Therefore illumined by his power, we believe neither by our own nor by anyone else’s judgment that Scripture is from God; but above human judgment we affirm with utter certainty (just as if we were gazing upon the majesty of God himself) that it has flowed to us from the very mouth of God by the ministry of men. We seek no proofs, no marks of genuineness upon which our judgment may lean, but we subject our judgment and wit to it as to a thing far beyond any guesswork! This we do, not as persons accustomed to seize upon some unknown thing, which, under closer scrutiny, displeases them, but fully conscious that we hold the unassailable truth! Nor do we do this as those miserable men who habitually bind over their minds to the thralldom of superstition; but we feel that the undoubted power of his divine majesty lives and breathes there. By this power we are drawn and inflamed, knowingly and willingly, to obey him, yet also more vitally and more effectively than by mere human willing or knowing! (*Institutes*, I, vii, 5)

The immediate sight of God’s reality in the Word

How can we be assured that this has sprung from God unless we have recourse to the decree of the church? — it is as if someone asked: Whence will we learn to distinguish light from darkness, white from black, sweet from bitter? Indeed, *Scripture exhibits fully as clear evidence of its own truth as white and black things do of their color, or sweet and bitter things do of their taste.* (*Institutes*, I, vii, 2)

1 John 5:7-11.

And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that bear witness, the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for the witness of God is this, that He has borne witness concerning His Son. The one who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the witness that God has borne concerning His Son. And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

What about the Use of Arguments and Proofs?

Yet of themselves these [proofs] are not strong enough to provide a firm faith until our Heavenly Father, revealing his majesty there, lifts reverence for Scripture beyond the realm of controversy. Therefore Scripture will ultimately suffice for a saving knowledge of God only when its certainty is founded upon the inward persuasion of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, these human testimonies which exist to confirm it will not be vain if, as secondary aids to our feebleness, they follow that chief and highest testimony. But those who wish to prove to unbelievers that Scripture is the Word of God are acting foolishly, for only by faith can this be known. (*Institutes*, I, viii, 13)

Once we have embraced it devoutly as its dignity deserves, and have recognized it to be above the common sort of things, those arguments – not strong enough before to engraft and fix the certainty of Scripture in our minds – become very useful aids. What wonderful confirmation ensues when, with keener study, we ponder the economy of the divine wisdom, so well ordered and disposed . . . (*Institutes*, I, viii, 1)

J. I. Packer's interpretation of the inward witness of the Spirit:

Calvin affirms Scripture to be self-authenticating through the inner witness of the Holy Spirit. What is this “inner witness”? Not a special quality of experience, nor a new, private revelation, nor an existential “decision”, but a work of enlightenment whereby, through the medium of verbal testimony, the blind eyes of the spirit are opened, and divine realities come to be recognized and embraced for what they are. This recognition Calvin says, is as immediate and un-analyzable as the perceiving of a color, or a taste, by physical sense – an event about which no more can be said than that when appropriate stimuli were present it happened, and when it happened we know it had happened. (Packer 166)