

Did God Really say?

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The Deception

“Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?”” (Gen. 3:1 ESV)

This is how Satan started out in deceiving mankind. Is this his most powerful weapon? How has he used it. Let’s look at some ways. In this study, we will again assume the inerrancy of Scripture. For those that do not accept this, that will need to be dealt with first. As we shall see, even Satan believed in the inerrancy of Scripture. The Word of God, could not be the “Sword of the Holy Spirit” if it was not inerrant in all that it proclaimed.

Here, Satan used deception to undermine the trust that they had in God and the truth that God had spelled out. First, Satan expands the commandment; he says from “any tree” rather than the specific tree. Interestingly, we have Eve’s response indicating that she, and possibly Adam was a kind of Pharisee. They had expanded the commandment to not even touch it, in order to make sure they would not trespass the command. Satan now questions the truth of what God has said, and that disobeying God would actually benefit them. He was implying that God was withholding something good from them. Their downfall was that they believed that they could make a better decision than God, determine what was true and that God did not have their best interests in mind. Essentially, they were putting themselves above God and judging God’s Word. Is this the strategy that Satan is still using today?

In John we read:

“You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” (John 8:44 LSB)

Paul in Corinthians affirms this, and indicates that Satan works through people that appear to be believers. Often, we find that the spiritual leaders in Israel and the Church were those who led others astray. For example, we find this at the time of the Babylonian exile, the time of Jesus with the Pharisees, in the New Testament letters and on throughout Church history.

“For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his ministers also disguise themselves as ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.” (2 Cor. 11:13-15 LSB)

Going to the end of the Bible, we find the same thing.

“And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world. He was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.” (Rev. 12:9 LSB)

Thus we see that deception seems to be the major strategy of Satan. Now in order for a deception to be effective, there needs to be truth in the deception, and generally a fair bit. If there was not a lot of truth, we would spot it easily and not be deceived. So how does that apply to us today. First, we need to acknowledge that the Word of God is true and authoritative. Without that, you cannot use it to determine and know the truth. Paul and Peter specifically tell us that Scripture is true and that there will be those who distort it and it is not subject to our own interpretation.

“All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be equipped, having been thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim. 3:16-17 LSB)

“But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” (2 Pet. 1:20-21 NAS95)

“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.” (Acts 20:28-30 LSB)

“But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.” (2 Tim. 3:13 LSB)

“But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.” (2 Pet. 2:1 LSB)

“and consider the patience of our Lord *as* 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.” (2 Pet. 3:15-16 LSB)

Jesus and the Scriptures

Now let’s see how Jesus viewed the Scriptures.

When Satan came to tempt Jesus after He had fasted forty days, we see both Jesus’s view of Scripture and Satan’s view of Scripture.

There were three temptations:

The first is “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” Jesus did not give in to the temptations. One temptation had to do with His hunger at this point, and the

other was using a miracle to prove that He was the Son of God. Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3 to him.

Satan then used Scripture to tempt Jesus by using it out of context and misapplying it. Psalm 91:11-12 is in the context of God protecting the psalmist from danger coming against him. Satan twisted the meaning to get Jesus to deliberately put Himself in danger. Jesus replies with Deut 6:16. Deuteronomy 17 talks about the requirement to diligently keep the commandments of God.

The last temptation was to have Jesus worship Satan, with the promise of giving Jesus all the kingdoms of the world, without having to go to the cross. Jesus again replied with Scripture. Deut 6:13.

Here we see that Satan did not say to Jesus, “well that’s just your interpretation”. He recognized it as true and authoritative.

Here are some other scriptures that show Jesus’ view of Scripture, aside from the many allusions or direct quotes.

“For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 5:18-19 LSB)

Jesus acknowledges the accounts of

- Jesus affirms that marriage was instituted in and based on Genesis. “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 REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.”” (Matt. 19:4-6 LSB)
- Sodom and Gomorrah as being an actual fact. (Matt 11:23, Lk 10:12, 17:28-29).
- David, when he was fleeing from Saul. Matt (12:3-4, Mk 2:25-26, Lk 6:3, 1 Sam 21:3-6)
- Jonah in the belly of the fish for three days as a sign of He himself being in the heart of the earth for three days. (and after that to rise again). (Matt 12:40, Lk 11:29-32).
- He affirms Moses and Elijah in Matt 17:4
- When He is discussing the resurrection of the dead with the Sadducees, (who did not believe in the resurrection), Jesus uses the specific phrase “I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB”. (Mat 22:32, Mk 12:26). In other words, the text is so clear, that you can use the actual wording to prove the resurrection from the dead. Another example of this is when he uses Psalm 110 to show

that He (the Messiah, Lord) had to be both prior to David and descended from him. (Matt 22:42-46).

- Abel being killed by Cain. This goes right back to the beginning of Genesis. (Matt 22:35, Lk 11:51).
- Noah, and that all but those on the ark perished. (Matt 24:37-39, Lk 17:26-27).
- When Jesus is teaching on divorce, he says that “from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female” (Mk 10:6). There is not a lot of time prior to Adam and Eve being created, but rather they were created at the beginning of creation.

Additionally, Jesus continually uses the Scriptures authoritatively and references them in foretelling His coming.

Old Testament

In the Old Testament we also have references affirming the accuracy of the account of the transgression of Adam against God’s command.

- “If I have covered my transgressions like Adam, By hiding my iniquity in my bosom,” (Job 31:33 LSB)
- “But like Adam they have trespassed against the covenant; There they have dealt treacherously against Me.” (Hos. 6:7 LSB)

New Testament Writers

- Luke, in his Gospel, presents the genealogy for Jesus right through Abraham, Noah and Adam, the son of God.
- Paul, while in Athens, proclaimed that “God made the world and all things” and “God made from one man, every nation of mankind”. (Act 17:23-28)
- Abraham is repeatedly mentioned by several of the New Testament writers, including very specific situations
- Paul makes a very specific point that through the sin of Adam, death entered the world. (Ro 5:12ff, 1 Cor 15:22,45)
- Paul says that “For it was Adam who was first formed, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into trespass.” (1 Tim. 2:13-14 LSB)
- Paul, in Romans references Sodom and Gomorrah by citing Isaiah. Ro 9:29
- In 2 Corinthians, Paul references the deception of Eve by the serpent. “But I fear that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be corrupted from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.” (2 Cor. 11:3 LSB)
- In his letter to Timothy, Paul again references Adam and Eve. “But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam

who was first formed, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into trespass.” (1 Tim. 2:12-14 LSB)

- “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” (Heb. 4:12 LSB)
- The writer of Hebrews goes on to mention Abel and his sacrifice, the account of Enoch being taken up by God without dying, Noah building the ark for the salvation of his household, Abraham and others. (Hebrews chapter 11, 12:24)
- James mentions Job, who would have been a contemporary of Abraham. (Ja 5:11)
- Peter references Genesis chapter 6 with the angels that sinned, Noah and the flood and Sodom and Gomorrah, thus again affirming the historical accuracy of these accounts.
- In another interesting passage, Peter already affirms that Paul’s writings are Scripture. “and consider the patience of our Lord as 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. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest you, having been carried away by the error of unprincipled men, fall from your own steadfastness,” (2 Pet. 3:15-17 LSB)
- Jude references Genesis chapter 6 with the angels and Sodom and Gomorrah. (Jude 5)
- Jude mentions Enoch, the seventh from Adam. (Jude 14)

As we can see, Jesus and the New Testament writers considered all of, what we call, the Old Testament as accurate and historical. God, in Exodus 11, wrote on tablets of stone “For in six days Yahweh made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore Yahweh blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.” (Ex. 20:11 LSB) One of Satan’s primary weapons is convincing people that even a small part of Scripture is not accurate and can be interpreted according to preference. That opens the door for more and more deception and turning people from the faith. Jesus, the New and Old Testament writers address a lot of the wrong teachings and beliefs that crept into the community. Going into those is beyond the scope of this article. The primary point is that all of Scripture is accurate in all that it records and needs to be read with the plain meaning in view and that compromising on aspects such as Jonah being in the belly of the fish for three days, the worldwide flood that destroyed all land and sea animals apart from those on the ark and the creation in 6, literal 24-hour days opens the door to all sorts of false teachings. Compromising on those accounts, now means you have Jesus and the New Testament writers lying or giving inaccurate references. Our society is really pushing the idea that each person can determine what truth is, just as Satan did with Eve. We must return to upholding God as the only determiner of truth and reality and accept His written Word as true.

Appendix A: The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy

Preface

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

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

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 within the Holy Scriptures was progressive.

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

Article VI.

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

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

Article VII.

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

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

Article VIII.

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

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

Article IX.

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

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

Article X.

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

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

Article XI.

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

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

Article XII.

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

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

Article XIII.

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

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

Article XIV.

WE AFFIRM the unity and internal consistency of Scripture.

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

Article XV.

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

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

Article XVI.

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

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

Article XVII.

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

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

Article XVIII.

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

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

Article XIX.

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

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

Exposition

Our understanding of the doctrine of inerrancy must be set in the context of the broader teachings of the Scripture concerning itself. This exposition gives an account of the outline of doctrine from which our summary statement and articles are drawn.

Creation, Revelation and Inspiration

The Triune God, who formed all things by his creative utterances and governs all things by His Word of decree, made mankind in His own image for a life of communion with Himself, on the model of the eternal fellowship of loving communication within the Godhead. As God's image-bearer, man was to hear God's Word addressed to him and to respond in the joy of adoring obedience. Over and above God's self-disclosure in the created order and the sequence of events within it, human beings from Adam on have received verbal messages from Him, either directly, as stated in Scripture, or indirectly in the form of part or all of Scripture itself.

When Adam fell, the Creator did not abandon mankind to final judgment but promised salvation and began to reveal Himself as Redeemer in a sequence of historical events centering on Abraham's family and culminating in the life, death, resurrection, present heavenly ministry, and promised return of Jesus Christ. Within this frame God has from time to time spoken specific words of judgment and mercy, promise and command, to sinful human beings so drawing them into a covenant relation of mutual commitment between Him and them in which He blesses them with gifts of grace and they bless Him in responsive adoration. Moses, whom God used as mediator to carry His words to His people at the time of the Exodus, stands at the head of a long line of prophets in whose mouths and writings God put His words for delivery to Israel. God's purpose in this succession of messages was to maintain His covenant by causing His people to know His Name—that is, His nature—and His will both of precept and purpose in the present and for the future. This line of prophetic spokesmen from God came to completion in Jesus Christ, God's incarnate Word, who was Himself a prophet—more than a prophet, but not less—and in the apostles and prophets of the first Christian generation. When God's final and climactic message, His word to the world concerning Jesus Christ, had been spoken and elucidated by those in the apostolic circle, the sequence of revealed messages ceased. Henceforth the Church was to live and know God by what He had already said, and said for all time.

At Sinai God wrote the terms of His covenant on tables of stone, as His enduring witness and for lasting accessibility, and throughout the period of prophetic and apostolic revelation He prompted men to write the messages given to and through them, along with celebratory records of His dealings with His people, plus moral reflections on covenant life and forms of praise and prayer for covenant mercy. The theological reality of inspiration in the producing of Biblical documents corresponds to that of spoken prophecies: although the human writers'

personalities were expressed in what they wrote, the words were divinely constituted. Thus, what Scripture says, God says; its authority is His authority, for He is its ultimate Author, having given it through the minds and words of chosen and prepared men who in freedom and faithfulness "spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21). Holy Scripture must be acknowledged as the Word of God by virtue of its divine origin.

Authority: Christ and the Bible

Jesus Christ, the Son of God who is the Word made flesh, our Prophet, Priest, and King, is the ultimate Mediator of God's communication to man, as He is of all God's gifts of grace. The revelation He gave was more than verbal; He revealed the Father by His presence and His deeds as well. Yet His words were crucially important; for He was God, He spoke from the Father, and His words will judge all men at the last day.

As the prophesied Messiah, Jesus Christ is the central theme of Scripture. The Old Testament looked ahead to Him; the New Testament looks back to His first coming and on to His second. Canonical Scripture is the divinely inspired and therefore normative witness to Christ. No hermeneutic, therefore, of which the historical Christ is not the focal point is acceptable. Holy Scripture must be treated as what it essentially is—the witness of the Father to the Incarnate Son.

It appears that the Old Testament canon had been fixed by the time of Jesus. The New Testament canon is likewise now closed inasmuch as no new apostolic witness to the historical Christ can now be borne. No new revelation (as distinct from Spirit-given understanding of existing revelation) will be given until Christ comes again. The canon was created in principle by divine inspiration. The Church's part was to discern the canon which God had created, not to devise one of its own.

The word canon, signifying a rule or standard, is a pointer to authority, which means the right to rule and control. Authority in Christianity belongs to God in His revelation, which means, on the one hand, Jesus Christ, the living Word, and, on the other hand, Holy Scripture, the written Word. But the authority of Christ and that of Scripture are one. As our Prophet, Christ testified that Scripture cannot be broken. As our Priest and King, He devoted His earthly life to fulfilling the law and the prophets, even dying in obedience to the words of Messianic prophecy. Thus, as He saw Scripture attesting Him and His authority, so by His own submission to Scripture He attested its authority. As He bowed to His Father's instruction given in His Bible (our Old Testament), so He requires His disciples to do—not, however, in isolation but in conjunction with the apostolic witness to Himself which He undertook to inspire by His gift of the Holy Spirit. So Christians show themselves faithful servants of their Lord by bowing to the divine instruction given in the prophetic and apostolic writings which together make up our Bible.

By authenticating each other's authority, Christ and Scripture coalesce into a single fount of authority. The Biblically-interpreted Christ and the Christ-centered, Christ-proclaiming Bible are

from this standpoint one. As from the fact of inspiration we infer that what Scripture says, God says, so from the revealed relation between Jesus Christ and Scripture we may equally declare that what Scripture says, Christ says.

Infallibility, Inerrancy, Interpretation

Holy Scripture, as the inspired Word of God witnessing authoritatively to Jesus Christ, may properly be called infallible and inerrant. These negative terms have a special value, for they explicitly safeguard crucial positive truths.

Infallible signifies the quality of neither misleading nor being misled and so safeguards in categorical terms the truth that Holy Scripture is a sure, safe, and reliable rule and guide in all matters.

Similarly, inerrant signifies the quality of being free from all falsehood or mistake and so safeguards the truth that Holy Scripture is entirely true and trustworthy in all its assertions.

We affirm that canonical Scripture should always be interpreted on the basis that it is infallible and inerrant. However, in determining what the God-taught writer is asserting in each passage, we must pay the most careful attention to its claims and character as a human production. In inspiration, God utilized the culture and conventions of His penman's milieu, a milieu that God controls in His sovereign providence; it is misinterpretation to imagine otherwise.

So history must be treated as history, poetry as poetry, hyperbole and metaphor as hyperbole and metaphor, generalization and approximation as what they are, and so forth. Differences between literary conventions in Bible times and in ours must also be observed: since, for instance, non-chronological narration and imprecise citation were conventional and acceptable and violated no expectations in those days, we must not regard these things as faults when we find them in Bible writers. When total precision of a particular kind was not expected nor aimed at, it is no error not to have achieved it. Scripture is inerrant, not in the sense of being absolutely precise by modern standards, but in the sense of making good its claims and achieving that measure of focused truth at which its authors aimed.

The truthfulness of Scripture is not negated by the appearance in it of irregularities of grammar or spelling, phenomenal descriptions of nature, reports of false statements (e.g., the lies of Satan), or seeming discrepancies between one passage and another. It is not right to set the so-called "phenomena" of Scripture against the teaching of Scripture about itself. Apparent inconsistencies should not be ignored. Solution of them, where this can be convincingly achieved, will encourage our faith, and where for the present no convincing solution is at hand we shall significantly honor God by trusting His assurance that His Word is true, despite these appearances, and by maintaining our confidence that one day they will be seen to have been illusions.

Inasmuch as all Scripture is the product of a single divine mind, interpretation must stay within the bounds of the analogy of Scripture and eschew hypotheses that would correct one Biblical passage by another, whether in the name of progressive revelation or of the imperfect enlightenment of the inspired writer's mind.

Although Holy Scripture is nowhere culture-bound in the sense that its teaching lacks universal validity, it is sometimes culturally conditioned by the customs and conventional views of a particular period, so that the application of its principles today calls for a different sort of action.

Skepticism and Criticism

Since the Renaissance, and more particularly since the Enlightenment, world-views have been developed which involve skepticism about basic Christian tenets. Such are the agnosticism which denies that God is knowable, the rationalism which denies that He is incomprehensible, the idealism which denies that He is transcendent, and the existentialism which denies rationality in His relationships with us. When these un- and anti-biblical principles seep into men's theologies at [a] presuppositional level, as today they frequently do, faithful interpretation of Holy Scripture becomes impossible.

Transmission and Translation

Since God has nowhere promised an inerrant transmission of Scripture, it is necessary to affirm that only the autographic text of the original documents was inspired and to maintain the need of textual criticism as a means of detecting any slips that may have crept into the text in the course of its transmission. The verdict of this science, however, is that the Hebrew and Greek text appear to be amazingly well preserved, so that we are amply justified in affirming, with the Westminster Confession, a singular providence of God in this matter and in declaring that the authority of Scripture is in no way jeopardized by the fact that the copies we possess are not entirely error-free.

Similarly, no translation is or can be perfect, and all translations are an additional step away from the autographa. Yet the verdict of linguistic science is that English-speaking Christians, at least, are exceedingly well served in these days with a host of excellent translations and have no cause for hesitating to conclude that the true Word of God is within their reach. Indeed, in view of the frequent repetition in Scripture of the main matters with which it deals and also of the Holy Spirit's constant witness to and through the Word, no serious translation of Holy Scripture will so destroy its meaning as to render it unable to make its reader "wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15).

Inerrancy and Authority

In our affirmation of the authority of Scripture as involving its total truth, we are consciously standing with Christ and His apostles, indeed with the whole Bible and with the main stream of

Church history from the first days until very recently. We are concerned at the casual, inadvertent, and seemingly thoughtless way in which a belief of such far-reaching importance has been given up by so many in our day.

We are conscious too that great and grave confusion results from ceasing to maintain the total truth of the Bible whose authority one professes to acknowledge. The result of taking this step is that the Bible which God gave loses its authority, and what has authority instead is a Bible reduced in content according to the demands of one's critical reasonings and in principle reducible still further once one has started. This means that at bottom independent reason now has authority, as opposed to Scriptural teaching. If this is not seen and if for the time being basic evangelical doctrines are still held, persons denying the full truth of Scripture may claim an evangelical identity while methodologically they have moved away from the evangelical principle of knowledge to an unstable subjectivism, and will find it hard not to move further.

We affirm that what Scripture says, God says. May He be glorified. Amen and Amen.

Appendix B: Josephus

Josephus, in his writings uses the Scriptures to come up with a date of creation in an apologetic against Apion. He defends the accuracy of the Scriptures against other accounts from other nations.

“1.1) I suppose that, by my books of the Antiquities of the Jews, most excellent Epaphroditus, I have made it evident to those who peruse them, that our Jewish nation is of very great antiquity, and had a distinct subsistence of its own originally; as also I have therein declared how we came to inhabit this country wherein we now live. Those Antiquities contain the history of five thousand years, and are taken out of our sacred books; but are translated by me into the Greek tongue.” (Apion 1:1 JOSEPH)

“(1.8) For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another [as the Greeks have], but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine; (1.8) and of them five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death. This interval of time was little short of three thousand years; (1.8) but as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life. (1.8) It is true, our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time; (1.8) and how firmly we have given credit to those books of our own nation, is evident by what we do; for during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them, to take anything

from them, or to make any change in them; but it becomes natural to all Jews, immediately and from their very birth, to esteem those books to contain divine doctrines, and to persist in them, and, if occasion be, willingly to die for them.” (Apion 1:38-42 JOSEPH)

“(1.3) How can it then be other than an absurd thing for the Greeks to be so proud, and to vaunt themselves to be the only people that are acquainted with antiquity, and that have delivered the true accounts of those early times after an accurate manner! Nay, who is there that cannot easily gather from the Greek writers themselves, that they knew but little on any good foundation when they set to write, but rather wrote their histories from their own conjectures. Accordingly, they confute one another in their own books to purpose, and are not ashamed to give us the most contradictory accounts of the same things; (1.3) and I should spend my time to little purpose, if I should pretend to teach the Greeks that which they know better than I already, what a great disagreement there is between Hellanicus and Acusilaus about their genealogies; in how many cases Acusilaus correct Hesiod; or after what manner Ephorus demonstrate Hellanicus to have told lies in the greatest part of his history: as does Timeus in like manner as to Ephorus, and the succeeding writers do to Timeus, and all the later writers do to Herodotus; (1.3) nor could Timeus agree with Antiochus and Philistius, or with Callias, about the Sicilian History no more than do the several writers of the Atthidae follow one another about the Athenian affairs; nor do the historians the like, that wrote the Argolic, about the affairs of the Argives. (1.3) And now what need I say any more about particular cities and smaller places, while in the most approved writers of the expedition of the Persians, and of the actions which were therein performed, there are so great differences! Nay, Thucydides himself is accused by some as writing what is false, although he seems to have given us the exactest history of the affairs of his own time.

(1.4) As for the occasions of this so great disagreement of theirs, there may be assigned many that are very probable, if any have a mind to make an inquiry about them; but I ascribe these contradictions chiefly to two causes, which I will now mention, and still think what I shall mention in the first place, to be the principal of all; (1.4) for if we remember, that in the beginning the Greeks had taken no care to have public records of their several transactions preserved, this must for certain have afforded those that would afterward write about those ancient transactions, the opportunity of making mistakes, and power of making lies also; (1.4) for this original recording of such ancient transactions hath not only been neglected by the other states of Greece, but even among the Athenians themselves also, who pretend to be Aborigines, and to have applied themselves to learning, there are no such records extant; nay, they say themselves, that the laws of Draco concerning murders, which are now extant in writing, are the most ancient of their public records; which Draco yet lived but a little time before the tyrant Pisistratus. (1.4) For as to the Arcadians, who make such boasts of their antiquity, what need I speak of them in particular, since it was still later before they got their letters, and learned them, and that with difficulty also.

(1.5) There must therefore naturally arise great difference among writers, when they had no original records to lay for their foundation, which might at once inform those who had an inclination to learn, and contradict those that would tell lies. (1.5) However, we are to suppose a second occasion besides the former of these contradictions; it is this; that those who were the most zealous to write history, were not solicitous for the discovery of truth, although it was very easy for them always to make such a profession; but their business was to demonstrate that they could write well, and make an impression upon mankind thereby; (1.5) and in what manner of writing they thought they were able to exceed others, to that did they apply themselves. Some of them betook themselves to the writing of fabulous narrations; some of them endeavored to please the cities or the kings, by writing in their commendation; others of them fell to finding fault with transactions, or with the writers of such transactions, and thought to make a great figure by so doing; (1.5) and indeed these do what is of all things the most contrary to true history; for it is the great character of true history that all concerned therein both speak and write the same things; while these men, by writing differently about the same things, think they shall be believed to write with the greatest regard to truth. (1.5) We therefore [who are Jews] must yield to the Grecian writers as to language and eloquence of composition; but then we shall give them no such preference as to the verity of ancient history; and least of all as to that part which concerns the affairs of our own several countries." (Apion 1:15-27 JOSEPH)

"(1.6) but now, as to our forefathers, that they took no less care about writing such records (for I will not say they took greater care than the others I spoke of), and that they committed that matter to their high priests and to the prophets, and that these records have been written all along down to our own times with the utmost accuracy; nay, if it be not too bold for me to say it, our history will be so written hereafter;—I shall endeavor briefly to inform you.

(1.7) For our forefathers did not only appoint the best of these priests, and those that attended upon the divine worship, for that design from the beginning, but made provision that the stock of the priests should continue unmixed and pure; (1.7) for he who is partaker of the priesthood must propagate of a wife of the same nation, without having any regard to money, or any other dignities; but he is to make a scrutiny, and take his wife's genealogy from the ancient tables, and procure many witnesses to it; (1.7) and this is our practice not only in Judea, but wheresoever any body of men of our nation do live; and even there, an exact catalogue of our priests' marriages is kept; (1.7) I mean at Egypt and at Babylon, or in any other place of the rest of the habitable earth, whithersoever our priests are scattered; for they sent to Jerusalem the ancient names of their parents in writing, as well as those of their remoter ancestors, and signify who are the witnesses also;" (Apion 1:29-33 JOSEPH)