

We know what we know about God because He chose to reveal Himself to those He created. He revealed Himself in the pages of Holy Scripture. As we approach the Word of God with humility, we are able to know the God of the Universe and what He expects from those He created. May we always approach the Book with a mind to understand and a heart to worship. God's Word is reliable and true because God is completely reliable and true.

Leroy Community Chapel Statement of Faith – Article I

“We believe that the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is verbally inspired and the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.”

Historic Church Documents

- Belgic Confession (1618)

“We confess that this Word of God was not sent nor delivered by the will of men, but that holy men of God spoke, being moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). Afterwards our God-- because of the special care he has for us and our salvation-- commanded his servants, the prophets and apostles, to commit this revealed Word to writing. He himself wrote with his own finger the two tables of the law.

Therefore we call such writings holy and divine Scriptures.” [Article 3]

“We receive all these books and these only as holy and canonical, for the regulating, founding, and establishing of our faith. And we believe without a doubt all things contained in them-- not so much because the church receives and approves them as such but above all because the Holy Spirit testifies in our hearts that they are from God, and also because they prove themselves to be from God. For even the blind themselves are able to see that the things predicted in them do happen.” [Article 5]

- Westminster Confession (1646)

“Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men unexcusable, yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of His will, which is necessary unto salvation. Therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal Himself, and to declare that His will unto His Church; and afterwards for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the Church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing; which makes the Holy Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God's revealing His will unto His people being now ceased.” [Article 1]

“The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, and obeyed, depends not upon the testimony of any man, or Church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof: and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God.” [Article 4]

- The Baptist Confession of 1689

“The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelation of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word, and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.” [Paragraph 6]

“The supreme judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Scripture delivered by the Spirit, into which Scripture so delivered, our faith is finally resolved.” [Paragraph 10]

- Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978)

“*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 6]

“*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. *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. *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.” [Articles 7-9]

“*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 10]

“*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 13]

“*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 15]

“*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.” [Article 19]

Key Terms & Definitions

Inspiration When we say that the Bible is inspired by God we are describing the activity of God in revealing Himself to mankind in the words of Scripture as the Spirit of God moved human authors in the writing of that revelation. The Bible literally says that all Scripture is “breathed out” by God. It is not that the Bible is just an “inspiring” book or that some men got “inspired” to write up pithy teachings, but Creator God revealed Himself to mankind and that is the Bible, His Word, His story, as the His Spirit moved men along in the writing of the Scriptures.

Verbal Inspiration This is a term used to describe that the Biblical writers were not just inspired by God in the broad ideas of what they wrote, but the very words they penned. All the words and every word is a work of inspiration through the Spirit of God. Some parts are more important and some rather obscure; some hard to understand and some crystal clear, but every bit of it is inspired by God for us to understand Him.

Inerrancy This is the term used to describe the Bible as without error; that the Word does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact. The Bible always tells the truth about everything it talks about. The Bible doesn’t tell us everything about every subject, but

what it says about any subject is truthful. Some resist this term, citing inconsistencies or misquoted statements, but we hold up the Book as inerrant according to the standard of ordinary language and common speech. (*Read Chicago Statement Article 13 above*)

Infallibility In a similar category of the term inerrant is this term indicating that the Bible is true and reliable in those matters it addresses. Not only is the Bible without error in what it teaches (inerrant), but also it is completely truthful and reliable in what it teaches (infallible).

Authority The authority of Scripture means that we believe all the words of Scripture are God's words, and to reject them or disobey them is to directly reject and disobey God. This is to say that God's Word comes with the authority of God Himself.

Sufficiency The sufficiency of Scripture means that the Bible contains everything we need to know for salvation and living a life of worshipful obedience. While every issue known to man is not addressed, what is addressed is thoroughly adequate to deal with the human condition. We need not go anywhere else for practical truth for life.

Autographs This term is used to describe the original inspired pages of Scripture penned by the human writers as God breathed out His revelation. No original autographs remain today.

Manuscripts This term describes those pages of Scripture copied by scribes and transmitted down through the ages from which all of our modern translations base their work on. There are various "families" of manuscripts as particular "schools" in the ancient world carefully copied down the words of Scripture. Errors were introduced into every manuscript; in part to human mistakes (spelling, grammar, carelessness) and in part to theological persuasions where they sought to make something clear that they felt was hard to understand. This is the problem for which the science of textual criticism was developed - comparing manuscripts to determine what was in the original autographs.

Canon The word literally means "standard, or measuring rod" and is applied to the books of the Bible as the standard of God's revelation. This term is used to describe an authoritative body of writing, thus those books that are inspired by God in distinguishing them from those that aren't (Apocryphal). Men didn't determine what was inspired or not, but they did scrutinize and validate which were inspired and therefore which should be included in the Canon of Scripture. The list of canonical books first began to be assembled in AD 175 and complete by 397 and the Council of Carthage.

Translations Every Bible we have today is a translation. Scholars have gone back to families of manuscripts and through a process of careful study (textual criticism) determined what the original autographs said. They then take the words in the original languages (Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic) and put them into English (or other languages) equivalents. There are various philosophies of translation that have impact on the truthfulness of the actual texts of Scripture. The best method of translation is a "literal equivalence" which translates word for word, seeking to preserve even difficult readings, but not introducing interpretations foreign to the actual text of Scripture. The best modern translations that use this philosophy of translation are the New American

Standard Bible (NASB) and the English Standard Bible (ESV).

Foundational Biblical Data

2 Timothy 3:16-17 “All Scripture is breathed out by God”

It is here in this passage that we get the term “inspiration” or as the ESV literally translates it “breathed out” describing the action of God through His Spirit in the self-revelation of Scripture. Here the activity of God in inspiration make no mention of the human writers, though they were involved, but of the Bible as completely (“All Scripture”) a work of God.

The reason for God’s breathing out Scripture is then given next in a series of uses: profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness. The intended result is that man would be equipped to live life to the glory of God. Here we see the origination of Scripture, the uses of Scripture, and the goal of Scripture.

2 Peter 1:21 “Men spoke from God as they were carried along”

Here the apostle Peter affirms the authority of the “prophetic word” of the Old Testament that was given by God and is “sure.” This word is to be heeded as the revealer of the heart because it originates not in men’s interpretations, but God.

This verse is the clearest place in Scripture where the process of inspiration is described (not that it’s easy to understand). First of all, Scripture was not produced by the will of man. How then was it produced? Normal, rational, non-trance-induced men, wrote with their faculties in tact within their own personality as the Holy Spirit carried them along. The word “carried along” is a term describing ships being moved by the wind at sea. God did not override these men’s minds, but exactly what they wrote down was exactly what the Spirit of God moved them (“breathed out”) to write. Therefore it is proper to describe God as the author of all Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16) and human men as the writers of particular books of the Bible (2 Peter 1:21).

Luke 24:25-27 “He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself”

There are a number of passages where Jesus quotes the Old Testament in his ministry referring to it as the Word of God (e.g.: Mark 7:13) and uses the words of Moses and the Prophets as authoritative. This passage is my favorite as it describes for us the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus with some of his followers who didn’t know it was him. Jesus comes up and begins to walk with them to Emmaus and teaches them from the Old Testament about himself as the fulfillment of the Messiah, showing both the truthfulness of the Old Testament and the fulfillment of prophecy.

Jesus validated the inspired, authoritative place of the Old Testament during his earthly ministry, as did the writers of the New Testament in their high view of the Hebrew Scriptures.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 “You accepted it not as the word of men, but as what it really is, the word of God”

The apostle Paul was a man well-trained in the Old Testament Scriptures. When God delivered him from his rebellion on the Damascus road, everything changed. For three years (Galatians 1:18) Paul hid himself away re-examining all he had been taught now through the lens of Jesus Christ as the Jewish Messiah ... and it all fit. As he began his apostolic ministry he would teach in the synagogues, gathering halls, and open places from the Old Testament and teach how God would deliver those who turned to him. His teaching, in many cases came in the form of letters (epistles) to various churches. The Thessalonians were one of those groups and in this passage Paul commends them for understanding his teaching not as merely his words, but God’s word. Not only did the Thessalonians embrace the Old Testament and teachings of Paul as Scripture, but also Paul affirms that his own teachings were in fact from God.

Interestingly enough, the apostle Peter also validates the authority and inspiration of Paul’s letters as Scripture, even if they are hard to understand (2 Peter 3:15-16). Paul, who wrote at least thirteen of the New Testament epistles, penned the Word of God and it was attested to by, his recipients, Peter, and himself.

Hebrews 1:1-3; Revelation 22:18-19 “He has spoken to us by His Son”

These two passages are often cited as Scriptural evidence for a completed Bible. In Hebrews 1, as we argue from the perspective of redemptive history, the full and final message from heaven is the revealing of Jesus Christ. Since the Gospels record the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, and the epistles (Pauline and non-Pauline) record the application of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the Church, these then represent the complete authoritative record of God’s revelation. The Revelation passage, which invokes a curse to those who would add or subtract from this book, closed the pages of the canon, calling attention to the complete message needed for mankind until we await the end of things. John received his word directly from God (Revelation 1:9-11) and his final warning, while it directly applies to his book, is divinely placed at the end of the Bible and does in fact serve as a bookend closing God’s self-revelation.

We can be confident that we have the full and final revelation of God as contained in the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testament. Sure, there are other “helpful” books in our journey toward godliness, but none other that are the inspired, infallible Word of God.

Frequently Asked Questions

1- Didn’t men just write the Bible?

No. The Bible is a God-breathed book, finding its source and authority in God Himself, not the will of men. How do you know that, you ask? Well, because the Bible tells me so. Isn’t that circular reasoning, basing your answer on the very thing you are trying to prove? Yes, and I would add that every attempt to “prove” the Bible with something

other than the Bible is putting the authority of man above the authority of God. Certainly there are credible “external arguments” for the reliability of the Bible (history, archeology, science), and “internal arguments” (prophecy fulfilled, acceptance by the Church, and the Spirit’s attestation), but ultimately we must accept the Bible as trustworthy because of what it says about itself. This is not a cheap excuse or inability to reason, but an attempt to remain consistent about how we approach the Bible. If I convince you to trust the Bible based on intellectual arguments, then intellectual arguments are what you will trust in, and perhaps “other” intellectual arguments will sway you in an opposite direction. Every intellectual argument begins with a presupposition, and I believe unless we start with the presupposition of the authority and inspiration of Scripture we will falter in the end. With that said, we should study the “proofs and evidences” so that we can in fact interact with unbelieving people in a credible and truthful way, but always remembering that we will never “argue” anyone into the Kingdom of God. Consider the words of Wayne Grudem, brilliant academic scholar, *“It requires the work of the Holy Spirit, overcoming the effects of sin, to enable us to be persuaded that the Bible is indeed the Word of God, and that the claims it makes for itself are true.”* God inspired every word of Scripture and used normal men (fishermen, doctors, shepherds) moved by the Spirit to write the books we have today in the full and complete Word of God, the Bible.

2- Didn’t a group of men decide which books would make up the Bible?

Various men throughout the early church began to make lists of those books that were already recognized as Scripture, but they didn’t determine what was Scripture. A good example is being able to recognize a counterfeit dollar from a real dollar. You don’t make the real dollar “real” you just recognize it as real. In the same way, the Holy Spirit preserved the inspired Word through the work of men who carefully recognized and gathered those books that fit the qualifications of canonical standards. What were those standards they used to recognize inspired, God-breathed books? (1) That the book was written with apostolic authority, that is to say that either an apostle wrote the book or it was closely connected to the ministry of an apostle, (2) that the book was written during the apostolic age, (3) that the book contained the faith of the apostles, or was consistent with the orthodox teaching of the apostolic churches, (4) that the book was widely accepted by the Church, not just accepted in a local region but by the broader Church, and (5) that the book had the Spirit-empowered sense of God-breathed Scripture. By the Council of Carthage in 397 a complete list of canonical books was widely accepted. Listen again to Grudem, *“The preservation and correct assembling of the canon of Scripture should ultimately be seen by believers, then, not as part of church history subsequent to God’s great central acts of redemption for his people, but as an integral part of the history of redemption itself. Just as God was at work in creation, in the calling of his people Israel, in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, and in the early work and writings of the apostles, so God was at work in the preservation and assembling together of the books of Scripture for the benefit of his people for the entire church age. Ultimately, then, we base our confidence in the correctness of our present canon on the faithfulness of God.”* Some books had their controversy, but we can be confident that the Spirit breathed Word was also divinely preserved in its entirety for every future generation.

3- Aren't there other Gospels out there?

Yes, there are ... but none of them come close to fitting the qualifications or feel of Scripture. Listen to an excerpt from The Gospel of Thomas, "*Simon Peter said to them: 'Let Mary go away from us, for women are not worthy of life.' Jesus said: 'Lo, I shall lead her, so that I may make her a male, that she too may become a living spirit, resembling you males. For every woman who makes herself a male will enter the kingdom of heaven.'*" Pretty stupid, huh? Other books, which did have a more meaningful contribution to make (e.g.: The Shepherd of Hermes) either contradicted the apostolic faith, or clearly held themselves at a level below Scripture. People are quick to make attacks on the four Gospels of the New Testament, or suggest others (thank you Dan Brown and Davinci Code), but any other gospel or devotional writing if given even a superficial reading lack the clear sense of God-breathed Scripture. Read 'em? If you want. Put them on par with the sixty-six books of the Bible? No way!

4- Do we really have an inspired Bible?

No. Surprised? Every Bible we have is a translation, and no translation is inspired (sorry, King James only folks). The original autographs are the only inspired writings ... and none exist today. So, we are left with manuscripts and the tedious role of textual criticism to determine what the original inspired writings were. But, guess what? We can determine with 99+% accuracy what the original writers wrote. So do we have an inspired Bible? Yes, we do ... God has preserved for generations the true sense of Scripture, and with the patient labor of hundreds of scholars over hundreds of years, we can be confident of the English Bible we hold and read. Let me give you an example here – Mark 16:9-20. Look it up. Your Bible probably has a marginal note saying that these verses are not contained in the earliest manuscripts. Is this a problem for our faith? No. All that's contained in those verses either are talked about in other places or don't touch on major tenets of the doctrine of salvation (it just created some "snake-handler" churches). There is no reason to doubt the Bible we have today, but in certain places careful study and interpretation is required.

5- Does it matter what translation I use?

Based on the answer to the previous question I would say – Yes. If inspiration only applies to the original autographs, then it follows that those translations that remain as close to the actual words of the original autographs are "more" inspired. Many modern translations use a philosophy of translation called "dynamic equivalence" which seeks to make an ancient text more "readable" to a "less literate" generation and to do so they translate "thoughts" rather than the actual "words." While this appears to be helpful (and it is in places) it introduces words foreign to the actual text of Scripture. The translators using this method become not only translators, but also interpreters, thus making "decisions" about the text, rather than just translators of the text. For this reason, I believe it is best to select a translation that holds as its philosophy to make a word-for-word translation, even if that means a passage of Scripture is hard to understand. Seeking to understand the text is the role of the student of Scripture, not the translator of it. My

suggestion is either the New American Standard (NASB) or the English Standard Version (ESV), and right now I'm a big fan of the ESV and it is what I will be regularly teaching out of.

What Do I Do With This?

In My Head

Give yourself to the study of the Word of God. Read it consistently, deeply, and comprehensively so that your grasp of the Bible increases with each passing year. Put yourself under the Word, submitting to it, not in the place of the skeptic looking for inconsistencies and errors. When you bump into hard passages, and you will, don't ignore them, but take the posture that there must be something you still do not understand, and perhaps won't come to understand until your broken, mortal body is perfected in glory. There is a big difference between a non-thinking Christian who says, "I just believe it because God said so" and a thoughtful student of the Word who says, "God's ways are not my ways, and I move forward in faith, help me God in my unbelief."

In My Heart

Don't worship the Bible, but worship the God of the Bible. Read and study to get to know your Creator and Savior better and better. Let the great mysteries of God lead you to a humble adoration of the God who has revealed Himself to His creatures. Trust the Bible to be your guide and don't run after the latest Christian fad. Saturate your heart in the precious truths of a loving Father and preach the truth of the Word to yourself when you are faced with troubles of any kind. Desire the Book more than gold (Psalm 19:10) and may it be said of you like it was of John Bunyan, that when they pricked him, he bled Bible!

For Further Study

Bible Doctrine. Wayne Grudem. Zondervan. 1999.

Know the Truth. Bruce Milne. IVP. 1999.

The Canon of Scripture. F.F. Bruce. IVP. 1988.

The Word of God in English. Leland Ryken. Crossway. 2002.

For Family Discipleship

Questions for Discussion

- (1) Why can we trust the Bible?
- (2) How can we get to know the Bible better?
- (3) What will you do to love the Bible more?

Memory Verse

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be

competent, equipped for every good work.” – 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Song

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

When I feel afraid, and think I've lost my way

Still, you're there right beside me.

Nothing will I fear, as long as you are near;

Please be near me to the end.

[Chorus]

I will not forget, your love for me and yet,

My heart forever is wandering.

Jesus by my guide, and hold me to your side,

And I will love you to the end.

[Chorus]

* Amy Grant. 1986. Watch & Listen at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9fwqZtWdHs&feature=player_embedded#t=25

A Catechism for Young Children

Q. Where do you learn how to love and obey God?

A. In the Bible alone.

Q. Who wrote the Bible?

A. Holy men who were taught by the Holy Spirit.