

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON BIBLICAL INERRANCY

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 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 1

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 2

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 3

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 4

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 5

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 6

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 7

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 8

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 9

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 10

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 11

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 12

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 13

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 14

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 15

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 16

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 17

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 18

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 19

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 CHICAGO STATEMENT ON BIBLICAL INERRANCY

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" (1 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 appear-

ances, 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 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.

THE CHICAGO STATEMENT ON BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

Summit I of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy took place in Chicago on October 26-28, 1978 for the purpose of affirming afresh the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture, making clear the understanding of it and warning against its denial. In the seven years since Summit I, God has blessed that effort in ways surpassing most anticipations. A gratifying show of helpful literature on the doctrine of inerrancy as well as a growing commitment to its value give cause to pour forth praise to our great God.

The work of Summit I had hardly been completed when it became evident that there was yet another major task to be tackled. While we recognize that belief in the inerrancy of Scripture is basic to maintaining its authority, the values of that commitment are only as real as one's understanding of the meaning of Scripture. Thus, the need for Summit II. For two years plans were laid and papers were written on themes relating to hermeneutical principles and practices. The culmination of this effort has been a meeting in Chicago on November 10-13, 1982 at which we, the undersigned, have participated.

In similar fashion to the Chicago Statement of 1978, we herewith present these affirmations and denials as an expression of the results of our labors to clarify hermeneutical issues and principles. We do not claim completeness or systematic treatment of the entire subject, but these affirmations and denials represent a consensus of the approximately one hundred participants and observers gathered at this conference. It has been a broadening experience to engage in dialogue, and it is our prayer that God will use the product of our diligent efforts to enable us and others to more correctly handle the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15).

ARTICLES OF AFFIRMATION AND DENIAL

Article 1

We affirm that the normative authority of Holy Scripture is the authority of God Himself, and is attested by Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church.

We deny the legitimacy of separating the authority of Christ from the authority of Scripture, or of opposing the one to the other.

Article 2

We affirm that as Christ is God and Man in one Person, so Scripture is, indivisibly, God's Word in human language.

We deny that the humble, human form of Scripture entails errancy any more than the humanity of Christ, even in His humiliation, entails sin.

Article 3

We affirm that the Person and work of Jesus Christ are the central focus of the entire Bible.

We deny that any method of interpretation which rejects or obscures the Christ-centeredness of Scripture is correct.

Article 4

We affirm that the Holy Spirit who inspired Scripture acts through it today to work faith in its message.

We deny that the Holy Spirit ever teaches to anyone anything which is contrary to the teaching of Scripture.

Article 5

We affirm that the Holy Spirit enables believers to appropriate and apply Scripture to their lives.

We deny that the natural man is able to discern spiritually the biblical message apart from the Holy Spirit.

Article 6

We affirm that the Bible expresses God's truth in propositional statements, and we declare that biblical truth is both objective and absolute. We further affirm that a statement is true if it represents matters as they actually are, but is an error if it misrepresents the facts.

We deny that, while Scripture is able to make us wise unto salvation, biblical truth should be defined in terms of this function. We further deny that error should be defined as that which willfully deceives.

Article 7

We affirm that the meaning expressed in each biblical text is single, definite and fixed.

We deny that the recognition of this single meaning eliminates the variety of its application.

Article 8

We affirm that the Bible contains teachings and mandates which apply to all cultural and situational contexts and other mandates which the Bible itself shows apply only to particular situations.

We deny that the distinction between the universal and particular mandates of Scripture can be determined by cultural and situational factors. We further deny that universal mandates may ever be treated as culturally or situationally relative.

Article 9

We affirm that the term hermeneutics, which historically signified the rules of exegesis, may properly be extended to cover all that is involved in the process of perceiving what the biblical revelation means and how it bears on our lives.

We deny that the message of Scripture derives from, or is dictated by, the interpreter's understanding. Thus we deny that the "horizons" of the biblical writer and the interpreter may rightly "fuse" in such a way that what the text communicates to the interpreter is not ultimately controlled by the expressed meaning of the Scripture.

Article 10

We affirm that Scripture communicates God's truth to us verbally through a wide variety of literary forms.

We deny that any of the limits of human language render Scripture inadequate to convey God's message.

Article 11

We affirm that translations of the text of Scripture can communicate knowledge of God across all temporal and cultural boundaries.

We deny that the meaning of biblical texts is so tied to the culture out of which they came that understanding of the same meaning in other cultures is impossible.

Article 12

We affirm that in the task of translating the Bible and teaching it in the context of each culture, only those functional equivalents which are faithful to the content of biblical teaching should be employed.

We deny the legitimacy of methods which either are insensitive to the demands of cross-cultural communication or distort biblical meaning in the process.

Article 13

We affirm that awareness of the literary categories, formal and stylistic, of the various parts of Scripture is essential for proper exegesis, and hence we value genre criticism as one of the many disciplines of biblical study.

We deny that generic categories which negate historicity may rightly be imposed on biblical narratives which present themselves as factual.

Article 14

We affirm that the biblical record of events, discourses and sayings, though presented in a variety of appropriate literary forms, corresponds to historical fact.

We deny that any event, discourse or saying reported in Scripture was invented by the biblical writers or by the traditions they incorporated.

Article 15

We affirm the necessity of interpreting the Bible according to its literal, or normal, sense. The literal sense is the grammatical-historical sense, that is, the meaning which the writer expressed. Interpretation according to the literal sense will take account of all figures of speech and literary forms found in the text.

We deny the legitimacy of any approach to Scripture that attributes to it meaning which the literal sense does not support.

Article 16

We affirm that legitimate critical techniques should be used in determining the canonical text and its meaning.

We deny the legitimacy of allowing any method of biblical criticism to question the truth or integrity of the writer's expressed meaning, or of any other scriptural teaching.

Article 17

We affirm the unity, harmony and consistency of Scripture and declare that it is its own best interpreter.

We deny that Scripture may be interpreted in such a way as to suggest that one passage corrects or militates against another. We deny that later writers of Scripture misinterpreted earlier passages of Scripture when quoting from or referring to them.

Article 18

We affirm that the Bible's own interpretation of itself is always correct, never deviating from, but rather elucidating, the single meaning of the inspired text. The single meaning of a prophet's words includes, but is not restricted to, the understanding of those words by the prophet and necessarily involves the intention of God evidenced in the fulfillment of those words.

We deny that the writers of Scripture always understood the full implications of their own words.

Article 19

We affirm that any preunderstandings which the interpreter brings to Scripture should be in harmony with scriptural teaching and subject to correction by it.

We deny that Scripture should be required to fit alien preunderstandings, inconsistent with itself; such as naturalism, evolutionism, scientism, secular humanism, and relativism.

Article 20

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

We deny that extrabiblical views ever disprove the teaching of Scripture or hold priority over it.

Article 21

We affirm the harmony of special with general revelation and therefore of biblical teaching with the facts of nature.

We deny that any genuine scientific facts are inconsistent with the true meaning of any passage of Scripture.

Article 22

We affirm that Genesis 1-11 is factual, as is the rest of the book.

We deny that the teachings of Genesis 1-11 are mythical and that scientific hypotheses about earth history or the origin of humanity may be invoked to overthrow what Scripture teaches about creation.

Article 23

We affirm the clarity of Scripture and specifically of its message about salvation from sin.

We deny that all passages of Scripture are equally clear or have equal bearing on the message of redemption.

Article 24

We affirm that a person is not dependent for understanding of Scripture on the expertise of biblical scholars.

We deny that a person should ignore the fruits of the technical study of Scripture by biblical scholars.

Article 25

We affirm that the only type of preaching which sufficiently conveys the divine revelation and its proper application to life is that which faithfully expounds the text of Scripture as the Word of God.

We deny that the preacher has any message from God apart from the text of Scripture.

THE CHICAGO STATEMENT ON BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

Exposition

The following paragraphs outline the general theological understanding which the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics reflects. They were first drafted as a stimulus toward that statement. They have now been revised in the light of it and of many specific suggestions received during the scholars' conference at which it was drawn up. Though the revision could not be completed in time to present to the conference, there is every reason to regard its substance as expressing with broad accuracy the common mind of the signatories of the statement.

Standpoint of the Exposition

The living God, Creator and Redeemer, is a communicator, and the inspired and inerrant Scriptures which set before us his saving revelation in history are his means of communicating with us today. He who once spoke to the world through Jesus Christ his Son speaks to us still in and through his written Word. Publicly and privately, therefore, through preaching, personal study and meditation, with prayer and in the fellowship of the body of Christ, Christian people must continually labor to interpret the Scriptures so that their normative divine message to us may be properly understood. To have formulated the biblical concept of Scripture as authoritative revelation in writing, the God-given rule of faith and life, will be of no profit where the message of Scripture is not rightly grasped and applied. So it is of vital importance to detect and dismiss defective ways of interpreting what is written and to replace them with faithful interpretation of God's infallible Word.

That is the purpose this exposition seeks to serve. What it offers is basic perspectives on the hermeneutical task in the light of three convic-

tions. First, Scripture, being God's own instruction to us, is abidingly true and utterly trustworthy. Second, hermeneutics is crucial to the battle for biblical authority in the contemporary church. Third, as knowledge of the inerrancy of Scripture must control interpretation, forbidding us to discount anything that Scripture proves to affirm, so interpretation must clarify the scope and significance of that inerrancy by determining what affirmations Scripture actually makes.

The Communion between God and Mankind

God has made mankind in his own image, personal and rational, for eternal loving fellowship with himself in a communion that rests on two-way communication: God addressing to us words of revelation and we answering him in words of prayer and praise. God's gift of language was given us partly to make possible these interchanges and partly also that we might share our understanding of God with others.

In testifying to the historical process from Adam to Christ whereby God re-established fellowship with our fallen race, Scripture depicts him as constantly using his own gift of language to send men messages about what he would do and what they should do. The God of the Bible uses many forms of speech: he narrates, informs, instructs, warns, reasons, promises, commands, explains, exclaims, entreats and encourages. The God who saves is also the God who speaks in all these ways.

Biblical writers, historians, prophets, poets and teachers alike, cite Scripture as God's word of address to all its readers and hearers. To regard Scripture as the Creator's present personal invitation to fellowship, setting standards for faith and godliness not only for its own time but for all time, is integral to biblical faith.

Though God is revealed in the natural order, in the course of history and in the deliverances of conscience, sin makes mankind impervious and unresponsive to this general revelation. And general revelation is in any case only a disclosure of the Creator as the world's good Lord and just Judge; it does not tell of salvation through Jesus Christ. To know about the Christ of Scripture is thus a necessity for that knowledge of God and communion with him to which he calls sinners today. As the biblical message is heard, read, preached and taught, the Holy Spirit works with and through it to open the eyes of the spiritually blind and to instill this knowledge.

God has caused Scripture so to be written, and the Spirit so ministers with it, that all who read it, humbly seeking God's help, will be able to

understand its saving message. The Spirit's ministry does not make needless the discipline of personal study but rather makes it effective.

To deny the rational, verbal, cognitive character of God's communication to us, to posit an antithesis as some do between revelation as personal and as propositional, and to doubt the adequacy of language as we have it to bring us God's authentic message are fundamental mistakes. The humble verbal form of biblical language no more invalidates it as revelation of God's mind than the humble servant-form of the Word made flesh invalidates the claim that Jesus truly reveals the Father.

To deny that God has made plain in Scripture as much as each human being needs to know for his or her spiritual welfare would be a further mistake. Any obscurities we find in Scripture are not intrinsic to it but reflect our own limitations of information and insight. Scripture is clear and sufficient both as a source of doctrine, binding the conscience, and as a guide to eternal life and godliness, shaping our worship and service of the God who creates, loves and saves.

The Authority of Scripture

Holy Scripture is the self-revelation of God in and through the words of men. It is both their witness to God and God's witness to himself. As the divine-human record and interpretation of God's redemptive work in history, it is cognitive revelation, truth addressed to our minds for understanding and response. God is its source, and Jesus Christ, the Savior, is its center of reference and main subject matter. Its absolute and abiding worth as an infallible directive for faith and living follows from its God-giveness (cf. 2 Tim. 3:15-17). Being as fully divine as it is human, it expresses God's wisdom in all its teaching and speaks reliably - that is, infallibly and inerrantly - in every informative assertion it makes. It is a set of occasional writings, each with its own specific character and content, which together constitute an organism of universally relevant truth, namely, bad news about universal human sin and need answered by good news about a particular first-century Jew who is shown to be the Son of God and the world's only Savior. The volume which these constituent books make is as broad as life and bears upon every human problem and aspect of behavior. In setting before us the history of redemption - the law and the gospel, God's commands, promises, threats, works and ways; and object-lessons concerning faith and obedience and their opposites, with their respective outcomes - Scripture shows us the entire panorama of human existence as God wills us to see it.

The authority of Holy Scripture is bound up with the authority of Jesus Christ, whose recorded words express the principle that the teaching of Israel's Scriptures (our Old Testament), together with his own teaching and the witness of the apostles (our New Testament), constitute his appointed rule of faith and conduct for his followers. He did not criticize his Bible, though he criticized misinterpretations of it; on the contrary, he affirmed its binding authority over him and all his disciples (cf. Matt. 5:17-19). To separate the authority of Christ from that of Scripture and to oppose the one to the other are thus mistakes. To oppose the authority of one apostle to that of another or the teaching of an apostle at one time to that of his teaching at another time are mistakes also.

The Holy Spirit and the Scriptures

The Holy Spirit of God, who moved the human authors to produce the biblical books, now accompanies them with his power. He led the church to discern their inspiration in the canonizing process; he continually confirms this discernment to individuals through the unique impact which he causes Scripture to make upon them. He helps them as they study, pray, meditate and seek to learn in the church, to understand and commit themselves to those things which the Bible teaches, and to know the living triune God whom the Bible presents.

The Spirit's illumination can only be expected where the biblical text is diligently studied. Illumination does not yield new truth, over and above what the Bible says; rather, it enables us to see what Scripture was showing us all along. Illumination binds our consciences to Scripture as God's Word and brings joy and worship as we find the Word yielding up to us its meaning. By contrast, intellectual and emotional impulses to disregard or quarrel with the teaching of Scripture come not from the Spirit of God but from some other source. Demonstrable misunderstandings and misinterpretations of Scripture may not be ascribed to the Spirit's leading.

The Idea of Hermeneutics

Biblical hermeneutics has traditionally been understood as the study of right principles for understanding the biblical text. "Understanding" may stop short at a theoretical and notional level, or it may advance via the assent and commitment of faith to become experiential through personal acquaintance with the God to whom the theories and notions refer. Theoretical understanding of Scripture requires of us no more than is called for to comprehend any ancient literature, that is, sufficient knowledge of the lan-

guage and background and sufficient empathy with the different cultural context. But there is no experiential understanding of Scripture - no personal knowledge of the God to whom it points - without the Spirit's illumination. Biblical hermeneutics studies the way in which both levels of understanding are attained.

The Scope of Biblical Interpretation

The interpreter's task in broadest definition is to understand both what Scripture meant historically and what it means for us today, that is, how it bears on our lives. This task involves three constant activities.

First comes *exegesis*, this extracting from the text of what God by the human writer was expressing to the latter's envisaged readers.

Second comes *integration*, the correlating of what each exegetical venture has yielded with whatever other biblical teaching bears on the matter in hand and with the rest of biblical teaching as such. Only within this frame of reference can the full meaning of the exegeted teaching be determined.

Third comes *application* of the exegeted teaching, viewed explicitly as God's teaching, for the correcting and directing of thought and action. Application is based on the knowledge that God's character and will, man's nature and need, the saving ministry of Jesus Christ, the experiential aspects of godliness including the common life of the church and the many-sided relationship between God and his world including his plan for its history are realities which do not change with the passing years. It is with these matters that both testaments constantly deal.

Interpretation and application of Scripture take place most naturally in preaching, and all preaching should be based on this threefold procedure. Otherwise, biblical teaching will be misunderstood and misapplied, and confusion and ignorance regarding God and his ways will result.

Formal Rules of Biblical Interpretation

The faithful use of reason in biblical interpretation is ministerial, not magisterial; the believing interpreter will use his mind not to impose or manufacture meaning but to grasp the meaning that is already there in the material itself. The work of scholars who, though not themselves Christians, have been able to understand biblical ideas accurately will be a valuable resource in the theoretical part of the interpreter's task.

- a. Interpretation should adhere to the *literal* sense, that is, the single literary meaning which each passage carries. The initial quest is

always for what God's penman meant by what he wrote. The discipline of interpretation excludes all attempts to go behind the text, just as it excludes all reading into passages of meanings which cannot be read out of them and all pursuit of ideas sparked off in us by the text which do not arise as part of the author's own expressed flow of thought. Symbols and figures of speech must be recognized for what they are, and arbitrary allegorizing (as distinct from the drawing out of typology which was demonstrably in the writer's mind) must be avoided.

- b. The literal sense of each passage should be sought by *the grammatical-historical method*, that is, by asking what is the linguistically natural way to understand the text in its historical setting. Textual, historical, literary and theological study, aided by linguistic skills - philological, semantic, logical - is the way forward here. Passages should be exegeted in the context of the book of which they are part, and the quest for the writer's own meaning, as distinct from that of his known or supposed sources, must be constantly pursued. The legitimate use of the various critical disciplines is not to call into question the integrity or truth of the writer's meaning but simply to help us determine it. .
- c. Interpretation should adhere to the principle of *harmony* in the biblical material. Scripture exhibits a wide diversity of concepts and viewpoints within a common faith and an advancing disclosure of divine truth within the biblical period. These differences should not be minimized, but the unity which underlies the diversity should not be lost sight of at any point. We should look to Scripture to interpret Scripture and deny as a matter of method that particular texts, all of which have the one Holy Spirit as their source, can be genuinely discrepant with each other. Even when we cannot at present demonstrate their harmony in a convincing way, we should proceed on the basis that they are in fact harmonious and that fuller knowledge will show this.
- d. Interpretation should be *canonical*, that is, the teaching of the Bible as a whole should always be viewed as providing the framework within which our understanding of each particular passage must finally be reached and into which it must finally be fitted.

Valuable as an aid in determining the literal meaning of biblical passages is the discipline of genre criticism, which seeks to identify in terms of style, form and content, the various literary categories to which

the biblical books and particular passages within them belong. The literary genre in which each writer creates his text belongs in part at least to his own culture and will be clarified through knowledge of that culture. Since mistakes about genre lead to large-scale misunderstandings of biblical material, it is important that this particular discipline not be neglected.

The Centrality of Jesus Christ in the Biblical Message

Jesus Christ and the saving grace of God in him are the central themes of the Bible. Both Old and New Testaments bear witness to Christ, and the New Testament interpretation of the Old Testament points to him consistently. Types and prophecies in the Old Testament anticipated his coming, his atoning death, his resurrection, his reign and his return. The office and ministry of priests, prophets and kings, the divinely instituted ritual and sacrificial offerings, and the patterns of redemptive action in Old Testament history, all had typical significance as foreshadowings of Jesus. Old Testament believers looked forward to his coming and lived and were saved by faith which had Christ and his kingdom in view, just as Christians today are saved by faith in Christ, the Savior, who died for our sins and who now lives and reigns and will one day return. That the church and kingdom of Jesus Christ are central to the plan of God which Scripture reveals is not open to question, though opinions divide as to the precise way in which church and kingdom relate to each other. Any way of interpreting Scripture which misses its consistent Christ-centeredness must be judged erroneous.

Biblical and Extra-biblical Knowledge

Since all facts cohere, the truth about them must be coherent also; and since God, the author of all Scripture, is also the Lord of all facts, there can in principle be no contradiction between a right understanding of what Scripture says and a right account of any reality or event in the created order. Any appearance of contradiction here would argue misunderstanding or inadequate knowledge, either of what Scripture really affirms or of what the extra-biblical facts really are. Thus it would be a summons to reassessment and further scholarly inquiry.

Biblical Statements and Natural Science

What the Bible says about the facts of nature is as true and trustworthy as anything else it says. However, it speaks of natural phenomena as they are spoken of in ordinary language, not in the explanatory technical terms of

modern science; it accounts for natural events in terms of the action of God, not in terms of causal links within the created order; and it often describes natural processes figuratively and poetically, not analytically and prosaically as modern science seeks to do. This being so, differences of opinion as to the correct scientific account to give of natural facts and events which Scripture celebrates can hardly be avoided.

It should be remembered, however, that Scripture was given to reveal God, not to address scientific issues in scientific terms, and that, as it does not use the language of modern science, so it does not require scientific knowledge about the internal processes of God's creation for the understanding of its essential message about God and ourselves. Scripture interprets scientific knowledge by relating it to the revealed purpose and work of God, thus establishing an ultimate context for the study and reform of scientific ideas. It is not for scientific theories to dictate what Scripture may and may not say, although extra-biblical information will sometimes helpfully expose a misinterpretation of Scripture.

In fact, interrogating biblical statements concerning nature in the light of scientific knowledge about their subject matter may help toward attaining a more precise exegesis of them. For though exegesis must be controlled by the text itself, not shaped by extraneous considerations, the exegetical process is constantly stimulated by questioning the text as to whether it means this or that.

Norm and Culture in the Biblical Revelation

As we find in Scripture unchanging truths about God and his will expressed in a variety of verbal forms, so we find them applied in a variety of cultural and situational contexts. Not all biblical teaching about conduct is normative for behavior today. Some applications of moral principles are restricted to a limited audience, the nature and extent of which Scripture itself specifies. One task of exegesis is to distinguish these absolute and normative truths from those aspects of their recorded application which are relative to changing situations. Only when this distinction is drawn can we hope to see how the same absolute truths apply to us in our own culture.

To fail to see how a particular application of an absolute principle has been culturally determined (for instance, as most would agree, Paul's command that Christians greet each other with a kiss) and to treat a revealed absolute as culturally relative (for instance, as again most would agree, God's prohibition in the Pentateuch of homosexual activity) would

both be mistakes. Though cultural developments, including conventional values and latter-day social change, may legitimately challenge traditional ways of applying biblical principles, they may not be used either to modify those principles in themselves or to evade their application altogether.

In cross-cultural communication a further step must be taken, the Christian teacher must re-apply revealed absolutes to persons living in a culture that is not the teacher's own. The demands of this task highlight the importance of his being clear on what is absolute in the biblical presentation of the will and work of God and what is a culturally-relative application of it. Engaging in the task may help him toward clarity at this point by making him more alert than before to the presence in Scripture of culturally-conditioned applications of truth, which have to be adjusted according to the cultural variable.

Encountering God Through His Word

The twentieth century has seen many attempts to assert the instrumentality of Scripture in bringing to us God's Word while yet denying that that Word has been set forth for all time in the words of the biblical text. These views regard the text as the fallible human witness by means of which God fashions and prompts those insights which he gives us through preaching and Bible study. But for the most part these views include a denial that the Word of God is cognitive communication, and thus they lapse inescapably into impressionistic mysticism. Also, their denial that Scripture is the objectively given Word of God makes the relation of that Word to the text indefinable and hence permanently problematical. This is true of all current forms of neoorthodox and existentialist theology, including the so-called "new hermeneutic," which is an extreme and incoherent version of the approach described.

The need to appreciate the cultural differences between our world and that of the biblical writers and to be ready to find that God through his Word is challenging the presuppositions and limitations of our present outlook, are two emphases currently associated with the "new hermeneutic." But both really belong to the understanding of the interpretative task which this exposition has set out.

The same is true of the emphasis laid in theology of the existentialist type on the reality of transforming encounter with God and his Son, Jesus Christ, through the Scriptures. Certainly, the crowning glory of the

Scriptures is that they do in fact mediate life-giving fellowship with God incarnate, the living Christ of whom they testify, the divine Savior whose words "are spirit and. . . are life" (John 6:63). But there is no Christ save the Christ of the Bible, and only to the extent that the Bible's presentation of Jesus and of God's plan centering upon him is trusted can genuine spiritual encounter with Jesus Christ ever be expected to take place. It is by means of disciplined interpretation of a trusted Bible that the Father and Son, through the Spirit, make themselves known to sinful men. To such transforming encounters the hermeneutical principles and procedures stated here both mark and guard the road.

J. I. Packer

THE CHICAGO STATEMENT ON BIBLICAL APPLICATION

This statement is the third and final in a trilogy of Summits sponsored by the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy.

Summit I (October 26-28, 1978) produced the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.

Summit II (November 10-13, 1982) resulted in the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics.

This last conference, Summit III (December 10-13, 1986), drafted the Chicago Statement on Biblical Application. With this statement the proposed scholarly work of ICBI has been completed, for the doctrine of inerrancy has thus been defined, interpreted, and applied by many of the leading evangelical scholars of our day.

NOTE

The participants at Summit III signed the following Statement of Affirmations and Denials with the following preface:

"As a participant in Summit III of ICBI, I subscribe to these articles as an expression of my agreement of their overall thrust."

ARTICLES OF AFFIRMATION AND DENIAL

Article 1: The Living God

- We affirm that the one true and living God is the creator and sustainer of all things.
- We affirm that this God can be known through His revelation of Himself in His inerrant written Word.
- We affirm that this one God exists eternally in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each of whom is fully God.
- We affirm that this living, acting, speaking God entered into history through the Son Jesus Christ to bring salvation to the human race.
- We affirm that the revealed character and will of God are the foundation of all morality.

- We deny that the human language of Scripture is inadequate to inform us who God is or what He is like.

- We deny that the doctrine of the Trinity is a contradiction or is based upon an unacceptable ontology.
- We deny that the notion of God should be accommodated to modern thought which has no place for the concepts of sin and salvation.

Article 2: The Savior and His Work

- We affirm that Jesus Christ is true God, begotten from the Father from all eternity, and also true man, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.
- We affirm that the indivisible union of full deity with full humanity in the one person of Jesus Christ is essential for His saving work.
- We affirm that Jesus Christ, through His vicarious suffering, death, and resurrection, is the only Savior and Redeemer of the world.
- We affirm that salvation is by faith alone in Jesus Christ alone.
- We affirm that Jesus Christ, as revealed in Scripture, is the supreme model of the godly life that is ours in and through Him.

- We deny that Scripture warrants any proclamation or offer of salvation except on the basis of the saving work of the crucified and risen Christ.
- We deny that those who die without Christ can be saved in the life to come.
- We deny that persons capable of rational choice can be saved without personal faith in the biblical Christ.
- We deny that presenting Jesus Christ as a moral example without reference to His deity and substitutionary atonement does justice to the teaching of Scripture.
- We deny that a proper understanding of the love and justice of God warrants the hope of universal salvation.

Article 3: The Holy Spirit and His Work

- We affirm that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Triune Godhead and that His work is essential for the salvation of sinners.
- We affirm that true and saving knowledge of God is given by the Spirit of God as He authenticates and illuminates the Word of canonical Scripture, of which He is the primary author.
- We affirm that the Holy Spirit guides the people of God, giving them wisdom to apply Scripture to modern issues and everyday life.

- We affirm that the church's vitality in worship and fellowship, its faithfulness in confession, its fruitfulness in witness, and its power in mission, depend directly on the power of the Holy Spirit.
- We deny that any view that disputes the essential tripersonality of the one God is compatible with the gospel.
- We deny that any person can say from the heart that Jesus is Lord apart from the Holy Spirit.
- We deny that the Holy Spirit, since the apostolic age, has ever given, or does now give, new normative revelation to the church.
- We deny that the name of renewal should be given to any movement in the church that does not involve a deepened sense of God's judgment and mercy in Christ.

Article 4: The Church and Its Mission

- We affirm that the inspiration of the Holy Spirit gives the Bible its canonical authority, and the role of the church was and is to recognize and affirm this authority.
- We affirm that Christ the Lord has established his church on earth and rules it by His Word and Spirit.
- We affirm that the church is apostolic as it receives and is established upon the doctrine of the apostles recorded in Scripture and continues to proclaim the apostolic gospel.
- We affirm that identifying marks of local churches are faithful confession and proclamation of the Word of God, and responsible administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper.
- We affirm that churches are subject to the Word of Christ in their order as in their doctrine.
- We affirm that in addition to their commitment to a local church, Christians may properly involve themselves in parachurch organizations for specialized ministry.
- We affirm that Christ calls the church to serve Him by its worship, nurture, and witness as His people in the world.
- We affirm that Christ sends the church into the whole world to summon sinful humanity to faith, repentance, and righteousness.
- We affirm that the unity and clarity of Scripture encourage us to seek to resolve doctrinal differences among Christians, and so to manifest the oneness of the church in Christ.

- We deny that the church can grant canonical authority to Scripture.
- We deny that the church is constituted by the will and traditions of men.
- We deny that the church can bind the conscience apart from the Word of God.
- We deny that the church can free itself from the authority of the written Word of God and still exercise valid discipline in Christ's name.
- We deny that the church can accommodate itself to the demands of a particular culture if those demands conflict with scriptural revelation, or if they restrain the liberty of Christian conscience.
- We deny that differing cultural situations invalidate the biblical principle of male-female equality or the biblical requirements for their roles in the church.

Article 5: Sanctity of Human Life

- We affirm that God the Creator is sovereign over all human life and mankind is responsible under God to preserve and protect it.
- We affirm that the sanctity of human life is based on the creation of mankind in the image and likeness of God.
- We affirm that the life of a human being begins at conception (fertilization) and continues until biological death; thus, abortion (except where the continuance of the pregnancy imminently threatens the mother's physical life), infanticide, suicide, and euthanasia are forms of murder.
- We affirm that the penal view of social justice is compatible with the sanctity of human life.
- We affirm that withholding food or water in order to cause or hasten death is a violation of the sanctity of life.
- We affirm that because advancing medical technology has obscured the distinction between life and death, it is essential to evaluate each terminal case with the greatest care so as to preserve the sanctity of human life.

- We deny that the quality of human life has priority over its sanctity.
- We deny that the sanctity of pre-natal life negates the propriety of necessary medical procedures to preserve the life of the pregnant mother.
- We deny that killing in self-defense, in state-administered capital punishment, or in wars justly fought, is necessarily a violation of the sanctity of human life.

- We deny that those who reject a divine basis for moral law are exempt from the ethical and social obligation to preserve and protect innocent human life.
- We deny that allowing death without medical intervention to prolong life is always a violation of the sanctity of human life.

Article 6: Marriage and the Family

- We affirm that the purpose of marriage is to glorify God and extend His Kingdom on earth in an institution that provides for chastity, companionship, procreation and Christian upbringing of children.
- We affirm that since marriage is a sacred covenant under God uniting a man and a woman as one flesh, church and state should require faithfulness to God's intention that it be a permanent bond.
- We affirm that in the marriage pattern ordained by God, the husband as head is the loving servant-leader of his wife, and the wife as helper in submissive companionship is a full partner with her husband.
- We affirm that loving nurture and discipline of children is a God-ordained duty of parents, and God-ordained obedience to parents is a duty of children.
- We affirm that the church has the responsibility to nurture the family.
- We affirm that honor to parents is a life-long duty of all persons and includes responsibility for the care of the aged.
- We affirm that the family should perform many services now commonly assumed by the state.

- We deny that pleasure and self-fulfillment are the basis of marriage and that hardships are justifiable cause for breaking the marriage covenant.
- We deny that the biblical ideal of marriage can be fulfilled either by a couple living together without a lawful marriage covenant or by any form of same-sex or group cohabitation.
- We deny that the state has the right to legitimize views of marriage and the family unit that contravene biblical standards.
- We deny that changing social conditions ever make God-ordained marriage or family roles obsolete or irrelevant.
- We deny that the state has the right to usurp biblically designated parental responsibility.

Article 7: Divorce and Remarriage

- We affirm that the marriage of Adam and Eve as a lifelong monogamous relationship is the pattern for all marriages within the human race.
- We affirm that God unites husband and wife in every covenanted and consummated marriage, and will hold covenant-breakers morally accountable.
- We affirm that since the essence of the marriage covenant is life-long commitment to the covenant partner, action in relation to a marital breakdown should at least initially aim at the reconciliation of the partners and restoration of the marriage.
- We affirm that God hates divorce, however motivated.
- We affirm that although God hates divorce, in a sinful world separation is sometimes advisable and divorce is sometimes inevitable.
- We affirm that God forgives repentant sinners, even those who have sinned by sundering their marriages.
- We affirm that the local church has the responsibility to discipline those who violate the biblical standards for marriage, compassionately restore those who repent, and faithfully minister God's grace to those whose lives have been scarred by marital disruption.

- We deny that any contradiction exists within Scripture on the subject of divorce and remarriage.
- We deny that it is sinful to separate or live apart from a promiscuous or abusive spouse.

Article 8: Sexual Deviations

- We affirm that Scripture reveals God's standards for sexual relationships, deviation from which is sinful.
- We affirm that sexual intercourse is legitimate only in a heterosexual marriage relationship.
- We affirm that God's grace in Christ can deliver men and women from bondage to deviant sexual practice, be they heterosexual or homosexual, and the church must assume responsibility for restoring such members to a life that honors God.
- We affirm that God loves homosexuals as well as other sinners, and that homosexual temptations can be resisted in the power of Christ to the glory of His grace, just as other temptations can.

- We affirm that Christians must exercise a compassion, kindness, and forgiveness in the ministry of God's grace to those whose lives have been scarred by sexual deviations.
- We affirm that human fulfillment does not depend on satisfying sexual drives; hedonism and related philosophies encouraging promiscuous sexuality are wrong and lead to ruin.
- We affirm that pornography threatens the well-being of individuals, families, and entire societies, and that it is incumbent upon Christians to seek to check its production and distribution.

- We deny that homosexual practice can ever please God.
- We deny that heredity, childhood conditioning, or other environmental influences can excuse deviant sexual behavior.
- We deny that the sexual molestation or exploitation of children in general and incestuous relationships in particular can ever be justified.
- We deny that it is hopeless to look for deliverance from homosexual practices or other forms of sexual deviancy.
- We deny that the healing of sexual deviancy is aided by condemnation without compassion or by compassion without the application of Scriptural truth, in confident hope.

Article 9: The State Under God

- We affirm that God established civil government as an instrument of His common grace, to restrain sin, to maintain order, and to promote civil justice and general well-being.
- We affirm that God gives civil governments the right to use coercive force for the defense and encouragement of those who do good and for the just punishment of those who do evil.
- We affirm that it is proper and desirable that Christians take part in civil government and advocate the enactment of laws for the common good in accordance with God's moral law.
- We affirm that it is the duty of Christian people to pray for civil authorities and to obey them, except when such obedience would involve the violation of God's moral law or neglect the God-ordained responsibilities of Christian witness.
- We affirm that governments have a responsibility before God to establish and enforce laws that accord with God's moral law as it pertains to human relations.

- We affirm that Christ's rule of the church through His Word must not be confused with the power He grants to civil governments; such confusion will compromise the purity of the gospel and will violate the conscience of individuals.
- We affirm that when families or churches neglect their biblically defined duties, thus jeopardizing the wellbeing of their members, the state may rightfully intervene.
- We deny that the state has the right to usurp authority of other God-given spheres of life, especially in the church and in the family.
- We deny that the Kingdom of God can be established by the coercive power of civil governments.
- We deny that the state has the right to forbid voluntary prayer and other voluntary religious exercises at an appropriate time in the public school.
- We deny that God's providential establishment of a particular government confers special blessing, apart from the government's just and faithful execution of its duties.
- We deny that religious belief is an essential prerequisite to service in civil government, or that its absence invalidates the legal authority of those who govern.
- We deny the Kingdom of God can be established by the power of civil governments.
- We deny that the government has the right to prescribe specific prayers or forms of religious exercise for its citizens.

Article 10: Law and Justice

- We affirm that the Scriptures are the only infallible record of unchanging moral principles basic to a sound jurisprudence and an adequate philosophy of human rights.
- We affirm that God has impressed His image on the hearts of all people so that they are morally accountable to Him for their actions as individuals and as members of society.
- We affirm that God's revealed law, the moral nature of mankind, and human legislation serve to restrain the fallen political order from chaos and anarchy and to point humankind to the need for redemption in Jesus Christ.
- We affirm that the Gospel cannot be legislated and the Law cannot save sinners.

- We deny that legal positivism, or any other humanistic philosophy of law, is able to satisfy the need for absolute standards of law and justice.
- We deny that any person or any society fulfills God's standards so as to justify himself, herself, or itself before the tribunal of God's absolute justice.
- We deny that any political, economic, or social order is free from the deadly consequences of original sin or capable of offering a utopian solution or substitute for the perfect society which Christ alone will establish at His Second Coming.

Article 11: War

- We affirm that God desires peace and righteousness among nations and condemns wars of aggression.
- We affirm that lawful states have the right and duty to defend their territories and citizens against aggression and oppression by other powers, including the provision for an adequate civil defense of the population.
- We affirm that in rightful defense of their territories and citizens governments should only use just means of warfare.
- We affirm that warring states should strive by every means possible to minimize civilian casualties.
- We deny that the cause of Christ can be defended with earthly weapons.
- We deny that Christians are forbidden to use weapons in the defense of lawful states.
- We deny that the indiscriminate slaughter of civilians can be a moral form of warfare.
- We deny that the circumstances of modern warfare destroy the right and duty of the civil government to defend its territories and citizens.

Article 12: Discrimination and Human Rights

- We affirm that God, who created man and woman in His image, has granted to all human beings fundamental rights which are to be protected, sustained, and fostered on the natural and spiritual levels.
- We affirm that all human beings are ultimately accountable to God for their use of these rights.

- We affirm that Christians must uphold and defend the rights of others while being willing to relinquish their own rights for the good of others.
- We affirm that Christians are admonished to follow the compassionate example of Jesus by helping to bear the burdens of those whose human rights have been diminished.
- We deny that any so-called human right which violates the teaching of Scripture is legitimate.
- We deny that any act is acceptable that would harm or diminish another person's natural or spiritual life by violating that person's human rights.
- We deny that age, disability, economic disadvantage, race, religion, or sex used as a basis for discrimination can ever justify denial of the exercise or enjoyment of human rights.
- We deny that elitism or grasping for power are compatible with Christ's call to dedicate our rights to His service.

Article 13: Economics

- We affirm that valid economic principles can be found in Scripture and should form an integral part of a Christian world and life view.
- We affirm that material resources are a blessing from God, to be enjoyed with thanksgiving, and are to be earned, managed, and shared as a stewardship under God.
- We affirm that Christians should give sacrificially of their resources to support the work of God's church.
- We affirm that the use of personal and material resources for the proclamation of the gospel is necessary both for the salvation of lost mankind and to overcome poverty where that is fostered by adherence to non-Christian religious systems.
- We affirm that active compassion for the poor and oppressed is an obligation that God places upon all human beings, especially on those with resources.
- We affirm that the possession of wealth imposes obligations upon its possessors.
- We affirm that the love of money is a source of great evil.
- We affirm that human depravity, greed, and the will to power foster economic injustice and subvert concern for the poor.

- We affirm that the Bible affirms the right of private ownership as a stewardship under God.
- We deny that Scripture directly teaches any science of economics, although there are principles of economics that can be derived from Scripture.
- We deny that Scripture teaches that compassion for the poor must be expressed exclusively through one particular economic system.
- We deny that the Scripture teaches that money or wealth is inherently evil.
- We deny that Scripture endorses economic collectivism or economic individualism.
- We deny that Scripture forbids the use of capital resources to produce income.
- We deny that the proper focus of a Christian's hope is material prosperity.
- We deny that Christians should use their resources primarily for self-gratification.
- We deny that salvation from sin necessarily involves economic or political liberation.

Article 14: Work and Leisure

- We affirm that God created humankind in His image and graciously fitted them for both work and leisure.
- We affirm that in all honorable work, however menial, God works with and through the worker.
- We affirm that work is the divinely ordained means whereby we glorify God and supply both our own needs and the needs of others.
- We affirm that Christians should work to the best of their ability so as to please God.
- We affirm that people should both humbly submit to and righteously exercise whatever authority operates in their sphere of work.
- We affirm that in their work people should seek first God's kingdom and righteousness, depending on Him to supply their material needs.
- We affirm that compensation should be a fair return for the work done without discrimination.
- We affirm that leisure, in proper balance with work, is ordained by God and should be enjoyed to His glory.

- We affirm that work and its product have not only temporal but also eternal value when done and used for God's glory.
- We deny that persons should pursue their work to fulfill and gratify themselves rather than to serve and please God.
- We deny that the rich have more right to leisure than the poor.
- We deny that certain types of work give persons greater value in God's eyes than other persons have.
- We deny that the Christian should either depreciate leisure or make a goal of it.

Article 15: Wealth and Poverty

- We affirm that God, who is just and loving, has a special concern for the poor in their plight.
- We affirm that God calls for responsible stewardship by His people of both their lives and resources.
- We affirm that sacrificial effort to relieve the poverty, oppression, and suffering of others is a hallmark of Christian discipleship.
- We affirm that just as the wealthy ought not be greedy so the poor ought not to be covetous.
- We deny that we may rightly call ourselves disciples of Christ if we lack active concern for the poor, oppressed, and suffering, especially those of the household of faith.
- We deny that we may always regard prosperity or poverty as the measure of our faithfulness to Christ.
- We deny that it is necessarily wrong for Christians to be wealthy or for some persons to possess more than others.

Article 16: Stewardship of the Environment

- We affirm that God created the physical environment for His own glory and for the good of His human creatures.
- We affirm that God deputized humanity to govern the creation.
- We affirm that mankind has more value than the rest of creation.
- We affirm that mankind's dominion over the earth imposes a responsibility to protect and tend its life and resources.
- We affirm that Christians should embrace responsible scientific investigation and its application in technology.

- We affirm that stewardship of the Lord's earth includes the productive use of its resources which must always be replenished as far as possible.
- We affirm that avoidable pollution of the earth, air, water, or space is irresponsible.

- We deny that the cosmos is valueless apart from mankind.
- We deny that the biblical view authorizes or encourages wasteful exploitation of nature.
- We deny that Christians should embrace the countercultural repudiation of science or the mistaken belief that science is the hope of mankind.
- We deny that individuals or societies should exploit the universe's resources for their own advantage at the expense of other people and societies.
- We deny that a materialistic world view can provide an adequate basis for recognizing environmental values.

THE CHICAGO STATEMENT ON BIBLICAL APPLICATION

Introduction

The International Council on Biblical Inerrancy was founded in 1977, with a planned life-span of ten years. Its goal, under God, was to seek by means of scholarly writing and teaching to restore the ebbing confidence of Christian people in the total trustworthiness of the Scriptures. Because this loss of confidence leads both to loss of clarity in stating the absolutes of authentic Christianity and to loss of muscle in maintaining them, the task was felt to be urgent. Ten years of special effort to turn the tide of uncertainty about the Bible did not seem to be too much to pledge, nor to ask the Christian public to support. In its tenth year, the Council sees what has been accomplished as cause for profound thanksgiving to God, from every point of view.

The three scholars' Summits that the Council has mounted were conceived as a logically connected series, each having a unitive as well as a consultative purpose. The 1978 Summit achieved a major restatement

for our time of the historic Christian view of Holy Scripture as canonical revelation from God given in the form of composite human testimony in God's will, works and ways. The 1982 Summit reached a wide-ranging consensus on hermeneutical guidelines and controls for biblical interpretation. The 1986 Summit seeks to show the relevance of a rightly interpreted Bible to some key areas of confusion and dispute in North American culture today. The need for the second and third Summits was always clear, for confessing belief in an inerrant Bible does us little good till we know how to interpret it, and interpretation involves applying biblical truth to the realities of contemporary life.

Summit III is concerned with applying eternal truth to late twentieth-century situations. It does not highlight the evangelistic and pastoral task of ensuring that known truth is internalized and lived by, but concentrates rather on seeing what it means to live out that truth in our present-day milieu. The Summit does not center its attention on the disciplines of personal discipleship, for much good material on these exists already, and it is not here that the acutest crises of application are felt. Rather, Summit III focuses, first, on the Trinitarian foundations that must give shape to all the church's life and witness, and then on a number of community concerns that come under the heading of Christian social ethics. These themes were chosen partly for their intrinsic importance and partly because there is need to dispel doubts as to whether Bible believers can ever agree on how to respond to them. As the consensus of Summit I dispelled doubts as to whether agreement is possible on the nature of Scripture, and the consensus of Summit II dispelled doubts as to whether inerrantists can agree on principles for interpreting the inspired text, so now Summit III offers a high degree of consensus as to how a trusted Bible directs prayer, planning and action in today's drifting society. We thank God for all these agreements, which we believe to be of great significance for our time.

Approaching Contemporary Problems

The process of supernatural divine action that produced the canonical Scriptures gave us, not a students' textbook of theology and ethics, but something richer and more instructive - a book of life. In this book, consisting as it does of sixty-six separate books, many different kinds of material are brought together. The backbone of the Bible is a collection of historical narratives spanning some thousands of years and telling how God the Creator became God the Redeemer after sin had entered His world and spoiled humanity. All the didactic, doctrinal, devotional, moral

and liturgical material, whether in the form of sermons, letters, hymns, prayers, laws, rubrics, proverbs, philosophical and practical reflections, or any other type of writing, has the character of occasional applicatory exposition addressed to specific people, in their historical and theological location at one particular point in God's unfolding plan of revelation and redemption. Because this is so, and in light of the massive cultural distance between the ancient Near Eastern civilizations out of which the Bible came, and the community life of the modern West, seeing the truest and wisest application of biblical principles to life today is often a task of some difficulty. Universal truths about God and men in relation to each other have to be unshelled from the applications in which we find them encased when first we meet them, and reapplied in cultural contexts and within a flow of history quite different from anything exhibited by the biblical text. In applying Scripture to this changed and changing milieu of our own times, the following principles must ever be borne in mind.

First, since all Scripture is authenticated to us as the permanently authoritative Word of God by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself (our Old Testament by His attestation and use of it, our New Testament by His promise of the Spirit to its apostolic and prophetic writers), it ought to be viewed in its entirety as the organ and channel of Christ's own authority. Thus, faithful discipleship to Christ must be held to involve conscientious acceptance of all that Scripture teaches, whether in the indicative or the imperative mood, and the common idea that loyalty to Christ can consist with sceptical or selective approaches to Scripture must be dismissed as a perverse and indefensible fancy. The authority of Scripture and the authority of Christ are one.

Second, since all Scripture is ultimately the product of a single mind, that of God the Holy Spirit, there is real consistency in its teaching on every subject which it touches. Any appearance of self-contradiction or confusion should therefore be judged illusory, and it should be understood that part of the exegete's task is to seek ways of dispelling any such appearance. How far we can succeed in this in particular cases will vary, but the goal must be aimed at always. The internal harmony of Scripture is axiomatic, being entailed by the certainty that the God of truth, from whom all biblical teaching derives, always knows his own mind, and never fudges facts. So, inasmuch as it is God's nature to speak only what is true and trustworthy, all that Scripture is found to teach on any subject is to be received as reliable. (Fuller justification for this assumption of au-

thoritative biblical inerrancy and definitive instruction from our Creator Himself was set out in the findings of the first two Summits.)

Third, the differences between the successive stages of God's revelatory program must be kept in view, and we must be alert to the fact that some of God's requirements of His people in pre-New Testament times were temporary only. In recognizing this, however, we must also seek to discern the abiding moral and spiritual principles which these requirements were applying and expressing, and we must press the question of how these same principles bear on our lives today.

Fourth, the church is neither a source of infallible information about God apart from Scripture, nor is it in any of its modes or means of self-expression an infallible interpreter of Scripture. The church is under the Bible, not over it. The historic claims of the Roman Catholic *magisterium* are neither biblically warranted nor intrinsically plausible; nor are claims by Protestant bodies to be led and taught by God's Spirit plausible when the positions taken are not supported by biblical teaching. But centuries of biblical study have shown over and over again that canonical Scripture interprets itself from within on all matters of significance for the life of faith, hope, obedience, love and salvation. The virtual unanimity on these essentials of Bible-believing expositors since the Reformation powerfully confirms the Reformers' contention that Scripture as we have it is both *sufficient* and *perspicuous* - in other words, is *complete* as a revelation of God and *clear* in its meaning and message to all who through the grace of the Holy Spirit have eyes to see what lies open before them. Yet, because the intellectual sanctification of Christians, like other aspects of their sanctification, is still imperfect, some differences of opinion on secondary issues are only to be expected among Bible believers; nor should these be thought to throw doubt on the intrinsic clarity of the Scriptures that all seek to expound and apply.

Fifth, it is a mistake of method to relativize biblical teaching to the cultural axioms, assumptions and paradigms of this or any age. Scripture discloses the work, ways and will of the unchanging Creator in relation to mankind as such, and all human opinion regarding values, priorities, and duties must be judged and where necessary corrected by reference to this disclosure. Every culture, being an expression of the corporate goals of fallen mankind, has a distorting, smothering, and blunting effect on the biblical truths which, if applied, would change it, and to keep those truths in shape, free from compromising assimilation to the cultural status quo, is never easy. Mainstream Protestantism over the past two centuries provides

a cautionary tale in this regard, for it has erred in a radical way by acquiring the habit of regularly relativizing biblical teaching to current secular fashion, whether rationalist, historicist, evolutionist, existentialist, Marxist, or whatever. But this is to forget how sin darkens and misdirects the human intellect in relation to all that ultimately matters, and to forget too that Scripture was given us to lighten our mental and spiritual darkness by showing us where the concepts and conceits of secular culture in this and every other age fall short. With regard to God and human living, secular culture is always astray (see Rom. 1:18-32), and only the contents of the biblical revelation can bring about the needed correction. Our calling, therefore, is not to set the Bible straight, but to allow Scripture to set us straight. Only as we let Bible teaching, in its character as God's absolute truth, amend assumptions concerning God and the best way of living that society around us takes for granted, shall we handle Scripture as we should. For the right way to handle Scripture is to allow it to handle us intellectually, morally, and spiritually. This was the Reformers' point when they spoke of the necessity of Scripture: none will ever think rightly about God, nor therefore live or act as they should, without the guidance of the Bible.

The proper way to pose the hermeneutical question that is central in contemporary debate is to ask what it is in us, and in our culture, that keeps us from hearing God's unchanging Word of judgment, mercy, repentance and righteousness, as it applies to us and to our own situation. When the question is posed in this way, the door is opened to the Word of God making its proper impact on us, which otherwise it could hardly do. The form of this impact will vary from one time and place to another, for it is right that the Word should indigenize itself in every distinct culture that the human family produces; but the substance of the impact, that is, the demand for repentance and faith in Christ, worship and holiness before God, and love and justice towards our fellow-men, will be always and everywhere the same.

Sixth, application of biblical principles to life is always conditioned by the limits of our factual knowledge about the situation in which it is being made. Where there is dispute about matters of fact, or about the likely consequences, direct or indirect, of alternative lines of action, the long-term effects, for instance, of particular industrial developments, or economic procedures, or military strategies, disagreement about the best and wisest way to move ahead is likely to follow and such disagreement may well be found disturbing, since the production of the best lawful con-

sequences for others is part of the duty of loving our neighbour which Scripture imposes on us all. But disagreement of this kind will not necessarily imply uncertainty about the principles to be applied, and may not therefore be appealed to uncritically as evidence of different understandings of the teaching of the inerrant Scriptures.

Seventh, application of biblical principles to life requires awareness that within the limits set by the moral laws of God are areas of liberty within which we have responsibility to choose the options that seem to us most fruitful for the glory of God and the welfare of humankind, ourselves included. Never to let the good become the enemy of the best, or to prefer what seems "not bad" over what is clearly better, is one of the rules of Christian wisdom and obedience. Here again, however, Christians whose theologies agree in substance may have differences due to personal or cultural factors that rightly affect their scale of values and priorities, and once more it will be a mistake to appeal to such differences as indicating disagreement on what the Bible has to say.

Eighth, application of Scripture to life requires the unction of the Holy Spirit. Without his aid the spiritual realities of which Scripture speaks will not be perceived, nor will the scope, thrust, and searching power of biblical teaching be truly grasped, nor will the range and depth of biblical visions, pleas, challenges, rebukes, and calls to faith and amendment be properly understood. Humble recognition that there is always more to be learned, and that one's present knowledge is incomplete, and constant crying to God for more light and wisdom, is the only healthy frame of mind for those who would set forth the relevance of the divine Word. And that frame of mind will only become reality in those who are savingly related to Jesus Christ, having felt the blindness and folly of their own natural reason and thus been taught by the Lord himself not to lean to their own understanding.

Summit III assumes these eight principles as common ground, and its findings reflect an honest attempt to follow their lead rationally and self-critically in bringing scriptural teaching to bear on the world around us.

New Vistas Along Old Paths

The task to which Summit III addressed itself is to apply the teaching of a trusted Bible to some of the most confused areas of modern life. This task could not in principle be tackled by Western secular society itself; for our

secular society insists on judging itself, not by the revelation of the Creator that the Bible sets forth, but by evolutionary, permissive, materialistic, hedonistic, and this-worldly yardsticks for thought. The Summit's findings embody the view that the belief and value-system that such judging reflects is in fact tragically mistaken, and the findings as a whole constitute a radical challenge to it. There is no doubt, however, that in the Western world secular perspectives everywhere ride high, and it will take a great deal more than the critique and challenge of any one conference to unseat them.

Nor could the task that Summit III undertakes be discharged by any form of liberal or modernist theology. These nominally Christian infidelities also ride high at present in certain circles. But such theology calls in question the divinity, adequacy, and binding force of much biblical teaching, and is thus methodologically incapable of operating under the authority of Scripture. The assumptions of liberalism relativize the Bible by absolutizing positions that run counter to biblical teaching (e.g., the essential goodness of man, or the essential oneness of all religions), and then rearranging biblical priorities in light of present-day secular prejudices and preoccupations (e.g., redefining mission so as to give political, social, and economic causes priority over church planting evangelism). The Summit distances itself explicitly from the arbitrariness of any such method and the wrong-headedness of any such conclusions.

The Summit findings turn their back on all forms of that modern Athenianism that seeks only to speak or hear some new thing. Instead of pursuing novelty, they offer updated applications of an older, more stable, arguably wiser and demonstrably more biblical heritage of belief. Thus to swim against the stream of current thought is a gesture, not of timidity, but of boldness, and not of eccentricity, but of conscience. The Summit members are united in the belief that the only good way for church and community today lies along the old paths. Thus, on historic questions like the sanctity of life, of sex, and of the family, and the God-given role of the state, in its regulating of political, judicial, and economic aspects of community life, as also on questions with new late-twentieth-century angles, like the legitimacy of nuclear war and the stewardship of the natural order, the continuing validity of standpoints maintained in the Christian past is constantly asserted. By the same token, modern statism, with its worship of centralization, its pervasively paternalist ethos, and its ready sanctioning of objectionable views on all the topics mentioned, is constantly viewed as a development to regret, whether in its fascist or Marxist form

or in any other. Whether this is political prejudice or prophetic vision is a question to which different people will no doubt give different answers, but it is one on which the Summit members have a fairly united mind. The two hundred and fifty of us who have met at the Summit believe that anyone who allows Scripture to deliver its own message on these matters will end up approximately where we stand ourselves. We now offer our findings and papers to the public as testimony to what we believe we have heard God say, and we shall welcome every opportunity to elaborate and confirm this testimony in wider discussions.