

Revelation, Inspiration, and Inerrancy

“We know him [God] by two means: First, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe, since that universe is before our eyes like a beautiful book in which all creatures, great and small, are as letters to make us ponder the invisible things of God: his eternal power and his divinity, as the apostle Paul says in Romans 1:20. All these things are enough to convict men and to leave them without excuse. Second, he makes himself known to us more openly by his holy and divine Word, as much as we need in this life, for his glory and for the salvation of his own.” (*The Belgic Confession*, Article 2: The Means by Which We Know God)

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

	General Revelation	Special Revelation
<i>Source</i>	All creation	Scripture
<i>Recipients</i>	All humanity	Only those who hear/read it
<i>Content</i>	God's existence and attributes	God's plan of salvation
<i>Form</i>	Non-verbal	Verbal
<i>Result</i>	Convicts	Saves

Inspiration

“All Scripture is breathed out by God [Greek *theopneustos*] and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

“This mode of revelation differs from prophecy, properly so called, precisely by the employment in it, as is not done in prophecy, of the total personality of the organ [human instrument] of revelation, as a factor. It has been common to speak of the mode of the Spirit's action in this form of revelation, therefore, as an assistance, a superintending, a direction, a control, the meaning being that the effect aimed at—the discovery and enunciation of Divine truth—is attained through the action of the human powers—historical research, logical reasoning, ethical thought, religious aspiration—acting not by themselves, however, but under the prevailing assistance, superintendency, direction, control of the Divine Spirit.”

—B.B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, p. 95

Inerrancy

“Scripture cannot be broken...” (John 10:35)

“I have learned to yield this respect and honor only to the canonical books of Scripture: of these alone do I most firmly believe that the authors were completely free from error. And if in these writings I am perplexed by anything which appears to me opposed to truth, I do not hesitate to suppose that either [1] the manuscript is faulty, or [2] the translator has not caught the meaning of what was said, or [3] I myself have failed to understand it.”

—*Letters of St. Augustine* 82.1.3

“The church has always believed her Scriptures to be the book of God, of which God was in such a sense the author that every one of its affirmations of whatever kind is to be esteemed as the utterance of God, of infallible truth and authority.”

—B.B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, p. 112.

The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy: 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.

Objections to Inerrancy

- “Inerrancy is a modern American doctrine. It doesn’t represent the view of the historic and global Church.”
- “The Bible only needs to be true in matters of faith and practice. It doesn’t matter if it has errors in historical or scientific details.”
- “Inerrancy is a meaningless and unprovable concept, since it only applies to the original manuscripts (autographs). All we have are copies of copies full of errors.”
- “Inerrancy is demonstrably false, since the Bible is full of contradictions and inaccuracies.”