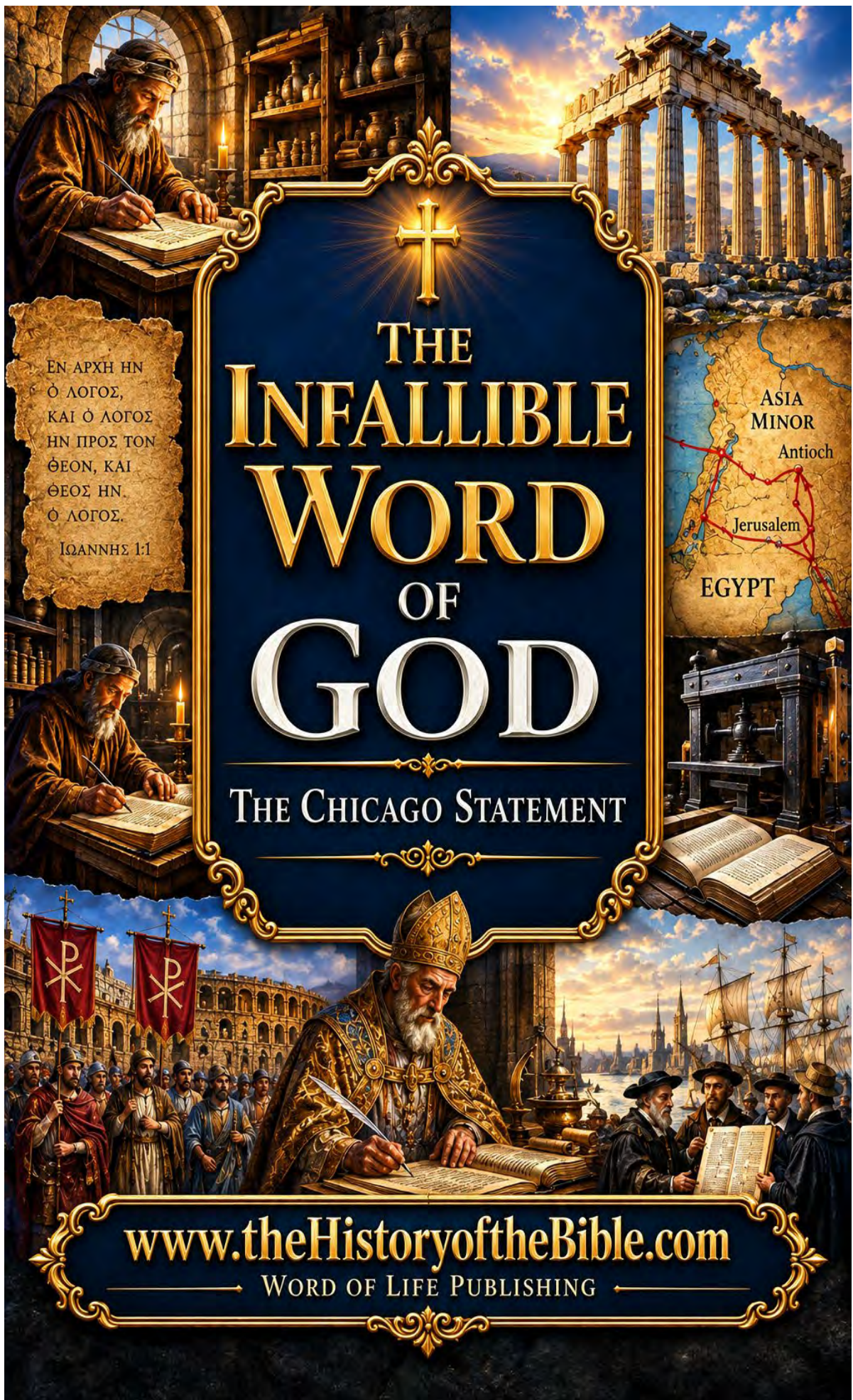




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ΘΕΟΝ, ΚΑΙ
ΘΕΟΣ ΗΝ.
Ο ΛΟΓΟΣ.

ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ 1:1

THE INFALLIBLE WORD OF GOD

THE CHICAGO STATEMENT

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WORD OF LIFE PUBLISHING

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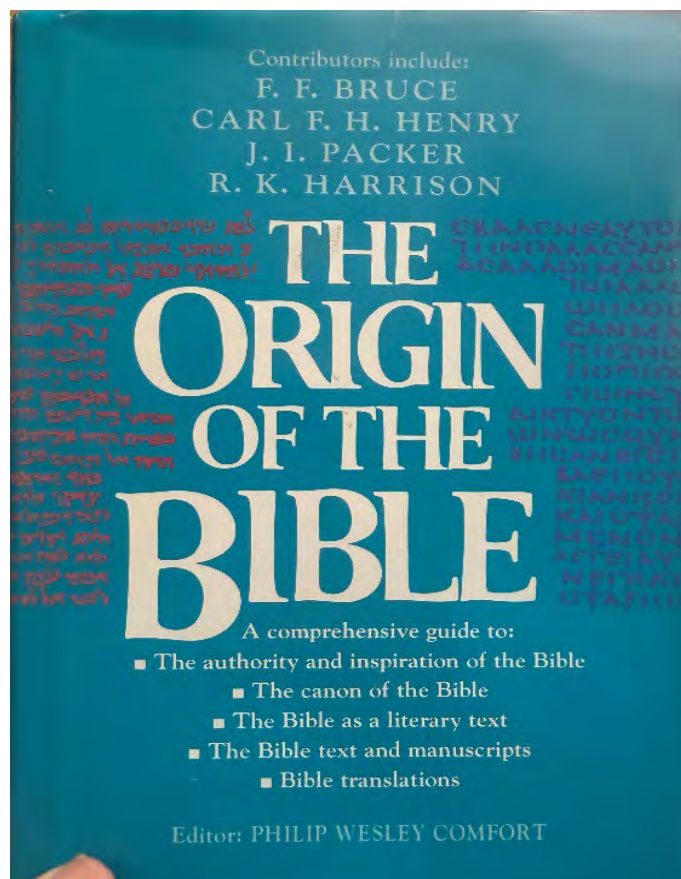
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THE CHICAGO STATEMENT ON BIBLICAL INERRANCY

Introduction

Although from the beginning of the church, the doctrine of biblical inerrancy has been affirmed, it has been frequently challenged by various opponents. For example, in a book often used for divinity classes titled: “The Origin of The Bible,”



one of the opening articles by Dr. Harold O.J. Brown introduces the reader to a large and failing debate on infallibility and inerrancy. A little later in the book, Milton Fisher shares a foundation for Moses being a compiler of the Pentateuch from secular sources. Pushing all this aside, let's ask the question,

What is “Infallibility” ?

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, **Infallibility** is the quality or state of never being wrong, failing, or making a mistake. Incapable of making a mistake. **General Meaning:** *Unerring judgment and totally free from error.*

The only one who fits this definition is God. This is expressed in Hebrews 6:18, where it states that,

“...it is impossible for God to lie...”

In short, the “infallibility” of God makes His Words infallible. Infallibility and inerrancy are derived from His attributes. It is literally God who makes His Words

infallible and inerrant because He is infallible and inerrant.

God Speaks in the Bible

In the Bible, we often see phrases such as,

“God said” (*587 verses in the Old and New Testaments*),

“Thus saith the Lord” (*149 verses*),

“The Lord said” (*1078 verses*)

(note: this is not a complete list)

However, the phenomenon of God speaking in the Bible is greatly enhanced by the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Jesus repeatedly stated that His Words were not His own but were from His Father. A signature statement of this is seen in John 14:10 where Jesus said,

¹⁰ **Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.**

JESUS' USE OF "WORD" AND "WORDS"

The Four Gospels • King James Version

56 verses • 60 occurrences • Spoken by Jesus

MATTHEW (12)

- 4:4 "Every word" — Life depends on God's revelation.
10:14 "Your words" — The apostles' message.
12:32 "A word against the Son of man" — Speech against Jesus.
12:36 "Every idle word" — Accountability for careless speech.
12:37 "By thy words" (twice) — Speech as evidence in judgment.
13:19 "Word of the kingdom" — The kingdom message.
13:20 "Heareth the word" — Joyful but shallow reception.
13:21 "Because of the word" — Persecution tests commitment.
13:22 "The word" (twice) — Worry and riches choke the message.
13:23 "Heareth the word" — Understanding produces fruit.
18:16 "Every word" — A matter established by witnesses.
24:35 "My words" — Jesus' words endure forever.

MARK (10)

- 4:14 "Soweth the word" — The seed is the message.
4:15 "The word" (twice) — Satan removes the message.
4:16 "Heard the word" — Glad reception without roots.
4:17 "The word's sake" — Persecution causes falling away.
4:18 "Hear the word" — Hearers among the thorns.
4:19 "Choke the word" — Desires prevent fruitfulness.
4:20 "Hear the word" — Reception bears spiritual fruit.
7:13 "The word of God" — Tradition evades God's command.
8:38 "My words" — Warning against shame over his teaching.
13:31 "My words" — His declarations never pass away.

LUKE (11)

- 4:4 "Every word of God" — Dependence on God above bread.
8:11 "The word of God" — The meaning of the seed.
8:12 "The word" — The devil hinders belief.
8:13 "Receive the word" — Temporary belief under testing.
8:15 "Heard the word" — Perseverance bears fruit.
8:21 "The word of God" — Obedience marks his family.
9:26 "My words" — Loyalty to Jesus' teaching.
11:28 "The word of God" — Blessing through obedience.
12:10 "A word against the Son of man" — Forgivable speech against Jesus.
21:33 "My words" — His promises remain certain.
24:44 "The words which I spake" — Earlier teaching fulfilled.

JOHN (23)

- 5:24 "My word" — Hearing and believing lead to life.
5:38 "His word" — God's message absent within unbelief.
5:47 "My words" — Moses' writings support belief in Jesus.
6:63 "The words that I speak" — Spirit and life.
8:31 "Continue in my word" — The mark of true discipleship.
8:37 "My word" — A message rejected by hostile hearts.
8:43 "Hear my word" — Resistance prevents understanding.
8:47 "God's words" — God's people hear his message.
10:35 "The word of God" — Scripture's binding authority.
12:47 "My words" — Rejection of his saving message.
12:48 "My words ... the word" — His message judges on the last day.
14:10 "The words that I speak" — Teaching with the Father's authority.
14:23 "Keep my words" — Obedience expresses love.
14:24 "The word which ye hear" — The Father is its source.
15:3 "Through the word" — His message cleanses disciples.
15:7 "My words abide in you" — His teaching shapes prayer.
15:20 "Remember the word" — Servants share their Master's treatment.
15:25 "The word might be fulfilled" — Scripture foretells unjust hatred.
17:6 "Kept thy word" — Disciples receive and obey.
17:8 "The words which thou gavest me" — The Father's teaching received.
17:14 "Given them thy word" — God's message brings world opposition.
17:17 "Thy word is truth" — God's truth sanctifies.
17:20 "Through their word" — Apostolic witness brings future believers.

Exact KJV terms; parallel Gospel accounts listed separately.
Narrators and other speakers excluded.

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Church History

The doctrine of inerrancy has been held by the earliest leaders of the Church: Ignatius, Irenaeus, Gregory of Nyssa, Theodore, Origen, Augustine, Jerome, Gregory of Nazianzus, and was assumed or presupposed by the Reformers. In fact, all of the early Church held that the inspiration and inerrancy of Holy Scripture followed down to the smallest detail of its content (*The jot and tittle, Matthew 5:18*) Their view was that Scripture was not only exempt from error but contained nothing that was questionable. This not only harmonized with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, but was consistent with the teachings of Jesus, and required for salvation and effective ministry.

Addressing Discrepancies in The Bible

In the “Origin of The Bible,” Dr. Harold O.J. Brown mentions some Bible discrepancies:

“Many biblical statements concern matters that cannot be either proved or disproved. However, many alleged contradictions have been resolved or diminished considerably by competent exegesis. For

example, this would apply to the apparent discrepancies in the genealogies of Jesus (Matt. 1; Luke 3), the various accounts of the apostle Paul's conversion (Acts 9; 22; 26), and alleged errors of fact—such as the reference to the rabbit as a cud-chewing animal (Lev. 11:6) and the sun standing still over Gibeon (Josh. 10:12-14).

Of course, there are more issues than what Dr. Brown has listed, however, if we are to learn from the early Church, they did nothing to address the differences in the gospel accounts (*The Synoptic Problem*). They simply presented each gospel to the world (under the direction of the Holy Spirit) as the actual words of God. The differences were purposely left to authenticate their testimonies. The Church made no attempts to rewrite the manuscripts or reconcile the differences.

A. A. Hodge, the son of Charles Hodge, President of Princeton Theological Seminary, succeeded his father as President of Princeton, along with Benjamin Warfield who also succeeded at Princeton as president, together they wrote in the 1881 *Presbyterian Review*. They said

that inerrancy applied not only to the original autographs, but also that the difficulties in Scripture do not overturn what the Scripture says about itself.

In other words, the difficulties are only superficial (and in many cases spurious). It does not matter what they may appear to be. The only thing that matters are that the Words of God are received as they truly are (*as the actual Words of God*) in order for the works of God to begin in a person's life.

1Thessalonians 2:13:

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

False Teachers

1 John 4:1-3,

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. ² Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: ³ And every spirit that confessed not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is the world.

JESUS' WARNINGS AGAINST FALSE TEACHERS

Direct warnings and related statements in the four Gospels

DIRECT WARNINGS

Account / References	Warning or lesson
False prophets Matthew 7:15–20	Beware of prophets disguised as sheep; recognize them by their fruits.
Corrupting influence Matthew 16:6–12; Mark 8:15	Beware of the leaven of religious leaders. Matthew identifies it as their teaching.
Pharisaic hypocrisy Luke 12:1	Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.
Exploitative scribes Mark 12:38–40; Luke 20:45–47	Beware of leaders who seek honor, exploit widows, and display false piety.
False messiahs and prophets Matthew 24:4–5, 11, 23–26; Mark 13:5–6, 21–23; Luke 21:8	Do not be deceived by claims to be Christ or by impressive signs.
Misleading claims about Christ Luke 17:23–24	Do not follow people who claim that Christ is here or there.

RELATED AND INDIRECT STATEMENTS

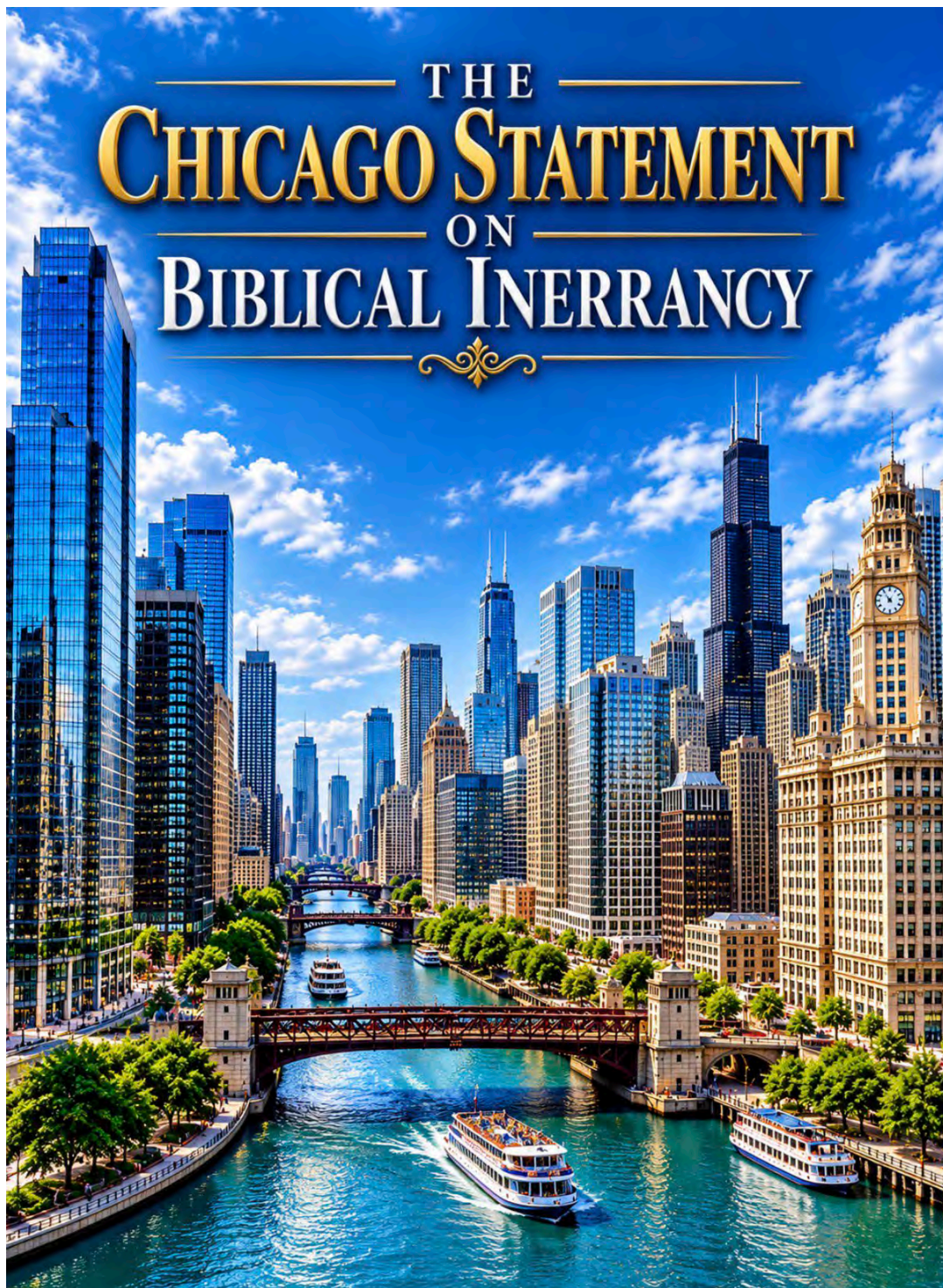
Account / References	Warning or lesson
Blind guides Matthew 15:13–14; Luke 6:39–40	A blind guide leads others into a pit; disciples become like their teachers.
Human traditions Matthew 15:3–9; Mark 7:6–13	Human traditions can replace God's commands and make worship empty.
False religious credentials Matthew 7:21–23	Claims of prophecy and miracles do not prove that someone belongs to Christ.
Words without obedience Matthew 23:1–7	Religious leaders may teach what they themselves fail to practice.
Barriers to God's kingdom Matthew 23:13, 15; Luke 11:52	Leaders can hinder others from entering and lead converts astray.
Distorted spiritual priorities Matthew 23:16–28	Blind guides distort oaths, neglect justice and mercy, and hide corruption.
Thieves and strangers John 10:1–10	True sheep recognize their shepherd; strangers and thieves threaten the flock.
Hirelings John 10:11–13	A hired shepherd abandons the flock when danger comes.
Misplaced acceptance John 5:43–44	People may reject Jesus yet welcome someone coming in his own name.

Parallel accounts are grouped. Related statements extend beyond explicit warnings about false teachers. Summaries are paraphrases.
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1 John 4:1-3 adds to the major teaching of our Lord on false prophets and scribes, and the lack of application is especially prevalent in the historical record of the Church. Most seminaries today are a display of this and appear as a direct fulfilment of the apostasy forewarned by the apostle Paul (*2 Thessalonians 2:13*), which has also mushroomed into so many Churches.

The Chicago Statement

Since the inception of the Church, there have been many challenges to the Bible. They range from those of total ignorance to the most learned, subtle and even “well meaning.” In recent times, theological modernists and “higher criticism” has made the belief in the infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible “unfashionable.” In response to the many challenges, a council of evangelical leaders met at an international Summit Conference in the fall of 1978 and drafted The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.



Authors and Contributors to the Chicago Statement

The statement was written by the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (ICBI) at a 1978 Chicago summit.

Organizers

The ICBI was conceived in February 1977 and launched eight months later. Its executive committee was chaired by James Boice, with Norman Geisler, Harold Hoehner, Earl Radmacher, R.C. Sproul, and full-time executive director Jay Grimstead.

Main drafters

R.C. Sproul: principal architect, who chaired the drafting committee. The first draft came from Sproul but was amended throughout the summit. Norman Geisler counted three framers: Sproul, Packer, and himself.

Others credited

Carl Henry, Kenneth Kantzer, Luder Whitlock, John Warwick Montgomery, Roger Nicole, Earl Radmacher, Francis Schaeffer, John Wenham, and Henry Krabbendam among those who helped produce it.

Nearly 300 evangelical scholars signed it, including

Boice, Geisler, John Gerstner, Packer, Sproul, and John Wenham.

Related ICBI work

Sproul later wrote the official commentary, *Explaining Inerrancy*, published in 1980.

For a detailed history, the *Christian Century* piece "The certainty summit" covers the drafting. Wayne Grudem's workshop slides cover the summit participants.

STATEMENT ON BIBLICAL INERRANCY

Articles of Affirmation and Denial

Article I. WE AFFIRM that the Holy Scriptures are to be received as the authoritative Word of God. WE DENY that the Scriptures receive their authority from the Church, tradition, or any other human source.

Article II. WE AFFIRM that the Scriptures are the supreme written norm by which God binds the conscience, and that the authority of the Church is subordinate to that of Scripture. WE DENY that Church creeds, councils, or declarations have authority greater than or equal to the authority of the Bible.

Article III. WE AFFIRM that the written Word in its entirety is revelation given by God. WE DENY that the Bible is merely a witness to revelation, or only becomes revelation in encounter, or depends on the responses of men for its validity.

Article IV. WE AFFIRM that God who made mankind in His image has used language as a means of revelation. WE DENY that human language is so limited by our creatureliness that it is rendered inadequate as a vehicle for divine revelation. We further deny that the corruption of human culture and language through sin has thwarted God's work of inspiration.

Article V. WE AFFIRM that God's revelation within the Holy Scriptures was progressive. WE DENY that later revelation, which may fulfil earlier revelation, ever corrects or contradicts it. We further deny that any normative revelation has been given since the completion of the New Testament writings.

Article VI. WE AFFIRM that the whole of Scripture and all its parts, down to the very words of the original, were given by divine inspiration. WE DENY that the inspiration of Scripture can rightly be affirmed of the whole without the parts, or of some parts but not the whole.

Article VII. WE AFFIRM that inspiration was the work in which God by His Spirit, through human writers, gave us His Word. The origin of Scripture is divine. The mode of divine inspiration remains largely a mystery to us. WE DENY that inspiration can be reduced to human insight, or to heightened states of consciousness of any kind.

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

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

Article IX. WE AFFIRM that inspiration, though not conferring omniscience, guaranteed true and trustworthy utterance on all matters of which the Biblical authors were moved to speak and write. WE DENY that the finitude or fallenness of these writers, by necessity or otherwise, introduced distortion or falsehood into God's Word.

Article X. WE AFFIRM that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations

of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original. WE DENY that any essential element of the Christian faith is affected by the absence of the autographs. We further deny that this absence renders the assertion of Biblical inerrancy invalid or irrelevant.

Article XI. WE AFFIRM that Scripture, having been given by divine inspiration, is infallible, so that, far from misleading us, it is true and reliable in all the matters it addresses. WE DENY that it is possible for the Bible to be at the same time infallible and errant in its assertions. Infallibility and inerrancy may be distinguished, but not separated.

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

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

Article XIII. WE AFFIRM the propriety of using inerrancy as a theological term with reference to the complete truthfulness of Scripture. WE DENY that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage or purpose. We further deny that inerrancy is negated by Biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical

arrangement of material, variant selections of material in parallel accounts, or the use of free citations.

Article XIV. WE AFFIRM the unity and internal consistency of Scripture. WE DENY that alleged errors and discrepancies that have not yet been resolved vitiate the truth claims of the Bible.

Article XV. WE AFFIRM that the doctrine of inerrancy is grounded in the teaching of the Bible about inspiration. WE DENY that Jesus' teaching about Scripture may be dismissed by appeals to accommodation or to any natural limitation of His humanity.

Article XVI. WE AFFIRM that the doctrine of inerrancy has been integral to the Church's faith throughout its history. WE DENY that inerrancy is a doctrine invented by scholastic Protestantism, or is a reactionary position postulated in response to negative higher criticism.

Article XVII. WE AFFIRM that the Holy Spirit bears witness to the Scriptures, assuring believers of the truthfulness of God's written Word. WE DENY that this witness of the Holy Spirit operates in isolation from or against Scripture.

Article XVIII. WE AFFIRM that the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatic-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, de-historicizing, or discounting its teaching, or rejecting its claims to authorship.

Article XIX. WE AFFIRM that a confession of the full authority, infallibility, and inerrancy of Scripture is vital to a sound understanding of the whole of the Christian faith. We further affirm that such confession should lead to increasing conformity to the image of Christ. WE DENY that such confession is necessary for salvation. However, we further deny that inerrancy can be rejected without grave consequences, both to the individual and to the Church.

Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics

The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics (1982) is a continuation and elaboration of the meaning of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978), particularly of Articles XIII, XIV, and XVIII. It is a fuller statement on the relation of inerrancy to hermeneutics, especially of the meaning of the “grammatical-historical exegesis” mentioned in Article XIII of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy which reads:

We affirm that the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatical-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, de-historicizing, or discounting its teaching, or rejecting its claims to authorship.

Articles of Affirmation and Denial

Article I. 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 II. 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 III. 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 IV. 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 V. 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 VI. 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 wilfully deceives.

Article VII. 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 VIII. 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 IX. 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 X. 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 XI. 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 XII. 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 XIII. 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 XIV. 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 XV. 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 XVI. 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 XVII. 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 XVIII. 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 fulfilment of those

words. WE DENY that the writers of Scripture always understood the full implications of their own words.

Article XIX. 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 XX. 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 XXI. 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 XXII. 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 XXIII. 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 XXIV. 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 XXV. 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.

Summary

The Chicago Statement is composed of the following points:

1. A section of affirmations
2. Denials consisting of 19 articles, and
3. An exposition of the doctrine of inerrancy in relation to the other teachings of Scripture.
4. A short summary statement presenting the Scriptures as God's revelation written by men and inspired by the Holy Spirit, who authenticates and illuminates its teachings. And
5. Scripture's very words in entirety are inspired (verbal plenary inspiration) and therefore without error (inerrant), and it asserts that to deny or limit inerrancy undermines the authority of Scripture.

The section of affirmations and denials include several other important points:

1. Scripture's authority comes from its being the Word of God, not from the church or tradition, and is thereby authoritatively binding.
2. The finitude of human language does not preclude it being used as a medium for divine revelation.
3. While inspiration did not eliminate human authorship and literary style, it did guarantee that their utterances were true and trustworthy
4. Only the autographs of Scripture were inspired, but this does not render the doctrine irrelevant since an accurate representation of the autographs can be constructed from the manuscripts we have.

5. While inerrancy and infallibility can be distinguished, they cannot be separated; that is, the Bible cannot be at the same time infallible and errant in its assertions.
6. Inerrancy is rooted in the doctrine of inspiration
7. While affirming inerrancy is not necessary for salvation, it is vital to the Christian faith, and its rejection leads to serious consequences in the individual and the church

The Relevance of the Chicago Statement

While not to be given creedal status, the Chicago Statement is an important. One of the reasons is that it navigated between liberalism and fundamentalism. Liberalism had so analysed and assessed the Bible's background and literary features that its authenticity and factuality was negated so as to undermine the authority of Scripture.

On the other hand, some fundamentalists assert that only one version of the text (the KJV) contains the inspired words of God. Both positions fail to do justice to the authorship of Scripture asserted by the CSBI, which has been observed since the printing of newer editions based on the Alexandrian texts.

The Chicago Statement is a response to the critics of the Church who seek to undermine or dispute the Bible, and assert in a fresh and thoughtful way the confidence that believers should have in the Holy Scriptures.

Fundamentalism: Its Five Points and Place in 1979

Note: The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy was produced in October 1978, 1979 was the year right after it and a pivotal one for the movement, so both are covered below.

Few religious movements in American history have been as misunderstood as fundamentalism. The word is now used loosely for almost any rigid religious or political conviction, but it began as the name of a specific Protestant movement in the early twentieth century. That

movement defined itself around a short list of non-negotiable doctrines, fought bitter battles for control of American denominations, suffered a public humiliation in the 1920s, and then regrouped and re-emerged as a powerful force by the late 1970s. To understand the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy and the world it came from, one has to understand the five points, the history behind them, and the condition of the movement at the time.

Origins of the Movement

Fundamentalism arose as a reaction to the intellectual and cultural changes of the late nineteenth century. Darwinian evolution, German higher criticism of the Bible, and the rise of the “social gospel” were reshaping mainline Protestant seminaries and pulpits. Liberal, or “modernist,” theologians argued that Christianity needed to adapt to modern science and scholarship. They tended to treat the Bible as a human document containing divine truth rather than as divinely dictated, and they were skeptical of miracles and of traditional teachings about sin and atonement.

Conservative Protestants saw this as a surrender of the faith. The movement took its name from *The Fundamentals*, a series of twelve paperback volumes published between 1910 and 1915 and financed by the oil magnate Lyman Stewart. About three million copies were distributed free to pastors, missionaries, and seminary students. The essays defended traditional doctrine against modernism, though they were often more scholarly and less combative than the movement's later reputation suggests. In 1920 the Baptist editor Curtis Lee Laws coined the term "fundamentalist" for those prepared "to do battle royal for the Fundamentals."

The Five Points

The best-known summary of the fundamentals comes from the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. In 1910, and again in 1916 and 1923, its General Assembly declared that ministerial candidates must affirm five "essential" doctrines. These five points became the shorthand for the movement as a whole. Different groups sometimes substituted or added items, but the standard list is as follows.

1. The inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture.

The Bible is the Word of God, and because God does not err, it is without error in what it teaches. This was the foundation on which the other four points rested, and the one the movement fought hardest over. Fundamentalists drew on the Princeton theologians Archibald Alexander, Charles Hodge, and especially B. B. Warfield, who argued that the original manuscripts were free from error because God superintended their writing.

2. The virgin birth of Christ.

Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. For fundamentalists this was not a pious ornament but a safeguard for the deity of Christ. If Jesus were merely the natural son of Joseph and Mary, they argued, he could not be the incarnate Son of God. Liberals who treated the birth narratives as legend were seen as undermining Christ's identity at its root.

3. The substitutionary atonement.

Christ's death on the cross was a sacrifice in which he bore the penalty for human sin in the place of sinners. This stood in direct opposition to modernist views that saw the cross primarily as a moral example or a demonstration of divine love. For fundamentalists, salvation depended on a real transaction: sin was real, God's justice was real, and Christ paid the debt.

4. The bodily resurrection of Christ.

Jesus rose physically from the dead on the third day. The resurrection was treated not as a spiritual symbol or a continuing influence in the disciples' hearts but as a historical event with an empty tomb. Fundamentalists pointed to Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 15 that if Christ has not been raised, the Christian faith is futile.

5. The authenticity of miracles & return

The miracles recorded in the Bible, including Christ's healings and nature miracles, actually happened. Modernists had tended to explain them

naturally or treat them as stories told to express religious ideas. Many fundamentalists, particularly those influenced by dispensationalism, substituted or added Christ's literal, premillennial return, which became a defining feature of much of the movement.

Together these points formed a boundary line. Those who affirmed them were within the faith, and those who denied them, however sincere or learned, were outside it. This is what made fundamentalism a militant movement and not merely a conservative one. It was defined by the willingness to separate from, or purge, people who crossed the line.

The Fight for the Denominations and the Scopes Trial

The 1920s were the movement's peak and its crisis. Fundamentalists battled liberals for control of the Northern Baptist Convention, the Northern Presbyterian Church, and other bodies. Leaders such as the Baptist pastor William Bell Riley, the Presbyterian scholar J. Gresham Machen, and the politician William Jennings Bryan carried the campaign into churches, seminaries, and public life. They also pressed for laws banning the

teaching of human evolution in public schools, and Tennessee passed such a law in 1925.

That same year the Scopes Trial in Dayton, Tennessee, put the movement under a national spotlight. John Scopes was convicted and fined, so fundamentalists technically won, but the trial was a public relations catastrophe. Clarence Darrow's cross-examination of Bryan, and the mocking coverage by H. L. Mencken and other journalists, portrayed fundamentalists as ignorant and backward. Bryan died days after the trial ended. Meanwhile, the denominational fights ended badly for the movement: Machen and his allies left Princeton Seminary to found Westminster Seminary in 1929 and later formed new denominations, and fundamentalists elsewhere lost control of the major institutions.

Retreat, Rebuilding, and Evangelicalism

The popular story says fundamentalism then disappeared. In reality it went underground and built its own institutions. Fundamentalists founded Bible institutes (Moody in Chicago, Bob Jones College, Biola), radio ministries, publishing houses, mission agencies, and independent Baptist and Bible churches. Away from the

national media, the movement grew steadily through the 1930s and 1940s.

It also began to fracture. After World War II, a younger generation including Harold John Ockenga, Carl F. H. Henry, and Billy Graham grew impatient with fundamentalist separatism and cultural withdrawal. They wanted to engage the wider culture, cooperate with a broader range of Christians, and take scholarship seriously. They called themselves “neo-evangelicals” and built their own institutions: the National Association of Evangelicals (1942), Fuller Theological Seminary (1947), and *Christianity Today* (1956). Graham’s decision to accept support from mainline churches for his crusades in the 1950s led separatist fundamentalists such as Bob Jones Jr. to denounce him bitterly. From then on, “fundamentalist” came to mean the separatist, militant wing, while “evangelical” described the more cooperative and culturally engaged one. The two shared the same core doctrines but differed sharply in attitude and strategy.

The Movement on the Eve of the Chicago Statement

By the mid-1970s the situation looked very different from the post-Scopes era. Conservative Protestantism was growing while mainline denominations were shrinking. In 1976, the year Jimmy Carter, a self-described born-again Southern Baptist, was elected president, *Newsweek* named it “The Year of the Evangelical.” Hal Lindsey’s dispensationalist bestseller *The Late Great Planet Earth* had sold in the millions, Liberty Baptist College (founded 1971 by Jerry Falwell) was growing, and televangelism was expanding the reach of conservative preachers across the country.

At the same time, evangelicals were anxious about biblical authority within their own ranks. In 1976, Harold Lindsell published *The Battle for the Bible*, arguing that denying inerrancy was the first step on a slippery slope toward liberalism. He pointed to what he saw as drift at Fuller Seminary and in the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, where a conservative takeover in the early 1970s had led to the walkout of moderate faculty and students from Concordia Seminary in 1974. Francis Schaeffer, whose writings and films reached a huge evangelical audience, warned that compromise on Scripture would undermine Western civilization itself. The question of

whether the Bible is without error had become the central test of orthodoxy.

The Atmosphere of the Chicago Statement

It was in this atmosphere that the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (ICBI) was founded.

It is worth noting what the statement was and was not. It was an evangelical document, not a strictly fundamentalist one; many of its authors were Reformed and evangelical scholars who had little sympathy for separatist fundamentalism. But it restated and sharpened the first of the five points, and it gave the broader conservative movement a precise definition to rally around. Later ICBI statements on hermeneutics (1982) and application (1986) built on it.

1979: The Movement Turns Political

The year after Chicago, the movement's momentum moved decisively into public life. In June 1979, the Southern Baptist Convention met in Houston and elected Adrian Rogers as president. This launched what its supporters call the "Conservative Resurgence," a decade-long campaign that put inerrantists in control of the

largest Protestant denomination in the United States. The Chicago Statement became a key reference point in that struggle.

Also in 1979, Jerry Falwell, working with conservative political strategists such as Paul Weyrich, founded the Moral Majority. Fundamentalists who had once insisted on staying separate from the world, and who had often criticized Christians for involvement in politics, now organized voters around opposition to abortion, the Equal Rights Amendment, pornography, and the perceived decline of traditional family values. The shift was striking: the movement that had retreated after Scopes was now registering voters and lobbying Congress. It would play a significant part in the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980.

Conclusion

By 1978 and 1979, fundamentalism and its evangelical cousins had travelled a long road. The five points of inerrancy, the virgin birth, substitutionary atonement, bodily resurrection, and miracles had been forged in the controversies of the early twentieth century. The movement had been humiliated in the 1920s, rebuilt in

obscurity, and divided in the 1950s. In the late 1970s it was larger, better organized, and more politically ambitious than at any time in its history. The Chicago Statement was both a product and a driver of that revival: a careful attempt to defend the first and most basic of the fundamentals at a moment when the movement was preparing to reshape American religion and politics.

In Closing

Along with a closer examination of doctoral theses, the institutions and their teachings that were attended, personal inquiry, testing and observation of character to accompany fasting and prayer, perhaps the Chicago Statement could be utilized in holding more teachers, pastors, and seminarians as an oath and guide to a greater fulfilling of commission.

And what is revival without this? It is simply enlightenment without discipleship, without any rails to keep us on the track through the narrow gate to the light.

May our Lord truly be an example to us as to how the Words of His Father are treated.

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A wide-angle photograph of the Chicago skyline across a body of water, likely Lake Michigan. The skyline is filled with various skyscrapers, including the Willis Tower. The water is blue with some ripples, and the sky is blue with scattered white clouds. The entire image is framed by a decorative gold border with ornate corner pieces.

THE CHICAGO STATEMENT ON BIBLICAL INERRANCY

A Brief History

Adopted October 26–28, 1978, at a Chicago summit convened by the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, the statement brought evangelical scholars, pastors, and Christian leaders together to affirm the truthfulness and authority of Scripture.

Its summary, nineteen articles of affirmation and denial, and accompanying exposition explain the conviction that the Bible is God's written Word, inspired through human authors and without error in its original manuscripts.

The statement calls readers to interpret Scripture according to its literary forms and historical setting. It places the authority of the Bible above church traditions and human judgments, encouraging Christians to trust God's Word and submit their faith and conduct to its teaching.

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