† Blessed is our God always, as it is now, was in the beginning, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. ... in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Through the prayers of our holy Fathers and Mothers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen. Glory to You, our God, glory to You.

O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, You are everywhere and fill all things, Treasury of blessings, and Giver of life: come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good One.

† Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us (three times).

† Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it is now, was in the beginning, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

A Refutation of The Chicago Statement
on Biblical Inerrancy
The Role of Reason

*Introduction*

*Part 1*. In Article X we read the cardinal principle of inerrancy: that inerrancy depends on the autographs, the original written documents.

“We affirm that inspiration[[1]](#endnote-1), 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.”

We might agree with some of Article X, yet not all of it. Strictly speaking, the sentence does not say that the autographs are inerrant; it says only that the autographs are “inspired”. So we will need to investigate the biblical idea of inspiration, just to be thorough in our examination. This is ironic, since the autographs are the only documents that could possibly be inerrant. Nevertheless, inspiration deals with the hearing and understanding of the conversation; inerrancy deals exclusively with the recorded document: it doesn’t even deal with the recording process, only the outcome of the process. Strictly speaking, the idea of inspired autographs is a metonymy substituting inspired for inerrancy and/or autographs for conversations.[[2]](#endnote-2) We most certainly do not mean that the hand of God physically directed the hand and pen of the original human writer.

We deny that autographs “can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy.” While it is true that a small percentage of manuscript evidence is in dispute; that evidence is hotly disputed; the reigning opinions seem to change every year: there is no consensus among experts. So “great accuracy” is a meaningless term, unless we define it in great detail: down to each chapter, verse, word, and spelling of words. Scripture requires both “jot and tittle”; so, accuracy must be measured by “jot and tittle”. We deny that mankind has such manuscripts or such technical information within its grasp at this time. Moreover, in several critical instances, we do not even know, or have evidence to establish, the actual autographic language.[[3]](#endnote-3)

We deny that extant “copies and translations of Scripture … faithfully represent the original. There is presently no acceptable standardized English language translation. Instead, there are as many as fifty or more confusing English language choices from which to select. Many of these choices are simply botch jobs. Instead of drawing closer to consensus, we are becoming more fragmented in opinions.

In seeking to establish an invalid assertion of biblical inerrancy as the Christian core authority, the Chicago Statement supplants the valid Christian core authority: namely the Father, Son, and Spirit. The Chicago Statement presents an hypothesis, which is neither biblical, Christian, conservative, or true; it grossly overstates the facts, and incredibly understates the difficulty and intensity of the problem: in doing so, it leaves the average Christian with little hope for coming to grips with the Truth.

*Part 2*. We certainly agree that God is without error; yet, no mere man is without error. For the autographs to be without error would ordinarily require that God write them. Yet in the life of Moses, God wrote only the Decalogue on stone tablets, which were archived inside the Ark.[[4]](#endnote-4)

Unless Genesis was received from an earlier source,[[5]](#endnote-5) the rest of Torah, which was archived outside, beside the Ark, is the product of an extended conversation between God and Moses, in which Moses acted as recording secretary.[[6]](#endnote-6)

So what we mean by inerrancy of Scripture is that the original documents sufficiently recorded and reported the conversations between God and His Prophets and Apostles, with the result that God approved and received them as a witness in His Holy Oracle,[[7]](#endnote-7) where they would then serve in perpetuity[[8]](#endnote-8) as the constitutional and regulatory law of God for God’s people, together with timely historical updates[[9]](#endnote-9) and literary treasures[[10]](#endnote-10).

Even in this, there is a marked distinction between the stone tablets themselves, and the Torah that reports a copy of the stone tablets’ contents. The stone tablets are unquestionably inerrant. We will not be able to prove that Torah is also inerrant, so this issue will remain unresolved, always in doubt.

*Part 3*. Some folks might take issue with the idea that inerrancy best describes this outcome.[[11]](#endnote-11) Does inerrancy mean without grammatical, punctuation, spelling, or syntactical variation — that Scripture defines perfection in such matters? Down to the least iota and serif?[[12]](#endnote-12)

We are troubled by the fact that not a single verse of Scripture contains the words, accurate, accuracy, inerrant, inerrancy, precise, or precision. Even if inerrancy might turn out to be a valid lemma of systematic theology; no biblical theology can be constructed without a mass of supporting Scripture: so a biblical theology of inerrancy will fail without evidence. Even if inerrancy might turn out to be a valid lemma of systematic theology: it will not, we will show that this also fails….

*Part 4*. It seems to us that the doctrine of inerrancy presupposes a false conservatism which seeks to supplant and usurp the true conservatism of the New Testament. In it, the Spirit’s living work, which engraves the Word[[13]](#endnote-13) on the heart, is replaced with a dead, yet inerrant counterfeit. This is very much like a turning away from Christianity back to a legalized Judaism similar in many respects to that contrasted with real Christianity in Romans 10:1-10, where the righteousness of law seeks to supplant and usurp the righteousness of the heart by faith. False righteousness comes from an inerrant book: it is cold and dead. True righteousness comes from an infallible Spirit who brings the teaching of the Word to life in the heart of faith.

“Brothers and sisters, my heart’s blessing and request to God for Israel is that they might be saved:[[14]](#endnote-14) for I witness of them that they have a zeal for God, yet not based on knowledge: for they, being ignorant of God’s righteousness, by seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to God’s righteousness:[[15]](#endnote-15) ***for Christ is the completion of the law in righteousness for everyone who believes***:[[16]](#endnote-16) for Moses writes concerning the righteousness of the law, ‘the man who does these things must live in them.’

“However, the righteousness of faith says this, ‘Do not say in your heart, Who shall ascend into heaven?’ Which is, to bring Christ down. ‘Or, Who shall descend into the abyss?’ Which is, to bring Christ up from the dead. Yet, what does it say? ‘The word[[17]](#endnote-17) is near you, in your mouth, and in your heart’: which is, the word of faith, which we proclaim, that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved: for with the heart one believes in righteousness; and with the mouth one confesses in salvation.”[[18]](#endnote-18)

*Part 5*. However, Article X states that such autographs are absent or lost; so that these autographs must “be ascertained from[[19]](#endnote-19) available manuscripts”. It is this insistence that the autographs are lost, with which we take issue first. Secondly, we evaluate the accuracy of theological wisdom and this conclusion of inerrancy. Thirdly, we ask, is this the process, the reconstruction from manuscripts, which Scripture itself prescribes, a process of ascertaining; or does Scripture require custodial guardianship? Fourthly, we collect some of the Scripture on the person and work of the Spirit. From this we ask the question, is the assurance, authority, and comfort we seek as Christians to be found in the inerrancy of the Scripture’s recording; or is it to be found in the infallibility of the Spirit’s leadership? In other words, are we the People of the Book, or are we the People of God, led in this age by the Spirit, Who is the Vicar of Christ on Earth?

In a second paper we will refute many of the claims of “The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy”. Yet in such refutation it is fair to ask if such a refutation of its parts exists, is the whole of “The Chicago Statement” also refuted? At what point is an errant teaching seen to be more than errant? At what point is an errant teaching, discovered to be a pernicious and wicked doctrine?

A third paper denies, as intellectually dishonest, that any reconstruction or recovery of the autographs, if possible at all, is achievable by simply examining the surviving manuscripts. This paper outlines a few of the difficulties in getting from inerrant autographic text of Scripture, to available manuscripts with great accuracy, to copies and translations of Scripture, which faithfully represent the original, without losing any essential element of the Christian faith along the way. Article X uses the phrase, “in the providence of God”: at least for some theologians this means Textus Receptus, or even King James Only. The providence of God does not certify for us, lives free from pain and suffering; nor does it certify freedom from error. Error, like rain, falls on the just and the unjust alike.[[20]](#endnote-20)

*Where is the Autograph?*

Where is the one inerrant, authoritative, canonical, and record copy of Holy Scripture today? It is not lost!

“I saw in the right hand of the One sitting on the throne, a scroll written inside and out, sealed with seven seals. I also saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to open the book, and to break its seals?’

“No man in heaven, in earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book, or look inside it. So I wept profusely[[21]](#endnote-21), because no man was found worthy to open, to read the book, or to look inside it.

“One of the elders said to me, ‘Do not weep. Look! The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the book, and to break its seven seals.’

“I looked! In the midst of the throne of the four beasts[[22]](#endnote-22), in the midst of the elders, a Lamb stood as it had been slain, having seven horns, with seven eyes, which are the sevenfold Spirit of God[[23]](#endnote-23) sent forth into all the earth. He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him Who sat on the throne.

“When He had taken the book, the four beasts and twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, every one of them having harps, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of saints. They sang a new song, ‘You are worthy to take the book, and to open its seals: for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood from every family, language, people, and nation. You have made us kings and priests to our God: and we shall reign on the earth.’

“I looked again! I heard the voice of many angels around the throne with the beasts and the elders: their number was myriads of myriads, and chiliads of chiliads[[24]](#endnote-24) saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb Who was slain to receive power, wealth, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and blessing.’

“I heard every creature in heaven, on the earth, under the earth, on or in the sea, and all that are in them[[25]](#endnote-25) saying, ‘Blessing, honor, glory, power, be to Him, Who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever.’

“The four beasts said, ‘Amen’. The twenty-four elders fell down and worshipped Him Who lives forever and ever.” — Revelation 5:1-14

The autographs are not lost, they are located, in accordance with Torah, exactly where we would expect them to be found, in the Oracle, beside the Ark. John emulates the process whereby the heir, first in Joshua, then in Samuel, especially in David and in Solomon, finally in Christ; whereby the Son receives the scroll from the Father. Christ the King receives the complete scroll of the holy record from God to rule over true Israel and the Universe. It is not the scroll which makes the Lamb worthy. Rather, His death and resurrection, ascension and enthronement, which fulfill all the promises to Abraham: these make Him worthy. The scroll is subject to His authority; not the other way around.

Several salient points are observable. We know where the complete autograph is located. We know that the Father has complete authority and power. We see that this complete authority is extended to Perfect-man.[[26]](#endnote-26) We see that this God-man is inseparably linked to the Spirit: as Perfect-man he has perfect fullness of the Spirit. This Father and Son are the subject of glorious hymns, among the greatest ever heard.

The book is subject to the authority of the Father and of the Son, and to the power of the Spirit. The book does not possess authority, it merely records and reports the authority of the Father and the Son, as it also describes the power of the Spirit.

Mere men are unworthy to open the book;[[27]](#endnote-27) hence, the authority of mere men is inferior to that of Jesus, the Perfect-man. Nevertheless, mere man who has been received in baptism, and empowered by the Spirit is no longer inferior: such people are being made into the likeness of Christ and are beginning to share in His authority, because they are His Body.

The book contains the record, it is the operating manual; yet, the book is not the miracle. The miracle is that all creation, including former mere men, is now in the process of being restored to the worship of the Father, Son, and Spirit. The book is not lost. We can see very well, where it is located.

*Wisdom*

Let’s examine the accuracy of theological wisdom and this conclusion of inerrancy.

“Where [is] a wise person? Where [is] a scribe? Where [is] a debater of this world? Hasn’t God made foolish, the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God by wisdom, it pleased God, by the foolishness of the proclamation to save the believers: for Jews also demand a sign, Greeks seek [only] wisdom:” [[28]](#endnote-28) — 1 Corinthians 1:20-22

*Axiomatic Wisdom*. Someone has remarked that inerrancy is axiomatic. It is far from being axiomatic. We cannot do with the Mysteries of God what ordinary creation and natural law permit us to do elsewhere.

For example, we cannot do with God, what we do in ordinary arithmetic: namely, declare a set of undefined and undefinable terms, lay out the Peano (1858-1932) postulates, define each new numeral as one more than its predecessor, and proceed to create the entire decimal number system, fractions, negative numbers, exponents, and all the rest. Or, with a little tweaking, develop unary, binary, octal, hexadecimal, or any number of other such similar systems. We would know everything practical, that there is to know about such systems.

We can do none of these things with God or with His Mysteries. There is nothing axiomatic about it. So, if God had not revealed Himself in an ongoing conversation with the ancients, we would know nothing at all. God is still, very much the Riddle wrapped in a Mystery inside an Enigma. We do not propose to know the outcome until God gives it to us.

In other words, man cannot know God from natural law alone, which is exactly what 1 Corinthians 1:20-22 says. We can know about God from natural law. We can know from natural law that the existence of God is reasonable, so that agnosticism and atheism are unreasonable. Yet we cannot know God Himself until we enter into conversation with Him. Such conversation as it is recognized in writing is commonly called Scripture, the Bible, or the Word[[29]](#endnote-29). Still, someone can read the Scripture without ever entering into the conversation: reading by and of itself does not necessitate faith.

There is nothing inherently inerrant in knowledge about God. Knowing God personally is revelatory; it is not axiomatic, nor is it axiomatically inerrant, because it comes through man.

*Exegetical Wisdom*.

“If a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams arises among you, and gives you a sign or a miracle, and the sign or the miracle should actually happen, about which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods, which you have not known, and let us serve them’ … that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death.” — Deuteronomy 13:1-2, 5

“The prophet, who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall surely die. Yet, if you say in your heart, ‘How shall we identify the word which the Lord has not spoken?’ When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing might not have come into existence, or might not reach agreement [with well-established, God-centered facts][[30]](#endnote-30), that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously: you shall not spare him.” — Deuteronomy 18:20-22

“Truly I say to you, ‘Until heaven and earth should be transformed[[31]](#endnote-31), one iota nor one whisker[[32]](#endnote-32) should not[[33]](#endnote-33) be transformed from the law, until everything should have come into existence[[34]](#endnote-34).” — Matthew 5:18

We note that all of these passages emphasize the perfection of fulfilment, rather that the inerrancy of the document. If any of these passages of Scripture actually taught the inerrancy of Scripture, proof would only be a matter of correct exegesis. Scripture says what it says: end of story, end of discussion.

However, this cannot be the emphasis or clear proof hoped for, from such passages: for oftentimes the Prophet simply disclosed a mystery, about which he had no personal understanding. The Prophet wrote without specific knowledge, so any perfection from a murky vision was strictly accidental.[[35]](#endnote-35) The Prophet is also a child, who must be led and taught by the hand of God: if there is any defining characteristic of children, it is that they get into trouble, and make mistakes.[[36]](#endnote-36)

Granted that, there must be some recognizable tangency between such prophecies and their perfect fulfillment: yet nothing indicates that such recognizable tangency is inerrant, it simply had to tell the recognizable truth, and be in agreement with all precedent Scripture. Prophets, were men and women of God, who walked with God, stumbling and suffering as they went: their words are marked with their personal anguish and sin.[[37]](#endnote-37)

The case for inerrancy is not proved exegetically. There are many miles between Truth and inerrancy. Inerrancy is not necessary to find Truth.

*Deductive Wisdom*. Let’s apply deductive reasoning, not abductive or inductive reasoning, in an attempt to move from what we do know, to what we wish to prove or disprove. To accomplish this, we will form a series of syllogisms and draw conclusions from them.

1. God is perfect; hence, whatever He writes, says, and/or does is perfect, inerrant, or infallible.
2. Creation is perfect[[38]](#endnote-38); yet it fell. This seems like a logical contradiction; even so, it is not a logical contradiction. We will leave proof of this to others.
3. Whatever God writes is inerrant.
4. All of human nature is tainted by this fall without exception; all of the elements of each person continue to function, yet they cease to behave inerrantly.[[39]](#endnote-39) In one sense, human beings are all dead: none of them can any longer attain the glory that was once taken for granted in a perfect creation.[[40]](#endnote-40)
5. This tainting of human nature effects mental processes, such as will, and wisdom: this results in defective variations of individuality, personality, reason, and logic, as well as the inability to stop sinning.
6. Whatever humans write is subject to defective variations of individuality, personality, reason, and logic, as well as the inability to stop sinning (errancy). The inerrancy statements deal thoroughly with the first defect, variations of individuality and personality, basically by saying that God permits them.[[41]](#endnote-41) They do not deal so well with variations of reason, and logic: for unredeemed man reading a perfect book, is unable to perfectly understand or explain it. Even redeemed man is sufficiently hampered by such limitations, as to be incapable of recognizing perfection, even if he sees it.[[42]](#endnote-42) The inerrancy statements never deal with humanity’s inability to stop sinning at all.[[43]](#endnote-43)
7. Since the perfection of God’s creation did not prevent the fall; there is no way to be certain that the perfection of God’s conversation will also prevent all errors in its recording.
8. Humanity, outside of redemption is in a state of decay. In redemption, some humans enter into a state of growth, not into a state of perfection. There is no indication that Scripture is capable of a similar growth toward perfection.
9. Whatever God writes is inerrant. Whatever humans write is inevitably errant. This dilemma is resolved by observing that Scripture was written by both God and man. Such a junction of two authors was not the result of dictation; it was the result of an ongoing two party conversation in which the Sprit enabled the human partner to participate. The Spirit’s involvement did not enable the recording of the conversation: for the Prophets could already read and write. What the spiritual gift of inspiration accomplished was to enable the Prophets to understand and explain some of the Mysteries they were privileged to see; there is no indication that such empowerment led to perfect recording. God provided only part of the conversation; man provided the other part.
10. So, according to theological logic and wisdom, the taint of sin is always present, and it is impossible to draw a conclusion of inerrancy based on wisdom alone. The question is left unresolved: there is both a possibility of error and no error; yet we cannot determine which, nor can we establish the probabilities of either. We have some of the necessary conditions, yet not all of the sufficient conditions of proof. Moreover, if we assume a resolution we are in danger of putting words into the mouth of God.[[44]](#endnote-44)

*Practical Wisdom*. After the Israelites wandered for forty years, Moses rewrote the Law in the book of Deuteronomy. This was necessary because the covenant, made with the older generation, was broken, and the older generation perished except for Joshua and Caleb. Even though the features of the first covenant at Sinai remained in force, Moses created a covenant renewal document for the younger generation, which was about to enter the Rest of God. It is no use claiming that these are the literary and stylistic changes of a human author: for the law itself is changing; albeit ever so slightly. Such changes also follow the principle of symbiosis, or coherency, so that the progress of doctrine grows into a consistent whole.

It should be clear that as the people of God grew in grace and faith that God’s lessons for them became more highly developed and profound. It is wrong to call these former covenants, errors, because the covenant has changed; but it may also be excessive to call them inerrant. The everlasting covenant changed again after David was enthroned; and finally the coming of Christ established the New Covenant.[[45]](#endnote-45)

As rock solid as this practical wisdom, the progress of covenants and doctrine is, it does not provide a proof for inerrancy.

*Conclusion from Wisdom*. We have tested the idea of inerrancy from several aspects of wisdom: axiomatic wisdom, exegetical wisdom, deductive wisdom, and practical wisdom. In each case we failed to find a proof for inerrancy.

This is not a claim for great error in Scripture: for no such error can be demonstrated.

If you believe that there are great contradictions in Scripture, show us what you believe to be one such contradiction, and we will examine each case, one at a time. We reject this line of argument as the foolishness of gainsayers.

Scripture may very well be inerrant in the autographs. We believe that Scripture is inerrant as far as Revelation 5 and 10 are concerned, until John touches the Little Book: inerrancy ceases with John’s errant touch. Nor is there any proof for inerrancy to be found anywhere.

Thus we are opposed to forcing this litmus test[[46]](#endnote-46) on the consciences of others who think that this word is excessive for describing the well-known historic acts involved: namely conversation, inspiration, interpretation, and canonization. If Scripture could ever possibly be inerrant, it would be inerrant as a result of these acts, which are all acts of God; yet, none of them certifies inerrancy.

*What is the Process?*

*Historic Path*. Is this the process, the reconstruction from manuscripts, which Scripture itself prescribes, a process of ascertaining; or does Scripture require custodial guardianship? Is it true that such an autograph, “in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy?” We are not now disputing the hypothetical possibility of such an event. Now we are questioning that this accurately describes the process given in Scripture itself.

In Revelation 6, as the Lamb opens the first four seals, we see a description of seemingly angelic action: conquest, conflict, crisis, and casualties, followed by the chasm of the grave.

As the fifth seal opens we see the martyrs being clothed in white baptismal garments, which are symbolic of the washing away of all their sins. These are said to have been slain for, τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ, the Word of God, the Lamb, the Son of God; not Scripture: for thus far Scripture has been called, βιβλίον, obviously in the form of a scroll. If not βιβλίον, or γραφαῖς ἁγίαις (Romans 1:2) we might at least have expected τοῦς λόγους for Scripture. The point is, that unless there are specific contextual reasons, especially in John’s literature, Word, meaning Jesus the Word is much preferred. These gave their lives for the Lamb, not for the book.

With the opening of the sixth seal we see what we believe to be the fall of Israel-Judea:[[47]](#endnote-47) for in Joseph’s dream the sun is Israel, the moon is Leah, and the eleven stars are his mostly envious brothers. The fall of Israel is seen as a cosmic event. The celestial Universe and the terrestrial kingdoms of man are brought to terror at the fall of Israel: for the fall of Rome cannot be far behind.[[48]](#endnote-48)

In Revelation 7, we see the sealing of Israelite evangelists who are exempted from the “holocaust” seen in the sixth seal. Sealing is characteristically the work of the Holy Spirit, so these are Israelites who have embraced Christ. These Israelite evangelists represent the true Israel of God. Israel in the flesh has left the faith.

Beginning with verse 9, we see that these Israelite evangelists were very effective so that large numbers of both Jews and Gentiles have entered The Church. Again these are dressed in baptismal garments, indicating their purity, which is a gift from the Holy Spirit. These stand before the throne, indicating that they are present in the worship service that John observes. New hymns break forth.

So far, hidden in apocalyptic language, reminiscent of Ezekiel, John has followed the same general historical path as Luke in Acts: Jews spread out from Jerusalem, making disciples as they go. He has also followed the same general liturgical path found in a worship service: for a worship service is primarily an historic pageant of the life of Christ.

With the opening of the seventh seal in Revelation 8 and 9, we see that the outcome of everything that has transpired thus far is cosmic, epic. We do not know that these events are caused by preceding events; or if they are incidental to preceding events; or even what these events are, specifically. What is perfectly clear is that these epic events are heralded by trumpets, each of which introduces a devastating destruction: yet of what? of Jews? of Greeks? of Romans? of angelic powers? Who can say?

In Revelation 10, we see an angel emerge from the preceding melee with a little book.[[49]](#endnote-49) This angel has very similar distinguishing marks to those of Jesus in Revelation 1; there Jesus also related with John via a book: there to write a book, here to take and eat the book.

We believe that this picture connects directly to Ezekiel 1:10, and 10:14.[[50]](#endnote-50) We believe that Ezekiel’s tetramorphs are icons or types of the four evangelists: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.[[51]](#endnote-51) Revelation 10 pictures the delegation of apostolic authority to, and commission of John; yet, we anticipate that similar delegations of apostolic authority and commissioning apply to Matthew, Peter-Mark, and Paul-Luke, as well as James and Jude.[[52]](#endnote-52) John is not to simply read the book; he devours it as food for his soul, this it turns out is a bitter-sweet pill to swallow, involving prophecies to many, possibly all of the world’s people. John’s portions of biblical record are not simply written down and copied; they must be digested.

So all believers follow Jesus not simply by reading the Bible, as so many strings of logical theorems, but by devouring, digesting, eating, and swallowing it. The Bible is more than so much information on a page; it must infect every life and every particle of life.

In this process, a complete Scripture has passed directly from the hands of the Father, to the Son, and a perfect portion of Scripture has been given to John the Apostle.

There is no ascertaining here. The book is in the hands of delegated authorities every step of the way: Father to Jesus to John the Apostle. The process described is one of assimilating, not one of ascertaining. John is the guardian of the books for which he bears responsibility; he does not gather them from available manuscripts; they are the outcome of his extended conversation with Jesus. Since John has received this “baton” of Scripture directly from Jesus; to whom will John pass the “baton” as his successor?

The “baton” most certainly will not be bequeathed to secular scholarship or to weighty theological arguments. Instead it will go to others who will, by devouring, digesting, eating, and swallowing it, become its faithful guardians. Where would we find such a body of loyal followers, and what should we call them, if we are not to call them The Church.

So the process is not a process of ascertaining inerrancy. It is a process of assimilating Truth and custodianship of Truth, as Scripture is handed from the Father to the Son to John to The Church.

“The things which you have heard from me among many witnesses; commit these same things to faithful people, who are able to teach others as well.” — 2 Timothy 2:2

[[53]](#endnote-53)

1. The switching of words and emphasis between inerrancy and inspiration is as misleading as it is clever. Inspiration and inerrancy are two distinct ideas. Inspiration refers to the giving, receiving, and understanding of the ongoing conversation between God and His Prophets and Apostles. Inerrancy is all about the recording of that conversation, which is more closely related to canonization, which is the official act of God in receiving into the Oracle those inspired writings, which the Levites presented and installed. This means that, if inerrancy is either necessary or true, it is the result, the outcome of the process of inspiration, recording, and canonization, not its cause.

Inspiration, from the giving perspective of God, is necessarily perfect. Inspiration, from the receiving and understanding aspect of man, is necessarily more limited; in this second aspect, inspiration is the gift of the Holy Spirit in empowering man to hear what God is saying, discuss it thoroughly with God in open conversation, understand it, and proclaim it (Speech is specified, not writing).

Closely associated with inspiration is the gift of the Holy Spirit in what is sometimes called the gift of interpretation. When the seventy or seventy-two elders received the gift of interpretation (Exodus 24:1, 9; Numbers 11:16, 24-29), Scripture identifies it as the same Spirit as was given to Moses. However, this spiritual gift is distinct from that of Moses: for Moses talks with God personally; whereas, the elders are only gifted to understand, interpret, explain, and disseminate what Moses wrote. Among the Jews this spiritual gift is known as Bath Kol, secondary inspiration. This is the spiritual gift that defines the schools of the prophets: it enabled several men to understudy the great Prophets. Today, we might call this spiritual gift, the gift of exegesis. We note that such a gift has nothing to do with the wild excesses of miracles or languages commonly claimed today: it is absolutely bounded to the ability to have Spirit given insights into Scripture (or, in some instances into Creation). Because this spiritual gift is not restricted to one person, as with the Prophet or Apostle (It is shared among many): it requires endless cross checking to insure that all interpretations say the same thing, are on the same page. An interpretation cannot become either Doctrine (“The Teaching”) or Dogma until it achieves universal acclaim: until such acclaim is achieved it is nothing more than pious personal opinion. This spiritual gift of secondary inspiration, interpretation, or exegesis is also distinct from the spiritual gifts that relate to priests, and kings. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. We may have inerrant autographs; and/or we may have inspired conversation: the adjectives do not accurately apply the other way around. When we investigate the spiritual gifts of Moses and the First Sanhedrin we discover that these gifts are limited to listening, understanding, responding: in one word, conversation; toward others these gifts are limited to also explaining, applying, and judging. Nothing in this set of gifts suggests inerrancy. The autographs are dead documents, unable to enter into the conversation: they are not, strictly speaking, inspired autographs. Similarly, the human side of the conversation can never be considered as inerrant: even though human participation is impossible without inspiration. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. The manuscripts, as far as we have remaining ones, are written in Hebrew/Aramaic or Greek. The supporting Old Testament evidence, such as it is, suggests that the post-Samuel to pre-exilic OT works were all written in Paleo-Hebrew, not in Hebrew/Aramaic or Greek. Supporting evidence for works from Moses to David, simply does not exist: there is no extant evidence that Moses wrote in either Paleo-Hebrew or Hebrew. Moses, most likely, wrote in Akkadian Cuneiform: proving this autographic language hypothesis is a far different matter, especially considering the paucity of available evidence. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Exodus 25:16; 40:20; Deuteronomy 10:2, 5 [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. There is every reason to believe that such documents were available to Moses in the Sumerian language or in the Akkadian language. It is unthinkable that such a large empire as Akkad was administered by oral tradition: since we have large libraries of Akkadian cuneiform tablets, we know that this is not the case. There are possibly as few as one hundred qualified epigraphers in the world, so it comes as no great surprise that many of these tablets have never been read; in fact, there are linguistic variants that we can’t even yet decode. We cannot know absolutely; still, the probabilities also point to Moses writing in Akkadian between 1406 and 1366. Paleo-Hebrew does not appear as a language until around 1200 or even much later. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Exodus 33:11 [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Exodus 25:22; Numbers 7:89; Deuteronomy 31:26 [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. They were designed and intended to last forever. What Moses does in Torah, and in tabernacle, as Solomon also does later in temple is an icon or type of the heavenly reality. In Revelation 5, John witnesses the heavenly reality itself, which does last forever. This is what Moses also saw, from which he constructed his earthly models (Exodus 25:9, 40; Numbers 8:4; Hebrews 8:5; 9:23). [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Nevi’im or Prophets [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Ketuvim or Writings, aka Psalms (Luke 24:44) [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. We do not take such issue; yet, we are sympathetic with those who do take issue with the word, inerrant. The word, inerrant, is an excessively strong word, subject to all kinds of misinterpretation, a word not found in Scripture, and totally based on a somewhat contrived theological argument. The insistence on the adjective, inerrant, opens Christianity to the most blatant attacks of the wicked. Nevertheless, we are willing to let the word, inerrant, stand; provided that very close scrutiny is given to all the caveats listed in this refutation. The fact that so many caveats are necessary to defend a single word is tantamount evidence that the wrong word is in use. Correctly chosen words depend on the common knowledge of their meaning: no such common knowledge exists for the meaning of the word, inerrant, in this context; hence the abundance of caveats.

The opposite of inerrant is not a declaration of a multiplicity of major Scripture errors. We agree that the manuscripts are marvelously free of significant errors. The vast majority of manuscript variations has to do with trivialities of grammar, spelling, and syntax. The opposite of inerrant is, showing very little evidence of unreliability. This is a statistically based conclusion, based on open observation of the evidence, not a somewhat contrived theological deduction. There is no evidence of widespread, sweeping error.

All of this contrived theological argument seems very reasonable. On the other hand, the ages of Enlightenment, Reason, and Science are statements of human failure, not of human success. In following the trail of deductive reason, rather than the trail of evidence, the Chicago Statement follows the same sort of process that led the scholastics to their infinitesimally silly debates, (How many angels can dance on the head of a pin?) and conclusions; or the German liberals who brought us higher criticism with their abuses of statistics and destruction of evidence. Man cannot reach God by reason. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Matthew 5:18 — While Articles VIII and IX are intended to guard against such excesses; some might still find the word inerrant as too strong a word to use. I do not have any problem applying the word, inerrancy to Revelation 5 or 10; yet, that is where I must stop. Once humans get their hands on anything it is no longer undefiled. The autographs of Moses existed in the Oracle (Deuteronomy 31:26) of the tabernacle and temple for quite a while, perhaps until 586. Touching these documents was said to make the hands unclean, and required washing before and after handling. This defilement of the hands did not apply to copies which were less sacred, and were handled more casually. On another note, some might think that the word, inerrant, tends to trivialize the difficulty of the work involved. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Christ Himself [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Israel in the flesh is not currently saved. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Similarly, inerrancy seeks to establish its own standard of truth: something other than the work of the Spirit seen repeatedly throughout the New Testament. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Christ is the complete fulfilment of the whole law. The law is not applied to the flesh by works. Neither is the law distinct and separate from the gospel: for the life of Christ is both law and gospel. So Christians, in obedience to the gospel, build the temple of God on the “partial” foundation of the law (or prophets, Ephesians 2:20-21; 1 Peter 2:6); which, since it is already fulfilled by Christ can only be applied to human life by the power of the Spirit, received by faith. It is not as though such faith has no works of its own: yet, these are the works of life, not the works of necrotic flesh. The rest of the foundation is, of course supplied by the apostles and by Christ Himself. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. τὸ ῥῆμά, not ὁ λόγος [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. The confession and faith are of a spiritual reality, which the Spirit has already sown in the heart by baptism. Based on the evidence of that reality, the Christian bears vocal testimony of it and walks within it: which is what faith is, walking within an established reality. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. reconstructed from [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Matthew 5:45 [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. poly [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Ezekiel 1:10; 10:14; Revelation 4:7. The tetramorphs are iconic, symbolic representations of the four Evangelists, the four Gospel writers. John, in his visionary state, may not realize that he is one of the four Evangelists. These uphold the throne of God and of His Christ. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Ordinarily, elsewhere in Scripture, particularly in Daniel, seven horns would indicate either a set of seven kings ruling as polyarchs, or a sequence of seven monarchs. Here neither of these is possible: for the Lamb is clearly the monarch in view, the seven horns are a descriptive property of the Lamb. If seven subordinate kings were in view, who would these be? Would they be the seven Julio-Claudian Caesars? We think it simpler and better to understand the seven horns as iconic of the perfection of authority and power: expressing the idea that the Lamb is King of kings, and Lord of lords, Who wears the seven horns as a crown, the symbol of His supremacy over the Universe. He is the sevenfold crowned, all-sovereign one.

Seven eyes may be a reference to Zechariah 3:9; 4:10. As with the seven horns, it is simpler and better to understand the seven horns as iconic of the perfection of vision and knowledge, the symbol of His unlimited oversight of the Universe. Strictly speaking, the Spirit is the sevenfold sighted omniscient one.

The word Spirit is plural. We do not believe that there are seven Holy Spirits; rather, this is the perfect sevenfold nature of the One Spirit, which expresses His ubiquitous, omnipotence. The Lamb is omnipotent in His own right; yet as Perfect-man He also receives the gift of the Spirit in full measure.

Since He sits until all His enemies are under His feet (Exodus 24:10; 2 Samuel 22:10; 1 Kings 5:3; Psalm 8:6; 18:9; Lamentations 3:34; 1 Corinthians 15:25, 27; Ephesians 1:22; Hebrews 2:8) these three sevens may express the work of the Spirit as Vicar of Christ, in bringing the infinite crown, vision, and power to the Lamb. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Oodles and oodles: it is unlikely that we are to count 101,000,000. Besides which, the expression is myriads upon myriads, and chiliads upon chiliads: plural in all four instances, a number too large to be humanly counted or comprehended. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. This is a curious expression, yet we cannot rule out the possibility that it refers to creatures that live inside of other creatures: thus even our benign and hostile parasites, as well as the smallest microbes give glory to the Father and the Son. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. As true God He already possesses such authority. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. This is the understanding of classic Judaism. Merely touching the master Torah scroll “makes the hands unclean”. The high priest must wash his hands before and after reading the master Torah scroll: copies of Torah do not receive such respect. The master Torah scroll is thought to be so pure as to reveal every defilement of the hands by its brightness: thus the hands must be washed a second time after reading, for the hands have been exposed, being, as they are, completely filthy. Hence, no mere man is worthy to touch the Scroll, open its seals, and read it, let alone teach its true meaning; only Perfect-man is so pure, so spotless that He can open the Scroll without being exposed as a thoroughly corrupted fraud. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. Imagine that! God does by the message of declaration, what men expect requires miraculous signs to confirm, or extraordinary intelligence to understand. Christ is risen! Christ is ascended! Christ is enthroned! Christ has all authority! The Holy Spirit is descended! The Church is born! Ironically, most of the Jews missed the coming of the Holy Spirit over all of The Church. Ironically, most of the Greeks did not have enough wisdom to see it. A mere mortal human being has no strength to attain salvation; it has to be handed to mere mortal humans on a golden platter. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. We avoid the use of the term, Word, unless specific contextual circumstances require it: for Word most frequently refers to Jesus, the Son of God, and only rarely refers to the Bible. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. The Greek word is related to symbiosis: the coming together in agreement with other truth. This is a coherency test: the Scripture must hang together, each new piece of evidence must fit together with all of the previous evidence. Thus the progress of doctrine grows into a consistent whole. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. Παρέλθῃ is pass beside, not pass away: there is no evidence that earth or heaven will be destroyed; there is ample evidence that both will experience a complete metamorphosis, third person singular aorist subjunctive. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. little hook [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. Οὐ μὴ is the only absolute thing in the sentence; everything else is grammatically hypothetical. Οὐ is the negation of concrete fact. Μὴ is the negation of philosophical theory. In the Greek mindset, the philosophical “world of the forms” is reality, while concrete earthly existence is considered unreal. Οὐ μὴ suggests that it would not happen, even if it could happen. The conditions of the hypothesis apply even if οὐ μὴ was not in the sentence. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. Γένηται is begotten, born, or created anew, third person singular aorist subjunctive. The whole verse is cast in hypothetical construction. It establishes only possibilities, without ever affirming that they will or will not happen. Even if they do happen, the law cannot be transformed away from perfect fulfillment. The emphasis is on a perfect fulfillment not an inerrant record. Since Jesus fulfills all the law’s righteous demands, this verse is now concrete historic reality. The only remaining acts have to do with the application of Jesus, in the law, to all who are being saved: for which we have no record; yet heaven does have such an inerrant record (Revelation 21:27). The misspelling of a name does not reduce the chances of salvation; God knows all those who belong to Him. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. 1 Peter 1:11-12 [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. Psalm 131:2 [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. Hebrews 11:1-40 [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. Posse non peccare est, et posse peccare est. Mankind is able and free to choose between not sinning and sinning, while still in the garden before the fall. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. Mind, will, emotions, body: all are bent, twisted; working, yet with a limp; functioning, yet incapable of real spiritual progress. Still, God provides…. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. Non posse non peccare est. Mankind is no longer able to stop sinning after the fall. Redemption repairs this flaw. The sacrament that conveys such redemption is baptism. Yet, redemption is not an instantaneous elimination of the ability to sin; rather baptism is the start of a lifelong process of walking and talking with God, which daily removes sin more and more, even though we all stumble (It is posse non peccare est, possible to not sin; it is not yet non posse peccare est, not possible to sin). This lifelong process may be called either Divinization (Theosis) or sanctification; its final outcome is known as Divinization (Theosis), final sanctification, or glorification (Non posse peccare est, it is no longer possible to sin). [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. 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.” [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. Article IX ducks the issue. We agree that falsehood is not introduced. This does not prove that inerrancy is produced. If some sense of omniscience, at least for the words involved, is not conferred, how does the result become inerrant without dictation.

“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.” [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. This is the same theological risk as that found in 1 Corinthians 15:15; except for the fact that 1 Corinthians 15:15 is easily resolved, Christ did raise: here, no such resolution is possible. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. Hebrews 13:20 [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. Article XIX certainly intends to be a litmus test: if not of salvation, then of orthodoxy with “grave consequences”. It is also used this way in practice: for in some denominations, candidates are turned away from the ministry on the basis of this one rubric, which is not found in Scripture; while no consideration is give to whether or not the candidate is full of the Holy Spirit, which is the rubric found in Scripture.

“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.” [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. Genesis 37:9-10 [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. Daniel 2:34, 44-45 [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. The timing of this emergence immediately after the melee described in the seventh seal of Revelation 8 and 9, leads us to believe that the seventh seal is an apocalyptic summary of all the events on earth, a contradiction of sinners against themselves, prior to the enthronement of Christ, the coming of the Spirit, and the birth of The Church on Pentecost, 33 AD. We now believe that the seventh seal of Revelation 8 and 9 is a sort of declaration of fulfillment for the whole book of Daniel: or at the very least is the earnest payment for the fulfillment of Daniel. The Diamond, cut without hands is now destroying the earthly kingdoms of human rebellion. [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. BTW, MT (600-1000 AD: Leningrad Codex, 1008/9), Ezekiel 1:10 has the sequence man, lion, ox, eagle; while 10:14 has the sequence cherub, man, lion, eagle. The Vulgate (382-420 AD) agrees with both of these readings. However, the Septuagint (200-100 BC or earlier) only agrees with the 1:10 reading; verse 10:14 only exists in one manuscript. So what shall we conclude? Shall we conclude that the Scripture has an error? Or should we conclude the obvious: that the correct reading does not have verse 10:14 at all, it is evidently a later scribal insertion. Another famous MT blunder is found at 1 Samuel 13:1. Ezekiel 10:14 is just one more instance supporting our tentative conclusion that the Septuagint preserves the superior text. Incidentally, the Septuagint has never left the custodial care of The Church. [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. Mark and Luke are not apostles; yet they serve as scribes for two of the apostles: probably Peter and possibly Paul.

Matthew sees Jesus as the Perfect-man, the God-man, Who by His death and resurrection brings the offer of forgiveness to all the world.

Mark sees Jesus as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, Who by His death and resurrection brings Rome and all other earthly authority toppling to the ground in ruins. Who by His death and resurrection takes the gathering twilight of evening, and the approaching night that consumes the Gentiles, and transforms them into blazing glorious light on the dawning of the eighth and eternal day, the day of resurrection.

Luke possibly sees Jesus as the sacrificial ox, Who by His death and resurrection completes all the sacrificial requirements of the Law and fulfills all of the Law’s righteous demands. This is only a tentative suggestion, because we have not spent enough time in Luke to be more positive.

John sees Jesus as the great eagle, Who by His death and resurrection reveals the lofty picture, in which Jesus, the Christ of God is seen changing the entire Universe. [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. The entirety of the New Testament is transcribed by these eight authors. We understand that the Pauline authorship of Hebrews is disputed: we simply consider this dispute to be so much foolishness. New Testament books stand only on Christ delegated, Spirit powered, Apostolic authority. If Apostolic authority can be removed, the book itself must also be removed. We are not willing to tolerate the removal of Hebrews from the New Testament. [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
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