

THE FOUNDATION OF BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

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Preface

THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON BIBLICAL INERRANCY

THIS VOLUME is the first scholarly production of a new organization of pastors, professors, and Christian laymen: The International Council on Biblical Inerrancy. Founded in 1977, after a year of careful conversations and planning, the ICBI has as its purpose the defense and application of the doctrine of biblical inerrancy as an essential element for the authority of Scripture and a necessity for the health of the church. It was created to counter the drift from this important doctrinal foundation by significant segments of evangelicalism and the outright denial of it by other church movements. At one of its early meetings, the Council adopted the following statement as an expression of its purpose.

The Situation

1. Even among evangelicals, Christian doctrine and Christian living are moving progressively away from the Bible's standard and from the classical teachings of the church.
2. This tragic departure is directly related to the denial in many quarters of the historical doctrine of the verbal inerrancy of the Bible.
3. Large portions of evangelical scholarship, which have accepted many of the negative critical theories of the writing of the Bible and a neo-orthodox approach to revelation, are endeavoring to redefine evangelicalism after their own image.

4. Most laymen, Christian leaders, and pastors seem to be theologically unequipped to discern this departure from the historic view of the Bible or to see the vast consequences which tend to follow from that departure.

5. Because of a contemporary unbiblical view of love and a low evaluation of truth, many evangelicals who are alerted to this doctrinal departure tend optimistically to think the problem will somehow vanish. Or they find themselves emotionally resistant to any effort to have the issues clarified, which might result in referring to some brothers and sisters as unbiblical.

“Peace at any cost” is the emotional position of vast numbers of evangelicals in the 1970s. This attitude complicates the matter of “speaking the truth in love” because many evangelicals think that “speaking the truth” means one cannot be “speaking in love” when certain issues or persons are involved.

In light of the situation we see, and in response to the burden it has placed on our hearts, we commit to writing the purpose to which we now commit ourselves:

Our Purpose

To take a united stand in elucidating, vindicating, and applying the doctrine of biblical inerrancy as an essential element for the authority of Scripture and a necessity for the health of the church of God, and to attempt to win the church back to this historic position.

Our Objectives

1. To host a meeting of carefully chosen evangelical leaders, all of whom are committed to the biblical doctrine of inerrancy.
2. To create and publish a clear statement on inerrancy endorsed by a united coalition of prominent evangelical scholars, declaring therein that the Bible is true not only in matters of faith and practice but also in other matters such as statements relating to history and science.
3. To stimulate the communication and application of the concept of biblical inerrancy both in the academic theological community and at a popular level.

Plans for the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy for the next ten years involve two major thrusts: academic defense of the inerrancy position and practical Christian instruction. Academic work will lay the foundation needed for the church to proceed on the basis of a Bible that is true in whatever it touches. Work will be done in the areas of biblical, historical, theological,

and philosophical studies and practical theology. Instruction will be offered to pastors, Christian workers and lay persons regarding inerrancy and related issues. On the drawing board is a national network of training centers for those who are committed to an inerrant Bible and who are eager to join hands across denominational and theological lines to defend and advance this position.

Some will charge those who hold to inerrancy with making mountains out of molehills and with dividing the evangelical church. Members of the Council believe that they are simply calling a mountain a mountain and think it reasonable to expect that the ICBI will be a unifying force within evangelicalism, as it encourages Christian brothers and sisters to stand for the only objective foundation of a sure revelation from God there is—inerrancy.

Still other persons will argue that *infallibility* is a better word than *inerrancy* for describing the soundest evangelical position on Scripture and will wish that the ICBI were called the International Council on Biblical Infallibility instead. As some use this word, the choice of infallible would probably be acceptable. They recognize that in order for the Bible to be infallible in its truest and fullest extent it must be inerrant. Unfortunately, the majority of those who choose infallible rather than inerrant do so because they want to affirm something less than total inerrancy, suggesting erroneously that the Bible is dependable in some areas (such as faith and morals) while not being fully dependable in others (such as matters of history and science). Because of this situation and because of its commitment to total inerrancy, the ICBI has chosen to name itself by the use of the stronger word.

Although a firm stand on God's propositional truth will be taken by each ICBI member, the Council trusts the church will not see it repeating the harshness characteristic of some who defended the position in the 1920s and 1930s. The Council assumes that evangelicals committed to inerrancy will continue to work hand in hand with all other evangelicals for such common causes as world evangelization and hunger relief, and against such common foes as liberalism, the occult, moral permissiveness, and abortion on demand. The ICBI thus hopes to foster "a coalition within a coalition" and believes that an inner coalition of evangelicals who hold to inerrancy will be a "hard core" providing strength for evangelicalism as a whole. It believes that without this core evangelicalism will eventually crumble and fall under

increasing pressures coming upon it from secular culture.

The executive council of the ICBI is composed of the following members: Gleason L. Archer, James M. Boice, Edmund P. Clowney, Norman L. Geisler, John H. Gerstner, Jay H. Grimstead, Harold W. Hoehner, Don E. Hoke, A. Wetherell Johnson, Kenneth S. Kantzer, James I. Packer, J. Barton Payne, Robert D. Preus, Earl D. Radmacher, Francis A. Schaeffer, and R.C. Sproul.

The advisory board currently consists of Jay E. Adams, John W. Alexander, Hudson T. Armerding, Greg L. Bahnsen, Henri A.G. Blocher, William R. Bright, W.A. Criswell, Robert K. DeVries, Charles L. Feinberg, William N. Garrison, D. James Kennedy, Jay L. Kesler, Fred H. Klooster, George W. Knight, Harold B. Kuhn, Samuel R. Külling, Gordon R. Lewis, Harold Lindsell, John F. MacArthur, Josh P. McDowell, Allan A. McRae, Walter A. Maier, Roger R. Nicole, Harold J. Ockenga, Raymond C. Ortlund, Luis Palau, Adrian P. Rogers, Lorne C. Sanny, Robert L. Saucy, Frederick R. Schatz, Joseph R. Schultz, Morton H. Smith, Ray C. Stedman, G. Aiken Taylor, Merrill C. Tenney, Larry L. Walker, and John F. Walvoord.

Evangelicals who are interested in the Council and its work may write to: The International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, P. O. Box 13261, Oakland, California 94611.

Forty years ago the issues were clearer than they are today. Those who rejected the classical, historical view of the Bible at that time tended to fall into obvious heresies, such as rejecting the deity of Christ or the necessity of the Atonement. Today, since the existential method of viewing truth has come into theology, the situation is different. Now some evangelical scholars do not feel at all embarrassed to build a house of evangelical doctrine on the foundation of a liberal or neoorthodox view of Scripture.

Based on the academic work of its scholars, the goal of the ICBI is to help lead the average evangelical to a point of mature decision-making ability by offering a reasoned defense of the highest possible view of Scripture: what the Bible says, God says—through human agents and without error.

*James Montgomery Boice
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