

Response to the REPORT OF THE SCRIPTURE STUDY COMMITTEE  
TO THE TWENTY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE  
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I have been asked by several individuals to respond at length to the Report of the Scripture Study Committee (SSC) that was made to the 28<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene in June of 2013. I offer this critical engagement with deepest respect to these committee members who gave of their time and their vast critical faculties to provide such a careful and nuanced report, not only of their concluding recommendations, but also of their reasoning. And, I want to begin by confessing agreement with the SSC's final recommendation to reject the language proffered in JUD-805. I am in agreement with the members of the SSC that this language would have been problematic, at best.

In fact, I would go so far as to express my deep disappointment that the language under consideration in Resolution JUD-805 was approved for discussion, at all. First, 'inerrant throughout' is a standard that no evangelical inerrantist should ever suggest (see, e.g., the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy). There's no nuance or qualification to that language, and it would have been a travesty if we had embraced it. But, I digress.

My interest in this response is not to question the SSC's recommendation with respect to Article IV. I agree with them. Instead, my intention is two-fold: First, I will engage with their reasoning as it has been articulated in this lengthy report. My contention here will be that as careful and as thorough as the report may be, it fails to address the underlying concerns regarding the language of inerrancy raised by JUD-805. And second, I will engage myself with the language of Article IV. Here I will contend that the present language of Article IV is far too utilitarian and anthropocentric to be reflective of the role Scripture has played throughout church history or to guide the church in appreciating the full width and breadth and depth of the texts of Christian Scripture.

The report begins by identifying the 'heart' of Resolution JUD-805 to be a desire for the Church of the Nazarene to secure the Christian Bible's "rightful place in our life and theology." The SSC then proceeds to confess commonality with this concern generally, roots the concern in Wesley and the Wesleyan tradition, and then goes on to argue that the present language of Article IV achieves this end sufficiently without need of editing or amending.

They then proceed to break down Article IV phrase-by-phrase. This methodology, in my opinion, produces a largely convoluted result which, in the end, avoids discussion of the principle concerns in the inerrancy debate in evangelicalism. I'll do my best to illustrate. I'll begin by direct quotation at the onset, since the language is too exact and dense to summarize adequately.

**(a) Plenary, divine inspiration**

First, the article clearly states the inspiration of Holy Scripture as 'divine' and 'plenary': that means that the *whole* Bible is inspired and that it is inspired, not just in the sense that a work of art may be said to be 'inspired', but by God. To say that the Bible *as a whole* is inspired is to say that we cannot take texts out of context and quote them arbitrarily as 'the word of God.' We have to understand biblical theology as a whole.

There is no question that Article IV places the Christian Bible in a unique and singular category of literature in the church. And the SSC confesses their belief that all of Christian Scripture is rightly to be understood as divine and inspired. However, what is not mentioned here is the most critical issue addressed by the question of inerrancy raised by JUD-805: Inspired to what end? To confess that Scripture is uniquely authoritative and completely inspired is a hollow statement without a comment on inspiration's telos.

The SSC will eventually discuss the telos of inspiration, but to not discuss that here at the onset leaves an impression of greater teleological openness than is actually allowed by Article IV. For instance, one could argue that the United States Constitution is 'inspired' to instruct a people as to a certain form of representative democracy. However, to say that is not to say that the Constitution will be helpful for baking chocolate chip cookies.

In my opinion, it is misleading to confess commonality of terms where no commonality of meaning exists. This language of plenary inspiration as it is used in Article IV does not address the question being raised by the Resolution under consideration. I suppose I'm particularly sensitive to the rhetorical slight-of-hand in which uncommon ground is re-interpreted as common ground and then used as a staging area for foundational refutation of a contrary perspective. So, I might be over-reading.

With that said, I do appreciate the SSC's insistence in the above quotation that 'plenary inspiration' does assume a commitment to contextual and canonical exegesis. Other than a philosophical jab at the presumed 'fundamentalist' penchant for proof-texting, I'm not sure if the comment serves the current argument, very well. But, I do appreciate the sentiment, in any case.

The explanation continues, thusly:

Nor do we believe that divine inspiration cancels out the human authorship. Each book has a distinct style, vocabulary, and idiom reflecting the quite different human authors and contexts, whether of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Luke, Paul, or even writers unknown. We do not believe in a mechanical idea of inspiration in which their minds were blotted out and they became mere puppets. Rather their mental powers were heightened and their free wills guided by the subtle and sensitive Spirit of God. Whether they were gathering information to write a narrative, or editing what had previously been written, or were putting into writing speech directly inspired by the Holy Spirit, the result was a collection of documents fit for the purpose of revealing God's will and way, God's acts, and supremely God's revelation in his Incarnate Son.

This distancing of the SSC from what has sometimes been called the 'dictation theory' of inspiration seems somewhat unnecessary. Again, the discussion of inerrancy for evangelical inerrantists rejected this position quite some time ago (at least since the 1970s). To associate inerrancy and the concerns of inerrantists with this theory is a bit like a Calvinist explaining that she is not a Wesleyan because she disagrees with Pelagius. But, since I suppose there may be some individuals in the Church of the Nazarene who are not quite clear on inerrancy, perhaps this clarification was simply meant to educate. In any case, it seems to have little relevance to the issue at hand.

What is most perplexing in this paragraph is actually my favorite clause: ". . . the result was a collection of documents fit for the purpose of revealing God's will and way, God's acts, and supremely

God's revelation in his Incarnate Son." I love this statement, but as soon as the SSC gives it, it takes it away. Why? Because in their later discussion of inerrancy, they will confine the inerrancy of Scripture, as the present language of Article IV does, to "inerrantly revealing the will of God in all things necessary to salvation." At this point in the argument our view of inspiration looks quite broad, but it will soon be curtailed to such an extent that I am tempted to label the wonderful clause I just quoted as inaccurate to the language of Article IV.

We continue...

We agree therefore with the Cape Town Commitment of the Third Lausanne Congress when they say in their confession of faith:

We receive the whole Bible as the Word of God, inspired by God's Spirit, spoken and written through human authors. We submit to it as supremely and uniquely authoritative, governing our belief and behavior. We testify to the power of God's Word to accomplish his purpose of salvation. We affirm that the whole Bible is the final written word of God, not surpassed by any further revelation, but we also rejoice that the Holy Spirit illumines the minds of God's people so that the Bible continues to speak God's truth in fresh ways to people in every culture.<sup>2</sup>

We strongly endorse the emphasis in this Cape Town Commitment that we love God's Word because we love God, love his world, love the gospel, love the people of God, and love the mission of God.

I am a bit befuddled by the inclusion of this statement on Scripture. To my understanding the Third Lausanne Congress was a renewal of an older ecumenical evangelical ministry focused on world evangelism. Being ecumenical, the agenda seems to have been to write statements of faith that would be agreeable to a large cross-section of the evangelical landscape with the goal of articulating commonality for the purpose of working together to share the Gospel with unbelievers. Ecumenical statements of faith are intended to be less nuanced and more general, and it is no surprise that the SSC would agree with a statement meant to be agreeable to evangelicals generally.

The only rationale I can find myself for confessing agreement with this statement would be to say, "Hey, we're in the mainstream. Our statement is consistent with an ecumenical statement written

by an evangelical ministry associated with Billy Graham.” Maybe the assumption was that the supporters of this Resolution would be soothed by the SSCs sympathy with a Graham-esque statement on Scripture? I don’t know. I mean there’s no recommendation that the Church of the Nazarene adopt this statement in place of our own, nor does the SSC seem to be arguing that Article IV and this statement are interchangeable. Again, I’m confused. Perhaps there is a back-story here of which I am not aware. So, I will not continue to ruminate in ignorance.

The explanation continues... Oh, and let me opine at this point that the word *inerrant* should not have been considered separate from the qualifying clause ‘all things necessary to salvation’. The teasing apart of the two proves a bit misleading, to my reading.

**(b) Inerrantly revealing the will of God**

Secondly, Article IV clearly states that the Holy Scriptures reveal the will of God *inerrantly*. That means that what Holy Scripture tells us about God and his saving acts and purpose cannot be set aside by any merely human philosophy, metaphysics, or ethics. Human reason and culture are all fallen and therefore suspect when it comes to discerning the will of God, but we each may trust the word of God given to us in Holy Scripture as ‘a lamp to my feet and a light to my path’ (Psalm 119:105). Human reason and experience may guide us in many things, but when it comes to the things of God (which shapes all of life), they must bow to what he has revealed to us in the inspired Scriptures. This belief is what is usually known as the ‘infallibility’ of Scripture, that it ‘inerrantly reveals the will of God in all things necessary to salvation’ as distinct from absolute ‘inerrancy’ in every factual detail. This implies that, while the Holy Spirit guides us as we listen for the voice of God speaking to us through Scripture, no claims to private revelations of the truth of God which are additional to Scripture are acceptable.

Again, this paragraph explains the language, but the explanation given is historically problematic. Christian practice, even in the Church of the Nazarene, does not mesh with the confession that the language of inerrancy should simply be applied to God’s *will*. For instance, the creeds of the Church, to which the Church of the Nazarene confesses assent, articulate theological realities which are logically distinct from the ‘will of God’. What does the revelation of the Trinity, for instance, have to do specifically with the ‘will of God’? Does the Scripture then not inerrantly reveal God’s character or nature, only His will? Can or should God’s will even be logically isolated in a discussion of inspiration or inerrancy?

It's surprising to me that a theologian on the committee didn't resist this language for the simple fact that it is inconsistent with the shape, methodology, and assumptions involved in the practice of theology. I mean the SSC had already confessed, ". . . the result was a collection of documents fit for the purpose of revealing God's will and way, God's acts, and supremely God's revelation in his Incarnate Son." They have confessed here that the purpose of Scripture was more than the revelation of God's will and way. They have also included God's acts and God's self-revelation in the Person of Jesus. But, the language of inerrancy, according to the committee here, only relates to the first (God's will and way) and not to the second (God's acts) or the third (God's revelation in Jesus) necessarily.

Also, the insistence that the choice is between either "'inerrancy' in every factual detail" or "inerrantly reveals the will of God in all things necessary to salvation" is a patently false claim. These are demonstrably not the only two options available with respect to inerrancy. Granted, the language of JUD-805 forced this juxtaposition, and, as I said at the onset, the fact that this was the language we were given to discuss is beyond frustrating. But still, integrity requires us to confess that the full conversation is much more nuanced. The Chicago Statement of Biblical Inerrancy offers another way of understanding the arena of inerrancy and the telos of inspiration, for instance. This way of arguing that says we either have to agree with a statement with which almost nobody of any biblical education agrees or we have to agree with the language of Article IV is quite misleading.

With that said, I do agree that even this way of construing inerrancy at least precludes private, new revelations of God's will that would contradict or contravene the Scriptural witnesses. Again, this seems more like a comment meant to pacify an adversary than it does to address the issue at hand, but, again, I am ignorant of the deliberations which led to the inclusion of this observation. Whatever the reason, I appreciate it.

Continuing...

This does not imply however that we are infallible in our interpretation of the Bible. Some Christians think that they are merely stating what the Bible says, but that is naïve.

Whether we like it or not, every Christian is actually engaged in *interpreting* the Bible. Accordingly, we must interpret each word in its sentence, each sentence in its paragraph, each paragraph within the argument of the book as a whole, and each biblical book within the Scriptures as a whole. We interpret the New Testament against the background of the Old Testament, and the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament and particularly as progressive revelation leads up to the final revelation of God in Jesus Christ. We follow the guidance of the ancient creeds of the Church as we interpret the Scriptures together. All of this calls not only for careful scholarship, but also for dependence on the Holy Spirit. We expect all preachers and teachers particularly to be committed to the interpretation of the Scriptures given in the ancient creeds and the Articles of Faith, but on other matters we affirm freedom of interpretation provided it is in a spirit of loyalty to the Church. As we interpret Scripture together within the fellowship of the Church, we look to the Holy Spirit to guide us in the future into 'the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect' (Romans 12:2).

I'm in agreement with these statements. There's not much to which to object in this paragraph.

In some ways it is covering ground already covered earlier. However, there is a polemical sense here about which I hesitate to speculate. Perhaps what is being implied is that inerrancy is not a way to exclude readings or interpretations with which we don't agree. True enough. It's not a sufficient reason to leave the language of Article IV untouched, in my opinion, but perhaps it needed to be said.

The article continues.

### **(c) All things necessary to our salvation**

Thirdly, that brings us to the point that Article IV makes clear the purpose of Holy Scripture: that it reveals the will of God "...in all things necessary to our salvation..." John Wesley was very clear that the purpose of being a person 'of one book' was to find 'the way to heaven.'

I'm not sure that this sentence summary of Wesley's view of Scripture is quite adequate. Did Wesley really make Scripture entirely about getting to heaven? This doesn't seem consistent with his preaching, practice, or theological methodology. I can't dispute whether he ever said this, I suppose. Perhaps he did. But, if he truly meant what this implies, I'd have to say that Wesley would seem to be inconsistent with the practice of theology in the church going back to the very beginning. Theological study of Scripture has demonstrably not always been interested primarily in getting to heaven. If this is faithful to Wesley, I'm not sure as Wesleyans we should be parading it about.

The Bible is not to be treated as an almanac or a magic book or a text book of history or science. Its truth is expressed in the thought forms of the ancient world, in their culture, context,

geography, cosmology, and language. But on the other hand, God's action in the *history* of Israel and supremely in the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ *was* 'necessary to our salvation.' Accordingly, it is part of our faith that the Bible is the God-given account of God's action in space-time history and therefore an integral part of God's revelation in history and uniquely in the Lord Jesus Christ. And while science progresses by studying 'the book of nature' rather than by biblical study, nonetheless modern science arose in a Christian culture out of Christian convictions, and ultimately we believe that everything we know through science will be seen to be more than compatible with all that has been revealed to us through Holy Scripture.

I'm pleased with the remainder of this paragraph. SSC has attempted, among other things, to insist that "inerrantly revealing the will of God in all things necessary to salvation" does not preclude a belief in the historicity of the Biblical narratives on principle. If an event is seen as 'necessary to salvation' then it follows that said event must have occurred, and therefore that Scripture must be inerrant in its revelation.

The principle may be somewhat sound, but I suspect that the originators of Resolution JUD-805 were speaking to pragmatics. Practically speaking, the language of Article IV does not *require* Nazarenes to believe that "it is part of our faith that the Bible is the God-given account of God's action in space-time history and therefore an integral part of God's revelation in history and uniquely in the Lord Jesus Christ." This may be an adequate expression of the 'interpretation' of Article IV being proffered by the SSC, but it is not an interpretation necessitated by the Article.

In my opinion, the SSC should have been a bit more transparent and admitted that the language of Article IV does not *preclude* the belief in the historicity of the narratives of Scripture, nor does it *preclude* the belief that all of Scriptural revelation is necessary for salvation. But, Article IV does not *necessitate* these confessions either, and that's the rub, I would imagine, for supporters of JUD-805. The issue is not whether one *can* believe that Abraham, for instance, was a real, historical person which Genesis sufficiently describes and be a Nazarene. The issue is whether one *has* to believe these things to be a Nazarene. The SSC has said, "We believe it," and left the question of the necessity of such belief unaddressed.



In the end what is 'necessary for salvation' is a matter of interpretation, and so Article IV allows for some room to distance ourselves from the theological interpretations of Scripture. Of course, it doesn't require us to do so, but it doesn't prevent us from doing it either. I wish that issue had at least been addressed.

Alright, continuing...

Faith in the word of the gospel of salvation also implies obedience to the law of God. To live intentionally violating the law of God as interpreted by Jesus and the apostles is the antinomian denial of the faith. Christian ethics are formulated as the Church interprets Holy Scripture guided by the Holy Spirit and taking note of the wisdom of the Church through the ages.

I agree that Article IV safeguards the role of Scripture in soteriology and Christian ethics to a much greater degree than it does the role of Scripture in the development of theology or philosophy or metaphysics, etc. Christian soteriology and ethics seem securely rooted in the Scriptures by Article IV, particularly as they have been articulated in the Gospels. But, the issue being raised by Resolution JUD-805 was much larger than this. Perhaps meaningful engagement with the larger concerns was just impractical at this stage of the process.

And continuing...

**(d) What is not from Holy Scripture cannot be a doctrine of the Church**

Fourthly, the final compound clause of Article IV is perhaps the strongest of all. Its wording derives (via Wesley's Twenty-five Articles) from Article VI of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England:

Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man [*sic*], that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite necessary to salvation.

This asserts one of the cardinal principles of the Reformation, the *sola scriptura*, that Holy Scripture is the only source of Christian doctrine. It says that only what is read in Scripture or proved from Scripture is to be required as an article of faith or is necessary to salvation. Of course, as Wesleyans we know (as do the other major theological traditions in the one Church) that Scripture has to be interpreted. We interpret Scripture, guided by the *traditions* of the Church, in the light of our *experience* as the people of God, and using sanctified *reason*. But according to this sentence none of these can be *in itself* the source or basis for Christian doctrine, and as we look at the other Nazarene Articles of Faith, we see that this is in fact true.

They are all derived from Scripture. Christian tradition helps us today to interpret Scripture, and human reason and experience are engaged in this interpretation and in articulating our doctrines. Reason and experience have shaped the way these Articles of Faith were formed and they still shape the way we express our doctrines and they may even corroborate them. But every doctrine we profess together as a denomination in our Articles of Faith is in fact based upon and derived from Holy Scripture.

Again, this phrase of Article IV is problematic, not in and of itself, but because of its context. In the quotation from the Articles of Religion, in contemporary usage anyway, the confession reads that a person cannot be required to believe a doctrine that cannot be rooted or demonstrated somehow in Scripture *in order to be saved*. Thankfully, the phraseology of Article IV for us is a bit less overt in that respect, but given the overall context of the statement, we arrive at virtually the same end.

I am pleased and agree with the inclusion of the so-called Wesleyan Quadrilateral and the reminder that interpreting Scripture is a multi-faceted discipline and involves much more than just 'reading' the words of Scripture uncritically. But again, the more fundamental aspects of the issue of 'protections against heterodoxy' being raised by JUD-805 have barely been addressed. It would appear that the only safeguards that Article IV provides Scripture relate specifically to its capacity to support personal (or corporate) salvation and practical Christian ethics. This seems to be precisely the difficulty that JUD-805 was written to correct (however poorly), and the ultimate response of the SSC is to refuse to engage with that concern in any meaningful way.

The rest of the treatise is a review and argument against what is presented as a Calvinist perspective on Scripture associated with the language 'inerrant throughout'. This is, in many ways, a straw person argument, since I am unaware of any inerrantists with terminal degrees writing in mainstream evangelicalism who would subscribe to the concept of complete factual inerrancy as it has been described in this treatise. It's easy to dismantle an untenable and grossly exaggerated position, and that has been done quite expertly in what follows.

Again, I recognize that the language of JUD-805 precipitated this trajectory because it did in fact include the language 'inerrant throughout'. However, even that language could have been interpreted

generously as inerrancy in all that Scripture contends, or intends, or something like that, and not simply as a synonym of complete factual inerrancy. This could have been an opportunity to bring nuance to the conversation in a public forum. The recommendation from the committee could have included a counter-proposal, or continued dialogue about the real and meaningful concerns implied by this resolution. Sadly, it simply did not turn out that way.

To the final resolution that these sorts of debates be referred to the Board of General Superintendents with a body of theologians in advance of a General Assembly and from which resolutions for changes would be made is reasonable, in my view. It should be noted, however, that according to the established procedures of Robert's Rules of Order that we follow the real power in the shaping of the doctrinal stands of the Church of the Nazarene would be fundamentally shifted from the General Assembly to this advisory committee.

I want to conclude with my own principle concerns regarding Article IV, and it seems best to begin by quoting the Article here, in full.

**4.** We believe in the plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, by which we understand the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, given by divine inspiration, inerrantly revealing the will of God concerning us in all things necessary to our salvation, so that whatever is not contained therein is not to be enjoined as an article of faith.

*(Luke 24:44-47; John 10:35; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:20-21)*

My concerns with this language are these: (1) Article IV depicts the nearly 1,500 year history of Israel and the massive cultural and generational undertaking of the writing, editing, and re-working of the Tanakh, as it finds its final expression in the Apostolic testimony of the New Testament, to be little more than a long treatise intended only to tell later believers in Jesus how to escape death and how to live godly lives. (2) Article IV is excessively anthropocentric in that it relegates Scripture to speaking sufficiently only with respect to personal and corporate salvation. (3) Our deliberations regarding the language we want to use to confess our dependence on Scripture have traded nuance for utility, in my opinion. In my estimation, our confession of what Scripture is should have little to nothing to do with

the kinds of debates it engenders or the details it forces us to consider. Whatever the difficulties it causes us, our confession with respect to Scripture should be reflective of the Scripture's role in the history of the Church, with particular attention to the way it was utilized in the development of the early creeds, and it should be reflective of Scripture's claims about itself. These confessions will be complicating, and sometimes impractical, but such is the theological history of the people of faith.

In our article on Scripture, the Church of the Nazarene has made the telos of inspiration and the long history of the Jewish people and the development of Biblical literature a means to a single end— i.e., my, or our, salvation. Really? Is that what we want to say? The utility of Scripture and the authority of Scripture relates only to eternal life? The Scriptures do not inerrantly reveal the character or nature of God? The Scriptures do not inerrantly give shape to a metaphysic? The Scriptures do not provide understandings of history and of the universe that, though not technically necessary for salvation, expand the scope and capacity of human reason and imagination? This is really a book only guaranteed to be effective in soteriology and ethics? I don't think this language adequately reflects the nature of the sufficiency of Scripture in the Church.

In conclusion, I'll provide an example that I think summarizes the core of the situation that we face as a denomination. And, in my opinion and with deepest respect for the members of the SSC, far from being an irrelevant diversion in the church, this issue that has been raised by the inerrantist debate is critical to the trajectory we set for upcoming generations. I was engaged in an online discussion of the story of Uzzah the priest in the books of Samuel. Many on the discussion thread were wrestling with the 'interpretation' offered by the prophetic tradition of Israel that God had struck Uzzah down in response to his attempt to steady the Ark of the Covenant with his hand. Here is a brief exchange I had with a retired Nazarene minister:

Minister: This story makes me very glad that we believe that the scriptures are inerrant in things pertaining to salvation! At that time they attributed EVERYTHING to God's direct hand. We don't. At least I don't. Jesus is the final revelation of God. He would

never have struck the man dead for trying to help. Personally, I think the poor man probably had a heart attack, perhaps at the thought of touching The Sacred.

Me: Are you saying that from your perspective the best approach to the story of Uzzah is to reject the prophet's assumption that God struck him down, and chalk the story up to a misunderstanding based on faulty premises?

Minister: Yes I do. It had too many problems in its portrayal of God. If we believe that God looks on the heart and also that He loves us without measure, I would rather leave this to a misinterpretation of a tragic incident.

Whatever we want to say about the language of inerrancy, however inadequate that language may be, however contemporary and recent much of this debate is, is this really the space we want to delineate for the practice of theology in the Church of the Nazarene? I am aware that some early hermeneutical models which appreciated the multi-faceted nature of Scripture and endorsed various levels or dimensions of a given text could be seen as endorsing a creative end-run around certain surface readings. But, it seems to me that flat out dismissal of the theological interpretation of the prophetic tradition of Israel is a very recent development in Scriptural hermeneutics.

I agree that 'inerrancy throughout' would have been a poor way to address this fundamental concern and inadequate to the task of expanding the scope and authority of Scripture beyond the telos of soteriology and ethics. But, I do believe we need to broaden the scope of our understanding of the authority of Scripture in the church before the Scriptures become nothing more to our younger generations than a 'how to' guide to salvation and ethical living. I think we all recognize with the church throughout history that the Scriptures, whatever they are, are more than that. Perhaps we should discuss how to articulate that appreciation in our article on Scripture.

It's easy, of course, to criticize, and much more difficult to make a positive contribution. So, I will conclude by putting myself at risk and providing an articulation of the authority of Scripture in the church that I believe delineates a broader and more historically defensible space in which to explore theology as Christians:

- *The Christian faith is necessarily, intimately, and indelibly rooted in the God-authorized, God-breathed testimony of the prophetic tradition of the people of Israel and the apostolic witness of Jesus, the Messiah, as their testimonies have been preserved in the 66 canonical books of the Christian Bible.*
- *Furthermore, all that can be known about the one, true God with certainty is to be discovered only through this testimony (e.g., God's nature, intention, will, activity in history, purpose, etc.).*
- *Consequently, though the presumptions of the writers and/or editors of Christian Scripture were culturally conditioned and may be demonstrated to be inadequate or even in error, the contentions of the writers and/or editors of Scripture are infallible and inerrant as they have been preserved by the believing community in their final canonical form.*