

## Article 2<sup>1</sup>

### *The Bible*

2. We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.

1. We believe the Scriptures, both the Old And New Testaments, to be the inspired Word of god, without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men, and the Divine and final authority for all Christian faith and life.

I. Introduction

II. Change of order in Articles 1 and 2

A. God precedes His Word.

B. This is how the Bible begins: “In the beginning God . . .”

C. God is not dependent on the Bible for His existence.

D. God existed before He spoke the world into being, and the Bible which is the written record of His “speech.”

E. This follows a biblical theology rather than a systematic theology format.

F. Though it is listed as the second article, this does not lessen the truth of or importance of God’s Word, the Bible.

### **Discussion questions:**

- What are the similarities and differences between these references: Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, Word of God, Bible?
- God who has always been has spoken. Where are his words recorded? Why is it important to state that God has spoken “in the Scriptures” over against that God has spoken through the Scriptures?
- The Scriptures consist of the “Old and New Testaments.” How many books are there in the Old Testament? What about the New Testament? Why is it important today to state explicitly the scope, or canon, of the Scriptures? How is it being undermined?

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from “EFCA Statement of Faith: Article 2,” by Greg Strand, Director of Biblical Theology and Credentialing. <http://www.efca.org/files/document/office-of-the-president/sof-proposed-revision-article-2.pdf>

- “God has spoken . . . through human authors.” This explains specifically what is meant by “verbally inspired.” How would you explain the verbal inspiration of the Bible?
- Because this is a word from God accurately recorded by human authors, it is “without error in the original writings.” The technical term is inerrant. What or who is the heart of inerrancy? Why is it important to state that it was the original writings that were without error? Do we have them, and if not, what is the importance of this statement?
- The Bible is “the complete revelation of His will for salvation.” What does it mean that it is complete? Why is it that many look elsewhere for something to add to what is in the Word? Why is it not considered sufficient? “Revelation” carries the meaning of “to make known.” God has ultimately revealed in the Bible, which is special revelation. God has also “spoken” or revealed in nature, which is known as general revelation. What is the difference between general and special revelation? How do we know, and where will we find the divine interpretation? What is the role of the Holy Spirit in inspiring the Bible, and what is his role in my understanding it? What are some challenges to the sufficiency of the Bible today?
- The appropriate response to God and his Word, as recorded in the Bible, is to believe “all that it teaches,” to obey “all that it requires” and to trust “all that is promises.” Though the Bible is true with or without our response to it, what is wrong when it merely remains abstract words that do not affect our lives? Why is it that biblical a-literacy is so rampant even among Christians? Why is it that the morality of many Christians is not noticeably different than non-Christians?

### III. Article 2 –

#### **The Bible**

A. We believe God has spoken in the Scriptures through the words of human authors (Matthew 1:22; 4:4; 19:4,5; Luke 1:1-4; Hebrews 1:1-2).

Matthew 1:22 (ESV)

<sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:<sup>2</sup>

Matthew 4:4 (ESV)

<sup>4</sup> But he answered, “It is written, “ ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ ”

Matthew 19:4-5 (ESV)

<sup>4</sup> He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female,<sup>5</sup> and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’?”

<sup>2</sup> All Scripture taken from *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. Wheaton : Standard Bible Society, 2001

Luke 1:1-4 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, <sup>2</sup> just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, <sup>3</sup> it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, <sup>4</sup> that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

Hebrews 1:1-2 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

God has spoken – This reference to the past “has spoken” refers to God’s spoken Word now inscripturated, as noted by the reference to “the Scriptures.” This is the Word of God. But it is important to note that it is in this inscripturated Word that God speaks today in the present. In Scripture God spoke, and still speaks.

Through the words of human authors – The notion that the Bible is written in “human words” is central to our hermeneutical method, which seeks the original intent of the human authors as the primary means by which to discover God’s truth. That God has spoken in the Scriptures through the words of human authors is what we mean by the expression “verbally inspired” in the next sentence.

- B. We believe the Scriptures, the Word of God, the Bible consist of both Old and New Testaments (Matthew 5:17-20; Luke 24:44; 1 Timothy 5:17-18; 2 Peter 3:15-16).

Matthew 5:17-20 (ESV)

<sup>17</sup> “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. <sup>18</sup> For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. <sup>19</sup> Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>20</sup> For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Luke 24:44 (ESV)

<sup>44</sup> Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”

1 Timothy 5:17-18 (ESV)

<sup>17</sup> Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. <sup>18</sup> For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer deserves his wages.”

2 Peter 3:15-16 (ESV)

<sup>15</sup> And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, <sup>16</sup> as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

- C. We believe the Bible, as the verbally inspired Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20, 21), is without error in the original writings (2 Samuel 7:28; Proverbs 30:5; Numbers 23:19; Psalm 119:89, 96; Matthew 5:18; John 10:35; 17:17; Titus 1:1, 2).

2 Timothy 3:16 (ESV)

<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

2 Peter 1:20-21 (ESV)

<sup>20</sup> knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. <sup>21</sup> For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

2 Samuel 7:28 (ESV)

<sup>28</sup> And now, O Lord GOD, you are God, and your words are true, and you have promised this good thing to your servant.

Proverbs 30:5 (ESV)

<sup>5</sup> Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

Numbers 23:19 (ESV)

<sup>19</sup> God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?

Psalm 119:89, 96 (ESV)

<sup>89</sup> Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. . . <sup>96</sup> I have seen a limit to all perfection, but your commandment is exceedingly broad.

Matthew 5:18 (ESV)

<sup>18</sup> For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

John 10:35 (ESV)

<sup>35</sup> If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken—

John 17:17 (ESV)

<sup>17</sup> Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

Titus 1:1-2 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, <sup>2</sup> in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began.

Verbally – What was implied in our present Statement of Faith is made explicit here. To embrace the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures means that we believe the Holy Spirit guided the writers of Scripture, “through the words of human authors,” such that even their choice of words conformed to God’s purpose and intention.

- D. We believe the Bible is the complete revelation of God’s will for salvation (Isaiah 40:6, 8; Luke 16:29-31; Galatians 1:8, 9; 2 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 1:1-2; 1 Peter 1:24-25).

Isaiah 40:6, 8 (ESV)

<sup>6</sup> A voice says, “Cry!” And I said, “What shall I cry?” All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. . . <sup>8</sup> The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

Luke 16:29-31 (ESV)

<sup>29</sup> But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ <sup>30</sup> And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ <sup>31</sup> He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’ ”

Galatians 1:8-9 (ESV)

<sup>8</sup> But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. <sup>9</sup> As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

2 Timothy 3:15 (ESV)

<sup>15</sup> and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 1:1-2 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

1 Peter 1:24-25 (ESV)

<sup>24</sup> for “All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, <sup>25</sup> but the word of the Lord remains forever.” And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

Of His will for salvation – In refreshing our Statement of Faith we have sought language which is more in keeping with contemporary usage. We recognize that contemporary English tends to avoid the use of the generic masculine; hence, the omission of the unnecessary phrase “of men.”

- E. We believe the Bible is the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged (Psalm 12:6; 119:160; Matthew 24:35; John 17:17; 1 Timothy 3:15-17; 1 Peter 1:23).

Psalm 12:6 (ESV)

<sup>6</sup>The words of the LORD are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times.

Psalm 119:160 (ESV)

<sup>160</sup>The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.

Matthew 24:35 (ESV)

<sup>35</sup>Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

John 17:17 (ESV)

<sup>17</sup>Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

1 Timothy 3:15-17 (ESV)

<sup>15</sup>if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. <sup>16</sup>Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

1 Peter 1:23 (ESV)

<sup>23</sup>since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;

The ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged – This strengthens our statement on Scripture by affirming that no area of human activity, including any area of knowledge or action, lies outside the authority of the divine Word of God. This statement does not demand that the Bible must be invoked to justify every aspect of human knowledge and action, for it does not address every subject directly. Rather, this statement affirms that the Bible speaks with divine authority in every area in which it speaks. Moreover, even those areas the Bible does not address directly or explicitly, they are still subsumed under the divine authority of the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in the Word, though not necessarily as a proof-text. With this statement we have unpacked and clarified the words in the 1950 statement: “The Divine and final authority for all Christian faith and life.”

## Response

F. We believe all that the Bible teaches (Matthew 22:29; Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:16).

Matthew 22:29 (ESV)

<sup>29</sup> But Jesus answered them, “You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.

Romans 15:4 (ESV)

<sup>4</sup> For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

2 Timothy 3:16 (ESV)

<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

G. We obey all that the Bible requires (Psalm 119:44-45, 162-168; Matthew 28:20; 2 Thessalonians 3:14; Hebrews 4:12; 1 John 2:5).

Psalm 119:44-45 (ESV)

<sup>44</sup> I will keep your law continually, forever and ever, <sup>45</sup> and I shall walk in a wide place, for I have sought your precepts.

Psalm 119:162-168 (ESV)

<sup>162</sup> I rejoice at your word like one who finds great spoil. <sup>163</sup> I hate and abhor falsehood, but I love your law. <sup>164</sup> Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous rules. <sup>165</sup> Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble. <sup>166</sup> I hope for your salvation, O LORD, and I do your commandments. <sup>167</sup> My soul keeps your testimonies; I love them exceedingly. <sup>168</sup> I keep your precepts and testimonies, for all my ways are before you.

Matthew 28:20 (ESV)

<sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

2 Thessalonians 3:14 (ESV)

<sup>14</sup> If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed.

Hebrews 4:12 (ESV)

<sup>12</sup> For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

1 John 2:5 (ESV)

<sup>5</sup> but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him:

H. We trust all that the Bible promises (Romans 1:2; 4:21; Hebrews 10:23; 2 Peter 1:4; 3:13).

Romans 1:2 (ESV)

<sup>2</sup> which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures,

Romans 4:21 (ESV)

<sup>21</sup> fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

Hebrews 10:23 (ESV)

<sup>23</sup> Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

2 Peter 1:4 (ESV)

<sup>4</sup> by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

2 Peter 3:13 (ESV)

<sup>13</sup> But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises. – The expression “teaches” is not intended to limit the Bible’s truthfulness in any way—everything it teaches, affirms, denies, or reveals is to be believed. This statement as a whole is adapted from a statement from the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy and is a helpful reminder that though the Bible does contain propositions that are to be believed, it contains more than that. The Bible reveals God himself, not only as One who teaches, but also as One who commands and as One who promises. Faith in the God of the Bible must also issue in obedience and trust in response to his Word in every way that it addresses us.

Summarizing connection to the gospel: *“God’s gospel is authoritatively revealed in the Scriptures.”*

IV. Specific ways the Article on the doctrine of the Bible has been strengthened, or new issues addressed.

- God has spoken. He is a “talking God.”
- God’s Word was written by human authors, and is therefore the verbally inspired Word of God.
- Ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged.
- Response to God in His Word—believe, obey, trust.

V. Importance of reaffirming the biblical/doctrinal truths of the Bible today (which also carries with it denials)

- God has spoken – God is both transcendent and immanent; He is personal, over against a God who is absent or hidden.
- Old and New Testaments – biblical canon, over against Nag Hammadi texts, Roman Catholic Bible, Orthodox, and popular writings like *The Da Vinci Code*.
- Through the words of human authors – no mechanical dictation.
- Verbally inspired – full inerrancy, over against limited inerrancy.
- Complete revelation – over against mysticism, subjectivism.
- Ultimate authority – every realm submits to Scripture.
- Believed, obeyed, trust – belief and behavior.