



EFCA Statement of Faith: Article 2
Greg Strand, Director of Biblical Theology and Credentialing

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.

III. Article 2

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.

Bible

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

- B. We believe the Scriptures, the Word of God, the Bible consist of both Old and New Testaments (Matt. 5:17-20; Lk. 24:44; 1 Tim. 5:17-18; 2 Pet. 3:15, 16).
- C. We believe the Bible, as the verbally inspired Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21), is without error in the original writings (2 Sam. 7:28; Prov. 30:5; Num. 23:19; Ps. 119:89, 96; Matt. 5:18; Jn. 10:35; 17:17; Tit. 1:1,2).
- D. We believe the Bible is the complete revelation of God's will for salvation (Isa. 40:6, 8; Lk. 16:29-31; Gal. 1:8,9; 2 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 1:1-2; 1 Pet. 1:24-25).
- E. We believe the Bible is the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged (Ps. 12:6; 119:160; Matt. 24:35; Jn. 17:17; 1 Tim. 3:15-17; 1 Pet. 1:23).

Response

- F. We believe all that the Bible teaches (Matt. 22:29; Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:16).
- G. We obey all that the Bible requires (Ps. 119:44-45, 162-168; Matt. 28:20; 2 Thess. 3:14; Heb. 4:12; 1 Jn. 2:5).
- H. We trust all that the Bible promises (Rom. 1:2; 4:21; Heb. 10:23; 2 Pet. 1:4; 3:13).

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, trusted – belief and behavior

VI. Additional Resources

Questions for Further Study

1. What are the similarities and differences between these references: Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, Word of God, Bible?
2. 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?
3. 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?
4. “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?
5. 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?
6. 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?

7. It is also “the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged.” Because it is God’s Word, He has the final say in everything. This is true with what the Scriptures state explicitly, but it is also true with what they state implicitly. No matter the discipline, it submits to the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in the Word. How is this true in your life? The fact that the word “should” is used acknowledges that not all use the Word to judge all they do and say. That is a statement of our sinfulness. What do you need to confess in relation to your posture to the Lord of the Word as revealed in the Word of the Lord?
8. 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 it 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?

Preaching/Teaching Texts

Psalm 1

2 Timothy 3:10-17

Memory Verses

Isaiah 40:8

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Hymns

Holy Bible, Book Divine, John Burton, Sr. (words) and William B. Bradbury (melody)

Standing on the Promises, R. Kelso Carter

Choruses

Ancient Words, Lynn DeShazo

Thy Word, Arul John

Appendix 1

EFCA Statement of Faith Commentary¹

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.]

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 still 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.

verbally—

What was implied in our present Statement of Faith² 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.

of His will for salvation—

¹This commentary will only highlight changes from the 1950 Statement of Faith and not expound the theological truth common to both statements.

² Cf. A. T. Olson, *This We Believe* (Free Church Publications, 1961), p. 183, who wrote, “While not specifically stating the fact, those who formed this article believed in the verbal inspiration of the Bible.”

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".

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."

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.

Appendix 2

Frequently Asked Questions – Article 2

Why have we changed the order of articles one and two, between the Bible and God?

This has been done because for two reasons. First, we have followed a salvation-historical framework. We have followed a biblical theology framework in the statement, so it follows God's story of His unfolding plan of redemption from beginning to end. This is the purpose of the headings. (Each article then states the truth in systematic theology categories.) It gives preeminence to God in all His Trinitarian fullness. God existed before the Bible. This God, however, is a talking God. This means that we have received His Word. Much like when we study Christ, we begin with His person and then address His work. Here we begin with the person of God, and then we address one of the things He has done, revealed Himself through words which is recorded in the Word. Second, we begin with a statement about God because ultimately our convictions about the nature of the Bible are based on our faith in God. This addresses epistemology, i.e. the basis of how and what we know. The real foundation for our knowledge of God is not a rational judgment about an inerrant Bible, which is it, but a faith in the goodness of the God who speaks. We believe God, we believe He has spoken, and we believe He has spoken truly.

Does not our motto “Where stands it written?” state our commitment to a specific hermeneutic?

The matter of “where stands it written” does not automatically solve all exegetical questions. This expression was used more for their commitment to the inspired, inerrant Word of God and its sole rule for life and godliness. When asked about a certain belief or practice, the common response would be “where stands it written?” But it was not intended to be a statement of a singular hermeneutic, as if it would automatically lead to the conclusion that if one embraced the inspired, inerrant Word, the place where it stands written, it would automatically lead that person to a certain eschatological position. In the Free Church whether one embraces a pre, mid or post tribulational position, they are all arrived at through the Bible. We all seek to be Biblicists. But we do not naively think that we do not have certain theological positions. The key is to know them and to state those presuppositions at the front end so we can engage in dialogue with full disclosure of our positions, all seeking to understand the Bible more clearly. This gets at the heart of the hermeneutical spiral: absolute confidence and certainty of God's Word, but humility as we approach the Text.

What does a “literal” hermeneutic mean, or what does it mean that we read the Bible literally?

A commitment to a literal understanding of the Bible is rooted in a literal understanding of the authorial intent. If we separate meaning from authorial intent in the Scripture, we end up with reader-centered hermeneutic, and that means the reader determines the meaning of the Text divorced from the A/author, both divine and human. So when we seek to understand a biblical text literally, the first question we ask is what did the A/author. Here is how the Spiritual Heritage Committee defined what is meant by “literal”: “With regard to “literalism” in biblical interpretation, we contend that responsible and faithful biblical interpretation is not about the

literal understanding of words but of meaning. The central question is, what is the literal reality intended by the author through the particular words and literary forms that he uses? Moreover, one must ask how that intended meaning of the biblical author is to be understood within the canon of Scripture. Such a biblical hermeneutic involves an informed and sensitive literary understanding of the biblical texts, appreciating genre, and the use of metaphor and symbol as well as straightforward history.”

What are some key hermeneutical principles for interpreting the Bible?

One begins with a commitment to a grammatico-historical interpretation, viz. we interpret using the conventions of the grammar and syntax of the day, of Hebrew and Aramaic in the Old Testament, and Greek in the New Testament, and we are sensitive to the context and history. I will come back to the history again below. As Christians, grammatico-historical exegesis is essential. But it is not all that must be said regarding interpretation, which will be seen in the following points. This was the church’s response to allegory in the second century. Second, we are committed to the canon, the 66 books of the Bible, 39 books of the OT and 27 books of the New Testament. This means that this is the scope of our interpretation, i.e. our interpretation is canonical. Third, we are also rooted in a redemptive-historical understanding of the Scripture, viz. the progressive unfolding of God’s plan which finds its climax in Jesus. If we are not sensitive to this reality in our interpretation, we will misunderstand much of Scripture. For Paul, many of his major arguments center on this very fact (cf. Gal. 3:10-14 for one example). Fourth, since Christ is the climax of Scripture, we are, as Christians, committed to a Christological hermeneutic, i.e. Christ is the One who enables us as Christians to understand the Bible as Christians. We read, interpret and understand the Bible through a Christological lens, through Christ, or we misunderstand the Bible, or we read it as Jew (particularly the Old Testament) not a Christian. Consider these many passages that address this: Matt. 5:17-20; Lk. 24:25-27; Jn. 12:41; Acts 28:23; Rom. 10:4; 2 Cor. 1:20; etc. Finally, we are committed to the pneumatological in our interpretation, the Holy Spirit. If Christ is the focus of the Bible, the Holy Spirit is the One alone who enables us to see, know and understand Christ (Jn. 16:14), the Word incarnate (Jn. 1:1, 14, 18), and also to read and understand the Bible, the Word inscripturated (1 Cor. 2:6-16).

Is premillennialism the only millennial position that embraces the doctrine of inerrancy?

It is one of them, and we thank God for that, but not the only one. Many of the most ardent and ablest defenders of inerrancy through the years have not been premillennial: Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Charles Hodge, B. B. Warfield, Charles Hodge, J. Gresham Machen (these were all amillennial). Additionally, there is not a causal connection between a denial of inerrancy and eschatology. Most of those in denominations that have become liberal have done so through a denial of inerrancy and the deity of Christ, not eschatology. It is true that some of the denominations that have become liberal are not premillennial, but their eschatological position is not the cause for going liberal.

I thought a SOF would just include beliefs. Why have you included both beliefs and behavior?

Credo, the Latin expression for “I believe” is at the heart of Creeds. Many Creeds contain only beliefs. Being part of this Evangelical tradition, we also realize that belief (orthodoxy) and

practice (orthopraxy) go together. For this reason we have included both what we ought to believe and how we ought to behave. This is one of the unique marks of this SOF.

Explain further the reason for including orthopraxy.

In any generation there are truths that need to be emphasized in a Statement of Faith that are at that point being undermined. Luther said, and I concur, that if one defends every point of orthodox doctrine except that one point at which it is presently being attacked, one is not defending the faith once for all entrusted to the saints. This is one reason Statements of Faith are revisable, and the only document that is not is the Bible. It alone is the touchstone for any discussion about this. It also means that any previous Statement is necessary and important, but not necessarily sufficient for the present day. This would include the Apostles' and the Nicene-Constantinople Creeds. One of the needs in the evangelical church, broadly, and the EFCA, particularly, is that we address the issue of both orthodoxy and orthopraxy. The fact that in surveys often the moral lives of those who profess to be evangelicals is indistinguishable from those who profess no faith at all is appalling. In fact, the truth of the gospel is belied with the way they live their lives. Granted, not all who say they are an Evangelical actually are, but even if allowances are made, it is a huge problem. Because Statements of Faith emphasize truths that are necessary at a point in time, we believe it is important to emphasize both orthodoxy and orthopraxy at this time in the life of the church. We have attempted to address both, but that is not to suggest that there is all there is to say about this issue. Not only have we stated the truth of being "justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone" in different ways in different articles, so we have done something similar with this truth. Not only do we believe this is important to the EFCA today, this truth is rooted in Jesus' teaching (Matt. 7:21-23; 22:37-40; 25:31-46).