

Chapter One: The Holy Scriptures

THCCI STATEMENT OF FAITH:

"We believe the Bible to be the inspired and only infallible written Word of God."

THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE

From the earliest days of the Christian Church, the sacred Scriptures have been regarded as the divine and authoritative Word of God. The Apostle Paul writes in **2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NASB)**:

"16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

The Christian life is a Word-centered life. From Genesis to Revelation, the Holy Scriptures not only tell the story of redemption, but they reveal the very heart and mind of God. In the Holy Christian Church International (THCCI), we affirm that the Scriptures are not merely ancient texts or religious literature—they are God's very Word, inspired by the Holy Spirit and authoritative for every believe

The Greek word translated as "inspired" is *theop-neu-stos* (θεόπνευστος), meaning "God-breathed." This term underscores that Scripture is not merely the product of human ingenuity or religious devotion but is the result of divine initiative. God breathed His Word through human authors, using their historical context, personality, and language to convey His eternal truth.

This belief, that Scripture is inspired and without error in all it affirms, has been central to the faith and teaching of the Church throughout history. The early Church Fathers echoed this doctrine:

- **Athanasius (c. 296–373 AD)** said, "The holy and inspired Scriptures are sufficient of themselves for the preaching of the truth." (Athanasius, *Festal Letter 39*)
- **Augustine of Hippo (354–430 AD)** stated, "I have learned to yield this respect and honor only to the canonical books of Scripture: of these alone do I most firmly believe that the authors were completely free from error." (*Letters*, 82.3)

THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE

The term *canon* comes from the Greek *kanōn*, meaning “rule” or “measuring rod.” In Christian theology, it refers to the set of books recognized by the Church as divinely inspired and authoritative.

Why 66 Books?

The Holy Christian Church International (THCCI), in continuity with historic Protestant orthodoxy, affirms the 66 books of the Bible—39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament—as the inspired Word of God.

This position is not arbitrary but grounded in historical, theological, and spiritual discernment:

- The **Old Testament** canon is identical to the Hebrew Bible recognized by Jesus and the Apostles. Jesus affirmed the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings (cf. Luke 24:44).
- The **New Testament** canon developed through apostolic authorship, early church usage, theological consistency, and spiritual efficacy.

Canon Formation Process

The process of canonization involved careful discernment by the Church over centuries, guided by the Holy Spirit. The following factors were considered:

1. **Apostolic Origin:** Was the book written by an apostle or a close companion?
 2. **Orthodox Doctrine:** Did its teaching align with the rule of faith and apostolic teaching?
 3. **Widespread Use:** Was it universally accepted and used in churches across the Christian world?
 4. **Spiritual Power:** Did it bear evidence of divine inspiration and transform lives?
- Church Fathers such as **Irenaeus**, **Origen**, and **Eusebius** referenced lists of recognized books in circulation. The formal recognition of the 27 books of the New Testament was confirmed by Athanasius’ *Festal Letter 39* (367 AD) and affirmed by councils such as Hippo (393 AD) and Carthage (397 AD).

What About the Apocrypha?

The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches include additional books, known as the **Deuterocanonical books** or **Apocrypha**. These books were widely read but not universally accepted as Scripture in the early Church.

- **Jerome** (c. 347–420 AD), who translated the Latin Vulgate, distinguished between canonical books and ecclesiastical books.

- **Martin Luther** retained the Apocrypha in a separate section, noting they were "not equal to the Holy Scriptures, but are useful and good to read." The Reformers, including John Calvin and Ulrich Zwingli, followed the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament and affirmed only those books.
- **Jewish Canon:** The Hebrew Bible, affirmed by Jesus and the Apostles, did not include these books.
- **Lack of Apostolic Authority:** The New Testament never quotes the Apocrypha as Scripture.
- **Historical Doubts:** Many early Church Fathers (e.g., Jerome) considered these useful for instruction but not inspired.
- **Doctrinal Issues:** Some teachings in these books (like praying for the dead in 2 Maccabees) contradict apostolic doctrine.

THE BIBLE IS NOT MERELY A BOOK ABOUT GOD —It *Is* the Word of God

One of the most dangerous modern misconceptions is that the Bible is merely a human record of people's experience with the divine—valuable, but not authoritative. In contrast, the Church historic has always affirmed the Bible to be *the Word of God written*. As **John Calvin** declared:

"We owe to the Scripture the same reverence we owe to God, because it has proceeded from Him alone, and has nothing of man mixed with it." (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.7.1)

Karl Barth, though from a different theological tradition, called Scripture the "witness" to God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ—but stressed its divine origin and truth. Basil the Great said, "What the Scriptures say, the Holy Spirit says." Wesleyans and Pentecostals affirm this as well. Charles H. Mason, founder of the Church of God in Christ, held up the Bible in one hand and declared it as "the book that lives."

Frank D. Macchia writes that the Spirit not only inspired the Word but also illuminates it to the believer: "The Bible is the Spirit's witness to Christ, and through it the Spirit speaks still today" (*Introduction to Theology*).

In Pentecostal scholarship, **J. Rodman Williams** emphasizes the dynamic nature of Scripture:

"The Bible is not simply a record of what God has done; it is itself a present and living word that confronts us with divine truth." (*Renewal Theology*, Vol. 1)

WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT SCRIPTURE IS INSPIRED?

Inspiration refers not merely to lofty thoughts or poetic expression, but to the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit upon the human authors of Scripture. This results in a text that is both fully divine and genuinely human.

Dr. Wayne Grudem defines inspiration as: "The process whereby God, working through human authors, ensured that what they wrote was His Word." (*Systematic Theology*, Chapter 3)

Thomas C. Oden, in his *Classic Christianity*, asserts that Scripture is "God's self-communication through chosen witnesses by the Holy Spirit."

This dual authorship is reflected in **2 Peter 1:20-21**:

"First of all, you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

The Wesleyan-Holiness tradition, which deeply shapes THCCI, has always held to the inspiration, sufficiency, and authority of Scripture. **John Wesley** called himself "a man of one book" (*homo unius libri*), and he taught that Scripture is the supreme rule of faith and practice.

Therefore, to say the Bible is inspired means:

1. **Verbal Plenary Inspiration:** Every word (verbal) and every part (plenary) is divinely inspired (2 Peter 1:20–21).
2. **Spirit-Driven Process:** God used human authors' backgrounds, styles, and contexts, yet superintended the process so the final result was His Word (see Amos Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community*).
3. **Authoritative and Trustworthy:** As Gordon Fee said, "The Bible is the trustworthy Word of God in human words."

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THCCI AFFIRMS THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE

As a Holiness-Pentecostal church rooted in the Wesleyan-Arminian tradition, **The Holy Christian Church International** affirms without reservation that the Bible—comprised of the 66 canonical books of the Old and New Testaments—is:

- Inspired by the Holy Spirit.
- Infallible in all that it teaches.
- Authoritative for doctrine, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness.
- Sufficient for salvation, sanctification, and equipping the saints for every good work.

Our aim is not merely to read Scripture but to be formed by it. As we study the Word, we seek to encounter the living God who speaks through it. It is not a book to be mastered, but the Word by which we are mastered, healed, and sent into the world.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION AND DEEPER REFLECTION

1. What does it mean for Scripture to be "God-breathed"? How does this shape how we read and apply the Bible?
2. Why is it important to recognize the Bible as *the* Word of God, not just a book about God?
3. How would you explain the development of the biblical canon to someone unfamiliar with Church history?
4. What is the difference between the Protestant canon and the Roman Catholic/Orthodox canons? Why does THCCI affirm the 66-book canon?
5. How have Church Fathers and Reformers influenced our understanding of Scripture's authority and sufficiency?
6. What dangers arise when the authority of Scripture is diminished or denied in the Church?
7. How can a Pentecostal believer faithfully engage with Scripture as both Word and Spirit?
8. In what ways can regular engagement with Scripture shape our discipleship and daily living?

Let the people of God be formed by the Word of God, that we may be shaped in truth, led by the Spirit, and equipped to glorify Christ in all things.

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." — Psalm 119:105

Recommended Readings for Further Study:

- *The Canon of Scripture* by F.F. Bruce
- *Inspiration and Incarnation* by Peter Enns (read critically)
- *Systematic Theology* by Thomas C. Oden, Vol. 1
- *Knowing Scripture* by R.C. Sproul
- *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers* by Christopher Hall
- *Spirit and Scripture* by Frank D. Macchia (ed.)
- *The Authority of Scripture in Renewal Theology* by J. Rodman Williams
- *Spirit-Word-Community* by Amos Yong
- *The Drama of Doctrine* by Kevin Vanhoozer

PERSONAL NOTES

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