

The Spectrum of Christian Faith

*What does it mean to say that the
Bible is God's Word?*

You Have Permission...

- To consider a different position or reconsider your own position on the topics for the rest of this quarter.
- To change your mind about a topic.
- To not change your mind on a topic.
- To listen to your Christian brothers and sisters.

Ask, Admire, Admit.

What is the Bible?

*What does it mean to say that
scripture is God-breathed?*

*What authority does the Bible
have in our lives?*



Bible Project Definition

From page one to the final word, we believe the Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus. This diverse collection of ancient books overflows with wisdom for our modern world. As we let the biblical story speak for itself, we believe the message of Jesus will transform individuals and entire communities.

What the Bible is Not

- A divine instructional manual or textbook. Bible is not an acronym for Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth.
- The Bible is not a logical system.
- The Bible is not a source of inspirational quotes or proof texts.
- The Bible is not always easy to read.
- The Bible is not a buffet for you to pick and choose what you like or cake that you just eat for dessert.
- The Bible is not a member of the trinity.

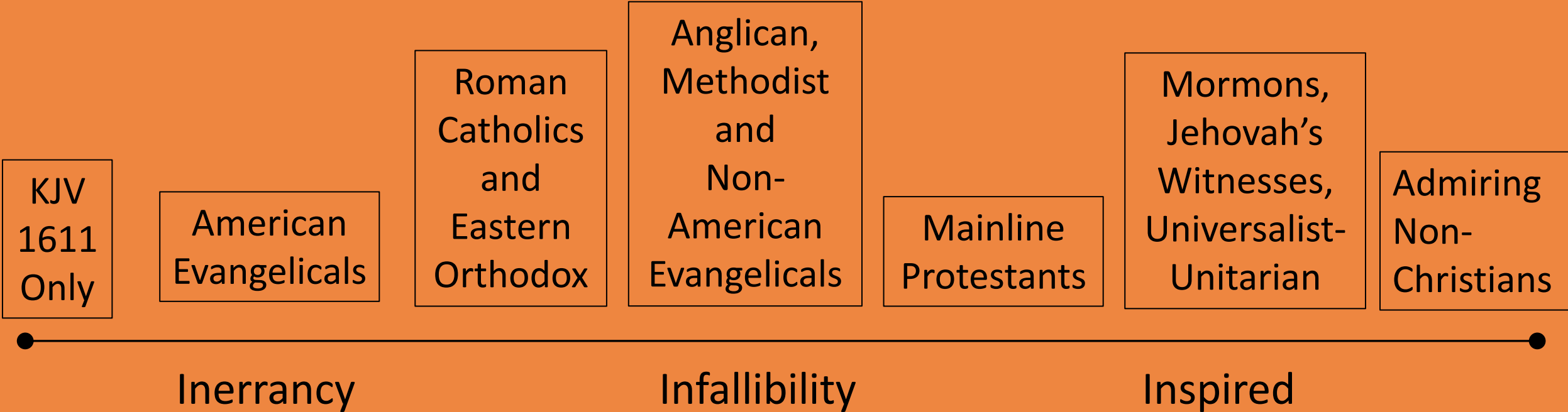
The Inerrancy-Infallibility-Inspired Spectrum

Inerrancy means that the *original biblical texts* are without error of any kind. (The definition is more fully articulated in the 1978 Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy).

Infallibility means that the Bible does not fail to communicate the truth on any matter of Christian faith or practice.

Inspired generally means that there is human input in Scripture emphasizing the Bible's witness to God.

The Inerrancy-Infallibility-Inspired Spectrum



Inerrancy

Strengths

- God is perfect, scripture is God-breathed, therefore scripture is perfect.
- Having to choose what is divine and what is human (error) puts humans in authority over the Bible.
- Follows a long church tradition.

Weaknesses

- Does not always square with the facts.
- Scripture twisting interpretations.
- We do not have the original manuscripts. We are arguing over a nonexistent book.
- Can lead to bibliolatry/biblicism.

Infallibility

Strengths

- Apologetic and evangelistic advantage in not having to explain every “biblical difficulty”
- Avoids bibliolatry while still giving authority to the Bible.
- Follows a long church tradition

Weaknesses

- Difficult to draw the line on what are matters of faith and practice and what are not.
- Apparent contradiction in saying God cannot error but God’s word can error.

Inspired

Strengths

- Admires the beauty and genius of the Bible.
- Emphasizes Jesus as God's Word
- Emphasizes relationship with God over relationship with a book.

Weaknesses

- Can easily deny the authority of the Bible.
- Overemphasizes the human input and underemphasizes the divine input of the Bible.

Seven Things Christians Should Know about the Bible

by Michael F. Bird

1. The Bible did not fall out of the sky.
2. The Bible is divinely given and humanly composed. (See next slide)
3. Scripture is normative, not negotiable. (See the slide after that)
4. The Bible is for our time but not about our time.
5. We should take the Bible seriously but not always literally.
6. The purpose of scripture is knowledge, faith, love and hope.
7. **Christ is the centre of the Christian Bible.**

How is the Bible God-breathed?

All Scripture is God-breathed (inspired) and is *useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...*

2Timothy 3:16

- Inspiration as Divine Dictation
- Inspiration as Divine Enablement with Words
- Inspiration as the Incarnation of Divine Ideas in Human Words
- Inspiration as Conceptual Guidance
- Inspiration as Divine Endorsement
- Inspiration as Artistic Ability

What authority does the Bible have?

All Christians believe that the Bible has authority over our faith and practice. Christians disagree on how the Bible ranks in terms of other authorities.

- Some Protestants: sola scriptura (scripture alone). The Bible alone is the source of doctrine and practice.
- Other Protestants: prima scriptura (scripture first). The Bible has the most authority in matters of faith and practice.
- Catholics: The Roman Catholic catechism gives equal authority to the Bible and church tradition.
- Eastern Orthodox considers the Bible the most important part of church tradition. All church tradition finds its source in Christ and is directed by the Holy Spirit.

Reading with Glasses

Everyone brings their own experiences and culture/tradition when they read and interpret the Bible. There is no “plain reading” of scripture. It is best to recognize this up front.

The solution is to read the Bible in community. Hearing other’s perspectives helps us to recognize our own perspective and guards against inappropriate readings/interpretations (with the help of the Holy Spirit).

Read humbly, wisely and critically.

Meet Esau McCaully

Which demographic group in the U.S. attends church most regularly?

Which demographic group in the U.S. prays the most?

Which demographic group in the U.S. reads and knows the Bible the best?

Which demographic group in the U.S. votes democrat 90% of the time?

Further Reading

- *Reading While Black* by Esau McCaulley, IVP Academic, 2020
- *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy* – R. Albert Mohler, Peter Enns, Michael F. Bird, Kevin J. Vanhoozer, John R. Franke, Zondervan Counterpoints, 2013
- *How the Bible Actually Works* by Peter Enns, HarperOne, 2019
- *Inspiration and Incarnation* by Peter Enns, Baker Academic, 2015
- *Seven Things I Wish Christians Knew About the Bible* by Michael F. Bird, Zondervan, 2021
- *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 4th Edition by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, Zondervan, 2014
- *How (Not) to Read the Bible* by Dan Kimball, Zondervan, 2020

Further Reading

- *Scripture and the Authority of God* by N.T. Wright, HarperOne, 2011
- *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes* by E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O'brien, IVP, 2012
- *Misreading Scripture with Individualistic Eyes* by E. Randolph Richards and Richard James, IVP Academic, 2020
- *The Blue Parakeet: Rethinking How You Read the Bible* by Scot McKnight, Zondervan, 2018
- *The Bible Unwrapped* by Meghan Larissa Good, Herald Press, 2018
- *Inspired* by Rachel Held Evans, Thomas Nelson, 2018
- *The Bible Made Impossible: Why Biblicism is Not a Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture* by Christian Smith, Brazos Press, 2012

Further Reading

- *Words of Life* by Timothy Ward, IVP Academic, 2009
- *A More Christlike Word* by Bradley Jersak, Whitaker House, 2021
- *The Lost World of Scripture* by John H. Walton and D. Brent Sandy, IVP Academic, 2013
- The Bible Project: <https://bibleproject.com/>
- The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978)
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/article/the-chicago-statement-on-biblical-inerrancy/>
- The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics (1982)
<https://divinity.carolinau.edu/chicago-statement-biblical-hermeneutics>