

## History and Science<sup>1</sup>

***Q. In your FAQs, you state that the LCMS sees the Bible as inerrant in all things, including history and science. But where does the Bible ever make that claim of historical and scientific inerrancy for itself? It seems that in its eagerness to defend the "Word" of God, the Synod has decided to make claims of inerrancy for documents which never make that claim for themselves.***

**A.** Classic, historic Lutheranism does not regard the Bible as a science textbook, and never has. The Scriptures themselves indicate that their primary purpose is to lead us to Christ and to reveal all that He means for us. Christ Himself indicated that he is the chief focus and content of the Scriptures (Luke 24). In other words, in a handy little phrase, the Scriptures tell us how to go to heaven, but not every detail of how the heavens go. We do a disservice both to the church and to ourselves if we try to turn the Bible into a science textbook. We definitely do believe that what the Bible says of science is accurate, but we recognize that it does not exhaust what may be learned and known from science.

Therefore, unlike some denominations, we do not try to build a textbook of natural science out of the Bible. Sometimes, when people talk about the Bible's reliability and truthfulness (which is really what inerrancy and infallibility are all about), they err in assuming that such terms are meant to imply that the Bible has "every" answer about "every" possible question known to mankind. Clearly the Bible does not. God has gifted us with reason, that, when used in service to the truth of God's Word, we can use to learn and explore and discover the inner workings of the human cell or the atom--things about which the Scriptures are relatively silent. The primary and most important purpose of the Bible is to bring us sinful human beings to trust in Christ and to know Him and His salvation (see John 5:39; 2 Timothy 3:15ff; John 20:30-31).

Having said that, we also need to be clear about this point. The Scriptures do claim to be the Word of God, and not only in a general sense, but in a very specific sense. 2 Tim. 3:16 indicates that the very words of the Bible were "God breathed" which is literally what the Greek word often translated as "inspired" means. 2 Peter 1:21 indicates that holy men of God were carried along by the Holy Spirit, actually writing down the very words and thoughts God wanted them to record. Even as our Lord Jesus Christ became man, but without sin, so we believe God has used sinful men to communicate His Word and kept such communication free from error.

This is clearly the Scriptures' claim for itself: to be the actual Word of God, the actual inspired Word of God. Therefore, the issue becomes: If the Bible is in fact what it claims to be--the actual Word of God--does that Word, God's Word, err? Deceive? Trick? Lie? Make mistakes? Lead us to erroneous thoughts about what God has done? No, it does not, nor is there anything in the Bible that ever qualifies the claims it makes for itself; that is, nothing for instance that says, "The Scripture is inspired, except when it takes up science or history."

That is a more modern phenomenon: to place "over" Scripture the judgment of human reason and try to sort out what is true from what is not true. And this leads to numerous errors, perhaps the least of which are debates over the science or history of the Bible, the more serious results of such attempts to place Scripture under the judgment of human beings being the rejection of the key doctrines--the key teaching--of the Bible regarding our Lord Jesus Christ.

To pursue these issues in more depth, please consult the following works:

Francis Pieper, "Christian Dogmatics," Volume I, Concordia Publishing House ([CPH](#)), 1-800-325-3040.

"A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles: Study Edition," CPH.

J.A.O. Preus, "It is Written." This may be out of print, but can be borrowed from a LCMS college or seminary library.

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<sup>1</sup> From LCMS Website – FAQ's – 3/13/07

