

Should the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy be Revised?

A Response to Dr. Derek Brown and TGC

The editorial staff at DefendingInerrancy.com

March 20th 2022

The Gospel Coalition (TGC) recently announced that they are “hosting a series about the need to revise and clarify arguments in light of new hermeneutical and cultural arguments.” [The first article in the series](#)¹ begins with an editor’s note assuring the reader that TGC’s confessional statement “affirms [the] doctrine of inerrancy” and that TGC is challenging the new generation to “freshly defend, embrace, and champion biblical inerrancy.” While still leaving their definition of inerrancy undefined, the editor gives an honorable mention to the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (CSBI) of 1978 as “the most comprehensive and clear articulation” of the doctrine of inerrancy. TGC appears to be reaffirming their commitment to biblical inerrancy and suggesting that their concept of inerrancy has some significant degree of correspondence with the CSBI. After the editor’s preface, Dr. Derek Brown, the author of the article, makes a case for the CSBI being “useful” over the last four decades, but no longer adequate for today. For Brown, the CSBI deserves to be salvaged and “reframed” rather than scrapped or rejected entirely. In his mention of the book *Defending Inerrancy* (authored by Norman Geisler and Bill Roach),² he partially agrees with Geisler and Roach that CSBI should remain the gold standard for the evangelical articulation of biblical inerrancy, while disagreeing with them over the idea that CSBI is not in need of revision today. While most of CSBI’s nineteen articles still meet Brown’s approval, he recommends the amendment of one article, recommends the addition of a new article, and leaves the door open to additional revisions. Though he is not willing to accept CSBI-1978 as the gold standard today, he seems willing to promote an updated CSBI-2023 (for example) as the standard of tomorrow. We will focus our response here to the question of the CSBI’s *revision* and briefly recommend the alternatives of *readoption* or *restatement* of CSBI.

We, the Defending Inerrancy Team, are a coalition of biblical scholars, theologians, and ministers who were encouraged by Geisler to focus some of our publishing in the defense of inerrancy at

<https://defendinginerrancy.com>. We offer one of the most conservative voices in matters pertaining to the preservation of the letter and spirit of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (ICBI). Roach has been an integral part of our team for the last ten years and remains a leading voice of the coalition today. He has already responded to Brown in [a YouTube video](#)³ with several points that merit consideration.

We want to express our appreciation to TGC for being willing to take a stand publicly for the Bible being error-free. Not everyone does these days. We also applaud their continued appreciation for the wisdom passed onto us by the ICBI. While some progressive evangelical scholars often try to escape the logic of CSBI's affirmations and denials to find greener pastures in shorter, more ambiguous statements on inerrancy, the TGC maintains a sincere and substantial interest in the CSBI.⁴ The aspiration to refine 18-karat gold into to 24-karat gold is, in and of itself, a very noble one. Also, we appreciate the mention of Geisler and Roach's *Defending Inerrancy* and are pleased to see that an architect aspiring to build upon the ICBI foundation is already familiar with it. While he disagreed with it on one point, we appreciate the tone with which he expressed his disagreement.

Should the CSBI (1978) be revised after four decades of service?

Did the ICBI hope that CSBI would be revised after 1978?

Brown suggests that the ICBI left the door open to the possibility that the CSBI was imperfect and open to revision. While there is a hint of truth to this, we suggest that this truth, when viewed in the light of the ten-year mission of the ICBI, actually works against the idea that anyone should revise it today. With its stated ten-year lifespan in mind, it seems the ICBI chose not to revise CSBI but to expand it with two additional statements.

A Ten-Year Mission

It is possible that some readers of Brown's article could be left with the impression that the CSBI was created in one "fall weekend" by a cadre of friends who later admitted they were in a rush and lamented the obvious shortcomings of their statement. Some readers may also get the impression

that the ICBI only produced the CSBI that weekend and didn't do much else. But the ICBI was far more than these mistaken impressions. And so was the CSBI. There was considerable history and groundwork that led up to the formation of the ICBI in 1977 as well as much preparation by many prior to the first summit meeting of the ICBI that occurred in 1978. Scholars wrote fourteen papers that were read and discussed by many at the conference and were then published by the ICBI in a 500-page book.⁵ The ICBI worked for a total of ten years, had three summits that produced three statements, and accomplished more work between the three summits. Throughout its ten-year lifespan, the ICBI encouraged feedback, dialogue (even with their detractors), and suggestions for improvement of their statements. Keeping their decade-long ministry in mind provides a better context for understanding these words about amendments written by the ICBI Draft Committee in the introduction to the CSBI:

We offer this Statement [CSBI] in a spirit ... of humility and love, which we purpose by God's grace to maintain in any future dialogue arising out of what we have said. ... We invite response to this statement from any who see reason to amend its affirmations about Scripture by the light of Scripture itself...

ICBI was just getting started. They had arrived at their first major milestone. They had just finished the first year of a ten-year-long project. Their willingness to accept CSBI revision proposals assumed the proposals would go through the right ICBI channels. It is safe to presume that any such proposal would ultimately need to make its way to ICBI Draft Committee. The entire committee would have needed to consider the proposal, debate it, vote on it, and, if accepted, reword it before republishing the revised version. The Draft Committee would also probably have needed to make revisions in concert with the rest of the ICBI Council members and quite probably with consultation with some or all of their Advisory Board members. Lastly, it would have to be resigned by the 300 or so signatories. This *could have* happened anytime between 1978 and 1987. It didn't. No revision proposals ever made it that far. But this would have been the only legitimate way, in the only possible window of time, where a revision could have been made to CSBI. If so, the opportunity to amend CSBI has long passed.

Inside of that decade, if Carl F.H. Henry, Robert Yarborough, G.K. Beale (the three examples cited by Brown), or anyone else⁶ wanted to suggest improvements to CSBI, they were all welcome to do so. The esteemed Carl F.H. Henry eventually did join the ICBI and was heartily welcomed. He

provided a tremendous amount of input into the dialogues that helped produce the second and third statements ICBI produced in their second and third summits.⁷

We can see an interesting glimpse in that quote of the criteria the ICBI would have used when adjudicating amendment proposals: reason applied to “the light of Scripture itself.” The reason would need to come from inside the Bible rather than something outside of it. While they might have still considered amendments based on “the light of new hermeneutical and cultural arguments,” it seems unlikely, insofar as these trends tend to reflect dynamics outside of the Bible, that they would have given them much weight. They gave a surprisingly generous amount of leeway for hermeneutical trends based on form criticism, redaction criticism, and most of the other forms of critical methodologies *en vogue* in the 1980s. But if and when that hermeneutic led, for example, to the dehistoricization of a historical account in the Bible, they ruled that the use of those tools had gone too far. If the Drafting Committee were available for comment today, we expect they would probably have treated the newer trends in genre criticism, mythological criticism, new historical criticism, post-colonial criticism, post-structuralist criticism, feminist criticism, cultural criticism, and such just like they treated the critical methods of their own day. Amendments in “light of new hermeneutical and cultural arguments” may not have held the same weight as amendments derived from “the light of Scripture itself.”

The ink on the CSBI dried in 1978 and, aside from a few minor typos being fixed, the ICBI ultimately had no reason to amend CSBI in the subsequent nine years. They were open to doing so, but they didn’t. If the framers ultimately proved averse to amendment through a decade of intense reaction to CSBI from several detractors who complained about its standards being overly rigid, unsophisticated impediments to the “progress” of scholarship, we might justifiably imagine they’d be averse to us amending it as well.

From Revision to Expansion

The dialogue after CSBI ultimately led not to *revision* of CSBI, but to its *expansion* in 1982. The expansion came in the form of a companion document—the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics (or CSBH). The ICBI did consider all manner of hermeneutical innovations after

CSBI. They followed quite closely, for example, the controversy over Robert Gundry's in the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS). The CSBH was written with the Gundry controversy in mind.⁸ If they had wanted to, they could have simply amended the articles in CSBI that touched on hermeneutics and made them more sophisticated. They could have added some additional articles to CSBI. But the challenges to inerrancy created by hermeneutics were so serious and complex that ICBI decided to devote Summit II to the matter. The CSBH was in harmony with CSBI and expanded some of the articles in CSBI. In their introduction to the CSBH, the ICBI framers again humbly admitted that they had not produced a perfectly thorough statement:

In a similar fashion to the Chicago Statement of 1978, we herewith present those affirmations and denials as an expression of the results of our labors to clarify hermeneutical issues and principles. *We do not claim completeness or systematic treatment of the entire subject...* *It has been a broadening experience to engage in dialogue*, and it is our prayer that God will use the product of our diligent efforts to enable us and others to more correctly handle the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15). (Emphasis added.)

Here they show that CSBH was the result of engaging in dialogue and having had a broadening experience. They didn't seem to encourage amendment proposals this time. We suggest then that the way the ICBI ultimately proceeded to revise and improve their output was to (1) produce the CSBH as an expansion of CSBI and (2) produce the CSBA to show what fruits a true inerrantist with a pro-inerrancy hermeneutic would look like.

[This Council will Self-Destruct in 10, 9, 8, . . .](#)

When considering the question of whether anyone today should have the *right* to revise the CSBI, it is difficult to overstate the importance of the rather extraordinary fact that the ICBI voluntarily time-bombed their own Council. From the start, the ICBI stated that their purpose was "to take a united stand *over a period of ten years* to elucidate, vindicate, and apply in the fields of academic theology as an essential element for the authority of Scripture and the health of the church, and to attempt to win back that portion of the church that has drifted away from this position."⁹ The introduction to the CSBA (1983) starts with these words: "The International Council on Biblical Inerrancy was founded in 1977, *with a planned life-span of ten years*. ... to restore the ebbing confidence of Christian people in the total trustworthiness of Scripture."¹⁰ Writing about the end of the ICBI project, Dr. Jay Grimstead recounted, "As per my suggestion to the ICBI Board [in]

our first year, we gave the ICBI *a ten-year life span*, and at the end of 1987, ICBI shut down and turned all its many boxes of records, pictures, and correspondence, etc. over to the Archives of the Dallas Theological Seminary Library where ICBI research may take place.”¹¹ This harmonizes well with what the Archivists at DTS leave us with:

One of the last actions of the ICBI was to transfer records of the organization to the archives at Dallas Theological Seminary to preserve them for future research. The ICBI files date from about 1978 to 1989 and fill sixty-nine linear feet. The records include correspondence, files regarding publications, documents about seminars and lay congresses, financial records, and copies of the statements adopted at the three conferences. The collection also has some scrapbooks and preservation copies of books published by the ICBI.¹²

Grimstead also recounted,

In 1978, as the ICBI Executive Director, I convinced our board of directors that we should give this movement a 10-year life span and shut ICBI down after 10 years. I presented this logic to them: If our team cannot turn evangelicalism around within 10 years, then we better get out of the way and let some better men than we take on this task. But if we are successful in turning it around in 10 years, then why keep this organization going to let it become ‘institutional’ and self-serving as many organizations have done which outlived their original usefulness? . . . [Regarding the possibility of shutting ICBI down after Summit I,] I strongly urged the board instead to keep the ICBI alive for the full 10 years because the weak evangelical Church in America needed to know there is a “standing army” of theologians ready to jump heavily upon any “neo-evangelical” who wanted to question the inerrancy of the Bible. They bought the plan and we held a closing ceremony . . . in 1987.¹³

To press the point further, if, hypothetically, the last three living framers of the ICBI—[J.I. Packer](#)¹⁴ (1926-2020), [Norman Geisler](#)¹⁵ (1932-2019), and [R.C. Sproul](#)¹⁶ (1939-2017)—had met in 2012, to discuss what they *wish* they had written in the CSBI, CSBH, and CSBA, taking advantage of thirty or forty years of hindsight and maturation, and had come to a unanimous consensus as to one proposition in one article that should be improved, they would not have attempted to improve the CSBI.¹⁷

In 2011, some of us noticed that some from The Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals (ACE) seemed to be trying to resurrect the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy. They had established a presence at facebook.com/inerrancy (now defunct) which talked about plans for a new ICBI summit meeting. Dr. J. Ligon Duncan III was to hold the title of Convener of the ICBI and Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr., was to hold the title of President of the ICBI. (Both Duncan and

Mohler have been board members of TGC.) They may have been trying to honor the ICBI by trying to revive it. And they had a somewhat legitimate claim to some small percentage of the ICBI legacy through their close association with James Boice. Boice had served as the chairman of the ICBI and was one of the founding members of ACE. In some way he made ACE the heir of some portion of the ICBI legacy. Intrigued by this development, some of us asked Geisler what he thought of the idea of the ICBI being reborn. The news of it alarmed him because a resurrection of ICBI was so diametrically opposed to the stated plans that the ICBI had for itself. Geisler explained to some of us on his Defending Inerrancy team that the ICBI wisely time-bombed itself to help ensure that the ICBI Council could not have the possibility to grow, for example, into an authoritative teaching magisterium like the Roman Catholic Church. Sometimes it is necessary to form a Church council to address a serious challenge to the Church. But the more success a Council has, the more potential it may have for supplanting the authority of Scripture.¹⁸ Geisler talked the matter over privately with Mohler. ACE then honored the ICBI by undoing the work they had done to begin to recreate it. We applaud ACE for their decision.

To some, an attempt to revise the CSBI might look a bit like an attempt to recreate the ICBI in some limited way. If any organization were to take the CSBI-1978, the flagship document of the ICBI, alter it and then offer it to the world repackaged as the CSBI-2023, as if it were theirs to name and offer, some onlookers will see this as bad form. What could look like rescuing an orphan from bondage to some could look like kidnapping and grooming to others. It runs the risk of the appearance of both property-theft and possibly even identity theft. What to some may seem like an effort of liberation and enhancement may to others resemble a conquest and intellectual colonialism. The question of taking ownership of the CSBI seems quite controversial from both ethical and legal standpoints. Legally the custody battle could possibly involve getting (or taking) permission from all the heirs of the authors of the CSBI and the organization entrusted with the CSBI's archival.¹⁹

The ICBI was alive and active for precisely ten years. It ended its life quite on purpose to prevent it from transmogrifying. It wanted to die and stay dead. It sought not amendment but archival. It didn't want a new ICBI council to rise from its scattered ashes. It wanted its ashes to fertilize the sprouts of inerrancy around the world. It hoped that many other organizations and individuals

would not redefine inerrancy but defend it. ICBI wanted all of its material to be archived and frozen in perpetuity. They are to be researched and discussed. They're not "living documents" meant to evolve as the scholarly trends in evangelical circles bend and shift, as hermeneutical and cultural winds change direction. Those were the intentions of the ICBI and we hope every pro-inerrancy group will honor those intentions.

To Revise, Readopt, or Restate?

We obviously recommend not pursuing the *revision* option and instead recommend the readoption option of both CSBI (1978) and the CSBH (1982) together. While they may have some of the wrinkles that age offers, no plastic surgery is needed. We certainly don't see anything so malignant in the existing articles to merit surgical removal and reconstruction. If the CSBI is substantially changed, even in one of its propositions, it's no longer the CSBI. Even if the new entity has 90% continuity with the old entity, it's still radically different. Blurring the lines between the old CSBI and the new CSBI would be confusing at best.

The next best option would be to make a fresh restatement of CSBI (without modifying the original) in your own words that remains totally distinct from CSBI. Borrowing heavily from CSBI is quite sensible and agreeable. It's also very respectable in one sense. For those who cannot in good conscience hold to all the articles of the CSBI as their standard for inerrancy, it would be better to not feign any false affirmation of the CSBI and instead create a diverging and competing statement with its own identity and name. This would be better for the sake of conscience, the avoidance of hypocrisy, simply letting the yes mean yes and the no mean no, and for the sake of not being sloppy in their articulation of what they really hold to be true regarding inerrancy. We would respect the honesty, integrity, transparency, courtesy, and courage that underlies the change.

Recommended Resources

Regardless of which of the three paths are taken, we believe the journey would be enriched and the end-product strengthened by review of the following ICBI-conservative resources:

- *Explaining Biblical Inerrancy: The Chicago Statements on Biblical Inerrancy, Hermeneutics, and Application with Official ICBI Commentary* (Bastion Books, 2013) by the ICBI with R.C. Sproul and Norman Geisler
- *Preserving Orthodoxy: Maintaining Continuity with the Historic Christian Faith on Scripture* (Bastion Books, 2017) by Norman Geisler.
- *Vital Issues in the Inerrancy Debate* (Farnell, Geisler, et al, Wipf&Stock, 2015)
- *Inerrancy* (Zondervan, 1980). Edited by Norman Geisler and containing essays by Wenham, Blum, Archer, Payne, Kaiser, Bahnsen, Packer, Lewis, Feinberg, Geisler, Sproul, Preus, Gerstner, and Krabbendam.
- All of the articles at <https://defendinginerrancy.com>
- *Defending Inerrancy* (Baker, 2011) by Norman Geisler and Bill Roach
- *Defending Evangelicalism: The Apologetics of Norman L. Geisler* (Christian Publishing House, 2020) by Bill Roach

In so far as hermeneutical concerns are providing catalysts for revision or restatement, we'd also recommend consideration of Lydia McGrew's *The Mirror or the Mask* (Deward, 2019) and *The Eye of the Beholder* (Deward, 2021). These are written in defense of the robust reliability of the gospels and they offer a thorough consideration of several controversial interpretations by biblical scholars in recent years.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to us if you'd like to use any of our ICBI-conservative scholars as sounding boards. We can disagree as brothers without being disagreeable. You can reach out to us through <https://defendinginerrancy.com/contact/>.

¹ Derek J. Brown. "Updating the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy: A Proposal." March 15th, 2022. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/updated-chicago-statement>, accessed 3/16/2022

² Norman Geisler and Bill Roach. *Defending Inerrancy: Affirming the Accuracy of the Scripture for a New Generation* (Baker, 2011)

³ Bill Roach, "Updating the Chicago Statement: Response to TGC and Derek Brown." March 15th, 2022. <https://youtu.be/JDv2TMA5kUo>.

⁴ The shorter statements on inerrancy, such as the one found in the Lausanne Covenant (1974), for example, may sound great at face value. But they proved to be too vague. They left too many loop-holes which invited errantists to introduce all manner of errantism under the guise of inerrancy. While they offer scholars on the progressive side of the evangelical spectrum an attractive amount of latitude to press the envelopes of inerrancy and hermeneutic, they end up blurring the lines between errancy and inerrancy. There were too many abuses of the short statements. A more thorough and verbose statement was needed to plug the many cracks in the dam. This was one of the original purposes for CSBI to solve that problem. Hopefully the CSBI's successor will plug at least all of the same cracks and a few more. See "Billy and the Lausanne Covenant" section at <https://defendinginerrancy.com/billy-graham-and-biblical-inerrancy/>.

⁵ Norman L. Geisler, ed. *Inerrancy* (Zondervan Publishing House, 1980).

⁶ The ICBI did not operate in obscurity. Its activity was well publicized in *Christianity Today* magazine and the *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* (JETS). In a letter from Ronald Youngblood to the ICBI, Ronald thanked ICBI for permission to reprint the CSBH, said the JETS was sent out to about 2,500 individuals and libraries, and enthusiastically concluded with, "We at JETS are delighted to give the main documents of Summit II as wide a circulation as possible." Virtually everyone in the ETS was aware of what the ICBI was doing at the time. The door was open to participate in ICBI in various ways. If they couldn't afford to attend the summits, they could still write letters or visit with ICBI members individually.

⁷ According to private letters contained in box #2 of the ICBI archives, Carl Henry had been invited by the ICBI to participate in Summit I and the forging of CSBI (1978). In a letter from Carl Henry to Jay Grimstead dated June 24, 1977, Carl turned down the ICBI's invitation to participate in Summit I because it seemed to him that allowing "pastors no less than academicians, and missionaries, and ultimately laymen" to join the project seemed too "broad" and that he therefore preferred the idea of such a statement on inerrancy being "done under the aegis of Evangelical Theological Society." But after seeing the results of Summit I and CSBI, and after its wide acceptance in the ETS, Henry got on board with the ICBI project and became an integral part of it. It is clear from the ICBI archives that Carl's input was not just welcomed but that he became a leading voice in the forging of CSBH (1982) in Summit II and CSBA (1986).

⁸ <https://normangeisler.com/the-ets-vote-on-robert-gundry-at-their-annual-meeting-in-december-1983/>

⁹ Jay Grimstead, "Evangelicals at a Fork in the Road," 1977. This essay is located in Box #1 of the ICBI archives at Dallas Theological Seminary. Quoted from *Explaining Biblical Inerrancy* (Bastion Books, 2013), 151. Emphasis added.

¹⁰ *Explaining Biblical Inerrancy*, 49. Emphasis added.

¹¹ Jay Grimstead, *Rebuilding Civilization on the Bible* (Nordskog Publishing, 2014), 6. Emphasis added.

¹² <https://library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/ICBI.shtml>, accessed 3/18/2022.

¹³ Grimstead, *Rebuilding*, 303.

¹⁴ <https://defendinginerrancy.com/tribute-to-jipacker/>

¹⁵ <https://defendinginerrancy.com/tribute-to-norm-geisler-2019/>

¹⁶ <https://defendinginerrancy.com/a-tribute-to-r-c-sproul/>

¹⁷ Speaking of a consensus between the three last living ICBI framers, few know that Packer, Geisler, and Sproul actually did reach a unanimous consensus in 2012 while speaking as

authoritative representatives of how the CSBI itself should be interpreted. All three agreed that the controversial interpretation at the center of “the Licona controversy” was not acceptable by the ICBI standards for inerrancy. For those not familiar with the controversy, in 2011, Norm Geisler raised a warning about how Michael Licona’s published dehistoricization of Matthew’s historical account of the raised saints in Matthew 27 was not compatible with either the CSBI and the CSBH and was essentially a repeat of the Gundry controversy of 1983. In 1983, while the ICBI was still active, the ICBI discussed the Gundry controversy, had the controversy in mind as they drafted the CSBH, and the Executive Committee of the ICBI voted unanimously to let the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) know that Robert Gundry’s interpretation was not compatible with ICBI standards. [<https://normangeisler.com/the-ets-vote-on-robert-gundry-at-their-annual-meeting-in-december-1983/>] Whereas Robert Gundry was voted out of the ETS in 1983, in 2011, several prominent ETS members public defended Licona’s similar dehistoricization saying it was a matter of interpretation rather than inerrancy. Many ETS members assumed incorrectly that Licona’s interpretation was consistent with the CSBI. Norm Geisler of course knew it wasn’t. When Packer and Sproul were asked whether the Licona interpretation was permissible according to the ICBI standards of inerrancy, both of them were quick to agree with Geisler that it was not. [See <http://normangeisler.com/dr-r-c-sprouls-judgment-not-even-remotely-compatible-with-icbi/> and <https://defendinginerrancy.com/j-i-packer-stands-firm-on-inerrancy/>.] The CSBI and CSBH had not changed. The judgments of the last living framers of the ICBI had not changed. The nature of the error had not changed (except for genre criticism having replaced midrash criticism). But the culture of the ETS as a whole, which had in the past used the CSBI to define their terms of inerrancy, and which in the past had enforced that doctrinal tenant, had changed. This consensus of the last three living framers of the ICBI was a profound historical moment. If the CSBI were to be improved at all today, it could be argued that additional safeguards should be added to make it clearer that the hermeneutical attacks on biblical inerrancy, such as the types that Robert Gundry and Michael Licona have become somewhat famous for are at odds with both the CSBI and the CSBH, and with the letter and spirit of the entire ICBI legacy. But such an additional safeguard clause is unnecessary because a plain reading of the CSBI, especially in concert with a reading of the CSBH which expands it, makes it abundantly clear that the Gundryan and Liconian loop-holes are antithetical to the ICBI standard of inerrancy.

¹⁸ These are not Dr. Geisler’s exact words but are a good-faith approximation of them based on a ten-year old memory of a private, in-person conversation. Various members of the Defending Inerrancy may have heard something similar from Dr. Geisler and might remember and phrase it differently.

¹⁹ Without pretending to have any mastery of the legal nuances of this case, we can offer a few factual pieces of that puzzle for TGC’s legal counsel to consider and can present them here in a matrix of our own legal speculation. If taking CSBI, altering it, and calling it the new CSBI were to be done in accord with laws governing copyright and intellectual property, one would probably need to first determine which persons or entities are the legal owners of the CSBI. The ICBI no longer exists. Then men who worked together to produce the final version of the wording of the CSBI have all passed away. It appears that they may not signed and left any legal contracts in their archives. We might presume that the rights would transfer from those authors to the estates of those authors. If so, perhaps the TGC may need to be prepared to figure out who the exact authors of the CSBI were, contact their many heirs, and get signed permission for the rights to redact the IP and use the name.

To date we are not aware of any legally binding documents signed by ICBI members giving up their rights to their IP delineating rights or ownership. One of our team members searched most of the boxes in the ICBI archives and found no obvious legal documents of interest. Perhaps an organization intent upon exploring this question could begin by sending someone with a legal eye to Dallas to search all the boxes of archived ICBI documents, listen to all the audio cassettes, and view their Betamax tape recordings. The son of William Garrison, the chief legal counsel for the ICBI, was consulted and there were no relevant legal contracts in the Garrison file cabinet. At least two discussions about ownership of the ICBI IP were had with one of the archivists at DTS. We have not consulted the legal department at DTS to ask what they may have in their file cabinets or to seek clarification for who has the rights to what.

There is no doubt that one of the last acts of the ICBI before dissolving their organization was to hand over several boxes of their IP to Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS). Part of the clear “last will and testament” (so to speak) of the ICBI was for DTS to have the right to archive and protect the unpublished and self-published IP from the ICBI. While this does not necessarily make DTS the legal owner of the CSBI in every sense, it may give DTS the right to object to mutations of what they’ve been entrusted with. While the ICBI gave their IP to Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS) to archive and preserve, to the best of our knowledge, DTS has so far not formalized any claim of full ownership to it. However, based on the law of adverse possession, it seems like DTS would seem to have the most obvious, strongest, and most natural claim to ownership, if they were so inclined to press that claim. TGC may need to seek the written consent from DTS as well, to be above reproach.

If TGC needs to attempt to take custody of it, perhaps the place to start may be a consultation with an attorney who specializes in copyright law followed by the courtesy of transparency with the legal department at DTS and the estates of the framers of the ICBI. As a courtesy TGC should also consider reaching out to several other organizations that specifically mention CSBI in their doctrinal statements and ask them if they have any concerns about TGC taking ownership of the CSBI and revising it. For example, the Defending Inerrancy team at defendinginerrancy.com, the Evangelical Theological Society, Veritas International University, the International Society of Christian Apologetics, and Ratio Christi, among others. It seems that for now, the custody of CSBI may be in a bit of legal limbo. It isn’t hard to imagine that taking ownership of CSBI could be a lengthy and somewhat costly struggle. As for the Defending Inerrancy team, we would recommend the action of leaving it in legal limbo and not trying to take legal custody of it—especially if the intention is to make changes to it.