



Biblical Inerrancy as an Epistemological Foundation for Christian Religious Education in Indonesia

Nella Mariana Panjaitan

Universitas Kristen Indonesia

Corresponding Author: Nella Mariana Panjaitan nellamarianaraffles@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the relevance of the principles of the CSBI as an epistemological foundation for Christian Religious Education in Indonesia. Employing a library research method with a descriptive-analytical approach, the study examines theological and Christian education literature relevant to the topic. The findings indicate that the concept of biblical inerrancy provides a strong epistemological foundation for Christian Religious Education by positioning Scripture as the primary source of truth, values, and character formation. In addition to strengthening Christian educational identity, the principles of the CSBI offer a conceptual framework that enables students to engage critically and responsibly with the challenges of the digital age. The novelty of this study lies in its conceptual analysis of the CSBI as an epistemological foundation for Christian Religious Education within Indonesia's pluralistic and digitalized context.

INTRODUCTION

Christian Religious Education (CRE) plays a strategic role in shaping students' faith, character, and worldview based on biblical values. Within the Christian educational tradition, the Bible functions not merely as instructional content but also as the normative foundation that guides the entire educational process, including character formation, spiritual development, and ethical decision-making (Knight, 2016; Estep et al., 2022). Consequently, the quality of Christian Religious Education is determined not only by the effectiveness of pedagogical approaches but also by the strength of the theological foundation that underpins the educational process. One theological issue that continues to receive significant attention in Christian education is the authority and inerrancy of Scripture.

The discussion surrounding biblical authority has occupied an important place in Christian theology, particularly since the emergence of historical criticism, theological liberalism, and various modern hermeneutical approaches during the twentieth century. These developments have raised questions regarding the reliability, authority, and truthfulness of Scripture in both ecclesiastical and educational contexts. In response to these challenges, the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (ICBI) issued *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* (CSBI) in 1978. This document affirms that the Bible is the fully inspired Word of God and is therefore truthful and without error in all its teachings (International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, 1978; Geisler, 1980). Since its publication, the CSBI has become one of the most influential theological documents within the evangelical tradition, providing a systematic framework for understanding biblical authority and its implications for church life and Christian education (Mohler, 2016).

The relevance of biblical inerrancy has become increasingly significant in the context of globalization and digital transformation. Contemporary students live in an environment characterized by an overwhelming abundance of information accessed through the internet, social media, artificial intelligence, and various digital platforms. While such accessibility creates unprecedented opportunities for knowledge acquisition, it also presents challenges in the form of misinformation, moral relativism, and competing perspectives that often conflict with biblical principles (Kandouw, 2025). In this context, students require not only digital literacy skills but also an interpretive framework that enables them to evaluate information according to theologically and morally accountable standards. Consequently, the question of biblical authority remains highly relevant within contemporary Christian Religious Education.

In addition to technological developments, Indonesian society is characterized by religious, cultural, and ideological diversity. This pluralistic reality requires Christian Religious Education to cultivate students' Christian identity while simultaneously promoting peaceful coexistence within a multicultural society. In such a context, Christian education must preserve its theological distinctiveness without neglecting the values of tolerance, mutual respect, and social harmony (Banks & Banks, 2016; Estep et al., 2022). Therefore, the need for a robust theological foundation becomes increasingly important in addressing the educational challenges of the twenty-first century.

Numerous studies have examined the relationship between biblical authority and Christian education from various perspectives. Knight (2016) identifies Scripture as the philosophical foundation of Christian education, while Estep et al. (2022) emphasize the integration of faith and learning as a defining characteristic of Christian educational practice. Within theological scholarship, Dockery (2019) argues that the doctrine of biblical inerrancy is essential for preserving evangelical identity. Likewise, Vanhoozer (2016) maintains that biblical

authority must be understood in relation to the life of the church and the formation of the faith community, whereas Kruger (2012) demonstrates that the authority of Scripture is inseparable from the historical process of canon formation and reception within the Christian tradition. Despite these contributions, most studies focus primarily on theological, apologetic, and hermeneutical concerns, while research examining biblical inerrancy as an epistemological foundation for Christian Religious Education remains relatively limited.

This condition reveals a significant research gap. Existing scholarship on *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* has largely concentrated on theological, apologetic, and hermeneutical dimensions (Geisler, 1980; Mohler, 2016; Dockery, 2019; Vanhoozer, 2016). In contrast, studies investigating the relevance of biblical inerrancy as an epistemological foundation for Christian Religious Education, particularly within Indonesia's pluralistic and increasingly digitalized context, remain scarce. Yet understandings of biblical authority significantly influence how students interpret knowledge, values, and reality.

Addressing this gap, the present study offers a conceptual analysis of biblical inerrancy as an epistemological foundation for Christian Religious Education in Indonesia. Unlike previous studies that primarily approach inerrancy as a theological issue, this research highlights its philosophical and educational implications for the formation of a Christian worldview within educational practice. In doing so, the study seeks to extend discussions of *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* beyond the domain of theology into a more contextualized educational framework.

Based on this background, the study aims to analyze the relevance of *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* as an epistemological foundation for Christian Religious Education in Indonesia. It is expected that the findings will contribute theoretically to the development of Christian education scholarship while enriching contemporary discussions concerning the relationship between biblical authority and educational practice in the face of digital transformation and societal pluralism.

METHODS

This study employed a library research method with a descriptive-analytical approach to examine the relevance of *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* (CSBI) as an epistemological foundation for Christian Religious Education in Indonesia. A library research approach was selected because the study focuses on the analysis of theological and philosophical concepts derived from a critical examination of relevant scholarly literature. This approach enables the researcher to explore the relationship between the doctrine of biblical inerrancy, biblical authority, and Christian Religious Education within contemporary contexts. In addition to describing existing scholarly perspectives, the study seeks to develop a conceptual synthesis regarding the relevance of the principles articulated in the CSBI for the development of Christian educational thought in Indonesia.

The data sources consisted of both primary and secondary materials. The primary source was *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy*, published by the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (ICBI) in 1978. This document served as the principal foundation for understanding the concept of biblical inerrancy and its theological and epistemological implications. Secondary sources included academic books, national and international journal articles, conference proceedings, and other scholarly publications addressing biblical authority, Christian epistemology, Christian education, faith-learning integration, and the relevance of biblical inerrancy within contemporary educational discourse. Priority was given to literature published

within the last five to ten years in order to obtain perspectives that reflect current developments in education and digital technology. The selection of literature was based on thematic relevance, academic credibility, and its contribution to discussions concerning biblical inerrancy and Christian Religious Education.

Data collection was conducted through a systematic review of literature retrieved from various academic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus, ATLA Religion Database, ProQuest, and SpringerLink. The search process employed keywords such as *biblical inerrancy*, *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy*, *biblical authority*, *Christian education*, *Christian epistemology*, *Christian worldview*, and *faith-learning integration*. The collected literature was subsequently organized and categorized according to its thematic focus to facilitate the analytical process.

Data analysis was conducted in three stages. First, data reduction was carried out by identifying and classifying literature relevant to the focus of the study. Second, thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring themes within the literature, particularly those related to biblical inerrancy, biblical authority, Christian epistemology, and Christian Religious Education. Thematic analysis was selected because it enables the systematic synthesis of diverse scholarly perspectives and facilitates the identification of conceptual patterns across studies. Third, descriptive-analytical interpretation was undertaken by synthesizing the findings from the literature and relating them to the context of Christian Religious Education in Indonesia. Through this process, the study generated a conceptual synthesis concerning the relevance of the CSBI as an epistemological foundation for Christian Religious Education in the digital era and within a pluralistic society (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Snyder, 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Biblical Inerrancy as an Epistemological Foundation for Christian Religious Education

The literature analysis indicates that the doctrine of biblical inerrancy plays a fundamental role in establishing the epistemological foundation of Christian Religious Education (CRE). According to *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* (CSBI), Scripture is understood as the fully inspired (*divinely inspired*) Word of God and is therefore free from error in all that it teaches (International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, 1978). This understanding affirms that the Bible functions not merely as a source of religious information but also as a normative foundation for the formation of knowledge, values, and character within Christian education.

From an epistemological perspective, every educational system is built upon particular assumptions regarding the nature of knowledge, the source of truth, and the means through which valid understanding is acquired. Modern education generally emphasizes human rationality, empirical observation, and scientific methodology as primary sources of knowledge. In contrast, Christian Religious Education recognizes that human knowledge cannot be separated from divine revelation as disclosed through Scripture (Knight, 2016). Consequently, the concept of biblical inerrancy provides an epistemological framework that enables students to understand reality from a biblical perspective while integrating faith with the learning process.

These findings are consistent with Geisler's (1980) argument that the doctrine of inerrancy is not merely a defense of the accuracy of the biblical text but rather the foundation of the entire Christian theological system. When Scripture is understood as the true and trustworthy Word of God, the educational process gains a strong theological legitimacy. Conversely, when biblical authority is questioned, the normative foundation that supports the objectives, content, and practices of Christian Religious Education is likewise weakened. Biblical inerrancy therefore extends beyond doctrinal

concerns and significantly influences the overall direction of Christian educational development.

The analysis further demonstrates that the Bible's role as the primary epistemological source contributes substantially to the formation of Christian educational identity. Knight (2016) argues that all Christian educational activities must be grounded in a worldview derived from divine revelation. This perspective is reinforced by Estep, Anthony, and Allison (2022), who identify faith-learning integration as a defining characteristic of Christian education. Within this framework, biblical inerrancy provides a conceptual foundation that enables education to pursue not only academic achievement but also spiritual growth and character formation.

The relevance of this epistemological foundation becomes increasingly evident within contemporary societies characterized by rapid technological advancement, value pluralism, and moral relativism. Students today are exposed to an unprecedented volume of information derived from sources whose authority is often uncertain. Information obtained through social media, search engines, and artificial intelligence technologies frequently contains bias, misinformation, or values that conflict with biblical principles. Kandouw (2025) notes that digital transformation has significantly altered the learning habits of younger generations, making them increasingly dependent on digital information sources rather than traditional forms of knowledge.

Such developments present new challenges for Christian Religious Education. Students require not only the ability to access information but also the capacity to evaluate its validity and reliability. In this context, biblical inerrancy functions as an evaluative framework that enables students to distinguish between facts, opinions, and normative truth. By recognizing Scripture as the ultimate standard, students are encouraged to develop critical thinking skills rooted in Christian values while remaining open to advances in science and technology.

This perspective aligns with Vanhoozer's (2016) argument that biblical authority should not be viewed as an obstacle to intellectual inquiry but rather as a foundation that enables the responsible pursuit of truth. Accordingly, the application of biblical inerrancy within Christian Religious Education is not intended to reject scientific developments; instead, it seeks to guide students in integrating scientific knowledge with Christian faith in a critical and reflective manner. Such an approach is particularly important in addressing contemporary issues, including artificial intelligence, digital ethics, environmental sustainability, and questions related to human identity.

The findings also indicate that biblical inerrancy remains relevant for the formation of students' identity within pluralistic societies. Christian education in Indonesia cannot be separated from the realities of religious, cultural, and ideological diversity. Within this context, Christian Religious Education must preserve its theological identity while simultaneously promoting tolerance, mutual respect, and constructive engagement within a multicultural society (Banks & Banks, 2016; Estep et al., 2022).

Based on the analysis, biblical inerrancy may be understood as an epistemological foundation that shapes the direction, purpose, and practice of Christian Religious Education. This principle supports an educational model that extends beyond the transmission of knowledge to include character formation, spiritual development, and the cultivation of critical thinking grounded in biblical values. Therefore, the relevance of the CSBI within the Indonesian context lies in its capacity to provide a theological framework that is both robust and contextually responsive to the challenges of the digital age and pluralistic society.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* (CSBI) remains highly relevant as an epistemological foundation for Christian Religious Education in Indonesia. Based on the literature analysis, the doctrine of biblical inerrancy is not merely a theological affirmation concerning the authority and inerrancy of Scripture; it also provides an epistemological framework that shapes how students understand knowledge, values, and reality. Within this perspective, the Bible is regarded as the primary source of truth that undergirds the formation of faith, character, spirituality, and critical thinking in Christian Religious Education.

The findings indicate that the principles articulated in the CSBI provide a strong conceptual foundation for Christian Religious Education in addressing contemporary challenges, including pluralism, moral relativism, and digital transformation. Amid the abundance of information and competing perspectives that characterize modern society, biblical inerrancy serves as a normative framework through which students can critically evaluate information according to biblical values. Consequently, the relevance of the CSBI extends beyond the domain of systematic theology and carries important implications for the development of students' ways of thinking and the formation of their Christian identity within educational settings.

The primary contribution of this study lies in its conceptual analysis of biblical inerrancy as an epistemological foundation for Christian Religious Education within Indonesia's pluralistic and increasingly digitalized context. This study broadens existing discussions of the CSBI, which have traditionally focused on theological and apologetic concerns, by demonstrating its relevance to philosophical understandings of the sources of knowledge and truth in Christian education. As such, the study contributes theoretically to the advancement of Christian education scholarship while enriching contemporary discussions concerning the relationship between biblical authority and educational practice.

This study is limited by its reliance on a library research approach and the absence of empirical data from schools, teachers, or students. Future research is therefore encouraged to investigate how understandings of biblical inerrancy influence teaching practices, character formation, and the development of students' faith identity across diverse contexts of Christian Religious Education in Indonesia. Such empirical investigations would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how the principles of the CSBI are implemented within contemporary Christian educational settings.

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