

## DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

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### II. Inspiration and Inerrancy of Scripture

*Scripture is breathed out by God; all its words are truly his own, while also the words of its human authors.*

*Inerrancy is a recent term, but an ancient notion per Scripture's inspiration by an omniscient, truthful God.*

*What about alleged errors and self-contradictions in Scripture?*

1. presuppositions usually decide outcomes (i.e., are you looking for problems or solutions?)
2. many prior "errors" have been resolved (e.g.: regnal years, House of David, Pontius Pilate)
3. some allegations of error fail to account for context, culture, genre, or other literary features
4. some allegations of error assume false standards of chronology, quotation, or precision
5. distinguish actual Scriptural assertions from the assumptions or limitations of interpreters
6. allow for the progressive revelation of major concepts instead of expecting homogeneity
7. remember what you've already learned to be *right* about Scripture—because it's a package deal
  - a. its spiritual power
  - b. its coherent worldview
  - c. its long record of vindication: fulfilled prophecies, historical events, human psychology
8. don't make believing the Bible contingent on every possible puzzle; learn to trust the Author

### III. Authority and Sufficiency of Scripture

#### A. Authority of Scripture

1. the question of objective authority differs from how we subjectively recognize it (WCF 1.4-5)
  4. The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man, or church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof: and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God.
  5. We may be moved and induced ... to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture ... our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit
2. due to its divine *authorship*, Scripture has unique, supreme *authority*: SOLA SCRIPTURA
  - a. versus Roman Catholicism and its false claims
    - i. Rome says the church determined the contents of Scripture in the first place
    - ii. Rome says the church is the sole arbiter of Scripture's meaning
    - iii. Rome says the church is a repository of unwritten tradition as separate revelation
    - iv. Rome says the church has native, magisterial authority to issue binding doctrines
  - b. versus rationalism or humanism (e.g., Schleiermacher and 19th century liberalism)
  - c. differs from "prima Scriptura"
    - i. Wesleyan "quadrilateral" puts Scripture alongside reason, experience, tradition
    - ii. these may be ministerial aids to understanding Scripture, but not grounds of faith
  - d. differs from "nuda Scriptura"
    - i. Restorationist denominations: "no book but the Bible, no creed but Christ"
    - ii. creeds, confessions, and teachers can explain, declare, and defend scriptural truths
3. objections to SOLA SCRIPTURA
  - a. "Don't church councils have authority to settle doctrine, per Acts 15 or 1 Timothy 3:15?"
    - i. you'd have to add some basis for deciding *which* church and *which* councils to count
    - ii. no, the church's role is ministerial (declaring what Scripture says), not magisterial
    - iii. no, synods and councils historically have erred and contradicted themselves

- b. "The New Testament enshrines other sources by referring to traditions or oral messages"
  - i. you'd have to add: those traditions consisted of revelation, not just true statements
  - ii. you'd have to add: those traditions stayed separate from what got inscripturated
  - iii. you'd have to add: they've been secretly or implicitly preserved within the church
  - iv. you'd have to add: Rome somehow became their sole steward, and kept them pure
- c. "What about Christians who lived before the canon was closed, or who couldn't read it?"
  - i. the apostolic message they heard was consistent with, and put into, later Scripture
  - ii. the availability of Scripture does not change its authority (cf. the Book of the Law)
  - iii. a shortage of Scripture cannot hallow the "doctrines and commandments of men"
- d. "Sola scriptura leads to doctrinal anarchy"
  - i. people have always twisted Scripture (2 Peter 3:16); that's no reason to depose it
  - ii. interpretive failures don't invalidate a standard of authority (e.g. U.S. Constitution)
  - iii. subjecting Scripture to human control yields spiritual tyranny, which isn't better
- e. "The Bible itself doesn't proclaim 'sola Scriptura'"
  - i. doctrinally-useful terms aren't always in the Bible (aseity? omniscience? Bible?)
  - ii. doctrinally-central concepts aren't from a sole verse (Trinity? covenant of grace?)
  - iii. sola Scriptura follows from things that are quite clear in Scripture...

#### 4. Scriptural basis of SOLA SCRIPTURA

- a. Scripture calls itself God's inspired, inerrant word (2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21)
- b. Scripture judges other claims to speak for God (Isaiah 8:20; Acts 17:11; 1 Cor 14:37)
- c. Scripture assumes it will be sufficient for ministry (1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Tim 2:15; 4:1-2)
- d. Scripture condemns man-made religious burdens (Matthew 15:3-9; Colossians 2:20-23)
- e. Jesus cites Scripture to settle key questions (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10; 22:29-32; John 10:35)

#### B. Sufficiency of Scripture

- 1. contains everything needed for our "faith and life" (2 Tim 3:14-17; cf. Micah 6:8; Deut 30:8-14)
- 2. includes "good and necessary consequence" (cf. John 3:10; this applies to most major doctrines)
- 3. we still need illumination (1 Corinthians 2:12, 14; 2 Corinthians 4:6; John 6:45; Ephesians 1:18)
- 4. contradictions of Scripture's sufficiency
  - a. Roman Catholicism's councils, popes, and traditions claiming to speak anew for God
  - b. Pentecostalism's new revelations or revelatory offices claiming to speak anew for God
  - c. supposed additions to Scripture (Book of Mormon, Eddy's "Science and Health," etc.)
  - d. unverified claims of traveling to heaven or receiving dreams and visions
  - e. imposing doctrines to believe, moral standards to obey, or worship that's extrabiblical
  - f. attempting to divine God's will extrabiblically

#### C. Power of Scripture

- 1. Scripture can communicate God's power to decree (Isaiah 55:10-11; Jer 23:29; cf. Psalm 33:9)
- 2. power to convert sinners and give life (1 Peter 1:23; James 1:18; 1 Cor 1:9; cf. Ezekiel 37:1-14)
- 3. power to sanctify and equip believers (Psalm 119:105; John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:14-17)
- 4. power to harden and judge (e.g., Isaiah 6:9-10; cf. 2 Corinthians 2:14-17)
- 5. power to defeat falsehood (Acts 18:28; cf. 2 Corinthians 10:4-5)
- 6. power to examine and convict us (1 Thessalonians 1:5; Hebrews 4:15)