DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

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Revised Class Outline

I. Revelation and Necessity of Scripture
II. Inspiration and Inerrancy of Scripture
III. Authority, Sufficiency, and Power of Scripture
IV. Attestation and Canon of Scripture
V. Preservation and Translation of Scripture
VI. Interpretation of Scripture
    A. Clarity and illumination of Scripture
    B. Analogy of Scripture and analogy of faith
    C. Genres of Scripture
    D. Grammar, exegesis, and hermeneutics
VII. Using Scripture as a Means of Grace
    A. Public reading and preaching
    B. Private and family worship
    C. Personal and group studies
    D. Memorization, meditation, and communion

PRIOR LESSON: Authority, Sufficiency, and Power of Scripture

Scripture has authority due to its authorship, apart from the question of anyone being convinced of it.
"Sola Scriptura" is the principle of Scripture's unique and absolute authority for Christian faith and life.
"Sola Scriptura" is rejected by those enshrining the church, human reason, experience, or new revelations.
"Sola Scriptura" follows from Scripture's divine inspiration and inerrancy, in contrast to human fallibility and tyranny; Jesus' own use of Scripture; and Scripture's statements and assumptions about itself.

<u>Sufficiency of Scripture</u>

1. contains everything needed for our "faith and life" (2 Tim 3:14-17; cf. Micah 6:8; Deut 30:8-14)
2. extends to "good and necessary consequence" (WCF 1.6)
    a. Jesus expects us to make such inferences (e.g.: John 3:10; Mark 12:18-27; Matt 19:3-9)
    b. most major doctrines are too big for one text (Trinity, Incarnation, covenant, sacraments)
    c. clear doctrinal and moral inferences are as important and binding as plain biblical text
3. we still need illumination (1 Corinthians 2:12, 14; 2 Corinthians 4:6; John 6:45; Ephesians 1:18)
4. beware of contradictions of Scripture's sufficiency
    a. Roman Catholicism's councils, popes, and traditions claiming to speak separately for God
    b. Pentecostalism's new revelations or revelatory offices claiming to speak anew for God
    c. purported additions to Scripture (Book of Mormon, Eddy's "Science and Health," etc.)
    d. unprovable claims of traveling to heaven or receiving new revelatory dreams and visions
    e. imposing doctrines to believe, moral standards to obey, or worship that are extrabiblical
    f. attempting to "divine" God's will extrabiblically (cf. Deuteronomy 18:10-11; 29:29)

<u>Power of Scripture</u>

1. Scripture can express God's powerful decree (Isaiah 55:10-11; Jeremiah 23:29; cf. Psalm 33:9)
2. power to examine and convict us (Hebrews 4:12-13; Romans 7:9; 1 Thessalonians 1:5)
3. power to convert sinners and give life (1 Peter 1:23; James 1:18; 1 Cor 1:9; cf. Ezekiel 37:1-14)
4. power to sanctify and equip believers (Psalm 119:105; John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:14-17)
5. power to harden and judge human hearts (e.g., Isaiah 6:9-10; cf. 2 Corinthians 2:14-17)
6. power to defeat falsehood (Acts 18:28; cf. 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 and Ephesians 6:17)

THIS LESSON: Attestation and Canon of Scripture

Attestation of Scripture

1. subjective persuasion differs from objective authority
    a. authenticity of a document doesn't rise with our acceptance or fall with our doubts
    b. authenticity of a document isn't diminished by the existence of counterfeits
2. how are we subjectively persuaded that Scripture is objectively God's word? (cf. WCF 1.5)
    a. internal evidence: consistency, majesty, focus, etc.
    b. external evidence: history, archaeology, church testimony, etc.
    c. spiritual evidence: God's Spirit uses Scripture itself to convince us

Canon of Scripture

1. "canon" (from yardstick or ruler) is a collection of texts considered authentic and normative
2. God's people have had to *recognize* God's true word—not *decide* what they want in the canon
3. Old Testament canon
    a. inspired books written in Hebrew (except the Aramaic half of Daniel and parts of Ezra)
    b. Ezra (500s BC) is traditionally thought to have collected books, updated names and script
    c. scholars date finalization of canon to 100s BC, but this results from thinking Daniel is late
    d. some rabbis still questioned Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Esther, and Daniel into AD 100s
    e. first-century Sadducees accept only Torah; Pharisees the full Tanakh but add "oral Torah"
    f. Jesus and his apostles believe the Tanakh, quote it, note its parts—but reject oral Torah

- TANAKH: all 39 books of Hebrew scripture (1400-400 BC); Jews count 22 or 24 books; consists of…
    - TORAH (a.k.a. The Law): five books of Moses
    - NEVI'IM (a.k.a. The Prophets): most history books are "former prophets"; others are "latter"
    - KETUVIM (a.k.a. The Writings or The Psalms): poetry books plus later histories and prophets
- APOCRYPHA: intertestamental books written by Jews in Greek—e.g., Maccabees (400-100 BC)
- SEPTUAGINT (LXX): Greek translations of the Hebrew Tanakh, plus some Apocrypha (200-100 BC)
- DEAD SEA SCROLLS: recently-found, partial, sectarian versions of various Hebrew books (100 BC)
- TALMUD: Rabbinic Judaism's Hebrew-language library of MISHNA plus GEMARA
    - MISHNA: edited record of Second Temple Pharisees' teachings ("oral Torah," AD 200)
    - GEMARA: later rabbis' commentaries on the Mishna (AD 500)

  note: the Jerusalem Talmud is slightly older, but the Babylonian Talmud became standard
- MASORETIC TEXT: oldest extant copies of assembled Tanakh, with vowel points added (AD 1000)

4. New Testament canon
    a. criteria used by the early church for accepting books as Scripture
        i. apostolicity: written by an apostle, or his ministry associate or amanuensis
        ii. orthodoxy: contents line up with the teachings of already-accepted Scripture
        iii. catholicity: universally shared, approved, and beneficially used in the churches
    b. core consensus evident by AD 100s (cf. Muratorian fragment, quotes from early fathers)
        i. all 4 gospels, Acts of the Apostles, all 13 epistles of Paul, 1 Peter, 1 John, Jude
        ii. took longer to agree on Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2-3 John, Revelation
        iii. took longer to reject Shepherd of Hermas, 1 Clement, Didache, and others
        iv. slowed by miscommunication, lack of titles, huge body of fakes (pseudepigrapha)
    c. full agreement on "protocanon" by AD 300s (Athanasius' Easter letter, councils, Vulgate)
    d. status of "deuterocanon" (Apocrypha) unresolved until AD 1500s
        i. isn't a single collection; e.g., Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox books differ
        ii. rejected as Scripture by nearly all Jews (post-prophetic "later writings": Josephus)
        iii. quoted by church fathers, but less frequently or authoritatively; "helpful readings"
        iv. Reformers mainly reject it; Rome enshrines it at the Council of Trent (1545-1563)