1689 Baptist Confession Chapter 1: Of the Holy Scriptures - Commentary

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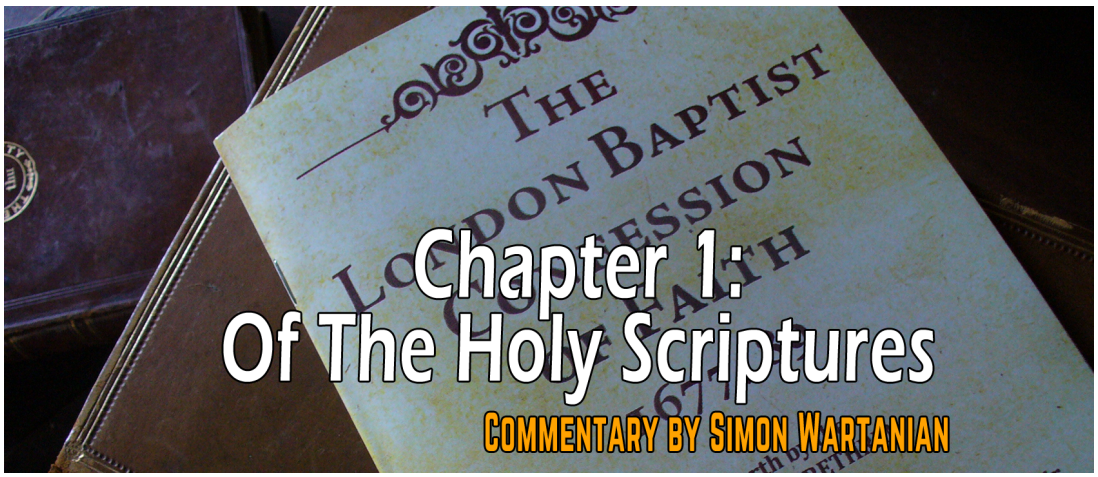

Chapter 1: Of the Holy Scriptures

What does the Bible itself teach about the Word of God? Which books are contained in the Bible? Are the Apocryphal books God-inspired and authoritative? Who made the Bible authoritative? What is Sola Scriptura? What does it mean that Scripture is inerrant and infallible? Is Scripture sufficient? What does it mean that the Scripture is inspired? Are creeds and confessions above or subordinate to the Scriptures? In this chapter, we will explore the Bible's view of the Word of God. The paragraphs in which I deal with parts of the Scripture's doctrine are not necessarily in a logical order, therefore, here are the topics in a somewhat more logical order:

1. Necessity of Scripture (**paragraph 1**)
2. Scripture As Self-Revelation (**paragraph 1**)
3. Canon of the Old Testament (**paragraph 4**)
4. Canon of the New Testament (**paragraph 3**)
5. Inspiration of Scripture (**paragraph 2**)
6. Inerrancy and Infallibility of Scripture (**paragraph 1**)
7. Authority of Scripture (**paragraph 4**)
8. Sufficiency of Scripture (**paragraph 6**)
9. Sola Scriptura (**paragraph 1**, **10**)
10. Authentication of Scripture (**paragraph 5**)
11. Perspicuity of Scripture (**paragraph 7**)
12. Interpretation of Scripture (**paragraph 9**)

This chapter is in many ways based upon the truths in 2 Timothy 3:16. All the particular subjects which are treated are part of a unified whole doctrine about God's Word.

§1 The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule

1. The Holy Scripture is the only **sufficient**, **certain**, and **infallible** rule of all **saving knowledge**, **faith**, and **obedience** **1**, although the **light of nature**, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to **leave men inexcusable** **2**; yet are they **not sufficient** to give that knowledge of God and his will which is necessary unto salvation. **3** Therefore it pleased the Lord at **sundry times and in divers**

manners to reveal himself, and to declare that his will unto his church **4**; and afterward for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan, and of the world, to **commit the same wholly unto writing**; which maketh the **Holy Scriptures to be most necessary 5,** those **former ways of God's revealing his will** unto his people being now ceased. **6**

1. Isa. 8:20; Luke 16:29; Eph. 2:20; 2 Tim. 3:15-17[1]
2. Ps. 19:1-3; Rom. 1:19-21, 32; 2:12a, 14-15
3. Ps. 19:1-3 with vv. 7-11; Rom. 1:19-21; 2:12a, 14-15 with 1:16-17; and 3:21
4. Heb. 1:1-2a
5. Prov. 22:19-21; Luke 1:1-4; 2 Peter 1:12-15; 3:1; Deut. 17:18ff; 31:9ff, 19ff; 1 Cor. 15:1; 2 Thess. 2:1-2, 15; 3:17; Rom. 1:8-15; Gal. 4:20; 6:11; 1 Tim. 3:14ff; Rev. 1:9, 19; 2:1 etc.; Rom. 15:4; 2 Peter 1:19-21
6. Heb. 1:1-2a; Acts 1:21-22; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:7-8; Eph. 2:20

Holy Scripture, which is defined to be the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, is "**sufficient, certain, and infallible**". This means that Scripture is enough; true and sure; and cannot err. What is the scope of this sufficiency, certainty, and infallibility? The Confession says that Scripture is the only infallible "**rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience**". Holy Scripture is given as a measuring line and a standard. It is a standard of standards. There are other standards and rules besides the Bible, but the Bible *alone* is the "sufficient, certain, and infallible rule". The Bible is the norm and rule to test everything else by.

Paragraph 1 then moves to speak about the insufficiency of general revelation for salvation. The "**light of nature, and the works of creation and providence**" demonstrate that there is a powerful God Who is the Creator of everything. Yet this knowledge is not sufficient to save. Although it is sufficient to leave men inexcusable. This is basically Paul's argument in Romans 1:18-32. Men know the God Who exists because of the creation which they are able to observe and because God has revealed Himself to them. So clear is this revelation that when they stand before the thrice Holy God they will be found "without excuse" (Rom. 1:20). General revelation condemns. If we are to be saved we need something more than general revelation. *Because* general revelation is insufficient to save ("**Therefore**"), the Lord specially revealed **Himself** and **His will** to His **church**. This is what theologians call *special revelation.* This revelation of God is to His people, the **church** and it concerns **Himself** and His **will.** Scripture is the self-disclosure of God. 1 Samuel 3:21 is an interesting passage where it is said that "the LORD revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD." The revelation of the LORD happened *by* the word of the LORD. When God reveals His Word and speaks to us through the Bible, He is not merely revealing this about us and about Himself, but He reveals *Himself* to us. 1 Timothy 3:16 describes the Bible as the breath of God (**see more on this below**). The Word of God is personal to God and it reveals Him and is ever true and certain as the Author of it is true and certain.

This part spoke about the revelation of the Word of God. The next part speaks about the inscripturation of the Word of God. This is the process whereby the Word of God is written down to be preserved for the next generations. This was so as to bless the **church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan, and of the world** so that we would have a certain and infallible Word of God. We would not have to try to remember what God said when we could read the inscripturated Word in the Bible. Furthermore, this also establishes the truthfulness of the Word of God. The Word of God is one and certain, though the interpretations thereof might differ among men. This revelation of God and His will and the subsequent inscripturation thereof is **most necessary** to know Who the true God is and the way of salvation. This is also because the **former ways of God's revealing his will** have now ceased. God no longer gives His Word and commands it to be inscripturated. The revelation of God is complete and is sufficient for us to live godly and obedient lives before His face.

The Confession starts with the authority of the Bible because the Confession is meant to be an interpretation of the Bible. Therefore, it must start with its position on the Bible. The Confession seeks to be faithful to the Bible in what it confirms and thus it is most appropriate to start by declaring its position on the Bible. I think it's appropriate, though it may be strange that the Confession starts with the Bible rather than with God. But that is the case because the presentation of God in the Confession is drawn from the Scriptures and that's why it was necessary for the Confession to declare what it believes about the Bible before it dives into topics whose belief is based upon Scripture above all. According to the Confession, the Scripture is sufficient, certain and infallible. It is all that we need in this life for godliness and to know the will of God. We don't need extra revelations when we have His pure and sufficient Word in our hands.

General Revelation And The Necessity Of Scripture

Looking at Creation, we perceive that there must be a powerful Creator Who has created all these things and brought them into being. Looking in our hearts, we see that our conscience condemns us and that there is a law which dictates what is right and what is wrong. Looking at the beauty of the world, it is most reasonable for us to conclude that there must be an Amazing Designer of this world. This is what we call general revelation. This is the revelation of God which is available to everyone. This revelation, says the Confession, "manifest[s] the goodness, wisdom, and power of God", but it is not perfect. The purpose of general revelation is to condemn and leave men inexcusable for their rebellion against the God Whom they know. The apostle Paul makes it very clear in Romans 1:18ff that all people know the true God, yet they hold down the truth, suppressing it and choosing rather to believe the lie. He says that the created world testifies to the fact that there is a Creator Who has revealed Himself to them. God reveals Himself in Creation. But since we live in a fallen world, this revelation of God is distorted, hence the necessity of verbal and special revelation. By looking at the beauty of the world and the awesome things in nature we cannot deduce that God is a Triune Being existing as Father, Son, and Spirit. Nor can we deduce that we have to believe in the Lord Jesus to be saved from God's wrath. Nor can we have an idea of His special love for His people. For these things, general revelation falls short. It is able to condemn men and leave them without an excuse (Rom. 1:20), but it is not able to point them to the way of salvation. That's why it pleased God to reveal Himself in words besides His general revelation in nature.

God's revelation of Himself came in words after the Fall to Adam and Eve, and it continued with Noah, Abraham and the other saints of old. Certainly, people knew the true God in these times, just think of Melchizedek who was a high priest of the Most High God coming to Abraham. Therefore, there must have been some kind of *special* revelation from God. When we speak of special revelation, we mean God's revelation in words and visions to His people, as in the Bible. Special revelation is necessary for salvation, but the Bible is not necessary for salvation. Let me clarify. Nobody has been saved through general revelation alone for that power it does not have. General revelation has the ability to condemn, but not save. On the other hand, every soul (beyond the age of childhood or disability, see **chapter 10**) that has been saved, has been saved because of God's special revelation. The message of the gospel came to them, even if they had not read the Bible. In the Bible, we have the full special revelation of God, which God wanted His people to possess. But knowledge or possession of that complete special revelation is not necessary for salvation. What is necessary is knowledge and reception of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore, when we speak of the necessity of Scripture, we do not mean that you can't be saved if you have not read the Bible, or you can't be saved without the Bible. Rather, what we mean is that special revelation, which the Bible is, is necessary for salvation because of fallen man's condition in a fallen world. In Romans 10:13-15, Paul explains the necessity of special revelation for salvation. He says:

> Rom. 10:13-15 For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." 14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

The call is for everyone to receive and call upon the Lord Christ. But, asks the apostle, how are they to call upon the Lord Christ if they had never heard of Him? Hence, Paul shows the necessity for gospel mission and gospel preaching to everyone, so that they may be saved through calling upon the name of the Lord Christ Who is willing and able to save everyone who comes to Him. It would have been very easy for the apostle to affirm that those who have not heard of the gospel are not condemned. But such an idea would have been in contradiction to what he said in chapter 1 of the same epistle. Therefore, the call to preach the gospel is even more necessary and heightened in light of the fact that 1) they are under the wrath of God and without an excuse, and 2) the only way of salvation is through calling upon the name of the Lord. Thereby the necessity of special revelation, which is the Scripture in our hands today, is established. We must preach the gospel, which is revealed in Scripture, for people to be saved. *That* is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16).

Moving beyond the subject of the necessity of special revelation, the Scripture is necessary for our spiritual growth. We need special revelation to know the will of God more certainly and more clearly. Certainly, we know the law of God by virtue of us being made in the *Imago Dei*, and therefore, we know some things concerning the will of God and right and wrong. But as we noted above, just like general revelation has been corrupted through the Fall, so likewise our perception of the moral law is corrupted and not clear. Therefore, it pleased God to reveal His perfect law to us in the Bible with words, so that His people would more clearly know what He said and what He meant (**see chapter 19**). The Scripture is necessary for us as Christians because it is our spiritual food. Our Master, as the God-Man, repeatedly appealed and relied on Scripture, how much more should we? When tempted by Satan, the Lord famously said:

> Matt. 4:4 But he answered, "'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by **every word that comes from the mouth of God**.'"

Notice that even in upholding the necessity and authority of Scripture, the Lord Christ appeals to Scripture (Deut. 8:3). We do not truly live by physical bread and food alone, but we are to live by every word of God. Notice how the Scripture is here described. It is said to be "word[s] that comes from the mouth of God." It has its origin with the God of the world and it is Him speaking by His mouth to us. We are to feed and live on this Word. The Lord does not say that we should feast on the Word, implying that we read and study it *occasionally*. But the Word ought to be like bread to us—every day's food. We are to read and study Scripture daily so as to grow in our faith and in our relationship with God.

In 1 Peter 1:23-2:2, the apostle Peter speaks about the "imperishable...[and]...the living and abiding word of God" (v. 23), which "remains forever" (v. 25; cf. Isa. 40:8) and which is "the good news that was preached to you" (v. 25). He goes on in chapter 2 to speak of us as "newborn infants" who "long for the pure spiritual milk" (2:2), which is the word of the Lord about which he is writing. Just like newborns cannot survive without the milk of their mothers, in the same way, Christians are dependent upon the Word of God.

The subject of mediation and delight of the Psalmist is "the law of the LORD" (Ps. 1:2). He does not occasionally think about the Word of God, rather, "he meditates day and night" on the Word of God. It is an essential part of his life. It is the light in which he walks (Ps. 119:105). He stores up God's Word in his heart and has the desire to learn more from God (Ps. 119:11-12, 18, 20). His delight is in God's Word (Ps. 119:16) and on it he meditates (Ps. 119:15, 23, 27, 48, 78, 148). And so goes the 119th Psalm praising God for giving us His Law and His Word as a guide and self-revelation. A Christian cannot be spiritually healthy without the Word of God.

Although general revelation reveals that there is a God, yet it is not enough to save us. General revelation condemns. That's why special revelation is necessary for salvation and special revelation inscripturated in Holy Writ is necessary for Christian discipleship and spiritual growth.

Scripture Is The Self-Revelation Of God

The Scripture is the Word of God, which is our ultimate standard in all matters. It is the self-revelation of God to us. It is to be trusted, cherished, studied and obeyed. In the Scriptures, we have the God of the Universe speaking to us in human words, so that we may understand Him. There is a very interesting passage in 1 Samuel 3 which reads:

> 1 Sam. 3:21 And the LORD appeared again at Shiloh, for the **LORD revealed himself** to Samuel at Shiloh **by the word of the LORD**.

Notice how here Yahweh the Lord revealed and disclosed Himself, by His word. God revealed Himself to Samuel, who did not know the LORD yet (1 Sam. 3:7), by His word. God revealed Himself savingly to Samuel by a Self-revelation. The word which the LORD spoke to Samuel was a revelation of Himself. It was the Lord of all the earth speaking to a man in human language so that he would understand. God condescends so as to reveal Himself in human language to us miserable sinners. What an amazing grace! What we have in Scripture, which is "the word of the LORD", is, in fact, the self-disclosure and revelation of God Himself. He reveals to us things about His character, His promises, His plans, His judgments, His people and so on. It is God Himself Who makes this condescension to reveal His glory to us in verbal revelation. It pleased the Lord not to restrict this revelation of Himself to the persons or nation(s) which He originally gave, but to commit these to writing for future generations. Even in things which are no longer applicable to Christians (e.g., ceremonial law, civil law) or prophecies which are already fulfilled, we see a self-revelation of God's holiness, covenant-keeping and promise-keeping nature. Since Scripture is His Word, we have Him speaking to us and revealing Himself to us.

In 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul writes to Timothy that "All Scripture is breathed out by God", θεόπνευστος (*Theopneustos*, G2315). The word is combined from the two words for *God* and for *breath* or *spirit*, hence the translation "breathed out by God", or "God-breathed" (ISV, YLT). The idea here is that Scripture is God's revelation and is given by His mouth. All and the whole of Scripture has that nature of God speaking to us. It is the breath from out of His mouth. When we put our hands before our mouths while we are speaking, we cannot but feel our breath. That is the same way Scripture is described in relation to God. It is God's breath, it is God's Word spoken from His mouth. This does not mean that every Word of the Bible is dictated, but rather, the result of all that is in the Bible is exactly what God wanted to have there and is God-breathed. The Bible as (self-)revelation is closely connected with the discussion of its authority, therefore, we will say more on this below.

The Truthfulness, Infallibility, And Inerrancy Of Scripture

We may know and not doubt the truth of the matter which is affirmed in the Scriptures on the basis of the God of Scripture. We know that the world was created in 6 days because Scripture testifies to this. We know and believe that Adam and Eve existed because the Scripture treats them as historical persons. We know that the Flood and Babel occurred because they are treated as historical fact in the Scripture. We know that Christ died for our sins because the Scriptures say so. We know that He rose because Scripture says so. We know He ascended into Heaven because Scripture says so. We know that He will

come back to judge the living and the dead because Scripture promises so. This is circular, we know, and every argument for an ultimate standard is circular. But there is a difference between a narrow circle and a wide circle. A narrow circle says the Bible is true because the Bible says that it is true. This is obviously true for Christians, but it is a very narrow circle. On the other hand, you could argue that the Bible is true because of its self-authenticating nature, fulfilled prophecy within itself based on the God that it reveals. Isaiah 53 is an incredible example of fulfilled prophecy within the pages of the Bible. One Testament records the prophecy; the other records its fulfillment against all the beliefs and expectations of the Jews at that time. The Bible is the palace of the King, and we may certainly go into the palace to inquire about what this King has said about Himself.

The truthfulness, infallibility, and inerrancy of Scripture are based on the God of Scripture. Since Scripture is His Word, therefore, it reflects His character. God is described as being "the truth" (John 14:6), "God, who never lies" (Tit. 1:2; cf. Num. 23:19). His Word is said to be "the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation" (Eph. 1:13), "pure words…purified seven times" (Ps. 12:6), "Every word of God proves true" (Prov. 30:5), "your word is truth" (John 17:17; cf. 2 Sam. 7:28; 1 Kgs. 17:24; Ps. 119:43, 89–90, 142, 151). The word "infallible" is closely related and sometimes synonymous with "inerrant." Noah Webster defines infallibleness as "Not fallible; not capable of erring; entirely exempt from liability to mistake; applied to persons. No man is infallible; to be infallible is the prerogative of God only."[2] He likewise defines inerrability as, "Exemption from error or from the possibility of erring; infallibility."[3] He sees these two terms as synonymous and meaning the same thing, namely, that thing which is inerrant and infallible, cannot be wrong or contain errors. But there is a certain way in which inerrancy and infallibility differ from each other, and this we get in the Chicago Statement On Biblical Inerrancy:

> *Infallible* signifies the quality of neither misleading nor being misled and so safeguards in categorical terms the truth that Holy Scripture is a sure, safe, and reliable rule and guide in all matters.
>
> Similarly, *inerrant* signifies the quality of being free from all falsehood or mistake and so safeguards the truth that Holy Scripture is entirely true and trustworthy in all its assertions.[4]

Article XI states that "Infallibility and inerrancy may be distinguished, but not separated."[4] Therefore, when we speak of the inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture, we are speaking about the complete truthfulness of Scripture, and of the fact that they're incapable of being wrong, or teaching us falsehood as truth and is free from all error. But do we mean that the translation of Scripture in various languages do not contain errors? No, this is not what we mean. Do we mean then that the existing Greek and Hebrew manuscripts contain no errors? "No" to this question as well. The inerrancy of Scripture concerns the original autographs, which the original writers of Scripture, penned by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Only they were incapable and free from all error. The extant manuscripts do, in fact, contain errors in the variants, but these variants were always known to the church and not because of modern biblical criticism. The church has also known the existence of textual variants because the transmission of the New Testament texts was a free transmission. This means, that it was people, like you and me, who copied the Scriptures, and not government officials or professionals. Add to that the fact the way in which the New Testament was written in the first millennium. It was written uncial form, which is all capital letters with almost no space or punctuation. In such a setting, where you see a long string of letters, which are multiple words, it is no wonder that scribes would make some mistakes. Add to that the fact that anyone who was able, did copy the Scriptures. In other words, not all the copyists of Scripture were professional scribes. In light of this, it is easy to see how textual variants have crept into the NT text. These textual variants are not hidden from the public but are well known. Most New Testament scholars know these variants and have a plausible explanation for how they might have crept into the text. But the fact remains, as Dan Wallace says, that although we have some errors (i.e. textual variants), we still have the original words there. It is like a puzzle of 1000 pieces, but we have 1100 pieces. You cannot go wrong. Furthermore, and contrary to popular opinion, these textual variants are insignificant and do not affect the doctrines of the New Testament. For more on this stuff check out Daniel Wallace and James White (his book *The King James Only Controversy* is likewise good) on YouTube.

Returning back to our discussion of inerrancy, we said that the original autographs are what were infallible, not the extant copies. But all scholars admit that the original autographs are no longer with us. Therefore, is it not a waste of time to talk about the inerrancy of Scripture? That will stand only on the supposition that the originals vary radically from the extant manuscripts, which is false. As we said above, we have not lost the original reading of the New Testament because when copies were made, the manuscripts from which the copies were made, were obviously not destroyed. So, although the scribe may have made some mistakes in his copy, we have not lost anything from the original text, but we have gained some textual variants. In other words, what we have is not 900 pieces for a 1000 piece puzzle, but 1100 pieces of a 1000 piece puzzle. There is not a loss of data to the NT, but an addition of data, which means that the original is still in the body of New Testament manuscripts. Using various criteria of authenticity scholars are able to determine which readings belonged to the original writers of Scripture. There is not a variant which affects any doctrine of the New Testament. Therefore, the Christian should not be afraid to believe in the complete truthfulness of Scripture. Dr. Greg Bahnsen, in a very fine article, writes that

> restricting inerrancy to the autographa *enables us to consistently confess the truthfulness of God* – and that is quite important indeed! Inability to do so would be quite theologically damaging. Only with an inerrant autograph can we avoid attributing error to the God of truth. An error in the original would be attributable to God Himself, because He, in the pages of Scripture, takes responsibility for the very words of the biblical authors. Errors in copies, however, are the sole responsibility of the scribes involved, in which case God's veracity is not impugned.[5]

In light of this all, the infallibility of Scripture is that none of the inspired writers of Scripture affirmed or taught in their writings that which is false and contrary to fact. In other words, everything that they wrote down was completely true. This does not mean that the Bible is in error when it describes things from the observer's point of view (e.g., the sun rising), or it rounds numbers, approximations and so on. Likewise, grammatical precision is not required by the doctrine of infallibility. Some statements may be grammatically inaccurate, though still communicate truth. It is not a problem or a challenge to the doctrine of inerrancy when the New Testament loosely quotes or alludes to the Old, without being precise, as we in the modern world would with quotations. Rather, the issue is that the writers of Scripture never affirmed or communicated that which is false and contrary to fact. What they wrote down were the words of God, which are altogether true.

This is affirmed, as mentioned, on the basis of the fact that the Scriptures claim to be the self-revelation and words of God. Therefore, if they truly are the words from God, they are true and infallible words, just like their Author. Any contrary view of infallibility must limit God's power or activity in the world in the claim that such an idea of inerrant inspiration and scripturation is not possible, God couldn't have accomplished such a thing. Since God is truthful (Ps. 65:16; John 14:6) and cannot lie (Num. 23:19), therefore, His words are likewise truthful and without error. The Lord Jesus says to the Father, "your word is truth" (John 17:17) because the God to Whom this Word belongs is truthful. Therefore, "The words of the LORD are pure words" (Ps. 12:6), and "Every word of God proves true" (Prov. 30:5). If they are truthful, they cannot contain error. Never in the many disputes of the Lord Jesus with the Pharisees do we read of any doubt, from both parties, about the truthfulness, inerrancy or canonicity of Scripture. Never.

In fact, we believe the Lord affirmed the inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture with no opposition from the Jews, i.e., the Jews did not reject the doctrine. In John 10:35, we have our Lord saying that "Scripture cannot be broken". There is no way to annul or to make ineffective what the Scripture says. It is altogether true. The ESV Study Bible notes that 'Jesus is depending on just one word ("gods") in the OT for his argument. When he says that Scripture "cannot be broken," he implies that every single word in Scripture is completely true and reliable. His opponents do not differ with this high view of Scripture, either here or anywhere else in the Gospels.'[6] Have you noticed, in Jesus' discussion with the Jews, the offhanded nature of this remark? It is a big deal to us, but it is just thrown there by the Lord as a way of saying, "and just like we agree that the Scripture cannot be broken, therefore..." The statement does not form an essential part of his argument, rather, it is an offhanded comment about what they both believe about Scripture. Kevin DeYoung writes:

> In John 10:35 *lou* carries the sense of breaking, nullifying, or invalidating. It's Jesus's way of affirming that no word of Scripture can be falsified. No promise or threat can fall short of fulfillment. No statement can be found erroneous.[7]

Do you also remember Luke 20:27-40 where the Lord Jesus made a whole argument on the basis of the verb "I am" being present tense? Would He have made such an argument if there was a question about the fallibility and errancy of Scripture? The whole argument was that God said to Moses "I *am* the God of..." and not "I *was* the God of..." and it is said that "they no longer dared to ask him any question" (Luke 20:40). Such trustworthiness in the Scripture and faith in its complete truthfulness is the doctrine of inerrancy. John Gill comments on John 10:35 that the Scripture cannot

> be made null and void; whatever that says is true, there is no contradicting it, or objecting to it: it is a Jewish way of speaking, much used in the Talmud {y}; when one doctor has produced an argument, or instance, in any point of debate, another says, איכא למיפרך, "it may be broken"; or objected to, in such and such a manner, and be refuted: but the Scripture cannot be broken, that is not to be objected to, there can be no confutation of that.[8]

In Matthew 5:17-18, the Lord said:

> Matt. 5:17-18 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18 For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, **not an iota, not a dot, will pass** from the Law until all is accomplished.

Here the Lord Jesus demonstrates His commitment to the full authority and infallibility of the Old Testament. The Lord Jesus

goes to the most insignificant detail of the Scriptures and affirms that they will not by any means pass away. This demonstrates that He believed in the inspiration, inerrancy as well as the preservation of Scripture. John MacArthur notes, "Here Christ was affirming the utter inerrancy and absolute authority of the OT as the word of God—down to the smallest stroke or letter."[9] Matthew Henry comments on this place:

> Heaven and earth shall come together, and all the fulness thereof be wrapped up in ruin and confusion, rather than any word of God shall fall to the ground, or be in vain. *The word of the Lord endures for ever,* both that of the law, and that of the gospel. Observe, The care of God concerning his law extends itself even to those things that seem to be of least account in it, the iotas and the tittles; for whatever belongs to God, and bears his stamp, be it ever so little, shall be preserved.[10]

The same is asserted for the Lord Jesus' teaching, and by extension to His teaching *through* the apostles, in Matthew 24:35. His words will not fail to accomplish that which He intends. They are the words of God and are more powerful than the cosmos itself. It would be easier for the whole cosmos to vanish away than the Words of our God to pass away.

Words of men are known to contain lies, but the words of God have no lies whatsoever in them (Titus 1:2) because this God is a God of truth (Isa. 65:16; John 14:6; 17:17). Paul says in Romans 3:4:

> By no means! **Let God be true** though every one were a liar, as it is written, "That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged."

God is always true and every time when He opens His holy mouth and when He speaks to His people through His God-breathed Word. Words of men may contain errors, but the God of the Word cannot lie and His words are always true.

Believing the doctrine of inerrancy is the natural implication if we affirm that the Bible is the Word of God. Affirming the doctrine of inerrancy is simply submitting to the absolute Lordship of God, even in thinking about His Word and following the Messiah's view of Scripture. Since we are Christians, we, therefore, should share the same view of Jesus on Scripture, which was clearly that they were inerrant and infallible, and fully trustworthy.

Sola Scriptura

> The Scriptures are the sole infallible rule of faith for the Church. Since they are *Theopneustos*, God-speaking (Matt 22:31; 2Tim 3:16-17; 2Pet 1:20-21), they are, by definition, ultimate in authority, for there can be no higher authority than God Himself. All other rules of faith, creeds, councils, or anything else produced by the Church herself, is subject to the ultimate correction of God's Word.

This subject is related to the truthfulness and infallibility of Scripture (**see above**), the inspiration of Scripture (**paragraph 2**), the authority of Scripture (**paragraph 4**), and the sufficiency of Scripture (**paragraph 6**). If all these things are true, what we get is Sola Scriptura. What does Sola Scriptura actually mean? Does it mean that the church is not to use anything but the Bible? Does it mean that the Bible is the only authority? Does Sola Scriptura deny the validity of using creeds and confessions?

We can assume that the answer to the last question is obviously a "no," since Sola Scriptura is asserted in all the Reformed *Confessions*. According to the definition given above of Sola Scriptura, the doctrine teaches specifically that *since* the Bible is described as God-breathed, that is, spoken by God and coming from His mouth (**see 2 Timothy 3:16 below**), and since it is only the Bible which is described thus, therefore, the Bible is to function as the sole infallible rule of faith. Only the Word of God is infallible, inerrant, God-breathed, absolutely authoritative and binding. Only the Word of God is described thus in Holy Scripture. Traditions and other things are never said to be infallible, inerrant, sufficient and so on. Therefore, since it is only in the Scriptures where we have the direct voice of God speaking to us (Matt. 22:31) and we have His very words (2Tim. 3:16), therefore, they are the only infallible rule of faith.

Sola Scriptura teaches that since the Bible is the only God-breathed revelation to the church and the world, therefore, it is the highest authority for the church. Sola Scriptura *does not* deny other authorities in the church, as is often erroneously thought. There is a difference between *Sola* and *Solo* Scriptura. Sola Scriptura teaches that the Scriptures are the only and sole *sufficient, certain, infallible, inerrant,* and *absolutely authoritative* rule of faith for the church. A special and hard emphasis is placed on the adjectives describing the rule of faith. This does not imply that the church has no other authorities as the elders, confessions, creeds, but what Sola Scriptura teaches is that all other authorities are subject to the sole infallible and sufficient authority of the Word. *Solo Scriptura* on the other hand, which is not the Reformed position, teaches that the Bible is the only authority for the church, period. It teaches that the church cannot benefit from creeds, confessions,

councils, writings of dead men and so on. We, on the other hand, accept all these things, but we do not blindly accept them, but we have to test them against the "only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience" (paragraph 1).

Since the Scriptures teach their truthfulness, inspiration, sufficiency, and authority, therefore, it follows that they are the only infallible and certain rule of faith given to the church. To be sure, this does not mean that we may not use other authorities, as councils, creeds, and confessions, but, these authorities are *subordinate* and are to be examined by "the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience". Notice that the Holy Scriptures are said to be sufficient on matters of faith and obedience, not all things. We do not find in the Scriptures where we should go to work, how we should start our car and a ton of other things. But that is not the Reformed position on the sufficiency and the sole authority of Scripture. Rather, Scripture is the sole authority and sufficient on *matters of faith and obedience*, because those things are only known through special revelation, which the Bible is. Scripture is the only and highest authority to decide matters of religion. As paragraph 10 of this chapter asserts:

> The **supreme judge,** by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be **no other but the Holy Scripture delivered by the Spirit,** into which Scripture so delivered, our faith is finally resolved.

Scripture alone is the supreme judge (notice the adjective), not councils, ancient writers or doctrines of men. In all these disputes, only Scripture is the infallible and highest authority in the possession of the church. All these things are judged by the Scriptures, but Scripture is not to be judged by these things. We may indeed be corrected in our *interpretation* of Scripture by these things, but Scripture is not judged or corrected by them. If, in the writings of men we find things for which we see no warrant in the infallible Word, we are not bound to believe these. But if in the Word we find doctrines which we don't want to believe, we are sinning and are disobeying God Whose Word Scripture is. Sola Scriptura teaches that the Bible alone can bind the conscious to obedience, since it alone is the Word of God, and God alone is the Lord of the conscious (**see chapter 21**).

On the other hand, Roman Catholics believe that sacred tradition and Scripture share the same authority. That's why these can believe unbiblical doctrines and practice unbiblical things as prayers to the dead, infant baptism, penance, the assumption of Mary, the ever-virginity of Mary, Mary as Queen of Heaven, Popery, infallibility of the Pope, Purgatory and the list goes on, which have no warrant in Scripture, but they find in "Sacred Tradition." Lest I be accused of misrepresenting them, here are a few statements from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church.* First, they say that they have the same source:

> "Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together, and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out from the same divine well-spring, come together in some fashion to form one thing, and move towards the same goal." Each of them makes present and fruitful in the Church the mystery of Christ, who promised to remain with his own "always, to the close of the age".[11]

Sacred Tradition is described to be divine and together with the Holy Scripture "to form one thing, and move towards the same goal." I beg to differ. You would be hard-pressed to find a single passage in Scripture which attributes the things attributed to Scripture to "Sacred Tradition." It is interesting at this point to note, that it was Sola Scriptura, dependence upon the Scripture alone as the highest authority, which ignited the Reformation. Scripture and Sacred Tradition allows the Roman Catholic Church to bind the consciousness of men with man-made doctrines, which the Holy Scriptures know nothing about. But since it is the assertion of the Roman Catholic Church that both Scripture and Tradition have the same divine source, then it is reasonable to assume that Tradition is to be obeyed also. Our problem really is that tradition is nowhere described in such a way in the only special revelation of God—the Bible, therefore, "Sacred Tradition" is not of God. Moreover, this "Sacred Tradition" is binding only as interpreted and explained by the Roman Catholic Church. Therefore, basically, they accept as tradition what accords with their doctrine and deny that which disagrees with them. The words of Jesus to the Pharisees come to mind, "in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men" (Mark 7:7-8). And by teaching the tradition of men they make "void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down" (Mark 7:13). Since Scripture is not the sole and final authority for the Roman Catholic Church, they can teach their false doctrine as authoritative and as binding upon the consciousness of their members, without any warrant from Holy Writ. In this way, by teaching "Sacred Tradition" and attributing to "Sacred Tradition" the same things as attributed to Scripture, i.e., having God as its source, they make void the true Word of God and worship Him in vain. This is a solemn word from the Lord Jesus Himself to caution us that when tradition, i.e., something which does not have a warrant in the Scriptures, is taught as the Word of God, we worship God in vain, dishonoring Him, and making void the true Word of God. Let us take heed and notice the warning here, both Protestants and Roman Catholics. Roman Catholics demand equal reverence and acceptance both for the Word of God and "Sacred Tradition." In their own words: "Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments

of devotion and reverence."[12] Therefore, they dishonor God by teaching the doctrines of men as the commandments of God.

Let us carefully learn what the true doctrine of Sola Scriptura is and what it is not, for caricatures and distortions of Sola Scriptura are abundant. Therefore, it is necessary to know that the doctrine of Sola Scriptura teaches that since the Scriptures are the only *inerrant, infallible, certain* and *God-breathed* revelation in the possession of the church, they, therefore, form the highest and supreme authority in the church. As the Lyrical Theologian FLAME says in the song "**Sola Scriptura**":

> Lately man its been some problems the scriptures have been under attack and that's crazy
> see God's word is the final authority I'm sorry there's no way you can sway can't persuade me
> the holy scriptures is the only sufficient certain and infallible rule for the Christian
> nothing can be added at all so you can keep your revelation and religious traditions
> the-op-nyoo-stos (theopneustus) its God breathed 2 Timothy 3:16
> because the scriptures are the only example of God breathed revelation in possession of the church
> they form the only infallible rule of faith for and which we base the church
> let's talk about inspiration
> God's the author no mistaken man

See also **paragraph 10** on the Scriptures as the supreme judge in all matters.

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§2 The 66 Books of the Old and New Testament

2. Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testaments, which are these:

OF THE OLD TESTAMENT	OF THE NEW TESTAMENT
Genesis	Matthew
Exodus	Mark
Leviticus	Luke
Numbers	John
Deuteronomy	Paul's Epistle to the Romans
Joshua	I Corinthians & II Corinthians
Judges	Galatians
Ruth	Ephesians
I Samuel & II Samuel	Philippians
I Kings & II Kings	Colossians
I Chronicles, II Chronicles	I Thessalonians & II Thessalonians
Ezra	I Timothy & II Timothy
Nehemiah	To Titus
Esther	To Philemon
Job	The Epistle to the Hebrews
Psalms	Epistle of James
Proverbs	The first and second Epistles of Peter
Ecclesiastes	The first, second, and third Epistles of John
The Song of Solomon	The Epistle of Jude
Isaiah	The Revelation
Jeremiah	
Lamentations	
Ezekiel	
Daniel	
Hosea	
Joel	
Amos	
Obadiah	
Jonah	
Micah	

OF THE OLD TESTAMENT	OF THE NEW TESTAMENT
Nahum	
Habakkuk	
Zephaniah	
Haggai	
Zechariah	
Malachi	

All of which are given by the **inspiration** of God, to be the **rule of faith and life.** **1**

1. 2 Tim. 3:16 with 1 Tim. 5:17-18; 2 Peter 3:16

This list is different than that of the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic Church has this set along with the Apocryphal ('hidden') writings, which is sometimes called Deuterocanonical (second canonical) writings. The Apocrypha is spoken of in paragraph 3.

To be given by the inspiration of God means that they are the Word of God and come from Him as their original Author. 1 Timothy 3:16 says that Scripture is "God-breathed". In the KJV it says that "All scripture [is] given by inspiration of God". This translation was further dependent upon the Latin Vulgate which had here the Latin word *inspirata*. But the original idea conveyed through the Greek is that whatever is considered Scripture, it is by definition God's breath and God's Word. This canon of Scripture, i.e., the list of what is considered Scripture, is to be **the rule of faith and life**. It is by Scripture which we should test and establish what we are to believe. It is by Scripture that we learn how we are to live God-pleasing lives. Scripture is the only infallible and certain rule of faith and life. There might be other rules or standards, but only Holy Scripture is the Rule of rules, Norm of norms and the Standard of all standards.

The Canonicity Of The New Testament

This is the only binding "rule of faith" upon every Christian. It is God's scepter of righteousness on every Christian soul. The consistent testimony of Scripture is what every Christian needs to heed. In regards to the New Testament canon, Christians have not had much disagreement although Gregg Allison observes that 'James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Hebrews—were on the "fringe" of the early church's canon.'[13] The Book of Revelation was likewise not too quickly received for obvious reasons.

First, let us look at what early Christians looked to see if a work is inspired or not.

1. First was the question of **apostolicity**. Was the book written by the apostles? Was it written by close associates of them, as Mark and Luke?
2. Second was the question of **antiquity**. Did the actual work go to the time of the apostles or does it come much later from the eyewitnesses that it cannot be trusted?

Using these criteria, the church looked to the writings that were claiming to be inspired and eventually came with the Canon that we now possess, the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments. The church did not select the books, but merely *acknowledged* the ones that God had inspired. As Calvin long ago said:

> Nothing, therefore can be more absurd than the fiction, that the power of judging Scripture is in the Church, and that on her nod its certainty depends. When the Church receives it, and gives it the stamp of her authority, she does not make that authentic which was otherwise doubtful or controverted but, acknowledging it as the truth of God, she, as in duty bounds shows her reverence by an unhesitating assent. As to the question, How shall we be persuaded that it came from God without recurring to a decree of the Church? it is just the same as if it were asked, How shall we learn to distinguish light from darkness, white from black, sweet from bitter? Scripture bears upon the face of it as clear evidence of its truth, as white and black do of their colour, sweet and bitter of their taste.[14]

Now let us take a brief look at why a few books in the New Testament were not admitted to the canon too quickly. The thing with **James** was the uncertainty of the author. It may also have been with what is taught in James 2:24-26, which at first glance seems contrary to the gospel preached by Paul, as was the case with Luther's rejection of or doubts upon James. There are three possible candidates for authorship:

1. James the son of Zebedee,
2. James the son of Alphaeus,
3. James the brother of the Lord or James the Just.

James the son of Zebedee (John's brother) died in 44 A.D. and that would be too early for him to write the book of James (Acts 12:2). James the son of Alphaeus or James the Less, another apostle of Jesus (Mark 3:18), was not credited in writing any surviving materials, which makes him an unlikely candidate. The last option seems to be the best. James the brother of the Lord Jesus and the brother of Jude (Mark 6:3) who was an unbeliever in Jesus' ministry prior to the cross (John 7:5), but believed after the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:7). He is the prominent leader in Acts 15 of the Jerusalem Church, which is interesting in connection to the Epistle being addressed to the "twelve tribes in the Dispersion" (Jas. 1:1).

2 Peter is interesting as it has a lot of similar material to **Jude,** which the church also doubted because of the citation of the apocryphal book of 1 Enoch in Jude 1:14. 2 Peter was further doubted because of the many pseudo-writings in the name of Peter as *The Acts of Peter* and the *Revelation of Peter* that were circulating at that time. Some have said that the Greek of 2 Peter is different than that of 1 Peter, but Christian scholars have replied by noting that 1 Peter was written by amanuensis by its own admission (1 Pet. 5:12). Therefore, Peter could have used another amanuensis or written 2 Peter himself. There is also the different usage of Greek vocabulary because of the main subject of the two Epistles. 1 Peter was written to help suffering Christians, while 2 Peter was written to battle false teachers within the church.

Jude identifies himself as "a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James." This is the James of the epistle of James, the brother of the Lord. Neither James nor Jude (or Judas) call themselves brothers of the Lord because of their humility and felt-unworthiness, they call themselves a *doulos,* a slave of Christ (Jude 1:1; James 1:1). James and Judas (Jude) are said to be among the brothers of the Lord in Mark 6:3, who were not believing, but became believers after the resurrection. Since the writing is from a close associate of the apostles, from the brother of the Lord, it is, therefore, to be accepted.

2 and **3 John** were doubted because of the size of the volumes. 2 John having only 13 verses and 3 John 14 verses. They seemed so insignificant because of the other volumes that were written by John like the gospel with 21 chapters, the Revelation with 22 chapters and the first epistle of John with 5 chapters (not suggesting that John divided his writings by chapters or that the early church did that). The church seemed to think that 2 and 3 John were not important, and probably were pseudo-writings. The other thing is that John identifies himself as the "elder" (2 John 1:1; 3 John 1:1), unlike in 1 John which has no introduction of the author much like the Gospel (1 John 1:1; John 1:1). Peter used the term "elder" to refer to himself in 1 Peter 5:1, which is *not* the equivalent of "not an apostle." Apostles could be elders, as Peter was. Therefore, John referring to himself as an elder does not cast a shadow on identifying him as John the apostle.

Hebrews was doubted because of the author thereof did not identify himself. It's not that anything was wrong with the theology of Hebrews, but it had to do with the criteria of apostolicity. It came to be accepted as a letter by Paul, although throughout the centuries some have expressed doubts upon the Pauline authorship. Clement believed that the letter "was written by Paul, to the Hebrews, in the Hebrew tongue; but that it was carefully translated by Luke, and published among the Greeks." Origen said, "But as to who wrote the epistle, only God knows the truth." Some think that it was a sermon by Paul transcribed or modified by Luke.

Lastly, the **Book of Revelation** was doubted because of its unique genre to what was already known of the New Testament, the question about which John wrote it, and its content. The book of Revelation belongs to the genre of apocalyptic, sometimes it is called the Apocalypse, after the first word in the book (Ἀποκάλυψις, *apokalupsis*). No other book in the Bible is as much symbolic and apocalyptic as the Revelation, also not to mention that nothing like it appears in the NT, therefore, it was unique to the NT. As to the authorship question, I believe that the apostle John was the author. Who else could simply refer to himself by the first name and expect to be known to at least seven churches in the first century? Furthermore, there are some unique concepts to both the Apocalypse and the Gospel of John. Christ as the Word (John 1:1; Rev. 19:13); Christ as the Lamb of God (John 1:29; Rev. 5:6-8); Christ as the Witness (John 5:31-32; Rev. 1:5); the unique translation of Zechariah 12:10, which deviates from the LXX, but is in agreement with each other (John 19:37; Rev. 1:7). Lastly, because of the content of the book. It was wise for the church to not be rash in accepting a book of dragons, beasts, 666 and a millennium, as there were more apocalyptic books circulating in the early church, trying to deceive people into thinking that they were written by apostles. It was cautious of the church not to be to rash about receiving it into the Canon.

As a short time passed, these books came to be recognized by the church as authentic and received as Scripture. Since then there has not been controversy concerning the NT canon. The Protestant, as well as the Catholic branch of Christianity, accepts the same canon of the New Testament. As to the Old Testament canon, there has been a lot of controversy throughout church history as to the question of the Apocrypha, but I believe that our question is settled by looking to what the Jews possessed and viewed as God-given Scripture in paragraph 3.

The Inspiration Of Scripture

What do we mean when we say that Scripture is inspired? What does it mean that 2 Timothy 3:16 in the KJV says, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God”? Why do we believe that Scripture is inspired? To answer the last question first: we believe in the inspiration and divine character of the Bible because that is what the Bible itself testifies to its character. We believe in the inspiration of Scripture, whatever that is, because God, in the Bible, testifies to it.

2 Timothy 3:16

Dr. John Frame defines inspiration as “a divine act creating an identity between a divine word and a human word.”[15] Inspiration is the doctrine which teaches that while it is true that human authors wrote the Bible, yet their words are exactly what God wanted to have. In this way, we can say truly that the Bible is the Word of God, without implying that everything in the Bible is the direct speech of God. As Dr. Frame wrote, in inspiration, God works mysteriously with the authors of Scripture so that the product which becomes Scripture is completely what He wanted to have there. Sometimes people, maybe imprecisely and not because they believe so, speak of the *authors* of Scripture being inspired. Alan M. Stibbs writes:

> When the word “inspiration” is used of the Bible it is often thought to describe a quality belonging primarily to the writers rather than the writings; it indicates that the men who produced these documents were inspired men. In contrast to this idea, which indubitably has its place, we find that the Scripture employs the word bearing this meaning primarily to describe not the writers but the sacred writings.[16]

The words are that which are inspired by the Spirit of God, not the authors themselves. The product which they write is Scripture and inspired of God. This is seen from the prime passage on the inspiration of Scripture, 2 Timothy 3:16-17—

> All Scripture is **breathed out by God** and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Notice the rendering of the ESV in comparison to the KJV. The KJV is here relying on the Latin translation of this passage, which says, “omnis scriptura divinitus ***inspirata***”, but the more proper and literal translation is given by the ESV. The word θεόπνευστος (*Theopneustos*, G2315) is a unique compound word used only here in the Bible, and it is made up of two words. The first word is the noun θεός (*theos*), which means *God*, and the second word is the verb πνέω (*pneo*), which means *to breath*. Therefore, putting two and two together, what we have is “God-breathed” (YLT, NIV) and “breathed out by God” (ESV). What is the significance of this metaphor or picture? The significance of this word is that just as when we speak we breath out, so likewise, “All Scripture” is described as God’s breathing out. Start speaking and put your hand in front of your mouth, you will feel your breath. That is exactly how Scripture is described. Therefore, writes Alan Stibbs, “The Greek adjective *theopneustos* (meaning literally “God-breathed”) is a compound, which begins with an explicit recognition of God as the author; the inspiration is divine.”[16] Notice that what is here described as *Theopneustos* is the *Scripture* and not the *authors* of Scripture. The product which the authors write, either themselves or using secretaries, is that which is breathed out by God. Dr. Wayne Grudem explains:

> Since it is *writings* that are said to be “breathed out,” this breathing must be understood as a metaphor for speaking the words of Scripture. This verse thus states in brief form what was evident in many passages in the Old Testament: the Old Testament writings are regarded as God’s Word in written form. For every word of the Old Testament, God is the one who spoke (and still speaks) it, although God used human agents to write these words down.[17]

John Calvin, commenting on this passage, states:

> This is a principle which distinguishes our religion from all others, that we know that God hath spoken to us, and are fully convinced that the prophets did not speak at their own suggestion, but that, being organs of the Holy Spirit, they only uttered what they had been commissioned from heaven to declare. Whoever then wishes to profit in the Scriptures, let him first of all, lay down this as a settled point, that the Law and the Prophets are not a doctrine delivered according to the will and pleasure of men, but dictated by the Holy Spirit.[18]

Even when we use the word that the Bible is the “inspired” Word of God, we must not be understood as saying that there is something extra special done in the inspiration, rather, as Alan Stibbs explains:

> The word “inspired,” however, is not to be understood as indicating something “extra” superimposed on the writer or writing, to make the writing different from what it would otherwise be. It indicates rather *how* the writing came into being. It asserts that the writing is a product of the creative activity of the divine breath. The word thus goes right back to the beginning or first cause of the emergence of Scripture and indicates that Scripture has in its origin this distinctive hallmark, that it owes its very existence to the direct, creative activity of God himself. Although it is men who wrote it, it is God who brought it into being. Its content and character have all been decisively determined by the originating and controlling activity of the creative Spirit.[19]

Inspiration is about the *origin* of the Scripture, not how the words become Scripture.

There is here nothing said about the human authors of Scripture. We do not deny that the Bible is a book written by men, but what we deny is the assertion that is it *only* a book written by men. Rather, the words which these men penned were breathed out by God, so that they wrote the very words of God and which He wanted to have written. I do not comprehend the process how God can accomplish this, but I believe that it is so. This breathing out of God and the inspiration of Scripture is *not* by dictation. Meaning, God did not speak in the hearing of the prophet all the words and then the prophet merely penned them down. To be sure, there is dictation in the Bible. The clearest examples are Revelation 2-3 and a lot of the “Thus says the LORD”, “Declares the LORD” declarations in the Old Testament. Yet, the majority of chapters in Holy Writ are not given by dictation and which are not direct speeches by God given to the prophet. Nonetheless, our passage here says that “All Scripture” is inspired and God-breathed. Everything that is Scripture is given by the inspiration of God and is His word and speech. If something is considered Scripture, it means that it is breathed out by God.

Notice that Paul is here not speaking about a particular subject in Scripture or a particular teaching in which Scripture is “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,” rather, the scope is that of all the Scripture. Everything which is written down and given by God to the prophets is God-breathed. The phrase “all Scripture” refers back to v. 15 wherein we read about the “sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” These “sacred writings” are undoubtedly the sacred writings of the Old Testament as we know them. These are then in v. 16 identified as Scripture and they are the words which are breathed out by God. This passage then speaks about the inspiration and divine authorship of the Old Testament. Do we have any reason to believe that the New Testament is likewise *Theopneustos?* I believe we do because New Testament writings are also referred to as “Scripture.” Read very carefully the following two passages:

> 1 Tim. 5:17-18 Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. 18 **For the Scripture says,** “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,” and, “**The laborer deserves his wages**.”
>
> 2 Pet. 3:15-16 And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother **Paul also wrote to you** according to the wisdom given him, 16 as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, **as they do the other Scriptures**.

In 1 Timothy 5:18, Paul refers to Deuteronomy 25:4, but sadly, the second quotation is nowhere to be found in the Old Testament. So what went wrong? Nothing went wrong, the source which Paul is quoting here is the Gospel of Luke 10:7! The wording in these two passages is identical except for the “for”:

> Luke 10:7 … ἄξιος γὰρ ὁ ἐργάτης τοῦ μισθοῦ αὐτοῦ…
>
> 1 Tim. 5:18 … ἄξιος ὁ ἐργάτης τοῦ μισθοῦ αὐτοῦ…

Isn’t it amazing that already in the lifetime of Paul the Gospel account is recognized and set on the same level as Deuteronomy and called “Scripture”? To be sure, the word γραφή (*graphe*, G1124), basically meaning “writing” occurs 51 times in the New Testament, and in all 51 times it refers to the Old Testament, that is why it is translated by *Scripture*. It is a technical word, as used by the authors of the Bible, to refer to the Bible. Therefore, we cannot dismiss this reference to Luke 10:7 as Scripture by saying that what Paul means here is that the Gospel of Luke is simply *a writing* and not Scripture. Therefore, since Paul saw the Gospel of Luke as Scripture, then whatever he said on Scripture in 2 Timothy 3:16 likewise applies to the Gospel of Luke and by extension to the other gospels.

The second passage identifies the writings of Paul as Scripture. How exactly? First of all, notice that Peter was aware not only of writings by Paul but also the *content* of some. Moreover, he recognizes the way that Paul wrote: Paul wrote according to the wisdom given him by God. But there are some difficulties in Paul which Peter himself has encountered. This should

give us encouragement that it is not only us who may have some difficulties with understanding some passages in Paul, but even an apostle of the Lord has difficulties. But as Peter has difficulties with understanding some of Paul's writings, he does not, unlike "the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction" Paul's writings. Notice that the apostle Peter places the apostle Paul's writings in high esteem as such their twisting brings destruction upon our souls. These are not mere human writings whose twisting does not affect us eternally. Rather, those who twist Paul's writings, do so to their own eternal destruction. Then we have the final clause, "as they do the other Scriptures." Here is actually where the apostle places the writings of Paul with the Scripture. These ignorant and unstable people twist the writings of Paul just as they twist the *other* Scriptures. The crucial word here is "other" (λοιπὰς, *loipas*). If this word had not been in the passage we would have little reason to conclude that Peter is identifying the writings of Paul with the Scripture. By saying that the writings of Paul are twisted just like the same people twist the *other* Scriptures, implies that Paul's writings are in the category of Scripture. If the clause read "as they do the Scriptures" instead of "as they do the *other* Scriptures", then we would see a distinction between the writings of Paul and the Old Testament Scriptures. But as it is, the apostle Peter puts the writings of Paul in the category of Scripture. Therefore, in both 1 Timothy 5:18 and 2 Peter 3:16, we have writings of the New Testament, which were still new, identified as and put in the category of Scripture. And so, what is said of the Old Testament in 2 Timothy 3:16 is just as true of the New Testament.

2 Peter 1:20-21

> 2 Pet. 1:19-21 And we have **the prophetic word** more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, 20 knowing this first of all, that **no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.** 21 For **no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man**, but **men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit**.

Peter relates how the writings, doctrines, and preaching of the apostles is not a result of "cleverly devised myths" (2 Pet. 1:16), but rather it is the truth of what they witnessed and what was confirmed by the Word of God. Although he heard the voice of God bearing witness about Jesus (2 Pet. 1:16-18), still he says "we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed". Meaning, that their experience points to the Word of God and was shown to be truthful because of God's Word. Or rather, as the KJV translates it, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy". While Peter's experience was real and genuine, yet, the foremost authority is the "word of prophecy." It is to the word of prophecy, i.e., Scripture, which Christians should "pay attention" to. Experiences are nice, but the Word of God alone is infallible and completely truthful (**see below for more on this**). Pastor John MacArthur writes that

> the Greek word order is crucial in that it does not say that [the ESV translation of "more sure"]. It says, "And we have more sure the prophetic word." That original arrangement of the sentence supports the interpretation that Peter is ranking Scripture over experience. The prophetic word (Scripture) is more complete, more permanent, and more authoritative than the experience of anyone. More specifically, the word of God is a more reliable verification of the teachings about the person, atonement, and second coming of Christ than even the genuine first-hand experiences of the apostles themselves.[20]

The reason that this word is firm and sure is that "no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation" (2 Pet. 1:20). This passage speaks about the origin of prophecy, but in church history, this phrase has been variously understood. Dr. Philip Schaff explains, "The verse has been largely taken advantage of by Roman Catholic divines in the interest of their theory of the relation in which Scripture stands to the Church. It has been regarded as a protest against the right of private judgment. Some Protestant commentators read it as a caution against interpreting particular prophecies separately by themselves, instead of interpreting them in the full light of prophecy as a whole. Others discover in it a re-statement of what Peter has already said in the former Epistle (chap. 2Pe 1:11-12) about the inability of the prophets to understand all that was in the prophecies which they uttered. Others suppose it to mean that prophecy is not its own interpreter but can be fully understood only in the light of the event." But he admits that "It cannot be said, however, that any one of these views falls in naturally with the context"[21], which is true. The Catholic interpretation is the most absurd option given. They want to take away the Bible, in fact, the Bible was away from the people and that's why they were able to hold their sway, but as soon as Scripture came into the hands of common man, he understood the lies of the Roman church and recognized the true Savior from Scripture. The passage is not about *our own interpretation*, rather the prophet's. The readers of Scripture simply cannot be meant because the passage goes on to explain the origin of prophecy and the Word of God and not its proper interpretation.

The KJV translation is here very weak in translating the word γίνομαι (*ginomai*, G1096) simply with "is" when the word actually means "to become, i.e. to come into existence, begin to be, receive being"[22], which demonstrates the passage to be about the origin of Scripture, rather than its interpretation by people, which is the sense given by the KJV rendering.

As for the word “interpretation,” it is the Greek ἐ π ί λ υ σ ι ς (*epilusis,* G1955), which is literally “a loosening, unloosing” and metaphorically “interpretation”[22], only used here in the Bible. Pastor MacArthur explains, ‘The Greek word for “interpretation” has the idea of a “loosing,” as if to say no Scripture is the result of any human being privately “untying” and “loosing” the truth. Peter’s point is not so much about how to interpret Scripture, but rather how Scripture originated, and what its source was.’[20] Dr. Schaff explains that

> This noun is found only this once in the N. T. It is used, however, by one of the ancient Greek Versions of the O. T. in the sense of the ‘interpretation’ or *reading* of a dream (Gen 40:8). The cognate verb, too, occurs in Mar 4:34 (where the A. V. renders it ‘expounded’), and in Act 19:39 (where it is translated ‘determined’). The verse, therefore, seems to mean that prophecy does not *originate in the prophets own private interpretation of things*—that it is not the mere expression of his own reading of the future.[21]

Therefore, this passage teaches that the prophecy of Scripture, or Scripture as a whole as a word of prophecy, since it was written by prophets, has its origin, not in the musings or thoughts of the prophets, rather, it has another source. This interpretation is confirmed by the following verse which speaks to the fact that prophecy does not have its origin in the will of man. Verse 21a repeats the last thought of v. 20 by explicitly stating that prophecy does not have its origin in the will of man. This does not mean that people are irrelevant, or people merely were dictated the words of God, for it is obvious to those who read the original languages that the writing styles are different for each author. Therefore, if the theory of dictation was true of all the Bible, then we would expect to see no stylistic differences, yet, there is, in fact, stylistic difference in the Bible. Verse 21 states that the prophet was not the one who originated his message, rather, his message came from somewhere else. What is denied is the cause or origin of prophecy being from the will of man, and not that men were not involved. Then the second half of v. 21 goes on to explain that “men spoke from God”. The speech which the men spoke came from God. See? The human author is not ignored, rather, he is the one who speaks the message of God. Or to be more precise, since it is the Word of God which he speaks, we can say that it is God who speaks *through* him. Peter describes the process of inspiration as that of the prophets speaking from God “as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” They spoke the words of God when they were under the power, influence, and working of the Holy Spirit. The emphasis of this passage, therefore, is about the divine authorship and origin of the Word of God.

It is interesting to note here how the Spirit is described as the Author of Scripture. It was under His influence and His working that the word of the Lord came to the prophets. Peter explains in his first epistle:

> 1Pet. 1:10-11 Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, 11 inquiring what person or time **the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating** when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

The Spirit of *Christ* was working within the prophets in the Old Testament. He is specifically identified to be Christ’s indicating that Christ is God Who has the fullness of the Spirit, and also that Old Testament prophecy is ultimately *about* Christ (cf. Rev. 19:10). The Third Person of the Trinity is the Author and Originator of Scripture. Pastor MacArthur writes concerning the phrase “carried along by the Holy Spirit”:

> Grammatically, this means that they were continually carried or borne along by the Spirit of God (cf. Luke 1:70; Acts 27:15, 17). The Holy Spirit thus is the divine author and originator, the producer of the Scriptures. In the OT alone, the human writers refer to their writings as the words of God over 3,800 times (e.g., Jer. 1:4; cf. 3:2; Rom. 3:2; 1 Cor. 2:10). Though the human writers of Scripture were active rather than passive in the process of writing Scripture, God the Holy Spirit superintended them so that, using their own individual personalities, thought processes, and vocabulary, they composed and recorded without error the exact words God wanted written.’[20]

The phrase stresses the authorship, activity, and involvement of the Holy Spirit in the origination of prophecy. They did not simply spew out words of God and prophesied as they wanted. As Calvin says, “They did not of themselves, or according to their own will, foolishly deliver their own inventions.”[18] Rather, they prophesied and spoke the words of God when “they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” We should not be bothered or brought down just because we do not exactly know how this process of inspiration took place. It is supernatural and it is special, no doubt, but we should nonetheless believe the testimony of God about His Word. There are many mysteries to our faith as the Trinity, the true and full humanity and divinity of our Lord, absolute sovereignty and responsibility, and so on, which we do not fully comprehend. Likewise, the Bible is a divine and human product.

Therefore, in these two passages, 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:20-21, we see clearly the divine authorship of the Holy Scriptures, the Old Testament, and by necessary and plain implication, the New Testament.

The Words Of The Bible Are God's

Not only do the words of 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:20-21 testify to the fact that all the Bible is the Word of God, but Scripture elsewhere identifies words as words of God, which are not directly spoken by God. Therefore, not only words which are explicitly attributed to God are identified as the Word of God, but words also which are not spoken by God are attributed to God.

A search on the phrase "Thus says the Lord" delivers 415 results in the Old Testament. "Declares the Lord" delivers 344 results in the Old Testament. The formula "the word of the LORD came" is used 109 times in the Old Testament. Expressions similar to "the mouth of the LORD has spoken" occur 5 times. The Old Testament is filled with assertions about the divine origin of its content. We read a lot in the prophets that their prophecies are from the true God, rather than their own inventions. For the following section, I am heavily relying on Grudem's chapter on the Authority of the Bible.

The Prophets Speak the Word of God

Balaam says in Numbers 22:38 that "The word that God puts in my mouth, that must I speak." The prophet ought to function as the mouthpiece of God to the people. He is to speak the very words of God. Whatever they say on divine authority, are, in fact, God's words. God is said to put words in the mouth of Jeremiah (Jer. 1:9). In contrast, the false prophets do not have the words of God and they have gone to the people without God sending them (Jer. 14:14; 23:16–22; 29:31–32). Ezekiel likewise receives a similar commission as Isaiah, and indeed to all the prophets (Deut. 18:18-20): "And you shall speak my words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear, for they are a rebellious house" (Ezek. 2:7). The prophet is to speak the words of God to the people. That is his function and that is his sworn obligation, to communicate to the people the unadulterated Word of God. If the Lord speaks, the prophet is to speak, otherwise, he is to remain silent concerning a divine word. Amos 3:8 rhetorically asks, "The Lord GOD has spoken; who can but prophesy?"

God Speaks by the Prophets

The "word of the LORD" is said to have been spoken "by his servant the prophet Ahijah" (1 Kgs. 14:18). The LORD likewise "spoke against Baasha by the prophet Jehu" (1 Kgs. 16:12); as He did speak "by Joshua son of Nun" (1 Kgs. 16:34); "his servant Elijah the Tishbite" (2 Kgs. 9:36); "his servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet" (2 Kgs. 14:25); "he spoke by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat" (2 Chron. 10:15).

The "words of the LORD" are said to have been spoken by the LORD "through the prophet Jeremiah" (Jer. 37:2). In another place, it is said that "Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke from the mouth of the LORD" (2 Chron. 36:12). Jeremiah spoke the very words of God. God is said to have spoken through many prophets in this way. Zechariah 7:7 speaks of "the words that the Lord proclaimed by the former prophets when Jerusalem was inhabited and prosperous". Verse 12 of the same chapter likewise repeats the same idea, "hear the law and the words that the Lord of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets." God is again and again identified as the primary author of the words of the prophets. In all of these passages, the One who speaks through the prophets is the LORD in through His word.

The people in exile are said to have "obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him" (Hag. 1:12). The words of Haggai, being a prophet, are identified with the voice of the Lord. In v. 13, he is called "the messenger of the LORD" and he "spoke to the people with the LORD's message". Therefore, in light of this, to disobey the word of a prophet is to disobey God Whose word the prophet merely declares (Deut. 18:19; 1 Sam. 10:8 and 13:13-14; 15:3 and 15:19, 23; 1 Kgs. 20:35 and 20:36). Nothing's changed in the New Testament, rather, we have all the more strongly asserted the divine authorship of the *whole Scripture* of the Old Testament in 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:20-21.

In answering the Accuser, the Lord Jesus always reverted back to Scripture. He declares, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4), citing Deuteronomy 8:3, which are actually the words of Moses. Likewise in v. 7, the Lord quotes Deuteronomy 6:16, and in v. 10 He cites Deuteronomy 6:13. All these passages which the Lord cited were the words of Moses to the people of Israel, yet His principle that man is to live "by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (v. 4), still stands, because He identifies these are the words of God by which He withstands temptation.

The Gospel of Matthew quotes from the Old Testament and it is interesting to note how he prefaces his quotations. In Matthew 1:22, he says the birth of Jesus fulfills "what was spoken by the prophet" and then he cites Isaiah 7:14. In Matthew 2:15, he says that the flight of baby Jesus to Egypt "was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet" Hosea (11:1). In both of these instances, Matthew communicates to us that not only was the Lord responsible for these prophecies but the things that are happening in Christ's life, are happening to fulfill these words spoken by the Lord through the prophets. We have an interesting instance in Matthew 19:5, which attributes the words of Genesis 2:24 to God. In reading Genesis 2:24, we do not get the sense that these words are either Adam's or God's, but rather Moses'. Yet the Lord Jesus in Matthew 19:5 declares that he, i.e., "he who created them from the beginning" (Matt. 19:4) said the words of Genesis 2:24. The Lord Jesus attributes the words of the narrator, in this case, Moses, to God.

In Mark 9:7-13, “the commandment of God” (v. 9), “Moses said” (v. 10) and “the word of God” (v. 13) are all used interchangeably, indicating that all of these are the words of God, even the things which Moses said in Exodus 21:17. What is interesting to note here is the parallel of Mark 9:10. While Mark says “For Moses said”, Matthew says “For God commanded” (Matt. 15:4) and attributes both verses (Ex. 20:12; 21:17) explicitly to God. Therefore, we see here that the New Testament authors, with no difficulty, attribute the words of Moses to God and vice versa.

In Luke 1:70, Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist says that God “spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old”. The speaker is identified to be God. He is the One who originated the words which the prophets spoke. In Acts 3:18, we read of Peter saying that “God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled.” Not only did God speak by the mouth of all the prophets, but what He foretold, He brought and will bring to pass. Likewise in v. 21, we read Peter saying, “God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.” Hebrews 1:1-2 begins by saying, “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son”. In both eras, before and “in these last days”, God is the Speaker. In former times, He spoke through the prophets but now speaks to us through His beloved Son.

The Holy Spirit is said to have spoken through David. Peter says, “the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David” (Acts 1:16) and then quotes Psalms 69:25; 109:8. In Acts 4:25, the early church recognizes that the LORD spoke through David by the Spirit:

> Acts 4:24-25 And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, “**Sovereign Lord**, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, 25 who **through the mouth of our father David**, your servant, **said by the Holy Spirit**, “‘Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain?

The Father spoke through David by the Holy Spirit Who indwelt him as a believer. David himself testifies, “The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me; his word is on my tongue” (2 Sam. 23:2). We should not forget the words of our Lord in reference to Psalm 110:1 when he questioned the Pharisees, “How is it then that David, **in the Spirit**, calls him Lord, saying” (Matt. 22:43). David recognizes that he’s an instrument through which the Spirit of Yahweh speaks to him and to His people. The apostle Paul recognized that the Holy Spirit spoke through the prophet Isaiah in Acts 28:25-28. In Isaiah 6:8-9, we see that the words quoted by Paul were actually spoken by “the voice of the Lord” (Isa. 6:8), but Paul sees them as words which the Holy Spirit said through Isaiah. Hebrews 3:7; 9:8 likewise show the activity of the Holy Spirit in the authorship of Scripture. As long as it is in Scripture and it is spoken by the prophets of God, the authors of the New Testament do not shrink back from calling the words of men God’s, or vice versa.

In Romans 9:17, the apostle says “For the Scripture says to Pharaoh”, but no Scripture said anything to Pharaoh. Rather, in actuality, it were the words of the LORD delivered through Moses (Ex. 19:13, 16), which are here called Scripture and identified with the words of God.

The testimony of the Scripture to itself is that it is all God-breathed and produced by God’s Spirit. We thank the God of the Universe, Who has not only condescended to covenant with us, but has sent His Son to die in our place, and has given us His self-revelation in written form, in the Holy Scriptures, His God-breathed, infallible and inerrant Word.

The Rule Of Faith And Life

The Scriptures are the only infallible rule of faith and life. They teach us the ways of God and the way that we should live as faithful servants. In them, we find the Word of life. They are our daily bread. Through them, our Redeemer speaks to us and sanctifies us. This is the doctrine of Sola Scriptura. The Scripture is the highest and only infallible authority for the church. This does not mean that we cannot benefit from non-Scriptural writings, as the Confession, for example. Rather, the final court of appeal is to the Scriptures, because only they are described as given by God and inspired by God, and therefore, speak the words of God, the highest authority in the Universe. They are the only God-breathed words in possession of the church, therefore, they are the only rule of faith and life. God exercises His Lordship over us through the Scriptures. He speaks with us, admonishes us, corrects us, rebukes us, and encourages us through the Scriptures. If we want a word from God, we open Holy Writ and hear God speaking in there. To have the Bible as the rule of faith and life is the most rational thing that a Christian can do, for we claim that the Bible is the very Word of God, therefore, it is divine wisdom and divine teaching, and why should we withhold ourselves from such a blessing? To have the God of the Universe speaking to us and instructing us is an immense blessing. Certainly, the Bible does not directly speak about every particular situation, but it gives us general and specific guidelines to follow. The Word of God touches upon all subjects and is not to be withheld from any subject. We must be students of Scripture to know how we should apply the Word as the rule of faith and life in our lives and in our churches. We cannot merely believe this, and yet not study Scripture and not seek to interpret Scripture properly and applying the Word of God to our own lives. That is hypocrisy. Rather, we should be diligent students of Scripture, in prayer studying the Word of God and asking the Spirit to reveal to us truths from the Word which we have not seen. Praying to God to teach us His ways through the Word and His Spirit, to give us the wisdom to apply His Word to all areas of our

lives, so that He would exercise His Lordship over all areas of our lives.

See **Sola Scriptura above**.

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§3 The Apocrypha and Canon of the Old Testament

3. The books commonly called **Apocrypha**, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon or rule of the Scripture, and, therefore, are of no authority to the church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved or made use of than other human writings. **1**
    1. Luke 24:27, 44; Rom. 3:2

Paragraph 2 defined what is Scripture by enlisting the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments. This paragraph goes on to reject those books which are accepted by the Roman Catholic Church within the scope of Scripture, namely, the Apocryphal writings. They are to be rejected because they are not **of divine inspiration**. The reason for the rejection of the Apocrypha is because God has not given it. It is not because it contains heresies or false teaching (which it does), but it is to be rejected because God did not give the Apocryphal writings. God has not given the Apocryphal writings and therefore they are **no part of the canon or rule of the Scripture**. In other words, they are not to be used to establish doctrine or practice, because they are not from God and therefore have **no authority** in **the church of God**. There may be godly things in them and even biblical things, but they are still not God-breathed. Those who read them may benefit from them just like from any other **human** book, but the Apocryphal writings are to be read and tested by Scripture.

The Canon Of The Old Testament

The word canon is from the Greek κανών, which means a measuring rule, a standard, a rule. The Canon of Scripture is the list of the inspired and authoritative books of the Old and New Testaments, which are the standard given to us by God. The canon of Scripture is not *created* by men, rather it is *recognized* by men. The canon was created at the moment that God gave the prophets and apostles the words to write.

The canon of the Old Testament is a matter of controversy between Protestants and Roman Catholics. The latter accepts several other books in their OT canon, while the former deny that these books are given by God. The Roman Catholic Church has an OT canon of 46 books:

> The Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, **Tobit**, **Judith**, Esther, **1 and 2 Maccabees**, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, **the Wisdom of Solomon**, **Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)**, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, **Baruch**, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zachariah and Malachi.[23]

There are also additions to Esther, additions to Daniel (History of Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, the Song of the Three Children), Letter of Jeremiah. Why do Protestants reject these as Scripture? Sometimes they are referred to as Deuterocanonical by Catholics, meaning *second canon*; while Protestants like to call them Apocrypha, meaning *hidden writings*. In summary, the additional books and portions are:[24]

1. The Wisdom of Solomon (Book of Wisdom)
2. Ecclesiasticus (Sirach)
3. Tobit
4. Judith
5. 1 Maccabees
6. 2 Maccabees
7. Baruch (including the Letter of Jeremiah)
8. Additions to Esther (10:4-16:24)
9. Prayer of Azariah (Daniel 3:24-90)
10. Susanna (Daniel 13)
11. Bel and the Dragon (Daniel 14)

Whence came these additions to the Old Testament canon? Were they written by prophets? Did they have Hebrew originals? These and similar questions must be asked to determine whether these books belong to the Old Testament canon. The fact is that to date, none of these apocryphal works has a Hebrew manuscript. All these works were translated from Greek, as they were only existent in Greek and not Hebrew. These books resided in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Beginning around 300 years before our Lord, a large portion of the Old Testament, as well as other Jewish writings, were translated into Greek to help the Jews who were forgetting their language in reading their histories and also for their histories and doctrines to be available to the world. The New Testament writers often quoted from the Greek Septuagint, which is also abbreviated as LXX, which is the Roman numeral 70 (the word Septuagint likewise means 70), after the legend that 70 or 72 rabbi's in Alexandria, Egypt went separately from each other to translate the Pentateuch and after 72 days, they had identical translations. This legend is fanciful, but this is the way people came to refer to this volume of books. It was a library of sorts about the Jews including their Scriptures, and from here did the apocryphal writings creep into the Old Testament canon. The apocryphal writings came to be written *after* the last prophet of the Old Testament, Malachi and have no Hebrew originals, unlike all the Old Testament books which are in the Protestant Bible. At this time we must inquire what the general thought of the Jews was concerning the canon of Scripture.

Romans 3:2

In Romans 3:2, Paul says that the foremost advantage of being a Jew is that "the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God." The oracles of God were the words of God. It is to them, the Jewish nation, that the words of God were entrusted. John Calvin notes, "Now the oracles were committed to them, for the purpose of preserving them as long as it pleased the Lord to continue his glory among them, and then of publishing them during the time of their stewardship through the whole world: they were first depositories, and secondly dispensers."[18] John Gill notes that

> in a word, [what is meant by the oracles of God are] all the books of the Old Testament, and whatsoever is contained in them; which are called so, because they are of divine inspiration, contain the mind and will of God, and are infallible and authoritative: and it was the privilege and profit of the Jews that they were intrusted with them, when other nations were not, and so had the advantage of them; they had them for their own use; for hereby they had a more clear and distinct knowledge of God than the Gentiles could have by the light of nature; and besides, became acquainted with the doctrines of a trinity of persons in the Godhead, of the sonship and deity of the Messiah, of the sacrifice, satisfaction, and righteousness of the Redeemer, and of salvation by him; and also with the manner of worshipping of God according to his will; all which the Gentiles were ignorant of. Moreover, they had the honour of being the keepers of these sacred books, these divine oracles, and of transmitting them to posterity, for the use of others.[8] [Words within brackets mine]

Jewish Testimony To The Canon

It was their foremost advantage and honor to possess the Word of God and to guard it. Therefore, we must now ask the question, "What did the Jews believe to be the inspired Old Testament canon?" We go to a person who lived near to the time of our Lord, Josephus, who wrote various histories of the Jewish people after the destruction of Jerusalem. Concerning the Sacred Writings, he wrote:

> For we have not an **innumerable multitude of books** among us, **disagreeing from and contradicting one another**, [as the Greeks have,] **but only twenty-two books**, which contain the **records of all the past times**; which are justly **believed to be divine**; and of them five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death. This interval of time was little short of three thousand years; but as to the **time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes** king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in **thirteen books.** The remaining four books contain **hymns to God,** and **precepts for the conduct of human life.** It is true, our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but **hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers,** because **there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time;** and how firmly we have given credit to these books of our own nation is evident by what we do; for during so many ages as have already passed, **no one has been so bold as either to add any thing to them,** to **take any thing from them,** or to **make any change in them;** but it is become natural to all Jews immediately, and from their very birth, to **esteem these books to contain Divine doctrines,** and to persist in them, and, if occasion be willingly to die for them. For it is no new thing for our captives, many of them in number, and frequently in time, to be seen to endure racks and deaths of all kinds upon the theatres, that they may not be obliged to say one word against our laws and the records that contain them; whereas there are none at all among the Greeks who would undergo the least harm on that account, no, nor in case all the writings that are among them were to be destroyed; for they take them to be such discourses as are framed agreeably to the inclinations of those that write them; and they have justly the same opinion of the ancient writers, since they see some of the present generation bold enough to write about such affairs, wherein they were not present, nor had concern enough to inform themselves about them from those that knew them;

examples of which may be had in this late war of ours, where some persons have written histories, and published them, without having been in the places concerned, or having been near them when the actions were done; but these men put a few things together by hearsay, and insolently abuse the world, and call these writings by the name of Histories.[25]

Several things are to be noted. Josephus speaks about the Jews in general, which only received 22 books, which span from the time of Moses until the time of Artaxerxes king of Persia who reigned from 464-423 B.C. This is very significant considering that the composition of the last Old Testament book, Malachi, to be around that same period. Basically, what Josephus is saying is that Old Testament books stopped to be written with the death of Malachi. But, we Protestants accept 39 books of the OT, but Josephus speaks of 22, how is this to be reconciled? This is easily reconciled by the fact that the Jews bundled many books together, which we, both Protestants and Catholics, have separated. For example, the books of Nehemiah and Ezra were considered one; the books of 1st and 2nd Kings, as well as 1st and 2nd Chronicles, were considered as only two books; Ruth belonged to Judges. Also, the book of the Twelve Minor Prophets contained 1) Hosea, 2) Joel, 3) Amos, 4) Obadiah, 5) Jonah, 6) Micah, 7) Nahum, 8) Habakkuk, 9) Zephaniah, 10) Haggai, 11) Zechariah, and 12) Malachi. What we have as twelve separate books, the Jews had in one book. This explains the difference between the ordering and grouping of the canon of the OT. Gregg Allison explains:

The books of Moses were the traditional Pentateuch [1-5]. The prophetic books were [6] Joshua, [7] Judges — Ruth, [8] Samuel, [9] Kings, [10] Isaiah, [11] Jeremiah — Lamentations, [12] Ezekiel, [13] the Minor Prophets (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi), [14] Job, [15] Daniel, [16] Ezra — Nehemiah, [17] Chronicles, and [18] Esther. The last category consisted of [19] Psalms, [20] Proverbs, [21] Ecclesiastes, and [22] Song of Songs. Note that the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, while appearing as two books in our Old Testament, were considered one book each in the Hebrew canon of Josephus. Also, Judges and Ruth, Jeremiah and Lamentations, and Ezra and Nehemiah, while separated in our Old Testament, were joined together and considered one book in this ordering.[26]

The books of the Old Testament were divided into the Law, the Prophets and the Writings (e.g., Luke 24:44), and could be shown in this way:

The Law	The Prophets	The Writings
1) Genesis	6) Joshua	13) Psalms
2) Exodus	7) Judges (including Ruth)	14) Job
3) Leviticus	8) Samuel (1st and 2nd)	15) Proverbs
4) Numbers	9) Kings (1st and 2nd)	16) Ecclesiastes
5) Deuteronomy	10) Jeremiah (including Lamentations)	17) Song of Songs
	11) Ezekiel	18) Lamentations
	12) Isaiah	19) Daniel
	13) Twelve Minor Prophets (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi)	20) Esther
		21) Ezra-Nehemiah
		22) Chronicles (1st and 2nd)

It is significant that these were the books for which the Jews were ready to die and which were laid at the Temple. But notice that Josephus acknowledges that there are other writings: “It is true, our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time”. Josephus does not deny that there were actually books after the Malachi and the period of Artaxerxes I (464/5-424 B.C.), this will include a lot of books from the Apocrypha, especially Maccabees which records the time of persecution, among other things, of the Jews by Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Yet, these are books which “hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former [books]”. Clearly, these books were not considered to have the same authority as the 22 books of the Jewish canon or the 39 books of the OT in the Protestant canon.

The Jews, who according to Romans 3:2, were entrusted with the Word of God, did not receive the Apocrypha, books which came after the writing of Malachi, the last prophet of the OT four centuries before Christ, as having the same authority as the books written by the prophets from Moses to Artaxerxes. Josephus acknowledges the existence of the Apocrypha and other writings besides the OT canon, which may be beneficial for some, yet they are not writings which are worthy to die for or have the same authority as the OT canon. The reason that the books after Artaxerxes are not to receive the same authority is “because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time”. There were not prophets, who

were the authors of Scripture, to write Scripture. The prophets ceased to be with the death of Malachi and only with the ministry of John the Baptist, four centuries later, did the Spirit of prophecy come back. This is acknowledged by the Jews themselves. The Babylonian Talmud writes:

> After the later prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi had died, the Holy Spirit [of prophecy] departed from Israel, but they still availed themselves of the Bath Kol.[27]

Corresponding to Josephus' account, after the death of the last prophet, Malachi, who lived at the time of Artaxerxes I, prophecy came no longer. Since there were no prophecies or prophets, Scripture could not be given. People may claim to have had revelations, but if they did not meet the criteria of authenticity as laid in Deuteronomy 18, they were to be perceived as false prophets. Moreover, even 1 Maccabees acknowledges that there were no prophets in Israel. We read:

> 1 Macc. 4:41-46 Then Judas ordered some of his soldiers to attack the men in the fort, while he purified the Temple. 42 He chose some priests who were qualified and who were devoted to the Law. 43 They purified the Temple and took the stones that had been defiled and put them in an unclean place. 44 They discussed what should be done with the altar of burnt offerings, which had been desecrated 45 by the Gentiles, and decided to tear it down, so that it would not stand there as a monument to their shame. So they tore down the altar 46 and put the stones in a suitable place on the Temple hill, where they were to be **kept until a prophet should appear** and decide what to do with them.[28]

By the very admission of the Apocrypha itself, it is acknowledged that these books were not written by a prophet, and therefore, could not be the word of God, as the prophet functioned as the mouthpiece of God (e.g., Ex. 7:1-2). The people could not have a word from God, or directly know the will of God, because there had not been a prophet. Also, we read in chapter 9:

> 1 Macc. 9:23-27 After the death of Judas, the lawless traitors began to reappear everywhere in Judea, and all the wicked people returned. 24 Also at that time there was a severe famine, and the whole country went over to the side of the renegades. 25 Bacchides deliberately appointed some renegade Jews as rulers over the country. 26 These men hunted down the friends of Judas and brought them all before Bacchides, and he subjected them to torture and humiliation. 27 It was a time of great trouble for Israel, worse than anything that had happened to them **since the time prophets ceased to appear among them**.[29]

From the sound of it, it has been a long time since there was a prophet. Maccabees was written around a century before our Lord's incarnation. This is in agreement with Josephus' testimony as well as the Talmud's testimony that no Scripture came after the death of Malachi, the last prophet.

Luke 11:49-51

Another argument for the Protestant Canon of the OT comes from the lips of our Lord:

> Luke 11:49-51 Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,' 50 so that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, 51 from the **blood of Abel** to the **blood of Zechariah**, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be required of this generation.
>
> Parallel in Matt. 23:34-35.

What on earth has this passage to do with the canon of Scripture? Let us first observe the testimony of Josephus (cited above) to the extent of the OT canon to be as our own with the exclusion of the Apocrypha which was written after Malachi. This was a statement about what the Jews in general or as a whole received as authoritative Scripture, even to die for them. Although the Jews and our Lord disagreed many times, yet their disagreements were upon the interpretation of Scripture, never about the canon or authority of Scripture. Both our Lord and the Jews accepted the full inspiration, inerrancy, and canon of Scripture. In no conversation did the Jews or our Lord bring anything outside the accepted canon of the OT. This is very significant that neither the Lord nor the Jews used the Apocrypha to argue against each other. Moreover, while several Old Testament books are quoted authoritatively as "it is written," "Scripture says," "God said" and various variants of those expressions, the Apocrypha is never referred to as such. There may be an allusion to the Apocrypha (e.g., in Heb. 11:37-38), but they were never quoted as Scripture. Mere quotation does not equal Scripture, otherwise, we will include several Greek writers within our Scripture (e.g., Titus 1:12; Acts 17:28). Rather, the form of authoritative quotation or allusion to Scripture

is never applied to the Apocrypha. Dr. Grudem writes:

> According to one count, Jesus and the New Testament authors quote various parts of the Old Testament Scriptures as divinely authoritative over 295 times, but not once do they cite any statement from the books of the Apocrypha or any other writings as having divine authority. The absence of any such reference to other literature as divinely authoritative, and the extremely frequent reference to hundreds of places in the Old Testament as divinely authoritative, gives strong confirmation to the fact that the New Testament authors agreed that the established Old Testament canon, no more and no less, was to be taken as God's very words.[30]

Now we return to the passage which we referred to above, Luke 11:49-51. The relation of that passage to the extent of the canon of the OT has to do with the Jewish ordering of the canon. The Jewish canon began with Genesis and ended with Chronicles, unlike ours (**see the table above**). It is significant when our Lord wants to say that the blood of all the slain prophets in the Old Testament will come upon the generation of the first century, that he refers to the blood of Abel to Zechariah. This is significant because Abel was the first martyr recorded in Genesis 4, while Zechariah was the last martyr recorded in 2 Chronicles 24:20-22. Why is this significant? Because the book of Chronicles (both 1st and 2nd were seen as a single book) was placed as the last book of the Jewish canon. The Jewish canon did not end with Malachi, as our does, since Malachi was included in the Twelve Minor Prophets, but ended with Chronicles. Therefore, for a Jew to say something like "I believe all the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation" he would say, "I believe all the Bible, from Genesis to Chronicles." The statement of the Christian communicates that he believes all the inspired books of the Old and New Testament, naming the first and the last book in the canon. While the Jewish statement has a similar connotation, that the Jew believes everything in his canon of the Old Testament which was ordered and grouped differently than the Christians while containing the same books of the OT. Therefore, the Lord's statement has the import of saying that all the blood of the slain prophets and saints of God, from Genesis, the first book of the Jewish canon, which records the death of Abel, to Chronicles, the last book of the Jewish canon, which records the death of Zechariah, will come upon this generation. It is significant that the Lord does not, for example, mention the martyrs in the period of the Maccabees who were killed by that vicious Antiochus Epiphanes. It is not because He did not acknowledge them as martyrs, rather, their recorded martyrdom was not included in Scripture. The blood of the prophets from the first book to the last book of the Jewish canon will come upon the Jews in 70 A.D.

"Chronologically," writes John Piper, "the last martyr in the Old Testament was Uriah the Son of Shemaiah, whose death is described in Jeremiah 26:20–23. He died during the reign of Jehoiakim, who reigned from 609 to 598 BC. That was about two hundred years *after* the Zechariah that Jesus refers to."[31] But in the order of the Jewish canon, Zechariah was the last martyr. F.F. Bruce wrote:

> There is evidence that Chronicles was the last book in the Hebrew Bible as Jesus knew it. When he said that the generation he addressed would be answerable for "the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world", he added, "from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary" (Luke 11:50f.). Abel is the first martyr in the Bible (Gen. 4:8); Zechariah is most probably the son of Jehoiada, who was stoned to death "in the court of Yahweh's house" because, speaking by the Spirit of God, he rebuked the king and people of Judah for transgressing the divine commandments (2 Chron. 24:20-22). Zechariah (c 800 BC) was not *chronologically* the last faithful prophet to die as a martyr…But Zechariah is *canonically* the last faithful prophet to die as a martyr, because his death is recorded in Chronicles, the last book in the Hebrew Bible.[32]

Melito Of Sardis

In confirmation of the Jewish testimony and to the testimony of our Lord, we add the words of Melito, bishop of Sardis from 170 A.D. The church historian Eusebius writes the following about Melito and quotes his words:

> 12. But in the Extracts made by him the same writer gives at the beginning of the introduction a catalogue of the acknowledged books of the Old Testament, which it is necessary to quote at this point. He writes as follows:
>
> 13. "Melito to his brother Onesimus, greeting: Since thou hast often, in thy zeal for the word, expressed a wish to have extracts made from the Law and the Prophets concerning the Saviour and concerning our entire faith, and hast also desired to have an accurate statement of the ancient book, as regards their number and their order, I have endeavored to perform the task, knowing thy zeal for the faith, and thy desire to gain information in regard to the word, and knowing that thou, in thy yearning after God, esteemest these things above all else, struggling to attain eternal salvation.
>
> 14. Accordingly when I went East and came to the place where these things were preached and done, I learned accurately the books of the Old Testament, and send them to thee as written below. Their names are as follows: Of Moses, five books: Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, Deuteronomy; Jesus Nave, Judges, Ruth; of Kings, four books; of Chronicles, two; the Psalms of David, the Proverbs of Solomon, Wisdom also, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Job; of

Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah; of the twelve prophets, one book; Daniel, Ezekiel, Esdras. From which also I have made the extracts, dividing them into six books." Such are the words of Melito.[33]

This canon includes all books of the Old Testament except Esther. The book called "Jesus Nave" is the book of Joshua the son of Nun. "Kings" included first and second Kings and also first and second Samuel. The four books were included under one because they all spoke about the kings of Israel and Judah, though Samuel, especially of David. The book called "Wisdom" is not the Wisdom of Sirach, which is also known as Ecclesiasticus, but the book of Proverbs. In chapter 22 of the same book, Eusebius writes, "Irenæus and the whole company of the ancients, called the Proverbs of Solomon All-virtuous Wisdom."[34] The editor, Dr. Philip Schaff, notes:

> This phrase (παναρετος σοφία) was very frequently employed among the Fathers as a title of the Book of Proverbs. Clement of Rome (1 Cor. lvii.) is, so far as I know, the first so to use it. The word παναρετος is applied also to the apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon, by Epiphanius (*de mens. et pond.* §4) and others. Among the Fathers the Book of Sirach, the Solomonic Apocrypha, and the Book of Proverbs all bore the common title σοφία, "Wisdom," which well defines the character of each of them; and this simple title is commoner than the compound phrase which occurs in this passage (cf. e.g. Justin Martyr's *Dial.* c. 129, and Melito, quoted by Eusebius in chap. 26, below).[35]

Clement prefaces his citation of Proverbs 1:23-31 with "For thus speaks all-virtuous Wisdom"[36] in his letter to the Corinthians chapter 57.

The book Esdras is the book of Ezra and not the apocryphal works of Esdras. Dr. Schaff notes: "Εσδρας: the Greek form of the Hebrew name □□□□□□□, Ezra. Melito refers here to the canonical Book of Ezra, which, among the Jews, commonly included our Ezra and Nehemiah"[37]. The book of Lamentation was one with the book of Jeremiah. The only missing book is that of Esther, and the difficulty was understandable, as that is the only book which does not mention the name of God. It does sound very strange for a book to be inspired by God not to mention His name, but it goes to show how God is sovereign in circumstances even when His name is not explicitly mentioned, though it cannot be doubted that they prayed and depended upon God. The book of Esther is not a point of contention between either Catholics and Protestants, or Christians and Jews. It is interesting why it is omitted by Melito, some say that the omission is accidental, either on the part of Eusebius or Melito. Either case, Esther is not a point of dispute.

Do you notice what else is missing from the list? Any apocryphal book. By 170 A.D., when Melito went to the East, i.e., Jerusalem, to inquire of the authoritative books, he only came back with our Old Testament canon, with the possible exception of Esther. Melito's canon is said to be the first canon of the Old Testament and it agrees with the Josephus' canon (with the possible exception of Esther), which agrees with the Protestant canon of the Old Testament.

The LXX, Apocrypha And Jerome

Now we return to our initial comments about the inclusion of the Apocrypha in the LXX. We see that the Jews, who were entrusted with the Scripture, did not accept the Apocrypha in their canon. The inclusion of the Apocrypha among the Scriptures in the early church was due to Jerome's translation of the Bible into Latin. But even Jerome himself acknowledged that the Apocrypha was not Scripture and was not to function as an authority in the church to establish doctrine. Gregg Allison writes concerning Jerome:

> Jerome first translated Samuel and Kings, and in his preface to these books he composed a list of canonical Scripture. It included only the writings in the Hebrew Bible; these alone were Scripture. He then commented: "This preface to the Scriptures may serve as a 'helmeted' [general] introduction to all the books which we turn [translate] **from Hebrew into Latin**, so that we may be assured that **what is not found in our list must be placed among the apocryphal writings**." These were Wisdom (of Solomon), the Book of Jesus Ben Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), Judith, Tobit, and 1 and 2 Maccabees. Elsewhere, Jerome indicated his rejection of Baruch, and though he did translate the additional stories in Daniel of the LXX, he placed them in an appendix to the book. Thus, he relegated the Apocrypha to secondary status in comparison with canonical Scripture.
>
> In commenting on two of the apocryphal writings (Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus), Jerome indicated the role or purpose of the Apocrypha: "As then the church reads Judith, Tobit, and the books of Maccabees, but **does not admit them among the canonical Scriptures,** so let it read these two volumes for the edification of the people, **not to give authority to doctrines of the church**." That is, the church could read the apocryphal writings for its growth, but they could not be consulted in the establishment of church doctrine. (This function for the Apocrypha, as Jerome conceived it, will be invoked later by the Reformers as the question of the canon of Scripture is reopened over a millennium later in the sixteenth century.)[38] [emphasis mine]

The Apocrypha may benefit some people but was not to be viewed as Scripture. The LXX was considered as a library of Jewish writings, and not as the canon containing only the authoritative books of the Old Testament. The books laid in the Temple were acknowledged by the Jews to be consisting of only 22 books, corresponding to our 39 books of the Old Testament, written from the time of Moses to Malachi, from Genesis to Malachi in the Protestant canon. These were the authoritative God-breathed books of the Old Testament.

The Apocrypha Is Not Of God

Although the above observations are sufficient proof that the Apocrypha is not Scripture and is not of God, yet it is interesting to note that there are false doctrines taught by the Apocrypha, which certainly puts them out of Scripture. The Roman Catholic Church officially recognized the Apocrypha in 1546 at the Council of Trent, prior to that no official church-wide statement was made upon that subject. Here below, I will quote some statements as to why Protestant, besides reasons for the recognized canon of the Jewish church, do not accept the Apocryphal writings as Scripture.

Roy E. Knuteson writes that

> it will be granted that a couple of the Apocryphal books contain accurate history, especially 1st Maccabees with its account of the wars of the inter-testamental period of Jewish history. However, elsewhere they abound in historical, geographic, and chronological errors. Many of them, such as the books of Tobit, Judith, and Bel and the Dragon, are pure fiction without any factual support whatsoever. For example, the book of Tobit is a short story which gives directions for casting out a demon by the burning of the heart and liver of a fish from the Euphrates River. It also includes an account of how Tobit regained her eyesight by applying the gall of the fish to her eyes. Bel and the Dragon is another fictitious story of how wicked priests were consuming food offered to the idol called Bel and how Daniel exposed their deceit which resulted in the destruction of the idol and its many priests. It also records how Daniel killed the "great dragon" that was worshiped in Babylon by feeding it balls made of pitch, fat and hair, which caused it to explode internally. Obviously such myths cannot be put on a par with the writings of Scripture and therefore must be rejected.[39]

We are not atheists or materialists to reject supernatural things, but there are things which are supernatural and miraculous, and there are things which are absurd. In all of God's Holy Book, we don't read of any such "healing" techniques. Also, the story of Daniel with Bel and the Dragon are likewise fictitious, although encouraging in that they show Daniel as worshiping only the true God. The end of the story is Daniel in the lion's den with several additions, such as Habakkuk being carried by an angel to give food to Daniel in the den.

In **Baruch 1:7-8**, it is said that the vessels of the Temple were received in Jerusalem by Joakim the priest in the time of Nebuchadnezzar. But this is in direct contradiction to Ezra 1:7, which states that Cyrus King of Persia had possession of the vessels of the Lord's house. But Cyrus commanded that they should be brought back to Jerusalem, yet this was neglected (Ezra 5:13-17). As this was brought to the attention of Darius, he granted Ezra to get the vessels and continue the work on the Temple. Artaxerxes likewise gave Ezra and the Israelites free leave in everything that they needed in rebuilding the Temple, including the "vessels that have been given you for the service of the house of your God" (Ezra 7:19; 8:25-30). This is a direct contradiction to what Ezra, who actually lived at the time of these things, wrote.

The **book of Judith** begins with an amazing historical inaccuracy:

> Judth 1:1 NRSV It was the twelfth year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, who ruled over the Assyrians in the great city of Nineveh. In those days Arphaxad ruled over the Medes in Ecbatana.

Nebuchadnezzar, the great king of Babylon, ruled from ca. 605-562 B.C. But there is a problem with the very first sentence. Nebuchadnezzar did not, in fact, rule over Assyria, neither did he rule in "the great city of Nineveh." The 12th year of Nebuchadnezzar would have been around 593 B.C. It is interesting to read what the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) notes on this passage: "His [Nebuchadnezzar's] depiction here as an Assyrian is an **invention** of the author, **as is the description of Arphaxad**, an otherwise **unknown king** of the Medes, in Ecbatana [emphasis added]."[40] So, the author presents a historical invention as a fact, yet this does not cast doubt upon the authority, canonicity, and inspiration of this book? Obviously, any book which has such an absurd and not only contradictory to history but contradictory claims to the Bible, cannot be trusted. Bruce Metzger notes the following on Judith:

> One of the first questions that naturally arises regarding this book is whether it is historical. The consensus, at least among Protestant and Jewish scholars, is that the story is, sheer fiction…the book teems with chronological, historical, and geographical improbabilities and downright errors. For example, Holofernes moves an immense army about three

hundred miles in three days (2:21). The opening words of the book, when taken with 2:1ff. and 4:2f., involve the most astonishing historical nonsense, for the author places Nebuchadnezzar's reign over the Assyrians (in reality he was king of Babylon) at Nineveh (which fell seven years before his accession!) at a time when the Jews had only recently returned from the captivity (actually at this time they were suffering further deportations)! Nebuchadnezzar did not make war on Media (1:7), nor capture Ecbatana (1:14)...The rebuilding of the Temple (4:13) is dated, by a glaring anachronism, about a century too early. Moreover, the Jewish state is represented as being under the government of a high priest and a kind of Sanhedrin (6:6-14; 15:8), which is compatible only with a post-exilic date several hundred years after the book's presumed historical setting.[41]

Dr. Knuteson likewise writes that the Apocrypha is a source of some Roman Catholic doctrines:

the books in the Apocrypha endorse many false doctrines that are totally at variance with the clear teaching of the Word of God. Suicide is justified in 2 Maccabees 14:41-46. Prayers to the dead are encouraged in chapter 12, verses 41-45. Almsgiving is considered efficacious for the forgiveness of sins according to Tobit 12:9. The Book of Wisdom teaches the heresy of the pre-existence of souls in 8:19-20. The Book of Judith portrays her as using deception, guile and outright lying with the apparent approval of God (9:10-13). It is in these books that the Roman Catholic doctrine of Purgatory is found along with many other unscriptural concepts. The internal evidence is totally against the acceptance of these so-called "hidden and concealed" books as being a part of God's holy and "breathed-out" Word (see 2 Timothy 3:16). Isaiah 8:20 sums up the proper attitude of all Bible-believing Christians regarding these spurious books. "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."[39]

In light of these things, even when these books contain not only historical, geographical, but even theological errors, the Roman Catholic Church accepts them, because it lends support to her false doctrines.

Geisler and MacKenzie give us several reasons not to accept the Apocrypha as Scripture:

First, no apocryphal books claim to be written by a prophet. Indeed, as already noted, one apocryphal book even disclaims being prophetic (1 Macc. 9:27). Second, there is no divine confirmation of any of the writers of the apocryphal books, as there is for prophets who wrote canonical books (e.g., Exod. 4:1-2). Third, there is no predictive prophecy in the Apocrypha, such as we have in the canonical books (e.g., Isa. 53; Dan. 9; Mic. 5:2) and which is a clear indication of their propheticity. Fourth, there is no new messianic truth in the Apocrypha. Thus, it adds nothing to the messianic truths of the Old Testament. Fifth, even the Jewish community, whose books they were, acknowledged that the prophetic gifts had ceased in Israel before the Apocrypha was written (see quotes above). Sixth, the apocryphal books were never listed in the Jewish Bible along with the "Prophets," or any other section for that matter. Seventh, never once is any apocryphal book cited authoritatively by a prophetic book written after it.[42]

The Apocrypha not only should be rejected because it was not received by those to whom the Word of God was entrusted, neither appealed to by our Lord or His apostles, but also because it contains historical, geographical, and theological errors and contradictions.

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§4 The Authority of the Holy Scripture

4. The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, **dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church**, **1** but wholly upon God (who is truth itself), the author thereof; therefore **it is to be received because it is the Word of God. 2**
    1. 2 Tim. 3:15; 3:16; John 10:35; 13:18, 34-35; 19:34-36, 24; 1 John 5:9; Rom. 1:2; 3:2; 9:17; 15:4; Acts 1:16; 2:16, 24ff; Matt. 5:17-18; 4:1-11; 13:35; 22:32; 22:41ff; 26:54; Gal. 3:8, 16; 1 Cor. 10:11; Luke 16:17; 22:37; 2 Peter 1:19-21
    2. Luke 15:27-31; Gal. 1:8-9; Eph. 2:2

The **authority of Holy Scripture** does not depend upon the testimony of the early church fathers, godly men or the **church**. This is against the Roman Catholic idea that the "church" establishes the canon and scope of Scripture. Furthermore, only the "church" can properly interpret Scripture. The **authority** and truthfulness of **Holy Scripture** depend upon **God**, its **Author**. It is interesting to note the parenthetical "**who is truth itself**". This is said to further confirm the truthfulness of Holy Scripture. If an author is truthful by nature, it is logical and obvious to expect that his writings will likewise reflect his nature. This is exactly the case with God. The truthfulness of the Bible depends upon the truthfulness of

God. If God is not wholly truthful then we have no reason to believe the Bible. But God is, in fact, wholly truthful. In fact, He is "the God of truth" (Isa. 65:16). It is because of the character and authorship of God ("**therefore**") that Scripture is to be received as truthful and authoritative.

God lays His claim upon His Word, therefore, it brings another standard aside from God Himself to test the truthfulness of His Word by it is to make God and His Word subordinate to that standard. In that scenario, God and His Word are no longer the ultimate standard and rule of all faith and obedience. The ultimate standard is whatever we use to "prove" or make Scripture authoritative for people. In the case of the Roman Catholic Church, it is itself the ultimate standard because it stands above Scripture by defining its scope and also by claiming to be the only one who could properly interpret it. Furthermore, all practices and doctrines of the church do not need to be derived from Scripture according to the Roman church. Sacred Tradition also plays an important role. In the Roman Church, therefore, the **authority of the Holy Scriptures** depends upon the Roman Catholic **church**.

The authority of Scripture plainly follows from the claims of Scripture to itself. If Scripture truly is the Word of God, therefore, its authority is dependent upon God Himself, Whose Word it claims to be. Since Scripture is the sole infallible rule of faith, therefore, its authority cannot depend upon a lower authority. For example, the authority of the Bible cannot depend upon the church, because the church is to be subject to the Bible, and not vice versa. To make the authority of the Bible dependent upon the church is to say that the church is a higher authority than the Bible. Therefore, the only option remaining and is consistent with the Bible as the authority over the church is that the Bible derives its authority from its Author.

This plainly follows from the inspiration of Scripture, which means that Scripture is God-breathed and is the Word of God (**see above**), as well as from the truthfulness, infallibility, and inerrancy of Scripture (**see above**). If Scripture truly is God-breathed as 2 Timothy 3:16 teaches, then this means that it is the very Word of God. But then we must ask, "What is the highest authority in the Universe?" The obvious answer is not us, the church or any human institution, but rather, the Creator and Redeemer Himself. Therefore, since Scripture is the Word of God, it plainly follows that it is the highest authority that could be since its authority depends upon God. John Calvin insisted that the authority of the Bible rests upon the authority of its author, as the next paragraph will also say. He wrote:

> Let it therefore be held as fixed, that those who are inwardly taught by the Holy Spirit acquiesce implicitly in Scripture; that Scripture carrying its own evidence along with it, deigns not to submit to proofs and arguments, but owes the full conviction with which we ought to receive it to the testimony of the Spirit. Enlightened by him, we no longer believe, either on our own judgement or that of others, that the Scriptures are from God; but, in a way superior to human judgement, feel perfectly assured - as much so as if we beheld the divine image visibly impressed on it - that it came to us, by the instrumentality of men, from the very mouth of God. We ask not for proofs or probabilities on which to rest our judgement, but we subject our intellect and judgement to it as too transcendent for us to estimate.[43]

It is the Spirit who testifies to us about the Word, not the church. The church merely acknowledges what the Spirit has declared as inspired, canonical, binding and authoritative.

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§5 The Testimony of the Spirit to the Holy Scripture

5. We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church of God to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scriptures; **1** and the heavenliness of the matter, the **efficacy of the doctrine,** and the **majesty of the style,** the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), the **full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation,** and many other incomparable excellencies, and entire perfections thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God; **2** yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authority thereof, is from **the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word** in our hearts. **3**
    1. 2 Tim. 3:14-15
    2. Jer. 23:28-29; Luke 16:27-31; John 6:63; 1 Peter 1:23-25; Heb. 4:2-13; Deut. 31:11-13; John 20:31; Gal. 1:8-9; Mark 16:15-16

3. Matt. 16:17; 1 Cor. 2:14ff; John 3:3; 1 Cor. 2:4-5; 1 Thess. 1:5-6; 1 John 2:20-21, with v 27

The subject of the previous paragraph continues here. This paragraph points us to the ultimate reason we believe that Scripture is God-breathed: because God testifies to us that it is God-breathed. We may be **moved and induced by the testimony of the church of God** and what all kinds of saints of old and present have said about Scripture to believe it and trust it. It is good to listen to them. It is good when we see the truthfulness of Scripture from the **heavenliness of the matter**, meaning how it seems to be out of this world in what it says. Not only that but it also speaks about truths from heaven, i.e., from God (e.g., John 3:12). We also see the truthfulness of the Bible in the **efficacy of** its **doctrine** and the **majesty of** its **style**. We see the power of Scripture in our lives and how it works to encourage us and give us hope (e.g., Rom. 15:4). We see the beauty of its vocabulary, phrases and the different styles of the different human authors. We see the unity of the subjects but also the diversity in how they are communicated by different authors and in different genres. In this, we see the **consent of all the parts**, in other words, the consistency of Scripture. We see how the **glory of God** is the main goal of the Scriptures. The Scriptures show us the glory of God, tell us that all things exist for His glory and promise us that we will share in that glory through faith in Christ (Rom. 5:2). Oh, and how beautiful is the **discovery** (i.e., revelation and disclosure) of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is **the only way of man's salvation** and there are many more **excellencies** pertaining to Scripture. All these are good and should induce any reasonable man to believe that Scripture is from God.

This paragraph is given as some kind of clarification of what was said in paragraph 4. The Confession is not rejecting the testimonies of man or the church, but rather, they are saying that while these **are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God**, yet this is not the ultimate reason why we should receive it as such. The **full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authority** comes only from the **inward work of the Holy Spirit**. But notice carefully how this inward testimony of the Spirit is described: this inward testimony of the Spirit about the Word is **by and with the Word.** To put it down simply, the Spirit testifies to us of the Word as we are reading and digging in the Word. We are convinced of the authority of Scripture when the Spirit bears witness to us as we are reading and studying Scripture.

It's the Holy Spirit Who can graciously convince Christians that the Bible is the sole authority in our lives. We can't judge the ultimate standard in our lives by another standard. If we do, then that means that it's not the ultimate standard anymore. The Bible is self-attesting—it attests to itself through the prophecies therein, the consistency of the message and the truth of the matter about man and the world. You may say that this is circular and you will be right. But, you must realize that every ultimate standard is circular and there is a difference between a narrow and a broad circle. A narrow-circle would be something like, "The Bible is true and from God, because 2 Timothy 3:16 says that all Scripture is inspired and from God" which is true, but that is a very narrow circle. A broad-circle would be something like, "Look at all the prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the Lord Jesus like Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22 and see how they are fulfilled in Jesus Christ *against* the expectation of the people in His time." We're still in the Bible, but our circle is much broader and more forceful than merely saying that "the Bible is true because it says it is true." Ultimately, the authority of Scripture depends upon the testimony of God to His children.

Everything that is said by godly men about the Scriptures' truthfulness, beauty, consistency, inerrancy, authority, sufficiency is all true and which moves us to trust the Scriptures as the Word of God. All these things "are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God", we do not deny evidence in support of the Bible. A lot of findings support the Bible and we are encouraged by that because we know that the Word in the Bible comes from the God of Truth, therefore, it cannot err. We see by such findings that the Bible is confirmed, but our belief about the Bible rests upon the God of the Bible. All these things are good and are arguments which support the Bible as the Word of God, but ultimately the issue is spiritual. The Confession acknowledges the receiving of the Scriptures as the Word of God is the work of the Author—God the Holy Spirit. The ultimate reason that we believe that the Scriptures are exactly what they claim they are is because of the testimony of the Spirit concerning them, both in Scripture and in our hearts.

The Lord Jesus told us that "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). The Lord Jesus speaks to His sheep through the Word, which He gave us, and the Spirit Who helps us to understand the Word. In John 8:47, the Lord said: "Whoever is of God hears the words of God." The matter of receiving the Scriptures as the Word of God, and therefore, authoritative and supreme judge, rests upon whether we are of God or not. Paul says, "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). Therefore, we should not be surprised that unbelievers bash the Bible and do not like the God of the Bible. The matter is spiritual, they are enemies of God, therefore, it is obvious that they do not like and resist His Word.

An important point which Dr. Grudem makes is that we are not convinced of the authority of the Bible merely by thinking of the Bible, and studying doctrine about the Bible, but rather, by reading the Bible. Throughout the ages, new believers have not questioned the authority of the Bible but received it as such because of its authority and because of their new nature. It is only because of those who seek to subvert the authority of Scripture, who are of the Enemy, the first one who questioned the authority of God's Word (Gen. 3:1), that the believers come have doubts about the Word. As we read Scripture, we hear the voice of the Shepard speaking to us, and we receive the Bible as the Word of God. Grudem writes, "Our ultimate conviction that the words of the Bible are God's words comes only when the Holy Spirit speaks *in* and *through* the words of the Bible to our hearts and gives us an inner assurance that these are the words of our Creator speaking to us."[44] As is obvious for the man devoid of the Spirit to reject the things of the Spirit, in the same way, it is obvious for the man filled with the Spirit to accept the things of the Spirit. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 2:13 that "we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual." Then we go on to explain in the next verse that the natural man cannot accept these things. These things are taught to us by the Spirit Whose Word the Bible is. It is He who speaks to our hearts through the Word and convinces us of its claims and authority. The truths of God and of Scripture are revealed to the Christian "through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God" (1 Cor. 2:10). Paul also says that an important reason that we received the Spirit is to understand the things of God. He writes, "Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God" (1 Cor. 2:12). Therefore, in all these things we see that receiving the Bible as the Word of God is ultimately a spiritual matter given to believers by the Holy Spirit. We are convinced of its authority as we read it.

John Calvin expressed the testimony of the Spirit thus:

> Profane men think that religion rests only on opinion, and, therefore, that they may not believe foolishly, or on slight grounds, desire and insist to have it proved by reason that Moses and the prophets were divinely inspired. But I answer, that the testimony of the Spirit is superior to reason. For as God alone can properly bear witness to his own words, so these words will not obtain full credit in the hearts of men, until they are sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit. The same Spirit, therefore, who spoke by the mouth of the prophets, must penetrate our hearts, in order to convince us that they faithfully delivered the message with which they were divinely entrusted. This connection is most aptly expressed by Isaiah in these words, "My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever" (Isa 59:21).[45]

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§6 The Sufficiency of the Holy Scripture

6. The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture: unto which **nothing at any time is to be added,** whether by new revelation of the Spirit, or traditions of men. **1** Nevertheless, we acknowledge the **inward illumination of the Spirit** of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word, **2** and that there are some circumstances concerning the **worship of God,** and **government of the church,** common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed. **3**
    1. 2 Tim. 3:15-17; Deut. 4:2; Acts 20:20, 27; Ps. 19:7; 119:6, 9, 104, 128
    2. John 6:45; 1 Cor. 2:9-14
    3. 1 Cor. 14:26, 40

God has given us everything that is necessary for **his own glory**, i.e., that we would glorify Him and see His glory, our **salvation** and our **life** of **faith** and obedience is **contained in the Holy Scripture**. These things are called the **whole counsel of God** and this is found either **expressly** or **necessarily** in the Word of God. By **expressly**, the Confession means by direct commands and teachings (e.g., the Ten Commandments, Baptism, the Lord's Supper). By **necessarily contained**, the Confession refers to principles, applications and implications of Holy Scripture. We are not only to obey the direct commands of Scripture, but also whatever is implied and is based upon the teaching and commands of Scripture. The Lord Christ uses this principle when He proves the resurrection of the dead from the fact that the Patriarchs are alive before God in heaven (Matt. 22:23-33). Resurrection was not in Exodus 3:6, but it was a necessary and a valid implication.

The whole counsel of God is not to be tampered with. No **new revelations of the Spirit** neither the **traditions of men** should be added to it because the canon is closed. God has given His last word to the church and world in His Son (Heb. 1:1-2). Then the Confession comes again to the necessity of the Holy Spirit in connection with Scripture. The inward work of

the Holy Spirit is not only necessary to convince us that the Bible is God's Word (paragraph 5), but also **for the saving understanding of those things as are revealed in the Word**. The Spirit gives us **inward illumination** to savor and love the truths revealed in the Word.

There are some things which are not revealed in the Word concerning the **circumstances of the worship of God** or the **government of the church**, but are left to be ordered by **the light of nature** (i.e., common sense) and **Christian prudence** (wisdom). These are things like the time of worship on the Lord's Day, the type of building or place to worship, how long the service will be, beamer screen or not, or the finances of the church. These are things which the Scripture does not directly or indirectly speak about but are left to Christian wisdom and common sense. Nonetheless, **the general rules of the Word** are still to be observed in these matters. These are not to be disconnected from the Word just because they are not directly addressed by the Word. See **chapter 22** about the elements and circumstances of worship.

The Sufficiency of Scripture

To say that Scripture is sufficient is not to say that it speaks on every topic imaginable or that it tells us everything that we should do and everything which we should not. Rather, the sufficiency of Scripture is defined as Scripture containing everything necessary that God wanted us to know about salvation, faith, and the walk of obedience. Whatever God had deemed necessary for His people to know, He has written for our benefit in Scripture. The primary passage in Scripture which teaches the sufficiency of Scripture is 2 Timothy 3:16:

> 2Tim. 3:16-17 **All Scripture is breathed out by God** and profitable for **teaching**, for **reproof**, for **correction**, and for **training in righteousness**, 17 that the man of God may be **complete, equipped for every good work.**

Here, the apostle Paul gives us a great and necessary-to-know description of Holy Writ. The Scriptures, all of it, is profitable for teaching us the will of God; for reproving and criticizing us and our actions, because in them God has revealed His perfect Law of righteousness. The Scripture is profitable for correcting us, leading us in the way which we should go and teaching us to walk in the path of the Lord. And finally, the Scripture teaches us righteousness and how we should live before the face of God. Going a verse before, Paul said to Timothy that "the sacred writings...are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2Tim. 3:15). Therefore, in the Scripture as a whole is found the way of righteousness, the way of salvation and the way of obedience. The purpose of God in giving the Scripture is that the man of God may be complete, not lacking anything, but rather be ready and have everything that he needs for every good work. God has given the Scriptures as a blessing to His people and as the way through which He speaks to His church. Furthermore, He has given the Scriptures so that we may know everything that He wants us to know about Him, the way of salvation and obedience. If the Bible doesn't speak about a particular issue, I believe we may still discern a general principle from Scripture which we should apply to all areas of life. The Bible was not written to address every issue directly, though, the person who has a biblical worldview will see the world differently in all areas. Sinclair Ferguson writes, "Everything I need to learn in order to live to the glory of God and enjoy him for ever I will find in the application of Scripture. Yet this narrow focus broadens out into everything. For one thing, Scripture teaches us something about everything."[46] It is the Word of God which is said to make the man and woman of God complete, mature, perfect and adequate for every good work which God has commanded us. It is only here where God speaks directly to us, and therefore it is the sole infallible rule of faith and practice. The Scriptures alone are described to be the means for teaching reproof, correction, and training in righteousness, because of its author Who is the God of Truth. No other standard is said to be God-breathed, therefore, only the Scripture forms the sole infallible rule of faith and it is, therefore, sufficient to teach us that which God wanted us to know for salvation and godly living. Albert Barnes commenting on v. 17 says:

> **That the man of God may be perfect** - The object is not merely to convince and to convert him; it is to furnish all the instruction needful for his entire perfection. The idea here is, not that any one is absolutely perfect, but that the Scriptures have laid down the way which leads to perfection, and that, if any one were perfect, he would find in the Scriptures all the instruction which he needed in those circumstances. There is no deficiency in the Bible for man, in any of the situations in which he may be placed in life; and the whole tendency of the book is to make him who will put himself fairly under its instructions, absolutely perfect.
>
> **Thoroughly furnished unto all good works** - Margin, "perfected." The Greek means, to bring to an end; to make complete. The idea is, that whatever good work the man of God desires to perform, or however perfect he aims to be, he will find no deficiency in the Scriptures, but will find there the most ample instructions that he needs. He can never advance so far, as to become forsaken of his guide. He can never make such progress, as to have gone in advance of the volume of revealed truth, and to be thrown upon his own resources in a region which was not thought of by the Author of the Bible. No new phase of human affairs can appear in which it will not direct him; no new plan of

benevolence can be started, for which he will not find principles there to guide him; and he can make no progress in knowledge or holiness, where he will not feel that his holy counsellor is in advance of him still, and that it is capable of conducting him even yet into higher and purer regions. Let us, then, study and prize the Bible. It is a holy and a safe guide.[47]

Calvin says on the word "perfect", as in the KJV, and complete in the ESV, "*Perfect* means here a blameless person, one in whom there is nothing defective; for he asserts absolutely, that the Scripture is sufficient for perfection. Accordingly, he who is not satisfied with Scripture desires to be wiser than is either proper or desirable."[18]

Paul tells us also elsewhere about the use of the Scripture for our lives. In Romans 15:4, he says, "For whatever was written in former days was **written for our instruction**, that through **endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures** we might **have hope**." What is written obviously refers to the Old Testament Scriptures, which are God-breathed and which come from "the God of endurance and encouragement" (Rom. 15:5). All that was written in the Old Testament is very relevant to the Christian and it is written for the benefit of the Christian believer. It is written to instruct us in godliness and obedience to God. To show us the examples of both obedience and disobedience. To show us which things we should imitate of godly men and which things we should abhor. Hebrews 11 is an example of this principle. After enumerating many heroes of the faith, Hebrews 12:1 moves to a conclusion of encouragement saying, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us". That which was written was written for our sake and it gives us encouragement and hope in our endurance. Notice that in Romans 15:4 Paul describes the "encouragement" to be that "of the Scriptures", but in v. 5, he says that God is "the God of endurance and encouragement". This then implies that God grants us encouragement and endurance through the Scriptures, because Scripture is the self-revelation and the very God-breathed Word of our Father. John Calvin comments on v. 4 saying:

This is an interesting passage, by which we understand that there is nothing vain and unprofitable contained in the oracles of God; and we are at the same time taught that it is by the reading of the Scripture that we make progress in piety and holiness of life. Whatever then is delivered in Scripture we ought to strive to learn; for it were a reproach offered to the Holy Spirit to think, that he has taught anything which it does not concern us to know; let us also know, that whatever is taught us conduces to the advancement of religion. And though he speaks of the Old Testament, the same thing is also true of the writings of the Apostles; for since the Spirit of Christ is everywhere like itself, there is no doubt but that he has adapted his teaching by the Apostles, as formerly by the Prophets, to the edification of his people.[18]

Philip Schaff says that the endurance and encouragement, or the patience and comfort as rendered by the KJV are connected in reference to the Scriptures. He writes:

That we through the patience and through the comfort of the Scriptures. This is the literal rendering of the better established reading. 'Of the Scriptures' qualifies both words: 'the patience and comfort produced by a study of the Scriptures; the repeated 'through' does not disconnect them, but gives rhetorical emphasis. 'Patience' is especially needed to hold out in not pleasing ourselves (Rom. 15:1), and 'comfort' or 'consolation,' that we may find joy therein.[21]

This hope is in the original with the definite article, as *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* notes, '"*The hope*" is not hope in general, but the special hope of glory through Christ. (ch. Rom. 5:2)"[48]. And as the *Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges* observes, "This statement of the use of the O.T. scriptures must be compared with 2Ti 3:16 : they imply (1) that the O.T. has a permanent value for the Christian, (2) that that value is two-fold, (*a*) for instruction, discipline and encouragement of the Christian, (*b*) as witnessing to Christ in whom is the Christian hope."[49] This is confirmed and repeated by what Paul writes to the Corinthians. In reference to the idolatry of the Israelites, Paul writes, "Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did" (1 Cor. 10:6). Therefore, we "must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did" (1 Cor. 10:8) and we "must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did" (1 Cor. 10:9), "nor grumble, as some of them did" (1 Cor. 10:10). Paul is taking this incident of the idolatry of Israel to warn Christians against conducts which are prohibited by God. Then he justifies his application of these things to the Christians by saying:

1 Cor. 10:11 Now these things happened to them as an example, but they **were written down for our instruction**, on whom the end of the ages has come.

This is similar to what was said in Romans 15:4. The Scriptures were written down for our sake and for our good and for our instruction. The scripturation of these things is specifically said to be for our instruction and teaching. In all these things, we see the sufficiency of Scripture as asserted by Scripture itself to teach us, instruct us in life and godliness, since it is written for that purpose, and it claims to be the very word of God. Therefore, it is authoritative, infallible, inerrant and binds the conscious of men to obedience.

In Isaiah 8:20 it is said, "To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn." These two divisions refer to the Torah (teaching) and the rest of the Bible at that time (testimony), and it is there where the Prophet directs the people to look at. That is the standard to which the writings and sayings of people should conform to, otherwise "they have no dawn", or as the KJV says, "they have no light in them." True light abides in the God-given Scriptures. There is where He manifests Himself and there is the light, i.e., truth. The Bible which they had at the time of Isaiah, was already to function as a standard by which other revelations were to be tested. Albert Barnes notes, "By this standard all their pretended revelations were to be tried. By this standard all doctrines are still to be tried."[50] In v. 16 of the same chapter, we read, "Bind up the testimony; seal the teaching among my disciples." These are the same two categories by which all revelations should have been tested. This is the Word of Yahweh, which He wanted His people to possess and to be familiar with so that they would know if there is any light in other writings, prophecies or what necromancers say.

In Luke 16:19, when the rich man is in Hades in torment, he tells father Abraham to send someone so that his brothers may be saved, but Abraham replies, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them." Then the rich man replies that if someone is raised from the dead, they will believe and repent, implying the Scriptures are not sufficient. But Abraham replies, "If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead" (Luke 16:31). We are sympathetic to the request of the rich man. We understand that if a miracle happens that is better than the Word of God. Or is it? That is because we have an unbiblical view of the Bible. We do not realize that in Scripture we have the very words of God speaking to us and therefore, we don't realize their sufficiency. According to Abraham, who here represents Heaven, all that people need to know to escape God's judgment is contained in the Law and the Prophets, that is, the Old Testament. Now we live beyond the New Testament revelation of God, which is completed and thus have a greater knowledge of God and the way of salvation, therefore, our obedience to Scripture and the belief in its sufficiency should be greater. If Abraham could say to the rich man that the Old Testament contained and was sufficient to reveal the way of salvation, how much more the full canon of the Old and New Testaments, which God has given us? Miracles will not do. What will do is the *living* Word of God through which God speaks.

The faithful should be able to say along with the Psalmist, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps. 119:105). The Holy Scriptures are sufficient to teach us the ways of God and to lead us into a walk of obedience. It is to them that we should go and it is by them that we should judge any teaching. The Christian is in need of nothing outside of the Bible for life and godliness. Psalms 19 and 119 over and over again praise God for His special revelation and that it is their lamp and their sufficient Word for godly living.

> Ps. 19:7-11 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; 8 the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; 9 the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. 10 More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. 11 Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

Only the Word of God is described in such a marvelous and an awesome way. It is that which is **perfect**, complete and sufficient. In it, we have everything that God wants us to know about life and godliness. It is the instrument which the Holy Spirit uses to convert us: **reviving** (ESV), renewing (HCSB), restoring (ISV), converting (KJV), refreshing (YLT) our souls. This is in accordance with what Peter says in 1 Peter 1:23, 25: "…you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God…this word is the good news that was preached to you." Through the word of the gospel, which comes from the Word of God—the special revelation of God to His people, regeneration comes. God's word gives us **knowledge**, it makes the believer **wise** because it is the Word of the Only Wise God. Psalm 119:30 says, "The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple." Study and reading of God's Word gives us wisdom and understanding. The Lord's precepts are **right**, therefore we are not led astray from the narrow path by following the Word. The commandments and Word of God is **pure** and it **enlightens our eyes**, showing us the way in which we should go. To the believer, they are more precious than the treasures which the world offers, because in the Word we have the Word of God, Who is our only Treasure. It is the treasure which God has left us and to us, it is sweeter than honey.

The Psalmist could not describe the Word of God in such a way if he thought that the Word was incompetent and not enough. Rather, while possessing very little of Holy Scripture, since the canon was not complete yet, David speaks of the sufficiency, truthfulness, and perfection of Holy Writ.

The Closed Canon Of Scripture

The closed canon of Scripture refers to the fact that no new revelation or traditions of men should be added to the Holy Scripture. Even if God would give a new revelation, it is not to be on par with Scripture, nor added to Scripture. The canon was closed not at the time when the church arrived at the 66 books of the Bible, but with the writing of the last New Testament book, the Apocalypse. The canon was closed with the vision of the Apocalypse as God-breathed. The book of the Law warned not to add anything to God's Law:

> Deut. 4:2 **You shall not add** to the word that I command you, **nor take from it**, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you.
>
> cf. Deut. 12:32.

Even at a time when the canon of Scripture was not complete and was not closed, the people were warned in not making their own additions and subtractions from Scripture. They were to closely follow what God has given and have that as their canon and ruling measure of true from false prophets. They were to test everything by what God had already revealed. If the canon was to be expanded, it had to be by the authority and inspiration of God. Wayne Grudem cites the following passages which support the idea that the prophets were the authors of the Old Testament: 1 Samuel 10:25; 1 Chronicles 29:29; 2 Chronicles 20:34 and 1 Kings 16:7; 2 Chronicles 9:29; 12:15; 13:22; 26:22; 32:32; Jeremiah 29:1; 30:2; 36:1–32; 45:1; 51:60; Isaiah 30:8; Ezekiel 43:11; Daniel 7:1; Habakkuk 2:2. It is amazing to see the stress in these passages upon the authorship of prophets from whom came the Word of God. Exodus 7:1-2 is especially of importance here. The prophet merely functioned as the mouthpiece of God to the people. Therefore, since the Messiah had not come and the canon was not closed, the Old Testament could be expanded as God was pleased to give more Scripture. The Jews were not to make their own additions, but they were to test the prophets to see if they're from God (Deut. 18:15-22). It is interesting to note how the Apocalypse comes to an end:

> Rev. 22:18-19 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, **God will add to him the plagues** described in this book, 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, **God will take away his share in the tree of life** and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

It is clear that the words explicitly are referred to "the word of the prophecy of this book", but it cannot be denied that its placement as the last book in the biblical canon is very significant. What is true of the book of Revelation concerning this curse, is likewise true of the entire Bible. Anyone who adds to the Scriptures or subtracts from them will be punished by God. This is similar to the warning in Deuteronomy to Israel concerning the Law. The difference here is that the consequences are clearly laid out. The one who does such a thing will not inherit eternal life, basically. Furthermore, while the Pentateuch itself acknowledges that there will be prophets (e.g., Deut. 18:15-22), and hence new Scripture, the New Testament does not expect after the time of the apostle anyone to produce new Scripture. While the *charismata* of the Spirit are with the church, the Spirit will no longer give Scripture, and all the *charismata* are to be tested by the Scripture, the only infallible rule of faith and practice. The 66 books of the Old and New Testament are the highest court of appeal and it is only in them that we have the inerrant, infallible, and authoritative voice of God.

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§7 The Perspicuity of the Holy Scripture

7. All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, **1** **nor alike clear unto all**; **2** yet those **things which are necessary** to be known, believed and observed for salvation, are so **clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture** or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of ordinary means, may attain to a sufficient understanding of them. **3**
    1. 2 Peter 3:16
    2. 2 Tim. 3:15-17
    3. 2 Tim. 3:14-17; Ps. 19:7-8; 119:105, 130; 2 Peter 1:19; Prov. 6:22-23; Deut. 30:11-14

Not all things are **alike plain** in Scripture, nor is it **alike clear unto all** believers or readers of the Bible. Peter, speaking of the writings of Paul says that "There are some things in them that are hard to understand" (2 Pet. 3:16), how much more we would have difficulty in wholly understand all things in Scripture? But those things which God has deemed **necessary to be known, believed and observed for salvation**, He has clearly revealed in Scripture. It is solely our problem that we do not perceive or understand their clarity. Not only that, even when these doctrines are spoken of in "difficult places", yet

they **are so clearly propounded and opened in some places of Scripture** that through the **use of ordinary means** (learning language, studying, trying to get the meaning of the text *from* the text, i.e., exegesis), we may understand those things. Something things we will understand more easily than others and that is the case with all things in life. For the "harder" things there is more study necessary. Let us observe our lives and how most of us have had a decent education and have learned enough for school because we had to or because we loved the subjects. Not all things were easy or pleasant. But we did them for the grades or for other goals. How much more should we spend time in the reading and study of Scripture when it concerns our spiritual happiness and well-being? How often do we neglect the Word and feed ourselves with garbage? If we would put so much effort into our education, job, hobbies or whatever else it might be, which are all momentary, how much more should we for our eternal happiness and spiritual health? Let us, therefore, be students of the Word, who are indwelt the Holy Spirit, who seek to love and obey the God of Scripture by the study and reading of His Word.

Perspicuity is a word that means *clearness* and in this connection, it teaches that the Scripture is clear on matters of salvation and obedience in its teaching. The doctrine does not mean that all things are alike clear in Scripture, as the Bible itself admits. Even the apostle Peter writes about Paul's letters that "There are some things in them that are hard to understand" (2 Pet. 3:16). The Bible does not claim that everything which it teaches is plain in the same way as it teaches about Creation, God, Redemption and so on. There are things which are difficult, but there are things which are easy and plain for those who want to receive the truth of the Word. Issues like Eschatology are difficult in the Scripture, and not directly plain. There will always remain debate among Christians about this subject until the Lord returns to settle the debate. The subject of Calvinism and Arminianism is difficult for some, especially when the former is filled with caricatures and false representations. But the most important truths of the Scripture are set forth plainly: the truth of God as Creator (Genesis 1), the sinfulness and salvation of man by grace (Rom. 3:9-26, Eph. 2:8-9), the deity of the Lord Jesus (John 1:1-3, 14-18, 28:20), His virgin birth (Matt. 1:23; Luke 1:27, 34-35), His death, burial and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:3-4), His Second Coming (Acts 1:11; Rev. 22:7), the deity of the Spirit (Acts 5:3-5), Monotheism (Deut. 6:4), the existence of Heaven and Hell (Matt. 25:46). Those things cannot be denied without damage to the perspicuity of Scripture.

When the Lord gave Israel the Law, God said to the people, "For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off" (Deut. 30:11). The Israelites had to teach the law of the Lord even to their children. Deuteronomy 6:6-7 says, "And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise." These things include the Ten Commandments in the previous chapter and the first greatest commandment to love God (Deut. 6:4-5). These things were to be taught and spoken to children, therefore, this shows the plainness of God's revelation. This does not mean that there is no difficulty in the interpretation of the Law. Rather, most of it was understandable to the Israelites at that time. Undoubtedly, the reason that we have some difficulties in understanding of the Law would have to do with our context and knowledge of those times, which the Israelites probably did not have. The idea of the Scripture being clear to even children is repeated in the New Testament. In 2 Timothy 3:15, the apostle writes concerning Timothy who "from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." From childhood he knew the Scriptures and from childhood, even the Old Testament Scriptures could make him wise for salvation *through Jesus Christ.* This much was clear even to children in the Old Testament, Paul asserts.

The difficulty in understanding Scripture does not lie in Scripture itself, but in our understanding of it. We are to blame. In none of His conversations with the Pharisees did the Lord blame the Scriptures of being unclear, rather, He always rebuked them and directed their attention to Scripture. He said, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is **they that bear witness about me**, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life" (John 5:39-40). He blames their misinterpretation of Scripture. In Luke 24:25, the Lord Jesus likewise does not blame the Scriptures, but his disciples, saying: 'And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!' Then He went on to correct their understanding of the Bible: "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). He accused the Sadducees who rejected the resurrection saying, "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God" (Matt. 22:29). The phrase "**have you not read**" is used 7 times in the Gospels on the lips of our Lord (Matt. 12:3, 5; 19:4; 22:31; Mark 12:10, 26; Luke 6:3) in which He sends them back to the Old Testament. The phrase implies that the thing which they had not read is a plain truth which they should have known. In Matthew 21:42, the Lord says, "**Have you never read in the Scriptures**" and then He goes on to quote Psalm 118:22-23. In 18 instances the Lord points to the authority and word of the Old Testament by the phrase "**it is written**" (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10; 11:10; 21:13; 26:24, 31; Mark 7:6; 9:13; 14:21, 27; Luke 4:4, 8; 7:27; 19:46; 24:46; John 6:45; 8:17), which not only shows its authority, but also its perspicuity. The difficulty which we have with Scripture is not because of Scripture, but because of our limitation and in not properly and harmoniously interpreting Scripture.

The essential things of Christianity are expressed in the Apostles' Creed. This statement is not meant to be a minimizing of

Christianity, but rather it shows the very core and essentials of the Christian faith. Indeed, the issue of election, sovereignty of God, the Law of God, the Lord's Day, Regulative Principle of Worship, believers baptism are very important for this Confession, yet if someone believes in a wrong, yet not an entirely anti-biblical view of these things, it does not mean that they're not saved. For example, Calvinists believe that Arminians are dear brethren who are wrong on the doctrine of God's sovereignty and of His election of the believers. But we do not deny that they're brethren. Only Hyper-Calvinists would deny that. We believe that they're brethren who believe a wrong view of election and do not follow their view to its logical consistency, which would place salvation in the hands of man and dependent upon him. As R. C. Sproul somewhere said, they are saved by a "happy inconsistency." Although followed to its logical conclusion, the Arminian view of election places salvation in the hands of man, yet, they confess that salvation is by grace alone, and not of the doing of man. Such inconsistencies could exist without rendering one an unbeliever. All of us have some wrong doctrine in our theology because we are sinful and imperfect people, that is why it is essential to be immersed in the Word and examine our doctrine against the only and sole infallible rule of faith.

The Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
the Maker of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:

Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried;

He descended into hell.[51]

The third day He arose again from the dead;

He ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost;
the holy catholic church;[52]
the communion of saints;
the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body;
and the life everlasting.

Amen.

§8 The Hebrew and Greek immediately inspired by God

8. The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), **1** and the New Testament in Greek (which at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations), being **immediately inspired by God,** and by his singular care and providence **kept pure in all ages,** are therefore authentic; **2** so as in all controversies of religion, **the church is finally to appeal to them**. **3** But because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have a right unto, and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded in the fear of God to read and search them, **4** therefore **they are to be translated** into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come, **5** that the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship him in an acceptable manner, and through patience and comfort of the Scriptures may have hope. **6**
    1. Rom. 3:2
    2. Matt. 5:18
    3. Isa. 8:20; Acts 15:15; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; John 10:34-36
    4. Deut. 17:18-20; Prov. 2:1-5; 8:34; John 5:39, 46
    5. 1 Cor. 14:6, 9, 11, 12, 24, 28
    6. Rom. 15:4; Col 3:16

The **Old Testament in Hebrew** (with some small parts in Aramaic) and the **New Testament in Greek**, those two were **immediately inspired by God** and then by His **care and providence kept pure in all ages.** Notice that the

inspiration of God has to do with the original languages and manuscripts and not translations. Furthermore, what God inspired and commanded to be written, He then kept pure and preserved and are therefore **authentic**. Seeing that the Old Testament, mainly containing the Old Covenant, was limited to the Israelites its language was, therefore, **Hebrew** since that was **the native language of the people of God of old.** But with the New Testament and Covenant where this ethnic limitation is removed and whereby the gospel is to go to all nations, the New Testament was written in **Greek**, which **at the time of the writing of** the New Testament **was most generally known to the nations**. Therefore, thanks to all these truths, in whatever controversy, **the church is finally to appeal to them.** Meaning, the church is to appeal to the Bible in the *original languages*, for that was immediately and directly inspired by God, with every iota and dot.

Then comes the necessity of translating the Bible in the languages of the people since **these original tongues are not known to all the people of God**. We cannot force them to learn the original languages to hear the words of God and as the people of God, they **have a right** to hear and read the Holy Scriptures. Not only do they have a right, but they are furthermore **commanded** to **read and search them** (John 5:39, 46). Therefore, they are to be translated according to the languages of the nations in which the gospel comes. This is so that God may be worshiped in **an acceptable manner**, His people knowing His Word and what He desires in worship. Furthermore, this is also so that the Holy Scriptures may give us **patience and comfort** and thereby that we **may have hope** (Rom. 15:4).

See above for the **Inspiration of Scripture**. What was inspired is not the translations, but only the autographs written by the prophets and apostles of our Lord.

The final appeal in matters of religion is to the Word of God, and the Word of God, especially in the original languages. Since the Holy Spirit did not write the Bible in English, therefore, the English translation is not the final authority. Every translation has its problems and imperfections, therefore, the final appeal is to the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek of the Bible. The framers of the Confession did not believe that the translation into English was the final authority, rather, the Word of God in the original languages. But it would be wrong to say that we do not have the Word of God in our translations. As long as the translations are faithful to the original languages of the Bible and to the intent of the authors, even in the translation, we have the Word of God in our hands, and we may appeal to them as authority. The Reformers urged the translation of the Bible. The Roman Catholic church withheld the Bible from the common people and that's why it was able to hold her sway upon them. But as soon as people began to translate the Bible into the vulgar tongues, the Reformation started. The Scriptures are necessary and a great blessing from God. Even the authors of the New Testament in most instances used the Greek translation of the Bible, the LXX, and so it was just as authoritative as the Hebrew Bible. The Confessions urges the translation of the Bible into the common tongues of people, unlike the Roman Catholic religion which had the Bible in Latin, even when people did not understand Latin. The Reformers wanted the believers to taste the sweetness of the Word of God in their own languages.

Returning to the Bible and the translation of the Bible to the common tongue is what flamed and started the Reformation. It is written of William Tyndale, the first translator of the complete English Bible:

> A clergyman hopelessly entrenched in Roman Catholic dogma once taunted Tyndale with the statement, "We are better to be without God's laws than the Pope's". Tyndale was infuriated by such Roman Catholic heresies, and he replied, "I defy the Pope and all his laws. If God spare my life ere many years, I will cause the boy that drives the plow to know more of the scriptures than you!"[53]

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§9 The Analogy of Faith

9. The **infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself;** and therefore when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched by other places that speak more clearly. **1**
    1. Isa. 8:20; John 10:34-36; Acts 15:15-16

This is a maxim well known among the Reformers and Reformed. The best interpreter of the Scriptures is the Scripture itself. All of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, was given word-for-word by God. Therefore, **when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture**, we should search to see if this Scripture is explained elsewhere in the canon or search for the concepts. Many examples could be given of this especially with the use of the Old Testament by the New Testament authors. Their interpretation is *the* interpretation of the Holy Spirit. Why? Because the Holy Spirit Who gave the Old Testament also gave us the New Testament. Both have the same Author. Therefore, when we have unclear passages or concepts, we must search **other places that speak more clearly** upon a said passage or concept. Furthermore, Scripture

has **one** sense, and not **manifold** senses and interpretations. There may be a manifold application, but the meaning is **one**.

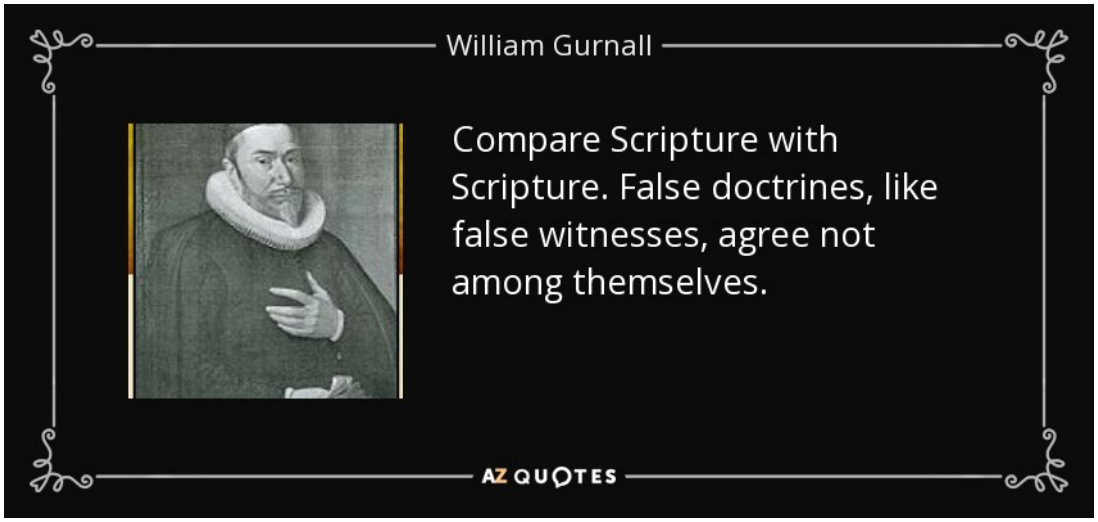
This hermeneutical principle is the basis on which all proper biblical interpretation rests. Since the Bible is infallible, inerrant, truthful, therefore, it cannot truly and without resolution contradict itself. Therefore, our interpretation of the Bible should likewise not contradiction the Bible. I cannot tell you how many believers are not aware of this principle, and how essential and beneficial it is. When speaking with believers about eschatology, for example, how many of them do not first of all jump into the Apocalypse and difficult Old Testament prophecies and try to interpret those? We believe the proper manner of approaching Eschatology, and for that matter—any subject is first to go to the plain teaching and then to the difficult (see **chapter 31** for an illustration of this principle on Eschatology). The assertion of this doctrine and of this paragraph simply is: the Bible is the best interpreter of the Bible. We should let the Bible interpret itself. The Holy Spirit who spoke in the Old Testament interprets the Old Testament in the New Testament. How many times do we have the apostles in the New interpret prophecies and texts in the Old, which do not seem clear to us when only reading the Old Testament text. That is our fault. The proper interpretation of those passages is the Apostolic interpretation given through the same Spirit. This is called the Analogy of Faith, or the Analogia Fidei in Latin. Theopedia explains why it is called such:

> In Romans 12:6 Paul says that each one was to exercise his gift of prophecy, i.e., of teaching, "according to the proportion of faith." The Greek word for *proportion* here is *analogia*, and hence the phrase *analogy of faith*. The meaning is, that the utterances of the "prophet" were not to fluctuate according to his own impulses or independent thoughts, but were to be in accordance with the truth revealed to him as a believer. Following the Reformation, this phrase was used to mean that all Scripture was to be interpreted with reference to all other Scripture. In other words, no single text or expression of Scripture was to be isolated or interpreted in a way contrary to its general teaching.[54]

How many times have we heard Dispensationalists say that the promises to Israel about the descendants or the land have not been fulfilled? I say this from experience. God promised to Abraham: "I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore" (Gen. 22:17). We may get the impression that this means that his descendants will be limitless or something. Yet, if we keep reading the Old Testament we see that such language is applied to the Israelites even before the coming of Christ. For example, we read in 1 Kings 4:20-21:

> Judah and Israel were as many as the sand by the sea. They ate and drank and were happy. 21 Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt. They brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life.

Not only does this fulfill the descendants' promise, but also the Land promise (Gen. 15:18-21). In Deuteronomy 10:22, we read Moses saying to the present generation that "now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven." Hebrews 11:12 says of Abraham, "Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore." We see that our first impression of what numerous as the sand of the sea and stars of heaven means is not the same as the biblical authors'. All the promises of God to the Fathers are said to have been fulfilled by the time of Joshua (Josh. 21:43-45). This is merely one subject. How much more if we apply this essential hermeneutic to all subjects in theology? We begin with the plain and interpret the difficult in light of the plain. We never interpret plain passages in light of difficult passages, but vice versa. As William Gurnall said, "Compare Scripture with Scripture. False doctrine, like false witnesses, agree not among themselves." What a statement and it is absolutely true!



This is the Reformed principle of the Analogia Fidei or the Analogy of Faith. The Bible is the best interpreter of the Bible. The following two quotes are taken from Theopedia:

> "There must be a consistency in all revealed truth because it represents absolute truth in the mind of God. Therefore each passage can have only one certain and simple sense. As the infallibly inspired word of God, the Scriptures are reliable, self-consistent and carry within them all that is needed for clarity. Since all that God makes known fits with what He knows perfectly, it is always proper to assume that no contradictions or dual realities can be attached to what He speaks." Bob Burridge
>
> "If the Scriptures be what they claim to be, the word of God, they are the work of one mind, and that mind divine. From this it follows that Scripture cannot contradict Scripture. God cannot teach in one place anything which is inconsistent with what He teaches in another. Hence Scripture must explain Scripture. If a passage admits of different interpretations, that only can be the true one which agrees with what the Bible teaches elsewhere on the same subject." Charles Hodge

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§10 The Supreme Judge In All Matters

10. The **supreme judge,** by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be **no other but the Holy Scripture delivered by the Spirit,** into which Scripture so delivered, our faith is finally resolved.**1**
    1. Matt. 22:29, 31-32; Acts 28:23-25; Eph. 2:20

The **supreme judge**, by which **all controversies of religion** and all things theological taught by men, are to be examined **can be no other but the Holy Scripture delivered by the Spirit**. The Holy scripture is the final arbiter of all truths theological. All things are to be judged in its light. It is a norm of norms and a standard of standards. A confession of faith does not stand on par with Scripture. The faithfulness and truthfulness of a confession of faith, creed, council or any doctrine are to be examined in light of the Holy Scriptures. If all these things said about the Holy Scriptures in the previous 9 paragraphs are true, then we cannot except but what is asserted in paragraph 10 about the place of Scripture. It is the final authority.

This paragraph is written also in a context wherein the Roman Catholic Church claimed to be the supreme judge in all controversies of religion. Against that, the Reformers gave the Bible, God's authoritative and infallible Word. The Pope, councils, whatever church, whatever theologian or church father, all these are to be examined by the Holy Scriptures.

See **Sola Scriptura above**. Directly opposing Rome on her teaching the authority of the church and councils, the Protestant confessions admit the Holy Scriptures to be the only infallible rule and guide of everything that is called Christian. It's not that councils and ancient writers are irrelevant, but they are to be judged by the Scriptures and not taken as an authority above or equal to Scripture, but as something derived from the Scriptures and subordinate to the Scriptures. Thus even the writers of the Confession recognize that the Scripture, not the present Confession, has the infallible and final authority over

the church. God rules us through the Scriptures, not the Confession, though confessions seek to articulate the truths of Scripture. If they accurately articulate the truths of God, then they are to be received on the basis that they derive their authority from the Word. They are subordinate to the Word and must be tested for their truthfulness by the infallible standard of the Word. This is what I'm trying to do in writing a commentary on the 1689.

Acts 15

We even have an example where the Bible is shown to be the supreme rule in the Bible. Even when the canon was not completed, the question of Gentiles in the church was decided by the Bible. Both Paul and Barnabas, and Peter in Acts 15, related how God worked through them among the Gentiles. Having seen all these amazing things, even clear evidence of the work of God the Spirit among the Gentiles, yet the deciding authority was the Word of God. Having heard the testimonies of the apostles Paul and Peter about the Gentiles, James stands up and declares:

> Acts 15:13-15 After they finished speaking, James replied, "Brothers, listen to me. 14 Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name. 15 And **with this the words of the prophets agree**, just **as it is written**,

James validates the testimonies of Paul and Peter about the Gentiles by the Scripture in his possession. The testimonies were absolutely true, but they were determined to be so and authoritative for the whole church because of this prophecy in Amos 9:11-12. James' appeal to solve the matter for the church is to appeal to the only infallible and inerrant authority—the Word of God. Therefore, "it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church" (Acts 15:25) to write a letter to the Gentiles about this matter, and about the fact that they're saved by grace alone, just like the Jews. The whole church is united in its decree, but not only that, they write that "it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit" (Acts 15:28) too. God worked among them to reach this decision. Although the testimonies of Peter and Paul about the Gentiles were true, yet the final and supreme judge of those was the Holy Scriptures.

2 Peter 1:19a

In 2 Peter 1:16-21, the apostle Peter asserts the authority of the Scriptures above that of experience. First of all, the apostles did not follow "cleverly devised myths", but rather, they were "eyewitnesses of his majesty" who told the truth (2 Pet. 2:19). Then Peter relates his experience along with James and John on the Mount of Transfiguration (2 Pet. 1:17-18; Matt. 17:1ff). They saw the Lord Jesus "receive honor and glory from God the Father" (2 Pet. 1:17) Who bore testimony to the Lord Jesus. Even though the testimony to the Lord Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration by God Himself, was unmistakable and undeniable, yet we must pay attention to the words of Peter in v. 19a. The ESV translates it with "And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed". There are two general interpretations of this passage: either Peter is saying that his experience confirmed the truths of Scripture or the Scripture is truer than his experience. I take the latter view. The ESV translation favors the former view as well as the NASB and HCSB translations. On the other hand, the literal rendering as given by Young's Literal Translation is, "And we have more firm the prophetic word". The KJV translates it with "We have also a more sure word of prophecy". The word βέβαιος (*bebaios*, G949) means "stable, fast, firm…sure, trusty"[22]. Peter uses it in v. 10 when he exhorts us to make our calling and election *sure.* The idea of surety, certainty, and stability is communicated by the word. This prophetic word—the Word of God—is more stable, firm and sure. But what is it "more sure" than? I believe the answer to be Peter's experience on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Although the experience was absolutely valid, true and demanded an act of faith, which it did, later on, produce in the disciples, thinking back about it, yet it was not in and of itself sufficient to do that. Many people saw the miracles of our Lord but remained in their unbelief. In Luke 16:31, the Lord Jesus says in the voice of Abraham, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." Naturally, we would think that a miracle would produce faith, but that is not what the Lord thought. He thought that the Scriptures were sufficient and able to produce faith in the hearts of its hearers (cf. 1Pet. 1:23-25). The experience of Peter and the other apostles showed that what they were preaching, they experienced and they lived. They saw the Lord Jesus both in His humility as well as in His transfiguration; before His resurrection as well as after His resurrection. They saw Him get crucified, as they saw Him ascend into Heaven. These things could not be said about the pagan myths which the Roman world was familiar with. Those things had no basis in history, but that is not the case with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The apostles were eyewitnesses, meaning, they're telling the story of the gospel as firsthand authorized witnesses. The fact the apostles were eyewitnesses refutes the idea that they "follow[d] cleverly devised myths". Moreover, not only were they eyewitnesses, but they witnessed to Christ even in their deaths. The Greek word μάρτυς (*martus,* G3144) from which our English word "martyr" comes from means "witness." Since they were not only eyewitnesses to the facts, but they were prepared to go happily to their deaths, this demonstrates that what we're dealing with here is not at all "cleverly devised myths" as the pagan religions had.

This then is the refutation of the claim that the apostles preached "cleverly devised myths", but what then is the comparison in the "more sure" of v. 19a? It seems to be the experience of Peter. While the experience was valid and shows that Peter

and the apostles were, in fact, eyewitnesses of the things which they're preaching, it is not adequate to establish the truth or demand a response of faith. Therefore, the apostle directs them to the Word of God which he says is "more sure" than his experience. This interpretation is supported by the literal reading of the clause, which is: "and we have more sure the prophetic word", and as well as Peter's exhortation that the believers are to pay attention to this Word. Not only does he point to the Word, but he explains that this prophetic word is the Word from God. It was produced not by the will of men, but by the Holy Spirit working in the prophets. He points to the prophetic word and also explains its nature, which makes it all the more reasonable for the believer to pay attention to it and heed the voice of the Shepard in it. The stress in v. 19a as the word order suggests falls upon the "more sure" quality of the word *written,* over against the *voice* from heaven. This is not to say that the voice of God is different than the Word of God, but rather, it is to distinguish an experience which is not universal and not infallible, from the *written* Word of God, which is given to all and is infallible. Notice that Peter sends his readers to the Scriptures so that they would know that Peter's testimony about the Mount of Transfiguration, as well as the other things he says about Christ, are true, since this prophetic word is the very Word of God. Charles J. Ellicott explains:

> But how can the word of prophets be more sure than the voice of God? In itself it cannot be so; but it may be so regarded (1) in reference to those who did not hear, but only heard of, the voice from heaven; (2) in reference to the subject in hand. (1) For the readers of this Epistle the many utterances of a long line of prophets, expounded by a school of teachers only second to the prophets themselves, might easily be "more sure" evidence than the narrative of a single writer; and "if they heard not Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded" by the report of a voice from heaven. (2) The Transfiguration, though an earnest of Christ's future glory, was not so clear a promise of it as the express words of prophecy.[55]

The great Presbyterian commentator, Albert Barnes, gives several reasons for this interpretation:

> (1) The prophecies are numerous, and by their number they furnish a stronger proof than could be afforded by a single manifestation however clear and glorious.
>
> (2) they were "recorded," and might be the subject of careful comparison with the events as they occurred.
>
> (3) they were written long beforehand, and it could not be urged that the testimony which the prophets bore was owing to any illusion on their minds, or to any agreement among the different writers to impose on the world. Though Peter regarded the testimony which he and James and John bore to the glory of the Saviour, from what they saw on the holy mount, as strong and clear confirmation that he was the Son of God, yet he could not but be aware that it might be suggested by a caviller that they might have agreed to impose on others, or that they might have been dazzled and deceived by some natural phenomenon occurring there…
>
> (4) even supposing that there was a miracle in the case, the evidence of the prophecies, embracing many points in the same general subject, and extending through a long series of years, would be more satisfactory than any single miracle whatever. See Doddridge, in loc. The general meaning is, that the fact that he had come as the Messiah was disclosed in the mount by such a manifestation of his glory, and of what he would be, that they who saw it could not doubt it; the same thing the apostle says was more fully shown also in the prophecies, and these prophecies demanded their close and prolonged attention.[47]

Matthew Poole says the following on the comparison between Peter's experience and the Word of God:

> the word of prophecy [is] more firm or sure, not in respect of truth, (which was equal in both), but in respect of the manner of its revelation; the voice from heaven being transient, and heard only by three apostles; whereas the word of prophecy was not only received by the prophets from God, but by his command committed to writing, confirmed by a succession of their fellow prophets in their several generations, and approved by Christ himself, and by him preferred before miracles themselves, Luk 16:29,31.[56]

Dr. Philip Schaff, in explaining the view that I'm taking, writes:

> the testimony of the Old Testament is referred to as of greater certainty, or as carrying in it greater power of conviction, than even the voice heard at the Transfiguration. The comparison thus becomes one between the exceptional testimony of the heavenly voice and the familiar testimony of Israel's ancient Scriptures. The advantage is given to the latter as a ground for confidently expecting the Lord's Coming. Why this is the case the writer himself does not say.[21]

I beg to differ with Dr. Schaff on the last statement: The reason is given in vv. 20-21, namely, because Scripture is of God, and it is His word and voice in written form. It is of the same authority as the voice which Peter heard, but Scripture contains the written, examinable-by-all, above-experience, inerrant, infallible Word of God. Dr. Schaff then says, "Be the reasons what they may, it would be natural enough for a Jew like Peter to claim for the Jewish Scriptures a superiority over all other forms of testimony. And on this view, which is now followed by many excellent interpreters, we get a sense entirely germane [i.e., relevant] to the context."[21] I could not agree more.

In this passage, we see that Peter raises the authority of the holy written Word of God above his valid experience and he points his readers not to his experience, but to the written Word of God. This prophetic Word of God which Peter sends the believers to go to be through the Spirit's work in the prophets, and not by the will and interpretation of men. Therefore, Scripture is the highest authority that God has given the church to test everything by it. It is the authority that judges all but should be judged by none.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Footnotes

1. ^ *Many Scriptural references have been supplied by Samuel Waldron's Modern Exposition of 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith which was apparently supplied by the Westminster Confession of Faith 1646.*
2. ^ *Noah Webster, Infallibleness (Webster's Dictionary 1828).*
3. ^ *Ibid., Inerrability.*
4. a, b *Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.*
5. ^ *Greg L. Bahnsen, The Inerrancy of the Autographa. Emphasis original.*
6. ^ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version: The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), p. 2044.*
7. ^ *Kevin DeYoung, Taking God At His Word: Why the Bible Is Knowable, Necessary, and Enough, and What That Means for You and Me (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), p. 98.*
8. a, b *John Gill, Exposition of the Entire Bible. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
9. ^ *John MacArthur, The MacArthur Study Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2010), p. 1367.*
10. ^ *Matthew Henry, Commentary On The Whole Bible (Full). By default in The Word. Taken*

from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.

11. ^ *Catechism of the Catholic Church: With Modifications From The Editio Typica (Double Day; 2nd edition, 2003), p. 31, number 80. Footnote reference removed.*
12. ^ *Ibid., number 82.*
13. ^ *Gregg R. Allison, Historical Theology: An Introduction To Christian Doctrine: A Companion To Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), p. 44.*
14. ^ *John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1.7.2.*
15. ^ *John M. Frame, Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief (P&R Publishing, 2014), p. 595.*
16. a, b *Alan M. Stibbs, etc, The Scripture Cannot Be Broken: Twentieth Century Writings On The Doctrine Of Inerrancy, ed. John MacArthur (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), p. 205.*
17. ^ *Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), pp. 74-75.*
18. a, b, c, d, e *John Calvin, Commentaries. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
19. ^ *Alan Stibbs, Scripture Cannot Be Broken, pp. 207-208.*
20. a, b, c *MacArthur, The MacArthur Study Bible, p. 1904.*
21. a, b, c, d, e *Philip Schaff, A Popular Commentary on the New Testament. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
22. a, b, c *Joseph Henry Thayer's Greek Definitions. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. See reference for the Strong's number.*
23. ^ *Catechism of the Catholic Church, number 120, p. 40. Emphasis added.*
24. ^ *Aaron Brake, Is the Apocrypha Scripture?*
25. ^ *Flavius Josephus, The Complete Works of Josephus, trans. William Whiston (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998), Against Apion, 1:8, pp. 929-930. Verse divisions omitted.*
26. ^ *Allison, Historical Theology, p. 38n3. Numbering within brackets supplied by me.*
27. ^ *Babylonian Talmud, Mas. Yoma 9b. The words of R. Abba. Words within brackets added by me because of the footnote attached.*
28. ^ *Good News Translation (GNT). 1 Maccabees 4:41-46.*
29. ^ *1 Maccabees 9:23-27.*
30. ^ *Grudem, Systematic Theology, p. 57, footnote references removed.*
31. ^ *John Piper, A Peculiar Glory: How the Christian Scriptures Reveal Their Complete Truthfulness, p. 48.*
32. ^ *Bruce, The Canon of Scripture, 31, his italics. As quoted in Adam Brake, Is the Apocrypha Scripture?*
33. ^ *Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History. Book IV, chapter 26.*
34. ^ *Ibid., chapter 22:8.*
35. ^ *Ibid., n. 1244.*
36. ^ *Clement's First Letter to the Corinthians, chapters 57.*
37. ^ *Eusebius, chapter 26, n. 1314.*
38. ^ *Allison, Historical Theology, pp. 48-49. Footnote references removed. Content with brackets not mine, but Dr. Allison's. Emphasis added.*
39. a, b *Roy E. Knuteson, Why We Reject The Apocrypha, p. 6.*
40. ^ *Judith 1 (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops).*
41. ^ *Metzger, An Introduction to the Apocrypha, 50-51. As quoted in Adam Brake, Is the Apocrypha Scripture?*
42. ^ *Geisler and MacKenzie, Roman Catholics and Evangelicals, 167. As quoted in Adam Brake, Is the Apocrypha Scripture?*
43. ^ *John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. Henry Beveridge (Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, LLC, 2008), pp. 33-34. 1.7.5.*
44. ^ *Grudem, Systematic Theology, p. 77.*
45. ^ *Calvin, Institutes, p. 33. 1.7.4.*

46. ^ *Sinclair B. Ferguson, The Authority, Sufficiency, Finality of Scripture (Monergism.com).*
47. a, b *Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
48. ^ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, ed. J. J. S. Perowne. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
49. ^ *Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
50. ^ *Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
51. ^ *Grave or Hades. See Grudem, Systematic Theology, pp. 582-594*
52. ^ *Catholic means universal, not Roman Catholic.*
53. ^ *The History of William Tyndale and his Bibles.*
54. ^ *Analogy of faith (Theopedia).*
55. ^ *Charles J. Ellicott, Commentary For English Readers. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*
56. ^ *Matthew Poole, English Annotations on the Holy Bible. Taken from the TheWord Bible Software. In loc.*