

Holy Scripture

Chapter 1

To be fair, much of the Bible is not systematically evil but just plain weird, as you would expect of a chaotically cobbled-together anthology of disjointed documents, composed, revised, translated, distorted and 'improved' by hundreds of anonymous authors, editors and copyists, unknown to us and mostly unknown to each other, spanning nine centuries.

Richard Dawkins, The God Delusion

There is certainly in the whole mass of confessional literature no more nobly conceived or ably wrought-out statement of doctrine than this chapter... placed at the head of their confession and laid at the foundation of their system of doctrine.

If it be compared in its details with the teachings of Scripture, it will be found to be but the careful and well-guarded statement of what is delivered by Scripture concerning itself. If it be tested in the cold light of scientific theology, it will commend itself as a reasoned statement, remarkable for the exactness of its definitions and the close connection of its parts.

Benjamin Warfield (1893)

Readings:

- B.B. Warfield, *The Inspiration of Scripture*, Chapter 1, "The Biblical Idea Of Revelation" Chapter 3, "The Biblical Idea of Inspiration"
- Franci Watson's, *Irenaeus and the Fourfold Canonical Gospel*
- Richard Gaffin Jr, *Perspectives on Pentecost*,
 - Chapter 1, "the Gift of the Spirit"
 - Chapter 5, "The Question of Cessation" (p.89-116)
- Chicago Statement of Biblical Inerrancy
- Louis Berkhof, *Summary of Christian Doctrine*
 - Chapt. 2 & 3, pp.13-23
- Watson, Francis, *Text and Truth: Redefining Biblical Theology* (Eerdmans, 1999)
- Wolterstorff, Nicholas, *The Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)
- Vern Poythress, "The Lordship of Christ in Interpretation"
- Dunbar, David, "The Canon of Scripture," in *Scripture and Truth*. eds. D.A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983.
- Thielman, F. "The New Testament Canon: Its Basis for Authority," *Westminster Theological Journal*, 45 (2): 400-410.

Section 1-5: Nature of Scripture

2Tim. 3:16 *All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work. (c.f. Pss 33:6, Gen. 2:7)*

2Pet. 1:19 *So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. 20 First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, 21 because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*

Heb. 1:1 *God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2 in these last days has spoken to us in {His} Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.*

1. Section 1 and 8 raises the issue of the "divine inspiration of scripture." What is inspiration? Notice then the "faith assumption" as related to the super-natural agency of God. ("to commit the same wholly into writing..." See also section 8 "being immediately inspired by God and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic...") What exactly is inspired?

WCF 1.1 Therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal himself, and to declare that his will unto his church; and afterwards, 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 Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased.

8. The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), 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; so as, in all controversies of religion, the church is finally to appeal unto them. But, because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have right unto, and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded, in the fear of God, to read and search them, therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come, 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.

Definition:

The process in which the words of scripture are made by the Holy Spirit working through responsible human agents to be revelatory without usurping the personality and mind of the writers. Creative work of H.S. through human instruments....

I. Biblical Idea:

2 Tim.3:16- "God-breathed", not scripture breathed into writers by God but rather breathed out "Breath", always evidence of God's creation. (Ps.33:6, Gen.2:7) - "all", the whole of scripture is inspired.

2 Peter 1:19-21- not a private interpretation. It's more than simply being eyewitnesses of historical events, but the interpretation of those events given by God as well.

John 10:33-34- Jesus defends by the authority of Scripture being that of God Himself. Scripture and God lay so close together in the minds of the writers of Scripture that they spoke of scripture doing what only God can do. The "oracles of God."(Rom.9:17; Gal.3:8; Acts 4:25; Acts 8:3...

II. Process of Inspiration, the Human and Historical Aspect:

1. The preparation of the men, physically, intellectually, spiritually and even personality. Not by dictation, human minds were engaged in the writing of scripture. Therefore, distinctive styles and forms of logic attributed to different authors. Scripture has no problem assigning the writing of scriptures to its human authorship.
2. The preparation of the history which is the subject-matter of Scripture.
3. Therefore, not an isolated event or action. A teleological character is inherent in the very cause of events toward the preparation of Scripture. Inspiration is founded upon the sovereign, providential and supernatural character of God making Himself immanent in history.

III. Summary of Biblical View of Inspiration:

Verbal: the very words of canonical text, not merely the writers or general concepts, are breathed out by the H.S.

Plenary: Inspiration extends to all parts of the Bible as opposed to views of partial inspiration.

Confluent: The divine and human interaction "flow together" such that the individual personalities and styles are not suppressed....

Inerrancy: The text of Scripture is true in all that it intends to affirm.

IV. Defenses of the Inspiration of Scripture:

A. Case # 1:

1. Provide a case that the God of Christian theism does exist.
2. The Scriptures provide a generally reliable history of Jesus.
3. Provide a case that the miracle accounts are accurate history.
4. Jesus as the miracle worker must have divine authority.
5. Jesus has an extremely high view of the OT.
 - a. His use of it: Matt.22:23-33; 12:1-8; 22:44
 - b. His statements about it: Matt. 15:3-4
6. Jesus has an extremely high view of his own words.
 - a. Mt.24:35, "My words will not pass away."
 - b. Constant refrain in his teaching, "Amen, Amen" (Truly, Truly)
7. Jesus commissions the apostles with the same authority.
 - a. Lk.10:16, "He that hears you, hears me"
 - b. Mt.10:20, "It is not you who speak but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you."
 - c. Jn.14:26, "The Holy Spirit will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said."

B. Case # 2:

1. Present the claims of Scripture for itself.
 - a. OT of OT:
 - 1) Constant refrain: "Thus saith the Lord"
 - 2) Jer.1:9, "I have put my words in your mouth"
 - 3) Ex.20:1, "God spoke all these words"
 - b. NT of OT:
 - 1) Mt. 4:1-11, Temptation narrative
 - 2) Lk.16:19-31, Mose's Authority is God's authority
 - 3) Jn.10:35, "Scripture cannot be broken"
 - c. NT of NT:
 - 1) 2 Cor 3:11, New covenant is far greater than Old
 - 2) Mt.24:35, "My words will not pass away."
 - 3) Jn.16:13-15, Commissioning of the Apostles
 - 4) 2 Tim.3:16, "All Scripture is inspired"
 - 5) 2 Peter 1:20-21, "not a matter of human interpretation..."

Therefore, The whole Bible comes to us as the "Word of God" under the sanction of God Himself, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

V. Low Views of Inspiration:

1. **Liberal Protestant View:** The Biblical author is inspired. Locus moves from what has been written to what the author experienced. Identify the experience of the author and then a person can experience it him/herself.
2. **Neo-Orthodox View:** The reader is inspired. Confuses doctrine of inspiration with illumination. Bible is God's Word only in so far as God speaks through it to the individual reader. Denies the objectivity of Theological truth, rather truth is subjective. This view reveals it's existential leanings.

Note: Both these views divorce the work of the Holy Spirit from the text in it's historical context. The words of scripture are separated from the history through which they came. Denies the sovereign and providential work of God through the Holy Spirit. The locus of inspiration is the self. These views are in contrast to a third and Biblical view where the text itself within it's historical context is inspired.

Some Variations of Low Views:

- a. **Social Hermeneutics:(Lindbeck, Roman Catholic, Political Theologies):** Biblical text is like a kernel or a seed. Over time, begin to see more and more of what was in the Biblical text. It is in and through God's actions in the world that meaning is to be found-- then move back to text and fill it out with meaning.
- b. **Existentialist Hermeneutics: (Tillich, Bultmann)** We share a human quest with the first century, but we (post-modern) can't believe in miracles today like first century (pre-modern). Therefore, make analogy between our own worldview and first century, meaning is what you get after pre-modern stuff is isolated out. Real meaning lies behind the text.

Therefore, The whole Bible comes to us as the "Word of God" under the sanction of God Himself, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Conclusion: The Bible is the Word of God in the words of people. It is a supernatural work of God. Inspiration has as its product the Old and New Testament Scriptures whereby God has brought about by providential control the human and historical circumstances surrounding the writings of the canonical text.

2. Having discussed the origin of scripture, the confession also speaks to the **redemptive historical nature of scripture** in section one. (*"therefore it pleased God at sundry times and in divers manners to reveal himself and to declare..."*) I.e. In so far as the doctrine of "inspiration" establishes the fact that Scripture is a supernatural product, when and how was this "product" accomplished? How does this relate to the "nature" of scripture? (See Vos)

I.e. Is it ultimately a collection of wisdom sayings (such as the Koran), or is it something else?

According to G. Vos

- 1. Biblical Theology: "deals with the process of the self-revelation of God deposited in the Bible." G. Vos
I.e. God's speaks, we listen-- truth is from God alone as relevant to God's causing redemption.

2. Main Features:

- a. The historic progressiveness of the revelation-process.
Revelation is the interpretation of redemption; it must, therefore, unfold itself in installments as redemption does. (Vos. p.6)
- b. The actual embodiment of revelation in history.
"the facts of history themselves acquire a revealing significance."(Vos. p.6-7)
"The usual order is: first word, then the fact, then again the interpretive word."
Example: "The Old Testament brings the predictive preparatory word, the Gospels record the redemptive-revelatory fact, the Epistles supply the subsequent, final interpretation." (p.7)
- c. The organic nature of the historic process is observable in revelation.
I.e. From seed form to full growth, qualitatively, the seed is not less perfect than the tree. We should therefore read the Bible as within an expectation that there is not multiple theologies presented within it, but rather one theology as becoming more and more clear as redemptive history progresses. We have license then to understand the "theological vision" of an earlier portion by it's relevant to a later portion.
- d. The practical adaptability of Biblical Theology.
"The Biblical idea (of "to know") is to have the reality of something practically interwoven with the inner experience of life." (Vos, p.8)

Summary:

Determined by the principle of historic progression, a "biblical use of scripture" seeks to understand the course of revelation as revealed in distinct redemptive periods determined in strict agreement with the lines of cleavage drawn by revelation itself. This necessarily requires a "covenantal" method of interpretation!

We see the "covenant" aspect of revelation if by the mere fact that the Hebrew word for covenant ("berith") is used 289 times in the Old Testament, beginning with Gen. 6:18 in describing the flood. Yet the context for "berith" is clearly set by the account of creation itself. (see below) The "berith" language is used explicitly to summarize the Genesis histories in Exodus 2:24, *God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.* Clearly God was acting in covenant through Moses as noted in Exodus 24:7 *Then he took the book of the covenant, and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient."* **8** *Moses took the blood and dashed it on the people, and said, "See the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."* As we will see, even the prophets themselves where those appointed by God as the covenant executors, to proclaim the terms of the covenant as especially related to the curses and blessings attached to them-- this will account for the prophets constantly applying the curses of Deuteronomy to the sufferings of the Israel people and the hope for blessings to the future Israel.

And of course, this Old Testament "covenant" context anticipates the New Covenant Context as recorded by Jeremiah.

Jer. 31:31 The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a **new covenant** with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. **32** It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt--a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. **33** But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Jer. 32:40 *I will make an everlasting covenant with them, never to draw back from doing good to them; and I will put the fear of me in their hearts, so that they may not turn from me.*

Clearly then, the concept of "covenant" is the Bible's way of understanding itself and the revelation that is granted by it.

The Characteristics of a "Covenant" Interpretation:

Everyone agrees that all interpretation of scripture should be sensitive to the context in which a given passage of scripture appears. Our point is that every passage of scripture falls into some *covenantal* context as well as some historical or cultural or linguistic context. Thus, the "meaning" of any passage of scripture is conditioned by our overall understanding of the various covenants and their relations to one another. All of His laws are given in some covenantal context, and that context must be considered as part of the interpreter's duty. (By way of an example) The interpreter must always ask, *In what ways, if any, are the peculiar features of a given covenant-administration reflected in this particular law?* If we ask this of Leviticus 20:11, we answer: the covenant people in the Sinai administration were required to wield the sword, exercising civil/judicial authority to punish certain crimes capitally. The covenant people in the New Covenant administration are neither required nor permitted (institutional as the people of God-- the church) to wield the sword in such a manner. (John 18) On the other hand, the New Covenant continues to teach that sexual immorality is sin; this is not peculiar to the Sinai administration. Yet we should discipline church members who are sexually immoral, but we should not execute them.

T. David Gordon

Methodological Stages in Covenantal Interpretation:

"The burden of biblical theology is to orient biblical interpretation to the history of redemption in a pointed and programmatic fashion. Revelation has its structure and serves its (undeniably multiple and diverse) functions as the progressive attestation and interpretation of the ongoing work of redemption. Any theological reflection basing itself on biblical interpretation must recognize and work from out of this redemptive-historical framework."

(Gaffin, p.xx)

1. Step One: To relate the text to its immediate theological horizon. (immediate covenantal context)
2. Step Two: To understand the text in light of God's total revelation especially as ultimately revealed in the New Covenant.

Advantages:

1. Guards against moralizing certain passages through the use of false analogies between the biblical narrative and contemporary life even to the detriment of the fuller theological significance.
2. Guards against a theology of "proof-texting."
3. Can recognize both the significance of certain passages within its own redemptive context and in the present redemptive context whereby the biblical-theological understanding of scripture is made relevant to us.
4. Guards against emotionalism and subjectivistic interpretations whereby the normative (governing) value of Biblical revelation is retained to the interpreter in any practical sense. (We are still the listeners.)
5. Provides a proper hermeneutic from which to derived "biblical ethics."

Summary:

A redemptive historical orientation is not some kind of dispensable exegetical luxury. At stake is nothing less than the right way of interpreting Scripture. At issue here is simply the fundamental principle that the text is to be interpreted in the light of its context. In the case of Scripture, the redemptive-historical structure or framework established by Scripture itself is the contextual factor having the broadest bearing on a given text. (Gaffin, p.xxii)

Section 1b, 6: Sufficiency of 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 in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. 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: 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.

1. Notice the sphere of biblical authority: "The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life".

Counsel: "Advice or guidance, especially as solicited from a knowledgeable person" (*American Heritage*). God undoubtedly knows much more than he has revealed in scripture; but whatever *guidance* he wishes to give us is here revealed. Obviously, in some sense, a cure for cancer is "necessary for...man's...life." Yet, scripture does not contain a cure for cancer, because God has no *counsel* he wishes to give us on that matter.

2. Notice also the sufficiency of Scripture for authority: "either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture." Why would the Assembly add the adjectives "good and necessary" to the word "consequence"? Is the Assembly right in saying (in effect) that we are responsible to make proper deductions from scripture? (examples)

Notice carefully the twofold criteria that must be satisfied by the church when acting as a church relative to Biblical authority. I.e. There may be "good" inferences from scripture that are proper for personal decision making, that are not proper as related to church jurisdiction.

I.e. A pastor, acting on his own authority may advise many various things to a parishioner that satisfies the "good" inference criteria, however his advise would not be used as a basis for discipline as related to the church itself. E.g. Some "judgments" are made, not by the pastor acting in his own, but by the "session" or those appointed in the church to handle the "keys" that will impact a persons relationship to the church. It is at these moments that the "good and necessary" rule ought to apply. So for instance, in determining the content of a "creed" as adopted by the church, the higher rule of good AND necessary should be kept in so far as the creed will "bind" the conscious of the church when acting as a church. This then relates to the issue of "authority" as then related to an elder of the church acting severally (in his own person) vs. when acting "jointly" on behalf of the church (in his office as related to the session-- which is why our polity demands that the church be "ruled/governed" by a plurality of elders.

3. Notice the question of Cessation: Given the above nature of the Bible, we also find in section 1 an affirmation of the Protestant belief that special revelation ceased with the close of the apostolic era. The Confession cites Heb. 1:1-2 as the basis of this:

... those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased...(1.1b), ... unto which nothing at any times is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men..." (1.6)

- *Heb. 1:1-3—God "spoke"... not "speaks"*
- *Eph. 2: 20 built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.*
- *Rev.22:18 ...if anyone adds to them...*
- *The Word-Deed-Word Principle of Inscripturation.. where "Redemption and revelation coincide...." (Geerhardus Vos)*

e.g. This is entirely consistent with the pattern throughout scripture; the giving of special revelation was an *occasional* activity, not a *perpetual* activity. There were many generations in the OT in which there was no revelatory activity. Prophets were appointed by God during significant, epochal moments in the history of redemption, to explain God's significant, epochal acts. Geerhardus Vos put it this way: "Redemption and revelation coincide....The usual order is: first word, then the fact, then again the interpretive word....We can observe that where great epoch-making redemptive acts accumulate, there the movement of revelation is correspondingly accelerated and its volume increased."

When Protestants deny that revelation continues, then, what they are also denying is that new, epochal events in the history of redemption continue. Positively, they are affirming that the great event, by which salvation is accomplished, has already taken place in Christ, and that the interpretation of that event by Christ's hand-selected apostles is sufficient to provide an understanding of it.

Given the above framework, and that the book of Revelation speaks to the present age in anticipation of the next and final great epochal event in the second coming of Christ, how then should we understand Rev. 22:18-19?

4. What are some ways that the Insufficiency of Scripture expressed: Two Ways Expressed:

In 16th Century Context: :

Why, then, does Chrysostom admonish us to reject all who, under the pretense of the Spirit, lead us away from the simple doctrine of the gospel-- the Spirit having been promised not to reveal a new doctrine, but to impress the truth of the gospel on our minds..."

We are assailed by two sects, which seem to differ most widely from each other. For what similitude is there in appearance between the Pope and the Anabaptist? That when they both

boast extravagantly of the Spirit, the tendency certainly is to sink and bury the Word of God, that they may make room for their own falsehoods.

(On Reform, p.92 & 93), *Selections ...* Ed. Dillenberger)

No less a confusion today:

c.f. "Dripping Like A Leaky Faucet", Scott Oliphint, *Reformation* Sept. 2012, (pre-seminar reading)

5. Three Confusions:

- 1) Confusion About Role Of The Holy Spirit in Bible Interpretation
- 2) Confusion About the Role of Church
- 3) Confusion About Revelation vs. Illumination

Clarification of all three in WCF 1.6

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. 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: 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.

Further Explanation:

1) **What the Spirit Does and Does not do in Interpretation:**

Does: *"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"*

Rom. 8:6-8 *For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, 7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able {to do so}; 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*

1 Cor. 2:12-14--*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, 13 which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual {thoughts} with spiritual {words.} 14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.*

1. The subjective role of producing reconciliation. Rom. 8.15.

1. Spirit destroys that enmity between rebellious creatures and God, which is the fundamental problem with interpretation.

2. While we are no longer fundamentally at enmity with God, the sanctifying work of the Spirit is not yet complete.

2. The Spirit's role in enabling us to receive the truths of God

1. Rom. 8:5-8-- 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7 For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law-- indeed it cannot, 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

2. 1 Cor. 2:9-15 9 But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him" -- 10 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. 11 For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. 13 And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual. 14 Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. 15 Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny.

C. Conclusions:

"The Holy Spirit plays a subjective, not objective, role in biblical interpretation. In reconciling our sinful hearts to God, he promotes within us a similar desire to love and serve God as we have to love and serve our natural parents. Further, he particularly gives us the desire to *embrace* and *receive* the things of God. In doing this, he makes us willing to work hard to understand scripture, and willing to embrace the conclusions of our study of scripture. Our view is distinct from the view of Rome, which argued that the difficulty of understanding scripture aright was due to scripture's obscurity and perplexity; Protestants responded by saying the difficulty was due to *our* obscurity and perplexity. On the other side of the Reformers, battling from another direction, were the anabaptists, who joined Rome in claiming scripture to be intellectually unclear and in need of further revelation and information. Thus, the Holy Spirit is *most* necessary in removing that sin and love of sin which is that which effectively prevents us from embracing and receiving the things of God." T. David Gordon

John Owen, vol. 4, pp. 118-235, "Causes, Ways, and Means of Understanding the Mind of God", p. 156:

"The things revealed in the Scripture are expressed in propositions whose words and terms are intelligible unto the common reason of mankind. Every rational man, especially if he be skilled in those *common sciences and arts* which all writings refer unto, may, without any especial aid of the Holy Ghost, know the meaning of the *propositions* that are laid down in, or drawn from the Scripture; yea, they can do so who believe not one word of it to be true, and they do so, as well as the best of them, who have no *other help* in the understanding of the Scripture but their own reason, let them profess to believe what they will. And whatever men understand of the meaning of the words, *expressions*, and *propositions* in the Scripture, if they believe not the *things* which they declare, they do not in any sense *know the mind and will of God* in them; for to know a thing as the mind of God, and not to assent unto its truth, implieth a contradiction."

B. Does Not: "*unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit,*

"The Holy Spirit does not give us objective insight into the correct interpretation of a given biblical passage. (Caveat: in saying the Spirit does not do this, we are not saying He is *incapable* of doing this, nor are we denying that, in some extraordinary circumstance, He *might* do so, or even *has* done so. What we are denying is the propriety of *expecting* Him to do so. We are denying that belief that it is a regular part of His role in the present church-order to reveal to individuals the meaning of a biblical passage.

T. David Gordon

Conclusion:

What may we, as Bible interpreters, rightly expect from God the Holy Spirit? That He will increasingly take away our innate rebellion and hostility to the ways of God, which is the primary obstacle to our "receiving" God's truths. In this way, He will "illumine" us, not by adding *content* to the objective revelation in scripture, but by subduing that rebellion which subjectively prohibits the truth from being received and embraced.

C. Evaluation of those misunderstandings of scripture which suggest that the Spirit does give supernatural insight into the interpretation of texts of scripture. by T. David Gordon

1. John 14:25-26--

"I have said these things to you while I am still with you. 26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you".

1. To whom is this addressed? The disciples in the Upper Room. The twice-repeated "you" of v. 26 has the same referent as the "you" at the end of 25 and the end of 26.
2. What is promised to the disciples? The Holy Spirit.
3. What will the Holy Spirit do? He will teach-remind (note the parallel between teaching and reminding here). His "teaching," even among the disciples, is not new information, but a remembrance of the many things which Jesus had already said.
4. What will be the content of the Spirit's teaching-reminding among the disciples? What is the referent of the *pavnta* ? This is answered by the relative clause, "that I have said to you". This clause is almost certainly further defined by the first clause of 25, "I have said these things to you while I am still with you" .
5. Conclusions from John 14.25,26. This text records a special promise of the Holy Spirit to the disciples guaranteeing that they will be helped to remember what Jesus taught them while he was with them. A number of other texts affirm that this is precisely what happened.
 - a. Jn. 2.20-22-- The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" 21 But he was speaking of the temple of his body. 22 After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.
 - b. Jn. 12.16-- His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him.

c.f. . John 15:26-27 , 1 John 2:19-27--

2. Confusion About the Role of the Church in Bible Interpretation

Does not add to the revelation in scripture: "unto which nothing at any time is to be added, ...nor traditions of men."

Protestant reformation was not about inspiration or tradition, but over a matter of authority. Whether the church in its teaching office had the right to impose meanings on the Biblical text which was not itself subject to correction by that text. Protestants held that Scripture was no longer free-- church teaching was silencing Biblical teaching.

Note the distinction between Westminster and Trent (1545-63) on ecclesiastical traditions:

"The sacred and holy, ecumenical, and general Synod of Trent--...following the examples of the orthodox Fathers, receives and venerates with an equal reverence, all the books both of the Old and of the New Testament--seeing that one God is the author of both--as also the said traditions, as well those appertaining to faith as to morals, as having been dictated, either by Christ's own word of mouth, or by the Holy Ghost, and preserved in the Catholic Church by a continuous

succession...But if anyone... knowingly condemn the traditions aforesaid; let him be anathema. Let all, therefore, understand, in what order, and in what manner, the said Synod, after having laid the foundation of the Confession of faith, will proceed, and what testimonies and authorities it will mainly use in confirming dogmas, and in restoring morals in the Church.”

The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, "Decree Concerning the canonical scriptures"

“I most steadfastly admit and embrace apostolic and ecclesiastic traditions, and all other observances and constitutions of the same Church. I also admit the holy Scriptures, according to that sense which our holy mother Church has held and does hold, to which it belongs to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the Scriptures; neither will I ever take and interpret them otherwise than according to the unanimous consent of the Fathers.”

Profession of the Tridentine Faith, III.

2) Does: To the degree that more qualified Biblical study and simply more of it over a greater period of time has the advantage of being a better instructor than the single untrained individual at one particular time, then the Church has the advantage of better translating the Bible, especially regarding those things "not alike plain in themselves nor alike clear unto all" (section7). The church then becomes a function of illumination vs. Revelation!

1 Timothy 3:15, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of god, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth.

(Note first lesson-- "Introduction on Confessionalism")

Section 2-3—issue of Canon

...are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testament (1.2) c.f. 1:3.

1. Two Christianities??, Two Scriptures???: Which is True?

the recent recovery of the original Gnostic compositions, has provided the wedge to challenge the traditional canon, and with it, the traditional construction of Christian identity... The implicit argument embedded in much scholarly and popular work is that historic orthodox Christianity is little more than a power-hungry conspiracy.

Timothy Luke Johnson

E.g. Canonization and The "Alternative" Gospels (Non-Canonical)

From a review of the *Gospel of Mary* and the *Gospel of Thomas*, what is the "gospel" according to the so called "Gnostic gospels?" What is "grace"? What is conspicuously absent in these and other similar texts?

Therefore, while the terms "non-canonical *gospels*" are arguably missing "the gospel"—they do raise the issue of canonization.

2. Note especially chapter 55 of Dan Brown's *The De-Vinci Code*

- *Lost Scriptures?? Excerpts from Dan Brown's DaVinci Code, chapter 55:*
 - *A product of man, not God"*
 - *False testimony*
 - *By men who possessed a political agenda to solidify their power base*
 - *Commissioned and financed by Constantine*
 - *"the gospels they attempted to destroy have been discovered as a part of an ancient library of Coptic Scrolls and highlight the glaring discrepancies and fabrications of the modern Bible*

Based on Scholarly works such as Elaine Pagels:

Now that scholars have begun to place the sources discovered at Nag Hammadi, like newly discovered pieces of a complex puzzle, next to what we have long known from tradition, we find that these remarkable texts, only now becoming widely available, are transforming what we know as Christianity.¹

(for more scholarly works on the Gnostic Gospels, see Elaine Pagels, *Gnostic Gospels*, (NY: Random House, 2004), John Dominic Crossan, *Four Other Gospels: Shadows on the Contours of Canon*, (Minn.: Fortress, 1985), etc.)

For a nice summary ‘critique’ of Dan Brown’s misrepresentations of the Gnostic Gospels and the Canonization process, cf. www.irr.org/da-vinci-code.html

- Canon from “reed” as a tool for measurement... that which is the “rule” or “ideal standard” against which all things can be measured—“rule of faith and practice”
- Orthodox Response (c.f. Canon Revisited... linked in syllabus)
 - Recognized vs. Conferred by Church
 - Test of OT Witness: “the prior rule of faith” already in tact by 1st century (Marcion Controversy settled in mid-second century! C.f. Thus the importance of the OT Interpretation of Christ ministry and message! (c.f. OT of OT: Ex.20:1, NT of OT: Mt.4:1-11,
 - Test of Apostolicity: (c.f. 2 Peter, Eph. 2,)

John 15:26 “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me, 27 and you will bear witness also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.”
 - Bottom up vs. Top Down—“the battle was waged not in the fourth century but in the middle of the second century, wherein the “winners” were not the politically advantaged... e.g. AD 140
 - Canon mostly “settled” by 200 AD and formally ratified ecumenically in 350 AD at the synod of Laodicea.
 -

3. What determined the canon?

A. New Testament anticipations of canon.

1. Apostles commissioned by Christ Himself, prepared for their unique task by the Christ-sent Spirit.

Lk. 1:1 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, 2 just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word have handed them down to us, 3 it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; 4 so that you might know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.

John 15:26 “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me, 27 and you will bear witness also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.”

John 14:25 “These things I have spoken to you, while abiding with you. 26 “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.”

2. Apostles as foundation builders of the Church said to be the “pillar and bulwark of the truth.” (1 Tim. 3:15)

Eph. 2:19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, 20 having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner {stone},

Mt. 16:18 “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.”

¹ Elaine Pagels. *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas*

3. Apostles establish a “deposit,” a “witness”

Acts 1:8 but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.

Jude 1:17 But you, beloved, remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ,

2 Thess. 2:15 So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.

B. Earliest evidences that NT is recognized as scripture.

1. NT itself.

1 Tim. 5:18 For the scripture says, “You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing,” and “The laborer is worthy of his wages.” (Dt. 25:4 and Mt. 10:10).

2 Pet. 3:15 our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, 16 as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

2. Early fathers

Polycarp, Philippians, 12 (c. AD 115): Only, as it is said in these scriptures, Be ye angry and sin not (Psa. 4.5), and Let not the sun set on your wrath (Eph. 4.26).

2 Corinthians, attributed to Clement of Rome, II.4 (AD 120-140): Again another scripture saith, I came not to call the righteous but sinners (Mt. 9.13).

Epistle of Barnabus, iv.14 (c. AD 70-79): Let us give heed lest we be found, as the scripture says, Many are called, but few are chosen (Mt. 22:14).

C. The Church *recognizes*, but does not *confer*, the canonical status of the biblical writings. (section 4)

2 Pet. 1:20 But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, 21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

2 Tim. 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

1 Thess. 2:13 And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

D. The Church's Use of External and Internal Evidence (section 5a)

(see p.32, Hodge)

E. The Holy Spirit testifies internally to believers that the scriptures are of divine origin. (section 5b)

1 Cor. 2:11 For who among men knows the {thoughts} of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the {thoughts} of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God.

John 10:27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

Section 3-4: A High and Reverent Esteem for Scripture

3. *The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon of the Scripture, and therefore are of no authority in the church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved, or made use of, than other human writings.*
4. *The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man, or church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof: and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God.*

1. Section 3-4 raises the issue of our esteem of scripture. Often times, our “esteem” of scripture is discussed in terms of “inerrancy.”

The Question of Infallibility/Inerrancy: ... *it is to be received because it is the Word of God (1.4), ... high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture...* (1.5)

- What this means, and doesn't mean: *It is true and reliable in all the matters it addresses* (Chicago Statement of Biblical Inerrancy, Article 9)
- Read and discuss the Chicago Statement of Inerrancy (**linked in syllabus**)
What are some of the issues covered?
What are some of the questions it raises?

Notice especially Articles:

2—What's at stake?

4—God's Method—confluent... (c.f. 8)

5—Redemptive historical nature of Bible—progressive... (c.f. 12)

6—Plenary Inspiration- the whole...

9—What does it mean to be “without error”—e.g. in so far as the scripture meant to speak...

10—Canonical Reliability

11—Infallibility vs. Inerrancy (depending on how you define)

18—Interpretation principles...

2. Five Categories of Errors that People Claim are in Scriptures:

1. Use of Imagery- Psm 67:7, 72:8, 93:1, Eccl.1:4,5, Matt.13:6
Response: Point of view prescribes what is said. ie. Anthropocentric
2. Chronology and Balance- Synoptics, some events appear in different order or places. Ex. Mt.4:1-11 vs. Lk.4:1-13
Response: Chron.- Must be careful to discern whether authors intend to give Chronology. (one topical vs. one chron.) Certain people or events given different emphasis by author.
3. Variant details- Kings vs. Chronicles and Synoptics.
Response: note different themes of which materials are organized
4. Reported Speech or "Mis-Quotes"
Response: Today words have become possessions that can be stolen whereas ancient world didn't lock on words this way. To give the sense of what someone said is okay.
5. O.T. Morality
Response: Does author intend to indorse or simply describe.

Consider also the following:

John M. Frame, *Chapter 8 Scripture Speaks for Itself*

What does Scripture say about itself? The self-witness of Scripture.

- The cornerstone of the orthodox argument for biblical authority has been that Scripture claimed authority.
- Acceptance or rejection of that claim influences every aspect of Christian doctrine/life.
- To prove the doctrine of the authority of Scripture, one must go to Scripture.
- The self-witness of Scripture must not only be the *first* but the final & decisive consideration.
- A Christian must look at the evidence with Christian assumptions/presuppositions.

- It's impossible to avoid circularity of a sort when arguing for an *ultimate criterion*. One may not argue for one ultimate criterion by appealing to another. And the argument over Scriptural authority is precisely an argument over ultimate criterion.

- We must not simply urge non-Christians to accept the Bible because the Bible says so. It is misleading if stated in this form w/o explanation.
- Must not be allowed to think that one can become a Christian and go on thinking the same old way. Must learn that Christ demands a change in “ultimate criterion.” Must learn that even the evidentiary procedures he uses to establish biblical authority must be reformed by the Bible.

Frame intends two improvements on past orthodox statements on Biblical authority:

1. Needs to be a greater emphasis upon the *persuasiveness* and *pervasiveness* throughout scripture of the biblical self-witness. Its *manner* is a testimony to its character. It is important to understand the doctrine is throughout Scripture, not just based on a couple of texts (2 Pet 1:21, 2 Tim 3:16) which liberal scholars dismiss as being late and legalistic. Without understanding this, it may seem like a peripheral doctrine, easily dispensable for anyone with the slightest inclination to dispense with unpalatable doctrines.

2. Address why not-so-orthodox people see the matter differently. When sinners are scholars, they generally do things for a *reason*, perverse as that reason may be. If orthodox people can identify that reasoning, explain its surface plausibility, and expose its deeper error, then the orthodox view of the biblical witness will be stated much more cogently.

The Case for Inerrancy: A Methodological Analysis

I. The Confessional Method

G.C. Berkouwer

II. The Presuppositional Method

Cornelius Van Til

Premise A: The Bible is the infallible Word of God.

Premise B: The Bible attests to its own infallibility.

Premise C: The self-attestation of Scripture is an infallible attestation.

Conclusion: The Bible is the infallible Word of God.

III. The Classical Method

Premise A: The Bible is a basically reliable and trustworthy document.

Premise B: On the basis of this reliable document we have sufficient evidence to believe confidently that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Premise C: Jesus Christ being the Son of God is an infallible authority.

Premise D: Jesus Christ teaches that the Bible is more than generally trustworthy: it is the very Word of God.

Premise E: That the word, in that it comes from God, is utterly trustworthy because God is utterly trustworthy.

Conclusion: On the basis of the infallible authority of Jesus Christ, the church believes the Bible to be utterly trustworthy, i.e., infallible.

Section 7-8: The Clarity of Holy Scripture

The Question of “Perspicuity” or Clarity: (c.f. Addendum 2)

WCF 1.7- *All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all: 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 the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.*

1 Cor. 2:12, 14–15. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.... But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

Eph. 1:18. ... the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.

See 2 Cor. 4:6.

e.g. Wouldn't it be strange, that as an act of intimacy and self-revelation such as to drive God to communicate to us by incarnational words—that God would then make such words inaccessible. AS if we could blame it on God that we don't study his word as if it were not attainable to know what it says... Satan is cunning that way!

Common Confusions:

Confidence vs. Enlightenment biased "Certainty":

E.g. Illumination vs.

- Empiricism
- Rationalism

Clarity vs. Easy

2Pet. 3:16 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.

e.g. And so while God has made the scriptures accessible, not in a way that would allow us to be independent of God acting in/with/through the Holy Spirit in communion in/with/through our interdependence upon one another...

1. What is affirmed in 1:7 is the clarity of scripture regarding our religious faith and duty, and that this clarity is such that both learned and unlearned people may therefore read the scriptures privately. A. A. Hodge: Protestants affirm and Romanists deny-- (1.) That every essential article of faith and rule of practice may be clearly learned from Scripture; and (2.) That private and unlearned Christians may be safely allowed to interpret Scripture for themselves.

Our view is distinct from the view of Rome, which argued that the difficulty of understanding scripture aright was due to scripture's obscurity and perplexity; Protestants responded by saying the difficulty was due to *our* obscurity and perplexity.

So Luther:

In a word, if the Scripture be obscure or ambiguous, what need was there for its being sent down from heaven? Are we not obscure and ambiguous enough in ourselves, without an increase of it by obscurity, ambiguity, and darkness being sent down unto us from heaven? But I fear I must already be burdensome, even to the insensible, by dwelling so long and spending so much strength upon a point so fully clear; but it was necessary that that impudent and blasphemous saying, 'the Scriptures are obscure,' should thus be drowned. And you, too my friend Erasmus, know very well what you are saying, when you deny that the Scripture is clear, for you at the same time drop into my ear this assertion: 'it of necessity follows therefore, that all your saints whom you adduce, are much less clear.' And truly it would be so. For who shall certify us concerning their light, if you make the Scriptures obscure? Therefore they who deny the all-clearness and all-plainness of the Scriptures, leave us nothing else but darkness. (Bondage of the Will, pp. 108,9).

On the other side of the Reformers, battling from another direction, were the anabaptists, who joined Rome in claiming scripture to be intellectually unclear and in need of further revelation and information. Calvin,

with Luther, understands the scriptures to be clear, taken in their plain sense: *Against the Libertines*, ed. Benjamin W. Farley, 222:

In fact, they have so deformed it (scripture) that they give about as much honor to the Word as if they denied it altogether. For they consistently maintain this principle: that Scripture, taken in its natural sense, is but a dead letter and only kills. Thus they abandon it in order to come to the life-giving Spirit... Although this sect is certainly different from the papists', inasmuch as it is a hundred times worse and more pernicious, nevertheless both of them together hold this principle in common: to change Scripture into allegories and to long for a better and more perfect wisdom than we find in it. And together both as a coverup appeal to Saint Paul's statement that 'the letter kills' (2 Cor. 3.6).

2. The clarity of scripture is affirmed in 1:7, yet this clarity is qualified in six ways, lest anyone misunderstand what is being affirmed:

- A. "All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves"--Not every doctrine is equally plain or clear; some are more difficult than others.
- B. "nor alike clear unto all"--Some truths in scripture are more apparent to some individuals than to other individuals.
- C. "yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation"--The scriptures are clear in their message of salvation in Christ, and in the necessity of faith and repentance.
- D. "are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or other"--The scriptural truths regarding our salvation are clear, if we consult the entirety of scripture.
- E. "in a due use of the ordinary means"--Ordinary means (literacy, a dictionary, language, etc.) which are useful in studying other ancient documents are necessary here also.
- F. "a sufficient understanding of them"--Contextually, "sufficient" probably means "saving." That is, the doctrines about salvation in Christ are sufficiently clear in the scripture that one can repent and believe.

3. In what sense do "all the people of God, ...have right unto, and interest in the Scriptures"?

- A. Biblically, the truths of God are not light merely to the wise and learned, but especially to the simple.
Psalm 119:30-- The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.
Mt. 11:25 At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants"
- B. The truths contained in scripture are the means of producing much good in us and for us.
Rom. 15:4 For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.
2Tim. 3:15 and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness

4. In what sense are the people of God thus "commanded, in the fear of God, to read and search them"? (See also LC Question 156: "Q Is the Word of God to be read by all? "Although all are not to be permitted to read the Word publicly to the congregation, yet all sorts of people are bound to read it apart by themselves, and with their families: to which end, the holy Scriptures are to be translated out of the original into vulgar languages.")

The Assembly may have used too strong a word, "commanded," and might have served us better had they used the word "commended." Surely we may *commend* the private reading of scripture, as a practice which will surely have many benefits to those who adopt the practice. However, since the same *benefits* which come from scripture reading can come from other means (listening to sermons, meditating on well-known passages of scriptures, memorizing the catechisms, etc.), it might have been better had the confession *commended*, rather than *commanded*, the private reading of scripture.

5. Some have said that a "high" view of scripture together with a hermeneutic that fits the nature of scripture has the effect of discouraging them to read scripture. E.g. "I'm no longer confident that I can read the bible since I am now so much more aware that it's original intent is governed by the text itself of which I am more or less incapable of discerning." Given what our confession has taught, how might we respond to this? How might we encourage people to read the Bible? How might we discourage people to read the Bible?

6. Historically, the Assembly justified this on the basis of John 5:39: "You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf." The KJV translated this as a command, "Search the scriptures," but the modern translations rightly recognize the verb to be indicative, "You search the scriptures." Thus, the Assembly's point could not be proved by the scripture they cited. They and others (such as A. A. Hodge) have attempted to establish this on the basis of other texts, such as Acts 17:11, 2 Tim. 3:15-17, Deut. 17:19, Rev. 1:3; Isa. 34:16.

7. The Assembly may have used too strong a word, "commanded," and might have served us better had they used the word "commended." Surely we may *commend* the private reading of scripture, as a practice which will surely have many benefits to those who adopt the practice. However, since the same *benefits* which come from scripture reading can come from other means (listening to sermons, meditating on well-known passages of scriptures, memorizing the catechisms, etc.), it might have been better had the confession *commended*, rather than *commanded*, the private reading of scripture.

8. What then is the responsibility of the church relative to theology (remember that "theology" here is used synonymously with "the gospel.") (2 Tim.1:13-14, 4:3, Gal.1:9)
Consider then the following rather amazing admonishments in Scripture and consider the modern practice when it comes to various "bible study" movements.

Christ warns against assuming the position of a teacher without due caution,

James 3:1 Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

Christ tells us to watch carefully lest false teachers bring harm to the church,

2Pet. 2:1-2 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive opinions. They will even deny the Master who bought them--bringing swift destruction on themselves. Even so, many will follow their licentious ways, and because of these teachers the way of truth will be maligned.

2John 1:10 Do not receive into the house or welcome anyone who comes to you and does not bring this teaching;

Christ commands that those who do teach false doctrine be removed from teaching,

Titus 1:11 they must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for sordid gain what it is not right to teach.

Christ warns us that the last days will be characterized not only by "false teaching" but also a natural affinity for it so as to take all possible precautions against it,

2Tim. 4:3 For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires,

1Tim. 4:1 now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will renounce the faith by paying attention to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons,

Christ warns us that many will want to be teachers who may not be qualified,

1Tim. 1:7 desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make assertions.

Christ explicitly commands that those who do teach be teachers of "sound doctrine"

Titus 2:1 But as for you, teach what is consistent with sound doctrine.

Christ commands that teachers are to be measured by the "standards" of sound doctrine,

2Tim. 1:13 Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus,

Christ intends for the ministry of "teaching" to be passed on through the succession of apostolic faith

2Tim. 2:2 and what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well.

The teaching ministry of the church is to be performed by those approved as qualified. ,

1Tim. 3:2 Now a bishop must be above reproach, married only once, temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher,

1Tim. 5:17 Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching;

Christ commands the elders to "watch over the flock of God" with due diligence and this would include keeping watch over the teaching of the church,

Acts 20:28 Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son.

Heb. 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls and will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with sighing--for that would be harmful to you.

A low view of the functions of the ministry will naturally carry with it a low conception of the training necessary for it... A high view of the functions of the ministry on evangelical lines inevitably produces a high conception of the training which is needed to prepare men for the exercise of these high functions... for here we have, of course, an infinitely higher conception-- as merely an enthusiastic Christian eager to do work for Christ... we might as well seek recruits for the ministry among the capable young fellows about town, zeal their highest spiritual attainment.

B. B. Warfield

Q and A:

Further Review:

- Canonization Revisted... (linked in syllabus)
- The Reliability and Sufficiency of Scripture (PPT linked in syllabus)

Addendum 1: *On the Apocrypha*

(Taken from www.churchplantingvillage.net)

After the Old Testament canon had been recognized by the Jews as being officially closed, and prior to the New Testament period, there arose a section of literature called the Apocrypha. This word literally means “that which is hidden” and consists of 14 books.

I. The Contents of the Apocrypha

A. 1 Esdras – This book covers much of the material found in Ezra, Nehemiah, and 2 Chronicles but it also includes a fanciful story concerning three Jewish servants in Persia. They were all asked a question by King Darius concerning what the greatest thing in the world was. One said wine, another replied women, while the third claimed truth was. He won, and when offered a reward, suggested the King allow the Jews to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.

B. 2 Esdras – This contains certain visions given to Ezra dealing with God’s government of the world and the restoration of certain lost Scriptures.

C. Tobit – Tobit is the story of a pious Jew (Tobit) who is accidentally blinded (by sparrow dung) and is later healed by an angel named Raphael, who applies a concoction of fish heart, liver, and gall to his eye,

D. Judith – This is the story of a beautiful and devout Jewish princess who saves Jerusalem from being destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar’s invading armies. This she does by beguiling the enemy general through her beauty, then returning to Jerusalem with his head in her handbag!

E. The remainder of Esther – There are additional inserts to this book to show the hand of God in the narrative by putting the word *God* in the text. The word *God* does not appear in the Old Testament book of Esther.

F. The Wisdom of Solomon – This book has been called “The Gem of the Apocrypha,” and is one of the loftier books of the Apocrypha.

G. Ecclesiasticus – Also called “the Wisdom of Jews, the Son of Sirach,” it resembles the book of Proverbs and gives rules for personal conduct in all details of civil, religious, and domestic life.

H. 1 Maccabees – This historical account of the Maccabean period relates events of the Jews’ heroic struggle for liberty (175 – 135 B.C.)

I. 2 Maccabees – This work covers in part the same period as 1 Maccabees but is somewhat inferior content-wise.

J. Baruch – Supposedly written by Jeremiah’s secretary, Baruch, it contains prayers and confessions of the Jews in exile, with promises of restoration.

K. The Song of the Three Children – Inserted in the book of Daniel, right after the fiery furnace episode (Dan. 3:23), It contains an eloquent prayer of Azariah, one of the three Hebrew men thrown in the fire.

L. The story of Susanna – This story relates how the godly wife of a wealthy Jew in Babylon, falsely accused of adultery, was cleared by the wisdom of Daniel.

M. Bel and the Dragon – This is also added to the book of Daniel. The book contains two stories:

1. The first concerns how Daniel proves to the king his great god Bel is a dead idol and that the Bel priests are religious crooks.

2 *Unger’s Bible Handbook* describes this event in the following words:

The other legend concerns a dragon worshiped in Babylon. Daniel, summoned to do it homage, feeds it a mixture of pitch, hair, and fat, which causes it to explode. The enraged populace compels the King to throw Daniel in the den of lions where he is fed on the sixth day by the prophet Habakkuk, who is angelically transported to Babylon by the hair of his head while carrying food and drink to the reapers in Judea. On the seventh day the King rescues Daniel and throws his would-be destroyers to the hungry lions. (p. 459)

N. The Prayer of Manasseh – This is the supposed confessional prayer of wicked King Manasseh of Judah after he was carried away prisoner to Babylon by the Assyrians.

II. Reasons for Rejecting the Apocrypha – “Why don’t you Protestants have all the books of the Bible in your King James Version?”

- A. The Apocrypha was never included in the Old Testament canon by such recognized authorities as the Pharisees, Ezra the prophet, etc.
- B. It was never quoted by either Jews or any other New Testament writers.
- C. The great Jewish historian Josephus excluded it.
- D. The well-known Jewish philosopher Philo did not recognize it.
- E. The early church fathers excluded it.
- F. The Bible translator Jerome did not accept them as inspired, although he was forced by the pope to include them into the Latin Vulgate Bible.
- G. None of the 14 books claim divine inspirations; in fact, some actually disclaim it.
- H. Some books contain historical and geographical errors.
- I. Some books teach false doctrine, such as praying for the dead.
- J. No apocryphal book can be found in any catalogue list of canonical books composed during the first four centuries A.D. In fact, it was not until 1596 at the Council of Trent that the Roman Catholic church officially recognized these books, basically in an attempt to strengthen its position, which had been grievously weakened by the great reformer Martin Luther.

Addendum 2: Prolegomena In Epistemic Perspicuity:

To what extent can we know the "text" concerning God and His will in an objective sense relative to our socio-linguistic context of knowing? Paradigmatic of the modernist answer, Hans-Georg Gadamer once wrote:

In view of the historicity of our being, the rehabilitation of (a text's) original conditions is a futile undertaking. What is rehabilitated from an alien past is not the original. In its continued alienation it has a merely secondary existence.²

This statement by Gadamer features a skepticism that Mark Noll has described as the "crisis in historical knowledge" or we could add "objective knowledge" even such as to have huge implications for the construction of Christian spirituality and church practice. It concerns then the skepticism of the *moderns* regarding both the perspicuity of divine revelation and the participation in the effectual presence of divine power. The epistemic crux of the issue involved the Kantian schism between the divine objective and human subjective relative to epistemology and experience whether applied toward subjective individualism or subjective communalism in modern and post-modern epistemologies.

From the pre-modernist orientation such epistemologies represent the construction of a glass ceiling between the objective and the subjective—even the divine and human. It is as a glass ceiling or Kant's "distant shores" wherein humanity, if but intuitively, discerns that their must be an objective ideal reality or luscious shores, and yet we can't get there. This is especially picked up in postmodernity in its adoption of the relativistic-oriented mysticism in spirituality as should be distinguished from the mystical element in pre-modern orientation.

Mark Noll describes the situation in terms of the pre-modern take on the moderns. He notes how on one hand, "our very existence is defined by the meaning of purportedly historical events." On the other hand, "implicit in affirming these events in the history of salvation is a definite view of historical understanding. These, events, Christians hold, may be known to be factual, and there may be a reasonable degree of certainty as to what these long-past events mean for our lives in the late twentieth century."³ As related to spirituality especially, Lesslie Newbigin was acutely

²Quoted by E.D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation*, (New Haven: Yale University Press; 1967) p. 247 as taken from his personal translation of Georg Hans Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, or *Truth and Method*. p. 159.)

³ Mark Noll, "Traditional Christianity and the Possibility of Historical Knowledge", *Christian Scholar's Review*, Volume XIX Number 4, 1990, p.388-406 p.392

aware of how this played out in terms of the modernist movement toward spiritual privatization in relation to the universality of Christ in contrast to a sectarian Christ. He argued, for instance

That human beings exist to glorify God and enjoy him forever is not a fact, according to this system... IT is an opinion held by some people. It belongs to the private sector, not the public. Those who hold it are free to communicate it to their children in home and church but it has no place in the curriculum of the public schools and universities. And since the publicly accepted definition of a human being excludes any statement of the purpose for which human beings exist, it follows necessarily that in the ordinary meaning of the word fact, no factual statement can be made about what kinds of behavior are good or bad. These can only be private opinions. Pluralism reigns!⁴

Moreover, the modernist dichotomy between ideal "text" and material "context" corresponds to the dichotomy in objective and subjective knowledge. So for instance, Gerhard Maier's observation in his *The End of the Historical-Critical Method* was that the decisive impetus for modernism in Biblical criticism could be traced to subjectivization leading to privatization. This in turn correlates to three interrelated Enlightenment movements. In the case of English deism, "human reason served as a touchstone and yardstick for everything revealed in Scripture...From French skepticism 'transcendence was finished off' as epitomized by the work of Immanuel Kant. ...From the German enlightenment the zeal for "freedom" was trafficked into a "freedom from divine principles of scripture and revelation."⁵

Accordingly, the common denominator of all three is a bias against the perspicuity *and* experience of the supernatural such as to leave us to the vicissitudes of our own subjectivity in spirituality. He notes: "as long as one makes analogous classification (between historical text and subjective context) a precondition for acceptance, much in the word of the Bible remains without foundation."⁶ In other words, the subjective takes precedence over an assumed ideal leading to epistemic uncertainty and relativism. For example, E.D. Hirsch explains in his book, *Validity in Interpretation*,

If an interpreter cannot overcome the distorting perspective of his own historicity, no matter how hard he tries, then it follows that one understands differently when one understands at all. ⁷

Therefore, skepticism regarding objective historical knowledge results not only in surgically removing portions of scripture from the pristine portion of the Word of God as in the case of the historical-critical method, but in a pessimism in the perspicuity of scripture such as to allow for ever changing interpretations which go beyond the author's intent rooted in pragmatism. The historicity or objectivity of the events and reality recorded in the Bible are secondary such as to create ever new and expanding meanings for the present. This is clearly articulated by Gadamer when he states,

The meaning of a text goes beyond its author not just sometimes but always. Understanding is not a reproductive but always a productive activity... the winning of the true sense contained in a text or artistic work never comes to an end. It is an infinite process.⁸

In other words, in the demise of objective knowledge is the emergence of radical relativism. Ronald Nash has described radical relativism as "the view that impartial and objective historical knowledge about anything in the past is impossible."⁹ Fundamental to this cosmology is the absence of divine presence in epistemology especially. That is, assuming for a moment the "class ceiling" between the divine and human, our subjectivity is without the subjective aid of a transcendent God who is nonetheless imminent God and active in the universe in even an epistemic manner. Christians, of course, call this an ongoing and divine presence by "illumination" related to an otherwise objective and static revelation.

⁴ Lesslie Newbigin, "Can the West Be Converted?" *Princeton Seminary Bulletin*. 6 (1):25-37, 1985 p.25.

⁵ Gerhard Maier, *The End of the Historical-Critical Method* Wipf & Stock Publishers (December 2001) p. 13-14.

⁶ Ibid, p.16

⁷ Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* p.252.

⁸ Quoted by Hirsch p.249 from Gadamer's *Truth and Method*. p.280, 282)

⁹ Ronald Nash, *Christian Faith and Historical Understanding*, (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, Mich.; 1984) p.77

For many evangelicals the "knee-jerk" reaction to radical relativism was to opt for a radical historical objectivism. Nash defines the latter as a "hard objectivism" such that "all subjectivity can in principle be eliminated from history, a fact that if true, would make history a value-free inquiry."¹⁰ This was exactly the trend in modernist facing evangelicalism, for instance, in its *nothingbuttery* rationalistic approach to anti-supernaturalism even. Yet the same assumption is just as well translated into a "hard subjectivism" such as to result in *nothingbuttery* cultural-linguistic orientation even if perhaps under the cloud of mysticism. It all remains open to supernaturalism and divine presence, albeit without the objective "rule of faith and practice" to guide our understanding of it. That is, as Nash pointed out, "hard objectivity" places in jeopardy any optimism toward gaining access to historical Christianity and divine revelation in that "anything less than a complete and impartial account of some event or series of events in the past would be considered bad history."¹¹

Against these Enlightenment conceptions of God, Mark Noll notes how the Christian faith affirms that "God is not just the creator and passive sustainer of the world, but also that His energy is the source of the world's energy and His will the foundation of its existence."¹² As further noted by Noll:

Christians like Malebranche, Berkeley and Edwards postulated a deity who filled the universe he had created, who activated the minds he had made in his own image, who brooded over the world with constant love as well as distant power. This is the sort of Christianity that can rescue Historical knowledge.¹³

A stress upon God's benevolent sovereignty suggests a radical dependency upon God for all historical understanding. Not only does God move and sustain history, but he also must give to the human mind His intentions and explanations for the understanding of history itself. Furthermore, a belief in the benevolence of God maintains that it is God's intention to share with humans an understanding of reality as he sustains it. In other words there is a "metaphysical reality" that can be explained by "the activity of God."¹⁴ The pre-modern response to radical relativism will seek to avoid an *either-or--* radical objectivist or radical subjectivist orientation in epistemology in preference for a "both-and." This is only theoretically possible within a cosmology wherein God is present both "then" with respect to the historicity of revelation (declarative covenant "by divine law") and now with respect to the historicity of illumination (mediated temple by divine participation). IN short, only a reunion of both "covenant" and "temple" can fully preserve a fluid human experience of an otherwise definitive divine presence!

One of the important implications of the covenant-temple reunion in hermeneutics is to suggest both confidence and humility in so far as our discerning the meaning of divine revelation in scripture. So for instance what many traditional conservatives view as equivocation with respect to the issue of scriptures perspicuity by emergents is often just humility to recognize that no matter who is reading the scripture, they are always reading it within a context of their own cultural-linguistic context. A stress on the covenantal orientation will insure that there is objective and absolute truth to be found in divine revelation. And yet the temple orientation will also require that for this truth to be actually known and experience, it must necessarily be translated into a cultural-linguistic vernacular. This translation, like the church herself, is fallible, if not to be confused with absolutely infallible.

¹⁰ Ibid. p.80

¹¹ Ibid. p.78

¹² Ibid. p.398.

¹³ Ibid. p.399.

¹⁴ Noll. p.398 Quoting from J.O.Urmson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982) p.37.