

Bibliology—Doctrine of the Scriptures: Inspiration and Veracity

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The place of Scripture is decisive in any system of Christian theology for either the Scriptures or human reason must be the ultimate authority in establishing doctrine. In an age of presenting us with theological, moral, and ethical issues of a complexity unparalleled in history, we need some standard of absolute authority more than ever to guide us.

I. The doctrine of Scriptures is a *watershed question*.

- A. In the use of this term, Harold Lindsell likens the errancy/inerrancy issue to the Continental Divide where water falling on one side ends up in the Atlantic Ocean, and water falling on the other ends up in the Pacific.
- B. In the history of doctrine, various eras have been marked by debate on special areas of doctrine.
 - 1. Nature of Godhead.
 - 2. Union of the divine and human natures in Christ.
 - 3. The atonement.
- C. The issue in the present era has been largely concerning Scripture.

II. There is no agreement among the various branches of Christendom as to what the Bible is.

- A. Liberalism sees it as little more than a great work of human literary production.
- B. Neo-orthodoxy would tell us that the Bible may *become* the Word of God if it speaks to you in some revelatory manner, but the terms *Bible* and *Word of God* do not mean the same thing.
- C. Neo-evangelicalism tends to emphasize Biblical *authority* instead of *inerrancy*.
 - 1. The grave danger of this position is that it assumes authority when the Bible speaks of *salvational* matters, but it leaves it to science to speak with authority in the natural order. Yet salvation was accomplished in the physical and historical world. Can there be confidence in Scripture in such salvational truth if couched in historical details which are suspect (at least to some new evangelical minds)?

2. We may hazard an opinion that this retreat from the historical Christian position is with the intention of appearing more intellectually acceptable to the modernists whom new evangelicals seem to be courting.

III. Statement of the doctrine. *The Bible, consisting of the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament and twenty-seven books of the New Testament, is the Word of God written. Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit so that every part, whether it be historical, legal, poetical, prophetic or doctrinal is the very Word of God. These Scriptures constitute the only authoritative standard by which all human beliefs, conduct, and doctrine should be tried.*

- A. This definition contends for *verbal* inspiration, i.e., the words (Latin *verbum*) were God given—*Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual (I Corinthians 2:13).*
- B. This definition contends for *plenary* inspiration, i.e., all the words were God-given—*All scripture is given by inspiration of God [God-breathed; Greek *theopneustos*, the product of God's creative power], and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (II Timothy 3:16).*
- C. This definition applies to the original writings, not to every conceivable copy or translation and paraphrase.

IV. The veracity (or truthfulness) of Scripture is beyond question.

- A. The claims of Scripture.
 1. Over 2000 times *Thus saith the Lord* and/or cognate forms appear in the Bible.
 2. *All scripture is given by inspiration of God [God-breathed; Greek *theopneustos*], and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (II Timothy 3:16).*
- B. The claims of Jesus.
 1. Jesus calls the Scripture the *Word of God* and admonished the Pharisees for their rebellion against it—*Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye (Mark 7:13).*
 2. Jesus said, *the scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35).*
 3. Jesus verified as fact those very points most disputed by scoffers.
 - a. Creation—*But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female (Mark 10:6).*
 - b. The flood of Noah—*37 But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, 39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be (Matthew 24:37-39).*

- c. Lot's wife—28 Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; 29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. 30 Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. 31 In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. 32 Remember Lot's wife (Luke 17:28-32).
- d. Jonah—39 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: 40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 41 The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here (Matthew 12:39-41).
- C. The relationship between Christ and the Scripture is ^{aptly} summarized by J. I. Packer: *Christ's claim to be divine is either true or false. If it is true, His person guarantees the truth of all the rest of His teaching (for a divine person cannot lie or err); therefore His view of the Old Testament is true. If His claim is false, there is no compelling reason to believe anything else that He said. If we accept Christ's claims, therefore, we commit ourselves to believe all that He taught—on His authority. If we refuse to believe some part of what He taught, we are in effect denying Him to be the divine Messiah—on our own authority. The question—"What think ye of the Old Testament?" resolves into the question—"What think ye of Christ?" And our answer to the first proclaims our answer to the second.* (J.I. Packer, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1958, p. 59).

V. How do we know we have God's Word today?

- A. There are no autographs (original works by the very hands of the inspired writers).
- B. The Dead Sea Scrolls take us back to the Hebrew text as it stood in Jesus' day—we need go no farther.
- C. The New Testament text is the best supported literary work in the history of the world!!

VI. Conclusion: Why bother to defend the inerrancy and veracity of all the Scripture?

- A. Worse errors are sure to follow when inerrancy and veracity of Scripture is rejected—*The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them?* (Jeremiah 8:9).
- B. There is no salvation in any other gospel—*10 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.....12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved* (Acts 4:10, 12).

- C. Christ and His Word stand or fall together—*37 And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. 38 And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. 39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me (John 5:37-39); Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me (John 14:6).*