

## Men of the Word: **Systematic Theology**

### **God's Word, Part 2**

**10/25/19**

Michael W. Sciarra

#### **Bibliology**

##### ***More on Inerrancy***

###### ***The Ligonier Statement, 1973***

*“We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired and inerrant Word of God: We hold the Bible, as originally given through human agents of revelation, to be infallible and see this as a crucial article of faith with implications for the entire life and practice of all Christian people. With the great fathers of Christian history we declare our confidence in the total trustworthiness of the Scriptures, urging that any view which imputes to them a lesser degree of inerrancy than total, is in conflict with the Bible’s self-testimony in general and with the teaching of Jesus Christ in particular. Out of obedience to the Lord of the Church we submit ourselves unreservedly to his authoritative view of Holy Writ.”*

###### ***The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, 1978.***

#### **The Canon - Canonicity of the Bible**

Since the Scriptures are inspired by God then a significant question arises: which books are inspired?

*Historically, the people of God had to determine which books God had inspired, which were recognized as authoritative.*

**Canon** is used to describe the inspired books.

The word comes from the Greek *kanon* and probably also from the Hebrew *qanch*, a measuring rod. Canon and canonical signify standards by which books were measured to determine whether or not they were inspired.

The religious councils at no time had any power to cause books to be inspired, they recognized what God had inspired at the exact moment the books were written. *They realized it later and basically just recognized it.*

Jews and conservative Christians have all recognized the 39 books of the Old Testament as inspired. Evangelical protestants recognize 27 books of the New Testament as inspired.

There is evidence of the manner in which the Old Testament books were recognized as canonical.

Laird Harris traces the continuity of recognition: Moses was recognized as writing under the authority of God, the criteria for acknowledging the Pentateuch was whether it was from God's servant Moses. Following Moses, God raised up the institution of prophecy to continue revealing himself to his people. The prophets to whom God spoke recorded the revelation. Those books known as the Word of God were received immediately as the Word of God.

The books of the Old Testament were divinely inspired and authoritative the moment they were written. Human recognition of the writings was normally immediate as the people recognize the writers as spokesmen from God. Finally there was a collection of the books into a canon.

### ***Canonicity of the New Testament***

Several factors that caused the recognition of the New Testament

- 1) False writings and attacks on genuine writings were a factor. *Marcion for example rejected the Old Testament and New Testament apart from Paul's letters. He changed Luke to fit his doctrine.*
- 2) The content of the New Testament writings testified to their authenticity and they naturally were collected, being recognized as canonical.
- 3) Apostolic writings were used in public worship, therefore it was necessary to determine which of those writings were canonical.
- 4) Finally, the edict by Emperor Diocletian in AD 303 demanding that all sacred books be burned resulted in the New Testament collection.

The process and recognition and collection took place in the first centuries of the church. Very early on, the New Testament books were being recognized. Paul recognized Luke's writing on par with the Old Testament 1 Timothy 5:18 quotes Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7 and refers to both texts as **the Scripture says**.

Peter recognize Paul's writing's as Scripture 2 Peter 3:15–16. Letters were being read in the churches and even circulated among the churches Colossians 4:16, 1 Thess. 5:27.

In the post-apostolic era, Clement of Rome (AD 95) mentioned at least 8 new testament books in a letter. Ignatius of Antioch (AD 115) also acknowledged 7 books. Polycarp, a disciple of John (AD 108) acknowledged 15 letters. This is not to say these men did not recognize more letters but these are the ones they mentioned in their correspondence. Irenaeus (AD 185) acknowledged 21 books. Hippolytus (AD 170-235) recognized 22 books. The problematic books were Hebrews, James, second Peter, 2 and 3 John.

Most important was the witness of the Muratorian Canon (AD 170), which was a compilation of books recognized as canonical at that early date by the church. It included everything except Hebrews, James, and one of John's epistles.

In the fourth century there was prominent recognition of a New Testament Canon. Athanasius wrote in AD 367 that the 27 books of the New Testament are the only true books. In AD 363 the Council of Laodicea stated that only the old testament and the 27 books in the New Testament were to be read in the churches. The Council of Hippo (AD 393) recognized the 27 books, and the Council of Carthage (AD 397) affirmed that only those canonical books were to be read in the churches.

How did the church recognize which books were canonical? Certain tests were applied to answer the question.

1. Apostolicity. Was the author an apostle or did he have a connection with an apostle?
2. Acceptance. What is the book accepted by the church at large?
3. Content. Did the book reflect consistency of doctrine with what had been accepted as orthodox teaching? Gospel of Peter rejected as well as Gospel of Thomas.
4. Inspiration. Did the book reflect the quality of inspiration? Did it bear evidence of high moral and spiritual values that would reflect a work of the Holy Spirit.
5. Worship. What is the book used in Christian worship? Colossians 4:16. Many Christians did not have copies and could not read. They were read aloud.

### **Scripture's Reliability**

We do not have the original manuscripts of either the Old or New Testament, we nonetheless have a biblical text that is reliable.

The history of the development of the Old Testament text will indicate this. The work of copying ancient manuscripts was a tedious exercise. The Jews very early developed strict rules for the work. The kind of parchment, the number of lines to be written, the color of ink, and the manner of revision. When parchments began to show wear, the Jews reverently buried the manuscripts. As a result until the discovery of the dead sea scrolls in Qumran the oldest surviving manuscript was from AD 900.

### **OT**

Dead sea scrolls. Isaiah. Habakkuk. 125 BC. No huge difference between the Isaiah scroll from Qumran and the Masoretic Hebrew text dated AD 900.

Septuagint. Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, translated piece by piece in Alexandria Egypt between 250 and 150 BC.

### **NT**

Papyrus manuscripts. Chester Beatty 3rd century.

Uncial manuscripts. 240, capital letters. Codex Sinaiticus contains all NT, AD 331. Codex Vaticanus, 4th century. Alexandrinus, 5th century.

Minuscule manuscripts. 2800, small letters.

Versions. Syriac, AD 170, 200, 5th century. Latin Vulgate, Jerome, AD 400.

### ***How do we know our English translations can be trusted?***

Because Bible translators use all of these really good resources that God has preserved. It has been tested.

## **Preservation of God's Word**

### *God did it!*

It is clear that the hand of God has preserved the various text through the centuries to enable scholars to collate them and reconstruct the text as closely as possible to the original writings.

## **Illumination**

God's work of illumination is necessary to enable us to comprehend the God's Word Luke 24:44-45.

The Bible is God-breathed, therefore in a completely different category from any other literature. So we must receive God-given help in understanding the Bible. 1 Corinthians 2:11.

Unregenerate man's mind cannot comprehend spiritual truths 1 Corinthians 2:14.

**Illumination** is the ministry of the Spirit of God where he enlightens those in a right relationship with him to understand and comprehend the written Word of God.

**Illumination** should not to be confused with revelation or inspiration. In reference to the Bible, revelation relates to its content or material, inspiration to the method of recording that material, and illumination to the meaning of the text. At the moment of salvation the believers indwelt by the Holy Spirit who then takes the truth of God reveals them, illumination, to the believer. 1 Corinthians 2:9–13. Since only God knows the things of God, it is essential that the Spirit of God instruct the believer. This ministry of the Holy Spirit had been foretold by Jesus in the upper room discourse. Jesus announced that the Spirit would teach them John 14:26, guide them into all the truth John 16:13, and disclose the truth of God to them John 16:14–15.

**Illumination** touches the mind and heart. Romans 12:2. Ephesians 4:23. Colossians 1:9–10. Ask 16:14. Ephesians 1:18.

*“But according to Scripture, God reveals himself to men both by exercising power for them and by teaching truth to them. The two activities are not antithetical, but complementary. Indeed, the biblical position is that the mighty acts of God are not revelation to men at all, except in so far as they are accompanied by words of God to explain them. Leave man to guess God's mind and purpose, and he will guess wrong; he can know it only by being told it. Moreover, the whole purpose of God's mighty acts is to bring man to know him by faith; and Scripture knows no foundation for faith but the spoken word of God, inviting our trust in him on the basis of what he has done for us. Where there is no word from God, faith cannot be. Therefore, verbal revelation – that is to say, propositional revelation, the disclosure by God of truth about himself – is no mere appendage to his redemptive activity, but a necessary part of it. This being so, the inspiring of an authoritative exposition of his redemptive acts in history ought to be seen as itself one of those redemptive acts, as necessary a link in the chain of his saving purposes as any of the events with which the exposition deals.” (J.I. Packer)*

### **Hermeneutical Concerns**

Literal. Grammatical. Historical.

**Literal interpretation.**

The words and sentences of scripture are to be understood in their normal meaning. The ways that words are understood in normal communication. *A literal or normal meaning of words is the basis of communication.*

**Grammatical relationships.**

*We acknowledge the verbal (words) and plenary (full) inspiration of scripture it is incumbent on us to pay attention to the words of scripture.* Grammatical relationships are important to study because words stand in relationship to another, study verb tenses, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, and laws of structure.

**Historical context.**

The context is important as a framework from which to interpret the Scriptures. Every book is written in a historical context that should be understood in order to help interpret the book accurately.

**Literary context.**

1. Studied the immediate context.
2. Study the more remote context.
3. Consider the context of the entire book.

(Paul Enns, Moody Handbook of Theology, pp. 174-180)

**More work to be done**

“The infallibility and inerrancy of biblical teaching does not, however, guarantee the infallibility and inerrancy of any interpretation, or interpreter, of that teaching; nor does the recognition of its qualities as the Word of God in any way prejudge the issue as to what Scripture does, in fact, assert. This can be determined only by careful Bible study. We must allow Scripture itself to define for us the scope and limits of teaching. Too often the infallibility which belongs to the Word of God has been claimed for interpretations of Scripture which are, to say the least, uncertain and which make Scripture pronounce on subjects about which it does not itself claim to teach anything.” (J.I. Packer)

*Those re-imagining and re-examining Scripture’s clear teaching need to re-examine their hermeneutic, not the Scriptures.*

**John 17:17 “Your Word is truth.”**

The Bible is inerrant in all it teaches and the only divinely-intended authority for the faith and practice of Christ's church. Therefore, true Christian theology must be based only on Scripture. It is of the foremost importance to the theologian then, that the origin of nature of the Bible be considered before any attempt to be made to develop other divisions of theology.

### **SOLI DEO GLORIA**

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss Scripture's authority, sufficiency, inerrancy, and how that plays into interpretation of Scripture.
2. What do we do with the myriad interpretations that are floating out there today on a myriad of biblical issues?
3. Why is authorial intent so important and why should we work so hard to discern it?

*For 11/1/19: God, Part 1:*

#### ***Another week on Scripture***

*What do we do with passages that aren't in the earliest manuscripts like just some of the things and John 7:53-8:11, Mark 16:9-20, etc.?*

*Does anything in there contradict or refute anything else in scripture? If not, I wouldn't put full confidence in it, but it doesn't hurt.*