



**Study guide for
AUTHORITY AND SUFFICIENCY
OF SCRIPTURE**

Lutheran View: Short Outline of the Authority and Sufficiency of Scripture

Authority of Scripture

I. Word of God three biblical types

- 1.) Jesus Christ as the Word of God - Genesis 1:1 John 1:1-2
The living and eternal word of God.
- 2.) Scripture as the word of God
A Word given that reveals Jesus the perfect testimony of Christ.
- 3.) Proclamation proclaiming the word of God preaching
Imperfect word that is to be based on the other two types
A proclaimed word from the Scriptures about Christ

II. Two definitions

1. Causative authority is defined as that authority by which scripture brings about, confirms and reinforces assent in the mind of a person the content of the faith. Scripture has the authority to make men wise unto salvation in Jesus Christ. This is related to Calvin's concept of the inner witness of the Spirit about Scripture. The more subjective understanding of authority.
2. Normative authority is defined as the authority by which scripture shows itself to be the only rule and guiding principle for all Christian teaching. As such it is distinguished from other writings as the true is distinguished from the false. A more Objective understanding of authority. It is through it's Causative authority that the Bible displays it's normative authority.

III. The Authority of scripture rests three concepts. 2 Tim 3:16.

- 1.) Inspiration - the Bible is God breathed (2 Tim 3:16). God is the source and origin of the text in this way scripture is unique yet God used human people to write it.
 - 2.) Inerrancy - Scripture cannot contain error - what it teaches is dependable, and reliable.
 - 3.) Infallibility - Scripture is true in everything it says respective to its genre and context. What it teaches is trustworthy, and sure.
- A. Scripture is the highest authority above all other authorities.
- 1.) Scripture is a higher authority than Tradition
 - 2.) Scripture is a higher authority than human reason .
Self is at the center. Human reason is logic without God at the center. Human thinking/deliberation without God in view. Rationality without a theistic at the best and trinitarian at best, perspective.
 - 3.) Scripture is a higher authority than experience.
Thus scripture is more authoritative than
 - a. Spiritual experience - no matter how powerful or intense
 - b. Sentimental / emotional experience - both negotiable and positive types
 - c. Sensory experience - Experience of the outer world through the five senses.
 - d. Corporate experience - validation by others having similar experience.

IV. The Bible is authoritative because it is inspired, infallible, and Inerrant

In summery

On the authority of Scripture from the AACL website

We believe, teach and confess that because the Scriptures have God as their author, they possess both the divine power to make men wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ (causative authority), as well as the divine authority to serve as the church's sole standard of doctrine and life (normative authority). We recognize that the authority of Scripture can be accepted only through faith and not merely by rational

demonstration. As men of faith, we affirm not only that Holy Scripture is powerful and efficacious, but also that it is "the only judge, rule and norm according to which as the only touchstone all doctrines should and must be understood and judged as good or evil, right or wrong." (FC, Ep, Rule and Norm, 7)

We therefore reject the following views:

1. That the authority of Scripture is limited to its efficacy in bringing men to salvation in Jesus Christ.
2. That the authority of Scripture has reference only to what the Scriptures do (as means of grace) rather than to what they are (as the inspired Word of God).
3. That the Scriptures are authoritative for the doctrine and life of the church, not because of their character as the inspired and inerrant Word of God, but because they are the oldest available written sources for the history of ancient Israel and for the life and message of Jesus Christ, or because they were written by the chosen and appointed leaders of Israel and of the early church, or because the church declared them to be canonical.
4. That the Christian community in every age is directly inspired by the Holy Spirit and is therefore free to go beyond the doctrine of the prophets and apostles in determining the content of certain aspects of its faith and witness.¹

Sufficiency of scripture

1. Examination of 2 Tim 3:16

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

2 Timothy 3:16-17

- Phrase "equipped for every good work" carries the concept of sufficiency
- The Bible is sufficient to teach what is listed in 2 Tim 3:16 -
 - for teaching,
 - for reproof,
 - for correction,
 - for training in righteousness
- Scripture is sufficient to teach doctrine - It is the norm that norms all things

2. Totality of scripture is connected with the Sufficiency of Scripture

- 1.) The error of having a canon within a canon - picking in choosing what books you consider as authoritative over your life. Sometimes this happens passively and is why the whole counsel of God should be preached.
- 2.) Because scripture is sufficient and authoritative then scripture should interpret Scripture. As a general rule Scripture defines its own terms.
- 3.) Read the Old Testament in light of the New Testament. We learn how to read the old by the way the New Testament authors read the old. Where The New Testament is speaks to a passage in the Old Testament we may interpret the Old Testament in like manor as the New Testament writers.
- 4.) it's all about Jesus scriptures authority and sufficiency means it is a trustworthy testimony, a trustworthy way to learn about Jesus.

¹ <https://www.taalc.org/scripture-and-confessions>

Authority of the Scriptures in early church fathers

All quotes are taken from *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson; 1885-1887; repr. 10 vols. (Peabody Mass.: Hendrickson 1994). All quotes are cited in the following way; Name, Year, Volume, Paragraph.

Key text used by the Fathers

Matt. 4:4.

1 Thess. 2:13.

2 Tim. 3:16.

We have learned the plan of our salvation from no one else other than from those through whom the gospel has come down to us. For they did at one time proclaim the gospel in public. And, at a later period, by the will of God, they handed the gospel down to us in the Scriptures—to be "the ground and pillar of our faith." Irenaeus (c. 180), 1.414.

When, however, the Gnostics are confuted from the Scriptures, they turn round and accuse these same Scriptures as if they were not correct, nor of authority. They say that they are ambiguous, and that the truth cannot be extracted from them by those who are ignorant of tradition. . . . But, again, when we refer them to that tradition which originates from the apostles, . . . they object to tradition. Irenaeus (c. 180), 1.415.

There will be no light punishment upon him who either adds or subtracts anything from the Scripture. Irenaeus (c. 180), 1.559.

I have demonstrated that the Scriptures which we believe are valid from their omnipotent authority Clement of Alexandria (c. 195,), 2.409.

In order that we might acquire an ampler and more authoritative knowledge of Himself, His counsels, and His will, God has added a written revelation for the benefit of everyone whose heart is set on seeking Him. Tertullian (c. 191,), 3.32.

We bring under your notice something of even greater importance: we point to the majesty of our Scriptures, if not to their antiquity. If you doubt that they are as ancient as we say, we offer proof that they are divine. . . . For all that is taking place around you was foretold. All that you now see with your eye was previously heard by the ear: The swallowing up of cities by the earth; the theft of islands by the sea; wars, bringing external and internal convulsions; the collision of kingdoms with kingdoms; famines and pestilences. . . . It was all foreseen and predicted before it came to pass. While we suffer the calamities, we read of them in the Scriptures. They are written in the same books, for the same Spirit inspires them. Tertullian (c. 191,), 3.33.

Examine our sacred books, which we do not keep in hiding, and which many accidents put into the hands of those who are not of us. Learn from them that a large benevolence is enjoined upon us. Tertullian (c. 197,), 3.42.

If it is nowhere written, then let him fear the woe that comes on all who add to or take away anything [from the written Word]. Tertullian (c. 200,), 3.490.

However, the statements of Holy Scripture will never be discordant with truth. Tertullian (c. 210,), 3.202.

Although Paul did not have a specific commandment of the Lord [to cite], he was accustomed to give counsel and to dictate matters from his own authority, for he possessed the Spirit of God, who guides into all truth. For that reason, his advice has, by the authority of the Divine Word, become equivalent to nothing less than a divine command. Tertullian (c. 211,), 3.95.

It will be your duty, however, to present your proofs out of the Scriptures, as plainly as we do. Tertullian (c. 213,), 3.605.

Brethren, there is one God, the knowledge of whom we gain from the Holy Scriptures and from no other source. . . . Even as He has cho-sen to teach them by the Holy Scriptures, so let us discern them. Hippolytus (c. 205,), 5.221.

Perhaps what [the heretics] allege might be credible, if—in the first place—the Holy Scriptures did not contradict them. Eusebius, quoting Caius(c. 215,), 5.601.

We . . . believe that it is possible in no other way to explain and bring within the reach of human knowledge this higher and diviner Logos as the Son of God, than by means of those Scriptures, which alone were inspired by the Holy Spirit: the Gospels and Epistles, and the Law and the Prophets, according to the declaration of Christ Himself. Origen (c. 225,), 4.252.

I do not want to appear to build my assertions on the basis of inference alone, particularly concerning subjects of such importance and difficulty. Nor do I wish for my listeners to agree to what is only conjectural. So let us see if we can obtain any declarations from Holy Scripture. For by its authority, these positions can be more credibly maintained. Origen (c. 225,), 4.258.

There is no contradiction nor absurdity in Holy Scripture. Methodius (c. 290,), 6.366.

We, whom the Holy Scriptures instruct to the knowledge of the truth, know the beginning and the end of the world. Lactantius (c. 304-313,), 7.211.

Inspiration of the Scriptures in the early church fathers

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Key text used by the Fathers

Acts 1:16.

Acts 3:21.

2 Tim. 3:16.

2 Pet. 1:20

Look carefully into the Scriptures, which are the true utterances of the Holy Spirit

Clement of Rome (c. 96,), 1.17.

Take up the epistle of the blessed apostle Paul. What did he write to you at the time when the Gospel first began to be preached? Truly, he wrote to you under the inspiration of the Spirit.

Clement of Rome (c. 96,), 1.18.

It is impossible to learn anything true about religion from your [pagan] teachers. For, by their mutual disagreement, they have furnished you with sufficient proof of their own ignorance. Therefore, I think it is reasonable to return to our forefathers. For they have precedence over your teachers in a great way. First, they precede them in time. Second, they have taught us nothing from their own private opinions. They have not differed with one another, nor have they attempted to overturn each other's position. Rather, without any wrangling or contention, they received from God the knowledge that they also taught to us. For neither by nature nor by human conception is it possible for men to know things that are so great and divine. It is possible only by the gift that descended from above upon the holy men. These men had no need of the rhetorical arts, nor of uttering anything in a contentious or quarrelsome manner. Rather, they presented themselves in a pure manner to the energy of the Divine Spirit, so that the divine plectrum itself could descend from heaven and use these righteous men as an instrument like a harp or lyre. Thereby, the Divine Spirit could reveal to us the knowledge of things divine and heavenly. Accordingly, they have taught us in succession as though with one mouth and one tongue. They have taught us in harmony with each other concerning God, the creation of the world, the formation of man, the immortality of the human soul, and the judgment that is to be after this life. Justin Martyr (c. 160,), 1.276.

We have the prophets as witnesses of the things we comprehend and believe. These were men who declared things about God and the things of God. They were guided by the Spirit of God.... It would be irrational for us to dis-believe the Spirit from God and to give heed to mere human opinions. For He moved the mouths of the prophets like musical instruments. Athenagoras (c. 175,), 2.132.

Truly holy are those letters that sanctify and deify. For that reason, the same apostle calls the writings or volumes that consist of those holy letters and syllables as being "inspired of God, and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction." . . . No one will be as impressed by the exhortations of any of the saints as he is by the words of the Lord himself, the lover of man.

Clement of Alexandria (c. 195,), 2.196.

He, then, who believes the divine Scriptures with sure judgment, receives in them the voice of God, who bestowed the Scriptures. Clement of Alexandria (c. 195,), 2.349.

The apostle has used the same word in writ-ing. For he was guided, of course, by the same Spirit by whom the book of Genesis was drawn up—as were all the divine Scriptures. Tertullian (c. 198,), 3.687.

These fathers were furnished with the Spirit, and they were largely honored by the Word Himself. They were similar to instruments of music. For they had the Word always in union with them, like a plectrum [the small implement by which a lyre was plucked]. When moved by Him, the prophets spoke what God willed. For they did not speak of their own power. Let there be no mistake about that. Nor did they speak the things that pleased them-selves. Hippolytus (c. 200,), 5.204.

For this reason, [the heretics] have boldly laid their hands upon the divine Scriptures, alleging that they have corrected them. . . . And as to the great audacity implied in this offense, it is not likely that even they themselves can be ignorant. For either they do not believe that the divine Scriptures were dictated by the Holy Spirit (and are thus infidels), or else they think that they themselves are wiser than the Holy Spirit (which makes them demoniacs). Eusebius, quoting Caius (c. 215,), 5.602.

In addition, for the proof of our statements, we take testimonies from that which is called the Old Testament and that which is called the New—which we believe to be divine writings. Origen (c. 225,), 4.349.

While we thus briefly demonstrate the deity of Christ and make use of the prophetic declarations regarding Him, we demonstrate at the same time that the writings that prophesied of Him were divinely inspired. Origen (c. 225,), 4.353.

Before the advent of Christ, it was not entirely possible to present clear proofs of the divine inspiration of the ancient Scripture. However, His coming led those who might think the Law and the Prophets were not divine to the clear conviction that they were composed by heavenly grace. And he who reads the words of the prophets with care and attention . . . will be led by his own emotions to believe that those words that have been deemed to be the words of God are not the compositions of men. Origen (c. 225,), 4.353, 354.

The men who are wise in Christ have profited by those epistles that are current. They recognize them to be vouched for by the testimonies deposited in the Law and the Prophets. So it is the conviction of these men that the apostolic writings are to be pronounced wise and worthy of belief and that they have great authority. However, they are not on the same level with that "thus says the Lord Almighty." For example, consider the language of Paul. When he declares that "All Scripture is inspired of God and profitable," does he include his own writings? Or does he not include his remark, "I say, and not the Lord." . . . And he writes similar things by virtue of his own authority—which do not quite possess the character of words flowing from divine inspiration. . . . The Savior says, "Call no man Teacher upon the earth." However, the apostle says that teachers have been appointed in the church. Accordingly, these latter persons will not be "teachers" in the strict sense of the language of the Gospel. In the same way, the gospel in the Epistles will not extend to every word of them—not when they are compared with the narrative of Jesus' actions and sufferings and discourses. Origen (c. 228), 9.299.

Conservative evangelical articulation

I. Authority: How do we know that the Bible is God's Word?

Explanation and Scriptural Basis

Definition: "The authority of Scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God's words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God."²

A. All the words in Scripture are God's words.

1) This is what the Bible claims for itself.

- a) "Thus says the LORD." Deut. 18:18-20' Jer. 1:9; Jer. 29:31-32;" Ezek. 2: 7:
- b) God speaks "through" the prophets 1 Kings 14:18: 2 Kings 9:36: Hag. 1:12: Deut. 18:19:
- c) In the NT, a number of passages indicate that all of the Old Testament writings are thought of as God's words. 2 Tim. 3:16: 2 Peter 1:21
 - i) In other passages in the NT, various sections of the OT are referred to as God's words. Matt. 1:22: Matt. 19:4-5: Mark 7:9-13, Acts 1:16
 - ii) New Testament writings also referred to as Scripture. 2 Peter 3:16 1 Tim. 5:18: 1Cor 14:37:
 - (a) Objection: 1 Cor. 7:12 cf. 7:25, 40 the "I, not the Lord" passages
 1. Paul's honesty "I have no command from the Lord, but I give my judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy."
 2. Paul's opinion "in my judgment she is happier if she remains as she is"
 3. Paul's odd Qualifier "And I think that I too have the Spirit of God."

2) We are convinced of the Bible's claims to be God's words as we read the Bible. (77-78)

- a) Our ultimate conviction that the words of the Bible are God's words comes only when the Holy Spirit speaks in and through the words of the Bible. John 10:27: 1 Cor 2:13-14

3) Other evidence is useful but not finally convincing.

WCF 1.5: We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to an high and reverend esteem of the Holy Scripture. And the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God: yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.

4) The words of Scripture are self-attesting.

- a) They cannot be "proved" to be God's words by appeal to any higher authority.

5) Objection: This is a circular argument. (78-80)

- a) That this is a kind of a circular argument does not make it invalid, for all arguments for an absolute authority must ultimately appeal to that authority for proof.

6) This does not imply dictation from God as the sole means of communication.

- a) Up to this point it has been argued that all the words of the Bible are God's words, yet this requires a word of caution.
- b) When we say that all the words of the Bible are God's words, we are talking about the result of the process of bringing Scripture into existence, not the process itself.
- c) The Bible does not speak of only one type of process or one manner by which God communicated to the biblical authors what he wanted to be said. Heb. 1:1, Luke 1:1-3, John 14:26

B. Therefore to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.

1) Jesus can rebuke his disciples for not believing the OT Scriptures Luke 24: 25.

2) Believers are to keep or obey the disciples' words. John 15:20: 2 Cor. 13:2-3: 2 Thes. 3:14. 2 Peter 3:2.

² Grudem, Wayne. Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine (Grand rapids, Zondervan, 2010). pg 73

C. The Truthfulness of Scripture

- 1) God cannot lie or speak falsely.
 - a) Since the biblical writers repeatedly affirm that the words of the Bible, though human, are God's words, it is appropriate to look at biblical texts that talk about the character of God's words and to apply these to the character of the words of Scripture.
 - b) Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18:
- 2) Therefore all the words in Scripture are completely true and without error in any part.
Num. 23:19; Ps. 12:6; Ps 119:89; Prov. 30:5; Matt. 24:35:
- 3) God's words are the ultimate standard of truth. John 17:17.
- 4) Might some new fact ever contradict the Bible?
 - a) Every true fact is something that God has known already from all eternity and is something that therefore cannot contradict God's speech in Scripture.

D. Written Scripture is Our Final Authority

- 1) The final form of Scripture is its written form; and it is authoritative in this form.
- 2) Hypothetical reconstructions of what "Jesus/Paul/the apostles really said" cannot replace the Scripture itself as the final authority.

II. Sufficiency: Is the Bible enough for knowing what God wants us to think or do?

A. Definition of the Sufficiency of Scripture

"The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains everything we need God to tell us for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly."³

- 1) Salvation (2Ti 3:15-16, 1Pe 1:23)
- 2) Living the Christian Life (2Ti 3:16, Psa 119:2)

B. We can find all that God has said on particular topics and answers to our questions.

- 1) The sufficiency of Scripture enables us to focus our search for God's words to us on the Bible alone. [equals the Reformation doctrine of sola Scriptura, "Scripture alone"].
- 2) What about other means of guidance today?
 - a) I do believe that God uses subjective impressions of his will to guide us day by day, for the Bible talks about being "led by the Spirit" (Rom. 8:9, 14, 16; Gal. 5:16-18, 25).
 - b) I also believe that God can guide us through "prophecies" or reports of what God has brought to mind that are spoken to us by other people (1 Cor 14:29; 1 Thess. 5:20-21).
 - c) But these can never equal Scripture in authority, but should be tested (1) by Scripture, and (2) by what else we know about a situation, and (3) by counsel from wise friends.
 - d) While God may guide you individually to do something based on subjective guidance that can't be proven from Scripture, the sufficiency of Scripture means that you should not try to force that decision on all other Christians in your church. (Example: fasting on a certain day, not reading the Sunday paper, not eating certain foods, etc.: see Rom 14:1-12.)
- 3) It is possible to collect all the passages that directly relate to doctrinal issues (for example, the atonement, the person of Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit) or to ethical issues (raising children, marriage/ divorce, truthfulness/ lying, the Christian and civil government, etc.) . this is good news!
- 4) Although the history of the church may help us understand what God says to us in the Bible, never in church history has God added to the teachings or commands of Scripture.
- 5) Our search for answers to theological and ethical questions is first not a search to find what various believers have thought in the history of the church, although that is helpful. But it is first a quest to find and understand what God himself says to us in Scripture and only in Scripture.

C. The amount of Scripture given was sufficient at each stage of redemptive history.

³ Grudem, Wayne. Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine (Grand rapids, Zondervan, 1994). pg 127

- 1) God has not spoken to mankind any more words which he requires us to believe or obey other than those which we have now in the Bible.
 - a) The doctrine of sufficiency does not imply that God cannot add any more words to those he has already spoken to his people. It rather implies that man cannot add on his own initiative any words to those that God has already spoken.
 - b) God could tell his people that his words to them were sufficient at many different points in the history of redemption. (Deu 29:29)
 - c) After the assembling of the books of the New Testament canon, no further central redemptive acts of God in history have occurred: thus no further words of God have been given to record and interpret those acts for us. (Deu 4:2, Deu 12:32, Pro 30:5-6, Rev 22:18-19)

D. Practical applications of the sufficiency of Scripture

- 1) Encourages us as we try to discover what God would have us to think (about a particular doctrinal issue) or to do (in a particular situation). Everything God has to tell us about that question is found in Scripture.
 - a) The Bible does not answer all the questions we might think up (for example, order of worship) (Deu 29:29)
 - b) Frequent practice in searching the Scripture for guidance increasing ability to find accurate, carefully formulated answers to our problems and questions.
- 2) Reminds us that we are to add nothing to Scripture and consider no other writings of equal value to Scripture (for example works like, The Passion Translation, Book of Mormon, or Science and Health with a Key to the Scriptures)
- 3) God does not require us to believe anything about himself or his redemptive work not found in Scripture (for example, collections of alleged sayings of Jesus, “lost” gospels).
- 4) No modern revelations from God are to be placed on a level equal to Scripture in authority. Scripture is sufficient as our normative authority for faith and practice.
- 5) Nothing is sin that is not forbidden by Scripture either explicitly or by implication. (Psa 119:1) That is not to say we don’t gain insight through the disciples of theological ethics as to attitudes, actions and practices that fall outside the bounds of ethical Christian behavior.
- 6) Nothing is required of us by God that is not commanded in Scripture either explicitly or by implication. (Psa 119:44-45, Psa 119:165)
- 7) In our doctrinal and ethical teaching we should emphasize what Scripture emphasizes and be content with what God has told us in Scripture (for example, not making obscure portions of Scripture into major teachings). (Deu 29:29) what is revealed is all we need for life and godliness.

Adapted from Grudem, Wayne. Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine (Grand rapids, Zondervan, 2010). 73-89, 127-136.

Classical Reformed Articulation

Note: This section has been edited for brevity, extracted were counter arguments and positions the author dialogues with and refutes. Remaining is the positive articulation of the reformed view.

B. The Inspiration of Scripture.

The Bible is and will continue to be the Word of God for all the successive generations of man only in virtue of its divine inspiration. The whole of Scripture is given by inspiration of God. This makes it the infallible rule of faith and practice for mankind. Since this inspiration is often denied and even more frequently misrepresented, it calls for particular attention.

1. Scripture Proof for Inspiration.

The doctrine of inspiration, just as every other doctrine, is derived from Scripture. The Bible itself testifies abundantly to its inspiration, and favors the strictest view of inspiration, as even rationalists are willing to admit. Writers of the Old Testament are repeatedly commanded to write what the Lord commands them, (Ex. 17:14; 34:27; Num. 33:2; Isa. 8:1; 30:8; Jer. 25:13; 30:2; Ezek. 24:1f.; Dan. 12:4; Heb. 2:2.) The prophets were conscious of, bringing a divine message, and therefore introduced it by some such formula as "Thus saith the Lord"; "The word of the Lord came unto me"; "Thus the Lord Jehovah showed me"; etc. These formulae frequently refer to the spoken word, but are also used in connection with the written word, (Jer. 36:27, 32; Ezek. 26, 27, 31, 32, 39. Isaiah probably even speaks of his own written prophecy as "the book of Jehovah," Isa. 34:16. The writers of the New Testament frequently quote passages from the Old Testament as words of God or of the Holy Spirit, Matt. 15:4; Heb. 1:5ff.; 3:7; 4:3; 5:6; 7:21, etc.) Paul speaks of his own words as Spirit-taught words, I Cor. 2:13, and claims that Christ is speaking in him, II Cor. 13:3. His message to the Thessalonians is the word of God. I Thess. 2:13. Finally, he says in the classical passage on inspiration: "Every Scripture (referring to the sacred writings of the Old Testament of which he speaks in the preceding) inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness," II Tim. 3:16. The rendering here given is that of the American Revised Version. That of the Authorized Version deserves preference, however: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." It is favored even by the rendering given by Moffatt.

2. Nature of inspiration...

c. Organic Inspiration.

The theory of inspiration which is now generally accepted in Reformed circles is usually called "organic inspiration," though some designate it as "dynamical inspiration." The term "organic" serves to stress the fact that God did not employ the writers mechanically, but acted on them in an organic way, in harmony with the laws of their own inner being. He used them just as they were, with their character and temperament, their gifts and talents, their education and culture, their vocabulary, diction, and style; illumined their minds, prompted them to write, repressed the influence of sin on their literary activity, and guided them in the choice of their words and in the expression of their thoughts. This view is clearly most in harmony with the representations of Scripture. It represents the writers of Scripture not as mere amanuenses but as real authors who, while sometimes recording direct communications of God, yet on other occasions set down in writing the results of their own historical investigations or register their experiences of sin and forgiveness, of joy and sorrow, of threatening dangers and gracious deliverances. It also accounts for the individuality of the books of the Bible, since each writer naturally had his own style and put on his literary productions his own personal stamp and the stamp of the time in which he lived.

3. The Extent of the Inspiration. ...

c. According to Scripture Inspiration Extends to Every Part of the Bible.

Jesus and the apostles speak of the books of the Old Testament as "Scripture" or "the Scriptures," and frequently appeal to them as such, in order to substantiate their teachings. For them an appeal to "Scripture" is clearly equivalent to an appeal to God. It is the end of all controversy. Besides, as we have seen in the preceding, some of the New Testament writers repeatedly quote passages of the Old Testaments as words of God or of the Holy Spirit. This is especially the case in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Moreover, Peter places the epistles of Paul on a level with the writings of the Old Testament. And, finally, the New Testament contains quotations from twenty-five Old Testament books all regarded as "Scripture," though some of them are taken from historical books. We cannot divide

Scripture into two parts, the one divine and the other human. It is just as impossible to say where in Scripture the human ends and the divine begins or vice versa, as it is to tell where in man the body ends and the soul begins. The two interpenetrate, and as a result of this interpenetration the Bible is in its entirety, on the one hand, a human production, and on the other, a divine creation.

d. Inspiration Extends to the Very Words of Scripture.

The Bible is verbally inspired. It should be noted particularly that this is not the same as saying that it is mechanically inspired, though opponents frequently insist on identifying the two. The doctrine of verbal inspiration does not assume that God dictated the words of the Bible, but that He guided the writers of the Biblical books in the choice of their words and expressions so as to keep them from errors, without in any way disregarding their vocabulary or suppressing their individuality of style and expression. Some prefer to call it plenary inspiration, in order to guard against the danger of identifying it with mechanical inspiration. This doctrine is fully warranted by Scripture. In many instances the Lord told Moses and Joshua exactly what to write, (Ex. 3 and 4; 6:2; 7:1; 12:1; Lev. 4:1; 6:1, 24; 7:22, 28; Jos. 1:1; 4:1; 6:2, etc.) The prophets speak of Jehovah as putting His words in their mouth, Jer. 1:9, and as directing them to speak His words to the people, (Ezek. 3:4, 10, 11.) Paul speaks of his words as Spirit-taught words, (I Cor. 2:13), and both he and Jesus sometimes base an argument on the use of a single word, (Matt. 22:43-45; John 10:35; Gal. 3:16.)

C. The Perfections of Scripture. The Reformers deemed it necessary to develop the doctrine of Scripture, in order to off-set the errors of the Roman Catholic Church. They stressed particularly the following points:

1. The Divine Authority of Scripture.

The Church of Rome as well as the Reformers ascribed divine authority to Scripture; yet they did not both mean exactly the same thing. The Roman hierarchy insisted on it that the Bible has no authority in itself, but owes its existence and therefore also its authority to the Church. Over against this position of Rome, the Reformers emphasized the fact that Scripture has inherent authority in virtue of its inspiration by the Holy Spirit. The Bible must be believed for its own sake; it is the inspired Word of God and therefore addresses man with authority. This view of the supreme authority of Scripture was generally accepted by the Churches of the Reformation until the chill winds of Rationalism swept over Europe and reason was enthroned as the arbiter of truth. Under its influence many now place the Bible on a level with other books and deny its divine authority. It is of the utmost importance, however, to maintain this authority. Scripture has first of all historical authority, that is, it is a true and absolutely reliable record, and as such entitled to a believing acceptance of all that it contains. But in addition to that it also has normative authority as a rule of life and conduct, and as such demands absolute subjection on the part of man....

2. The Sufficiency of Scripture

Neither the Church of Rome nor the Anabaptists regard the Bible as a sufficient revelation of God. The latter have a low opinion of Scripture and assert the absolute necessity of the inner light and of all kinds of special revelations, while the former regards oral tradition as a necessary complement of the written Word. According to Roman Catholics this tradition embodies truths which the apostles preached but did not commit to writing, and which were handed down in the Catholic Church, without interruption, from generation to generation. These are now contained chiefly in the decrees of the councils, in the writings of the holy fathers, in the deliverances of the Pope, and in the words and usages of the sacred liturgy. In opposition to this position the Reformers maintained the perfection or sufficiency of Scripture. This does not mean that everything that was spoken or written by the prophets, by Christ, and by the apostles is contained in Scripture, but simply that the written Word is sufficient for the moral and spiritual needs of individuals and of the Church. It involves the denial that there is alongside of Scripture an unwritten Word of God of equal or even superior authority.

From Manual of Christian Doctrine Louis Berkhof (Grand Rapids Eerdmans 1933. repr. 1998) pg. 39, 42, 43-49

Modern Theological articulation

III.a. Authority

III.a.1. The nature of biblical authority

Scripture stands as the supreme authority for faith and life. The Bible is not simply the vehicle through which God issues his authoritative Word in the church. It is the supreme enunciation of God's authoritative Word in the church, short of the Lord's return.⁴ In Holy Scripture God provides the authentic self-presentation of his name, issues his authoritative declaration of the gospel, and publishes his will for Christian life, ministry, and worship. Because God not only speaks through Scripture but in Scripture, Scripture bears intrinsic authority and warrants our absolute submission. Scripture's claims are God's claims, and thus command our assent (Rev. 19.9). Scripture's promises are God's promises, and thus command our trust (Tit. 1.2–3). Scripture's instructions are God's instructions, and thus command our obedience (Mt. 15.3–4). The one who trembles at God's word honors God and receives his favor (Isa. 66.2). Conversely, the one who despises God's word despises God and incites his wrath (Mt. 15.1–9; cf. Isa. 29.13).

Biblical authority is uncompromising and absolute. But it is not tyrannical. God's first command in the Garden of Eden was a command that authorized freedom: "freely eat" (Gen. 2.16, KJV). The restriction placed upon Adam only served to guard and protect that freedom (Gen. 2.17). Even after Adam's revolt plunged the human race into slavery to sin, God's authoritative word retained its liberating force. Indeed, God's authoritative word in the gospel sets us free from the tyranny of the world, the flesh, and the devil. And it does so because it announces the truth about the fulfillment of God's saving good pleasure in Jesus Christ (cf. Jn 8.31–32). For Christianity, therefore, divine authority and human freedom are happy correlates, not hostile enemies. The former grounds and governs the latter.⁵

In a general sense, authority is the right or dignity of a person "to have a voice in some matter" based upon that person's identity, experience, or knowledge.⁶ Scripture bears the supreme right and dignity to have a voice in matters related to Christian faith and life because it is the ultimate source for our knowledge of the triune God and for the knowledge of human beings as those created, fallen, redeemed, and yet-to-be-consummated through the gospel. If God had not graciously stooped down to speak to us in his Word, then his name would remain unknown to us (cf. Acts 17.23), and his way of salvation would remain hidden from us (cf. Jn 14.6). But because God has spoken here—in this book—the Bible shines as the lodestar of Christian thought, life, and worship.

As the ultimate source of God's saving self-revelation, Holy Scripture "speaks for itself and proves itself."⁷ Because Scripture is the supreme and irreplaceable fountain of the saving knowledge of God, it needs no other authorities to establish its authority. Just as light "is immediately most certainly known to us by its own brightness" and "food by its peculiar sweetness," so Scripture's true dignity and authority are known to us by its own intrinsic radiance (Ps. 119.105) and its own intrinsic sweetness (Ps. 19.10).⁸ Indeed, what higher authority could there be to authenticate God's word and will than God's own voice?⁹ Because Scripture is God's own Word, it authenticates itself. In the Bible the Lord's sheep hear his voice and follow his lead (cf. Jn 10.3, 14).

² As Oliver O'Donovan observes, depicting the authority of Scripture as simply shorthand for "the authority of God exercised through Scripture" (as for example N. T. Wright does in *Scripture and the Authority of God*, 17ff) is insufficient. His explanation of why this is the case is worth quoting at length: "God's authority authorizes; and it is through authorized persons and activities that we see the effective exercise of God's authority in the world. There is nothing wrong in speaking of the authority of bishops, of councils, of preachers or of the community of the faithful; and at the other end of the spectrum, there is nothing wrong in speaking of the authority of Jesus of Nazareth. Neither is it inexact, then, to speak of the authority of apostles and prophets, called out by God to write with clarity and sufficiency of the events surrounding Jesus of Nazareth, their context in the history of Israel, and their universal meaning for mankind. These writings are God's chosen means, together with the sacramental acts of the church, of making his self-announcement known to all ages. Scripture is not the first moment of God's self-announcement; that is the historical deeds themselves by which he raised up Israel and Jesus. But neither is it a moment after God's self-announcement, a retrospective commentary that could be peeled away, leaving the core intact. Scripture is, we may say, God's administration of his self-announcement, the record he has authorized to it and the seal he has set on it to confirm that it is true" (*Church in Crisis*, 54–55)

⁵ For further discussion of the nature and relationship of authority and freedom, see Oliver O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, Part Two.

⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:463

⁷ Van Genderen and Velema, *Concise Reformed Dogmatics*, 84

⁸ Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1:89

⁹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 Vols., trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 1.7.4

Because its authority is self-authenticating, Holy Scripture does not depend upon the church to validate its status as God's word. "A law does not derive its authority from the subordinate judges who interpret it or from the heralds who promulgate it, but from its author alone."¹⁰ Neither does Scripture depend upon reason to validate the authority of its teaching, the historian to validate the accuracy of its claims, or experience to validate the authenticity of its prescribed way of life. To be sure, Scripture's authoritative teaching will always find confirmation and affirmation in the faithful teaching of the church, the right functioning of human reason, the responsible work of the historian, and the well-formed conscience of the believer. But these subordinate authorities do not establish or judge the authority of Scripture—any more than science establishes or judges the laws of nature! Scripture establishes and judges these subordinate authorities. Scripture is *norma normans non normata*—"the norming norm that is not itself normed."

Of course, we must acknowledge that it is the Holy Spirit who enables us to acknowledge and respond to God's authoritative Word in Holy Scripture (Jn 3.3, 5; 2 Cor. 3.14–18; 4.3–6; 1 Thess. 1.5; 2.13). The Spirit enables us to perceive Scripture's inherent brightness and to taste its inherent sweetness. The light of the sun does not illumine the eyes of a blind man. Nevertheless, the Spirit's work of "illumination," the work whereby he enables us to see and to receive Scripture as God's word (cf. 1 Cor. 2.12, 14), does not add light to Holy Scripture any more than the healing of a blind man adds radiance to the sun. The Spirit, by his illuminating work, enables us to see the light and to savor the sweetness that belong to Scripture in and of itself as God's divine Word. As Bavinck states: "The illumination of the Holy Spirit is not the cognitive source of Christian truth. It does not disclose to us any material truths that are hidden from the 'natural' person. It only gives us a spiritual understanding of these same things, one that is different and deeper."¹¹

III.a.2. Biblical authority and biblical interpretation

The fact that God speaks his authoritative Word in a book means that submission to God's word is mediated through the act of reading.¹² Because divine authority is transmitted textually, divine authority is appropriated interpretively. This is true whether one gains access to scriptural teaching through one's own reading or through the reading of another. Consequently, a proper notion of biblical authority must insist that it is Scripture rightly interpreted that bears supreme authority for Christian faith and life.

We will reserve a full discussion of the act of reading until chapters four and five. For now the following points may be made:

1. The perfections of Scripture set our interpretive agenda. The appropriateness of a given approach to reading Scripture is determined by the reality of Scripture.
2. Accordingly, the authority of Holy Scripture elicits a particular interpretive stance in relation to Holy Scripture. We do not stand over it as interpretive lords. We do not sit beside it as interpretive equals. We kneel beneath it as interpretive servants. The Lord looks upon the one who trembles at his Word. Therefore, the stance of biblical interpretation is humble attentiveness and the goal of biblical interpretation is obedience: "speak, Lord, for your servant hears" (cf. 1 Sam. 3.9ff).
3. As the supreme norm of Christian faith and life, Holy Scripture is the final standard for Christian theology, life, and worship. Consequently, any mode of interpretation that relativizes scriptural teaching in these areas, whether on the basis of a supposedly clearer source of light or on the basis of a "deepened moral sensitivity," is an illegitimate mode of interpretation, a denial of Scripture's supreme and final authority.¹³
4. The authority of any particular text of Scripture can only be comprehended in light of scriptural teaching as a whole. *Sola Scriptura*, the Bible's status as supreme authority, functions properly only in relation to *tota Scriptura*, the Bible's teaching in its entirety. In this regard, Scripture must be read in light of its progressively unfolding form and in light of its Christological climax. Moreover, Scripture must be read in relationship to its own stated aim of promoting the love of God and the love of neighbor.

¹⁰ Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1:89. The present point holds significant implications for how we understand the church's act of canonization. See John Webster, "The Dogmatic Location of the Canon," chap. 1 in *Word and Church: Essays in Christian Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2001); and Hill, "God's Speech in These Last Days."

¹¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:594, emphasis in the original text

¹² Webster, *Confessing God*, 60

¹³ See O'Donovan, *Church in Crisis*, 61–63

5. The fact that the Bible is our supreme authority does not mean that the Bible is our only authority when it comes to biblical interpretation. *Sola Scriptura* (“Scripture alone”) is not *solo Scriptura* (“Scripture only”). The Bible, God’s supremely authoritative Word, authorizes subordinate authorities and, as we shall see in the next chapter, these subordinate authorities have a role to play in biblical interpretation. 6. Nevertheless, because Scripture is the supreme font of saving knowledge for pilgrims traveling the path of faith, it remains the source to which we as readers must continually return “if we are to stay on the right track.”¹⁴ As the ever new, ever renewing fountain of divine wisdom, Scripture never becomes redundant.

Scott R Swain, *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading: A theological introduction to the Bible and its interpretation.* (New York NY; T & T Clark Bloomsbury 2011) Kindle file, Chapter 3, 71-76 of 139.

III.c. The Sufficiency of Scripture

III.c.1. The meaning of the sufficiency of Scripture

Through his prophets and apostles, God has revealed “all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1.3). Consequently, the God-breathed writings of his authorized spokesmen are “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3.16). These two verses encapsulate the fundamental claim regarding “the sufficiency of Scripture.” In Holy Scripture, God has revealed all things necessary to know him in a saving way and to serve him in a pleasing way, both in our individual lives and in our corporate worship. In other words, Scripture is sufficient for communicating Christ and covenant.

Whereas confessional Protestants and Roman Catholics may find much agreement on the inspiration, authority, and truthfulness of Holy Scripture, the doctrine of Scripture’s sufficiency (and Scripture’s clarity) is a topic of longstanding disagreement and dispute between these groups.¹⁵ The doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture received its clearest articulation at the time of the Reformation, as Protestants were compelled to counter Rome’s claim that the church bears authority to promulgate articles of faith—articles that must be believed for salvation—beyond what is written in Holy Scripture. Article Six of the Thirty-Nine Articles offers a representative statement of the Protestant doctrine: “Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.” A similar, if slightly more comprehensive statement, appears in the Westminster Confession of Faith (Chapter 1, Paragraph 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.”

In affirming the sufficiency of Scripture, Protestants have been careful to make certain important qualifications. First, the sufficiency of Scripture does not exclude “the ecclesiastical ministry (established by God for the setting forth and application of the word).” As Turretin states: “A rule is not . . . imperfect because it requires the hand of the architect for its application.” Indeed, the Bible itself authorizes the ministry of the Word (Eph. 4.11ff). Second, the sufficiency of Scripture does not exclude “the internal power of the Holy Spirit necessary for conversion.”¹⁶ Again, the Bible itself teaches the necessity of the Spirit’s work of regeneration and renewal (Jn 3.3, 5; Tit. 3.5). As in the case of the Bible’s authority, so with the Bible’s sufficiency, *sola Scriptura* does not mean *solo Scriptura*. What the sufficiency of Scripture does rule out is the notion that Scripture requires an external supplement supplement to revelation from the church’s teaching office, or even from the Holy Spirit, if we are to know God and his gospel in an adequate and reliable manner.¹⁷

Another important qualification concerns the fact that the Bible’s sufficiency lies primarily in its purpose of communicating Christ and covenant, and that the Bible’s sufficiency only secondarily relates to other issues such as politics, global warming, or dieting. To be sure, Scripture speaks to all of life, for it teaches us that God made all things and that we are called to do all things to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10.31). Nevertheless, Scripture does not

¹⁴ O’Donovan, *Church in Crisis*, 79

¹⁵ For a recent attempt at rapprochement, see Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus, ed., *Your Word is Truth: A Project of Evangelicals and Catholics Together* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002)

¹⁶ Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1:141. On the latter point, see also the Westminster Confession of Faith, 1.6

¹⁷ See Timothy Ward, “Scripture, Sufficiency of,” in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, 730–31

speak to all of life in the same way. Scripture speaks primarily and directly to the nature of God the Holy Trinity, to his saving plan and purpose, and to his moral will for our lives and worship (again, see 2 Tim. 3.15–17). Scripture speaks only secondarily and indirectly to a host of other issues, providing a framework or a lens through which we may view these issues in a biblical way. On such matters, however, the Bible does not legislate but instead shapes our minds that we may discover the God-given design, order, and law that exist within the relevant spheres of creation in order that we might in turn subdue the earth to the glory of God. Another way of making the point is to say that Holy Scripture is a sufficient deposit of special revelation, but not of general revelation. Scripture shines forth with the light of the former and Scripture shines forth upon the light of the latter. In so doing, Scripture also serves to illumine both the miseries (Gen. 3.14–24; Ecclesiastes) and the mysteries of the created order (Job 38–41).¹⁸

Finally, as discussed above under inerrancy, even when it comes to subjects the Bible directly addresses, the Bible's purpose is only to shine a light that is sufficient to guide our paths to everlasting glory. Only then will we know as we are known (1 Cor. 13.12).

With these qualifications in view, we may appreciate the true nature of Scripture's claim to sufficiency. God has not hidden his will in heaven above or beyond the farthest sea (Deut. 30.12–13). Although "the secret things belong to the Lord," he has revealed to us all that we need for faith and life (Deut. 29.29). Scripture in and of itself is able to make us "wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3.15). And it is profitable for living unto God (2 Tim. 3.16–17). And so, while the scriptures do not exhaust the glorious treasures held in promise for all the saints (Rom. 8:18), the foretaste they do provide proves more precious to the sanctified taste than the wisdom of the world in its entirety (1 Pet. 1.3–9). "I rejoice at your word like one who finds great spoil" (Ps. 119.162; cf. Mt. 13.52).

III.c.2. The sufficiency of Scripture and biblical interpretation

What implications for biblical interpretation follow from the sufficiency of Holy Scripture? We mention briefly four.

1. It is a source of great comfort to the minister of the gospel that all one needs for equipping the saints with faith and godliness is contained in Holy Scripture. This is the immediate application which Paul draws for Timothy from the sufficiency of Scripture (see 2 Tim. 3.17).
2. The sufficiency of Scripture for the life of faith awakens in the reader a desire to search Scripture's vast plains, to savor its numerous delicacies, and to follow its wise paths. If the narrow way that leads to life has indeed been found, there is nothing else to do but to set our feet to traveling. Because Scripture bears the words of the Lord, which are "the words of eternal life," where else would we go (cf. Jn 6.68)?
3. The sufficiency of Scripture does not rule out the use of helps in biblical interpretation, but it does determine how we use those helps.

(a) First, with respect to the church, we do not seek supplemental revelation that goes beyond what has been revealed in Holy Scripture. Instead, we seek the church's aid in pointing us to that which has been fully and finally revealed in Holy Scripture. The church's common wisdom and interpretive guidance is a great aid in this regard, as we shall see more fully in the next chapter.

(b) Second, with respect to the Holy Spirit, we do not seek a supplemental revelation that goes beyond what has been revealed in Holy Scripture. The sacred writings themselves contain all that is necessary for all of God's people at all times and in all places until Christ returns. Therefore, we seek from the Holy Spirit the power to comprehend the things that have been revealed and the wisdom to apply those things to our lives. And we have the promise that, due to his abiding presence and anointing, those who seek will indeed find (cf. 1 Jn 2.20, 26–27).

(c) Third, with respect to other sources of interpretive assistance—from linguistic aids, to historical background information, to parallel literatures, commentaries, specialized studies, and other scholarly tools. Such sources may truly benefit us so long as they function as interpretive assistants and not as interpretive lords. God has richly blessed his creatures with all sorts of extra-biblical knowledge and skills that can aid the interpretive process. Indeed, Scripture does not teach us how to read! Nevertheless, these aids do not add anything to the teaching of Holy Scripture that is not already there, for the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are not hidden

¹⁸ The discussion in the present paragraph is largely dependent upon Robert Letham, "Applying God's Word to All of Life? The Use and Abuse of the Bible," *Modern Reformation* (January/February 2001): 40–43

anywhere other than in the Christ exhibited in Holy Scripture (Bavinck). Such aids only help us uncover that which God has generously revealed in his Word. They can neither predetermine nor preclude the possibilities of scriptural meaning, for scriptural teaching flows from higher fountains than these.

4. Holy Scripture is sufficient for developing a coherent system of Christian doctrine, a “body of divinity.” Moreover, Scripture contains the principles, norms, goals, and examples necessary for the exercise of Christian ethical reasoning. However, Scripture does not contain the secret to a better diet or to a more efficient exercise routine—though it does have something to say about gluttony! Put simply, the goals of biblical interpretation must be consistent with the nature of Holy Scripture. We may only expect interpretive success when we read according to scriptural promise. The use of Scripture for something other than its God-given design is an abuse of Scripture.

Scott R Swain, *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading: A theological introduction to the Bible and its interpretation.* (New York NY; T & T Clark Bloomsbury 2011) Kindle file, Chapter 3, 82-86 of 139.

Evidentiary case for the inspiration and authority of Scripture

I. Evidence for inspiration

A. Breathed Out by God

Writing about the entire Old Testament canon, the apostle Paul declared: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16–17). Jesus described the Scriptures as the very “word that comes out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10). They were written by men who spoke from God. Paul said his writings were “words . . . which the Holy Spirit teaches” (1 Cor. 2:13). As Jesus said to the Pharisees, “How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him ‘Lord’?” (Matt. 22:43).

B. The Bible is self referential in its claim to inspiration

That the Bible is God's inerrant Word is expressed in several ways in Scripture. One is the formula, “What the Bible says, God says.” An Old Testament passage claims God said something, yet when this text is cited in the New Testament, the text tells us that the Scriptures said it. Sometimes the reverse is true. In the Old Testament it is said that the Bible records something. The New Testament declares that God said it. Consider this comparison:

What God Says . . .	the Bible Says
Genesis 12:3	Galatians 3:8
Exodus 9:16	Romans 9:17
What the Bible Says . . .	God Says
Genesis 2:24	Matthew 19:4 , 5
Psalms 2:1	Acts 4:24 , 25
Psalms 2:7	Hebrews 3:7
Psalms 16:10	Acts 13:35
Psalms 95:7	Hebrews 3:7
Psalms 97:7	Hebrews 3:7
Psalms 104:4	Hebrews 3:7
Isaiah 55:3	Acts 13:34

Even though the Bible was not verbally dictated by God, the result is as perfectly God's thoughts as if it had been. The Bible's authors claimed that God is the source of the very words, since he supernaturally superintended the process by which each human wrote, using their vocabulary and style to record his message (2 Peter 1:20–21).

C. Inspired by God and Presented in Human Terms.

Although the Bible claims to be the Word of God, it is also the words of human beings. It claims to be God's communication to people, in their own language and expressions.

First, every book in the Bible was the composition of human writers .

Second, the Bible manifests different human literary styles, from the mournful meter of lamentations to the exalted poetry of Isaiah, from the simple grammar of John to the complex Greek of Hebrews. Their choices of metaphors show that different writers used their own background and interests. James is interested in nature. Jesus uses urban metaphors, and Hosea those of rural life.

Third, the Bible manifests human perspectives and emotions; David spoke in Psalm 23 from a shepherd's perspective; Kings is written from a prophetic vantage point, and Chronicles from a priestly point of view; Acts manifests a historical interest and 2 Timothy a pastor's heart. Paul expressed grief over the Israelites who had rejected God (Rom. 9:2).

Fourth, the Bible reveals human thought patterns and processes, including reasoning (Romans) and memory (1 Cor. 1:14–16).

Fifth, writers of the Bible used human sources for information, including historical research (Luke 1:1–4) and noncanonical writings (Josh. 10:13; Acts 17:28; 1 Cor. 15:33; Titus 1:12; Jude 9, 14).

II. Evidence for Authority

A. Scriptures Claim of Divine Authority.

Words or phrases used in Scripture entail the claim of God's authority. Jesus said the Bible will never pass away and is sufficient for faith and life (Luke 16:31; cf. 2 Tim. 3:16–17). He proclaimed that the Bible possesses divine inspiration (Matt. 22:43) and authority (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10). It has unity (Luke 24:27; John 5:39) and spiritual clarity (Luke 24:25).

This truth fleshes out in syllogism:

1. Scripture is the Word of God.
2. The words of God are authoritative.
3. Conclusion: Scripture is authoritative.

B. The Extent of the Bible's Authority.

The extent of scriptures claim to divine authority includes:

1. all that is written— 2 Timothy 3:16 ;
2. even the very words— Matthew 22:43 ; 1 Corinthians 2:13;
3. and tenses of verbs— Matthew 22:32 ; Galatians 3:16 ;
4. including even the smallest parts of words— Matthew 5:17, 18.

C. Original Text Is Without Errors, Not the Copies.

The claim of authority and thus inerrancy “does not mean that every copy and translation of the Bible is perfect. God breathed out the originals, not the copies, so inerrancy applies to the original text, not to every copy. God in his providence preserved the copies from substantial error. In fact, the degree of accuracy is greater than that of any other book from the ancient world, exceeding 99 percent.”

D. The Witness of Christ

The authority of Jesus confirms the authority of the Bible. Christians insist that Jesus is the Son of God as he claimed to be (Matt. 16:16–18 ; Mark 2:5–11 ; John 5:22–30 ; 8:58 ; 10:30 ; 20:28–29). . .three of the four references above to biblical authority come from the witness of Jesus. In light of Christ's nature and Christ's witness to scripture a case can be made for the authority of Scripture.

E. In conclusion based on the evidence given, “If he is the Son of God, then the Bible is the Word of God. . . . Only if one rejects the divine authority of Christ can he consistently reject the divine authority of the Scriptures. If Jesus is telling the truth, then it is true that the Bible is God's Word..”

Adapted from an entry in “ Bible , Evidence for” Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics, ed. Norman L. Geisler, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999) 91-93

I. Jesus' View of the Bible

Perhaps the strongest argument that the Bible's authority and inspiration is the witness of Jesus. Jesus affirmed the Old Testament to be the Word of God and promised to guide his disciples to know all truth.

A. What Jesus Affirmed about the Old Testament.

Premise: If Jesus is the Son of God, then what he affirmed about the Bible is true. And Jesus affirmed that the Bible is the infallible, indestructible, inerrant Word of God. The New Testament was not written until after Jesus ascended into heaven. Hence, his statements about the Bible refer to the Old Testament. But what Jesus confirmed for the Old Testament, he also promised for the New Testament.

1. Jesus affirmed the divine authority of the Old Testament.

Jesus and his disciples used the phrase "it is written" more than ninety times. It is usually in the perfect tense, meaning, "it was written in the past and it still stands as the written Word of God." Often Jesus used in the sense of "this is the last word on the topic. The discussion is over." Such is the case when Jesus resisted the temptation of the Devil. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. . . . Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Jesus said to him, It is again written, Thou shalt not tempt [the] Lord thy God. . . . Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. [Matt. 4:4, 7, 10] This use demonstrates that Jesus believed the Bible to have final and divine authority.

2. Jesus affirmed the Old Testament to be imperishable.

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, to fulfill. Think not that I am come to make void the law or the prophets. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matt. 5:17-18). Jesus believed the Old Testament to be the imperishable Word of the eternal God.

3. Jesus affirmed the Old Testament to be inspired.

Although Jesus never used the word inspiration, he did use its equivalent. To the Pharisees' question, he retorted: "How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him 'Lord'?" (Matt. 22:43, emphasis added). Indeed, David himself said of his own words, "The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; his word was on my tongue" (2 Sam. 23:2). This is precisely what is meant by inspiration.

4. Jesus affirmed that the Bible is unbreakable.

The word infallible is not used in the New Testament, but a close cousin is— unbreakable. Jesus said, "If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). Indeed, three powerful words describe the Old Testament in this short passage: "law" (vs. 34), "word of God," and "unbreakable." Thus, Jesus believed that the Old Testament was the unbreakable law of God.

5. Jesus affirmed the Old Testament is the Word of God.

Jesus regarded the Bible as the "Word of God." He insisted elsewhere that it contained the "commandment of God" (Matt 15:3, 6). The same truth is implied in his reference to its indestructibility in Matthew 5:17-18. Elsewhere, Jesus' disciples call it "the oracles of God" (Rom. 3:2; Heb. 5:12).

6. Jesus ascribed ultimate supremacy to the Old Testament.

Jesus often asserted the ultimate authority and supremacy of the Old Testament over all human teaching or "tradition." He said to the Jews: "Why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? . . . Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition" (Matt. 15:3, 6). Jesus believed that the Bible alone has supreme authority when even the most revered of all human teachings conflict with it. Scripture alone is God's supreme written authority.

7. Jesus affirmed the inerrancy of the Old Testament.

Inerrancy means without error. That concept is found in Jesus' answer to the Sadducees, a sect who denied the divine inspiration of the Old Testament, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures [which do not err], nor the power of God" (Matt. 22:29 KJV). In his high priestly prayer, Jesus affirmed the total truthfulness of Scripture, saying to the Father, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17 KJV).

8. Jesus affirmed the historical reliability of the Old Testament.

Jesus affirmed as historically true some of the most disputed passages of the Old Testament, including the creation of Adam and Eve (Matt. 19:4–5), the miracle about Jonah in the great fish, and destruction of the world by a flood in the days of Noah. Of the latter, Jesus declared: “As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark” (Matt. 24:37–38). Jesus affirmed that Jonah was really swallowed by a great fish for three days and three nights: “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matt. 12:40). Jesus also spoke of the slaying of Abel (1 John 3:12), Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Matt. 8:11), the miracles of Elijah (James 5:17), and many other Old Testament persons and events as historically true, including Moses, Isaiah, David, and Solomon (Matt. 12:42), and Daniel the prophet (Matt. 24:15). He affirmed the historical reliability of major disputed passages of the Old Testament. Both the manner in which these events are cited, the authority they are given, and the basis they form for major teachings Jesus gave about his life, death, and resurrection reveals that he understood these events as historical.....

B. What Jesus promised about the New Testament.

Jesus not only affirmed the divine authority and infallibility of the Old Testament, he also promised the same for the New Testament. And his apostles and New Testament prophets claimed for their writings what Jesus had promised them.

1. Jesus said the Holy Spirit would teach “all truth.”

Jesus promised that “the Comforter, [which is] the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” He added, “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, [that] shall he speak” (John 14:26 ; 16:13). This promise was fulfilled when they spoke and later recorded (in the New Testament) everything Jesus had taught them.

2. The apostles claimed this divine authority Jesus gave them.

Not only did Jesus promise his disciples divine authority in what they wrote, but the apostles claimed this authority for their writings.

- John said, “these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:31).
- He added, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life” (1 John 1:1).
- Again, he said, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world..... They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error” (1 John 4:1,5–6).
- Likewise, the apostle Peter acknowledged all Paul's writing as “Scripture” (2 Peter 3:15–16 ; cf. 2 Tim. 3:15–16), saying, “And account [that] the long-suffering of our Lord [is] salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you. As also in all [his] epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as [they do] also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.”

C. the New Testament is the “all truth” Jesus promised.

From the fact that Jesus promised to lead his disciples into “all truth” and they both claimed this promise and recorded this truth in the New Testament, we may conclude that Jesus' promise was finally fulfilled in the inspired New Testament. In this way, Jesus directly confirmed the inspiration and divine authority of the Old Testament and promised the same, indirectly, for the New Testament.

D. Conclusion: Therefore, if Christ is the Son of God, then the Old and the New Testament are the Word of God.

Adapted from an entry in “ bible , Jesus view of” Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics, edt. Norman L. Geisler, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999) 99-101

III. Jesus and the Critics

The Argument for the trustworthiness of scripture in trusting what Jesus trusted.

The Argument for the inerrant nature of scripture, based on Jesus divinity & perfection.

The Argument contrasts modern higher criticism of Scripture and Jesus' perspective.

A. Argument:

Jesus confessed the very things many modern critics deny about the Old Testament. If Jesus was right, then the critics are wrong, despite the pretense of having scholarship on their side. For if Jesus is the Son of God, then it is a matter of Lordship, not a matter of scholarship.

B. Lines of Evidence

1. Jesus on Daniel

Negative critics of the Bible claim that Daniel was not a predictive prophet, but only a historian recording the events after they happened (ca. 165 B.C.). Jesus, however, agreed with the conservative view, declaring Daniel to be a prophet. Indeed, Jesus cited a prediction that Daniel made that had not yet occurred in Jesus' day. In his Mount Olivet Discourse he said, "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel . . ." (Matt. 24:15). "See, I have told you ahead of time" (Matt. 24:25)....

2. Jesus on Jonah

Most negative critics of the Bible believe that the Jonah story is mythology. Indeed, with strong emphasis Jesus asserted that, "just as" Jonah was in the great fish three days and nights, "even so" he would be in the grave for three days and nights. Surely, Jesus would not have based the historicity of his death and resurrection on mythology about Jonah.

3. Jesus on Noah's flood

Bible critics often deny there was a world-wide flood in the days of Noah. But, as was seen above, Jesus affirmed there was a flood in the days of Noah in which all but Noah's family perished (Matt. 24:38-39; cf. 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 3:5-6).

4. Jesus on Isaiah

It is common for biblical critics to teach that there were at least two Isaiahs, one of whom lived after the events described in the latter chapters (40-66) and the other of which lived earlier and wrote chapters 1 to 39. But Jesus quoted from both sections of the book as the writing of "the prophet Isaiah". In Luke 4:17 Jesus cited the last part of Isaiah (61:1), reading: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor" (Luke 4:17-18). In Mark 7:6 Jesus cited from the first section of Isaiah (29:13), saying, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me'" (Mark 7:6). Jesus' disciple John made it unmistakably clear that there was only one Isaiah by citing from both sections of Isaiah (chapters 53 and 6) in the same passage, claiming of the second that the same "Isaiah said again" (Jn 12:37-41).

B. Conclusion: Stuck on the horns of a dilemma

The dilemma is this: If Jesus is the Son of God, then the Bible is the Word of God. Conversely, if the Bible is not the Word of God, then Jesus is not the Son of God (since he taught false doctrine).

Adapted from an entry in "Bible, Jesus view of" Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics, ed. Norman L. Geisler, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999) 101-102