



# Scripture as Final Authority for Bible Education and Society

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# Introduction

Great change in opinion regarding the Bible:

- **Friedrich Schleiermacher** – “The father of liberal German theology.” (1768–1834)
- From his time, we see a push to reformulate Christian doctrine in contemporary terms.
- Use of reason, science, freedom, and experience to advocate wrong views of Scripture.



# Introduction

Great change in opinion regarding the Bible:

## Harold DeWolfe (1905-1986)

- Typical of the old liberal view of Scripture.  
*“Strictly speaking, the Bible itself is not the pure word of God. Some degree of accommodation to culture seems inevitable unless Christian teaching is to become a mere irrelevant echoing of ancient creeds.”*
- His rejection of much of Scripture was based on his anti-supernaturalistic bias.

# Introduction

Great change in opinion regarding the Bible:

## **Shubert Ogden (1928–2019)**

- A representative of the many new liberal thinkers who do not view the Scriptures as the verbally inspired Word of God.

## **What do we see see today?**

- Many so-called Christians who have rejected the Bible as the supreme authority for faith and practice.
- Pietistic, extrabiblical proclamations of “Papas”

# The Nature of Biblical Authority

## What is Authority?

- The claim that the Bible is authoritative is a central feature of Reformed and evangelical doctrine “*Sola Scriptura*.”
- Bernard Ramm, *The Pattern of Religious Authority*.

# The Nature of Biblical Authority

## What is Authority?

- The written Word of God is Scripture in its entirety and variety.
- We must seek to teach the whole counsel of God.
- Scriptures function as the final authority and serve as the filter through which all other truths are examined for their consistency with a Christian world and life view.

# The Nature of Biblical Authority

- Since Scripture is given by “inspiration of God,” (2 Tim. 3:16, *theopneustos*), the Bible’s authority is comprehensive and total, down to the very words themselves.
- God DID NOT breathe “into” the scriptures, but that the Scriptures are breathed out by God.
- This term is saying that the Scriptures are not primarily human in their origin, but rather they are Divine in origin.

# The Nature of Biblical Authority

## Post Reformations Confessions:

“Holy Scripture demands belief, yet its authority does not depend on the testimony of any person or church, but entirely on God its author, who is truth itself. Therefore, it is to be received because it is the Word of God.”



# The Nature of Biblical Authority

## Post Reformations Confessions:

“The supreme judge by which all religious controversies are to be settled, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, human doctrines and individual thinkers are to be examined, can be none other than the Holy Scriptures delivered by the Spirit. In the verdict of Scripture our faith is finally determined.”

# The Nature of Biblical Authority

“The authority of Scripture means that:

- All the words in Scripture are God’s words;
- To disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.

# The Nature of Biblical Authority

## Two Major Errors

### I. The Rejection of the inspiration & authority of Scripture

*To reject the inspiration and authority of the Bible is to invent some other religion than Christianity.*

### II. The neglect or functional denial of Sola Scriptura

- Functional
- Neglect

# The Nature of Biblical Authority

- The Bible alone is our final authority in all matters of what is true and what ought to be done or not done.
- God's word also tells us what should be our inner thoughts, our attitudes, and our true preferences.
- All these matters must be grounded in the Bible alone.

## Scriptures:

2 Timothy 3:15-16

2 Peter 1:19-21

# The Nature of Biblical Authority

The outworking of God's authority in Scripture can be summarized in negative (what it is not) and positive (what it is) statements.

1. It is *not* a derived authority bestowed by humans; rather it is the *original* authority of God.
2. It *does not* change with the times, the culture, the nation, or the ethnic background; rather it is the *unalterable* authority of God.
3. It is *not* one authority among many possible spiritual authorities; rather it is the *exclusive* spiritual authority of God.

# The Nature of Biblical Authority

4. It is *not* an authority that can be successfully challenged or rightfully overthrown; rather, it is the *permanent* authority of God.
5. It is *not* a relativistic or subordinate authority; rather it is the *ultimate* authority of God.
6. It is *not* merely a suggestive authority; rather it is the *obligatory* authority of God.
7. It is *not* a benign authority in its outcomes; rather it is the *consequential* authority of God.

# Why the Authority of Scripture is Important

“Those systems that do not begin with this belief in Scripture will exhibit a wide range of beliefs that will shift over time in light of the ever-changing whims and views of culture. Almost every single collapse involving denominations and churches in regard to historic Christian beliefs can be traced back to a degradation in that group’s view of the Bible as the inspired and inerrant revelation of God’s truth.” (James R. White, *Scripture Alone*, p. 43)



# What Implications does this have for Bible Education and Society?

1. In the formulations of our curricula, extreme care and attention must be given to the authority of Scripture on any course or subject that we teach.
2. We must resist the numerous temptations:
  - To democratise our education – “What is popular wins;”
  - To surrender to political correctness – “what offends must be discarded;”
  - To commercialise our education – “What brings in most revenue must be given greater priority.”



## **What Implications does this have for Bible Education and Society?**

3. We must not be timid to reform unbiblical traditions under the guise of contextualisation.
4. We must beware of the popular and controversial pull of a feminist theological hermeneutic.
5. We must never invest allow our theological libraries to take the place of Scripture.
6. We must be intentional in modelling our own unshakable conviction about the authority of Scripture.

# Concluding Questions

1. Have you slipped into functional denial of Scripture's authority?
2. Have you slipped into neglecting Scripture's authority?