

Sola Scriptura:
The necessity, sufficiency, authority, preservation &
perspicuity of Scripture
by Daniel HC Chew

The doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* has increasingly been subjected to attack, ridicule and neglect. Since it is vital to biblical Christianity, it is imperative that we Christians know what it is and are able to prove it from Scripture, and then applying what it says to our lives.

Sola Scriptura, or Scripture alone, is one of the Reformation slogans; one of the five solas that comprise *Sola Fide* (Faith alone), *Sola Gratia* (Grace alone), *Solus Christus* (Christ alone), and *Soli Deo Gloria* (For God's glory alone). These 5 solas defined the 16th century Protestant Reformation over and against the apostate Romanist Church, and thus any person who call him/herself a Protestant/Evangelical can only do so legitimately if he/she subscribes to the 5 solas of the Reformation. Those who do not subscribe to these 5 solas may call themselves Protestants or Evangelicals, but they are considered illegitimate children of the Reformation, and thus do not deserve to be properly called such. It is also my contention that these five solas define an important part of the Gospel message and hence the Christian faith, and I would prove this assertion subsequently, thus any denial of any of the 5 solas in part or the whole constitute a denial of the Christian faith.

Historically, the split with apostate Rome pivoted over the issue of salvation by justification by faith alone, *Sola Fide* and the hermeneutical principle of Scripture alone, *Sola Scriptura*. The former issue was termed the 'material principle' of the Reformation, while the issue of *Sola Scriptura* was termed the 'formal principle' of the Reformation^[1]. While Rome maintain a synergistic approach of faith plus works righteousness, the Reformers maintained a monergistic conception of salvation, whereby salvation is by grace through faith from beginning to the end. Where Rome adds 'Sacred Tradition' as being authoritative to the Christian, and adding the Apocrypha to the (Roman Catholic) Canon of Scripture in the Council of Trent, the Reformers countered that only Scripture was authoritative for the Christian, and rejected the addition of the Apocryphal to the established Canon of Scripture, while maintaining that the Apocrypha have some value to the Christian^[2].

So what is *Sola Scriptura*? *Sola Scriptura* means that Holy Scripture is the only **sole supreme authority** upon which to judge anything and everything. It is different from what is termed *Solo Scriptura*, or Scripture only, whereby only Scripture has authority in the lives of Christians. While seemingly the same, the two are not identical. Although both appeal to Scripture as authority, *Sola Scriptura* allows for secondary sources of authority like the Church and her traditions whereas *Solo Scriptura* does not. Thus, *Sola Scriptura* does not allow for the 'me with the Bible in the woods' syndrome prevalent in postmodern and anti-intellectual Christianity, whereby the traditions of the Church (which comprises theological works and hymns by ancient and modern writers, and ancient creeds and confessions of the Church) are discarded and seen as little use in the lives of Christians. That is *Solo Scriptura*, a pervasion of the biblical understanding of *Sola Scriptura*.

The refutation of *Solo Scriptura* in the proof of the importance of traditions can be seen in the Scripture whereby we are told that God has promised to sustain His Church and the gates of hell will not prevail over it (Mt. 16:18). Also, the keys to the Kingdom of heaven are given to the Church (Mt. 16:19; 18:18) as found in the disciples at that time. Since that is the case, biblically, the universal Church in all generations will always have some aspects of the Truth of Christ and His Gospel in her which are codified in her traditions. Logically also, since God has placed teachers over us in the Church (1 Cor. 12:28, Eph. 4:11-12), which include elders or overseers (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:9) and pastors (1 Tim. 4:11; 13; 6:2ff; 2 Tim. 4:2; 2 Tim. 2:1), to the end that we might be build up in the faith (Eph. 4:11-12; Col. 3:16), we ought to listen to these teachers. And what are traditions, but records of teachings and practices of those who have gone before us? Unless you draw an arbitrary distinction between the saints before and the saints presently, why should we listen to those who are alive but not those who have gone before us, as though those who were teachers who have gone before us were not teachers at all and are not part of the universal Church of all generations? Since that is the case, we ought to place traditions on par with the teachings we receive daily from the pulpit and from our leaders; that is, they ought as much as possible to be read and to be respected (not necessarily followed, as we shall see later).

And just for the record, Protestant churches **DO** have traditions. This could be seen in the context of traditional, conservative Evangelical churches whereby certain hymns are sung, certain liturgies are kept and certain creeds are adhered to, or in the opposite context of fringe experiential 'third-wave' Charismatics who have altar calls and read books written by their 'apostles' like C. Peter Wagner.

Now, after establishing the importance of traditions, I would like to caution against the other extreme which was and is still maintained by Rome and her ancient sister the Orthodox Churches, which is the elevation of Tradition to the same authoritative level as Scripture. *Sola Scriptura* explicitly deny to tradition any authority on par or above Scripture. Thus, when evaluating anything, including any and all traditions, all are to be judged according to the Word of God. If they are found wanting, they are to be rejected, and if they are found to be in accordance with Scripture, they are to be embraced. I would defend this characteristic, the sufficiency of Scripture, later.

Now, I would like to go into greater detail the definition of *Sola Scriptura* and to prove it and then defend it against its critics.

Sola Scriptura entails the **necessity, sufficiency, authority** and **perspicuity** of Scripture. By necessity of Scripture, we mean that Scripture is necessary for people to be saved and for Christians to grow in Christ and in their knowledge of Him and live their lives. By sufficiency of Scripture, we mean that Scripture alone as the **supreme** authority is enough for us Christians to be saved and to grow and to know anything about God and His dealings with us that we need to know. By authority of Scripture, we mean that anything which is commanded of us in Scripture must be obeyed. And lastly, by perspicuity of Scripture, we mean that the meaning of Scripture is plain to all; it does not need some scholar using sophisticated tools and means to decipher its esoteric text, instead, anyone whether educated or uneducated, rich or poor, as long as they can read or hear the text in a language they can understand, can understand what Scripture is saying. Of course, underlying the latter three is the **inerrancy** of Scripture.

We shall now look into the topic of the necessity of Scripture.

The necessity of Scripture

All Scripture is breathed out (Gr. θεοπνευστος, transliterated: *theopneustos*) by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16-17 —ESV)

As stated before, what is meant by the necessity of Scripture is that Scripture is necessary for people to be saved (conversion) and for Christians to grow in Christ and in their knowledge of Him, and to live their lives, without which they could not do so. I would like to prove this concept biblically and philosophically. Biblically, the primary proof-text for this concept is that of 2 Tim. 3:16-17 as cited above.

In 2 Tim. 3:16-17, we can see the necessity of Scripture as relating to growth in Christ as it states that "ALL Scripture ... is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be equipped for every good work." Therefore, Scripture is profitable, that is to say Scripture would greatly benefit and help the person in 'teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness'. These four acts state how Scripture is to be used and utilized, with the ultimate aim that we would be trained in righteousness and that we would be equipped to be able to do and to do every good work. Thus, the aim of Scripture is to help us grow in righteousness, and thus more and more Christ-like, with the effect that we would be able to do the good works which God has prepared for us to do (Eph. 2:10). Since that is the express purpose of Scripture, Scripture is necessary for growing in Christ. The necessity of Scripture in conversion can be seen in Rom. 10:13-14, where the preaching of the Good News of the Gospel to that person is necessary for him/her to come to Christ.

An objection may be raised to the effect that though the purpose of Scripture is help believers to grow in Christ, there may be other methods which are just as effective. Firstly, however, there are no other methods that are mentioned in Scripture, with the exception of 'traditions' which will be discussed in the section on the sufficiency of Scripture. This is because the Roman Catholic, and also Orthodox (Greek, Russian, Eastern etc.), view is that both Tradition and Scripture are necessary, thus they do not formally deny the necessity of Scripture. Secondly, and more importantly, Jesus said that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and that no one comes to the Father except through Him. (Jn. 14:6). Since He is the only Way, to grow in Christ one needs to follow Him, and that includes what is mentioned in Scripture. Thus, any other method, if there be any, must take the Scriptures into account, and thus Scripture is necessary.

Logically, in order to prove the necessity of Scripture, I would need to show a couple of things. I would need to show that Scripture is needed to cause all these good things, which I shall collectively name godly works. Similarly, I would need to prove that the little or no use and application of Scripture is accompanied with the absence of these godly works. Logically, this is what I would need to prove:

Only if *p*, then *q* (*p* is necessary for *q*; *p* is a sufficient condition for *q*)

where p = Scripture is used and applied properly
 q = godly works are done

Thus,
Only if p , then q = Only if not q , then not p

$q \supset p = \sim p \supset \sim q$ (Logical form)

The relation that the lack of usage and application of Scripture is the cause of the lack of godly works ($\sim p \supset \sim q$) can be proven in the fact that in places where the Gospel is not heard and thus there is totally no usage and application of Scripture, no one is a Christian and therefore nobody can even begin to grow in Christ, and there are no exceptions. Similarly, there are no cases of new believers growing without reading the Word. Thus, the relation is proven and Scripture is necessary.

A very strong argument for the necessity of Scripture is through epistemology. How does one recognize what a godly life is except through the description from Scripture? How does one know one is a Christian unless they test themselves by the Scripture? The mere tagging of someone as a Christian, as in the case in people whose parents are Christians, does not make oneself a follower of Christ and thus can be legitimately called a Christian. Christ said that unless one is born again (regenerated), one cannot enter the Kingdom of God (Jn. 3:3). Even more problematic for nominalism is the teaching of Christ in the Sermon of the Mount where he said that not everyone who calls Him Lord, Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven (i.e. be saved) (Mt. 7:21), thus showing that mere calling of oneself a Christian does not make one a Christian. Therefore, epistemologically, it is proven that Scripture is necessary for all these godly works.

Biblically and philosophically, the doctrine of the necessity of Scripture is proven. So what are the implications of this doctrine?

Firstly, since Scripture is necessary, all Christian activity must be founded on Scripture, and all Christian teaching and doctrines also. Believers are to read the Word of God for spiritual nourishment and pastors are to preach from God's Word to feed the flock. The latter two cannot be emphasized further, for believers to neglect their study of God's Word and for pastors to neglect to preach it is to practically deny the necessity of Scripture. Let us therefore as God's people regularly read and study His Word and to grow in Christ, the head of the Church.

The Sufficiency of Scripture

The doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture basically states that all that we need to know to live our lives as Christians can be found in the Scriptures and in them only. Thus, all other materials, tools or other stuff that are present are at best secondary sources of authority, to be used inasmuch as they agree with the primary authority of Scripture. This is what I would set off to prove in this section. After proving the necessity of Scripture in the last section, I will use Scripture to prove the sufficiency of Scripture. This is valid because since Scripture is necessary for Christians and for correct Christian teachings and doctrines, we would need to consult Scripture itself on this particular topic also. References to other sources are not needed since, if Scripture itself does teach that Scripture is sufficient, then all other sources will either agree with Scripture, or disagree with it. If it agrees with Scripture that Scripture itself is sufficient, then the extra proof is superfluous. Consequently, if it does not agree with Scripture and thus contradict Scripture, since Scripture is necessary and thus it must be accepted, Scripture's verdict on its own sufficiency will stand while the others will fall. Of course, if the sources do not speak at all on the subject at hand, it is totally useless with regards to this topic.

I would like to tackle this topic first using the same passage that was used to prove the necessity of Scripture — 2 Tim. 3:16-17.

All Scripture is breathed out (Gr. θεοπνευστος, transliterated: theopneustos) by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16-17 —ESV)

From this passage, I have shown previously how it mentions that Scripture is to be used for the building up of believers in righteousness. I would like to focus now on the later part of the passage in verse 17, where it is stated that "... the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work". From this part, we can see that Scripture is meant to equip us Christians for EVERY good work, not just some, but EVERY single one of them. Furthermore, we are to be made competent to do these good works. In the NIV, it is stated that the man of God

may be "thoroughly equipped" and the NASB translates the word as adequate. The word translated 'competent' here is ἀρτιος (transliterated: *artios*) in the Greek, which according to the [NAS New Testament Lexicon](#) on [crosswalk.com](#) is used only once in the Greek NT and its definitions are:

1) Fitted,

2) complete, perfect (a) having reference apparently to "special aptitude for given uses"

For those who want more concrete proof, I looked up my copy of the Word Study Greek-English New Testament with complete concordance by Paul R. McReynolds^[3] and it was confirmed that this was the case. For those people who love the KJV, this is the case also, with the word *artios* occurring once there and being translated perfect in the KJV.

Thus, we can see that the passage says that we are perfectly and completely equipped to be able to do every good work by the usage and application of Scripture. Now what is the Scriptural definition of good works?

In Scripture, good works are defined differently according to the context. One has just to search for the phrase 'good work' or 'good works' in the search engines on sites such as [BibleGateway](#) which contain the entire Bible to find out. However, we are only interested in the good works that the saints do, which would tell us what Scripture means when it states that we are able to do every good work.

The phrase "good work(s)" as talking about the saints occurs a few times in the Bible. They are found in Mat. 5:16; 2 Cor. 9:8; Eph. 2:10; Col. 1:10; 2 Thess. 2:17; 1 Tim. 2:10; 1 Tim. 5:10; 1 Tim. 5:25; 6:18; 2 Tim. 2:21; Titus 1:16; Titus 2:7; Titus 2:14; Titus 3:1,8,14 and Heb. 10:24. In order to know what "good works" of the saints are, let us look to these verses.

In Mat. 5:16, the idea of good works that the saints do are linked to the idea of being the light of the world. Therefore, we can see that these good works are the works which we do which witness to people and bring glory to God. In 1 Tim 2:10, Paul tells Timothy to tell women to adorn themselves with good works which is proper for those who profess godliness. Thus, this verse in its context tells us that good works and godliness go hand in hand. In 1 Tim. 5:10, we can see some examples of good works which women ought to do, which are bringing up children, showing hospitality and care towards the saints and the afflicted. Verse 25 says that good works are plain for all to see and cannot remain hidden. In 1 Tim. 6:18, Paul admonishes the rich to do good works in being generous and ready to share. We can see further in Titus 1:16 that people who teach false doctrines, in this context the insubordinate people of the circumcision party aka the Judaizers (Titus 1:10), who are not sound in the faith (v. 13), are not fit for any good work, and in fact their false teaching and unsound faith are their wicked works which show their denial of Christ (v. 16). Therefore, it can be seen that only people with sound doctrine and faith could do good works in accordance with God's will for the saints.

In Titus 2:7, the context tells us that good works consist in godly behavior, and verse 14 tells us that believers will be zealous in doing good works. Similarly Titus 3:1 and verse 14, together with Heb. 10:24, exhort believers to do good works. Titus 3:8 on the other hand shows that correct doctrine especially in salvation (Titus 3:4-7) would make people careful in doing good works.

From these verses so far, we can see that good works in the biblical sense (as opposed to the secular sense) for the saints is intricately linked with godliness and caused by embracing of correct doctrine, and that only people with sound doctrine and faith can do such good works. Also, these good works would make us witnesses for Christ as lights in the world. Examples of such good works can be seen in the passages quoted, and all of them bring glory to God. Therefore, given this definition of good work(s), let us apply that to 2 Tim. 3:16-17 and also to the remaining verses where the term good work(s) appear — 2 Cor. 9:8; Eph. 2:10; Col. 1:10 and 2 Thess. 2:17.

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every **good work** (2 Cor. 9:8 -ESV)

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for **good works**, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Eph. 2:10 -ESV)

so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every **good work** and increasing in the knowledge of God. (Col. 1:10 -ESV)

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every **good work** and word (2 Thess. 2:16-17 -ESV)

Applying this definition to 2 Tim. 3:16-17 give us the idea that all Scripture is sufficient, adequate, complete and perfect to help Christians do every good work. Since good works are caused by embracing of correct doctrine, for Scripture to be able to be adequate and complete to help Christians to do every good work, Scripture must contain **ALL** the doctrines needed for Christians to believe in, nothing more, nothing less. Since good works is intricately tied to godliness, Scripture is all the Christian will ever need to grow in Christ-likeness and maturity in Him. Since good works are tied to being witnessed for Christ as the light of the world, Scripture must therefore be able to equip us **completely** to be witnesses for Christ in the world. In short, all Christian activity and growth can be completely accomplished through Scripture alone. Thus, as of this moment, the sufficiency of Scripture has been proven already. We will however finish looking through all the other verses.

Applying this to 2 Cor. 9:8, we can see that God's grace is able to help us abound in every good work. The context is on giving to the Lord, but in the middle of this passage on giving is this amazing verse which tell us that God's grace is sufficient for us to do every good work. Granted, this passage is talking about giving to the Lord, and definitely giving to the Lord is a good work, but the context doesn't negate the fact that God's grace is sufficient for us in doing **EVERY** good work, especially in giving to the Lord. Knowing from 2 Tim. 3:16-17 that Scripture is sufficient for every good work, putting the two principles together just shows that God's grace works through the use and application of Scripture.

Eph. 2:10 comes on the heel of the great soteriological passage of Eph. 2:8-9, where the great truths of *Sola Fide* and (slightly) of *Sola Gratia* are found. We are reminded that it is by grace we are saved, through faith, and the whole salvific enterprise is not from ourselves or our works, lest anybody should boast. Eph. 2:10 ends off this passage by stating that we are saved to do good works which God has foreordained that we Christians should walk in them. Thus, this again shows that biblical good works can only be done by the saints after they are saved by God's grace through faith.

As a side note, the reason why biblical good works can never be done by non-Christians is that non-Christians DO NOT seek to grow in godliness, never mind about seeking God (Rom. 3: 10-12)

In Col. 1:10, we can see that good works are considered good fruits, and they are pleasing to God. This brings to mind the parallel passage of Mt. 7:17-20, and this just goes to confirm that non-Christians cannot do good works, and the presence of biblical good works confirm the salvation status of a professing Christian. As for the final passage of 2 Thess. 2:16-17, we can see that this passage shows that it is Christ Himself who enables us to do good works. Therefore, even good works are by grace alone, and we are empowered to do them by God's grace in Christ through the usage and application of Scripture, which as we shall see in the section of the perspicuity of Scripture is done through the power of the Holy Spirit.

I would here like to tackle one canard which I have heard some people mentioned before:

Christ is sufficient, but the Scriptures are not. Christ (or Christianity) is bigger than the Scriptures. You can't contain Christ inside a book.

I would like to at least assume that people who make these assertions do at least think that Christianity is about Christ (If not, why call it 'Christianity' in the first place?) I would also like to assume that these people at least hold to the necessity of Scripture, though I would acknowledge that they think that Scripture is just one of many sources and that "you can't put God into a box (in this case a book)". With this, I would like to tackle this canard and then furnish a few more proofs for the sufficiency of Scripture.

First of all, I have shown that if a person holds to the necessity of Scripture, then it logically follows that the person must therefore hold that the Scriptures are sufficient. The only exception to this rule, which I will discuss later, is that if you hold the Scriptures not to be inerrant; they are errors in the Bible. There are problems with that view also, but I disgress. Anyway, it still stands that anyone who believes in an inerrant Bible and regards Scripture as necessary must logically hold to the sufficiency of Scripture.

Secondly, such a false dichotomy between Christ and/or Christianity and the Bible is totally illogical and contradicts Scripture itself. The reason why this is so is because epistemologically, how does one know who Christ is except through the Scriptures? Having proven the necessity of Scripture, definitely at least one of the sources of information about Christ must be the Scripture themselves, with Christ Himself saying that the Scriptures testify

about Him (Jn. 5:39). Furthermore, how does one know whether the "Christ" who is supposedly speaking in other works is the true Christ or one of the many false antichrists? The Scriptures warn us about the many antichrists who have come and are coming into this world (1 Jn. 2:18, 2 Jn. 1:7). In the Olivet discourse, Jesus warned about many who would come in the last days and claim to be the Christ and lead many astray (Mt. 24:4-5, 23). Furthermore, these false christ and false prophets will perform great signs and wonders so as to lead people astray. (Mt. 24:24-26). Therefore, how can one discern between the true Christ and the false christs? Miracles, signs and wonders mean nothing at all, since the false christs can do these things as well. The only way to do so is by going to the Scriptures, whereby since Scripture is necessary, it is the only source which is not itself questionable, if you accept the authority of Scripture, that is.

Now, some people may say that they can accept the fact that Jesus revealed Himself in the Scriptures, and that only through the Scriptures can you discern between the true Christ and the false one. However, they maintain that Christ is still not confined within a book, as Christ is infinite whereas the Bible is finite. To that statement per se, I can agree. However, the question is not whether Christ is confined to a book, but what the Scriptures say about what is revealed in it. To this, let us consider Deut. 29:29, where it is written:

The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the works of this law. (Deut. 29:29 -ESV)

From this verse, we can see that God has told us in His Word that the things revealed belong to us that we may do the works He has told us to do (which in the OT means obeying the laws given by God). The purposes of the revealed things as stated in Scripture is to make us profitable for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17). More importantly for this situation, Deut 29:29 says that the secret things belong to the LORD. So, even though Christ is not limited to a book as He is infinite, what is not known about Christ — being not revealed in Scripture, are the secret things of God which belong to Him and Him alone and which we **DO NOT NEED TO KNOW**. Their absence would not in any sense make us deficient in whatever way here on earth, be it in doctrine or in applied doctrine in good works, since God has promised us that what is revealed is sufficient. Therefore, the above canard is totally useless against the case for the sufficiency of Scripture.

To further prove the sufficiency of Scripture, let us look at Col. 2:3. In this verse, Paul wrote that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ. Since Christ is revealed to us in Scripture (Jn. 1:14; Jn 5:39), all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in Scripture also. Not some, but all. Therefore, Scripture is sufficient for us.

In conclusion of this section, I would like to quote Ps. 19:7-11 where it tells us about the perfection of Scripture and extols its benefits in the lives of the saints:

The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul;
the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;
the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;
the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;
the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether.
More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.
Moreover, by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward. (Ps. 19:7-11 -ESV)

Amen.

The authority of Scripture

The doctrine of the authority of Scripture states that Scripture has authority in the lives of believers and whatever it says are to be heeded and obeyed. Taken together with the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture, Scripture is said to be the **supreme** authority in our lives. Now, given merely the doctrine of the necessity of Scripture and the sufficiency of Scripture, the only thing we can say is that the only way to know more about Christianity; to know more about Christ, is through the Scriptures, either primarily or secondarily. However, they do not in and of themselves furnish any reason for anyone, not even Christians, to follow what it says and obey its injunctions and commands. Hence, the doctrine of the authority of Scripture is thus important for us, as it is the catalyst which is needed for the translation of sound doctrine (facts) in Scripture into practical obedience (oughts - impetus) in godliness towards God. Therefore, anytime a Bible verse is applied by a person into his/her life, that person has de facto practice the doctrine of the authority of Scripture, or at least that part of Scripture which he/she has applied.

I would now set to prove the authority of Scripture. Given the necessity and sufficiency of Scripture, I would use the Bible to prove the authority of Scripture. Later on, I would then look at the extent of the authority of Scripture, as subsumed in the extent of the inspiration of Scripture.

The proof text for the authority of Scripture will be the same one used in proving the necessity and sufficiency of Scripture — 2 Tim. 3:16-17

All Scripture is breathed out (Gr. θεοπνευστος, transliterated: *theopneustos*) by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16-17 —ESV)

For the purpose of proving the authority of Scripture, I would like to concentrate on the front part of this short passage. Whereas the middle part mainly helps in proving the necessity of Scripture, and the latter part in verse 17 mainly helps in proving the sufficiency of Scripture, the front part of this passage speaks about the authority of Scripture. It states that "All Scripture is **breathed out** by God" and because of that, it **THUS** is profitable for all these godly works. This could be seen as all these activities (teaching, reproof, correcting, training) must of necessity presuppose the authority of Scripture to begin with. Only when a person or rule have authority over another can teaching be done by the one in authority to the one under authority. This is the same for reproof, for correcting and for training, all of which require a person to submit to another person or a rule so as to progress further. Therefore, for Scripture to be used to do such activities must of necessity presuppose the authority of Scripture over the one who is being taught, being reproofed, being corrected or being trained.

"All Scripture is breathed out by God ...". The term 'breathed out (by God)' in the Greek is θεοπνευστος (transliterated *theopneustos*) which literally means God-breathed (*theo* = God & *pneusto* = breath) and is translated as such in the NIV. In the NASB and KJV, it is translated as "inspired by God" and "inspiration of God" respectively, from which we get the term the inspiration of Scripture. So, what does it mean for Scripture to be God-breathed or breathed out by God?

The Greek term *theopneustos* occur only once in the Greek New Testament text where it is used to describe all Scripture in 2 Tim. 3:16, and nothing else. First of all, this is a strong internal consistency validation (not proof) for the sufficiency of Scripture, as assuming the sufficiency of Scripture would give rise to the fact that only Scripture is described as God-breathed and nothing else (neither traditions nor emotions nor revelations obtained through prophecies) is described as such, thus validating the sufficiency of Scripture. This one-time usage of the word *theopneustos* as descriptive of Scripture also elevates the status of Scripture. Since *theopneustos* is literally translated as God-breathed, this shows firstly that Scripture has its origin in God and not man. Secondly, as breathed out by God, it reflects and shows the attributes of God. It is this property of Scripture which give Scripture its authority, for it has God's authority due to its nature as being breathed out by God. Since God is God Almighty, the Creator of the world (Gen. 1-2; Rom 1:20; Col. 1:16) and upholder of the universe (Col. 1:17b), He has ownership and thus authority over every single creature that has ever existed and will exist, including even us. Since that is the case, Scripture has authority over believers. In fact, since God creates all and owns all, Scripture has authority over **all** mankind, whether they believe in Him or not.

The inspiration of Scripture: Extent of Inspiration

So far, Scripture has been proven to be necessary, sufficient and authoritative. All of these points are actually descriptive of the core doctrine commonly known as the inspiration of Scripture. In this and later sections, I would like to take a step back and look at the doctrine from another angle, where actually most of the attacks by the liberals are coming from — the extent of the inspiration of Scripture, the inerrancy of Scripture and the Canon of Scripture, before returning to the doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture. In this section, I would discuss the extent of the inspiration of Scripture, which basically focuses on the extent to which the following attributes: necessity, sufficiency and authority, could be applied to the different words and passages of Scripture.

Before I begin, I would like to state how the discussion of the extent of the inspiration of Scripture and the inerrancy of Scripture would be framed. Definitely, there is a considerable correlation and overlap between the two topics, as the degree to which Scripture is inerrant would impact the extent of the inspiration of Scripture, and also part of the discussion of the extent of the inspiration of Scripture would involve the inerrancy or errancy of certain parts or portions of Scripture. To make the discussion simpler, the discussion on the extent of the inspiration of Scripture would primarily focus on the "total inerrancy versus partial inerrancy" split within Evangelicalism and related issues, thus it would assume *a priori* that Scripture is infallible and is meant to function as the Word of God. Conversely, the discussion on the inerrancy of Scripture would make no such assumptions and would be geared towards the position of the Liberals who deny inerrancy altogether and treat the Bible as just another piece of literature to be deconstructed at will.

The historical backdrop upon which such a discussion about the extent of the inspiration of Scripture takes place is that of Evangelicalism in the 20th century. After the devastating attack on the Bible by the "higher critics" in the 19th century, followed by the Fundamentalist/ Liberal split in the early 20th century, Evangelicalism as a whole still haven't settled the issue of biblical inerrancy. However, all Evangelicals presuppose the authority of Scripture as the Word of God which is to be obeyed and thus do not go into the type of destructive criticism which destroy the liberals' faith. Due to the onslaught of naturalism in the form of old earth theories and the theory of evolution, as well as being shown alleged discrepancies and errors in the Bible, some Evangelicals have tried to keep the authority of Scripture while caving in to "proofs" of errors found in it, by inventing the theory of Scripture being "inerrant as in matters of faith and morals" or "infallible", while being not inerrant in all things^[4].

Since such is the case, I would interact with the "partial inerrancy" position at the same foundational level as the Evangelical partial inerrantists. That is to say that I would operate under the presupposition of the authority of Scripture in the lives of believers in spiritual things. I would not be trying to refute every argument which the partial inerrantists throw forward, which many Bible scholars have done^[5], just only to see whether their claims would hold consistently to their beliefs or undermine them, after I have made the case from Scripture regarding this issue, of course.

The case from Scripture

Let us now start off where we had stopped; at 2 Tim. 3:16-17. In the earlier section, I had used the phrase "All Scripture is breathed out by God" to show that Scripture had its origin in God and not Man, thus having within in the very authority of God Himself. Another thing which must be noted is that **all** of scripture is said to be inspired, not some. Thus, this passage seems to extend the inspiration of Scripture to every part of it.

Now, someone might rightly object to the universal application of 2 Tim. 3:16-17 to all of Scripture. Since this letter of Paul to Timothy was written before the New Testament Canon was completed, therefore does this verse only apply to Scripture which was written before Paul wrote 2 Timothy? Also, it does take time for the different Scriptures to be passed from each congregation to the next and then verified as Scripture by each and all of the Christian congregations, thus who knows how many books of the New Testament were known by Timothy then when he received this letter from the apostle Paul? Shouldn't the phrase "all Scripture" be interpreted in its historical context as stating only those books of Scripture which were known to Paul and Timothy at that time?

The short answer to that question is no. Although the argument sounds reasonable, the problem with the objection is that the verse does not lend itself to that type of interpretation. 2 Tim. 3:16-17 states that the extent of inspiration is to 'all Scripture' (Πασα γραφε, transliterated *Pasa Graphē*), thus the verse itself is saying that as long as something is Scripture, it is inspired. The verse does not concern itself with what is Scripture per se, and thus such an argument is invalid.

Another passage often used to prove the inspiration of Scripture is 2 Peter 1:20-21, which states thus:

... knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

From this passage, we can see that no 'prophecy of Scripture' comes from anyone's own personal interpretation, neither was it produced by Man's autonomous free will. Rather, Scripture says that the men who wrote the Scriptures spoke as if God himself was guiding them; being carried along by the Holy Spirit to produce the Scriptures themselves. Therefore, since no prophecy of Scripture came about just by chance or by someone deciding to write Scripture by his own autonomous free will, **all** of Scripture must have come about through the Holy Spirit's leading, and thus all of Scripture in its totality is inspired.

Yet another key passage which is used to defend total inerrancy is found in the words of Jesus Himself in Mt. 5:18

For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

In this verse found within the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was telling his Jewish hearers that not even "an iota, nor a dot" would disappear from the Law until all is accomplished, which will occur at the second judgment when heaven and earth will pass away. An iota (i) is the smallest letter in the Greek alphabet and thus could be easily lost, especially when words are squeezed together in a document and another person has to decipher them. A dot obviously is very small and thus easily lost. In the immediate context, Jesus was telling his Jewish hearers that he

did not come to abolish the Law but to fulfil it (Mt. 5:17), which was appropriate for the scenario since Jesus would seem to contradict some of the laws found in the Law later when he contrasted the normal surface interpretation of some of the laws, which the Pharisees abided by and added their own traditions to help them keep the Law, with their true spiritual meanings and application (Mt. 5:21- 6: 18). Therefore, we can see that Jesus is telling us in this verse that the very words of Scripture themselves are preserved from error, since even an iota and a dot would not disappear from the Law. Since that is the case, this verse tells us that the very words of Scripture are themselves inspired and preserved throughout history, until Christ comes back.

An objection might be raised at this point that this verse only applies to the Law, which comprises the Torah; the first five books of the Old Testament written by Moses containing the Mosaic law. Someone might say that Jesus is saying here that not one word would be altered or removed from the Torah and therefore the Mosaic law would be preserved, and not altered or abrogated or lost. When we look at the verse, definitely, we can see that the verse does speak of the Torah. Also, from the context we can see that the Mosaic law would not be altered, abrogated or lost, but would be fulfilled in Christ (Mt. 5:17). However, it is my contention that the verse can be applied to Scripture as a whole. This is because in the preceding verse the phrase "the Law and the Prophets" were mentioned which is a phrase used in the New Testament to signify the Old Testament Scriptures^[6] (the Tanakh)^[7]. Since verse 18 flows out of verse 17, Jesus was actually also implying that the other books of the Old Testament were similarly inspired. Of course, at that time, none of the New Testament books were written yet so there wasn't a way for Jesus to talk explicitly about them. However, since Jesus mentioned all the Scriptures which were present at that time as equally verbally inspired, it would seem to be the case that what Jesus had in mind was not just the Old Testament Scriptures, but also the entirety of Scripture, even of those who had not been written yet. This could be seen in the case whereby Jesus mentioned that "heaven and earth will pass away, but my (Jesus') words would not pass away" (Mt. 24:35), and where Jesus says that his words are spirit and bring life (Jn. 6:63), thus showing that Jesus treated His words with the same authority as Scripture. Since it has been proven that Scripture is the only supreme authority, at least according to Scripture, then Jesus' words must be Scripture also.

Therefore, Mt. 5:18 does teach the verbal inspiration and preservation of Scripture. We would cover the preservation of Scripture later in the section of the inerrancy of Scripture

Two more prooftexts for the verbal inspiration of Scripture (the doctrine that every word in Scripture is inspired) are Prov. 30:5-6 and Rev. 22:18-19. Prov. 30:5-6 states that

Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar (Prov. 30:5-6 -ESV)

From this verse, we can see that every word of God is true and that we should not add to the words of Scripture, thus showing forth the inspiration of every word found therein.

In Rev. 22:18-19, it is stated:

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

Thus, we can see in the last book of the Scriptural Canon that the words of this book of prophecy in particular are important and not to be added to or removed at will, therefore showing that each individual word in the book of Revelation is inspired. Since this is the last book of the Bible, and this phrase occurs at the end of the book, the phrase is often applied to the entire Bible. Unless one wants to assume different types of inspirations of Scripture, which Scripture does not support, this application is sound. In fact, given 2 Tim. 3:16-17 and 2 Peter 3:15-16 which prove the plenary inspiration of Scripture (the doctrine whereby the totality of Scripture is inspired), there is only one single type of inspiration in all of Scripture, and thus the passage of Rev. 2:18-19 does teach the verbal inspiration of Scripture, after supporting evidences from other Scriptural passages.

In conclusion, from the Bible alone, it can be seen that the Bible do teach what is known as full inerrancy, known as the theory of **verbal plenary inspiration (VPI)** rather than the theory of partial inerrancy. Thus, every single word and every single concept, history and fact found in the Bible is equally inspired. This would definitely include the Creation account of Gen. 1-2, the chronologies found in Scripture in for example Gen. 5 and Mt. 1:1-17, the book of the Songs of Songs etc.

Defense of the doctrine of VPI

I would now go on to look at some of the arguments commonly used to disprove VPI, and to see whether the stand of the partial inerrantists are internally consistent.

When one surveys the arguments by the partial inerrantists, one is hard-pressed to find any biblical argument for partial inerrancy. Obviously, the Scriptures do not explicitly proclaim itself inerrant, but they implicitly do so. The main arguments used by partial inerrantists are mainly by pointing to alleged discrepancies and contradictions in the Bible, or to point that this doctrine of total inerrancy is not believed by others within church history. With respect to Scripture, none of them could validly refute the claims of Scripture regarding its inerrancy, since they hold to the inerrancy of the Scriptures as with regards to spiritual matters. As the inspiration of Scripture is a spiritual issue, none of them could claim that the verses used to prove the inspiration of Scripture are errant. The only thing they could do is to try to give examples of errors in the Bible so as to limit the extent of the application of these verses.

Now, it must first be said that proving errors in the Bible does not by itself disprove the theory of verbal plenary inspiration. By careful exegesis of these verses in context, these verses do not lend themselves to any other interpretation. Therefore, proving errors in the Bible could only undermine the inerrancy of Scripture in all things, including spiritual things, as the verses used to support the inspiration of Scripture are proven false. This is shown in the logical diagram below:

p = The verses used to support VPI are inerrant
q = VPI of the Scriptures is true

If p, then q
~ q
Therefore, ~ p (*Modus tollens*)

Therefore, we can see from this valid argument that the only conclusion that could be gotten from the proving of errors in the Bible is to discard the theory of inerrancy in all things to begin with. Therefore, these partial inerrantists are inconsistent in their view of Scripture. Unless they can prove that the verses used can not support VPI, they should either abandon their unbiblical theory or just follow the path of the liberals before them and throw out the Scriptures. Charges of circular reasoning in this case would not be applicable as the partial inerrantists do state that they believe in the inerrancy of Scripture in spiritual things.

With regards to this doctrine being a new doctrine and not held by the saints in former times, this is certainly not the case. Granted, the term 'verbal plenary inspiration' may not be used, but the concept is still believed^[8]. Even if few people in the early church believe in it, the fact of the matter is that Scripture is the ultimate authority, not what other Christians believe.

We now come down to the major reason people embrace the partial inerrantist position — alleged discrepancies in Scripture and the contradiction the Bible has with certain theories of naturalistic science like evolution. We will deal with the alleged discrepancies in Scripture in the next section under the inerrancy of Scripture and only discuss the contradictions the Bible has with certain theories of science or history. Now, if Scripture is the ultimate authority as in a Christian's life, then Christians should uphold the Bible by faith and reject these naturalistic theories, having faith that these naturalistic theories are actually false. In fact, if one knows how science actually works, one will also know that science has no way of proving Scripture false, since in order for science to know and prove anything, a correct formula is not enough - one must also make a few assumptions regarding the object under investigation and whether there was any interference with the system. For example, science can never prove anything about the age of the earth. Using radiometric dating and rock samples, the scientist must assume uniformitarianism (that the decay rate of the radioactive elements are always constant), and more importantly, the scientist must make certain assumptions about the initial radioisotope ratio and/or amount in the rock. Both of these assumptions cannot be proven or tested, so therefore science cannot know or prove the exact age of that rock. This is the case with all scientific disciplines, so for believers the results from this type of "historical science" inquiry should be ignored. Far better by far to believe in the words of our God who created history than to believe the fallible interpretations of men who are fallible and themselves subjected to the depravity of our human nature.

For history as well as for science, the problem of replying on them is that all of us are daily faced with our own sinful desires, including those people doing the research. The idea that any discipline can ever be neutral (i.e. the myth of the objective scientist following where the evidence leads him) is a lie. As someone who is studying in the life sciences, I can personally say that there are no objective scientists. If we find data which is not consistent with our hypothesis, we would either discard the data by writing it off as contaminated data, or we come out with a hypothesis or other reasons to explain this anomaly. This is so especially when we are doing experiments where the end results are more or less known. And I think most people would be astonished by how many reasons we can use to explain why an experiment was unsuccessful (i.e. contamination due to unwashed test tubes). Of

course, this is not to say that scientists are out to deceive people, but the fact of the matter is that scientists are not quite the objective enquirers of truth that they are made out to be. This is the same for historians too, who use fallible scientific methods sometimes to date artifacts, and who will sometimes make mistakes also.

Since this is so, people who embrace partial inerrancy due to such factors as the Bible being contradictory to naturalistic science are actually very much in error. Whether Scripture is totally inerrant or not must be established through Scripture itself, not by appeal to fallible human disciplines.

One objection which has been raised to the theory of verbal plenary inspiration is that the New Testament writers did not seem to treat the Old Testament as being verbally inspired, since they did not exactly quote the OT writings word for word, not even the Septuagint⁹¹. However, this is an invalid argument. It could very well be the case that as the NT writers quoted OT scripture, their quotes were themselves inspired to be different from the Septuagint and other Greek translations of the OT, and thus we have two different inspired wordings for certain OT texts. Another possibility is the fact that the Septuagint was never verbally inspired in the first place. Just as translations of the Bible into other languages seek to reflect the original meaning of Scripture but will never quite do justice to it, the Septuagint could be similar to our English translations of the Bible like the KJV and not primarily verbally inspired, only secondarily inspired. Since that is the case, the NT writers when quoting the OT scripture in their books would have create a 'primary verbally inspired OT scripture' in the Greek. Whatever the reason, this could not disprove the doctrine of verbal plenary inspiration, since there are ways of explaining how this could be so.

We would now go to the Achilles' heel of the theory of partial inerrancy — epistemology. Why do the partial inerrantists' claim that the spiritual content of Scripture is inerrant, whereas the 'natural' contents found in Scripture are errant? Upon what basis is such a division created? If the 'natural' contents of Scripture are errant, upon what basis could a person defend the inerrant nature of Scripture? Isn't such a division just arbitrary? As I have stated above, if Scripture is errant in its 'natural' facts, then the entire Scripture is suspect to be errant too. Therefore, the partial inerrantists' position is undefendable. Either they return to the biblical view of verbal plenary inspiration, or they should consistently follow the path of the liberals, and throw out the entire Scriptures as being errant.

In conclusion, we have shown that the doctrine of the verbal plenary inspiration (VPI) of Scripture is sound, and that the partial inerrantists' position is untenable. Those who do insist that there are errors in the Bible should reject the inerrancy of Scripture as a whole, and it is to those people that we would now turn to.

The Inerrancy of Scripture

To say that Scripture is inerrant is to say that all of Scripture, every word of Scripture as it is in the autographs is inerrant (Verbal Plenary Inspiration). The opposite view is that the Scriptures are errant; with errors in it, with no viable middle ground. As stated before, there are no explicit evidence for inerrancy, but there are a lot of implicit evidences in Scripture for it. If one abides by the absolute authority and truth of Scripture, one can be confident that there are no errors in the Bible, since the Bible itself say it is without error. Of course, this is a circular argument, but we are getting ahead of ourselves.

So how do opponents of the inerrancy of Scriptures, all liberals, try to disprove inerrancy? Basically, they use the same points and more which the partial inerrantists borrowed to argue against total inerrancy. However, at least the liberals are consistent with their philosophy, since they do not postulate certain parts of Scripture as being inerrant. They attempt to prove their case by (i) Pointing out alleged contradictions in the Bible, (ii) Contradiction with established scientific and historical facts, (iii) Pointing out textual variants and then extrapolating that to say that this show errors in the Bible, and when all else fails, (iv) Saying that doing so makes the Bible a 'paper pope' and is bibliolatry (OR Christ is bigger than the Scriptures).

Now, what do we Christians say to this? All of these are extra-biblical evidences, for sure. That does not necessarily make it wrong, but we must see if they are actually sound arguments against the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture.

(i) Pointing out alleged contradictions in the Bible

If Scripture is inerrant, then all of its facts must be correct. One way of testing this is to see if facts stated in the Scripture are consistent among the different accounts found in certain parts of Scripture. For example, the Resurrection accounts in the different Gospels seem to be different in some places. In the account in Matthew, it is stated that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb (Mt. 28:1) whereas in John, it is stated that Mary Magdalene came to the tomb (Jn. 20:1). This appears to be a contradiction here. However, just because the Johannine account mention Mary Magdalene only does not imply that **only** Mary Magdalene was present. If I say

that there is one marble (on a plate containing two marbles), I would not be lying unless I say there is **only** one marble. Thus, in evaluating supposed contradictions in the Bible, we must check to see whether the 'contradictions' is due to our reading our low-context interpretation into the Bible, as the Bible is a high-context text rather than a low-context one as our modern society now is. It is my belief that most of the supposed errors and contradictions in the Bible are in actually neither and are simply presenting the truth in different ways which may cause difficulties due to our low-context reading lenses^[10].

However, are there any errors or contradictions in the Bible which are really valid? A few numerical errors found in the Bible, like a numerical inflation of 10 times could be seen when comparing passages like 2 Sam. 10:18 and 1 Chron. 19:18. Also, there seem to be a discrepancy found between the genealogies of Luke and Genesis, with Lk 3:36 having an extra Cainan, supposedly the son of Arphaxad, in it, which is not found in the Genesis account^[11]. However, when one counts such errors, there are in actual fact **extremely few** of such genuine errors in the manuscripts^{[12],[13]} and such errors do not necessarily show that these contradictions are also found in the autographs. Also, such errors only implicate a small amount of the Scriptures and their existence do not touch any major teaching or doctrine in the Bible. Since such is the case, their existence do not negate the teaching of the inerrancy of the Bible in its autographs.

But then some may say that such a move make the inerrancy of Scripture unfalsifiable and also it is ridiculous for us to say that the Bible is inerrant except for the few errors in the Bible. First of all, inerrancy is preserved for the autographs only, not the apographs, which are inerrant inasmuch as they conform to the autograph. For the charge that such a claim would make the teaching unfalsifiable, let it be clear first that this doctrine is primarily for Scriptural and theological reasons, not for its 'scientific' verifiability. Secondly, that is what the science of (lower) textual criticism is for, to correct any copyist errors which had made its way into some of the manuscripts and our Bibles. Thirdly, as I have mentioned, no major doctrines, in fact not even one doctrine mentioned in the Bible, is affected by these copyist errors^[14]. For all these reasons, the doctrines of the inerrancy of Scripture and the preservation of Scripture, which will be talked about later, are still maintained.

(ii) Contradictions with established scientific and historical facts

As I have mentioned before in the previous sections, the scientific method is fallible, especially when dealing with the historical sciences, as there are way too many variables and events which are assumed *a priori* when trying to reconstruct what actually happened. Typically, the philosophical theory of uniformitarianism is assumed which the scientific data can neither prove nor disprove. The historical theories and 'facts' of relevance to the biblical data falls to the same fallacy also since their dates are often found using scientific methods such as carbon dating. Since such is the case, such contradictions are not important to the doctrine of inerrancy, since if there exists a contradiction, the scientific or historical 'facts' can legitimately be assumed to be wrong as they rest on an unproved philosophical principle.

(iii) Pointing out textual variants and then extrapolating that to say that this show errors in the Bible

The existence of textual variants, most notably that between the Critical Text and the Majority Text traditions, could very well be exploited and extrapolated to say that such variants show that there are errors in the Bible, since the autograph would definitely have only one reading. However, approximately 99.5% of the Bible which account for all the doctrines in the Bible agree completely all of the time^[15], and therefore to extrapolate from the existence of textual variants to the existence of errors found in the Bible is invalid.

(iv) Saying that doing so makes the Bible a 'paper pope' and is bibliolatry (OR Christ is bigger than the Scriptures).

When all else fails, this is often the 'best' accusation, often made by the liberals within so-called Protestant circles^[16]. However, this is simply ridiculous, as obviously, this charge is not about people bowing down to a physical Bible and offering incense and sacrifices to it (which would be true bibliolatry) but of people revering God's Word. If the Bible is truly the Word of God, and the words therein are God-breathed, then what the Bible says is what God says. Since that is the case, believing the Bible and following its precepts is the same as following God. These people therefore blaspheme God by implying that to obeying Him and to treat His words with reverence is idolatry. To liken the words of God to the pope is highly insulting, noting that the Pope is an antichrist^[17]. Nevertheless, the issue of the comparison is related to that of ultimate authority, which we shall cover later.

The Canon of Scripture

Carrying on after proving the inerrancy of Scripture, I would like to go on to a related issue — the Canon of Scripture, before going on to the issue of ultimate authority which undergirds everything, and finishing with the preservation of Scripture.

The Canon of Scripture refers to the books which are to be found in the Scriptures, to be regarded as the Christian's Rule of Faith. In fact, the word Canon comes from a Hebrew and Greek word and basically means something by which to keep straight; a rule^[18]. Thus, the Canon delineates which books are considered to be the Word of God and which books aren't to be considered as such.

Most liberals, probably knowing the weakness of their position with regards to the Bible, question the Bible itself at its core, by questioning the Canon of Scripture. If one holds to the Canon of Scripture as delineating between the inspired writings and the non-inspired ones, then there is simply no logically consistent way that one can hold to errancy of Scripture in light of the evidences, manuscript and otherwise, and thus there is no way one can reject the other doctrines about the Bible without rejecting Christianity. Therefore, the liberals attack the Canon of Scripture, as only then can they still logically be a 'Christian' (in the sense that their worldview is logically consistent with their idea and understanding of Christianity) and remain a liberal.

The Christian Canon is typically made up of 66 books; 39 books in the Old Testament (OT), and 27 books in the New Testament. They are made up of:

OT

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy — Torah or Law

Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi — Prophets

Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Songs of songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles — Writings

NT

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John — Gospels

Acts — History

Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1

Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon — Pauline Epistles

Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude — General Epistles

Revelation — Apocalyptic

The Christian Canon differs from the Roman Catholic Canon in that they add the Apocrypha into their Canon, and their Canon differ from the Orthodox churches also. I would not go into detail over which version of the canon is correct, but instead focus more on the issue of canonicity with regards to the liberals.

The liberals question and reject the idea of the Canon by essentially positing that the Canon was decided by men and thus they could have added in or rejected certain books which are actually authentic books representing what they call 'true Christianity'. The most well-known example of such liberal thinking is that found in the blasphemous and hugely popular novel (and adopted to film) by Dan Brown entitled *The Da Vinci Code*, in which Brown had his fictitious expert in his novel saying that the Council of Nicea and the Emperor Constantine had decided which books were placed into the canon of Scripture. Liberals can also use the example of the different Canons found within Christendom to show the fact that the Canon is ultimately decided by Man. Of course, the historical development of the Canon shows that the Church was the one who finally decided on the Canon, after accepting some disputed books and then rejecting them, or rejecting other disputed books and then accepting them later^[19], which the liberals use to promote the idea that the Canon was decided by fallible, biased Man. The Nag Hammadi finds of the Gnostic gospels and the idea of secret gospels in general also have given liberals fuel to bolster their claims of the Bible being essentially a work of men and not the Word of God.

So, how should we respond to all these attacks? To the existence of different canons in visible Christendom, it must be said that to infer from this that the Canon of Scripture is suspect is a non sequitur. All three traditions (Protestant, Roman Catholic, Orthodox) believe in a fixed Canon while disputing on some of the books which the other side has or hasn't in the Canon of Scripture. Obviously, one side is right and the others are wrong. As an Reformed Evangelical Protestant, I would definitely say that the Protestant Canon is the Christian one, and this is backed up by historical and internal evidence of the rejected writings^[20]. Also, based on historical and literary

evidences, the 'secret Gospels' like for example those in the Nag Hammadi finds are also rejected as being part of the Canon^[21].

The main thrust of the liberal arguments is the argument that the Canon was decided by Man, who were often assumed to be biased in their selection of books to add in the Canon. Feminists and New-Agers could therefore claim that these people suppress the Gnostic 'gospels' as they were patristic and biased against women. Also, I would like to take note that Roman Catholics use a similar form of argumentation to push their argument for the primacy of the Church over that of the Word. What all these arguments have in common is the argument that people create the canon of Scripture. However, this argument is flawed. The canon was recognized by the Church, not created by it^[22]. Since the canon was recognized by the Church, the Church did not have any liberty to add to or remove books from the Scriptures, but to humbly recognize and receive these canonical books as Scripture. Was it possible for the Church and Christians in general to rebel against God and not accept those books which are meant to be canonical? **No**, for God has said that His Will shall be accomplished and not be thwarted (Dan. 4:35). If God intends for these books to be His Word, it will be done as such. Also, it is written that God's Word in the Scriptures is eternal, standing firm in the heavens (Ps. 119:89), and thus its contents do not dependent on Man's decision of the books of the Canon.

But what about the Roman Catholic church or the Orthodox churches, some might ask? We can see that the Roman church-state only added the Apocrypha during and after the Council of Trent^[23], and the Orthodox churches basically accepts all of the Apocrypha, even those that the Roman state-church rejects. The Roman acceptance of the Apocrypha is thus rather recent and was after the Reformation and therefore this does not infringe on the canon of Scripture. As with regards to the Orthodox churches, they do not make a clear distinction between Scripture and Tradition, in fact placing Scripture as the preeminent tradition among many forms^[24]. Therefore, nothing much about the Canon can be made from the Orthodox position.

Since this is the case, all the arguments by the liberals and the defense of Rome for *Sola Ecclesia* is undercut and rendered unsound. The doctrine of the existence of the inspired Canon of Scripture in its present form as stated above with 66 books is thus validated.

What do you place your faith on? The issue of ultimate authority

As it can be seen, I have been using Scripture so far to prove all its own attributes. Of course, epistemologically, one must take into account one's own holy text in order to find out what it says about itself. Through the use of Scripture and a few other evidences, I have managed to prove all the above attributes of Scripture. However, isn't the whole argument so far just an exercise in circular reasoning? Using Scripture to prove the attributes of Scripture; using Scripture in fact to prove and undergird almost every argument for these attributes, seems like reasoning in one big circle. So why should our arguments to be taken seriously at all, since circular reasoning is normally one big logical fallacy?

This whole idea of engaging in circular reasoning, however, does not constitute a logical fallacy in this instance. It must be reminded that the issue here is about ultimate authority. What I have done so far, in appealing to Scripture over and over again, is to treat it as my ultimate authority. In the post on the inerrancy of Scripture, it was stated that opponents of verbal, plenary inspiration would say that Christians (or fundamentalists as they call us) turn the Bible into a 'paper pope'. In the technical sense of the term, these opponents are right. We are treating the Bible as our ultimate authority.

Now, then, an ultimate authority cannot appeal to anything but itself, since by doing so it would acknowledge another to be an authority higher than itself and it is therefore not the ultimate authority. Therefore, epistemologically, all reasoning on ultimate authority would by necessity be circular. Let us see how the liberals and other non-Christian worldview are actually circular also.

The old-time liberals of the Higher Criticism group, when deconstructing the Bible, are actually postulating that their intellect, or rather the collective intellect of the liberals, are to function as the ultimate authority in all things. There is simply no reason whatsoever that can be given as to why they are so sure that all of them by their intellect could not be wrong. They may admit that they could individually be wrong, but collectively, they would deny that they could be wrong since they believe that they could correct each other's mistakes. However, false premises give rise to false conclusions. If everybody share the same false premises, then no matter how much thought is given to the problem, the best you can get are valid arguments which are unsound due to the false premise embraced. This is the fallacy of Rationalism and all who base their beliefs on their mind or the collective worldview in society (like for example the scientific evolutionary establishment). In fact, this describe the entire discipline of philosophy apart from God and all secular humanist thought.

As for non-Christian religions, it need not be said that they have their religious books or teachings which are similarly circular in reasoning (unless they are read through the lens of rationalist discourse, which would come under the fallacy of Rationalism). Islam for example have as its ultimate authority in the Koran. Try asking a devout Muslim why something is correct and they will say that the Koran (or the Hadiths) say it is correct. Try questioning their holy books and they would not be able to answer that question except to say that the Koran (or the Hadiths) say so.

Since that is the case, the liberals and rationalists among others who attack Christianity by saying that all such proofs for its inerrancy etc are circular are by themselves engaging in circular reasoning. They have no right whatsoever to call us to account for doing so since no one can do otherwise.

But this then opens up a Pandora's box. For then how can we decide which system is correct? Since there is no such thing as neutral ground, upon which can one make an informed decision regarding the correctness of any religious/ philosophical system, how then can one make a correct choice? What makes one system better than the other? Some try to validate postmodernism by claiming such epistemologically nihilism. However, if postmodernism is correct, then there is not one system that is better than the other, except that the postmodern system is better than all exclusive systems (which goes to show that postmodernism is self-defeating). How then can one decide between different systems?

I, of course, as a Christian, would claim the Scripture as ultimate authority and God the ultimate authority over the world. Many other religions and religo-philosophies claim ultimate authority status for their respective books and figures and ideas also. What then differentiates the true and the false one, or the good and the better one? Since Christianity is an exclusive religion (Jn. 14:7), the contrast is between true religion in Christianity and the other false religions and philosophies. How one could compare them is by comparing the consistency of each religious or religo-philosophical system, since truth is consistent with itself. Test its internal consistency and also check its consistency with the external world, as they are supposed to describe the external world. It is my contention that Christianity passes both tests, and none others do so, and thus taking Scripture as our ultimate authority is the supremely and only rational thing to do.

The preservation of Scripture

I would now like to go on to the topic of the preservation of Scripture.

In the section regarding my defence of Verbal Plenary Inspiration (VPI), it was commented that the particular defence I have made does not establish that what we have now is the very Word of God, only that it is 99% of the Word of God, and I agreed. Although Verbal Plenary Inerrancy of the original autographs have been proved from the Scriptures, the existence of errors in the apographs, and the fact that the science of textual criticism will never by itself be able to confidently deliver a text which is 100% free from error, could erode our confidence in the Word of God. What use is an inerrant Bible if we do not have it with us? Or so the saying goes.

Before we go on further, it must be granted that the doctrine of VPI is useful in and of itself apart from any consideration of the preservation of Scripture. Although we do not have the autographs with us now, acknowledgement of the VPI of the autographs would give us the right to say that we have an objective absolute standard of truth. Conversely, if VPI is rejected, then what right does anyone have to say that this word or phrase or even concept is actually found or not found in the Scriptures? Also, consideration of Greek and Hebrew grammatical constructs would be of no use in the interpretation of Scripture, and thus alternative readings which contain serious errors in biblical exegesis could not be faulted. For example, if the Scriptures were not verbally inspired, why can't a person who read John 6:44-45 say that the act of coming to Christ determines who is being drawn to Christ, and not the biblical understanding that the drawing of the elect to Christ determines who will come to Christ? Therefore, although the doctrine of VPI does not by itself give us any confidence that we currently have the inerrant Word of God with us, it does have its practical benefits.

To have assurance that our current bibles are indeed the inerrant Word of God, the doctrine of preservation of Scripture is required. The doctrine of preservation of Scripture basically says that God has preserved His Word in all ages and at all times such that believers can be certain that what we have with us now is the authoritative Word of God which is *theopneustos* (God-breathed). Note that it does not say that any particular copy of any particular version of the Bible that we have is the Word of God, otherwise anybody with the blasphemous pervasion called *The Message* could say that he/she has the authoritative, inerrant Word of God with him/her when he/she in actual fact doesn't have it. It does, however, say that if we get a good Bible where the translators honor God's Word in its translation (word for word translation), we will have God's authoritative Word with and for us.

Now, there has been in some conservative/ fundamentalist circles a controversy regarding the preservation of the Bible. Some of them propose that the preservation of the Bible be extended to the apographs also. More specifically, they extend preservation to include either the KJV (Ruckmanite^[25]), or to the TR (*Textus Receptus*) (which include people currently in the Bible-Presbyterian church like Dr. Jeffrey Khoo, academic dean of FEBC^[26]). I am not going to enter this particular debate, except to note that the doctrine of preservation can and does exist independently of these two teachings.

The doctrine of preservation can be found in passages of the Bible like Ps. 119:89, 160 which state that God's Word is eternal. Similarly, Is. 40:8 in its context (Is. 40:6-8) states explicitly that though men die and their glory fades away, God's Word still remain. The doctrine of preservation is boosted with the verse Mt. 5:18 where Jesus, as the Son of God who never lies, proclaims that not even a dot or an iota would disappear from the Scriptures. Since such is the case, definitely in every age and time, the people of God will never fail to have the Word of God with them, and thus the doctrine of preservation is proved.

Another line of deductive argument can be made from the fact that Jesus has promised that his Church will always be present on this earth until he comes again, in Mt. 16: 18. Since the Church of God will always be preserved by God, and also since the people of God need the Word of God in order to grow (2 Tim. 3:15-16) and to multiply (Rom. 10:17), therefore in order for the Church to stand, her people must have the Word of God. Thus, the doctrine of the preservation of Scripture is hereby proved.

But then, some may ask, how does this doctrine of preservation works out in the face of the facts of textual variants and copyist errors? As stated above, we start off with the facts of Scripture *a priori* (by faith), then we tackle the issues, not the other way round using textual criticism in an attempt to discover the inerrant Scriptures. Therefore, starting from the standpoint of a preserved, verbally plenary inspired Bible, we can see that the phenomena of textual variants and copyist errors do not pose a problem at all to the doctrine of preservation, as we shall see.

Firstly, the idea of plenary preservation of Scriptures has no conflict whatsoever with the facts of the known errors and variants, judging by the nature and type of errors and variants. This is the most important aspect, since it is the content of the Scripture that is most important for us Christians. Secondly, although there are textual variants and minor errors, it could still be the case that we have the very words of Scripture in the autograph found among the many different manuscripts that are available to us. Since such is the case, all these facts do not pose a problem for the doctrine of preservation, and thus we can be certain of our bibles being the very Word of God itself. But then what about the saints in ancient times who do not have so many manuscripts to look at? Well, if we believe that God is faithful to His people, then of course we can believe that what they had is sufficient for them, just as what we have is sufficient for us.

Ultimately, the whole issue boils down to a matter of faith; faith in the Word of God and in the Sovereignty of God to do what he says he would do regardless of human intentions or free will. If we believe in a God who is absolutely sovereign, and He has decided to reveal Himself in His Word, then He will never fail to preserve His Word even though Man may try to distort and corrupt it, or lost or destroy the various Bible manuscripts, or just let it disintegrate over time. And thus the doctrine of the preservation of Scripture is proved.

The perspicuity of Scripture

The perspicuity of Scripture is basically the doctrine which states that Scripture is plain to all who will read it. Scripture is thus not an esoteric text whereby only a select elite few could decipher its 'deeper meaning', but to all who would read or hear the text for themselves in a language they understand, they could learn from Scripture and know God from it.

Now, what does this doctrine actually mean? Does this doctrine negate the necessity of studying the Bible, especially in the original languages? To answer this and other questions, I would like to further expound on what this doctrine actually means and what it does NOT mean, and then showing the proofs for this doctrine from Scripture.

First of all, this doctrine says that the Scripture is plain to all people who truly are interested in finding out what it actually says. It does not mean that it is plain to someone who comes to Scripture with preconceived bias and conclusions, and definitely not with a superior prideful attitude towards Scripture. Secondly, this doctrine says that a person is able to know what the Scriptures say if they could understand the words and concepts as expressed in a language they can understand. It thus does not mean that the person who reads it can understand everything in the Scriptures if they do not comprehend the words used in it. This doctrine also DOES not say that all things in Scripture can be similarly understood easily, but it confesses with the Westminster Confession where it states that

'All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed, for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them'^[27].

So does the Scriptures support this doctrine of perspicuity? It does. First of all, we can take note that the Scriptures are written to be read, memorized (Ps. 119:11), meditated upon (Josh. 1:8, Ps. 119:97), taught (2 Tim. 3:16), applied (2 Tim. 3:16-17) and obeyed (Ps. 119:129). This is just but a sample of the verses that can be used to support the ways in which Scripture is to be used. Now, if Scriptures are to be used by Christians in such a manner, surely this presupposes that the Scriptures can be understood by those who read it, otherwise how can they be utilized in such a manner? However, could it be that perhaps the Scripture were to be read and interpreted by the clergy and then the laity would then do all these godly things, while leaving the interpretation of Scripture exclusively to the clergy?

We can see from the Scriptures how the Scripture were read and interpreted, which would inform us on whether there exists such a clergy/ laity distinction with regards to the interpretation of Scripture. First of all, during the time of Moses, the Jews were commanded to obey all the commands and the decrees of the LORD (Deut. 11:13; 11:1), to memorize them (Deut. 11:18), and to teach their children the Law of God (Deut. 11:19). Note that this command was given to all the Jews. More specifically, the command to teach their children was given to the father who is the head in the household. This shows that all the Jews are to know the Law (the given Scriptures of their time). Furthermore, since for the fathers it involves teaching the children, they must first understand the Scriptures before they teach their children. Therefore, such reading and understanding of the Scriptures is not limited to the 'clergy' of their day only, the Levites and the Aaronical priesthood, but to all Jews. Since Israel is the Old Testament Church, this represents the fact that all Christians are to know the Scripture for themselves, and also that fathers must teach their children the Scriptures.

During the time of Jesus, it was the custom to read from the Scriptures in the synagogue, as Jesus did (Lk. 4:16-17). From this, we can see that the Scripture were read to the ordinary folks, even to ordinary Jewish villagers in the town of Nazareth. Therefore, we can see that even ordinary unlearned villagers were expected to be able to understand the Scripture by themselves, in order to abide by them.

When we go to the Apostolic age, we find that the doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture is even more explicit. Of special note is the case of the Bereans, who test the Apostle Paul's teaching by the Scriptures they had (Acts. 17: 11) and were commended for doing so by Luke who called them noble-minded. This presupposes the doctrine of perspicuity as they can only test Paul's teaching by Scripture ONLY if they can understand what Scripture teaches in the first place. Another place in the New Testament where the doctrine of perspicuity is implied in the various places where we are told to contend earnestly for the faith (Jude 1:3), which would be meaningless unless one can know the faith through reading the Scriptures. Even more explicit is the words in Scripture by Luke stating that the reason why he is writing the Gospel named after him (Lk. 1:4) is so that 'you may have certainty concerning the things you [Theophilus] have been taught'. Also, in 1 Jn. 5:13, a verse used often to talk about having assurance of salvation, the whole book of 1 John was written so that believers can **know** that they have eternal life. Therefore, the Scripture are written so that we would know **for sure** the things which God wants us to know, which is thus plain to us.

Now, another aspect of the doctrine of perspicuity is that, although it is plain to all, those who are wise in their eyes and who thus approach the Scripture with bias unbelief, together with those whose eyes are blinded, would not be able to discern the true meaning of Scripture. The former is found in 1 Cor. 1:18-25, especially in verse 20 where it is stated that God has made foolish the wisdom of the wise, which expresses itself through them ridicuing the way of salvation through the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Since through the Scriptures alone, Man can know God and be saved (Rom. 10:14-17), therefore those who are wise in their eyes would not be able to understand Scripture. The latter is seen in 2 Cor. 4:3-4 where the god of this world or Satan has deceived and veiled the eyes of the unbelievers who do not know God, so that they can't see Him nor hear the Gospel which is found in Scripture.

Then, how can Man truly know and understand the Scriptures? Although the Scriptures do tell us that each of us can know the Scriptures through the commands of Scripture and the examples in Scripture as seen above, we have also seen that the Scriptures are veiled towards those who are wise in their own eyes, which include Christians who place their tradition above Scripture and all non-Christians. Of course, it can be said that Christians who place their traditions above Scripture should humble themselves and submit to the Word of God and become babes (Lk. 10:21) so that they might know the Scriptures. However, what about the non-Christians as stated in 2 Cor. 4:3-4? Where does that leave the doctrine of perspicuity?

The answer is to be found in 1 Cor. 2:12-16. In this passage, we can see that the key to understanding Scripture is through the infilling of the Holy Spirit who will teach us Christians all things and guide us into all truth (Jn. 14:26; 1 Cor. 2:13). Therefore, the doctrine of perspicuity of Scripture is indeed correct, with the clarification that the Scriptures though perspicuous but can only be rightly understood by those who are the children of God, and thus have the Holy Spirit's guidance in understanding Scripture.

Now, this is not to say that unbelievers cannot intellectually know the meaning of Scripture. In fact, it is precisely because they can intellectual understand the claims of Scripture that they scoff and reject the Gospel, as it is foolishness to them (1 Cor. 1:24). Therefore, what is meant by the fact that they cannot know the Scriptures is that they could not comprehend the reasonableness of the Christian faith. In fact, since God is the only Truth, and Christ is the *Logos* of the World (Jn. 1:1), this shows that all non-Christians are actually intellectually deficient when it comes to things of eternity (though they could be geniuses in other fields), which spring from their spiritual rebellion against God.

Last but not least, the doctrine of perspicuity says that not all things in the Scripture are 'alike plain in themselves', which means that some things in Scripture are easier to understand than others. The classic proof text for this can be found in 2 Peter 3:16, where some of the Apostle Paul's teaching is harder to understand than others. Therefore, this clarification on the doctrine of perspicuity is proved.

Answer to various objections

The first difficulty posed to the doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture is the doctrine of verbal plenary inspiration of the Scripture. Some people have pitted the two against each other^[28], since if the Scriptures are verbally, plenary inspired, then there is a need to study the Bible in the original languages in which they were written. Such requires scholars who can read, understand and translate the biblical languages, and thus it seems that this doctrine is contrary to the doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture.

However, this is not the case. Although on the surface such a contradiction seems plausible, the fact of the matter is that the doctrine of preservation of the Scriptures have been proven, thus we can be certain that we have God's Word with us. One aspect of this preservation is in the work of the Holy Spirit is safeguarding the translation process of the Scripture so that the Gospel message would not be significantly distorted in the translations in general so that the Gospel message and the essentials of the Christian faith would be preserved^[29]. Note that this does not say that any particular translation attempt or pseudo-translation of the Scriptures would be kept free from error, which the Bible nowhere promises. Also, there is evidential proof for such errors as can be seen in the New Age "Bible version" called *The Message*, which substantially distort the Christian message.

Since that is so, this seeming contradiction ceases to exist, as although looking at the original languages is important, our English translations, especially the more literal word-for-word translations like the ESV and NASB and KJV, are faithfully translated to such a degree that we virtually have almost the exact Word of God in our own language such that our Bibles in our languages would be able to function as the Word of God to teach and edify us. Even in the more liberal dynamic equivalence versions like the NLT or the LB, some elements of the Gospel message and the original meanings of the Scripture remain which allow it to function as the Scriptures to a certain extent. Thus, the Scriptures could be said to be perspicuous. Also, with the plethora of resources like lexicons, concordances and interlinear Bibles available especially for the English-speaking world, it is possible to find out to a certain degree what the original text says.

Now, all of this seem to apply only to the English-speaking world. However, how about peoples and cultures that do not have the Bible in their own languages, or only have them in dynamic equivalence translations? Well, such situations do not have any bearing on the validity of the doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture, since the doctrine is not talking about whether people in fact do have a good translation of Scripture in their own language, but only prescribe what would happen — that Scripture would be plain to them, **IF** they have good translations of the Scriptures in their own language. Since this is the case, it is imperative that proper faithful translations of the Scriptures be done by people who revere God's Word and seek to give an accurate translation of the Scriptures, in order that each language group would have, as much as possible, the Word of God with them which would thus be plain to them, so as that these translations could function properly to teach them God's truth.

Another objection which could be made is the fact that Scripture cannot be perspicuous since there are instances whereby two groups of Christians claim that their interpretation is the correct one, and sometimes their interpretations can be diametrically opposite of each other and thus contradict each other. An example of such a case would be the Calvinist/ Arminian controversy, whereby both Calvinism and Arminianism are antithetical to each other yet both sides claim to be biblical.

Such an objection, however, forgets that one aspect of perspicuity is the fact that Scripture is plain to those who approach Scripture without bias and willing to submit their traditions, known and unknown, to the authority of Scripture. Therefore, Scripture is not plain to people on the matters in which they read their traditions into Scripture. For example, in the example stated above, I believe that the Arminian position is the result of reading Humanist presuppositions into the text of Scripture. Therefore, this objection referring to multiple interpretations existing within the visible Church fails to disprove the doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture.

Some people may think that this doctrine would lead us to read the Bible literally. However, this is not always the case. By saying Scripture is plain does not mean that Scripture is to be read literally in all its passages, but that people could understand the Scripture just like any normal piece of literature without the need to resort to esoteric measures. Scripture is thus to be read in context and interpreted accordingly. Therefore, historical narrative passages are to be read as such, and parable and poetry are to be understood allegorically. In short, the Scriptures are to be interpreted in context and the way it is read and interpreted also is determined by the genre in which the Scriptural passages or verses belong to.

After looking through the various objections raised and supposed problems which the doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture caused to other doctrines, it can be seen that the doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture still stands. Therefore, the doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture has been proved and has proven to be true and biblical.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we have proved the necessity, sufficiency and authority of Scripture. We have also proved the verbal plenary inspiration of Scripture, the inerrancy of Scripture, discussed the Canon of Scripture with regards to the ultimate authority of Scripture, proved the doctrine of the preservation of Scripture and also the doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture. All of these points are summed up in the concept of *Sola Scriptura*, and therefore *Sola Scriptura* has been proven to be biblical.

Now, so what does all of this have to do with us? The first application which I had mentioned before is that we Christians ought to read the Scriptures in order to grow in Christ. Since all of these concepts of *Sola Scriptura* are biblical, we are to act upon them. Since Scripture is sufficient, we are to cleave to what God says in the Scripture alone, not add our own marketing ideas and plans, or our philosophies, to God's Word and in our service to Him in an attempt to 'improve' it; to make it more 'relevant' to so-called seekers. Since Scripture is authoritative, we are to obey it in whatever it commands. Since Scripture is verbally plenary inspired and inerrant, we are to treat it as such and use it as our authority. Since Scripture is preserved, we can take heart that we do have the inerrant, infallible Word of God with us even today and forever until Christ comes again in the future. Finally, since Scripture is perspicuous, we are to approach it humbly without presuppositions and have confidence in interpreting it as long as we submit to Christ in our interpretation. Furthermore, we can take heart and not be troubled by the so-called scholarly 'deconstructive interpretations' and strange interpretations advanced by non-Christians, since they are intellectually deficient as concerning the contents of Scriptures, not having the Holy Spirit's guidance in interpreting it, and thus all their scholarly talk ends up as so much high level profound nonsense.

With this, let us continue to cleave to Scripture, and obey it as our ultimate authority, so that we can grow in Christ-likeness, and continually being transformed by the renewal of our minds (Rom. 12:2).

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen. — Rom. 11:36

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- [14] *Illustration of Bible text manuscript tree and variant readings* (<http://www.carm.org/bible/textualexample.htm>)
- [15] *Ibid.*
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- [17] The Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter XXV Sentence VI states that the Pope is The Antichrist. I will not speculate about whether the Pope is indeed THE Antichrist, but I believe he is definitely one of the antichrists.
- [18] M.G. Easton (1897), *Easton's Bible Dictionary*, Published by Christian Classics Ethereal Library, Grand Rapids, MI. Public Domain.
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- [20] See The Old Testament Canon and Apocrypha at <http://www.bible-researcher.com/canon2.html> . For more research into the Canon, look at <http://www.bible-researcher.com/canon.html> . Also Are the right books in the Bible? (<http://www.angelfire.com/nt/theology/theology/04canon.html>) See the articles in the Canon section at Monergism.com also at <http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/topic/bible.html#canon>
- [21] *The Gnostics and Jesus* (<http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/gnostics.html>). Even a cursory look at some of these books will show that they are radically different in style and writing from the canonical books. See *Lost Books of the Bible, so-called* at <http://www.carm.org/lostbooks.htm> where you can read some of these books for yourself.
- [22] See James R. White (2004), *Scripture Alone*, pp. 101-103, published by Bethany House, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- [23] Reasons why the Apocrypha does not belong to the Bible! (<http://www.bible.ca/catholic-apocrypha.htm>)

[24] Eastern Orthodoxy (<http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/topic/EasternOrthodoxy.html>)

[25] Read James. R. White's correspondence with Peter S. Ruckman at <http://aomin.org/ruckcor.html>

[26] The view called VPP (Verbal Plenary Preservation) can be seen promoted in the Bible-Presbyterian Bible College (Far East Bible College or FEBC for short) at <http://www.febc.edu.sg/Verbal%20Plenary%20Preservation.htm>

[27] Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter I Sentence VII. As seen at http://www.reformed.org/documents/westminster_conf_of_faith.html

[28] *Another look at Plenary Verbal Inspiration*
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[29] This is a logical deduction from the doctrines of the preservation of Scripture and the perspicuity of Scripture. Since for a person to be saved, he must believe the Gospel, which is found in the Scriptures, the person must be able to understand the Gospel. The Scriptures are however, written in languages which most people do not understand, so therefore in order for the Gospel to be understood by a person who does not know the original languages, the person must be able to hear the Scriptures in his/her language. We have seen that the Scriptures are plain to its readers, thus the person reading it must be able to understand the Gospel without external help. Therefore, the Gospel message and the Scriptures also must be preserved in the translations in order for them to convey the Gospel and Scriptural truths in the language the person can understand.