



# TRUTH ON TOUGH TEXTS

EXPOSITIONS OF CHALLENGING SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

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## IS BIBLICISM BIBLICAL?

2 TIMOTHY 3:16–17

**O**F ALL THE VERSES IN THE BIBLE THAT ADDRESS itself (e.g., Pss. 19:7–9; 119; Jn. 17:17; Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12; 2 Pet. 1:20–21; etc.), no other text equals 2 Timothy 3:16–17 for its clarity concerning the origin, use, authority, and sufficiency of Scripture:

**All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.**

This text, however, has never known a moment's peace from some kind of attack, whether direct or indirect, whether savage or subtle. But there is no other text that is more critical to an understanding of the nature of Scripture than this one. Before we address the primary issue of this article, the accusation of "Biblicism," we need to fully grasp these verses.

Without doubt, the issue of **inspiration** is the pivotal doctrine concerning the Bible. While "revelation" refers to the act of God of making known His Truth and to the content of that Truth, **inspiration** refers to the way God makes His Truth known. The Greek word here is absolutely critical. Technically, the term "inspired" actually comes from the inferior Latin Vulgate (*divinitus inspirata*) and speaks of a "breathing in." The Greek *theopneustos*, however, which appears only here in the NT, literally means "God-breathed," that is, breathed out. It is a compound comprised of *theos*, "God," and *pneō*, "to breathe hard, or blow."

The best way to understand these words is to contrast them with two others. One is *psuchō*, "to breathe naturally." In contrast, *pneō* speaks of a forceful expiration of air. In fact, in the NT it is "used only of the 'blowing' of a dangerous wind or of the south wind which brings heat (Matt. 7:25, 27; John 6:18; Luke 12:55) or the destructive winds in Rev. 7:1."<sup>1</sup> Another word is *aēr*, "to breathe unconsciously," while *pneō* speaks of a conscious breathing.

All this provides a clear definition of inspiration: *Inspiration is the forceful and conscious exhaling of God into the Scripture writers.* It is the "expiration" of God, that is, with all His energy He "blew" His very words into the writers of Scripture, while still allowing for the writer's personality and style. That definition clearly reflects what is meant

when we say the Scriptures are "God-breathed." As God said to Jeremiah (Jer. 1:9): "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth."

That brings us to the doctrine of *verbal* inspiration. This key doctrine means that the Holy Spirit gave the very words of Scripture; that is, the Scripture writers were not left to themselves to write whatever they wanted to write. This does not imply mechanical dictation, as some suggest, since we see different styles of writing in each writer. Rather what we see is that God allowed the writers to write in their own style but still controlled the words they used. What is the importance of verbal inspiration? Simply that *without it there is no true inspiration*. Commenting on verbal inspiration, Herbert Lockyer writes this excellent statement:

Some say, "The thoughts, not the words, are inspired," but we think in words. Words give precision, definiteness of form and color to thought. We are not sure of the thought until it is spoken or put into exact written words.<sup>2</sup>

God did not promise to inspire doctrines, messages, or concepts. He promised to inspire and preserve His words. Doctrines, messages, and concepts flow from words.

So, unless the very words of **Scripture** are inspired and authoritative, man is left to his own resources to search out what *seem to be* underlying divine concepts and principles. That is what some translators do (such as the NIV committee). They look for the "concept" or "idea" that is conveyed and translate accordingly. But even from a purely logical perspective, to discount the words of **Scripture** is to discount all *meaning* of Scripture. Not only is it impossible to write without using words, but it is also impossible, except in the most nebulous way, even to think without words. It is as meaningless to speak of thoughts and ideas without words as to speak of music without notes or mathematics without numbers. To reject the words of **Scripture** is to reject the *truths* of **Scripture**. It is the words that matter (cf. Deut. 6:6–7; 8:3; Josh. 3:9; Job 23:12; Pss. 12:6–7; 107:10–11; 119:130; Prov. 30:5–6; Matt. 4:4; 5:17–18; Jn. 3:34; 1 Cor. 2:12–13; Rev. 17:17; etc.).

Ephesians 6:17 is especially significant. The Christian soldier's only offensive weapon is "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." "Word" is not *logos* (to speak intel-

ligerly, to articulate a message, to give a discourse), but rather *rhēma*, which usually relates to individual words and utterances (cf. Jn. 3:34; 8:47; Rom. 10:17; etc.).

Why is that critical? Because only the *words* of God are **profitable** (*ophelimos*, useful, beneficial, advantageous) for **doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness**. This underscores that Scripture is sufficient and comprehensive. Nothing else is needed. It *addresses* every issue, *answers* every question, and *advises* in every situation. These verses supremely affirm the absolute sufficiency of Scripture to meet all the spiritual needs of God's people.

*First*, Scripture is profitable for **doctrine**; this is *didaskalia*, which to the ancient Greeks meant imparting information and later the teaching of skills. The fundamental nature of Bible doctrine simply cannot be overemphasized. The word **doctrine** appears no less than 45 times in the New Testament, 11 of which refer to Jesus' own emphasis, four to what the apostles declared in Acts, two specifically to the John, and most of the rest to Paul. Why? Because it is the *only* thing that grounds us in the Truth (2 Tim. 4:2; etc.). Do we need any other source of doctrine? If so, where would it come from, and on whose authority would it rest?

*Second*, Scripture is profitable for **reproof**. The powerful Greek word here is *elegmos*, which carries the ideas of convincing, rebuking, and convicting of misbehavior or false doctrine. So strong is this word, in fact, that Greek scholar Richard Trench writes: "It means to rebuke another with the truth so that the person confesses, or at least is convinced, of his sin."<sup>3</sup> In his commentary on Ephesians, John Calvin adds, "It literally signifies to drag forth to the light what was formerly unknown."<sup>4</sup> What a vivid picture! We must drag error kicking and screaming into the light to expose it. Do we need any other source of reproof? Again, if so, what else could do what Scripture does?

*Third*, Scripture is profitable for **correction**. Here is another powerful Greek word (*epanorthōsis*), which appears only here in the NT. The root *orthos* means "upright, straight, correct" and is where we derive such English words as *orthodontist* (who corrects and straightens teeth) and *orthopedics* (the correcting of bone injuries, deformities, and diseases). Add to this the prefix *epi* ("to" or "upon") and the prefix *ana*, denoting repetition (as in the word *again*), and the result is "to set upright again, to straighten again." In secular Greek literature it was used of setting an object upright that had fallen down and of helping a person back on his feet after stumbling.

The idea in this key word, then, is bringing things back to where they should be. That is, indeed, what correction is. Sin is first exposed, rebuked, and punished, and then comes *restoration*. That is what the Word of God does; it sets things right, improves, restores, and brings us back to where we're supposed to be. **Correction** is Scripture's *positive* provision for those who accept its *negative reproof*. Do we need anything else? Well, once again, if God cannot do it through His Word, what else can?

*Fourth*, Scripture is profitable for **instruction in righteousness**. The original meaning of *paideia* (**instruction**) referred to bringing up and training a child (*paidion*), but it came to be used of any sort of training. In the context of verses 16–17, while **doctrine** is more basic, **instruction**

goes deeper in the idea of training in what is right and building us up in strength. Do we need anything else to accomplish this task? Like the other three, no we do not.



With that foundation laid, we turn now to the issue of what has been dubbed "Biblicism." Here is a term that is almost always used in a derogatory way, often even in a mocking tone, against anyone who interprets the Bible literally or holds to *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone). The common definition of a "biblicist" is someone who uses *only* the Bible for his authority and source of knowledge and who therefore blindly holds to the Bible to inform him on every issue and guide him through every situation. Biblicists, in fact, are often accused of bibliolatry (worship of the Bible). In short, the critic insists: the biblicist is intellectually shallow, has a naïve view of life, and misuses Scripture.

What is usually ignored here, however, is that such accusations as those (and the ones below) come from people who have a *very* low view of Scripture in the first place. Some actually deny inspiration, but even those who do not go that far still believe the Bible can be (and *must* be) "supplemented" because "it does not address every issue." There are four main accusations leveled at the biblicist, so we will take each in turn.

**Accusation #1: "The biblicist sees no value in information derived outside the Bible, has no appreciation for extrabiblical truth in Theology, and ignores general revelation."**

This charge completely ignores (or at least discounts) the fact that *Sola Scriptura* itself is about the Bible being the *ultimate authority*. There is nothing wrong with gleaning information from other sources, but it must *agree* with Scripture either in word or principle. As for "general revelation" (the general truths that can be known about God through nature; e.g., Ps. 19:1–4; Rom. 1:20), that is all well and wonderful, of course, but it is not enough. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word[s] [*rhēma*] of God" (Rom. 10:17). Recognizing a Creator through nature falls short of the Gospel revealed in Scripture.

**Accusation #2: "The biblicist believes that the Bible is meant to be a textbook for science, philosophy, ethics, politics, economics, and so forth."**

Frankly, I have yet to meet a single so-called biblicist who is guilty of saying any such thing (though I have *read* of a few who do). Of course, the Bible is not a textbook on those, but it most certainly *does* address them either directly or indirectly. The very first verse of the Bible, in fact, addresses *science*. All three basic elements of the physical universe—space ("heaven"), matter ("heaven and earth"), and time ("beginning")—were brought into existence by the Word of God. It speaks of creation, not evolutionary process. In Job 9:9, it refers to "the Bear" (Ursa Major), the "Orion" nebulae (M42), the Pleiades (cf. Amos 5:8), and "the chambers of the south" (stars in the southern hemisphere, unnamed here because they were not visible in the northern hemisphere). Further, while the "scientific world" once thought the earth is flat, God told men thousands of years

ago that it is round when He revealed to Isaiah: "It is [God] that sitteth upon the circle of the earth" (Isa. 40:22). Likewise, it again took man centuries to understand the Moon and what it does, how it divides the time into months. But the Psalmist tells us plainly that God "appointed the moon for seasons" (Ps. 104:19; cf. Gen. 1:14).

Scripture also clearly addresses *philosophy*. Philosophers have grappled with "what is Truth?" for millennia, but the Bible is all about Truth. Colossians 2:8 even warns about the trap of human philosophy: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (cf. 1 Cor. 2:13; 3:19; 1 Tim. 6:20-21).

How about *ethics*? It is shocking that anyone would level this charge! The Bible is also all about ethics and right behavior. After all, the last six of the Ten Commandments specify our relationship to others. Then there is Isaiah 1:17: "Learn to do well." More specifically, to list only a few, it directly addresses *business* ethics (Lev. 19:11, 19:35-36; 25:14; Prov. 20:23; 21:5; Jas. 4:17), *work* ethics (Ecc. 9:10; Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:23; 2 Thes. 3:10), and *personal* ethics (Matt. 7:12; Phil. 4:8; 1 Tim. 1:9-10; Jas. 2:8; 1 Jn. 3:17).

As for *politics*, Matthew 22:17-21 and Romans 13:1-7 clearly delineate our responsibility here. Acts 5:29 adds that if government oversteps its boundaries, "We ought to obey God rather than men." How does this work out in practice? Well, how could a Christian vote for any candidate for office who advocates abortion (Jer. 1:5; Lk. 1:41; etc.), who ignores the Constitution (the *real* law of the land, not officials who violate that document; Rom. 13 again), who supports unrestrained warfare (2 Thes. 3:10-13), or who promotes any other unbiblical conduct?

What about *economics*? This is again a shocking accusation since the Bible addresses money repeatedly. Of our Lord's some 40 parables, in fact, about one-third address money either directly or indirectly. The virtuous woman invests so as to make a profit (Prov. 31:16-18), we can use a bank for the same purpose (Lk. 19:23), we weigh the economic feasibility before starting a project (Lk. 14:28-30), we must be careful about lending money and usury (Deut. 23:20; etc.), and, of course, our giving is based on how God has prospered us economically (1 Cor. 16:2).

I am compelled to add that it is especially troubling when critics slap the "Biblicist" label on those who believe that Scripture specifically defines *church government*. Writing in 1895, one church historian made the following very disturbing statement: "The church of today is at liberty to vary from the form of church government prevalent in the first centuries."<sup>5</sup> But if I may respectfully ask, on what authority does he say that? Where does Scripture even imply that we can run our churches any way we wish? As we have noted in previous TOTTS, where does it imply that we can replace the simple two-office organization of *Elder/Bishop/Pastor* (one office that reflects his character, position, and duty) and *Deacon* (addresses temporal matters; aided by wives; no "deaconess," a 3<sup>rd</sup>-century invention)?<sup>6</sup>

It was actually Ignatius (c. 35-c. 107) who was "the first to place the office of bishop in contrast with the office of presbyter and to subordinate the presbyters (elders) to the monarchical bishop."<sup>7</sup> By doing so, he actually laid the foun-

ation for what would later become the elevation of the Bishop of Rome. To this day, in fact, Roman Catholicism "often cites Ignatius as a witness to the legitimacy of its Episcopal structure."<sup>8</sup> As Philip Schaff adds, "It is a matter of fact that the Episcopal [hierarchical] form of government was universally established in the Eastern and Western Church as early as the middle of the second century," and that it was indeed Ignatius who "brought out" the "idea of the Episcopal hierarchy."<sup>9</sup> All of this directly *contradicts* Scripture. Again, there is not the slightest ambiguity in the fact that the three terms "elder," "bishop," and "pastor" all inarguably refer to the same person so no single one is elevated over the others. As sincere as Ignatius was in stemming the tide of heresy, on what authority did he *divide* what God had *joined*?

The seed Ignatius planted (and Cyprian [c. 200-c. 258] later watered) grew into a monstrous hierarchal tree that would dwarf most modern corporations. The simple two office system of "bishop" (elder/pastor) and "deacon" (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-7) was replaced by a massive order of precedence and rank in the Roman Catholic Church. What it eventually included were the following (not an exhaustive list): The Pope, Bishop and Patriarch of Rome; Cardinal-bishop; Cardinal-presbyter; Cardinal-deacon; Major Arch-bishop; Archbishop; Bishop (Diocesan, Coadjutor, and Titular); Territorial Prelate; Territorial Abbot; Vicar Apostolic; Exarch Apostolic; Prefect Apostolic; Apostolic Administrator; Diocesan Administrator; Archdeacon; Vicar General; Vicar Episcopal; Provincial Superior; Protonotary Apostolic (Monsignor 3); Diocesan Consultor; Honorary Prelate of His Holiness (Monsignor 2); Chaplain of His Holiness (Monsignor 1, Archpriest); Pastor; Parochial Vicar; and Deacon. Sadly, even some Protestant churches have their own hierarchy. Is that what we are free to create because we think it warranted?

So, if believing that Scripture's simplistic organization is the true binding one makes me a biblicist, so be it. Why? Because if we don't stick with Scripture, anything goes.

Finally, concerning this second accusation, Cornelius Van Til (1895-1987), the renowned theologian and Princeton professor (before it went off the rails), stated that Scripture "speaks of everything":

The Bible is thought of as authoritative on everything of which it speaks. Moreover, it speaks of everything. We do not mean that it speaks of football games, of atoms, etc., directly, but we do mean that it speaks of everything either directly or by implication. It tells us not only of the Christ and his work, but it also tells us who God is and where the universe about us has come from. It tells us about theism as well as about Christianity. It gives us a philosophy of history as well as history. Moreover, the information on these subjects is woven into an inextricable whole. It is only if you reject the Bible as the word of God that you can separate the so-called religious and moral instruction of the Bible from what it says, e.g., about the physical universe.<sup>10</sup>

Again, if that makes me a biblicist, go right ahead and glue the label on. As two co-writers well put it: "While not a perfect term, we have chosen *biblicists*, because at the core of our convictions lies an unshakeable trust in God's inerrant, infallible Bible, rightly interpreted."<sup>11</sup>

**Accusation #3: “The biblicist rejects the ancient confessions of faith, creeds, and traditions of the church in favor of constructing a personal belief system.”**

Again, there is nothing wrong with gleaning information from other sources, including confessions of faith and creeds (e.g., *Westminster Confession* of 1646, *London Baptist Confession* of 1689). But they must conform to Scripture, for it is the final authority. For example, the Nicene Creed has some weaknesses. More serious, the much lauded Apostolic Creed (3<sup>rd</sup>-century) states that Jesus “descended into hell,” but it is entirely unbiblical to even imply that Jesus went into “hell,” that is, the suffering side of *sheol* (Hebrew)/*hades* (Greek); His redemptive suffering was complete on the Cross; “It is finished,” He declared (Jn. 19:30).<sup>12</sup>

Another example appears in Canon #28 of the Council of Chalcedon (451): “The bishop of New Rome [Constantinople] shall enjoy the same honor as the bishop of Old Rome.” In other words, the Bishop of Constantinople (Eastern Church) had equal authority as did the Bishop of Rome (Western Church). While Pope Leo I (c. 400–61) accepted all the other Canons, he rejected this one out of hand. Preferring to rule alone, he refused to acknowledge the Bishop of Constantinople as his equal. Here was a dramatic example of the centralized position of the Roman Bishop as the sole, supreme, sovereign ruler of “the Church,” a wholly unbiblical and utterly indefensible development.

Tradition, however, I respectfully submit, is an entirely different matter. It is, in fact, a slippery, slimy slope. Why? Because *tradition has no authority and has no end*. Anyone can create a tradition, but that does not mean it is right. Catholicism is again our example. In no uncertain terms, the Council of Trent (1545–63) decreed that Scripture and Tradition constituted equal sources of revelation. The results were, to name only a few: purgatory, penance, priestly absolution, the intercession of saints, the worship of the Virgin, indulgences, priestly celibacy, asceticism, monasticism, vow of poverty, papal infallibility, making the sign of the cross, creation of Lent, the Rosary, and image worship.

Is Protestantism free from tradition? Hardly! To name only a few again: the vast majority still holds tenaciously to the celebration of the so-called Christian “Holydays” (which are inarguably pagan in origin); some branches practice infant baptism (which flowed directly from the fountain of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration and was clearly stated by Origen in the 3<sup>rd</sup>-century); some are steeped in the liturgical calendar and ritual (liturgy was also invented in the 3<sup>rd</sup>-century); and many have adopted other worship practices that are anything but biblical.

It is argued by some that the Reformers respected tradition, as if that makes it right. In fact, as one highly respected theologian writes (I withhold his name purposely):

The Reformers did not try to rebuild the faith from the ground up. They saw themselves reforming, not rejecting, the teachings of their church. They saw Protestant churches not as new churches but as the old church purified. . . . So they were not biblicists in that sense. But they came close to it.

I again respectfully submit, however, that that is exactly why the Reformation fell short. No one has said it better than

Lehman Strauss (1911–97):

The Reformation raised up a group of men who came out from Romanism and who rescued much from the mortuary of Rome. *But they did not go far enough*. State churches were organized, many of which are in operation today in Germany, Holland, and other countries. Denominationalism with its sacraments, forms, and ceremonies became a cold, lifeless formalism. Ministers became ministers of the church, not of Christ.<sup>13</sup>

As passionately as I defend the Reformation, instead of the emphasis on *reform*, why not emphasize a *return*? Yes, their intent was to *reform* the Church, that is, change it from within. But as most of them ultimately realized, it was impossible to reform a corpse, so they *returned* more and more to Scripture and found themselves having to obey 2 Corinthians 6:17. We praise God that the Reformers returned to the Word of God in certain areas, but they simply did not go back far enough, back to the NT standards of the Church. As a result, their systems were (and still are) riddled with man’s traditions, organization, and other weaknesses. Starting with Luther, what would the glorious results have been if they had just thrown out *everything*, opened their Bibles, and started over? Does this mean we will all agree perfectly on every point? Of course not. But I do submit that while there will certainly be *minor* points of *difference*, that is far different than *major* points of *departure*. We also at times seem to glorify the *men* of the *Reformation* instead of the *God* of the *revelation*.

**Accusation #4: “The biblicist ignores the historical, cultural, and even biblical context of Scripture and relies on ‘proof-texts’ for their authority.”**

In other words, the biblicist ignores both the historical and cultural setting and at times even rips verses from their biblical context. While there are certainly those who do that, that does not automatically mean all biblicists do. (I would also interject, how many “non-biblicists” are just as guilty, if not more so?) As we have detailed in this publication, there are 12 principles of interpreting literature that directly apply to Scripture, which is *inspired* literature.<sup>14</sup> By following those rules—they include normal (literal or plain) use of language, grammar, history, context, comparison with other Scripture, and seven others—can anyone justifiably accuse us of “proof texting” on the following? To list only a few:

- Abortion: Ex. 21:22–25; Job 10:10–12; Pss. 139:13–16; 127:3; Jer. 1:5; Is. 44:24; Lk. 1:41, 44; Jud. 13:7; Num. 35:33.
- Birth Control: Gen. 1:28; 38:7–10; Pss. 127:3–5; 128:3–4.
- Capital Punishment: Gen. 9:5–6; Ex. 21:12; 35:2; 21:16, 29; Lev. 20:9–16; Num. 22:25; 35:16–31; Rom. 13:3–4; Deut. 22:25.
- Church Ministry and Methods: Acts 1:8; 13:1–3; 20:27–30; Rom 16:17–20; 1 Cor. 2:1–5; Eph. 4:11–16; 1 Tim. 3:15; 2 Tim. 2:1–2; 3:16—4:1–4.
- “Christian” Holidays: Gen. 10–11; Judg. 2:13; 3:17; 10:6; 2 Kings 17:9–10; Jer. 7:18; 44:17–19; Ezek. 8:13–14; 1 Thes. 1:9; Rev. 2:20; 17:5.
- Crime (and Capital Punishment): Ex. 22:1–6.

- Civil Disobedience: Mk. 12:17; 22:17–21; Acts 5:29; Rom. 13:1–7; 1 Pet. 2:13–17.
- Debating Unbelievers: 1 Cor. 2:1–5, 13 (cf. 1 Pet. 3:15).
- Education: Deut. 6:6–9; Eph. 6:4; Prov. 1:8; 2:1–2; 3:1; 4:1–4, 10; 5:1–2; 7:1–2, 24.
- Husbands’ and Wives’ Responsibilities: Gen. 3:16; Prov. 31:10–31; 1 Cor. 11:8–9; Eph. 5:22–6:4; 1 Tim 5:8, 14; Titus 2:3–5.
- Homosexuality: Gen. 1:27; 19:5; Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Deut. 23:17–18; 1 Kings 14:24; 1 Kings 15:12; 22:46; 2 Kings 23:7; Rom. 1:26–27; 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10; Jude 7.
- Marriage: Gen. 2:18; Mal. 2:14; Eph. 5:22–6:4; 1 Cor. 11:8–9.
- Psychology and Counseling: 1 Cor. 2:1–5; Prov. 11:2; 15:33; Mk. 8:34; Eph. 3:8; 4:2; Phil 2:5–8; Jas. 4:6.
- Race: Gen. 9:25 (properly viewed); Gen. 10–11; Acts 17:24–26; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11.

A related argument of the critic is that the biblicist is guilty of “Pervasive Interpretative Pluralism” (PIP). Roman Catholic author, Notre Dame professor, and sociologist Christian Smith writes much about this in his book, *The Bible Made Impossible: Why Biblicism Is Not a Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture* (Brazos Press, 2011), which is simply the latest attempt in a long history of attacks that tear down “the Bible’s exclusive authority, infallibility, clarity, self-sufficiency, internal consistency, self-evident meaning, and universal applicability.” (I pray the reader recognizes that any evangelical who condemns all Biblicism is aligning himself with Roman Catholicism, which abhors and attacks any notion of the sufficiency of Scripture.) PIP means that Biblicism is impossible, Smith says, because intelligent, sincere, fair-minded evangelicals can’t begin to agree on what the Bible says. If the Bible were really clear, consistent, and internally harmonious, we should be able to come to agreement on what it teaches, but we can’t and never will. But that is a straw man; such differences are easily explained by a violation of one or more of the principles of interpretation mentioned earlier, as well as preconceived opinions and other factors.

So, what is the answer to our paradoxical title—“Is Biblicism Biblical?” Well, I would encourage you to answer that yourself by considering this: what are the only *alternatives* to Biblicism? There are only two: either *Rationalism* or its opposite *Mysticism* (both totally man-centered and pervasive nowadays). Are we to think that either one of those is better? I pray that we all will refuse to be any part of a weakening of the authority and sufficiency of Scripture. Let the critic scoff if he wants at the following statement, but if we do not stand on it, we have no authority whosoever: God *said* it, that *settles* it.

Dr. J. D. Watson,  
Pastor-Teacher, Grace Bible Church  
Director, Sola Scriptura Publications, a ministry of GBC

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Gerhard Kittle (Ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Eerdmans), Vol. VI, 452.
- <sup>2</sup> Herbert Lockyer, *All the Doctrines of the Bible* (Zondervan, 1964), 9.
- <sup>3</sup> Richard Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, 29, 30.
- <sup>4</sup> *Calvin’s Commentaries: Ephesians*, comment on 5:11.
- <sup>5</sup> Henry Sheldon, *History of the Christian Church* (Hendrickson, 1988 reprint from original 1895 edition), Vol. 1, 283.
- <sup>6</sup> See TOTTs 19 and 20 (“Pastor, Bishop, and Elder”) and TOTT 21 (“What About the Deacon and Deaconess”), or the book, *Truth On Tough Texts* (Sola Scriptura Publications, 2012), 157–79.
- <sup>7</sup> Earle Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries* (Zondervan, 1954, 1981, 1996), 76. This idea permeates Ignatius’ letters: *To the Ephesians* (2:2; 3:2; 4:1–2; 5:1–2; 6:1; 20:2); *To the Magnesians* (3:1; 4:1; 6:1–2; 7:1; 13:1–2); *To the Thallians* (2:1; 3:1–2; 7:1–2; 13:2); *To the Philadelphians* (1:1; 3:2; 8:1–2).
- <sup>8</sup> Joseph Early, *A History of Christianity* (B&H Academic, 2015), 20.
- <sup>9</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, (Eerdmans, 1994 reprint of 1910 edition), Vol. II, 144, 660.
- <sup>10</sup> Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith* (P&R, 1963), 29.
- <sup>11</sup> John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine* (Crossway, 2017), 26.
- <sup>12</sup> See TOTT 24 (“What Does the Phrase ‘Led Captivity Captive’ Mean? (Eph. 4:8–10)”) or the author’s book, *Truth on Tough Texts* (180–86).
- <sup>13</sup> Lehman Strauss, *Book of Revelation* (Loizeaux Brothers, Inc., 1964), 73 (emphasis added).
- <sup>14</sup> See TOTTs 26 and 27 or the “Appendix” in the book, *Truth On Tough Texts*, 545–63.



The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.

(*The Westminster Confession of Faith*, I.VI)



**RECENTLY RELEASED:** Pastor Watson’s two-volume work, *The Christian’s Wealth and Walk: An Expository Commentary on Ephesians*. If you purchase both volumes directly from SSP, the set is only \$32.00 (shipping donation is entirely optional). Just write to us at: Sola Scriptura Publications; P.O. Box 235; Meeker, CO; 81641.

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Grace Bible Church  
P.O. Box 235  
Meeker, CO 81641  
[www.TheScriptureAlone.com](http://www.TheScriptureAlone.com)  
[dwatson@thescripturealone.com](mailto:dwatson@thescripturealone.com)  
A F.I.R.E. Church  
[www.FireFellowship.org](http://www.FireFellowship.org)

This monthly publication is intended to address Scriptures that have historically been debated, are particularly difficult to understand, or have generated questions among Believers. We hope it will be an encouragement and challenge to God's people to carefully examine and discern Truth. While the positions presented here are based on years of careful biblical research, we recognize that other respected men of God differ.

If you have a question that perplexes you, please send it along so we might address it either in a full length article or in a "Reader Questions" issue. Other comments are also warmly welcomed, and letters to the editor will be published.

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