

It is important to have a theory of knowledge. The Christian must build his foundation of knowledge upon the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Many people assume that what they perceive to be truth is self-evident to all. This is not the case. Evidence is interpreted within the framework of a worldview. What constitutes a biblically coherent approach to life or worldview? The Bible must be the bedrock or foundation for all of life and beliefs. P.T. Barnum said, a sucker is born every minute. Many people do not grasp the potential for deception and even self-deception. Today in the Post Modern era, experience is set-forth as the ultimate test for truth. Experiential testimonials, secular and religious are used as recruitment techniques. The Christian must not succumb to this erroneous approach to truth, namely letting experiences guide us. On the contrary, the Scriptures must always interpret and test experience, tradition, spiritual leaders, and even the official theology of the church.

The reformed faith is unique in that it places the Scripture paramount as the ultimate authority for life and truth. Many competing religious movements have attempted to undermine this teaching. When the Scriptures are acknowledged as the supreme authority, people are less likely to follow artful deceptive religious leaders. When someone rejects the reformed position on the Scriptures they open themselves up to all kinds of deception. They are not rejecting authority *per se*, just the Scriptures as the final court of appeal, or *Sola Scriptura*. Some have followed leaders; their own vanity, traditions, or experience are lifted up as supreme. The authority of Scripture flows from the fact that it is God's word. As will be shown the Scriptures declare themselves to be God's word. It follows necessarily then that the Scriptures are authoritative. God's authority and His word are inseparable. This assertion needs to be established biblically right at the outset. The prophet Isaiah declares:

So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. (Isaiah 55:11)

The Psalmist further confirms this truth:

By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth).The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations. (Psalms 33:6, 11)

It should be obvious that God's word is inseparable from His authority. The real issue is one of authority. What role does the Bible have? False religious leaders attack the reliability of the Bible in order to subordinate people to their own authority. The pattern is always the same; the claim is the Bible is not sufficient. The attacks upon biblical authority and sufficiency are sometimes very subtle, although at times bold claims are made about alleged missing or corrupted parts of the Scriptures. You supposedly need their leaders, traditions, books, or special insights to make up for the missing or unclear parts of the Bible. The thesis that will be set forth in this article is that since the Bible consisting of the Old and New Testaments is the word of God, the believer can be certain

that the Scriptures are authoritative and sufficient. Consequently, the Bible is the final court of appeal when seeking for truth. The church should never bind the consciences of men to non-biblical doctrine. It is important to see at the start just how closely God is identified with His word. Consider this example from the book of Romans:

For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.
(Romans 10:11)

The book of Romans says, "the scripture saith." When you consult Isaiah 28:16 whom the apostle is quoting you find that it is God speaking:

Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. (Isaiah 28:16)

In Romans we also read:

For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. (Romans 9:17)

Was God speaking or the Scriptures? If there is any doubt, we know for sure after reading Exodus 9:16 that it is God speaking whereas, Romans says, "the scripture saith." Therefore, it is clear that God and His word, the Scriptures are so closely identified we learn from these two examples that God and the phrase "the Scriptures saith" are used interchangeably or in other words are synonymous.

The Scriptures declare God to be Sovereign or the absolute ruler over all. God has either preserved His word from corruption or He has not. These are the only two choices. It is self-evident from the Scriptures that God has sovereignly preserved His word from corruption as evidenced by the testimony of the Scriptures themselves. This means that the believer can have confidence that he has the complete and sufficient word of God to rest and base his life upon. As will be shown this is the plain teaching of Scripture found throughout its pages.

Since the Christian recognizes the authority of Scripture we will examine what God has revealed in the Bible about his word. The Bible provides a powerful testimony concerning itself. God has clearly spoken in the Bible. We can have the utmost confidence in Scripture. We will see five important truths concerning the Scriptures.

1. The testimony of Scripture concerning itself.
2. The Bible consisting of the Old and New Testaments is the word of God.
3. God's Word is to be written down and set forth as truth superior to the traditions and experiences of men.
4. The sufficiency and completeness of Scripture.
5. The closing of the canon (authoritative list of books) of Scripture, or the ceasing of divine revelation.

There will be some overlap between these five areas, especially between points one and two. This is because some passages are relevant to more than one issue. The truth that the Scriptures are the word of God will be discussed throughout the whole article but particularly in the sections dealing with the Old and New Testaments. Likewise, comments and passages that are relevant to the sufficiency of the Scriptures will be seen throughout. Prayerfully, this examination of biblical teaching will be edifying and a help for those who deal with individuals and religious groups who attempt to undermine the ultimate authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures in order to gain converts for their own cause.

In particular, comments will be made along the way that is relevant to the positions that attempt to establish non-biblical systems of authority. Some examples of this are, new revelations given by leaders in groups such as the Mormons. Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox concepts of "sacred tradition" which sets up an additional knowledge structure along with the church as the final authority. The charismatic movement and its alleged ongoing spiritual experiences which cause the depreciation or subordination of the Scriptures to either the church leaders, supplemental revelations or result in novel interpretations of the Bible. These groups in question all seek to establish a different authority other than the Bible in which to bind the Christian. Finally, at the end there will be responses given regarding attempts to challenge the Reformed view of Scripture that will be outlined in this article and an appendix dealing with the importance and necessity of special revelation. The King James Version will be used unless otherwise noted.

A. The Biblical view of the Old Testament Scriptures:

The Scriptural passages in this section give biblical rationale for putting confidence in the word of God. The passages cited in this section from the Old Testament clearly teach that the Old Testament itself is the word of God. The New Testament passages cited in this section clearly refer to the Old Testament as Scripture or the very word of God. Because of this, there is no reason to doubt that the Old Testament is the word of God. The following five passages speak of the word of God. Since the ceasing of divine revelation in the First Century (to be proven later) there is no warrant for thinking that this is something other than the written Scriptures found in our Bibles:

Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandment of the Lord your God which I command you. (Deut. 4:2)

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. (Psalm 119:105)

Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar. (Proverbs 30:5-6)

Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed: but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded. (Proverbs 13:13)

The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever. (Isaiah 40:8)

These five passages set God's word apart from the writings of men, by the fact that God's words are "pure," "a lamp and light," and are eternal. If you despise the Word by rejecting or altering it you will be destroyed. What man can claim this about his writings? Not one!

And furthermore, when reading the Old Testament there is no mistaking that God is speaking to man. Beginning in Genesis 1:3 you have the phrase "And God said)" or the similar phrase "And the Lord said)" Exodus 32:9. In addition, you have God speaking using the familiar terminology "Thus saith the Lord" or "saith the Lord" in places such as Genesis 22:16; Exodus 5:1; all the way to Malachi 1:2. In the prophets we read passages like "And say, Here ye the word of the Lord" Jeremiah 19:3. There are many variations of these above phrases. In fact, there are many hundreds of Old Testament passages like this, which establish the divine authenticity of the Old Testament.

How does the New Testament view the Old? For the remainder of this section we will see a consistent New Testament testimony. Consider the importance of the following New Testament verse:

These were more noble minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. (Acts 17:11)

This should be the practice of all believers. The believers in Berea used the Scriptures as a test for the truth or falsity of a given message and are commended for this practice. In this particular instance the Bereans were commended for examining even the Apostle Paul's message. Surely, this gives the individual Christian the basis for questioning church doctrine if not established biblically. In regards to the above passage, it should be noted that this verse from Acts 17:11 deals primarily with the Old Testament Scriptures, since at this stage in redemptive history the New Testament was in the process of being given and compiled. This means that the Old Testament is the word of God. It was the Old Testament that was searched by the Bereans to see if Paul's message was true. Consider the words of Christ himself when speaking of the Old Testament Scriptures:

...the Scripture cannot be broken. (John 10:35)

This passage speaks directly of the Old Testament but goes beyond them and refers to the New Testament as well. If the Scriptures "cannot be broken" then we are to bind ourselves to its teaching. Unquestionably, according to our Lord here in John's gospel the Scriptures are set forth as the highest court of appeal. How did the Old Testament prophecy of Scripture come? The Apostle Peter teaches that the Scriptures came from God as the Spirit of God moved holy men to speak:

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. (II Peter 1:20-21)

Peter clearly sets the Old Testament apart from human writings. The apostle Paul says the same thing when he tells us that it was the oracles or the very word of God, which was committed to the Jewish people in the Old Testament:

Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. (Rom. 3:2)

In the following passage from Luke, Jesus is referring to the Old Testament Scriptures. How did Christ view these Scriptures? To begin with, Jesus establishes His identity from the Scriptures. And secondly, He did not believe any portions of Scripture had disappeared or existed in some separate body of oral traditions as evidenced by the phrase "in all the Scriptures." Christ is appealing to an objective body of writings:

And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. (Luke 24:27)

Along this same line, after Jesus quotes the prophet Isaiah in Luke 4:18,19 He says:

And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.
(Luke 4:21)

Not only does Christ identify Isaiah's writing as Scripture he goes on later in Luke chapter sixteen to show the importance of Scriptural testimony as over against even a miracle such as someone returning from the dead. This sets forth the Scriptures as more important than experience. Consider this passage from Luke:

Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. (Luke 16:29)

This passage reinforces the authority of the Old Testament, because Moses and the prophets spoke the word of God with finality and we are told to "hear them." At this point because of the relevance of the above passage it would be good to note the necessity of using the Scriptures to interpret experience. This is of the utmost importance. Many people use experience to interpret the Bible without even realizing it. The reader of God's word should use the grammar and historical setting when interpreting the Scriptures. You should not come to the text with preconceived ideas that may color your interpretation. People whom claim to have had spiritual experiences often fall into the trap of allowing the experience to influence their understanding of a particular text of Scripture. The experience in effect governs the interpretation the Scripture.

In the gospel of John 5:18, Jesus responds to the Jew's attempt to kill him because of his claim of Deity by appealing to the Old Testament Scripture in John 5:39,46, & 47. The summation of Christ's argument is an admonition to search the Old Testament Scriptures (John 5:39). Hopefully this important affirmation concerning the authority of the Old Testament Scripture is not overlooked. In addition, in the same passage Jesus tells the disciples the most important testimony of the Scriptures. The person and work of Christ are inseparably connected to the Scriptures. More will be said later on the importance of this. Listen to how Jesus makes this connection:

Search the scriptures; for in them ye think
ye have eternal life: and they are they which
testify of me. (John 5:39)

God speaking in and through the Scriptures directs the believer to study the Scriptures to gain patience, comfort, and hope. Notice how the apostle Paul gives the believer assurance by clearly referring to the Old Testament Scriptures as the place to obtain these very things:

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were
written for our learning, that we through patience

and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. (Romans 15:4)

It should be established beyond any doubt that the New Testament consistently calls the Old Testament the Scriptures or in other words, the word of God. Another issue that needs to be addressed is whether Old Testament people of God had possession of the Scriptures in a discernable or recognizable form. The Scriptures were read and studied in the synagogues of ancient Israel. The people of Israel were to commit God's word to memory and teach it to their children and write them on the door-posts of their houses. This command of God has tremendous implications in the life of every day believers. Consider God's command:

And these words, which I commanded thee this day, shall be in thine heart:
And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. (Deut. 6:6-9)

This verse shows us that there was a daily ongoing reading and teaching of the Scriptures, which created a deep respect in Israel for the word of God. There was a reverence for God's word in Israel. In fact, Israel has been known as "people of the book." As God spoke in the Old Testament, these words were recorded and faithfully transcribed to preserve this word for proceeding generations. This preservation is evidenced by the fact that the Scriptures were read in the synagogues of Israel. Christ himself read and taught the word in the synagogues (Luke 4:16-21). Notice that Jesus "closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister)" thus demonstrating that Israel had the word of God in written form. Israel did not just have fragments of God's word; they had a recognizable body of writing. So it is not surprising in Luke's gospel we see clear indication for the Old Testament authoritative books, or the canon of Scripture that existed in Christ's day:

And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. (Luke 24:44)

This verse refers to the three sections of the Old Testament canon. The Old Testament canon consisted of the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings in which the Psalms was a part. There was clearly, a distinguishable structure and list of authoritative books in the Old Testament at this point in redemptive history.

In the following passage we find more confirmation for a distinguishable canon of Scripture in Christ's day:

That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation. From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation. (Luke 11:50,51)

This passage sets the time frame for Old Testament prophetic revelation between the death of Abel in Genesis 4:8 and Zechariah's death. The death of Zechariah is recorded in II Chronicles 24:20,21. At first sight this seems to present a problem because of the order of our Bibles today. It seems to exclude any Old Testament books following II Chronicles. In Christ's day the canon of the Old Testament had the book of Chronicles, which was not then divided, placed out of historical order in the Jewish canon and was found after Ezra and Nehemiah, thus making it the last book. So according to this order Zecharias was the last sufferer at the hands of the Old Testament religious apostates.

The testimony of the Scriptures stands sure. That testimony is that the Old Testament is the word of God. It can be said with certainty; there was indeed a distinguishable Old Testament canon in Christ's day. The importance of a recognizable canon of Scripture possessed by the Old Testament people of God cannot be underestimated in its importance. An objective body of canonical writings is far superior to an undetermined fluctuating oral tradition. Hopefully, those who have attempted to cast doubt on the Scriptural canon so that they can attempt to establish new revelations allegedly found in additional books previously missing or a secondary source of divine revelation, such as an alleged body of "sacred tradition" will not miss this. Christ fully accepted the canon as it stood in His day, on that account His words "the Scripture cannot be broken" John 10:35. To doubt the divine authenticity of the Old Testament is to doubt Christ. The Old Testament people of God knew that they possessed the word of God, and consequently, were careful in handling the text of Scripture. The New Testament people of God were no less careful. There is no indication that the word of God mentioned in this section was anything other than the Scriptures, which are recorded in our Bibles.

B. The Biblical view of the New Testament Scriptures:

The following passages in this section give additional biblical rationale for putting confidence in the word of God. They also clearly teach that the New Testament is the word of God. The New Testament writers viewed their own writings as Scripture. Because of what the passages in this section teach there is no reason to doubt that the New Testament is the word of God.

Let us survey several passages concerning the authority of the New Testament, and the view the New Testament writers held of their own writings. The following passage dealing with John the Baptist gives New Testament revelation the same status as Old Testament revelation:

But what went ye out for to see? A prophet yea,
I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this
is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my

messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. (Matthew 11:9-11)

These above verses teach three points that are relevant: 1- John was a prophet; 2- Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist. Thus, John was greater than the Old Testament prophets; 3- and the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. In which case, the New Testament prophets were greater than John. In light of this verse, the biblical, and indeed, logical conclusion is that the New Testament prophets were also inspired by God just like the Old Testament prophets. The Old Testament is completed by the revelation of Christ in the New Testament. This is why the apostle Peter says:

We have also a more sure word of prophecy } II Peter 1:19

Consider Christ's explicit utterance concerning the importance of His words:

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. (Matthew 24:35)

Christ identifies his words on the same level as the prophet Isaiah who says, "the word of our God shall stand forever" Isaiah 40:8. Is apostolic teaching to be received on the same level? How did the early Christians receive it? It is clear the early Christians received the teaching of Christ's apostles as authoritative. We see proof of this from the book of Acts:

And they continued stedfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. (Acts 2:42)

The early Christian disciples continued in the apostle's doctrine because they viewed it as the authoritative word of God. "Stedfastly" in this passage means to persevere, to adhere closely and give oneself continually to the apostle's doctrine. In the following verses the reader should notice how Paul viewed his own epistles and their origin. Paul clearly viewed his epistles as the word and commandments of God. Because of Paul's apostolic authority, he is able to say:

If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the

commandments of the Lord. (I Cor. 14:37)

Paul, An apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;).... But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by revelation of Jesus Christ. (Galatians 1:1, 11, 12)

And the things that thou hast heard of me, among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. (II Timothy 2:2)

For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. (I Thess. 1:5)

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. (II Thess. 2:13)

Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, [teaching, preaching] or our epistle. [written letter] (II Thess. 2:15)

And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans) (Col. 4:16)

There should not be any doubt that these passages from Paul establish the New Testament to be none other than the word of God. It is especially important to note the pattern described in Colossians 4:16 concerning the reading of Paul's epistle in the church. This follows the same pattern as synagogue worship where the Scriptures were read as part of the service. For biblical evidence in support of this assertion about synagogue practice we read:

For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day. (Act 15:21)

The early Christians followed the pattern of synagogue quite closely at points. This reading of an apostolic epistle is a powerful confirmation that these epistles were viewed as the word of God. The early church read the Old Testament Scriptures right along side of the emerging corpus of New Testament writings. The First Century Church utilized the Old Testament as its most powerful apologetic weapon.

Consider the further testimony of New Testament revelation. At some point the reader should survey the numerous occasions where the words; read, readest, readeth, and reading appear in Scripture. This is powerful evidence that Israel had the Scriptures and they were expected to know them. Surely the reader recalls Jesus saying, "Have ye not read what David did?" Matthew 12:3. Christ saying this type of thing confirms that the Scriptures were widely distributed and known in Israel.

Going on, Paul's writings clearly evidence that they are the word of God. Notice in particular how Peter views Paul's writings. Peter places Paul's epistles at the same level as the rest of Scripture:

...our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles...in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. (2 Peter 3:15-16)

In the next passage, Peter connects the Old Testament Scripture with the apostolic message. This means that apostolic writing is not only authoritative it is equally the word of God:

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts. Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. (2nd Peter 1:19-21)

In case anyone would doubt this, the next passage declares the gospel message to be Scripture:

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures. (I Cor. 15:3,4)

In Ephesians Paul shows us the superiority of New Testament revelation:

How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. (Ephesians 3:3-5)

While the New Testament does not normally use the phrases like "Thus saith the Lord," what the New Testament does uniquely is repeatedly cite or quote the Old Testament for proof of New Testament theology. For this reason and others shown in this section, it should be clear that the New Testament Scriptures are the word of God. Also it can be said, the New Testament Scriptures are interlocked and interwoven with the Old Testament. The New Testament revelation completes the Old and functions as a divine commentary on the Old Testament revelation. Or it could be said that the Old Testament is incomplete without the New Testament. Yet, the New Testament cannot stand-alone. The Old Testament provides essential background material at almost every point without which the New Testament would be unintelligible. The Old Testament provides the revelation upon which the New builds. The two form a complete unit inseparably joined together with a divine testimony. That testimony is Christ. Jesus possesses all the attributes of Deity. With this in mind consider the Great Commission:

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20)

Christ as the sovereign God guarantees the success of this commission by His omnipotent presence. Consequently, the believer has the assurance of Christ Himself that we have all that is necessary for our salvation, which includes the Scriptures. We have the guarantee of Christ Himself that we have the word of God. As mentioned, the New Testament consistently appeals to and cites the Old Testament Scriptures to explain and establish its truthfulness. This establishes an important method of biblical interpretation, namely, that the Scripture is the best interpreter of the Scriptures. It also establishes the fact that since the Scriptures are the word of God they are the highest court of appeal.

C. God's Word is to be written down and set forth as truth superior to the traditions and experiences of men:

This is the clear pattern that is set forth in the Scriptures. As will be seen there are good reasons for the inscription of God's word. All men have to deal with the question of authority. Is ultimate

authority found in God, man, or the church? How are questions answered? Do we look to an oral or "sacred tradition for answers? Are we guided by subjective feelings? Or, are the Scriptures reliable as the standard to guide us and settle disputes? Do we just listen to the leader or head guy? This is the approach used by some religions. The inscription of God's word gives us an objective divine standard to determine truth. Notice the clear commands that are set forth in God's word about this:

For whatsoever things were written aforetime
were written for our learning... (Rom. 15:4)

And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord..."
And he [Moses] took the book of the covenant,
and read in the audience of the people... (Exodus 24:4, 7)

Now go, write it before them in a table, and
note it in a book, that it may be for the time
to come for ever and ever. (Isaiah 30:8)

Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all
the words that I have spoken unto thee against
Israel, and against Judah, and against all the
nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from
the days of Josiah, even unto this day. (Jer. 36:2)

Only be thou strong and very courageous, that
thou mayest observe to do according to all the
law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn
not from it to the right hand or to the left, that
thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This
book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth,
but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that
thou mayest observe to do according to all that is
written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way
prosperous, and then thou have good success. (Joshua 1:7, 8)

And the Lord answered me, and said, Write
the vision, and make it plain upon tables,
that he may run that readeth it. (Hab. 2:2)

Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and
the last: and, What thou seest, write in a
book and send it unto the seven churches... (Rev.1:11)

God's word was to be written down so that His people could know right from wrong. Apart from the objective written standard of Scripture, man is left with his own subjective opinions. There are numerous examples of the appeal to what had been previously written. A few examples are:

Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerrubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God. (Ezra 3:2)

But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. (Matthew 4:4)

And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. (Luke 4:4)

For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. (1 Corinthians 1:19)

Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. (1 Peter 1:16)

When Jesus says, "it is written" this is the end of the debate for Him. Christ used this very phrase when He rebuffed Satan during the wilderness temptation. In fact, when Jesus used "it is written" to preface His teaching or end an argument, there is not one example in Scripture where Christ's human opponents questioned the authority of Scripture. Jesus clearly used the Scriptures as the final court of appeal. Christ and the apostle Paul viewed the written Scripture as authoritative and cited them frequently. Consider the following examples of this pattern:

And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. (Luke 24:27)

Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. (John 5:39)

Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come. (Acts 26:22)

For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. (Romans 4:3)

God commanded His word to be written and gave them to His people. Not only did Israel have the Scriptures, so did the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:27-39. God's word to Israel was known beyond the borders of Israel. What should be done with the written word? Consider Paul's command to Timothy:

What you heard from me, keep as the pattern
of sound teaching, with faith and love in
Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was

entrusted to you, guard it with the help of
the Holy Spirit who lives in us. (II Timothy 1:13, 14) NIV

In the above verse, Paul commands Timothy to guard this apostolic "deposit" of truth. What precisely is this good deposit, or good thing? This "deposit" was a distinguishable collection of writings. This is clearly presupposed from Paul's command to guard it. You cannot guard a nebulous collection of oral traditions. It should also be noted there is no indication that this "deposit" was inadequate. The apostolic teachings are described as traditions II Thessalonians 2:15, form of sound words II Timothy 1:13, the faith in Jude verse 3, that good thing II Timothy 1:14, the holy commandment II Peter 2:21, the apostle's doctrine Acts 2:42, and the faithful word and sound doctrine in Titus 1:9. These passages referring to apostolic teaching also demonstrate evidence of the New Testament authoritative canon during the apostolic age. As will be seen the passage from Jude is particularly relevant to this statement.

During the lifetime of the apostles their traditions or teachings i.e., the revelation of the New Testament was conveyed in two ways: orally by their teaching and preaching and by their writings, II Thessalonians 2:15. And furthermore, there is no evidence that there was any difference between their oral teaching and preaching, and their written epistles. This holds true for God's spokesmen in the Old Testaments well. Any oral traditions that were in conflict with the written Scriptures would have been rejected in accordance with Isaiah 8:20, "because there is no light in them."

It should be self-evident that after the apostles died; their writings were the only means the church had to distribute its teachings or traditions with accuracy. Why is so someone might ask? Many may recall classroom exercises where the teacher would give a student a word or sentence and then instruct the student to pass the word or sentence verbally around the class room in such a way that the previous student in the process could not hear what was being passed on. When the last student in the process received the word or sentence they would announce it to the class. The teacher would then make known the original word or sentence. The original word or sentence had changed in this process and was never the same thing as at the beginning. This exercise demonstrated the inferiority of verbal communication.

In spite of the inferiority of verbal or oral communications, the Roman Catholic Church's adherence to and use of oral "traditions" has caused much confusion and doctrinal deviation. It should be noted that the word traditions in II Thessalonians 2:15 is a biblical word, which is now limited too apostolic teaching and is restricted to the Scriptures alone. There are traditions that exist outside of the Bible, some of which are good as well as bad. Roman Catholicism's elevation of questionable traditions to a status of equality to the Scriptures has allowed doctrinal perversions to creep into the church in much the same way, as an experience dominated hermeneutic will subtly cause biblical misinterpretation. As will be seen, Christ denounced a number of man made traditions quite strongly in the Scriptures. Extra-biblical traditions must always be evaluated in light of Scripture.

Did Jesus ever refer to traditions or teaching of the religious leaders of His day? Yes, and as will be seen these traditions are unlike and do not command the authority in the same way as His appeal to "it is written" in (Matt. 4:4, 21:13; Mark 9:12; John 8:17). The phrase "it is written" is a

clear reference to the finality of the word of God. It should be noted that when Jesus says, "it was said by them of old time" he is referring to something other than the Scriptures. Jesus was correcting or setting the record straight. He was referring to the commentary of the Jewish elders that was in error, not the Old Testament Scriptures themselves:

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. (Matt. 5:21)

We find another example in Matthew's gospel where Christ was referring to the traditions or teaching either written or oral of the Pharisees. Consider from Matthew where He says, "it hath been said:

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. (Matt. 5:43)

Once again, Christ is referring to false teaching of the Pharisees. Jesus mentioned the tradition of the elders in Mark 7:3. Christ goes on in the gospel of Mark 7:9 to say that the Pharisees had substituted the commandments of God for the traditions of men. We must always be on guard against false traditions being substituted for the word of God. Hopefully the reader sees how Christ always corrected the false traditions of the Pharisee's by citing the written word. Christ condemned the teaching and tradition of the Pharisees in the strongest terms in Matthew chapter twenty-three. Christ's denunciation of Pharisaical teaching is so strong that it should give any one pause before attempting to elevate their own traditions or revelations to a status of equality with the biblical Scriptures. Christ places tremendous emphasis on the Scriptures and knowing them correctly. In fact, Jesus rebuked the religious leaders for not knowing the Scriptures:

And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God? (Mark 12:24)

The religious leaders of Christ's day erred because they did not know the Scriptures. This strongly implies that the Scriptures are reliable and trustworthy as evidenced by Christ's rebuke of the leaders for not knowing them. If the Scriptures are reliable and trustworthy, it follows that they are sufficient. This rebuke of Christ makes no sense if the Scriptures are incomplete or were unavailable. If the Scriptures were incomplete, then it follows that whatever knowledge was possessed would be incomplete and the leaders whom Christ had rebuked could claim justifiable ignorance. When Christ quotes the Old Testament or says, "it is written" this should inspire confidence in the Scriptures because Jesus is establishing them as God's final authority. Christ obviously knew that they were reliable and quoted them as authoritative.

For example, there are numerous examples where Christ and the apostles quote the Old Testament directly. For example, in Matt.19: 4, 5 Jesus quotes Genesis 2:24. In Hebrews 1:5 the writer is mentioning Psalms 2:7. In fact, there are literally hundreds of examples of the New Testament writers quoting the Old Testament. In Acts 18:24, 28 we learn of Apollos who was "mighty in the Scriptures" and convinced the Jews publicly that Jesus was Christ from the

Scriptures. What Scriptures were these? They were the Old Testament Scriptures. This sheds important light on how important the Scriptures are. Apollos did not use testimonials, or new revelations to convince the Jews, he used the Scriptures.

The early Christians and the Christians today have both preached orally, and have written sermons and books. There is a major difference between our preaching and writing and that of the apostles. The word of the apostles was revelatory, where as ours is simply repeating the divinely inspired word of the apostles. The apostle s words were original and authoritative. The church and ours is derivative and only authoritative as long as it is completely faithful to the word of the apostle s i.e., the word of God. The astute reader will see the clear pattern in Scripture of appealing to what had been previously written. This establishes a normative pattern of using the Scriptures to determine truth. Therefore, using the Scriptures to interpret the Scriptures and allowing them to be the final court of appeal is biblical.

D. The Sufficiency of Scriptures:

The self-evident testimony of the Scriptures is that they are sufficient. The Scriptures are completely adequate to meet the needs of the believer. This teaching is all over the face of the Scriptures. The believer can have confidence in the Scriptures. Surely, this is the testimony of the Scriptures. This conclusion is one that can be drawn from or deduced from the Scriptures by good and necessary consequence. God's words are described as "pure," "perfect," "a light," and "eternal." For example, consider this testimony from the following three passages:

The words of the LORD are pure words: as
silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven
times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou
shalt preserve them from this generation for ever. (Ps. 12:6,7)

For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven. (Ps. 119:89)

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto
my path. (Ps. 119:105)

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting
the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure
making wise the simple. (Ps. 19:7)

Consider just one implication from Psalms 19:7. If the law of God were incomplete, the conversion of the soul would be tenuous at best. The necessary biblical conclusion is that the Scriptures are complete. The Scriptures have more to say more along this line of reasoning:

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost,
whom the Father will send in my name, he shall
teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance,
whatsoever I have said unto you. (John 14:26)

This promise of Christ to his apostles tells us that the Holy Spirit will teach them "all things", and bring to their remembrance all things that he said unto them. This is a promise by God to the apostles that important information (i.e., revelation) would be given to them. It is a justifiable biblical conclusion that this revelation would be complete and sufficient because Jesus said "all things." The wording "all things" is used in a qualified sense, but admitting this in no way contradicts the conclusion that this apostolic revelation (now Scripture) would be anything less than complete and sufficient. We are not to infer from the wording "all things" that Jesus taught the disciples about weather patterns in Australia during the Sixteenth Century. The "all things" pertain to whatsoever God intended to reveal and His revelation necessary for salvation.

Along this same line of thinking, consider Paul's ministry to the church. Did Paul leave anything out of his words to the church? Absolutely not, listen to the apostle:

And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shown you, and have taught you publicly, from house to house... For I have not shunned to declare to declare unto you all the counsel of God. (Acts 20:20,27)

Paul did not believe that God's word was insufficient. This is proved by his use of the phrase "all the counsel of God." Paul believed that he had this counsel for the Church. This whole "counsel of God" was the same message that Moses and the prophets spoke. See Acts 26:22 for proof of this.

The Scripture tells us that what is written will lead us to God that we might have life. This would again be tenuous at best if parts of Scripture have been lost, corrupted, or were insufficient. Consider the further testimony of Scripture:

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing ye might have life through his name. (John 20:31)

But the word of the Lord endureth for ever, And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. (1 Peter 1:25)

It is clear that Peter had confidence in God's word. The Scriptures were given so that we might obtain life, and they endure forever. The believer does not need anything more than the written word of God. In the next verse notice how God says "All Scripture is given that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The implications of this for the doctrine of the sufficiency of the Scriptures are enormous:

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. (II Tim. 3:16,17)

The Greek word translated "inspiration" means "God-breathed," or that God is the source of the Scriptures. God's inspiration of the Scriptures sets them apart from all other writings of men. They came from him. God used men to write His word in the Bible. He did it in such a way as to make sure that what was written was exactly what He intended or designed. This means the Scriptures are divinely inspired.

What if the Scriptures were incomplete? If the Scriptures were incomplete, the "man of God" would never be able to "be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Paul's instruction here would not be true if portions of the Scriptures were lost or some other standard needed. That is because the Scriptures are connected to this process of the perfecting of the man of God. Likewise, the next verse clearly sets forth the sufficiency of Scripture.

Think not that I am come to destroy the law,
or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but
to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven
and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no
wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. (Matt. 5:17)

Jesus said that the least part of the law would not pass away. One implication is that nothing would be lost. If the least is to be preserved, then surely, the weightier things will not be lost. Consequently, we can have confidence that God's word is complete. There are not books missing from the Bible nor do we need some kind of nebulous oral tradition interpreted exclusively by church leaders. The next passage from Isaiah warns us about those who will go beyond Scripture:

To the law and to the testimony: if they speak
not according to this word, it is because there
is no light in them. (Isaiah 8:20)

Isaiah sets God's word forth as the standard. In preparation for the close of the apostolic era, Like Isaiah, Paul sets forth the Scriptures as the objective source that must be the final court of appeal. By apostolic command believers are bound to the written word:

Now brothers, I have applied these things
to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so
that you may learn from us the meaning of the
saying, "Do not go beyond what is written...." (I Cor. 4:6 NIV)

In the *Tyndale New Testament Commentary* on First Corinthians, Leon Morris makes the following comment about the above verse:

not beyond what is written" was a catch-cry familiar to Paul and his readers, directing attention to the need for conformity to Scripture.¹

The above passage in First Corinthians clearly condemns all forms of extra-Biblical revelation including an oral tradition that is allegedly on par with the written word of God. There is no need to go beyond Scripture. Why? Because it is complete.

The biblical test of a prophet found in Deut. 12:32 - 13:4; Deut. 18:20-22; and Isaiah 8:20 clearly sets forth Scripture as the standard and a sufficient guide. Remember, Jesus used this standard to stop the mouths of His adversaries when He said "Have ye never read?" in Mark 2:25 regarding David's actions. What did the Pharisees say in response to this? Nothing! Some religions such as Mormonism actually teach that you are supposed to pray about the purported prophet and his message, then see if it rings true by getting a confirming sensation after prayer. The Old Testament believer in contrast was to compare the purported prophet and his message with what had been revealed and written by God in His word. In the book of Galatians, Paul continues this same pattern for testing purported revelation:

But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that which ye have received, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:8, 9)

Hopefully the reader has discerned the clear pattern in Scripture. This pattern is appealing to what has been written. As mentioned previously, when Christ said, "It is written" this denotes finality and certainty because there was nothing more authoritative than God's word. It should be noted that Christ's commentary on the Scriptures is infallible, ours is not. The written word is the standard and it has not changed. Consider the importance of the following verse:

...which is the church of the living God,
the pillar and foundation of the truth. (I Timothy 3:15) (NIV)

Hopefully, nothing said by this writer in this study on the authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures would cause anyone to think that the church is unimportant. The church is very important. How is this so? The church today like a pillar or foundation defends and supports the gospel. How does the church do this? 1- by "Holding forth the word of life..." Philippians 2:16; 2- by "...rightly dividing the word of truth" II Timothy 2:15; 3- by "teaching all nations..." Matt. 28:19; 4- and by "guarding the good deposit" II Timothy 1:13, 14 (NIV). The church should do

these things with all the resources in its power. These tasks would be impossible if Scriptures were incomplete or corrupted. Why? Because you could not know if you were "holding forth the word of life" or the word of men. God commands us to "rightly divide the word of life." God would not command us to rightly divide something, which we did not possess. Why? If we did not possess the Scriptures it would be an impossibility to rightly divide them. The biblical conclusion is that Scripture has been preserved. Listen to the apostle Peter:

By the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. (1 Peter 1:23)

Can anything be clearer? Peter is not talking about anything other than the written Scriptures. Peter goes on to say:

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue. (II Peter 1:3)

As Peter instructs us there are a great number of spiritual blessings that God has given us. We can have confidence that "all things" would have to include Scripture as one of those things. There is not any limitation expressed here because the passage is dealing with what God has given us for salvation. Consequently, we have confidence in the sufficiency of Scripture.

Consider the following examples on Jesus' view of the accuracy of the Old Testament Scriptures and their prophetic fulfillment concerning himself: Matthew 26:31; Matt. 26:54; Mark 9:12, 13; John 13:18 John 17:12. Jesus referred to Old Testament individuals in the following verses: (Abraham) John 8:56, (Noah and Lot), Luke 17:26-32, (Isaiah) Matt. 3:3, (Elijah and Elisha) in Luke 4:24-27. The case is irrefutable, Jesus believed in the reliability of the written word of God. Consequently, the believer can have confidence in the reliability and trustworthiness of Scripture. Reliability and sufficiency go hand in hand. An insufficient or incomplete document is not reliable.

There is no evidence that Jesus believed the Scriptures to be anything less than complete. The tremendous spiritual corruption of Israel in Christ's day, which culminated in the destruction of the Jewish nation in 70 A. D. (Matt.23: 34-36) did not affect the Old Testament canon. The canon was intact in Christ's day, and the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls confirms the accuracy of the Hebrew Masoretic Text used by the King James translators many centuries later. In fact, there is virtually no difference between the First Century copies of Old Testament Dead Sea copies and the Masoretic text that is one thousand years older. The New Testament books were brought into the canon of Scripture as the church bore testimony to the fact that our present New Testament books claimed to be by their very nature the word of God. This was a process in which the testimony of the Holy Spirit bore witness by and with the Scriptures in men's hearts. This was not a process where the church as a divinely inspired entity determined what the canon of Scripture would be. The Scriptures themselves bore this testimony of their inspiration.

In essence, the Roman Church teaches that the church in and of itself made this decision. The

word of God does depend upon man or the church. The Scriptures do not come from the church. They come from God. The Scriptures do not need our confirmation to be true. Their truthfulness is independent of man and even the church. In regards to New Testament revelation, there is more manuscript evidence for the New Testament than any other writing from antiquity. Likewise, we can have the same confidence that corruption during the New Testament Church age did not alter the New Testament canon of Scripture in any way. God is LORD of heaven and earth. He is Sovereign; none can stay his hand..." (Daniel 4:35). Preserving His word is a small matter for Him.

E. **The Closing of the Canon of Scripture:**

The Scriptures are complete and divine revelation has ceased. In fact, the ceasing of divine revelation is seen right in the texts of Scripture. This is what is meant when theologians talk about the closing of the canon. Consider the biblical evidence for this:

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. (Jude 3)

Also, it should be noted how the *New King James Version* renders the last part of this verse:

Which was once for all delivered to the saints. (NKJ)

This verse in Jude clearly anticipates the closing of the New Testament Canon. What does Jude mean by the phrase (the faith)? Simon J. Kistemaker in the *New Testament Commentary* of the book of Jude says the following:

What is this faith Jude mentions? In view of the context, we understand the word faith to mean the body of Christian beliefs. It is the gospel the apostles proclaimed and therefore is equivalent to "the apostles teaching (Acts 2:42).²

The phrase once [*hapax*] delivered is important. *Hapax* means once for all. In *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* we find this comment concerning *hapax*:

Once for all, of what is perpetual validity, not requiring repetition.³

The following verse provides more important information concerning the completion of Scripture:

And are built upon the foundation of the
apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself
being the chief corner stone. (Ephesians 2:20)

This verse in Ephesians tells us that the apostles are part of the foundation of the church. There is only one foundation that the church has. The Scripture in John 14:26 teach that the apostles were taught "all things." Paul commanded Timothy to "guard the good deposit" of truth in II Timothy 1:14. Clearly this "deposit" was identifiable or else Paul's command to Timothy would not make sense. And furthermore, this deposit in order to guard it, could not have been a nebulous association of oral traditions. Written documents can be compared to forgeries whereas oral traditions as already shown (classroom exercise) by their very nature are open to endless differing accounts and interpretations.

Since the apostle's were taught all things, there would be no need for further revelation. What can you add to all things? The good deposit or the all things was tied to the apostolic period i.e., the foundation of the church. The authoritative apostolic writings became part of the New Testament canon. The biblical conclusion is that after their death apostolic revelation ceased. Why? On account of the fact that after the death of the apostles their special office in the church ceased. The church has only one foundation, not layers of foundations on top of each other, as the ongoing apostolic office view would require.

The next verse from Daniel cannot be disregarded in its importance for the subject of the closing of the canon:

Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people
and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression,
and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation
for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting
righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy,
and to anoint the most Holy. (Daniel 9:24)

The terminus or completion of this prophecy is clearly in the first century. Verses 25-27 make it clear that when the seventy-week period begins, it will continue uninterrupted till the seventy week period is over or complete. Christ's death and resurrection made an end of the sins of His people. He accomplished reconciliation for His people. Christ's people have experienced everlasting righteousness because of the fact that we are clothed in Christ's righteousness, which is everlasting. The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. is clearly within the time frame of the seventy weeks, and is proved by verse twenty-six. The phrase "and to seal up the vision and prophecy" clearly sets forth the closing of the canon of Scripture.

E. J. Young in *The Geneva Daniel Commentary* makes the following observations concerning "vision" and "prophecy":

Vision was a technical name for revelation given to the OT prophets (cf. Isa, 1:1, Amos 1:1, etc.) The prophet was the one through whom this vision was revealed to the people. The two words, vision and prophet, therefore, serve to designate the prophetic revelation of the OT period.... When Christ came, there was no further need of prophetic revelation in the OT sense.⁴

Since there is no fundamental difference between Old and New Testament revelation, and the source of the revelation is identical, there is no reason to doubt that all giving of new revelation ceased in the first century.

In Adam Clarke's commentary concerning this same phrase we read:

To put an end to the necessity of any farther revelations, by completing the canon of Scriptures, and fulfilling the prophecies which related to his person, sacrifice and the glory that should follow.⁵

A passage in I Corinthians sheds even more light on the completion of Scripture:

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. (I Corinthians 13:9,10)

The passage says that something that is "in part" will be done away with when "that which is perfect is come." What is the apostle referring to when he says that something perfect is coming? Theologian Gordon H. Clark comments on this:

There is one phase, not so far mentioned: "When the completion comes," or "when that which is perfect comes." This raises the question: Completion of what? It could be the completion of the canon. Miracles and tongues were for the purpose of guaranteeing the divine origin of apostolic doctrine. They cease when the revelation was completed. Even the word knowledge is better understood this way. Instead of comparing present-day extensive study of the New Testament with Justin's [Martyr] painfully inadequate understanding of the Atonement, it would be better to take knowledge as the apostolic process of revealing new knowledge. This was completed when revelation ceased. ⁶

Clark is right on track when connecting the coming perfection with the completion of the Scriptures. The tongues and prophecy of the apostolic era confirmed and bore witness to the truthfulness of that message. These tongues, prophecy, and revelatory knowledge were lacking when compared with the written Scripture. The written Scriptures are far superior to spoken words. Dr. Leonard Coppes also has relevant comments regarding this section of Scripture:

This is a clear statement that when the knowledge being given through the apostles and prophets is complete, tongues and prophecy shall cease. Tongues, prophecy, and knowledge (*gnosis*) constitute partial, incomplete stages. Some may stumble over the idea that "knowledge" represents a partial and incomplete (revelational) stage. But is rightly remarked that Paul distinguishes between *sophia* and *gnosis* in I Cor. 12:8 All three terms (tongues, prophecy, knowledge) involve divine disclosure of verbal revelation and all three on that basis alone ceased when the foundation (i. e., the perfect) came (10). Verse 11 speaks of the partial as childlike (cf., 14:20) and the perfect as manly (the apostolic is "manly," too, cf., 14:20). Paul reflecting on those who are limited to these childlike things describes this limitation as seeing in a mirror darkly (12). When the perfect (the apostolic *depositum*) is come, full knowledge is present.⁷

Coppes, like Clark connects the perfection with the completion of the canon. The next passage of Scripture cited contains a strong warning not to tamper with God's Word. This verse is particularly relevant for the closing of canon at this point in redemptive history:

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. (Rev. 22:18-19)

The book of Revelation for good reasons is believed to be the last book written. It was completed prior to 70 A.D. The passages in chapter 1:3 and 22:6, 12 are time indicators that point to an early date to this book. Why, someone may ask? The wording in these texts such as "for the time is at hand" and "which must shortly be done" provide convincing evidence for an early date prior to 70 A.D. for John's revelation. This is because, the First Century fulfillment of the prophecies within the book are relevant to dating of Revelation prior to 70 A.D. So the time texts previously mentioned become important indicators pointing towards dating the book in the First Century.

In addition, the temple in chapter eleven shown to be still in existence also supports this early date prior to 70A.D. If an early date for the book of Revelation is accurate (which it is) then it

allows the book to fit into the time frame of Daniel's prophecy. Accordingly, the book of Revelation fits into the time frame and purview of Daniel's "seventy weeks." Therefore, those who argue for continued revelation do so at the peril of their souls since they are urging men to violate this Scriptural warning recorded in the last book of the canon.

Another passage that sheds important light on the penalty for giving false revelation is in Zechariah thirteen. The context of this section of Zechariah places it in the First Century. See Zechariah 11:13; 12:10; 13:1; 13:7 for proof of this First Century setting. Consider this warning not to add to God's word:

It shall come to pass that if anyone still prophesies, then his father and mother who begot him will say to him, You shall not live, because you have spoken lies in the name of the Lord. And his father and mother who begot him shall thrust him through when he prophesies. (Zechariah 13:3) (NKJ)

This passage supports the view that prophecy has ended in light of the fact that the death penalty is still to be carried out for false prophetic utterances and is in harmony with Daniel 9:24. The phrase "If anyone still prophesies" makes it clear that prophecy has ended. The death penalty is required for those who give new revelation. Why? On account of the fact that it is false revelation since God has ceased giving revelation. This is the consistent theme of Scripture. Again, see Rev. 22:18, 19; Gal. 1:8, 9; Deut. 13:5 for the penalties and curses associated with violating this prohibition.

Consider the important fact that Jesus is the incarnate word of God:

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

Because of the incarnation, the next passage may be most important verse in our study regarding the completion of the Scriptures:

God, Who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom he also made the worlds. (Heb. 1:1,2)

This passage in Hebrews makes it clear that Christ Jesus is the final and complete revelation of God. God in times past spoke through the prophets. Now, He speaks through Christ. God speaks

to us in and through the Scriptures which Jesus said testify of me (John 5:39). Jesus also admonished his disciples saying And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself (Luke 24:27). Christ is the head corner stone of the church's foundation. He is the head of the church.

Jesus as the head of the church commissioned the twelve apostles to speak in His name with His authority and power:

And When he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease). These twelve Jesus sent forth) (Matthew 10:1-5)

These apostles whom Jesus commissioned, spoke in His name, 2 Peter 3:2, they wrote in His name, 1st Corinthians 14:37. God confirmed the words of the apostles with power:

Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. (2 Corinthians 12:12)

The words of the apostles were the words of Christ and as shown earlier the words of the apostles that God intended to preserve for His Church were committed to writing. Beyond the words of Christ and His apostles, new alleged revelations are nothing more than an attempt to rebuild or add to the foundation of the church. Any attempt to add to Scripture is a direct attack upon the person and work of Christ. How is this so? The Scriptures are so connected to Christ e.g., Luke 24:27, and John 5:39 that any attempt to undermine them is an attack upon Christ himself. In the book of Colossians we see Christ's preeminence over all of creation:

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. (Col. 1:15-17)

The Father declared concerning Jesus in Matthew 17:5 "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." Where do we hear the words of Christ? It has been abundantly demonstrated that we hear Christ speaking in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. In addition, when we read "the Scriptures hath said" and "God hath said" we see how the Scriptures and God speaking are equated in such a way as to be identical. Therefore, the testimony of Christ is so connected with and interwoven into the very fabric of Scripture that to deny the authority of Scripture in any fashion is to deny Christ Himself.

In conclusion it can be said: the voice of Scripture is assuredly, the word of God. The testimony from Scripture itself leads to the realization that the Scriptures are sufficient and the final court of

appeal or *Sola Scriptura* as the men of the reformation put it. This should be the testimony of the church and all of God's people. The word of God does depend upon man or the church. The Scriptures do not need our confirmation to be true. Their truthfulness is independent of man and even the church. For those who go beyond Scripture to differing authorities such as "sacred traditions," new revelations, or spiritual experiences, it must be said that this is nothing more or less than setting your self or the alleged authority above the Scriptures.

When Jesus said, "it is written)" He established beyond all doubt that the Scriptures are the final court of appeal. A pattern has been seen where the writers of Scripture appeal to other Scriptures establishing two important principles of Protestantism. They are, first, that the Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture and secondly, that since the Scriptures are identical with God speaking they must be the highest court of appeal for the Christian. Consequently, because of the declaration "It is written" the Scriptures are authoritative and sufficient. In light of this and the closing of the canon, new revelations no matter who gives them are false revelations. The Scriptures came from God, not the church. God is the author of the Scriptures. Therefore, the Scriptures are the highest authority. Alleged spiritual experiences, new revelations, and traditions must not guide man, only the Scriptures where God has spoken. For those whom disagree with this conclusion, the burden of proof is upon them.

F. **Objections and Responses:**

Several Objections

It is necessary to comment on several objections that have been raised against the historic Protestant view of Scripture. My comments are to objections that have been made in public forums and advanced by various organized religious groups. I have encountered these arguments when discussing the Protestant view of Scripture with Mormons, Catholics, and those in the Charismatic movement. I in turn will raise a number of questions in this section that the opponents of *Sola Scriptura* should consider. It is not my intention to engage in an extensive interaction with the opponents of *Sola Scriptura* in this section since Protestant theologians have done so on many occasions. A number of different "straw man" arguments could be raised against the view of Scripture outlined above. Fallacious arguments collapse because of their misstating their opponent's position and then attacking the misstated position.

Someone may cite passages like Deut. 4:2 which forbids the adding to or the diminishing from Scripture and claim that this verse teaches the closing of the canon at this point in redemptive history. This is a cute trick attempting to demonstrate the Protestant view of Scripture just does not work. Passages of this nature refer to the prohibiting of man from adding to Scripture.

Another may cite a passage like John 21:25 referring to the potential of Christ's teaching fill the whole world with books in an attempt to distort the meaning of a passage like John 14:26 dealing with Christ's message to the apostles. Hence, an interpretation or spin like this would seek to open the door for continued revelation by leading people to believe that there is still more to the "all things."

John 14:26 certainly does not mean that Jesus taught his apostles all about the occult and deviant sexual practices. There is clearly a limitation in the passage. John 14:26 is understood in relation

to passages like II Peter 1:3 and II Tim. 3:16, 17. Is it true that not every word of Christ and the apostles is recorded in the Bible? Yes, and John even says this in John 20:30. John follows up this statement in verse 20:30 with an important conclusion that: "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:31,2). The phrase in the first part of the verse "are written" is expressing the same truth as "it is written." If "it is written," it is Scripture and has been canonized. If it is not recorded in the Bible it is not Scripture.

It may be objected that passages like John 10:35 and II Tim. 3:16, 17 refer only to the Old Testament and cannot be used to prove the completion of Scripture.

It is admitted that these passages do primarily refer to the Old Testament. The New Testament is also Scripture, so the passages in question include the New Testament within their scope. It should be obvious to the reader that these passages were not the only ones used to support the completion of Scripture.

There are several different manifestations of competitive authority systems that are opposed to the Scriptures alone as being the final court of appeal for life and truth. I will touch upon some of them briefly. When someone rejects the Scriptures as the final authority they open themselves up to all kinds of deception. They are not rejecting authority *per se*, just the Scriptures as the final court of appeal, or *Sola Scriptura*. As mentioned at the outset, some have followed leaders; their own vanity, traditions, or experience are lifted up as supreme. False and misguided religious leaders attack the reliability of the Bible in order to subordinate people to their own authority. The pattern is always the same; the claim is the Bible is not sufficient. The following three categories are examples of this pattern, but by no means exhaust the number of examples of aberrations that could be cited.

Mormon Groups

The various expressions of Mormonism have a vested interest in undermining the authority of Scripture. If the biblical authority is called into question, then the case is made (fallaciously) for dependence upon an additional authority structure. Where is the authority of Mormonism found? In the case of Mormonism their authority is located in the church hierarchy and doctrines which are found in additional books that they call scripture and in the pronouncements of their leaders in official church publications and general conference meetings. This means that there are many, many volumes of alleged authoritative writings. There are two main groups that are adherents to Mormon or restoration theology. Both of these particular groups believe in continued ongoing revelations, which add to the Bible. It is a fact that Utah Mormonism and the Reorganized Mormon Church disagree with each other as to exactly what the new revelations are. The latter group believes that some of the former group's revelations are false. Utah Mormonism is polytheistic, whereas, the Reorganized Mormon Church is not (no small difference).

Both of these groups that adhere to the theology Joseph Smith (Mormon founder) have more than one man claiming to be the only prophet on earth. This is somewhat reminiscent of a period in church history where more than one individual at the same time claimed to be the Pope. In addition, both Mormon groups have between themselves at least twenty-four men who claim to be apostles. Obviously, something is wrong. Since Mormons assert I need their revelations which

are not found in the Bible, they need to explain what exactly these new revelations are that that I need for salvation? How do we know if the alleged new revelations are accurate? How can the contradictory revelations given by the various so-called Mormon prophets be explained? Are the Mormon alleged revelations being properly interpreted? How do we know? In the case of Mormonism, they claim the Bible is insufficient, so you have to take someone's (their leaders) word for it. Supposedly the Mormon leaders are sufficient. This particular claim is not only unacceptable, it is ridiculous and unbiblical.

Sacred Tradition Groups

In particular, it has been alleged by some Roman Catholics that the Bible does not teach *Sola Scriptura*. Is this so? The Roman Catholic should so where the Bible contradicts this doctrine properly defined? Some have said that *Sola Scriptura* means "the Bible plus nothing else." This is a straw-man argument as will be shown below. To the Roman Catholic we ask, where does the Bible direct God's people to an outside authority structure such as "sacred tradition?" The force of this question should not be dismissed. As demonstrated in the preceding part of this article, *Sola Scriptura* is taught all over the face of Scripture. In essence, the critics of *Sola Scriptura* are saying that the Protestant must accept as the final authority, the word as stated by the Roman or Eastern Orthodox Church, end of debate.

If the church is always correct, why did Christ attack the religious authorities of the Old Testament Church? The facts are, sometimes even the church will err in its doctrine. If the Old Testament Church erred why should anyone deny the fact that the church in gospel age can and has fallen into error as well? What happens when the church misinterprets the Bible? Can the believer challenge the misinterpretation? As Protestants we say yes, but this does not mean by doing so we are disregarding or repudiating the church. It means that we have to test all things in light of Scripture. This includes even the rulings and doctrine of the church. If this is necessary, it should be done in humility. The faithful church sees that the Scriptures always stand as the final authority above it. Christ is the head of the church. He speaks through the Scriptures. The faithful church should always be reforming and checking itself in light of Scripture.

How can error creep into the church? The leaders in the Old Testament covenant nation did not want the people to misinterpret and break God's law. This sounds like a worthy goal. Who would want that to happen? To prevent this, the elders Of Israel built walls and fences made out of man-made regulations to go around God's law. These man- made laws are found in the Talmud. These additional laws would allegedly keep the people from even getting close to actually breaking one of God's laws. Did this work? What were the consequences of this? These man made laws actually produced ignorance in Israel regarding God's law. The traditions of the elders became confused with the word of God. It in fact became a great burden for God's people. Not only were these traditions of men a burden, it also made the commandments of God of none effect. See Mark 7:13 for proof of this.

Likewise, the Roman Church did not want people to misinterpret the Scriptures because it is God's word. This ostensibly sounds good since it is wrong and sinful to misinterpret God's word thus bringing judgement upon those whom do this. What was the Roman Church's attempted solution to this possibility of misinterpretation? The Roman Church placed the Bible on the list of forbidden books. If the people did not have the Bible to read then they would not be able to misinterpret it. The logic may be correct, but it is perverse. Eventually, the people in the Roman

Churches were not able to recognize the difference between the church law, traditions, superstitions, heresy, and the word of God. In fact, these strategies by ancient Israel and Rome produced ignorance of the law of God and the Scriptures. These strategies to keep the people of God from breaking God's law or misinterpreting the Bible were and are evil since they produce ignorance among the people of God.

Moving on, does the theory of "sacred tradition" invalidate the Protestant doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*? The distinctive doctrines of Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy are all based upon sources outside of the Bible. In the case of Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy the distinctive doctrines are found in what is referred to as oral "sacred tradition" interpreted by the church. How do we know if alleged "sacred traditions" are true? Is it because the church says so? How do we know the word of the church regarding a particular "sacred tradition" is true? Is it because it is in agreement with "sacred tradition?" If this is the case, then we would seem to be going in a circle. In Orthodoxy and Rome, tradition is elevated on a par equal with Scripture. It needs to be asked: has God revealed all his revelation now? Or is the body of revelation, i.e., "sacred tradition" still expanding? If still expanding, how long will these alleged traditions continue to expand or grow? If the sacred oral traditions are written down, what becomes of them?

Are they now considered to be equivalent to the Old and New Testament writings? If so, why not revise the Scriptures by adding them to the Bible? Is there a sacred book of traditions? Are there commentaries that explain these "sacred traditions?" If so, are these commentaries inspired?

Does this alleged expanding body of revelations or traditions ever contradict each other? It should be noted that Roman Catholic theology is still evolving because of the influence of these so-called traditions. The development of Mariology is an example of this. To deny that there are contradictions between the different traditions one would have to be dishonest. For example, Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholic have traditions that contradict each other at various points. The role of "feasts," "fasts," "festivals," the "*filioque*," "papal claims," "original sin," "purgatory," the "immaculate conception" and the use of "Icons" are examples of divergent contradictory traditions. And furthermore, there is much debate and disagreement upon exactly what some traditions mean. It should be noted that the Eastern Orthodox Churches first acted on a basic principle of Protestantism by breaking with the Roman Church in 1054 over the *filioque* controversy. The *filioque* controversy is where a Roman Catholic Pope, outside of a church council changed the Nicean Creed. The facts are, there are serious theological differences within Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, which includes divisions or factions among themselves, new age mysticism, liberalism and outright humanism manifesting itself in a variety of ways.

In defense of Protestantism, it needs to be explained how someone may look at the Reformation doctrine of *Sola Fide* (by faith alone) and say this is not what the Bible teaches. They could say, "the Bible says we are saved by grace. This Latin phrase that highlights Protestant doctrine does not even mention grace, it only speaks of faith." Such statements would reveal an appalling amount of ignorance. *Sola Fide*, or "by faith alone" must be understood in its historical context. The debate that was raging at the time concerned how a person was saved or justified. Both positions had the doctrine of grace in their formulas. Although Rome uses the word grace in its formulation of justification, Rome's sacramental system has subverted the biblical doctrine of grace into a system of works. The Protestant battle cry was "by faith alone" in contrast to the Roman Church, which was essentially saying "faith plus works."

The Roman position essentially said that faith plus works produced justification, which placed

man in a tenuous state of grace. In the Roman view man could fall from this state of grace. The Protestant position in contrast to this said that it was "faith alone" (the result of God's imparting grace) produced justification, thus saving man. If *Sola Fide* is taken out of its historical context it can be made appear to be in conflict with Scripture. The Latin formula is a phrase drawing attention to the difference between the Protestant and Roman positions on justification. The Protestant position did not reduce to "faith only" minus grace as the surface meaning of the Latin might appear. It should be noted that an objection like this is a clever straw-man fallacy that capitalizes on the ignorance of modern man.

Likewise, the Protestant doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* if taken out of its historical context can be made to appear to be unconvincing. The debate surrounding *Sola Scriptura* was a debate on ultimate authority. The Roman Church claims that it was the final court of appeal. If time is taken to study the debate during the Reformation, it is clearly seen that the Protestants were claiming that the Bible was the final court of appeal. They were not saying "the Bible plus nothing else." An ignorant person in the Twentieth Century looking at the Latin formula just on the surface may get this impression. If they believe this is the Protestant position, it is the result of their own ignorance. To properly understand the Latin formula used by the men of the reformation you must understand the context of the debate at the time. The Protestants were not claiming that you were forbidden to use commentaries or refer to church history, or have church synods and assemblies to help settle disputes. To illustrate, John Calvin produced a commentary set on the Bible that is still the standard against which all others are measured. Philip Schaff, a noteworthy Protestant historian wrote a valuable eight volume church history, a three volume work on the creeds of Christendom, and edited the thirty eight volume church fathers set.

It is beyond dispute that Protestantism has produced a rich tradition of scholarship. Does this violate its own stated position? Of course not! The Protestant position is not some kind of simplistic "the Bible plus nothing" theory. Those who allege this are dishonest or ignorant. Since the Scriptures are the word of God, Protestants have always maintained that there could be no higher authority to appeal to. It should be noted that Protestants are not against traditions. Reformation Protestants are against traditions that are contrary to Scripture. Protestants believe strongly in the church's role in the interpretation of Scripture. *Regula fidei* or what is known at the rule of faith guards against the danger of the individual setting himself up as the ultimate interpreter of Scripture. Radical individualism in the area of interpretation of Scripture is akin to anarchy. It should be noted that the Reformation Protestants strongly condemned the radical individualism of the Anabaptists of their day which sought to overthrow all authority. The ecumenical creeds serve an important role in the understanding the rule of faith. In Protestantism debates on the meaning of Scripture takes place in the church. In Reformed Churches in particular there are courts of appeal to guard against the possibility of error at any level of the debate. Protestants claim that the Bible is the final court of appeal in settling debates. This is the meaning of *Sola Scriptura*.

It is well to remember that the Roman Church had placed the Bible on the list of forbidden books. The Roman Church during this time would not allow their people to be like the Berean Church in the book of Acts. It should be remembered that this church was commended for searching the Scriptures. How can you search the Bible if it is forbidden? In reality, the reason for this ban on the Scriptures was that the Roman Church did not want any challenges to its authority. Thus, the Roman Church had set itself up as the final court of appeal. It tolerated and perpetuated spiritual abuse and corruption, which led up to the events surrounding the Protestant Reformation. Is the church the final court of appeal or the Scriptures? Again, the question is one of authority.

What is the ultimate authority? Since the church is made up of fallible men we must answer the question in favor of the Scriptures as the final authority.

In another line of attack, some Roman Catholics have said that the Protestant doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* is responsible for all the numerous denominations that interpret the Bible differently. It is true that a number of Protestants interpret the Bible differently. Sin, not Protestant theology in the human condition is responsible for this problem. Some Roman Catholics believe that factions or divisions within Protestantism are evidence of the correctness of their view. This is a fallacious assumption. The falsity of your opponent's position does not necessarily guarantee the correctness of your own position. For Roman Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox to pretend that their theologians and church members are in agreement on everything is dishonest. As already mentioned, it should be again noted that there are numerous factions within both of these groups. Unless your own house is free from different interpretations and factions it is hypocritical to raise an objection like this.

Roman Catholics believe that men cannot understand and interpret the Bible properly on their own. That is why you need the church. This is an epistemological objection. Does looking to the church rather than the Scriptures solve this alleged problem? If we cannot understand the word of God written down and preserved in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, how can there be certainty that the word of the church will be any clearer? If the individual cannot understand properly the word of God in the Scriptures, then surely, the individual will not be able to understand the word of the church either. If this epistemological objection were valid, it cuts against anyone understanding the word of the church as well and therefore is of no help to Catholics arguing against the Protestant view. It is an epistemological objection that proves too much for the Roman Catholic.

Charismatic Experience Oriented Groups

The modern day charismatic movement is notorious for allowing experiences to influence their interpretation of Scripture. Adherents of the charismatic movement believe that God still speaks through the continued presence of revelatory gifts in the church. Do the Charismatic revelatory gifts convey authoritative knowledge? If so, how is this revelatory knowledge fundamentally different from Mormon revelation, which also claims to be authoritative? If they are not authoritative, what is the purpose of these revelations since these same revelations in substance would already be in the Scriptures? Revelation if real, is authoritative. Non-authoritative revelation is a contradiction of terms. God's revelation cannot be separated from His authority. In fairness, charismatic followers do not believe that modern day revelatory knowledge contradicts the Bible. However, it is interesting to note that Mormons also believe that their revelations do not contradict the Bible either. Simply believing something is no guarantee of the truth or reality of the belief.

If the charismatic revelatory gifts are imparting new revelation, then this is a dangerous movement away from the authority of Scripture. In many cases, unwittingly the charismatic is accepting an authority other than the Bible, namely the new revelation. In addition, rather than *Sola Scriptura* being the guiding principle of the charismatic movement, many adherents of this movement have adopted a "just let the spirit lead or move" approach to arriving at truth for life decisions. In fact, this "just letting the spirit lead or move" seems to be the *modus operandi* of much of the charismatic movement. Sometimes this claim of "letting the spirit lead or move" has

been used as a pretext for doctrinal abuse and public sins such as men running off with other men's wives. This writer personally knows cases where people believing that they received words of prophetic knowledge actually sold their homes and moved away at great financial loss only to find out later that such a move accomplished nothing at all beneficial. Claims to the contrary, this movement has spawned unbelievable abuses in practice and doctrine, which is the very fruit of a non-Biblical system of authority.

Many followers of the charismatic movement pay lip service to the principle of *Sola Scriptura*. This is undermined however when so called spiritual experiences actually influence the interpretation of the Scriptures. In light of this flawed hermeneutic, namely, letting the alleged spiritual experience (tongue speaking, words of knowledge, and prophecy) influence an understanding of the Scripture it is not surprising that sound doctrine gives way to interpretations of Scripture that are influenced by these self-same experiences. The astute reader sees the circular reasoning that plagues this approach. Since the charismatic has either allegedly witnessed or spoke in tongues, the Bible is interpreted in such a fashion as to support the charismatic interpretations of the Bible. Thus, the charismatic assumes this must be what the Bible teaches since they have witnessed or experienced it. This is nothing more than a dangerous subjectivist circle of interpretation. The role of Scripture and experience are reversed, experience gaining the upper hand in this system. As already mentioned, the fruit of this in addition to producing faulty theology, has led to unbiblical practices.

In fact, it is not too strong to say that many of the modern day charismatic abuses rival the abuses that were produced by the medieval Roman Church. When experience is lifted up, as the guiding interpretive principle objectivity is lost. Experience is in the realm of subjectivity. In essence, the theology of the charismatic movement subverts in principle the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* and can end up supporting something other than the Scriptures being the final court of appeal. Does the charismatic believer want to establish alleged revelatory gifts as an additional source of authority? If so, how this be fundamentally different than Rome's "sacred tradition?" Both are sources of authority that stand outside of Scripture. This analysis may be painful for the charismatic to accept but it is true.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy reject *Sola Scriptura* in favor of "sacred tradition." It should be remembered that both of these religious bodies disagree strongly on a number of traditions and Eastern Orthodoxy in particular has numerous factions. Mormon groups reject it in favor of continued on-going revelation which come from their apostles and prophets. The charismatic churches in principle subvert *Sola Scriptura* because of their belief that modern revelation allegedly found in tongues and prophecy provides authoritative knowledge. If authoritative revelatory knowledge is ongoing whatever the form, (sacred tradition, new revelation) then the authority of Scriptures would now have a pretended equal. The facts are thus, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments have no equal. And furthermore, these other sources end up resulting in sectarianism and outright false interpretations of Scriptures.

Whose authority or word do I have to accept if the Scriptures are unreliable? Why should I believe one claim over against another? Do the new revelations in the charismatic movement or the "sacred traditions" of Roman result in unique interpretations of the Bible? These non-Biblical sources actually influence the interpretation of God's word. The Biblical pattern for interpreting

Scripture which is seen in the New Testament is to always refer to the Old Testament or other New Testament writers. This establishes the norm for using the Scripture to interpret other Scriptures.

This was the practice of the Berean believers in the book of Acts. In addition, we need to be careful not to cut our-selves off from the past or rule of faith. We should find out how other believers interpreted the Scriptures and why. It is possible that believers in times past may have insights into the grammar or historical setting that has been lost to modern interpreters. This is one reason why the church is important because of the preservation of the history of interpretation in commentaries.

However, to accept older interpreters or commentators as divinely inspired interpreters is completely unwarranted. This is the error of the "sacred tradition" churches. They have set up traditions and the certain (only the fathers that agree with them) early church fathers as divinely inspired interpreters and authorities on the word of God. Eastern Orthodoxy and Rome then summon this tradition as proof of their own authority when challenged. In this regard, both Rome and Eastern Orthodoxy engage extensively in the fallacy of circular reasoning. The facts are that many of the early church fathers had not completely broken free from the paganism of their day. With elements of pagan thinking clouding their minds, this caused many misinterpretations of the Scriptures. Some of the early church fathers in essence interpreted the Scriptures through the interpretive grid of pagan thinking. Origen is a prime example of this. He used Hellenistic philosophy to interpret the Scriptures. He tried to interpret Scriptures in such a way as to be harmonious with Greek Philosophy. Other examples of early church fathers using pagan ideas could be cited. I doubt that anyone would seriously question this assertion. It should be noted that many church fathers were in complete agreement with the Protestant position on *Sola Scriptura*. See the bibliography for sources that prove this assertion.

In summary, if the Scriptures are unreliable how could any other source be reliable? Discrediting the Bible would prove more than the critics of the Bible intend. It would in essence prove too much, namely, that no knowledge is possible. If God is incapable of preserving His word you certainly cannot have confidence in the word of men. If God has not spoken reliably in history then mankind is left in the quicksand of subjectivity. If God has not spoken reliably in history it is preposterous for a church to claim to speak infallibly. Mormons and charismatic believers may claim that their revelations are reliable today. This is nonsense. If God has not spoken reliably in the past He certainly cannot speak reliably in the present.

Who has more authority on earth, God or the church? The answer is obvious to this rhetorical question. The Scriptures declare God to be Sovereign or the absolute ruler over all. As stated at the beginning, God has either preserved His word from corruption or He has not. These are the only two choices. It is self-evident from the Scriptures that God has sovereignly preserved His word from corruption as evidenced by the testimony of the Scriptures themselves. As shown, the believer can have confidence that he has the complete and sufficient word of God to rest and base his life upon. Rome Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox use traditions, Mormons have their new revelations, and the charismatic indulge in their experiences, all of which causes misinterpretation of the Scriptures and out-and-out doctrinal perversion. "Sacred tradition," new revelations, revelatory gifts all take away from the written Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, which Jesus said, testify of Him.

The Scriptures declare themselves to be the word of God in no uncertain terms. Their authority and sufficiency is seen throughout the whole of Scripture. God ceased giving divine revelation

and closed the canon of Scripture in the First Century. The canon of Scripture is what God has preserved for His Church. No doubt, Jesus said many words that are not recorded in Scripture. Jesus probably talked about the weather and thanked his mother for a good meal. Providentially God did not preserve every last word Jesus uttered. Why? That is a question that rests with the secret counsel of God (Duet. 29:29). We can be sure that with God's perfect control of all things we can know that we have "all things" (II Peter 1:3) that God has commanded us for life and doctrine. The view of Scripture outlined in this article does not invalidate the use of historical information, tradition, commentaries, confessions, creeds and teachers. Scripture however, is the final court of appeal, and Scripture should test all things. If we are obedient to Christ we likewise will appeal to what "is written."

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Notes:

1. Leon Morris, *The Tyndale New Testament Commentary I Corinthians*, (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), p. 78.
2. Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary Jude*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), p. 371.
3. W. E. Vine, *Vines Expository Dictionary Of New Testament Words*, (Iowa Falls: Riverside, 1952), p. 809.
4. E. J. Young, *Daniel*, (Oxford: The Banner Of Truth Trust, 1988), p. 200.
5. Adam Clarke, *Clarks Commentary Vol. 4*, (Nashville: Abingdom Press, 1956), p. 602.
6. Gordon H. Clark, *First Corinthians*, (Jefferson, Maryland: The Trinity Foundation, 1991), pp. 212,213.
7. Leonard J. Coppes, *Whatever Happened to Biblical Tongues?*, (Chattanooga, Tennessee: Pilgrim Publishing Company, 1977), pp. 59,60.
8. I want to express my indebtedness to Dr. Greg L. Bahnsen whom I am dependent upon at numerous points in this article. In particular, two of his lectures provided valuable information and have deeply influenced my thinking in the area of the authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures especially when dealing with the biblical concept of traditions. These two lectures are titled *Is Sola Scriptura sufficient for today?* And *Is Sola Scriptura a Protestant Concoction?* In addition, Dr. Bahnsen's debate with former Presbyterian turned Roman Catholic, Professor Jerry Matatics, and Catholic Priest, father Michael Manning titled *A Roman Catholic-Protestant Debate* have provided useful information. Tapes of these lectures and debate can be obtained from the Covenant Media Foundation. Covenant Media Foundation is a ministry of Grace Covenant Church, Texarkana, AR.
9. The above study is taken with a number of revisions from my unpublished *Mormon Beliefs Versus The Bible Part One*.

Recommended Reading

1. Keith A. Mathison, *The Shape Of Sola Scriptura*, Volume 1, (Moscow, Idaho: Canon Press, 2001). This work explains the *regula fidei* or rule of faith in light of the creeds and answers Roman Catholic challenges to Protestantism in the area of the Canon Scripture.
2. David T. King, *Holy Scripture: The Ground and Pillar of Our Faith*, (Battle Ground, WA, Christian Resources Inc., 2001).
3. William Webster, *Holy Scripture: The Ground and Pillar of Our Faith*, Volume 2 (Battle Ground, WA, Christian Resources Inc., 2001).
4. David T. King and William Webster, *Scripture: The Ground and Pillar of Our Faith*, Volume 3 (Battle Ground, WA, Christian Resources Inc., 2001).
5. Beckwith J. Francis, Mosser Carl, Owen Paul, Editors, *The New Mormon Challenge*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan, 2002).