



Doctrine of Scripture

Saturday 11th October 2025

Teaching by Ralph Cunningham

Scripture

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Knowledge

“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children for ever, that we may follow all the words of this law.”

(Deuteronomy 29:29)

Two different ways of knowing things:

Comprehension

Apprehension

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Revelation

Read Psalm 19:1-14; Romans 1:18-32

How has God revealed himself to us? What is the difference between what these sources reveal?

“There is within the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, an awareness of divinity. This we take to be beyond controversy. To prevent anyone taking refuge in the pretence of ignorance, God himself has implanted in all men a certain understanding of his divine majesty... There is no nation so barbarous, no people so savage, that they have not a deep-seated conviction that there is a God.”

Calvin's Institutes 1.3.1

“There are innumerable evidences both in heaven and on earth that declare his wonderful wisdom, not only those more recondite matters for the closer observation of which astronomy, medicine and all natural science are intended, but also those which thrust themselves upon the sight of even the most untutored and ignorant persons, so that they cannot open their eyes without being compelled to witness them.”

Calvin's Institutes 1.5.2

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The Inspiration of Scripture

“A supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Holy Spirit by virtue of which their writings are given divine trustworthiness.”

B.B. Warfield

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

2 Timothy 3:16

“Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

2 Peter 1:20-21

How is this view of how God inspired the Bible different from the Muslim view of how God wrote the Qur’an? What is the impact of this difference?

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The Canon of Scripture

“Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote to you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.”

(2 Peter 3:15-16)



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The Authority of Scripture

“For Scripture says, ‘Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain,’ and ‘The worker deserves his wages.’”

(1 Timothy 5:18)

“I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Saviour through your apostles.”

(2 Peter 3:2)

“The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, and obeyed, depends not upon the testimony of any man, or Church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof: and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God.”

Westminster Confession of Faith 1.4

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The Inerrancy of Scripture

1 John 3:20

Numbers 23:19

Psalms 119:142

Acts 17:11

Revelation 22:6

What are the commonly alleged errors in the Bible? How do we reconcile these with the doctrine of inerrancy?

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The Sufficiency of Scripture

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

Wayne Grudem

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

2 Timothy 3:14-17

“The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word: and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.”

Westminster Confession of Faith 1.6

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The Clarity of Scripture

The Bible itself claims to be “a lamp to our feet and a light to my path” (Psa. 119:105)

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

Westminster Confession of Faith 1.7

What are the key components of the doctrine of clarity according to the Westminster Confession of Faith?

Acts 8:26-40

“Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote to you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.”

2 Peter 3:15-16

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The Clarity of Scripture – Case Studies

How can you use what we have learned about the clarity of Scripture to help the following people?

Aaron is a pastor. It's Friday afternoon and he's slouched at his desk, head in his hands. He's surrounded by open books and Bible commentaries. Aaron's Greek New Testament is open in front of him on his desk and he has three different diagrams of 1 Peter 3:8-22 – each using multiple coloured pens and annotations. Aaron has been working on the passage for nearly twenty hours. In that time, he has consumed six coffees, three cookies and chewed the end off one pencil. But he still can't work out what verse 19 means when it speaks of Jesus proclaiming to the spirits in prison. As Aaron pours himself yet another coffee, he thinks back to his time at Seminary and the lecture he heard on the "Clarity of Scripture", wondering whether his lecturer ever had to preach 1 Peter 3:8-22. He sincerely doubted it!

Arthur has been a Christian for two years. He recently got back from a Christian conference where he was inspired and challenged about his lack of personal Bible reading. Arthur goes to a good church and has recently heard sermon series on Mark's Gospel and the Book of Genesis but he realises that he doesn't have a good grasp of the Bible as a whole so he sets himself the task of reading through the whole Bible in a year. He does the maths and realises that means three chapters a day and starts. All goes well for the first month while he's in the familiar territory of Genesis and the early part of Exodus. But before long he hits the lists of Laws in Leviticus and Balaam's talking donkey in Numbers; the conquest of Canaan in the Book of Joshua is the last straw. He'd been told at the conference that personal Bible reading is honey to the taste and food for the soul, but he found that hard to believe as he wrestled with what, to him, looked like genocide.

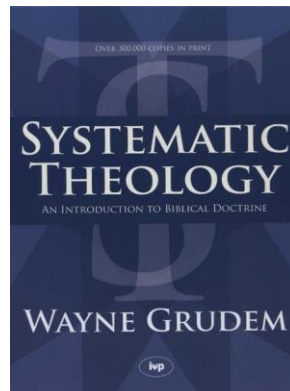
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Further Reading



Wayne Grudem
Systematic Theology
(IVP 1994)
Chapters 2-8



Ralph Cunnington
“Did Turretin depart from Calvin’s view of the
concept of error in the Scriptures?”
(2011, 61 Foundations 41)