

# **Associated Gospel Churches - Articles of Faith and Doctrine**

## **The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture**

### **Part 2**

**October 30, 2005**

# The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture

## I. The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture

*We believe the Holy Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, as originally given by God are divinely inspired, without error, entirely trustworthy, and constitute the only supreme authority in all matters of faith, teaching and behaviour.*

*2 Peter 1:21*

*2 Timothy 3:16-17*

*Hebrews 4:12*

*Mark 12:26-36*

*Acts 1:16*

# The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture

- Concepts included in this Article:
  - *Canon* of Scripture - “the Holy Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments”
  - *Inspiration* of Scripture - “as originally given by God are divinely inspired”
  - *Inerrancy* of Scripture - “without error”

# The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture

- Concepts included in this Article:
  - *Infallibility* of Scripture - “entirely trustworthy”
  - *Authority* of Scripture - “and constitute the only supreme authority”
  - *Sufficiency* of Scripture - “in all matters of faith, teaching, and behaviour.”

# Review

- **Canon of Scripture**

**The list of all the books that belong in the Bible**

- **Inspiration of Scripture**

**The doctrine that all the words of Scripture are spoken by God and are His words**

- **not just “mechanical dictation”, but the Holy Spirit superintended the lives, thoughts, experiences, etc. of men such that what they wrote was the very word of God**

# Review

- **Inerrancy of Scripture**

Scripture in its original manuscripts is without error in *all* that it addresses

- **i.e. Scripture is free of all falsehood, fraud or deceit, and does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact**

- **Infallibility of Scripture**

Scripture is entirely reliable and trustworthy in all that it addresses

- **i.e. Scripture will never lead us astray**

# Today

- **The Authority of Scripture**
- **The Sufficiency of Scripture**

# Today

- **Discuss**
  - **Scripture passages in handout**
  - **Agree or disagree (and why?):**
    - **Christians should offer sacrifices for their sins (Lev. 4:27-31)**
    - **Spanking is an acceptable and effective form of child discipline (Proverbs 23:13-14)**
    - **Women should wear head coverings during worship services at church (1 Cor. 11:3-16)**

# The Authority of Scripture

- **Definition**

**All the words of Scripture are God's words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God**

- **basis for *authority* of Scripture is its *inspiration* (2 Tim. 3:16: "All Scripture is God-breathed...)**
- **God's children will recognize His voice and follow it**

*My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.*  
(John 10:27)

*He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.* (John 8:47)

# The Authority of Scripture

- AGC Article

The Scriptures “*constitute the only supreme authority in all matters of faith, teaching and behaviour.*”

- i.e. the Scriptures ‘trump’ all other ‘authorities’
- the Scriptures have the final say in all matters of faith, teaching, and behaviour
- contrary, for example, to Roman Catholic teaching (Scripture & church tradition have equal authority)

# The Authority of Scripture

- Implications

1. Scripture is the ultimate standard of truth by which all else is measured

*“Thy Word is truth.” (John 17:17b)*

*“When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.” (Isaiah 8:19-20)*

# The Authority of Scripture

- **Implications**

1. **Scripture is the ultimate standard of truth by which all else is measured**

- **Scripture is the measure of all things, not vice versa**

- where they intersect, does science judge Scripture, or Scripture science?
- does culture judge Scripture, or Scripture culture?
- does experience judge Scripture, or Scripture experience?
- does psychological theory judge Scripture, or Scripture psychological theory, etc.
- is Scripture a “bright student” or the “answer key”?

# The Authority of Scripture

- **Implications**

1. **Scripture is the ultimate standard of truth by which all else is measured**

- **new “facts” that seem to contradict Scripture**

- often turn out to be false (e.g. the ‘fact’ that there was never a King Belshazzar (Daniel 5:1), subsequently overturned by further archaeological discoveries)

- may sometimes necessitate reconsideration of whether the Bible actually affirms something (e.g. flat earth, earth at centre of universe, etc.)

- **Bible is inerrant & infallible, but our understanding of it is not!**

# The Authority of Scripture

- Implications

2. Scripture is to be believed and obeyed

- **to disbelieve or disobey is to disbelieve / disobey God**

*“You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed”* (Psalm 119:4)

*“They are not idle words for you--they are your life.”* (Deut 32:47a)

- **Scripture is to be obeyed even when it seems contrary to what everyone around us is doing or saying**

*“...you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Do not follow their practices. You must obey my laws and be careful to follow my decrees...”* (Lev. 18:3-4)

# The Authority of Scripture

- Applications

- we are to obey when we are in the same/similar situation as that addressed in the command

- e.g. sacrifices for sin

- situation addressed by Scripture no longer exists (i.e. atoning for sin before Christ's death and resurrection)
- *Scripture* says we are no longer to offer sacrifices, since Christ's sacrifice is complete (e.g. Heb. 10:1-18)

- e.g. discipline by spanking

- the same situation still exists today that the Scripture originally addressed (i.e. how should parents raise kids)?
- no indication *in Scripture* that this precept has “passed away”, so we are still bound to obey

# The Authority of Scripture

- Applications

- e.g. head coverings for women (1 Cor 11:3-16)

- difficult & controversial passage

- some elements that are enduring

- argument from the Trinity, who is eternal (v.3)

- argument from Creation, which still applies to us (v.8-9)

- some elements that *from Scripture* seem limited to culture of the day and thus not absolute in application to all cultures

- dishonorable for men to pray with heads covered (v.4) - but the OT priests commanded to wear turbans (Exodus 28:37)

- long hair a disgrace to a man (v.14) - but Nazirites commanded not to cut their hair (Numbers 6:1-8) - thus not absolute

- historical understanding by evangelicals:

- principles of authority & submission in the husband-wife relationship remain binding, though cultural expressions in worship may vary culturally

# The Sufficiency of Scripture

- **Definition**

Scripture contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting Him perfectly, and for obeying Him perfectly

- **2 Tim. 3:15-17**

- Scripture makes us wise for salvation (v.15)
- Scripture equips us thoroughly for *every* good work (v.17)

- **2 Peter 1:3**

“His divine power has given us *everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him* who called us by His own glory and goodness.”

# The Sufficiency of Scripture

- Implications

1. We should study the Scriptures to understand what God would have us think and do about specific issues and in specific situations

- **all that God has decided to tell us about a particular question is in the Bible**

- but He may not always choose to tell us that much (or anything) about some things!

*“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.” (Deut 29:29)*

# The Sufficiency of Scripture

- **Implications**

**2. God does not require us to believe or do anything that He has not revealed or commanded explicitly or implicitly in Scripture**

- **thus, neither should we require such things**

**3. Nothing is sin that is not forbidden explicitly or implicitly by Scripture**

- **thus, neither should we forbid such things**

# The Sufficiency of Scripture

- **Implications**

**4. We are to add nothing to Scripture, nor consider other writings or modern ‘revelations’ as being on par with Scripture**

- **e.g. cults - many add to Scripture**
- **“God told me...”**

# Authority & Sufficiency

- **Some current challenges in evangelicalism**

- 1. Evangelical feminism**

- **tends to undermine authority of Scripture to justify disregarding Scripture's teachings about relationship between men & women in the home and the Church**
- **may affirm inspiration & authority of Scripture on paper, but tends to undermine it in practice by a variety of methods**

# Authority & Sufficiency

- **Some current challenges in evangelicalism**

- 1. Evangelical feminism**

## **Evangelical Women's Caucus Statement of Faith, 1974**

[We believe] “that the Bible which bears witness to Christ is the Word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and is *the infallible guide and final authority for Christian faith and life.*”

## **Evangelical & Ecumenical Women's Caucus Statement of Faith, 2003**

“We believe the Bible is the Word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and is *a central guide and authority for Christian faith and life.*”

# Authority & Sufficiency

- **Some current challenges in evangelicalism**

- 1. Evangelical feminism**

- **2 examples of how authority of Scripture undermined**

- a) Use of “cultural arguments” to negate the teachings of Scripture**

e.g. Paul, writing to Timothy in Ephesus, says, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve.” (1 Timothy 2:12-13)

# Authority & Sufficiency

- **Some current challenges in evangelicalism**
  1. **Evangelical feminism**
    - a) **Use of “cultural arguments” to negate the teachings of Scripture**
      - **some feminist arguments why 1 Timothy 2:12 “no longer applies”:**
        - **Paul was just reflecting his rabbinic background or was just accomodating to the culture when he wrote this**
        - **Paul commanded this because women in Ephesus were less educated, which is no longer the case today**
        - **Paul’s command was only for that specific situation because some women in Ephesus may have been teaching heresies**
        - **Paul was specifically addressing a Gnostic heresy about Eve, which is no longer around today**
        - **It’s unclear what Paul is trying to say**

# Authority & Sufficiency

- **Some current challenges in evangelicalism**
  - 1. Evangelical feminism**
    - a) Use of “cultural arguments” to negate the teachings of Scripture**
      - **problems with these arguments**
        - ‘rabbinic background’ & ‘cultural accommodation’ argument - undermines inspiration, inerrancy & infallibility of Scripture
        - many of the arguments are based on hypothetical situations - i.e. no evidence they existed in reality (e.g. women less educated, women teaching heresy, Gnostic heresy about Eve)
        - none of these arguments come from or are found in Scripture
          - **derive from ‘authorities’ other than Scripture (e.g. ‘experts’)**
          - **authorities outside Scripture used to override Scripture’s teachings**

# Authority & Sufficiency

- **Some current challenges in evangelicalism**
  1. **Evangelical feminism**
    - 2 examples of how authority of Scripture undermined
  - b) **Use of “trajectory hermeneutics”**
    - aka “redemptive movement hermeneutics”
      - idea that Scripture doesn’t always give the ‘final word’
    - trends developing over time in Scripture can be extrapolated to go beyond what Scripture actually says, in order to develop “*a better ethic than the one expressed in the isolated words of the text.*” [W. Webb. *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis.* (InterVarsity Press, 2001), p.36]

# Authority & Sufficiency

- **Some current challenges in evangelicalism**
  1. **Evangelical feminism**
    - b) **Use of “trajectory hermeneutics”**
      - idea that Scripture doesn’t always give the ‘final word’
        - Scripture was moving towards ‘full equality’ between men and women as it progressed from OT to Jesus to the NT
          - for various reasons (e.g. cultural pressures) it just didn’t quite get there by the time the Canon was closed
      - thus, we should live today by the ‘target’ or ‘ultimate ethic’ that Scripture was pointing towards (i.e. egalitarianism with no role distinctions between men and women), rather than be bound by the ‘isolated words of the text’

# Authority & Sufficiency

- **Some current challenges in evangelicalism**
  1. **Evangelical feminism**
    - b) **Use of “trajectory hermeneutics”**
      - **Problems with trajectory hermeneutics**
        - who decides what the correct trajectory is and where it ends?
        - opens door for anyone to “interpret” Scripture any way he (or she) chooses
          - **undermines the authority of Scripture by making individual interpreter a higher authority than Scripture itself**
        - undermines sufficiency of Scripture by saying that the words of Scripture are not enough in themselves to show us how to live

# Authority & Sufficiency

- **Some current challenges in evangelicalism**

1. **Evangelical feminism**

- b) **Use of “trajectory hermeneutics”**

- **Problems with trajectory hermeneutics**

e.g. an entirely plausible alternative “trajectory”:

<b>From Paul’s Early Writings</b>	<b>To Paul’s Later Writings</b>	<b>To the Final Target for this Trajectory</b>	<b>Application for Today</b>
<b>Gal. 3:28: Women in all positions of leadership</b>	<b>1 Tim 2-3, Titus 1: Only men can teach or be elders</b>	<b>Women can’t participate in any ministry in the church</b>	<b>All ministry of all kinds must be done by men</b>

**from Grudem,  
JBMW (2004)  
vol. 9, p.44**

# Authority & Sufficiency

- **Some current challenges in evangelicalism**

- 1. Evangelical feminism**

- **the danger with undermining authority and sufficiency of Scripture in these ways**

- Where will it all end?**

- **inspiration and authority a “watershed” issue**
        - **opens the door to undermine Scripture’s authority on virtually any other issue using the same arguments**
          - **abortion, euthansisa**
          - **homosexuality**

# Authority & Sufficiency

- **Some current challenges in evangelicalism**
  - 1. Evangelical feminism**

*“I believe if we read the Bible in the same way we learned to read it in order to accept the equality of other races and women, we will be forced to the conclusion that gay and lesbian people are also to be accepted as equal.... What I want them to realize is that to remove the ban on ordaining homosexuals is not abandoning the Bible *but reading the Bible in a different way.*”*

**-Jack Rogers, Moderator, The Presbyterian Church USA, quoted in “Presbyterians push church to embrace gays,” The Detroit News, June 25,2001**

# Authority & Sufficiency

- **Some current challenges in evangelicalism**

- 1. Evangelical feminism**

- **Interesting article for further reading:**

**Grudem, Wayne. Is Evangelical Feminism the New Path to Liberalism? Some Disturbing Warning Signs. Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, 2004. vol. 9(1), pp. 35-84.**

*available at <http://www.cbmw.org/journal/archives.php>*

# Authority & Sufficiency

- **Some current challenges in evangelicalism**

## 2. Marriage and family life

- **widespread reliance among evangelicals on authorities other than Scripture in matters of counselling, rather than on Scripture as the only supreme authority**
  - most often, reliance is on pop psychology and its fads, in Christianized form (i.e. ‘Christian psychology’)
  - tends to assume that Bible is too simplistic or just inadequate to deal with complexities of modern existence
    - **need extra degrees and courses in psychology to be a competent Christian counsellor**
  - often founded on principles contrary to those of Scripture
  - often gives counsel contrary to that given by Scripture

# Authority & Sufficiency

- **Some current challenges in evangelicalism**

- 2. Marriage and family life**

- **e.g. the debate over spanking**

- “Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death.” (Prov 23:13-14, NIV)

- “Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol.” (ESV)

# Authority & Sufficiency

- **Some current challenges in evangelicalism**

## 2. Marriage and family life

- **e.g. the debate over spanking**

**Canadian Paediatric Society Position Statement:  
Effective Discipline for Children**

**(<http://www.cps.ca/english/statements/PP/pp04-01.htm>)**

**“The Psychosocial Paediatrics Committee of the Canadian Paediatric Society has carefully reviewed the available research in the controversial area of disciplinary spanking (7-15). The existing research is not in the form of double-blind, randomized controlled trials, as such studies would be impossible to conduct.... The research that is available supports the position that spanking and other forms of physical punishment are associated with negative child outcomes...”**

# Authority & Sufficiency

- **Some current challenges in evangelicalism**

## 2. Marriage and family life

- **e.g. the debate over spanking**

### Canadian Paediatric Society Position Statement: Effective Discipline for Children

(<http://www.cps.ca/english/statements/PP/pp04-01.htm>)

“The Canadian Paediatric Society, therefore, recommends that physicians strongly discourage disciplinary spanking and all other forms of physical punishment.... Physicians should actively counsel parents about discipline and specifically discourage all forms of physical punishment, including the use of spanking....

Effective discipline should be based on academic facts rather than subjective opinion....”

# Authority & Sufficiency

- **Some current challenges in evangelicalism**
  2. **Marriage and family life**
    - **e.g. the debate over spanking**

**Special Seminar: Emotional Intelligence and Parenting -  
Raising Emotionally Intelligent Kids:**

**“Spanking: short term gain for long term pain”**

# Authority & Sufficiency

- Some current challenges in evangelicalism

## 2. Marriage and family life

- So who's right? Which authority should we choose?

“...should a people not inquire of their God?... To the law and to the testimony! *If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.*”  
(Isaiah 8:19-20)

# **Authority & Sufficiency of Scripture**

- **The Authority of Scripture**

**All the words of Scripture are God's words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God**

- **The Sufficiency of Scripture**

**Scripture contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting Him perfectly, and for obeying Him perfectly**

# The Inspiration & Authority of Scripture

- **How shall we then live?**
  - **study the Scriptures**
    - **lack of understanding of the Scriptures is probably the most common cause of doubting its authority and sufficiency**
    - **search the Scriptures, for in them God has given us all we need for salvation, for trusting Him perfectly, and for obeying Him perfectly**
  - **learn to think and act Biblically in all areas of life**
    - **the authority of Scripture means that everything else is measured against what the Bible says, not vice versa**
  - **obey the Scriptures!**
    - **even when it goes against other ‘authorities’**

**Next class**

**The Trinity of the Godhead**

**November 20, 2005**