

## Session 2: The Scriptures

*The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.*

### Structure

The Bible is comprised of 66 books from many different styles of writing—poetry, song, historical narrative, biography, autobiography, law, and personal correspondence.

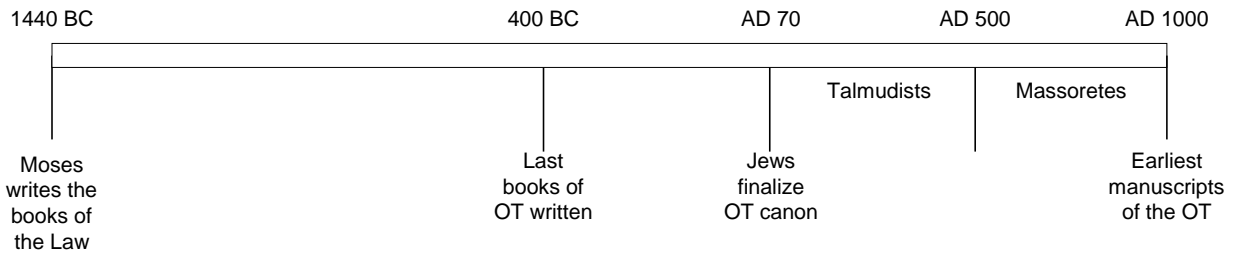
The Old Testament begins with the creation of man and ends about five hundred years before the birth of Christ. It contains 39 books.

The Pentateuch	History	Poetry & Wisdom	The Prophets	
Genesis	Joshua	Job	Isaiah	Jonah
Exodus	Judges	Psalms	Jeremiah	Micah
Leviticus	Ruth	Proverbs	Lamentations	Nahum
Numbers	1 and 2 Samuel	Ecclesiastes	Ezekiel	Habakkuk
Deuteronomy	1 and 2 Kings	Song of Solomon	Daniel	Zephaniah
	1 and 2 Chronicles		Hosea	Haggai
	Ezra		Joel	Zechariah
	Nehemiah		Amos	Malachi
	Esther		Obadiah	

The New Testament begins with four different accounts of the life of Christ and ends with the return of Christ victorious to conquer sin. It contains 27 books.

Jesus and Early Church	Letters		Revelation
Matthew	Romans	Titus	Revelation
Mark	1 and 2 Corinthians	Philemon	
Luke	Galatians	Hebrews	
John	Ephesians	James	
Acts	Phillippians	1 and 2 Peter	
	Colossians	1, 2, and 3 John	
	1 and 2 Thessalonians	Jude	
	1 and 2 Timothy		

## The History of the Old Testament



We believe that Moses began writing the books of the law as early as 1440 B.C., though the events of the creation are thought to have happened as early as 4000 B.C. (Promise Keepers Study Bible, p.1) The complete Hebrew Old Testament had been written by 400 B.C. (McDowell, A Ready Defense, p.48)

Until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947, the oldest manuscripts that we had of the Old Testament dated around 900 A.D. (McDowell, A Ready Defense, p.48) However, the discovery of the texts hidden in the Qumran caves provided us with manuscripts that date back to the time before Christ's birth.

Between 100 A.D. and 500 A.D., the task of cataloging the religious scrolls was undertaken by a group of Jews known as the Talmudists. Their rules for creating synagogue rolls was incredibly detailed (Geisler and Nix):

1. A synagogue roll must be written on the skins of clean animals,
2. prepared for the particular use of the synagogue by a Jew.
3. These must be fastened together with strings taken from clean animals.
4. Every skin must contain a certain number of columns, equal throughout the entire codex.
5. The length of each column must not extend over less than 48 or more than 60 lines; and the breadth must consist of thirty letters.
6. The whole copy must be first-lined; and if three words be written without a line, it is worthless.
7. The ink should be black, neither red, green, nor any other color, and be prepared according to a definite recipe.
8. An authentic copy must be the exemplar, from which the transcriber ought not in the least deviate.
9. No word or letter, not even a yod, must be written from memory, the scribe not having looked at the codex before him ...
10. Between every consonant the space of a hair or thread must intervene;
11. between every new parashah, or section, the breadth of nine consonants;
12. between every book, three lines.
13. The fifth book of Moses must terminate exactly with a line; but the rest need not do so.
14. Besides this, the copyist must sit in full Jewish dress,
15. wash his whole body,
16. not begin to write the name of God with a pen newly dipped in ink,
17. and should a king address him while writing that name he must take no notice of him.

Josh McDowell argues that the absence of original manuscripts that we have today can be traced directly to the strict rules that the Talmudists observed. It also is a testimony to the accuracy of the manuscripts we do have.

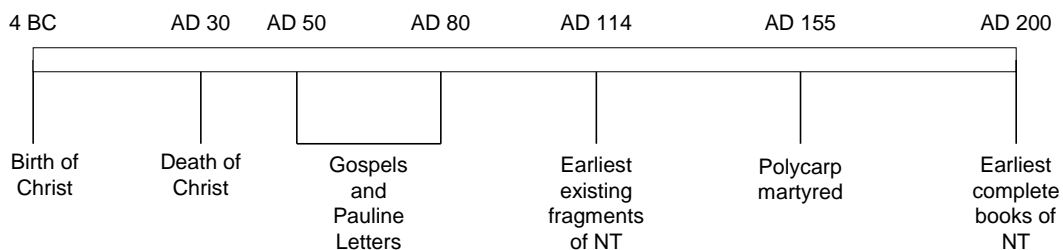
When the Talmudists completed a transcription, they were so convinced that they had an exact duplicate that they gave the copy equal authority. (McDowell, A Ready Defense, p.48)

Between 500 and 900 A.D., the Massorettes performed the role of maintaining the religious scrolls. They not only took the same care in the copying of the manuscripts, they also broke each down into sections, chapters, and verses.

In 1947, there was an amazing discovery in the caves near Qumran, which is on the northwestern coast of the Dead Sea. A young Bedouin shepherd discovered hundreds of manuscripts from the Essenes, a group of fundamentalist Jews much like the Pharisees. These scrolls, called the Dead Sea Scrolls, gave us a text of the Old Testament that was 1000 years older than the earliest Massoretic text. How did the accuracy of the older texts compare to the texts of 1000 years later? Were the Talmudists and the Massorettes accurate in their copying? Millar Burrows notes:

Of the 166 words in Isaiah 53, there are only seventeen letters in question. Ten of these letters are simply a matter of spelling, which does not affect the sense. Four more letters are minor stylistic changes, such as conjunctions. The remaining three letters comprise the word "light", which is added to verse 11, and does not affect the meaning greatly....Thus, in one chapter of 166 words, there is only one word (three letters) in question after a thousand years of transmission—and this word does not significantly change the meaning of the passage. (Burrows, The Dead Sea Scrolls, p.304)

## The History of the New Testament



The New Testament books were preserved by the early church fathers. The texts that would become the four gospels began circulating within just 30 years of the death of Christ. As such, people who were eyewitnesses to his words and works would have been alive to contradict the accounts.

The gospel records were preserved in both oral records and written records. The Jewish people had a long tradition of oral histories. The rabbis had a saying: "A good disciple is like a well-built cistern: He does not let fall one drop of water from his master's teaching."

## **The “Canon”**

Our Bible contains 66 books—39 in the Old Testament, 27 in the New Testament. But surely there were other books written during this time—why aren't they in our Bible?

Old Testament canon was decided by the Jews in the years just after Christ's death. With the rise of Christianity, the Jews decided they needed to arrive at a consensus on the books they considered “authoritative.” The same Old Testament they defined is the one we use today.

For the New Testament books, the church relied on a series of questions to determine which books should be included in the canon:

- Is it authoritative? – Did it come from the hand of God?
- Is it prophetic? – Was it written by a man of God?
- Is it authentic? – Church fathers had a policy : “If in doubt, throw it out.”
- Is it dynamic? – Did it come with the life-transforming power of God?
- Was it received, collected, read, and used? – was it accepted by the people of God?

The church did not create the canon—they discovered it. This is an important distinction. Critics of the Scripture will often argue that the Bible was put together by fallible men at a fourth-century council. As Baptists, we believe that the canon was determined by God and discovered by man.

## **The Apocrypha**

The name given to the books of the Bible not accepted as canonical is the Apocrypha. Norman Geisler and William Nix provide ten examples that the early church fathers doubted the inspiration of these books. A few of those examples:

1. Philo, Alexandrian Jewish philosopher, quoted the Old Testament prolifically... but he never quoted from the Apocrypha as inspired.
2. Josephus, Jewish historian, explicitly includes the Apocrypha, numbering the books of the Old Testament as 22. Neither does he quote these books as Scripture.
3. Jesus and the New Testament writers never once quote the Apocrypha, although there are hundreds of quotes and references to almost all of the canonical books of the Old Testament.
4. No canon or council of the Christian church for the first four centuries recognized the Apocrypha as inspired.
5. Luther and the Reformers rejected the canonicity of the Apocrypha.

It is interesting to note that the Roman Catholic Church did not grant full canonical status to the Apocryphal books until A.D. 1546.

## **What's so special about the Bible?**

(McDowell, *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, pp.4-7)

The Bible is the only book that was:

1. Written over a fifteen-hundred-year span
2. Written by more than forty authors from every walk of life, including kings, military leaders, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, tax collectors, poets, musicians, statesmen, scholars, and shepherds.
  - Moses, a political leader and judge, trained in the universities of Egypt
  - David, a king, poet, musician, shepherd, and warrior
  - Luke, a physician and historian
  - Peter, a fisherman
3. Written in different places
  - By Moses in the wilderness
  - Jeremiah in a dungeon
  - Daniel on a hillside and in a palace
  - Paul inside prison walls
4. Written at different times
  - David in a time of war and sacrifice
  - Solomon in a time of peace and prosperity
5. Written during different moods
6. Written on three continents (Asia, Africa, and Europe)
7. Written in three languages (Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic)
8. Written in a wide variety of different literary styles

The Bible addresses hundreds of controversial subjects, subjects that create opposing opinions when mentioned or discussed. The biblical writers treated hundreds of hot topics (e.g., marriage, divorce and remarriage, homosexuality, adultery, obedience to authority, truth-telling and lying, character development, parenting, the nature and revelation of God). Yet from Genesis through Revelation, these writers addressed them with an amazing degree of harmony.

In spite of its diversity, the Bible presents a single, unfolding story: God's redemption of human beings....The unifying thread is salvation from sin and condemnation to a life of complete transformation and unending bliss in the presence of the one, merciful God.

Finally, and most important, among all of the people described in the Bible, the leading character throughout is the one, true, living God made known through Jesus Christ.

FACT: "The Greek manuscripts were written without any breaks between words, while the Hebrew text was written without any vowels until these were added by the Massoretes between the fifth and tenth centuries A.D." (McDowell, Evidence, p.10)

### **Are the Old Testament texts reliable?**

The Old Testament has been shown to be reliable in at least three major ways:

Textual Transmission is defined as "the path from the original writings to today's printed copies." (McDowell, Evidence, p.69) As with many other ancient works, we do not have the original documents for the Old Testament writings. The copies of the original manuscripts, however, contain amazing accuracy:

- "The two copies of Isaiah discovered in Qumran Cave 1 near the Dead Sea in 1947 were a thousand years earlier than the oldest dated manuscript previously known (980 A.D.)...they proved to be word-for-word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95 percent of the text. The 5 percent of variation consisted of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling." (Gleason Archer, A Survey of OT Introduction, pp.23-25)
- "The Hebrew Scriptures contain the names of 26 or more foreign kings whose names have been found on documents contemporary with the kings. The names of most of these kings are found to be spelled on their own monuments, or in documents from the time in which they reigned in the same manner that they are spelled in documents of the Old Testament....neither the assailants nor the defenders of the Biblical text should assume for one moment that this...is an easy or usual thing." (Wilson, A Scientific Investigation of the Old Testament, pp. 64, 71)

Archeological and Historical Confirmation is the second way in which the Old Testament has been proven reliable. Here are a few examples:

- Excavations at the historical sites of Sodom and Gomorrah show them to be situated exactly where the Scriptures describe. There is evidence of earthquake activity in the area, as well as the presence of bituminous pitch ("brimstone").
- An inscription that dates back to 900 B.C. refers to the "House of David". According to Avaraham Biram, "this may be the oldest extra-biblical reference to Israel in Semitic script."

Henry M. Morris concludes, "...it is no longer possible to reject the substantial historicity of the Bible, at least as far back as the time of Abraham, because of the remarkable discoveries of archaeology." (Morris, Many Infallible Proofs, 300).

Documentary Confirmation provides the third means of confirming the reliability of the Old Testament. It refers to the confirmation of the facts, names, and places of a text based on other documents of the time.

One such confirmation regards a passage in Genesis chapter 37:

Genesis 37:23-29

So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe--the richly ornamented robe he was wearing—and they took him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it. As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt.

Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood." His brothers agreed.

So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt. When Reuben returned to the cistern and saw that Joseph was not there, he tore his clothes.

Documents have proven that the price for a slave during that time, around 1800 B.C. was indeed around twenty shekels. "...earlier than this, slaves were cheaper (average, ten to fifteen shekels), and later they became steadily dearer." Though this might seem to be a small detail, hundreds of such examples exist to confirm the historicity of the Old Testament.

Millar Burrows notes "The Bible is supported by archaeological evidence again and again. On the whole, there can be no question that the results of excavations have increased the respect for the Bible as a collection of historical documents." (McDowell, Evidence, p.100)

Merrill Unger summarizes: "Old Testament archaeology has rediscovered whole nations, resurrected important peoples, and in a most astonishing manner filled in historical gaps, adding immeasurably to the knowledge of biblical backgrounds." (McDowell, Evidence, p.98)

### **Are the New Testament texts reliable?**

As with the Old Testament manuscripts, there are three tests for the reliability of the New Testament texts. Again, since we do not have originals of the writings, we are forced to work with copies. But we can examine these copies using three different tools: bibliographical evidence, internal evidence, and external evidence.

Bibliographical evidence is much the same as the textual transmission test used earlier. It poses this question: "Since we do not have the original manuscripts, how reliable are the manuscripts we do have?" For the New Testament documents, scholars factor in the number of copies we have, as well as the time interval between the original manuscripts and the copies that exist today.

F.E. Peters, in his book *The Harvest of Hellenism*, states that "on the basis of manuscript tradition alone, the works that made up the Christian New Testament were the most frequently copied and widely circulated books of antiquity."

Our evidence of the reliability of the New Testament stands on thousands of copies of the works, both complete copies and partial, that were made between the second century and the fifteenth.

There are more than 5,600 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. Add to that 10,000 copies of the Latin Vulgate and almost another 10,000 copies from other sources, and you have nearly 25,000 copies of the New Testament to analyze. No other document in ancient history even begins to approach these numbers.

Author	Book	Date Written	Earliest Copies	Time Gap	Number of Copies
Homer	<i>Iliad</i>	800 B.C.	c. 400 B.C.	c. 400 yrs.	643
Herodotus	<i>History</i>	480-425 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1350 yrs.	8
Thucydides	<i>History</i>	460-400 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1300 yrs.	8
Plato		400 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1300 yrs.	7
Demosthenes		300 B.C.	c. A.D. 1100	c. 1400 yrs.	200
Caesar	<i>Galic Wars</i>	100-44 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1000 yrs.	10
Livy	<i>History of Rome</i>	59 B.C. – A.D. 17	4 <sup>th</sup> century (partial), mostly 10 <sup>th</sup> century	c. 400 yrs. c. 1000 yrs.	1 partial 19 copies
Tacitus	<i>Annals</i>	A.D. 100	c. A.D. 1100	c. 1000 yrs.	20
Pliny Secundus	<i>Natural History</i>	A.D. 61-113	c. A.D. 850	c. 750 yrs.	7
New Testament		A.D. 50-100	c. A.D. 114 (fragment) c. A.D. 200 (books) c. A.D. 250 (most) c. A.D. 325 (complete)	c. 50 yrs. c. 100 yrs. c. 150 yrs. c. 225 yrs.	5366

As the above chart demonstrates, for the sheer numbers of manuscript copies, no other ancient work compares to the New Testament. Additionally, most of the manuscripts we have are within two centuries of the date they were written, which is more early copies than any of the other ancient works.

Bibliographical evidence also takes into account the accuracy of the manuscripts collectively; one test used in this method is the quotation of scripture by early church fathers. Josh McDowell numbers those quotations over 36,000 in just the writings of seven early church fathers. Though the quotes are often not verbatim, Norman Geisler estimates that even if we did not have the texts of the New Testament books, we could reconstruct them simply from the quotes of these early Christians.

The second test we use to determine the reliability of the New Testament manuscripts is internal evidence; in other words, are the texts consistent within? Are there contradictions and discrepancies between the books?

Dr. Gleason Archer, who is a student of over 30 languages, many of them ancient, has made the field of Middle Kingdom Egyptian studies a special interest in his life. In addition, he had a law degree. Dr. Gleason has made the following statement about supposed inaccuracies in the Scripture:

“There is a good and sufficient answer in Scripture itself to refute every charge that has ever been leveled against it. But this is only to be expected from the kind of book the Bible asserts itself to be, the inscripturation of the infallible, inerrant Word of the Living God.” (Archer, Encyclopedia of Biblical Difficulties, p.12)

Josh McDowell lists fifteen principles that are to be used when addressing an apparent discrepancy in the Scripture:

1. The unexplained is not necessarily unexplainable.
2. Fallible interpretations do not mean fallible revelation.
3. Understand the context of the passage.
4. Interpret difficult passages in the light of clear ones.
5. Don't base teaching on obscure passages.
6. The Bible is a human book with human characteristics.
7. Just because a report is incomplete does not mean it is false.
8. New Testament citations of the Old Testament need not always be exact.
9. The Bible does not necessarily approve of all it records.
10. The Bible uses non-technical, everyday language.
11. The Bible may use round numbers as well as exact numbers.
12. Note when the Bible uses different literary devices.
13. An error in a copy does not equate to an error in the original.
14. General statements don't necessarily mean universal promises.
15. Later revelation supercedes previous revelation.

A final subject addressed in the area of internal evidence is the sources used by the writers. Time and again, the New Testament writers testify as eyewitnesses to the history they witnessed:

Luke 1:3-4

Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

2 Peter 1:16

We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

1 John 1:3

We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

The third and final argument for the reliability of the New Testament texts is external evidence; in other words, are there writers outside of the New Testament that confirm facts, names, or events recorded in the New Testament?

The answer is a resounding “yes.”

Polycarp, who was a disciple of John the Apostle, was martyred in A.D. 155. In a persecution of the Christians at Smyrna, the Romans told Polycarp that if he recanted, he would live. His response was “Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He hath done me no wrong. How can I speak evil of my King who saved me?” He was burned at the stake. Josh McDowell comments, “Polycarp certainly had ample contacts to verify the truth.”

Pliny the Younger, a prominent Roman author and administrator, wrote of the early church’s worship practices in a letter to the Emperor Trajan:

“They were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to do any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which was their custom to separate, and then reassemble to partake of food—but food of an ordinary and innocent kind.” (Pliny the Younger, Letter 10:96)

Finally, the Babylonian Talmud, a compilation of Jewish teachings and commentary, records the following about Christ and His death:

“On the eve of Passover Jeshu was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried, ‘He is going forth to be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy. Any one who can say anything in his favour, let him come forward and plead on his behalf.’ But since nothing was brought forward in his favour, he was hanged on the eve of the Passover.”

There are many, many more examples in non-Biblical literature that confirm the events, people, and places in the New Testament. Some of the authors include Tacitus, Josephus, Trajan, and Suetonius. The evidence based on external sources is strong.

## **What We Believe About The Scripture**

### **Three Important Terms:**

(Hobbs, The Baptist Faith and Message, p.21)

<u>revelation</u>	The process by which God unveils himself and his will to human messengers.
<u>illumination</u>	The Holy Spirit's work as he enlightens the human mind with spiritual understanding in order than man might grasp the revealed truth.
<u>inspiration</u>	God's inbreathing into the chosen human messenger through the Holy Spirit, enabling him by divine guidance to deliver or record God's revealed message.

### **Point 1: Baptists believe that the Scripture is "divinely inspired".**

2 Peter 1:20

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

The Bible does not contain the Word of God—the Bible is the Word of God.

We often speak of a moving book or poem as being "inspired". The Bible and its writers were inspired by God.

In what manner were the writers inspired? There are four prevalent theories:

### **Four Theories on the Inspiration of the Bible**

(Hobbs, The Baptist Faith and Message, p.22)

"Intuition"	Inspiration is simply a higher development of man's natural insight into truth.
"Illumination"	Inspiration is simply an intensifying and elevating of the religious perceptions of man.
"Dictation"	Inspiration is man being so possessed by the Holy Spirit that he becomes a passive instrument in the hands of God.
"Dynamical"	Inspiration is neither natural, partial, nor mechanical, but supernatural, full, and dynamic.

The first two theories put the focus of the inspiration on man. They both hold that only parts of the Bible are inspired; therefore, the parts that are not inspired are subject to error. The Baptist Faith and Message, however, asserts the complete accuracy of the Bible in at least three places:

*It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy.*

So we're left with the last two theories. Southern Baptists have never required their members to ascribe to any particular theory of inspiration, but most Southern Baptists believe one of the latter two theories (Hobbs, The Baptist Faith and Message, p.22)

The dictation theory, also referred to as the verbal theory, states that the Holy Spirit dictated to the writers the exact words that they should write.

The dynamical theory states that the Holy Spirit inspired the thought rather than the exact words and that the writers were left free to express the thought in their own words, while the Holy Spirit protected them from error.

### **Point 2: Baptists believe that the Scripture is completely accurate.**

As noted above, three separate references in the Baptist Faith and Message makes reference to the complete accuracy (or "infallibility") of the Scripture. However, this issue has stirred more than its share of controversy.

In 1961, Ralph Elliott published a book called "The Message of Genesis." This book denied that the events of Genesis 1-11 were in fact historical events; rather, they should be figuratively interpreted.

James A. Smith, editor of the Florida Baptist Witness, writes:

"A controversy quickly ensued resulting in unanimous adoption of a motion offered by influential Houston pastor K. Owen White at the 1962 Southern Baptist Convention. The motion reaffirmed "faith in the entire Bible as the authoritative, authentic, infallible Word of God."

SBC leaders, including Herschel Hobbs, decided a restatement of Baptist convictions was necessary to satisfy the concerns of conservatives, resulting in the adoption of the 1963 edition of the Baptist Faith and Message.

Nevertheless, the same concerns emerged again in 1969 with the publication of volume 1 of The Broadman Bible Commentary. G. Henton Davies, author of the commentary on Genesis, was criticized on similar grounds as Elliott. Ultimately, the volume was removed and rewritten at the direction of the 1970 Southern Baptist Convention.

Although conservatives won the votes on the motions related to the Elliott and Broadman volumes, it became clear to them that systematic changes

in denominational leadership would be needed to correct the direction of the SBC. In 1979, conservatives elected Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, as the first in what became an unbroken string of presidents who affirmed without hesitation the historical validity and inerrancy of Scripture.”

This debate has extended to the present day. When delegates met in Orlando in 2000, they voted to affirm a new Baptist Faith and Message which contained more definite language on the infallibility of the Scripture: “Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy.”

**Point 3: Baptists believe the Bible is the “supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried.”**

Acts 17:11

Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

Psalms 119:105

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

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

When we hear teaching, we ought to judge the value of that teaching by what we find in Scripture. When we see behavior, we ought to judge the wisdom of that behavior by what we find in Scripture. The Word of God ought to be the ultimate test of man’s knowledge, actions, and teachings.

Here’s an important point, and another point of controversy within the ranks of Baptists: Baptists believe that the Word of God—the Bible—is a testimony to Christ. We call the Bible the “Word of God”, but Jesus Christ is also the “Word of God.” What we know of Christ, we learn from Scripture. As such, we do not put authority in any “religious experience” that we might have. All authority comes from the Bible.

The Western Recorder makes this comment about those who depend on “religious experience”:

... it places the final authority, which it has denied to the inspired Book, in the religious experience of each professing Christian. But religious experiences differ tremendously. In fact religious experience as a final authority is as the quicksands, for Satan himself is a spiritual power in this world and has his hand in a lot of the "experiences" that pass for religion.

Christianity rests upon the revealed supernatural Word of God, declaring the redemption of man in the person and substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ our Lord. The Bible- not individual experience- is the authoritative revelation of God concerning Christ and our need of Him. To try to take the foundations out from under the authority of the Bible and place them on the quicksands of human experiences is the very heart of the Anti-Christ work of Modernism."

We do not, in any form or fashion, place the Bible above Christ in our thinking. Christ is our Savior and the only way to heaven. There are those who accuse us of bibliolatry, which is "worship of the Bible." Such an accusation is false.

"The Scripture" is the first section of the Baptist Faith and Message. I think there's a good reason for that. Though we believe that it is only through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ that one is saved, we gain our knowledge of God and His Son through the Scripture. Professor E.Y. Mullins, in his pamphlet "Baptists and the Bible", summarizes his belief this way:

"It follows ... that the Bible is final for us on all questions of doctrine and polity and Christian living. The doctrines of salvation, of the church, of the ordinances, of polity, and of the Christian life we derive from the Bible. In its teachings alone do we find our sufficient, certain and authoritative source of knowledge concerning all these matters. ...

"In conclusion, it may be said that the one sure and certain road to agreement among all Christians is obedience to the New Testament teachings in all matters of doctrine, polity, worship, and life. ...

"For all Christians there should be one authoritative source of religious truth and knowledge. To that source they should look in all matters relating to doctrine, to polity, to the ordinances, to worship, and to Christian living -- That source is the Bible."

## **Words You Need to Know**

Apocrypha	The name given to the books written in ancient times that are not considered “canon” by the church.
bibliographical evidence	A test of an ancient document that asks, “Since we do not have the original manuscripts, how reliable are the manuscripts we do have?” For the New Testament documents, scholars factor in the number of copies we have, as well as the time interval between the original manuscripts and the copies that exist today.
bibliolatry	Worship of the Bible.
canon	An authoritative list of books accepted as Holy Scripture.
Dictation Theory	The theory of biblical inspiration that states “Inspiration is man being so possessed by the Holy Spirit that he becomes a passive instrument in the hands of God.”
documentary confirmation	Comparison of a document’s contents with other documents of the time to confirm historical accuracy.
Dynamical Theory	The theory of biblical inspiration that states, “Inspiration is neither natural, partial, nor mechanical, but supernatural, full, and dynamic.”
external evidence	Evidence that is used to test the historicity of a document; to be external, the evidence needs to be outside of the document being investigated.
illumination	The Holy Spirit’s work as he enlightens the human mind with spiritual understanding in order than man might grasp the revealed truth.
Illumination Theory	The theory of biblical inspiration that states, “Inspiration is simply an intensifying and elevating of the religious perceptions of man.”
inerrant	Without error.
infallible	Without fault.
inscripturation	The act of putting something into scripture form.
inspiration	God’s inbreathing into the chosen human messenger through the Holy Spirit, enabling him by divine guidance to deliver or record God’s revealed message.
internal evidence	Evidence that is used to test the internal consistency of a document. Portions or statements from one part of a document are compared with the rest of the document for consistency.

## **Words You Need to Know (cont'd)**

Intuition Theory	The theory of biblical inspiration that states, "Inspiration is simply a higher development of man's natural insight into truth."
Latin Vulgate	A Latin version of the Bible authorized and used by the Roman Catholic Church
manuscripts	A document written by hand or typed
Massorettes	A Jewish group charged with caring for and preparing the synagogue rolls from A.D. 500 to A.D. 900.
Qumran	Region on the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea, notable since 1947 as the site of the caves where the Dead Sea Scrolls were first discovered
revelation	The process by which God unveils himself and his will to human messengers.
synagogue	The house of worship and communal center of a Jewish congregation
Talmudists	A Jewish group charged with caring for and preparing the synagogue rolls from A.D. 100 to A.D. 500.
textual transmission	See "bibliographical evidence".
Verbal Theory	See "Dictation Theory".

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