

The Doctrine of the Bible

by

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Preface

Bibliology, or the study of the Bible, continues to be an area of vital concern for the committed Christian. The written Word of God has again come under bombardment from the theological left. Many, even among so-called evangelicals, are wavering in their commitment to the inspiration and infallibility of the Scripture.

Therefore, it is important that the believer have an understanding of the various elements of this doctrine. A teacher of the Word of God who neglects bibliology cannot claim to have expounded “the whole counsel of God.”

The Purpose for the Study

This study is presented with the serious Bible student in view. Its purpose is to provide the student with an exegetically accurate view of the doctrine of the Bible.

The Nature of the Study

Because of the pedagogical nature of this course, the basic presentation is in outline form. Since this study was written for the non-Greek reading student, explanation of the Greek text is done in English translation.

The Scope of the Study

In a presentation of this nature it is impossible to cover every aspect of the doctrine as presented in Scripture. To do so would require a work of dissertation length. Therefore, this study is limited (with only a few exceptions) to New Testament material. However, not even all that the New Testament has to say could be included in this course. Since the scope of the course is limited, the author desires that it will be but a stepping stone to further study.

In determining what to leave out, the author relied on two criteria. First, the normal material of the subject of bibliology on the seminary level (below the doctoral level) was included. Also included are some subjects which are not normally considered in evangelical works on the subjects, specifically the work includes sections on inscripturation and heresy.

The second criteria was practicality. How much material could be covered in a traditional 14 or 15 week course of study? And into how much depth, or detail, could the course be rightly expected to cover?

Because of length constraints some areas of study could not be included. Specifically, the nature of Old Testament prophecy (“the word of the Lord came unto me, saying...”), and the mode of revelation (dreams, visions, etc.), both of which would take up several pages if done adequately, are dealt with in a cursory manner or not at all.

The following subjects will be discussed in this course:

- The Bible, the Word of God
- Revelation

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- Inscripturation
- Inspiration
- Animation
- Canonicity
- Illumination
- Authority and Application
- Heresy

The Expectation for the Study

The author's desire is that this course will provide a practical basis for the teaching of this most basic doctrine of the Bible. It is expected that students will gain insight as to the nature and purpose for the written word of God, and that this in turn will provide a "high view of Scripture" for those who complete the study.

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Outline

I. *The Bible – The Word of God*

A. The Bible is God's Word

1. Sometimes the word *logos* is sometimes used alone of God's Word.

a) Matthew 13:19-23

When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand *it*, then the wicked *one* comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.²⁰ But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy;²¹ yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.²² Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.²³ But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands *it*, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

b) Mark 4:14ff

The sower sows the word.

c) 2 Timothy 2:15

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth

d) See also 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:9-11

2. Often the whole phrase *ho logous tou theou* (the word of God) is used.

a) Mark 7:13 – first use of the entire phrase *ho logos tou theou*.

...making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.

b) Acts 4:29-31

Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word,³⁰ by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.³¹ And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

c) 2 Corinthians 2:17

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For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.

Concerning “peddling” the word of God (2 Cor 2:17) A. T. Robertson says the idea comes from “a huckster or peddler, common in all stages of Greek for huckstering or trading. It is curious how hucksters were suspected of corrupting by putting the best fruit on top of the basket.”

d) 2 Corinthians 4:2

But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.

e) See also 2 Timothy 2:9; 1 Thess. 2:13; Hebrews 4:12; 1 Peter 1:23; Hebrews 13:7; Colossians 1:25; 1 John 2:14

3. A definition of the phrase *The Word of God*

a) **The Phrase Itself:** The word *logos* (word) is used in Greek as it is in English. Sometimes it means an individual word, like *house* or *man*. Other times, however, it means a communication, as in such a phrase as “let me have a word with you.” In such cases, the word *logos* means a communication. The preposition phrase *tou theou* (of God) refers to the One communicating. God, then, communicates to His audience using normal techniques of human language.

b) **From the human author’s point of view:** The word of God was an oral or written communication to or through the human author of the words that God wanted spoken or written by the human author.

c) **From the modern reader’s point of view:** The word of God is the written communication which says in words what God wanted said, in whatever language one finds it. This writing is found exclusively in the sixty-six books of the Bible.

4. Some negative aspects of *The Word of God*.

a) Not everything in the Bible was spoken by God. Satan spoke, men spoke, etc. The Bible is the Word of God in that it consists of what God wanted communicated to man, whether He actually made the original communication or not.

b) Some statements in the Bible are either (a) deliberate falsehoods (Satan’s statements to Eve) or (b) errors perpetrated by ignorant men (Job’s friends).

c) Therefore, not all the Bible is *true*, although all the Bible is *truth*. That is, lies are recorded in the Bible, but they are accurately

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recorded *as lies*. When a statement is untrue in Scripture, it is presented as being untrue, and the careful believer will be able to discern from the context the reason for the untrue statement being included in Scripture.

- d) Not all in the Bible is authoritative *for practice*, although all of it is authoritative *for faith*. That is to say, we are not required to attempt to practice it all, but we are required to believe it all as it is presented.

B. The basic question of all spiritual inquiry: **Has God Communicated to Man?**

1. If God has communicated to man, and we believe that He has, then the only way for man to answer any question that relates to God is to examine that communication for the answer. We must assume that God has revealed all that it is necessary for man to know at any given time and place. Therefore, any theological question that is worthy of an answer can be answered from the careful and diligent study of that revelation. Any consistent theology must be based on the Bible, which is God's unique INSCRIPTURATED word to man.
2. Our basic assumption is that God intended man to understand the communication of Scripture using the normal principles of communicative understanding used by the people to whom He originally made the communication.
3. A Bible-based (Exegetical) Theology
 - a) Exegesis simply means the drawing of meaning from the text as opposed to reading a meaning into the text (eisegesis).
 - b) **Definition:** A Bible-based theology is a setting forth in systematic style the doctrines of the written Word of God through a careful induction based on an equally careful exegesis of the Scriptures involved with that doctrine. This type of theology might be called "exegetical theology" in that it attempts to derive theological understanding exclusively from the exegesis of Scripture.
 - c) Inductive reasoning is necessary for a Bible based theology. It must be distinguished from deductive reasoning.
 - (1) Deductive reasoning is reasoning from the general to the particular. Sometimes assumptions of a general nature are made, and then attempts are made to prove those statements from the Bible. Usually, then, deductive reasoning begins with a preconception. If that preconception is wrong, then the deduction based on it is wrong.

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- (2) Inductive reasoning is reasoning from the particular to the general. The student examines ALL STATEMENTS about a particular subject before drawing a conclusion.
- (3) Inductive reasoning is to be preferred over deductive reasoning for Bible study. However, there can be some problems with inductive processes.
 - (a) Insufficient observation can cause errors in conclusions. We must observe all the facts before a generalization is made. “The basis for all real thinking is the ability to withhold judgment until all the facts are in.” Irving Babbitt
 - (b) Haste in interpretation can invalidate induction. Even if all the facts are observed, they are not always taken into account before making a generalization.
- (4) However, induction does provide the primary basis for correct understanding of exegetical theology.
 - (a) A complete induction lays groundwork for further interpretive processes.
 - (b) The results of induction, if carefully made, provide a rich field for Bible teaching.

C. How to Approach God’s Communication to Man – **Interpretation of the Written Text**

1. Always interpret in the light of the context – this is the most common violation in interpretation.
2. Always note to whom the communication is addressed. We interpret from the point of view of the original recipients of the communication, not from our point of view in modern America.
3. Always note who is speaking. Jesus, an apostle, Satan, an angel, an evil king, etc.
4. Always note when the original communication is made. During Jesus earthly life, during Moses day, before or after pentecost, etc.
5. Always examine the history and culture of the time and place where the communication was made.

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6. Always recognize figures of speech. Literal interpretation is not the opposite of figurative interpretation. Literal interpretation includes the understanding of figures of speech used in their normal way. The opposite of literal (normal) interpretation is allegorical interpretation, also called spiritualizing.
7. Always look at the exact meaning of words and phrases.
 - a) *Usus Loquendi* – This is the principle of looking carefully at the word as it occurs as used in the day in which it was written. Words take their meaning from use, not from a dictionary. By looking at the various passages in which a word occurs, we can determine its force in the Biblical context.
 - b) *Comparison* – Words and phrases should be compared to and contrasted with similar words and phrases. One of the interpreter’s main responsibilities is to distinguish between similar ideas. For example, while there may be four different Greek words translated “world,” they do not all mean the same thing. The careful interpreter must compare and contrast these four words and apply the correct meaning to any given context.
 - c) *Etymology* – Etymology is the science of the derivation of words. Such Greek words as *worship*, *prayer*, and *patience*, for example, have a rich etymological background. Likewise, since the Hebrew language is based on a tri-literal root system, etymological study of Hebrew roots and some of the words derived from them can be exciting.

One word of caution is necessary. The etymology of a word should not be relied upon to determine the meaning of a word. Etymology can provide wonderful illustrative material for the exegete, and can provide a basis for the emphasis that a word gives, but the definition of a word must be derived from a thorough inductive study of the word in various contexts. Sometimes the original meaning of a word or its elements has been completely obliterated by its common use at the time the New Testament was written, or by its technical theological use as found in the Bible. Such is true of the Greek word for *sin*, which at one time carried the idea of an archer missing his target, but does not carry that meaning in any of its uses in the New Testament.

- d) Grammar and Syntax
 - (1) Word studies without grammar are misleading.
 - (2) Syntactical study puts the emphasis on the major thoughts of a sentence, not on subordinate ones.
 - (3) The study of grammar can be either dry and uninteresting, or full of life and understanding. The ability to study the syntax of a sentence in the original languages of Scripture

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can yield abundant information which will solidify, or even change, the interpretation of a sentence. Word studies are necessary, but syntactical study, that is, the study of the relationship between words, clauses, and phrases., is absolutely essential to an understanding of the text of Scripture.

8. Always distinguish between interpretation and application.
 - a) Interpretation always relates to the original receiver of the communication.
 - b) There are three breaks on application.
 - (1) The first is the cultural break. Some statements are made in the Bible that can only apply to people living in the culture of Biblical times. If the cultural meaning has not carried forward, then the application cannot be made. Otherwise the practice becomes mere litany without meaning.
 - (2) The second is the personal break. Sometimes statements are made to individual persons, or to groups of a particular nature, that cannot be applied generally. For instance, Paul says things to elders that cannot be applied to the non-elder, to women that cannot be applied to men, to men that cannot be applied to women, to Timothy that cannot be applied to anyone else. Some things are said about God that can only be applied to Him.
 - (3) The third break is the dispensational break. Indeed, as we shall learn later, the purpose for the use of the word dispensation in theology is to indicate that certain communication is intended only for certain groups of people. See the discussion of Dispensationalism below.
 - c) Application can only be made to present day Christians when the relevant facts of the situation under consideration are held in common by the original receiver of the communication and the modern day Christian.

The trite and often repeated statement that “every promise in the Book is mine” cannot be accepted by the conservative Bible student. For instance, there are promises to Old Testament Israel that do not apply to me, promises made to Old Testament believers that do not apply to me, and statements to unbelieving nations and individuals that do not apply to me. Likewise, some statements in the New Testament were written to groups or individuals for their practice, and not directly for me, such as those who will go through the tribulation period or who will be participants in receiving the fulfillment of the land promises during the millennial reign of Christ.

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Be careful not to “over apply” the Word of God.

II. The Doctrine of Revelation

A. General or Natural Revelation (Sometimes called “indirect” revelation.)

1. Nature accurately reveals certain things about God’s Being.

a) Acts 14:14-17 – God always has a witness.

But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out and saying, “Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.”

b) Psalm 19:1-6

A Literal Translation by G. H. Shinn

The heavens are speaking God’s glory; and the working of His hands the firmament is expressing.

Day unto day is continually put forth speech; and night unto night is continually making knowledge known.

There is no speech and there are no words; their voice is not heard.

Through all the earth has gone out their chord; and their words are at the ends of the world because He has set a tent for the sun at them.

And it is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber; it rejoices like a strong man who runs a race From the extremity of the heavens is its departure and its circuit is unto their extremities; there is nothing hidden from its heat.

c) Romans 1:18-23

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

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- (1) By interpretation, this passage refers to humanity just after the flood.
 - (2) By application, the resulting condition of verse 18 is true concerning unbelievers today. Note the change in verb tense. Verses 18-20 = present tense. Verses 21 ff., past tense.
2. Natural revelation is not sufficient for salvation or for understanding God's program for the believer.
 3. By means of natural revelation, God made know concerning Himself two truths: 1) He exists; 2) He is powerful.
 4. **A Definition of Natural Revelation:** Natural revelation is the provision by God through His creation by which He makes know His existence and power.
- B. Special Revelation (Sometimes called "specific" or "direct" revelation.)
1. Special revelation occurred only to certain individuals.
 - a) 1 Corinthians 2:10-12 – Note aorist tense – to Paul, note editorial "WE".

But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

- b) Ephesians 3:5 – Aorist passive, to specific people, only to the apostles and prophets.

which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets:

- c) 1 Peter 1:12 – Aorist passive

To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.

2. Those things which were revealed to certain individuals are said to be revealed to all that hear them – Philippians 3:15 – Applicable to the Philippians, They would receive revelation, but only 2nd hand.

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Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.

3. The results of an individual receiving special revelation is that he will pass it on to others

- a) 1 Peter 1:10-12

Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace *that would come* to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.

- b) 1 Corinthians 2:13

These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

- c) In both of the above cases the receivers of the revelation spoke the content of the revelation to the believers for whom it was intended. The receiver of Revelation is a channel through which the message of God was given to his people. Therefore we today have received revelation through the apostles and prophets.
4. Not all Scripture is through a process of Direct Revelation from God. In other words, God can, and does, include information in His revelation that is from sources other than His direct communication to men:
 - a) The experiences of the human author, i.e. Moses crossing the Red Sea.
 - b) The observations of the human author, i.e. what Jesus did and said in Matthew's Gospel, which Matthew saw and heard.
 - c) The thoughts of the human author – Job.
 - d) The research of the human author – Luke's writings.
 5. **A Definition of Special Revelation:** Special revelation is the act of God whereby He makes known to His people through a human channel truth which could not otherwise be known.
 6. **A Definition of the Bible as God's Revelation:** The Bible is the gracious provision of God by which through special revelation as well as the experiences, observations, thoughts and research of the human author,

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provides a complete body of knowledge for the spiritual edification of man.

III. Inscripturation – The activity of writing down God’s Word

A. The Writing of Scripture is Often Overlooked in Formal Theology Books.

1. Inscripturation is sometimes confused with Revelation or Inspiration.
2. Inscripturation refers to the process through which the Revelation became Inspired writing.

B. The Scriptures Came into Existence through a process that Goes beyond Revelation.

1. The written word was not originated by the prophets – II Peter 1:16-21

For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

And so we have the more certain prophetic word, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.

2. Beginning in verse 19, Peter argues that we have a “more sure word of prophecy” than even his first person testimony (see vs. 16-18). How can this be? How can a mere written record be “more firm” than the eyewitness account of the apostle? The answer to the question is found in verses 20 and 21. The supernatural “bearing along” ministry of the Holy Spirit makes the inscripturated form of God’s Word more reliable than Peter’s own account of the same event. It is because of this Spirit ministry that Scripture is inerrant and infallible.
3. The oral communication was received through the teaching of the Holy Spirit so that it might be inscripturated – 1 Corinthians 2:9-13.

But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us

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by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

- a) The individuals involved (note the editorial "we" in this passage. Paul was alone when he reached Corinth. Timothy and Silas were left behind in Macedonia.
- b) The subject involved – The deep things of God.
- c) The method involved – Comparing spiritual things with spiritual words.

1 Corinthians 2:9-13 deal with the problem of how the communication between infinite mind of God and the finite mind of the human authors of Scripture came to be.

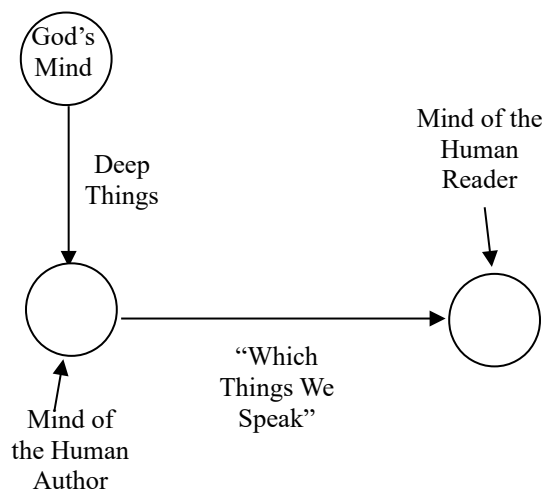
Only the Holy Spirit knows the "deep things" of God. How can these things be communicated to the mind of man? Vs. 12 tells us! The "we" in this passage is exclusive. It refers to the writers of Scripture exclusively, not to the readers. This is not the same receiving of the Spirit of God which is true of all believers since Pentecost, but a special reception of the Spirit for the particular purpose of the production of Scripture. This is the "comparison ministry" of the Holy Spirit.

I have translated vs. 13 so that the particular emphasis of the original can be more clearly seen:

Which things (the deep things of God) also we (the apostles and prophets) speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Spirit, comparing spiritual words (pneumatikois) with spiritual things (pneumatika).

By comparing the spiritual vocabulary of the human author with the spiritual things in the mind of God, the Holy Spirit supernaturally taught the human author the things he needed to know. In this way the Holy Spirit did not violate the individual style or vocabulary of the human author, but used those elements to produce perfect Scripture.

Note the following Chart:



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C. **Definition of Inscripturation** – Inscripturation is the process of producing the written text of the prophetic Scripture. Writers of Scripture were “born along” by the Holy Spirit so that the communication of God included in Scripture was exactly what God had determined.

IV. Inspiration

A. The Scriptural Definition – 2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture *is* God-breathed (Greek = *theopneustos*), and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

1. It is a quality of the Scripture
 - a) Inspiration is God’s statement as to the quality of Scripture. Since it is God-breathed, it has God’s seal of approval. The word “theopneustos” says that the Scripture has the quality of having been “breathed by God.” The –tos ending of this word turns it into a qualifying adjective.
 - b) Of course we understand that God did not actually “breath out” the Bible. Rather, “theopneustos” states that if God had breathed out His communication to man, it would have been as our Scripture now is. Inspiration is therefore God’s statement as to the source and reliability of His written Word.
2. It is not a process (confusion with inscripturation)

Virtually every major error of inspiration confuses the *process* of inscripturation with the *quality* of inspiration (see Theories of Inspiration below.) Nor is inspiration an influence or interference with the human authors. *IT WAS NOT THE HUMAN AUTHORS WHO WERE INSPIRED.* 2 Tim. 3:15 says that Scripture is inspired, rather than the human authors.

3. It is not a quality or an influence on the writers (confusion with “bearing along ministry of the Holy Spirit”).
- B. A look at some theological comments on the doctrine of inspiration (see the section below entitled “Some Statements on Inspiration”).
- C. Inspiration and Inscripturation – a Comparison
1. As these two ideas are often confused, a carefully considered comparison might help. The difference between inspiration and inscripturation can be likened to the difference between the individuals who prepare meat for marketing. The farmer grows the beef. The butcher cuts the beef into useable portions. These activities relate to human activity and are analogous to the idea of inscripturation.

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2. On the other hand, someone must certify that the beef is of a high quality. After the beef has been butchered for consumption, an inspector determines the quality of the beef and puts his stamp of approval on it. Inspiration is God's stamp of approval on the finished product. It is His statement of its quality.

D. What was Inspired?

1. The original manuscripts were God-breathed at the time of their writing. Inspiration, then, deals with the source of the writing, since the source determines the quality of the written texts. Inspiration does not deal with the general truth of revelation, as revelations which were not written occurred in the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. Only those acts of revelation that was written is God-breathed.
2. That the oral, non-written word of God was also produced by God does not lessen its authority for its intended audience. That it was not inscripturated was the choice that God made concerning those aspects of revelation that had limited and local value, and therefore were not to be included in the text.
3. The translations. That the translations, copies and modern editions of the Bible in its original languages are not inspired in no way lessens their value. In so far as translations accurately express the truth of the original manuscripts, they retain value for their readers. This, however, does not free interpreters from careful considerations of modern editions and copies of the original language text.
4. Modern editions and copies of the original language text, while not inspired, are the best source for studying the Bible, as they more accurately than any translations provide a source that is closer to the original manuscripts. Modern editions of the Hebrew and Greek Bibles are the result of careful scholarship, and are generally reliable. While some textual variants do exist, they do not impact the doctrinal reliability of those editions. The modern movement toward confidence in the western text type is a welcomed approach to the written text of Scripture, and careful study of both majority and critical text are valuable for the sincere student.

E. Theories of Inspiration (The following discussion is adapted from "Theories of Inspiration" by M. James Sawyer, Ph.D. Associate Professor of Theology at Western Seminary)

1. Natural Intuition

This position is held by liberals on the far left of the theological spectrum, i.e. those who are classified as rationalists. Its proponents hold that what marks the Bible off from other works of literature is the high degree of religious insight, something akin to artistic ability, of the authors of Scripture. This insight was not a supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit, but rather a natural permanent possession of the various individuals. The net effect of this position is to make the scriptural authors as qualitative no

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different than Plato, Buddha, Mohammed etc. The Bible thus becomes the spiritual experiences of the Jewish people.

2. Inspiration as Illumination

This understanding maintains that there was an influence of the Holy Spirit upon the authors of Scripture, but this influence involved only a heightening of their normal powers. This view, traceable to Schleiermacher holds that “the natural, or at most the gracious, agency of God illuminating the rational or the spiritual consciousness of a man, so that out of the fullness of his own Christian understanding and feelings he may speak or write the product of his own religious life.” (Bannerman. *The Inspiration Of The Scriptures*, cited by Berkhof, Introduction p. 146.) This view understands inspiration to be of the same nature as divine illumination. The Spirit's work in the process is not seen to be different in kind, only in degree from that the illumination of other believers.

3. Concept Inspiration

This view of inspiration expresses an essential disjuncture between the form and the substance of the Scriptures. Proponents contend that God has inspired the concepts which the authors of Scripture were to write, but left it to the human author to choose the words. This view is today a more popular than scholarly view. However a century ago there were numerous scholars who adopted this position. The position came in several varieties. All would allow for some form of error in the final inspired product. But some would restrict the truth guaranteed by inspiration to the spiritual substance of Scripture alone, while others would see it as more full, with errors being inconsequential. The process of concept inspiration has been described thus:

The Holy Spirit was “... ‘pointing to them’ or ‘showing them’ certain things, as ‘testifying beforehand’ as ‘revealing to them,’... Stimulating them to know things by intellectual processes... [the prophets] used their intellectual powers in quest for truth and fact; therefore we may know the teaching of these prophets was a joint product of the subjective investigation made by the prophets themselves and the objective revelation made by the divine spirit. All of this is strictly in accord with the laws and operations of the human mind. The divine spirit enters into the human mind and takes possession of it for the time and for the purpose of religious guidance. He occupies the throne room of the reason, in the innermost seat and the fountain-source of authority in man. He touches the most sensitive point of the religious feeling, and quickens it so as to make the man conscious of the union with God and his call to be a prophet....He fills the chamber of metaphysical reason and guides the intellect in its working in all the categories. So the biblical prophets dig deep into the recesses of the human soul; they soar to the heights of God....The biblical prophets are distinguished by their grasp--they were men of their times, but they were men beyond their times. (Charles A. Briggs, *Inspiration of the Bible*, Cornerstones)

4. Dynamic Inspiration

This view of inspiration holds: That inspiration is not simply a natural but a supernatural fact, and it is the immediate work of a personal God in the soul of man. It holds...that inspiration belongs, not only to the men who wrote the Scriptures, but to the Scriptures they wrote, so that these Scriptures, when taken together, constitute a sufficient record of divine revelation.. It holds...That the Scriptures contain a human as well as a divine element, so that while they present a body of divinely revealed truth, this truth is shaped into human molds and adapted,

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even to the point of misleading the original readers, to human intelligence. In short it is neither natural, partial, nor mechanical, but supernatural, plenary and dynamical. (A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, p. 211.) This view sounds close to the correct view, but is not since it allows for errors in the text because of the human element. God adapted the truth to the extent that He included errors because the original recipients were not yet able to understand the scientific fact relating to them. A. H. Strong was a “theistic evolutionist” holding that scientific fact had gone beyond that which was able to be understood by the original human author.

5. The Neo-Orthodox Theory of Inspiration

Neo-orthodoxy views the Scriptures as a time-bound culturally condition to the fact that revelation has occurred. Barth considered the position of historic Protestantism which insisted that the words of Scripture were the *ipsissima verba* (This Latin expression means “the very words”) of God as the setting up of a paper pope. He viewed the precise nature of the inscription process as mystery. He noted: “it is impossible that there should be a direct identity between the human word of Scripture and the word of God.” Such a view he labeled as docetic. Rather, “the prophets and apostles...Were real, historical men as we are, and therefore sinful in their action, and capable and actually guilty of error in their spoken and written word.” In spite of this fact God condescends to speak through the text of the human fallible Scripture. The Bible becomes the word of God to the individual reading it in a moment of “crisis,” i.e. An existential encounter when he meets God in the pages of Scripture.

6. Partial Inspiration

The partial inspiration viewpoint comes in several varieties and is generally promoted by those of an evangelical perspective who for one reason or another do not accept the concept of inerrancy. Those who adopt this concept generally restrict the Bible’s authority to its salvation teaching.

Thus something originally merely natural - the kind of myth that is found among most nations - will have been raised by God above itself, qualified by him and compelled by him to serve purposes which of itself it would not have served. Partial inspiration is the error promoted by C. S. Lewis, who was not orthodox in his view of the Bible. He says:

Generalizing this, I take it that the whole Old Testament consists of the same sort of material as any other literature--chronicle (some of it obviously pretty accurate), poems, moral and political diatribes, romances, and what not; but all taken into the service of God’s word. Not all, I suppose, in the same way. There are prophets who write with the clearest awareness that divine compulsion is upon them. There are chroniclers whose intention may have been merely to record. There are poets like those in the Song of Songs who probably never dreamed of any but a secular and natural purpose in what they composed. There is (and it is no less important) the work first of the Jewish and then of the Christian church in preserving and canonizing just these books. There is the work of redactors and editors in modifying them. On all of these I suppose a divine pressure; of which not by any means all need have been conscious.

The human qualities of the raw materials show through. Naiveté, error, contradiction, even (as in the cursing psalms) wickedness are not removed. The total result is not “the word of God” in the sense that every passage, in itself,

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gives impeccable science or history. It carries the word of God; and we (under grace, with attention to tradition and to interpreters wiser than ourselves, and with the use of such intelligence and learning as we may have) receive that word from it not by using it as an encyclopedia or an encyclical but by steeping ourselves in its tone or temper and so learning its overall message. (*Reflections On The Psalms* p.111-112)

7. Verbal Dictation

This view holds that God actually dictated the content of the Scriptures to the human authors. They became in truth nothing more than amanuenses. “a secretary is not ashamed to take dictation from a man. Why would a prophet be ashamed to take dictation from God?” Some of those who hold this view hold that God prepared the human authors beforehand so that their vocabulary and literary style were in harmony with God’s plan. What this view seeks to safeguard is the absolute divinity of the Scriptures. Proponents deny that the biblical authors engaged in historical research, utilized documents or oral tradition. All Scripture is seen as having come directly from God to the human writers. It thus is open to the charge of docetism. “the Scriptures are fundamentally the word of God, not the word of men, except in some incidental and controlled and limited sense.” This view is held by some Protestant fundamentalists (for example, John R. Rice).

Those who hold to verbal inspiration are often charged with holding this view which is untrue. F.E. Gaebelien puts the matter like this:

Unfortunately, there is a persistent tendency to caricature the intellectual position of those who accept the Bible as a fully inspired book...almost always there is the insistence upon equating plenary inspiration with the dictation theory:

... “the authors of the Bible were little better than human dictaphones, recording mechanically the words of the divine writer. The individuality of the writer was lost, his function being but that of parrot-like reproduction. As for the Bible which we now have, it is entirely free from error, even the punctuation having been translated unchanged.” Such a view is then said to be intellectually impossible and fit to be held by only the most ignorant.

8. The Traditional Verbal Plenary Inspiration View

Sawyer says,

This view holds that the influence of the Holy Spirit over the writers of Scripture extended beyond the thoughts to the selection of the very words which the authors chose. Yet this influence of the Holy Spirit did not amount to a verbal dictation. The term often adopted is that of “concursum,” or confluent authorship, i.e. That every word is both fully divine and fully human.

Like all the other views, this position, though closer than most, still insists that inspiration has to do with the process of the production of the written word of God. It confuses inspiration, a quality of Scripture, with inscripturation, the process by which the Holy Spirit guided men to write the word of God.

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The fact that the word “inspiration” in English, and *theopneustos* in Greek carry a form of the word “spirit” seems to confuse these well-meaning authors. In fact, no statement in Scripture associates the Holy Spirit with inspiration. Only one passage in the New Testament deals with inspiration, 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

This position also confuses the teaching of passages like 2 Peter 1:16-23. It assumes that since the Holy Spirit produced the written word of God, that this passage, and its sister passage in 1 Corinthians 2:9-13, must be dealing with inspiration. See our discussion of inscripturation in the previous section of this outline.

9. An Accurate Statement Concerning Verbal Plenary Inspiration

By verbal, plenary inspiration we mean that the quality of the Scripture is such that every word, phrase, sentence, grammatical construction and literary form of the entire canon of the sixty-six books of Scripture was, in its original writing, exactly as it would have been if God had actually breathed out the written Word; thus, inspiration states that the entirety of the written Word of God has its source in God *without reference* to the process by which the written Word came to be by the Holy Spirit through the human authors.

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Some Statements on Inspiration

For Student Evaluation

Quote by Theologian	Errors
<p>“... the older use of the word with regard to the Bible comes from the reference in 2 Timothy 3:16, ‘All Scripture is inspired of God,’ meaning that the Holy Spirit had worked in the PRODUCTION of the Bible. The spirit of God was within the authors who produced it.” R. Laird Harris, <i>Inspiration and Canonicity</i> of the Bible, pg. 19. (Emphasis added.)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Makes inspiration a function of the Holy Spirit. 2. Confuses inspiration with inscripturation, making inspiration a process. 3. Makes the human authors inspired, rather than the Scriptures, thereby confusing the bearing along ministry of the Spirit with inspiration.
<p>“We define it (inspiration), therefore, as the work of the Holy Spirit of God in causing the writers of the Scriptures to give forth the Word of God without error. The writers were inspired in the sense that the Holy Spirit worked through them. The writings are inspired in the sense that they are the product of the Holy Spirit through the writers.” J. O. Buswell, <i>A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion</i>, vol. 1, pg. 184.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Makes inspiration a function of the Holy Spirit. 2. Confuses inspiration with inscripturation, making inspiration a process. 3. Makes the human authors inspired, rather than the Scriptures, thereby confusing the bearing along ministry of the Spirit with inspiration.
<p>“Inspiration is that INFLUENCE of the Spirit of God upon the minds of the Scripture writers which made their writings the record of a progressive divine revelation...” A. H. Strong, <i>Systematic Theology</i>, pg. 197.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Makes inspiration a process on the mind of the human author by the Holy Spirit. 2. Confuses revelation with inspiration, and delegates to Scripture a mere record of revelation, rather than being the revelation itself.
<p>pg. 24, “Inspiration may be defined as that operation of the divine Spirit which renders a speaker or writer infallible in the communication of truth, whether or not previously known.”</p> <p>pg. 27, “By verbal inspiration we mean that the very words were given by the Holy Spirit.”</p> <p>pg. 28, “The writings are always inspired, though the writers were not always inspired men.”</p> <p>pg. 30, “The candor and sincerity of the inspired writers are not less remarkable than their moral precepts...”</p> <p>Emery Bancroft, <i>Christian Theology</i>, pgs. 24-39.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Makes inspiration the work of the Holy Spirit. 2. Makes the human author infallible, rather than the Scripture itself. 3. Falls into the dictation view by making the words of Scripture the product of the Holy Spirit, rather than a bearing along ministry of the Spirit. 4. Makes the human author inspired rather than the Scriptures.

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V. Animation

What causes the Word of God to be effective in the life of an individual? Some Christians have inadvertently fallen into a “magical” or “mystical” view of the Bible. This view differs only slightly from the Neo-orthodox view of individual “crisis.” In fact, the Bible uses a figure of speech, called personification, to apply the fact that God uses His word as a means of changing the thinking and outlook of men.

The doctrine of animation actually teaches that Scripture has an inherent quality designed by God to produce specific effects in the sincere reader. In a metaphorical sense, the Bible is “alive” because God, through several ministries of the Holy Spirit, brings spiritual understanding out of spiritual darkness. This is the doctrine of animation. It is the objective side of the doctrine of Illumination, which we will study next.

A. Animation and the Unbeliever – 1 Peter 1:22-25

Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because “All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, But the word of the Lord endures forever.”

Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.

The Bible produces life in the unbeliever by specific application of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-5). An interesting juxtaposition of Greek words occurs in this passage. Vs. 23 states that “the word of God...lives and abides forever.” Here the Greek is *logos*, referring generally to God’s communication to man. But the next two occurrences of “word” are actually *rhema*, referring not to the entirety of the God’s communication, but to specific utterances on particular subjects. Thus, not only is God’s communication alive and abiding, the specific statements God makes are as well.

God’s word is alive because only it can produce the spiritual result intended. The intention of the divine author is to point out the importance of being careful with the very utterances of God. They are not to be taken lightly, misused or abused in any way. They, in themselves, are what God uses to produce spiritual result.

Peter’s specific illustration here deals with the regeneration of the unsaved. The final statement above could be translated, “This is the utterance which was evangelized to you.” Only through the precise and accurate presentation of the Gospel (God’s specific statement concerning salvation; His *rhema*) can an individual be regenerated. This should give us pause when we hear some present “the gospel” without in some way inconsistent with its biblical presentation.

B. Animation and the Believer

1. Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart

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God uses His word to bring man to understanding and application of spiritual truths. Only through the living word can a believer truly understand the distinctions between soul and spirit. Only through the living word can a believer understand the “thoughts and intents of the heart.”

2. 1 Thess 2:13

For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

The Word of God effectively works, or operates, in the believer. The believer’s only source for correct spiritual change (growth) is God’s word as found in Scripture. Only the careful presentation of the living word will be operative in the lives of maturing Christians. Bible teachers have a fearsome responsibility in presenting not the word of man, but the Word of God. Only a careful, exegetical, literal examination of Scripture as presented accurately from the original languages can produce the spiritual results intended by God.

Based on the doctrines of animation and illumination, we hold to a philosophy of translation of Scripture. When a translator approaches the original languages he must determine the principles which he will use in presenting God’s word in the target language.

In recent times “dynamic equivalence” has overtaken “formal equivalence” as the primary theory of translation. This is unfortunate, as it misunderstands the nature of “formal equivalence” and charges its advocates as being “naïve.” Actually, formal equivalence is to be preferred for several reasons: (1) It renders the Scriptures into the target language more closely than does “dynamic equivalence, (2) It interprets less and allows the individual believer to interact with the meaning of the original author more directly, and (3) It does not over-simplify the meaning to the point of loss of clarity.

In fact, it is the “simplicity” of the dynamic equivalence translations that make them so popular. Often, however, the Bible does not say what the dynamic equivalent text proposes. If the Bible is the living Word, if it is operative in the life of the believer, it behooves Christians to relate themselves as closely to the original statements as possible.

VI. Illumination

A. The Need for Illumination

Illumination is the throwing of spiritual light upon the truth of a passage of Scripture so that the individual can understand not only the correct interpretation of the passage, but the spiritual significance of the passage.

1. The Natural Man

a) Does not comprehend the things of God – 1 Corinthians 2:14

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

The natural man is unsaved and therefore devoid of spiritual life. All his relationships are determined by his soulish desires. While he may understand the bible on an intellectual scale, he

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is unable to discern any truth about God on a spiritual level. This is specifically true when it comes to applying the truth of the Gospel.

- b) Is blinded by Satan to the Gospel – 2 Corinthians 4:3, 4

But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

- c) If he is a Jew, he is judicially blinded by God – Romans 11:5-8

Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.

What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. Just as it is written: “God has given them a spirit of stupor, Eyes that they should not see And ears that they should not hear, To this very day.”

The Jew today has a specific judicial blinding that is upon him alone. Note that this blinding is not from Satan, but from God Himself, and is stated to be only upon Israel. Nevertheless, there is, today, a remnant according to the election of grace.

- d) If he is a Jew, the Old Testament is a closed book – 2 Corinthians 3:12-16

Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech— unlike Moses, *who* put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the *veil* is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

It is impossible for the Jew today, in his unsaved state, to understand the reading of the Old Testament, particularly the law of Moses. It is useless to use the Old Testament as an appeal for the Jew in attempting to lead him to salvation. Like the unbelieving gentile, the unbelieving Jew needs the truth of the Gospel of Salvation as presented in 1 Corinthians 15:1-5.

This is not some sort of anti-semitic rhetoric. Remember that Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians were all written by a Jew of the first century. He recognized God’s spiritual judgment of the Jew, but it is not to be taken as authorization for the persecution of Jews in any sense. The Jew is still today a member of God’s elect nation, even though God is not currently dealing with him as such. In due time, God will bring Israel back to Himself, and it is required of regenerate believers today that they honor the chosen nation.

2. The Saved Man

- a) Can become carnal – 1 Corinthians 3:1-2

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And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual *people* but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. ² I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able *to receive it*, and even now you are still not able;

b) Is, therefore, constituted a babe, – Hebrews 5:13

For everyone who partakes *only* of milk *is* unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.

The believer can fall into a state of carnality which produces a condition which is similar (not identical to) the state of the unsaved, or natural man (1 Corinthians 2:14). This had actually occurred in Corinth, with the result that the apostle had to speak to the Corinthians “as unto men” rather than as to spiritual men. These believers were “babes,” and their ability to understand the spiritual application of biblical truth was restricted.

The solution to their carnal state is not discussed in detail in Corinthians. Undoubtedly Paul had already spent time explaining how to be spiritual. Their problem was not knowledge of the spiritual requirement, but an unwillingness to apply the solution. For a detailed discuss for overcoming the carnality problem see Romans 6-8 and Colossians 3.

c) Must mature through the process of exercising the Word of God – Hebrews 5:14, 1 Corinthians 2:6

But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Hebrews 5:14

However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. 1 Corinthians 2:6

B. The Definition of Illumination

1. For the Unsaved – 2 Corinthians 4:2-6

But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴ whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. ⁵ For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus’ sake. ⁶ For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

From the viewpoint of the unbeliever, illumination is the provision by God of understanding of the truth of the Gospel of Salvation so that the blinded unbeliever may see and understand the truth of salvation.

2. For the Saved – Ephesians 1:18-21

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the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,¹⁹ and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power²⁰ which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated *Him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places*,²¹ far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

From the viewpoint of the believer, illumination is the provision of ability to understand the truths of Scripture relating to the present day practice of Christian living so that maturity may be attained. This is directly related to the ongoing relationships with the various members of the trinity as they are related and are ministering to believers in this dispensation.

VII. Canonicity

A. The Definition of Canonicity

1. “When we speak of the canon of scripture, the word ‘canon’ has a simple meaning. It means the list of books contained in scripture...”

“The word ‘canon’ has come into our language (though Latin) from the Greek word *kanon*. In Greek it meant a rod, especially a straight rod used as a rule; from this usage comes the other meaning which the word commonly bears in English – ‘rule’ or ‘standard.’

F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*, pg. 17.

2. Canonicity means the recognition of which books measure up so as to be included in the written Word of God.

a) The canon of Scripture was determined by God rather than man.

“Underlying all the insufficient views of what determined canonicity is the failure to distinguish between *determination* and *recognition* of canonicity.

“*Canonicity is determined by God*. Actually, a canonical book is valuable and true because God inspired it. That is, canonicity is determined or fixed conclusively by authority, and authority was given to the individual books by God through inspiration. The real question is not where a book received its divine authority, for that can only come from God; but how did men recognize the authority?

“*Canonicity is recognized by men of God*. Inspiration determines canonicity. If a book was authoritative, it was so because God breathed it and made it so. How a book received authority, then is determined by God. How men recognize that authority is another matter altogether.” (Emphasis original.)

Normal Geisler & William Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, page 211.

b) Therefore, canonicity does not determine or cause a book of the Bible to be God-breathed. It simply recognizes that God-breathedness is present. In other words, canonicity is based on inspiration, not the other way around.

B. The Recognition of Canonicity

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1. The Lord Jesus Christ Recognized the Canon of Scripture

- a) Luke 24:44-45 – Jesus recognized the law, the prophets, and the Psalms (the writings) as Scripture.

Then He said to them, “These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning Me.” And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

- b) Matthew 15:3-6 – God is the ultimate source of Scripture

He answered and said to them, “Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God commanded, saying, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’ But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, “Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God.”’

- c) John 10:35 – The Scriptures will accomplish their purpose.

If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken)....

- d) Mark 7:8-13 – Scripture is superior to tradition.

For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men— the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.” He said to them, “*All too* well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. For Moses said, ‘*Honor your father and your mother*’; and, ‘*He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.*’ But you say, ‘If a man says to his father or mother, “Whatever profit you might have received from me *is* Corban”—’ (that is, a gift *to God*), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.”

- e) Christ quoted directly from the Pentateuch, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Zechariah, Malachi, and the Psalms.
- f) While it was available to Him, Christ did not ever quote from the apocrypha.

2. The Early Church Used Guidelines to Help Recognize the Canon of Scripture.

- a) Is the writing of divine origin?
- b) Was the human author divinely enabled? Did he meet the criteria of 2 Peter 1:21?
- c) Is the writing true? (Authenticity)
- d) Does the writing accurately represent itself? That is, is it genuine? – 2 Thessalonians 2:2. Already in Paul’s day, letters were evidently circulating bearing his name that were not genuine.

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- e) Was the author a prophet (Old or New Testament), an apostle (New Testament) or associated with an apostle (Mark, Luke, etc.)?

C. The Completion of the Canon

“Theologically the canon is closed. God has inspired only so many books, and they were all completed by the end of the apostolic period (first century A.D.). God used to speak through the prophets of the Old Testament, but in the ‘last days’ he spoke through Christ (Hebrews 1:1) and the apostles whom He empowered with special ‘signs’ (miracles). But because the apostolic age ended with the death of the apostles (Acts 1:22), and because no one since apostolic times has had the ‘signs of a true apostle’ (2 Cor. 12:12) whereby they can raise the dead (Acts 20:10-12) and perform other unique supernatural events (Acts 3:1-10; 28:8-9), it may be concluded that God’s ‘last day’ revelation is complete (see Acts 2:16-18). This does not mean that God’s visitations are over, because there are many other things yet to be fulfilled (see Acts 2:19-20). Nor does it mean that there will be no new understanding of God’s truth after the first century. It simply means that there is no new revelation for the church. Indeed, this does not necessarily imply that there have been no miracles since the first century. Supernatural acts will be possible as long as there is a Supernatural Being (God). It is not the fact of miracles that ceased with the apostles but the special gift of miracles possessed by a prophet or apostle who could claim, like Moses, Elijah, Peter, or Paul, to have a new revelation from God. Such a prophet or apostle could back up his claim by dividing a sea, bringing down fire from heaven, or raising the dead. These were special gifts bestowed on prophets (apostles), and they are not possessed by those who are not the recipients of new revelation (Acts 2:22; Hebrews 2:3-4).”

Geisler & Nix, page 217.

VIII. The Authority and Application of Scripture

A. **Definition of Biblical Authority:** By Biblical authority we mean the *right* of the Scriptures to determine the areas of faith and practice required of the individual believer.

B. Denials of Biblical Authority

1. The “no one tells me what to do” attitude

The Argument from Arrogance

2. The “we’ve always done it (or thought about it) this way” attitude

The Argument from Tradition

3. The “it isn’t practical in the modern world” attitude

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The Attitude from Practicality

4. The “don’t make waves” attitude

The Argument from Timidity

5. The “I don’t care what the Bible says, this is what happened to me” attitude

The Argument from Personal Experience (Arrogance, – Part 2)

C. The Extent of Authority

1. Positively Stated: The entire Bible is authoritative for faith. We are required to believe it all, whether we understand it all or not.
2. Negatively Stated: Not all Scripture is authoritative for practice to all individuals. Only those passages intended by God for me are authoritative for me.

D. The Problem of Application

1. Always interpret before you apply.
 - a) Every Scripture has only one interpretation.
 - (1) That interpretation relates only to the original recipients of the statement being made. Always interpret from the point of view of the original recipients.
 - (2) That interpretation is based on a consistent literal (normal), grammatical, historical approach.
 - b) The application of a passage of Scripture **MUST BE CONSISTENT WITH THE ONE INTERPRETATION.**
 - c) Technically, therefore, there is only one correct application of a specific passage of Scripture.
2. The Breaks on Biblical Application
 - a) Some information is culturally colored: Illustration, feet washing.

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- b) Some information is situationally limited: Illustration, information about the marriage state is only directly applicable to those who are married, though the unmarried can learn from it.
- c) Much information is dispensationally limited.

- (1) There is a misunderstanding of the Nature of God – Some hold practically that God is restricted, in that once He begins a program He must continue that program without interruption.

While God's character and attributes never change, He is able to deal with people differently from time to time. As long as He does not violate His nature, God is free to act any way He sovereignly determines.

This is not to say that God is capricious, as that would, in fact, be a violation of His nature. Changes in God's program are always with a view to further revealing Himself as He actually is.

- (2) There is a tendency toward uniformitarianism in human thinking – 2 Peter 3:1-4

For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world *that* then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth *which* are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

- (3) In fact, God's program is one of planned change based on the failure of mankind – 2 Peter 3:5-7

Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in *both of* which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of creation.

E. Ages and Dispensations

Paul used the word "dispensation" to refer to a relationship between a household and God. The context in which the idea was presented indicates that dispensational thinking belongs to the doctrine of the Bible, as it gives believers information as to what "mail to read." God sent different messages (mail, dispensed through a dispenser, or steward) to different households at different times. For a thorough discussion of Dispensations and Ages see the author's work "A Study of Biblical Dispensationalism."

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1. Biblical Dispensationalism

a) The Biblical Statements— Ephesians 3:1-5

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles— if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets:

b) The Cultural Figure – Lk. 16:1-7

He also said to His disciples: “There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. So he called him and said to him, ‘What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.’ “Then the steward said within himself, ‘What shall I do? For my master is taking the stewardship away from me. I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg. I have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.’ “So he called every one of his master’s debtors to *him*, and said to the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’⁶ And he said, ‘A hundred measures of oil.’ So he said to him, ‘Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.’ Then he said to another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ So he said, ‘A hundred measures of wheat.’ And he said to him, ‘Take your bill, and write eighty.’

c) The Various Elements

(1) The Owner, or Head of Household

(2) The Steward, a slave

(3) The Household

(4) The Goods to be Managed

d) **A Biblical Dispensation Defined** – A dispensation is a distinguishable relationship between God and part or all of mankind, which God designates a household, which is revealed through an individual who is designated as a steward.

2. Dispensationally Related Doctrines

a) The Church

(1) The Beginning of the Church

(a) The Mystery Nature of the Church

(b) The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

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- (2) The Mystery Gospel
 - b) The Indwelling of the Godhead
- 3. The Ages
 - a) Definition of *aion*. Distinct from a dispensation.
 - b) Importance of the Ages.
 - c) The Age to which Christ Referred – Matthew 24:1-14

Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. ² And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not *one* stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down." ³ Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" ⁴ And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. ⁵ "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. ⁶ "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet. ⁷ "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ "All these *are* the beginning of sorrows. ⁹ "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. ¹⁰ "And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. ¹¹ "Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. ¹² "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ "But he who endures to the end shall be saved. ¹⁴ "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

- (1) The Beginning of the Age
- (2) The End of the Age
- d) The Distinction between the pre-kingdom age and the present evil age
 - (1) The Content of Salvation
 - (a) Mark 10:23-31

Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" ²⁴ And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." ²⁶ And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, "Who

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then can be saved?"²⁷ But Jesus looked at them and said, "With men *it is* impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible."²⁸ Then Peter began to say to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You."²⁹ So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's,³⁰ "who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time -- houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions -- and in the age to come, eternal life."³¹ "But many *who are* first will be last, and the last first."

(b) Matthew 19:27, 29

Then Peter answered and said to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?" Matthew 19:27

"And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. Matthew 19:29

(c) Lk. 18:29-30

So He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God,³⁰ "who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life."

(2) The Content of the Gospel

(3) The Kinds of Baptism

e) The Christian's Relation to the Present Evil Age – Gal. 1:4

...who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father...

(1) We are to live godly – Titus 2:12

...teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age...

(2) We are not to be conformed

(a) Romans 12:1-8

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service.² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.³ For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.⁴ For as we have many

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members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function,⁵ so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.⁶ Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them*: if prophecy, *let us prophesy* in proportion to our faith;⁷ or ministry, *let us use it* in *our* ministering; he who teaches, in teaching;⁸ he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

(b) 2 Timothy 4:10

...for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica -- Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia.

(3) We receive the ultimate benefit of God's program of the Ages – 1 Corinthians 10:11

Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

IX. Heresy

The following is a short position paper written by the author of this course on the biblical use of the word heresy.

Heresy

We now approach a very delicate, though highly misunderstood area of doctrine. The doctrine of heresy is seldom carefully considered by theologians or by Bible teachers. Perhaps this is because it is a distasteful subject to some. But since the word heresy occurs in the Bible, the subject of heresy is certainly worthy of our time.

Unfortunately, heresy is a word often applied to anyone who does not happen to hold to one's particular system of theology. Sometimes individuals use the word of general theological error; other times some use the word of a specific doctrinal error of a group or individual. As it happens, neither of these uses of the word is biblically accurate.

All Christians hold to error in doctrine. If one were doctrinally perfect, there would be no need to study Scripture. All serious students of the Bible find themselves changing their minds about areas of doctrine as they grown and mature in the faith. Are all Christians then heretics because they at some time or other hold to erroneous doctrine? Certainly not!

Sometimes the word heresy is applied only to those who deny "the fundamentals of the faith." While this is certainly serious, is the fact that they are denying biblical truth heresy? After all, the idea of "fundamentals" is a man made concept. God knows of no distinction between denying "big" doctrines and "little" ones. How important does the doctrinal error need to be in order for an individual who holds to be deemed guilty of heresy? Who determines which are more important?

Actually, the problem is solved when we realize that the idea of heresy in the Bible is not related directly to holding doctrinal error.

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The Greek word for heresy is *hairesis* and occurs only nine times in the New Testament. Because of the great misunderstanding and relative importance of this area of doctrine, we will examine each occurrence of the word in its context.

The basic idea of the word *hairesis* is “to hold an opinion,” either rightly or wrongly. The verbal form of the word *haireo* means “to choose,” and is used of God’s act of choosing based on His righteous opinion.

Heresy in the Book of Acts

Several of the uses of the Greek word *hairesis* occur in the Book of Acts. The first occurrence is Acts 5:17 where we read, “Then the high priest rose up, and all those who *were* with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation.” The word *hairesis* is here translated *sect*. In this passage the word carries no negative connotation whatsoever. It simply means a group of people who hold to a common viewpoint or opinion.

The same term is applied to the Pharisees in Acts 15:5, “But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, ‘It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses.’” Again the word has no negative connotation.

In defending himself before Agrippa in Acts 26:5, Paul says that when he was a young man “that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.” Paul is using the word “sect” in a positive way here, showing that his background is of the highest religious order. The Pharisees were a group of Jews who held to a common opinion, which opinion was held in high esteem by most.

When Paul arrived in Rome in chains, he called the leadership of the Jews together where he was being held. They reported to him that they had not received a report from their brethren (the Jews in Israel) concerning him. Then in Acts 28:22, they say, “But we desire to hear from you what you think; for concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere.” By the word “sect” the Jews mean Christianity. There is no implied condemnation in the word, only that the viewpoint which Paul espouses is an held by a certain group of people. They were not accusing Paul, or Christians in general, of holding heretical doctrine as the word is used today. Perhaps they did not understand Christianity as a different religion than Judaism, but a separate sect such as the Pharisees or Saducees within legitimate parameters in Israel. They certainly wanted to hear more before the condemned it.

Paul’s Defense before Felix

Since Acts 24 gives especially important information concerning the meaning of the word heresy we will deal with it separately

Paul had been brought before Felix, who was under the influence of the Jews In verses 14 and 15 we find Paul defending himself by stating, “But I confess this to you, that according to the way which they (the Jews) call a heresy thus I worship my fathers’ God, believing all the things having been written in the prophets, having hope toward God, these things which they themselves are also expecting, resurrection about to come, both of just and unjust people.” (Translation mine.)

This passage shows some of the cultural attachments to the word *hairesis*. The word is translated “sect” in the NKJV. The Jews viewed Paul’s “way” a sect, and therefore distinguishable. In this they were correct. However, in this passage, Paul clearly is indicating that the Jews had a

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negative attitude toward the “sect.” This is the first passage in the New Testament in which the word *haireisis* tends toward a negative connotation. An accusation seems included in the use of this word as the Jews applied it to Paul’s “way.” The meaning seems to be that the opinions held by Paul and others are divisive, and therefore to be avoided. Therefore, in certain uses, *haireisis* includes the connotation of holding to a view that is divisive. This is similar to the way the word is used in the negative connotation passages in Paul and Peter’s writings.

Heresy in Paul’s and Peter’s Epistles

In the rest of the New Testament, the word *haireisis* has a universally negative connotation. This is reflected in Paul’s use of the word in Galatians 5:20, where it is listed with the works of the flesh.

A detailed consideration of the flesh must be left for another time. At this point it is important to note that heresy has the same source and cure as the other works of the flesh mentioned in the context of Galatians 5:20.

Second Peter 2:1 states, “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction.” In this context the word heresy is linked to the message of false teachers. Note that heresy is not linked with false prophets. Why? It is the peculiar function of the teacher that is at issue. Teachers tend to interpret information as they teach. An unscrupulous teacher can sometimes lead a person into following the teacher rather than the Lord.

As used by Peter, heresy has a totally negative connotation, and in this it is distinct from its use in the majority of the passages in the Book of Acts. Heresy includes the concept of leading astray by false teachers into opinions that are unsound.

A Definition of Heresy

By combining the elements of the of the words in their various contexts, we understand heresy to be the promotion of false teaching with a view to causing the hearers to adhere to it and to leave the truth. The word carries the connotation of divisiveness.

Heresy is not merely holding false doctrine. It is using the doctrine as a lever to pry people away from Scripture so as to hold a different opinion. It is the attempt to bring people into a sect or group based on the different opinion held by that group. A person can only be deemed a heretic when he *intends* to cause division in the Body of Christ by leading people astray. He uses false doctrine in a teaching manner to bring about separation from the truth so as to draw individuals into his sect or group that share the common error.

The main problem with heresy is when it infects the local assembly. It appears that the use of the word heretic in Titus is to be applied to carnal believers in local assemblies.

Admonishing the Heretic

According to Titus 10 and 11, “A heretic after the first and second admonition avoid, knowing that such a man has been perverted and sins, being self-condemned.” (Translation mine). Some have argued that the only reason for admonishing a heretic is to confirm him in his sin. But this passage clearly states that he is already self-condemned. God is not tell us to admonish a person without hope of his turning from his carnality. Such an exercise in futility is contrary to the teaching of Scripture.

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The common view of admonishing a heretic is to attempt to convert him from the error which he is teaching. However, as we have previously stated, the error is only part of the problem, and it is not the core problem. The basic problem of the heretic is that he is being controlled by the flesh. That is, he is in a state of carnality. First Corinthians 2:14-3:3 is the classic passage that deals with the problem of the flesh as it deals with the Word of God. A carnal Christian is viewed as immature (a babe) and cannot understand or correctly apply the spiritual truth of the Word. Taken a step further, when a carnal individual begins to be divisive and attempt to lead people into his own group, he is deemed guilty of heresy.

Since the basic problem is one of carnality, the heretic must be addressed from that point of view. It will do no good to get him "straightened out" doctrinally if he is still carnal. Again, the problem is not that he is holding doctrinal error, but that he is divisive and attempting to split the Body of Christ. As far as the deep things of God are concerned a heretic is acting as an infant and is not able to digest the meat of the word. See 1 Corinthians 3:3 where the specific problem of the Corinthians was strife and division.

Paul states that he was dealing with the carnal Corinthians "as men." This takes us back to 1 Corinthians 2:14 where we read that "the natural man is not able to receive the things of the Spirit of God, because they are foolishness to him, nor can he know them because they are spiritually understood." (Translation mine.) A carnal Christian (including the heretic) is in a state similar to that of the natural man. The apostle could not speak unto them as unto spiritual. They were carnal and they could not receive the deep things of the Spirit of God because these things can only be understood in a spiritual sense by the spiritual man.

Therefore, a person who is guilty of heresy will not receive correct doctrine concerning his heretical doctrinal opinion. He is unable to bear the solid food of the Word of God (1 Cor 3:2). It does no good to attempt to convert the heretic from his doctrinal error until he becomes spiritual. Admonition of the heretic must then be in some area other than in that of correcting his doctrine.

The Cure for Heresy

The cure for heresy is the same as the cure for any act of carnality. The carnal state itself must be cured before the heresy can be eliminated. To attempt to cure the heresy without curing the carnality is dealing with a symptom rather than the disease.

When one is being divisive by teaching error he must be admonished. But what form should the admonishment take? Rather than attempting to convert the heretic, he should be treated for carnality. A complete discussion of carnality must be left for another time. Suffice it to say that the heretic must be encouraged to walk by the Spirit. He must be admonished to apply the principles of grace to the problem of indwelling sin. This involves the application of the principles of Romans 6 to the life of the heretic.

If the heretic refuses to apply these grace principles, then he is to be avoided. Why so drastic an act? The danger to the assembly is too great to tolerate his continued presence. The avoidance and rejection of this individual is not punishment. Nor is it to be confused with excommunication as it is not intended to necessarily be permanent. The act of rejection itself may shock the heretic into an awareness of the seriousness of his situation. Restoration of the heretic is the ultimate goal.