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BIBLIOLOGY **(The Doctrine of the Bible)**

There has never been, nor will there ever be, a book comparable to the Bible. There is no other book in history that has affected the world as much as the Bible. Countries have literally been founded upon its principles. Leaders of the world, at various times in history, have made major decisions based upon its teachings. This is the one book that soldiers want read to them before they go into war. This is the one book that people want read or cited to them when they are in a hospital. This is the one book that people want in their lives when they are in times of sorrow. The Bible is a book of no equal.

The Bible has been used in a court of law before men give the most serious types of testimonies. The Bible is a book that still draws thousands of people every week to churches so they may hear it expounded and applied to their own lives. It is true that many have laughed at it, tried to destroy it and have criticized it, but to **no** avail. The Bible continues to stand, it continues to exist, it continues to transform lives. No human can examine the words of the Bible without coming face-to-face with God. The Bible is much more than just a book, it is God's Supreme book and any honest, intelligent individual who will realistically inspect the evidence will be forced to conclude that this is God's Infinite word.

In the next weeks we would like to get to know more about this book in a doctrinal study of Bibliology.

QUESTION #1- What is Bibliology?

Bibliology is the systematic collecting and arranging of all facts that pertain to the Bible. It is the systematic attempt to organize all Truth which God has revealed "in" His word, "about" His word.

Bibliology is **not** an attempt to prove or disprove that the Bible is in fact God's inspired word. The field of study which gropes in this area is called Biblical criticism. Criticism in its pure grammatical sense simply means to exercise judgment. When the term is applied to the Bible, it is used in reference to exercising judgment about the Bible, itself. There are two general classifications of criticism pertaining to the Bible: 1) Higher Criticism; 2) Lower Criticism. From these two main classifications there are six different branches of criticism which extend. Higher Criticism studies the value of the manuscript to determine whether or not it is a genuine Biblical text. Higher Criticism is interested in the date of the manuscript, the style and structure, its literary form and authorship. Lower Criticism is concerned with the actual form and words of the manuscript. Lower Criticism attempts to make sure the manuscript contains the right word and spelling of the actual original text. If there has been a copying error, such as a reversal of letters, lower criticism attempts to understand and explain it. Many scholars involved in Criticism are good men who firmly adhere to the inspiration of the Bible. However, there have been some liberals and modernists who have departed from the proper place of criticism and have become "destructive" critics. True Bibliology recognizes the importance of good criticism and guards against destructive criticism.

BIBLIOLOGY (2)

Bibliology is a part of the field of study known as systematic Theology. Systematic Theology is not a science that questions the Inspiration of God's word, it is a science that accepts that the Bible is God's word. This is the assumption which is the basis for all true and sound systematic theological study. Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer made a profound point when he wrote: "The student who in spite of the claims of the Bible to be the Word of God is yet groping for added light on that aspect of truth, cannot even begin the study of Systematic Theology." (Vol. 1, p.21) Bibliology, then, is the putting in order of all true facts which pertain to the Bible. It is a systematic study of the Bible, itself.

QUESTION #2 - Why is Bibliology typically the first doctrine studied in Systematic Theology?

Bibliology is studied as the first doctrine because all other doctrinal studies are based upon the Bible. Charles Baker captured the essence of this question when he observed: "It is placed first in logical order before all other doctrines, simply because it is considered to be the authoritative source of all other doctrines. Our knowledge of God, of His will, of His spiritual provisions, of His plans and purposes would have no objective basis apart from some kind of revelation of these truths. The Bible lays claim to being such a revelation of God..." (A Dispensational Theology, p.30)

Since all other doctrinal studies are based upon the Bible, it is both logical and critical that we study this doctrine first. Our concept of the Bible determines our concept of our authority, of our God and of our faith. This is why it is so important to study this doctrine first.

QUESTION #3 - What does the word "Bible" actually mean?

The English word "Bible" is the great-grandson of the Greek word "Biblos" which means a book or a roll. The word originally referred to a papyrus plant or reed which grew along the Nile River in Egypt, which was a plant, when dried, on which people could write.

Dr. Paul Enns describes the process: "Writing material was made from the papyrus plant by cutting the pith of the plant in one foot strips and setting it in the sun to dry. The strips were then laid in horizontal rows with rows of vertical strips glued to the horizontal rows in a criss-cross fashion similar to the way plywood is constructed today. The horizontal rows were smoothed and became the writing surface. Sections of these strips were glued together to form a scroll up thirty feet in length." (Moody Handbook of Theology, p.21).

The plural for of the word "Biblos" is "Biblia". By the second century A.D., Christians were using this term, to describe their sacred writings. This particular word gave birth to the Latin word of the same spelling, which was transliterated into the Old French Language. The English word "Bible" comes the Old French, with just a change in the ending. The ending "Bibl ia" was dropped and an Anglicized "e" was added thus forming the English word "Bibl e." (A General Introduction to the Bible, Revised & Expanded, p.21)

BIBLIOLOGY (3)

As we previously stated, the word "Bible" means book. However the Bible is distinguished from any other book that has ever been written. It surpasses every other book ever written in authority, history, literature and even popularity. As Dr. Chafer said, "The Bible is a phenomenon which is explainable in but one way- it is the Word of God." (Vol. 1, p.22)

QUESTION #4 - Why is there a need for a Bible?

God made a wonderful decision in eternity past that He would permit humans to know Him and have a relationship with Him. God knew that in order for this to happen a written Revelation was necessary. Thus He gave His written word- the Bible. Certainly any thinking person will admit that gaining personal knowledge of the God of the universe would be desireable. The issue would not be one of desirability but of possibility. This is the value of the Bible- for the Bible makes it possible to know God.

When one thinks logically about this, a written word is the only way absolute knowledge about God can be revealed. For example, knowledge gained through our senses, such as our feelings, is relative and limited to our situation and our experience. However, knowledge gained through a written revelation is absolute and certain. Had not God put in writing His precious word, our knowledge of God would be very limited and very lacking. Our knowledge would depend on our limited experiences or understanding. Without a written record one person could have one opinion of God and another person could have a different opinion about God and there would be no authoritative way to decide whose opinion is accurate. God was not about to depend on the sinful senses of finite, sinful man to reveal Him, so He put His word into print.

When we look into the Bible, we discover that God has revealed Himself in several ways:

- 1) He has revealed Himself in creation. Psalms 19:1-6; Romans 1:18-21
- 2) He has revealed Himself in conscience. Romans 1:19; 2:14-15
- 3) He has revealed Himself in countries. Daniel 2:21; Romans 13:1
- 4) He has revealed Himself in care. Matthew 5:45; Acts 14:15-17
- 5) He has revealed Himself in Christ. John 1:14; Colossians 2:9; I Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:1-2

In order for us to have a proper understanding of any of these realities, a written record is needed. The ability to know God demands a written revelation and without such a document we are left with no absolute authority, except that of finite, sinful human minds.

QUESTION #5 - Is it logical to assume that God would give a written word?

Certainly by virtue of the fact that the Bible exists is evidence enough that God would give His written word, however, from a logical standpoint, this matter can be further substantiated:

(Logical Assumption #1) - God must be the true source of knowledge of Himself.

BIBLIOLOGY (4)

Dr. Charles Ryrie says: "God Himself is the Source of our knowledge of Him. Only true truth comes from God, for since sin entered the stream of history man has created that which he calls truth but which is not. Furthermore, he has perverted, blunted, diluted, and corrupted that which was originally true truth that did come from God. For us today the only infallible canon for determining true truth is the written Word of God. Nature, though it does reveal some things about God, is limited and can be misread by mankind. The human mind, though often brilliant in what it can achieve, suffer limitations and darkening. Human experience, even religious ones, lack reliability as sources of the true knowledge of God unless they conform to the Word of God." (Basic Theology, p.25)

This principle that only a knowledgeable source may reveal information is easily observed. For example, when a person takes a job of employment, someone with knowledge of that job must teach and instruct them concerning that job. No sane company would ever permit one without knowledge to instruct another person. They would select the person who knows the most to train one who knows nothing.

So it is with God. God is the only One who is in a position to instruct us concerning Himself. It stands to reason that He would put a Divine Document into writing as the most logical method of Revelation, for that would eliminate the possibility of any human distortion.

(Logical Assumption #2)- God is the source of language communication. Genesis 2:19

Language is a creative work of God given by God to man for the purpose of communication. The ability to understand language, to write a language, to understand words, clauses, and paragraphs that communicate thoughts is a Divine grant from God and it is **only** given to humans and not animals. Animals may learn a few commands, however the ability to systematically reason and communicate with language is something only humans can do. You will never find an animal in a library doing research.

The original purpose of language was so that communication could take place between God and man. In the beginning, this communication seems to have been verbal, but as time developed and as the population expanded and as various languages multiplied, God knew it was necessity to put His word in writing.

When God's primary focus was on the nation Israel, His commandments, laws and ordinances were written in one language- Hebrew. But when His program spread to Gentiles all over the world, it became necessary to produce several translations of His word into a variety of different languages. The original language that made this possible was Greek. Since God is the source of language, it is only logical that His word would be written in a language.

(Logical Assumption #3)- God must be the source of verification of truth.

Various religions and theological views have Surfaced over the years, too numerous to count.

BIBLIOLOGY (5)

Many of these religions claim they have received direct messages from God. Many religions have claimed that they have books and writings that are from God. This should not surprise us because man is determined to believe in "a" God or many "gods" even when his belief system is false. How does one go about verifying what is really from God and what isn't? How does one determine what is true what is false? The most logical way to verify truth and authenticate what is really from God and what isn't really from God is to have a written word. When God put His word in writing, any claim or any writing may be checked in view of God's written word.

(Logical Assumption #4)- God must be the ultimate teacher in the education of any human.

In any serious learning about anything, one must have a teacher. When it comes to the subject of God, it is absolutely impossible for someone limited and sinful to accurately invent and decipher information about One unlimited and holy. It is also impossible, in any type of learning, to develop from a status of ignorance to a status of intelligence without something to study and someone to teach and instruct. Man, left to himself, will **never** end up holy and knowledgeable about God. For this reason, God gave us His information in writing. He knew that if we were to learn truth about Him, He needed to teach us. He gave us His textbook- the Bible, He gave us His Spirit- who guides and leads us into all Truth and He gave gifts to the church such as Pastors and Teachers so that a true education about Him may be realized.

(Logical Assumption #5)- God must be the source of absolute knowledge.

On this assumption, we cite the words of Dr. Charles Baker: "In spite of the fact that we live in the most enlightened age of man's history, man has not been able to attain to any absolute knowledge. Many cannot be sure that his knowledge today will not be modified or overthrown by the findings of tomorrow. Science is in a constant state of flux. A popular layman's book on philosophy states: "Our sense experience and historical information are always changing. We cannot tell whether any of our sense information is necessarily true...In order to be absolutely certain we would have to be able to show that it is impossible that it could be false." One can view an object rotating thousands of times a minute in the light of a stroboscope and his senses will tell him it is standing still. Objects change color when viewed in light of varying wavelengths. Psychologists have devised many optical illusions. Heisenberg's "Uncertainty Principle" which operates in the field of quantum mechanics has been transferred by philosophers into other fields of knowledge. Knowledge gained through our senses appears to be relative. There may be absolute knowledge; there may be God, but the skeptic and agnostic say we cannot know for certain. ... In the light of all of this uncertainty it should be admitted by all that it would be a very desirable thing for man to possess some absolute, certain knowledge. The great majority of scientists and philosophers do not think that man has been able to attain to such knowledge through the empirical disciplines, so if man is to ever possess such knowledge, it must come through some other channel. This other channel is Revelation: the Divine communication of absolute truth which man could never learn by his own reasoning and investigation." (p.31)

BIBLIOLOGY (6)

If God does not put His absolute word into writing, we have no absolute knowledge. We are left to the theories, discoveries and conclusions of other finite, sinful and even, at times, God mocking men and women. It is very logical to assume that God gave us His written word. If He didn't, we are in a miserable condition for we cannot know anything with absolute certainty.

QUESTION #6 - What are the **false** sources of authority that many use have as a basis for their belief system?

All people, regardless of who they are, act and react, believe and disbelieve based on some basis of authority. Every human being has an ultimate authority base to which he/she appeals when making decisions and choices in life. The Scriptures are clear that there is nothing wrong with having an authority base, as long as that authority base is in conformity to God and His word. But the Scriptures are equally clear in establishing the fact that if it comes down to a choice between doing wrong in God's sight or doing right in God's sight, "We ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29)

Most people have never taken the time to actually determine what their real authority base really is. As a result, most have been lulled into a spiritual stupor, actually being governed by some authority which is not an absolute authority and which is a false authority.

The purpose of this question and this section is to point out the various things that people use as their authority. Although the official titles of these false sources have existed for many years in the study of Systematic Theology, it is evident that they are just as contemporary and just as relevant as they were hundreds of years ago.

False Authority Source #1 - Rationalism

Rationalism is the belief system that makes one's own mind the ultimate authority. It tends to believe and accept **only** those things which can be personally and individually reasoned. In this source, one's own reasoning abilities become the ultimate source of authority and decisions and beliefs are determined by one's own mental rationale.

We would quickly and certainly acknowledge that the Bible places a very high priority on the development of the mind. However, to make one's own mind the ultimate authority is very deficient and very dangerous. At best, every human mind is finite, which means it is limited. If our ultimate authority basis must be a finite, limited human mind, we have **no** absolute authority. Also, every human mind is sinful, which means it is colored and lacking in many ways. If our authority basis is a sinful, depraved human mind, we have a defective authority.

The mind has a real need to "grow" in knowledge, which means it is not the source of knowledge. If one person's finite, sinful mind thinks one way and another person's finite, sinful mind thinks another way- to whom or to what do we appeal to determine absolute truth?