

A Light in the Darkness

THE DOCTRINE OF THE WORD OF GOD

Important Recap

- ‘Traditions’ in The Scriptures
 - In order to threaten formal sufficiency, these traditions would need to be
 - not found anywhere in Scripture
 - applicable to all Christians in all eras
 - information or commands necessary for living rightly before God
 - The burden of proof lies on someone to produce such a tradition, with the most commonly (and almost, only) given example being the canon of Scripture.
- ‘Traditions’ in Church History
 - Tradition I (*regula fidei*)
 - Tradition II
 - Tradition III
 - Contrary to popular belief, the Protestant Reformation was not about Tradition vs. Scripture, but more about Tradition I vs. Tradition II.

Important Recap - Disagreement

- What exactly are we saying is “clear?” Everything in the Bible?
 - “The whole counsel of God *concerning all things necessary for his glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture*: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.”
WCF I.VI (1646)
- Is there a better designation than “objective clarity” that the text can have apart from any subjective/individual’s ability to understand it?
 - Suggestion: Communicative excellence
 - Excellence doesn’t always mean “plain” | Abstract vs Realistic Art
 - It might be most helpful to say that while all of Scripture is excellent communication, not all of it is plain, but those things *things necessary for his glory, man’s salvation, faith and life* are communicated both excellently *and plainly*.

What Explains Disagreement?

- Sin
- Developing understandings of Scripture as a whole
- Differing levels of historical and grammatical/lexical knowledge in interpretation
- Philosophical presuppositions

At this point, we have 1) made a case to preserve and explain the *excellency* of Scripture despite interpretive disagreement and 2) explain why, for lack of more formal terms, not everyone's disagreement poses a real threat to Scripture's clarity. This is because the conclusions of many interpreters simply lack weight due to any number of background reasons and assumptions that place them on inferior interpretive ground, at least among those with a high view of Scripture's supremacy.

But What About the Disagreement of “Shared-Value” Experts?

- The Epistemology of Disagreement
 - Are critics of Scripture’s clarity consistent here?
 - What about disagreement surrounding who *is* the true church or infallible interpreter?
 - Self-authentication, redux
 - What about disagreements within Catholic theology and practice?
 - Disagreement about disagreement—an awkward end

Summary

- No one can understand Scripture 1) exhaustively 2) with equal clarity in all places or 3) all at once. These realities, combined with sin and a host of other factors that affect Christians as interpreters, make disagreement over the proper interpretation of the Scriptures *likely*, not unlikely. Nevertheless, those things “necessary for [God’s] glory, man’s salvation, faith and life” are communicated so excellently that when the church *community* listens carefully to Scripture *as supreme*, there is *widespread agreement* about the *core message and imperatives* of Scripture, with outstanding disagreement not threatening knowledge claims *any more than any other area of life*, including claims about where God’s authority on earth lies.
- Shifting the Burden of Proof—What Explains Widespread *Agreement*?

The Illumination of Scripture

What have you heard, or what is your understanding of the illuminating role of the Holy Spirit, particularly as it relates to Scripture?