

## Special S.N.A.P. Section

### Biblical Orthodoxy Requires the S.N.A.P. of Scripture

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*In this paper prepared for the October 1997 Christian Business Faculty Association Annual Fall Conference in Nashville, Tennessee, Dr. Chewning advocates maintaining an orthodox view of the Bible through beliefs in the sufficiency, necessity, authority, and perspicuity of Scripture.*

*“Scripture was written long before the age of science and we should not expect it to address a number of contemporary issues that confront society today.”*

*“Scripture is infallible, but we can only discover its full meaning and truth through the use of other equally reliable sources of truth that can help us interpret it.”*

*“Scripture is not always clear on the things it addresses so we should be tolerant of other peoples’ interpretations and applications of it in areas where there are differences.”*

#### The Slippery Slope

Christians who are orthodox and believe in the full fidelity of Scripture face the subtle and grave danger of consciously or unconsciously subscribing to one or more fallacious presuppositions that can send their orthodoxy down the slippery slope of neo-orthodoxy. The three opening quotations are simple examples of thoughts that seem so reasonable

(logical) on the surface, but are at their heart capable of creating grave heresies. Quotes, such as those above, rest on presuppositions like: a) the truths of Scripture are bound by time and culture; b) “modern” people have a different nature from their ancestors; c) moral problems may be something other than things that impact people and relationships; d) there are other

coequal authorities that are as reliable as the Bible (the Bible is *merely* one among a number of authorities); e) God was not and is not a clear communicator; and f) “tolerance” is best understood as the belief that “any idea is as good as any other idea” and no ideas are to be related to any absolutes or universal standards—such standards do not exist.

Orthodox Christians have focused almost exclusively on the “inerrancy” and “infallibility” issues related to the Scripture for so long that they have taken their eyes off of the equally important presuppositions that must undergird their world and life view regarding the Scriptures they profess to believe and follow. If those of us who spend our lives associating biblical truth with our academic disciplines are to avoid making significant errors of judgment in our associative work, we must learn to recognize and adhere to the many supporting presuppositions that are so necessary for the maintenance of an orthodox view of Scripture that remains faithful to God’s propositional truths. To this end, in this treatise, we will employ the acrostic **S.N.A.P.**—the *sufficiency, necessity, authority, and perspicuity* (clarity

and understandability) of Scripture—to address the ever-increasing threat to our remaining faithful who believe in the absolute and immutable integrity of the Bible.

#### The “Sufficiency” of Scripture

The issue to be confronted first can be posed as a question. Does Scripture, standing alone, contain *sufficient* content (not exhaustive content) to render it absolutely reliable as a guide in all moral and salvific matters that are to be faced in any society at any time? Or are there occasions when other external authorities—for example, scientific authorities—are needed to bring light to the Scriptures so they can be more accurately interpreted? Or, put even more succinctly, are there other coequal authorities that are as reliable—full of truth—as the Bible? The issue posed here is real, not theoretical.

The very way people answer the questions above will clearly impact their understanding of what is meant when the *necessity, authority, and perspicuity* of Scripture are also being considered. The presuppositions we hold regarding a subject will always govern the way we understand the matter and everything tied to it. Our

epistemological perspectives are ruled by our presuppositions.<sup>1</sup>

Does the biblical account of creation and mankind's subsequent fall, contained in Genesis 1-3 and elaborated on in other sections of the Scripture, provide us with all the data necessary for us to truthfully ascertain our genesis? Or is the truth about our beginnings better understood with the help of certain scientific presuppositions guiding our interpretation of the Genesis account? Is the Bible a *sufficient* authority or is Scripture better understood with the help of other "equally truthful" authorities?

The *sufficiency* of Scripture issue is an old one. The groundwork for the modern form of the controversy was laid by Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 A.D.). He rejected the presuppositional underpinnings of Augustine of Hippo (St. Augustine, 354-430 A.D.) that had guided Christian thinking for 700 years. Augustine held strongly to a belief in the "total depravity" of all mankind—*fallen people* could not: (a) desire what God desires; (b) will what God wills; or (c) think the thoughts of God. Aquinas held equally as strongly to a belief in the "partial depravity" of all persons—*fallen people* could not: (a) desire what

God desires; or (b) will what God wills; *but fallen people could*, with much self-generated effort: (c) think the thoughts of God after Him. This difference in the basic understanding of human nature (the human intellect was badly wounded in the fall, but it was not rendered "dead to God") allowed Aquinas to argue with the scholastics of his day that reason alone could prove the existence of God and that reason could and should, on certain occasions, guide faith.<sup>2</sup>

Augustine believed that faith was the essential guide for reason. He believed this because of the fall of both mankind and the created order. People should not trust their reason until it had been informed by their biblically transformed faith, because the Holy Spirit had only promised to use the Scripture in the renovation of the fallen ("dead to God") human intellect. Aquinas, of course, believed that reason, on some occasions, should be the guide to faith. The consequence of following Aquinas' prescription, however, is that there are now other authorities that are as indispensable as the Scripture itself. This results in a vastly diminished authority of Scripture, for it is left up to the human to decide both: (a) what other

authority is applicable, and (b) when it is to be applied.<sup>3</sup>

One illustration will, I believe, demonstrate the importance of sorting out the issue that is imbedded in the *sufficiency* of Scripture discourse. Let us assume that good science (not "politically correct" science) proves that there is a DNA flaw in the genes of homosexuals (both males and females) that engenders a compulsive drive to act out their sexual preferences. Would such a finding cause a problem in the larger church? It would!

Those people who accept the presupposition that there are other authorities coequal with the Scripture may well argue that the findings support a new (neo-orthodox) understanding: the Scripture's prohibition against homosexual practices is a *general principle*—those without a genetic predisposition toward homosexual conduct should abstain from such practices—but not a *universal principle* to be applied to those that have the genetic predisposition toward the practice of same-sex relationships. In this case the science authority is allowed to reinterpret the biblical authority.

Those of us who reject the presupposition that there are other

authorities coequal with the Scripture would (I trust) anguish over those ensnared in this particular manner and beseech our Lord to strengthen those so afflicted with this particular consequence of the fall and its subsequent fallout (read and ponder Exodus 4:11). But the truth of Scripture would not be set aside by such a scientific finding. The practice of homosexual activity is contrary to God's expressed will. Regardless of the cause for its presence in the life of an individual, that person is morally accountable for his or her dealing with their particular desires, whether they be weak or strong desires. And those of us who are not so constituted are to love the individuals so ensnared in their old nature, while never condoning the habit and practice of it.

One final *sufficiency* issue also needs to be addressed. Is Scripture adequately prepared to address all of the possible moral issues that have or can arise on any occasion in any society at any time, now or in the future? There are many people in the church who believe the Bible is culturally and contextually constrained and even confined. They believe, "It spoke to the problems of its day but it is out-

of-touch with many contemporary issues of our day—cloning, environmental issues, modern economic realities (derivatives, plastic money, etc.), medical technology, contraceptives, etc.” Is this a valid perspective or a limitation that should be factored into the use or non-use of the Bible?

Our answers to these questions also rest on our presuppositions. If our governing presupposition

is, “God has expressed His mind *sufficiently* to His image-bearers so that

they can, with Spirit-directed, biblical help, discern His will regarding all relational matters,” then we would believe that every possible reality people might encounter already has *sufficient* guides available in the Word of God to address the questions relevant to the impacted people.

To illustrate, God did not directly address the issues related to cloning. He did, however, provide us with *sufficient* directions in His Word to guide us safely through this physiological possibility—humans cloning humans. (We will ignore the issue of humans

cloning other biological creatures.) Scripture clearly informs us that all who are called by the name of God—His elect—have been created by God for His glory (Isa. 43:7). We also know that His covenant of grace is with us and with our children (Isa. 44:3; Acts 2:39). We also know that sin entered the world through one man, not one man and one woman (Rom. 5:12-21). Fathers are the responsible progenitors of

the sin nature of their children. If this were not so, Jesus would have

had the sin nature of His mother, Mary. This is referred to as the “doctrine of traducianism” (Heb. 7:8-10; Gen. 15:4; 46:26; II Sam. 7:12; 16:11) and stands in opposition to the Platonic idea accepted by the Roman Catholic Church—the “doctrine of God’s continuous creation of spirits” (Eccl. 12:7; Isa. 57:16; Zec. 12:1). God’s act of redemption in Christ is sufficient for all mankind, but its benefits are applied only to His chosen children who have inherited their fathers’ sin nature. We are given no hope in the Scripture that a clone of a regenerate person

*...every possible reality that people might encounter already has sufficient guides ...in the Word of God...*

would be subject to God’s redemptive work in Christ. God is the sole creator of His image-bearers, not us. Christians ought to strongly resist the temptation to clone humans.<sup>4</sup>

God gave His image-bearers dominion over His created physical order. We are His stewards. We are to love Him. We are to love our “neighbors” and do what is in their best interest (collectively, that means to do what is just). Those people whose presuppositions allow for situational relativity (no standards by which to judge moral and ethical issues) are thrust on the horns of the dilemma of dialectical morality—an ever-shifting sand of moral confusion. Those of us who renounce this relativistic quagmire are not appealing to a list of rules and laws but to a body of sufficient revelation, commands, and principles that were given to us by a caring and loving Spirit who has our best interest at heart.

### The “Necessity” of Scripture

Those of us who desire to have Christ formed in us (Gal. 4:19; Eph. 4:13) and thereby have His mind (I Cor. 2:11-16) are absolutely dependent upon the Holy Spirit to use the Word of God in order for this

transformation to take place in us (Titus 3:5; Eph. 5:26).

Furthermore, the continuing growth that is so necessary for us to become mature servants of Christ in our educational ministries is completely dependent upon our receipt of God’s grace—grace in this case being the transformation of our minds into the mind of Christ, which will give us, over time, His world and life perspective on our academic disciplines.

And how is this grace received? Through *faith!!!* Listen to Paul’s discourse with the Galatians (Gal. 3:1-5):

*You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing I want to find out from you: **did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?** Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Did you suffer so many things in vain, if indeed it was in vain? Does He then, who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the Law, or by hearing with faith? [Emphasis added]*

We were saved by grace through *faith*. We received the Holy Spirit through *faith*. We are sanctified—set apart and matured to do Christ’s work—through *faith*. Christ is in fact our sanctification (I Cor. 1:30). We can do nothing to please Him apart from *faith*, for whatever is not wrought into being through *faith* is sin (Rom. 14:23).

It is by faith (Greek *pistis*—being fully persuaded) that we are fully persuaded that the Scripture is an absolute *necessity* for the transformation and renovation of our minds into the likeness of Christ’s mind (Rom. 12:2). The Spirit of God has promised to use the Holy Writ, and nothing else, as the cleansing, renovating touchstone of truth in our lives.

When people set forth the premise that all truth must be honored as God’s truth, no matter its source, be very careful. There is truth that is extra-biblical (2+2=4; this animal is a dog; etc.), but the interpretation, meaning, and significance of such truth is very different within the framework of different worldviews. For example, a rock may be a rock in everybody’s worldview, but to one person it is the product of an accident in the cosmos; to another person it is a particular mode of “god” since

everything is made of “god”; and to a Christian, the rock declares the glory of God, the omnipotent One. The biblical revelation is an absolutely necessary and integral ingredient in the formation of a Christian’s world and life view.

Using the analogy of John Calvin, the Scripture is the lens through which we are to see and interpret all reality. The difficulty a sincere person always faces in regard to this insight, however, is quickly recognized in the question, “Is the truth of the Bible transforming and renovating my mind into the mind of Christ, or am I transforming the Bible into my own unconscious mind-set through the fallen, worldly lens I bring to it?” We should always read the Word in expectant faith and in complete dependence upon the Spirit. The Bible is an irreducible *necessity* for Christian growth.

Then what of those who assert that there are other coequal authorities that are as dependable as the Bible itself? Do they have a biblical warrant for such a belief? They often claim they do by referring to such passages of Scripture as Psalm 19 or Romans 1:18-23. (Thomas Aquinas leaned heavily on such Scriptures to justify His belief in “partial depravity.”) A discourse on the

hermeneutics of these and other such passages would go far beyond the limits of this treatise, but let it be noted that: (a) all nature references to God in the Bible, like Psalm 19, are pointing and drawing attention to God and not to any specific truths about nature; and (b) passages of Scripture like Romans 1:18-23 (and following) point out the true state of the nature of mankind—they know in their fallen consciences that there is a genuine God who ought to be worshipped, but *in their fallen condition they are only able to continue their rebellion against Him*.

This last point is always undergirded by a person’s presuppositional beliefs about the degree of “free will” a person has. It is very clear biblically (and existentially) that everybody freely exercises his or her will. What is far less obvious to most people, however, is that people are only free to exercise their will in *accordance with their existing nature* and that none of us are free to alter our nature. A fallen nature is free to act in a way consistent with a fallen nature, not a redeemed nature—they are

slaves of their sin nature. Hence, discussions about “free will” often skirt the real issue—our fallen nature and God’s renovation of our nature in His act of regeneration, which act is only ascribed to God in the Scripture, never to mankind. (I once offered every student in a class of 187 students \$1,000 each

if he or she could find anything in the Bible that spoke of mankind’s free will. None could

because the subject of free will is a logical derivative of the Scripture that is absolutely dependent upon one’s hermeneutical presuppositions for its resolution.)

This author acknowledges no other coequal authorities to be placed alongside the Bible. Scripture itself acknowledges no such authority. There are truths about the fallen, created, natural order for which we are to search as we exercise our dominion over the fallen order, but we are never invited by God to use the presumed truths we generate, when cataloging or exploring the fallen natural order, to either alter or add to the special revelation in His Word. Those who believe this stance is in accord with the

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Scripture will therefore hold to the absolute *necessity* of recognizing the Bible as the only source of governing truth that God will use in the lives of His children.

### The “Authority” of Scripture

Affirming the full *authority* (inerrancy, infallibility) of Scripture (a hallmark of biblical orthodoxy twenty-five years ago and still an essential component of orthodoxy) is no longer a sufficient guard against the making of significant errors of judgment in our scholastic efforts to integrate our faith with our academic disciplines. The two preceding sections of this treatise—“The *Sufficiency* of Scripture” and “The *Necessity* of Scripture”—and the one that will follow this section—“The *Perspicuity* of Scripture”—provide, I believe, sufficient evidence of the shifting nature of the battle for the Christian’s belief in the singular importance of Scripture in the Spirit’s development of a transformed, renovated, godly world and life view in the hearts of His people. We must, however, not lose our ability to defend the infallibility of Scripture while we assume the new and essential defenses of the Bible’s *sufficiency*, *necessity*, and *perspicuity*.

Just what does the modern-day Christian mean when he or she affirms an unwavering belief in the infallibility, inerrancy, full authority, or absolute fidelity of the Scripture? And why are so many different words necessary to describe the intended idea that the Scripture is completely reliable? It will help the readers be more at ease with what follows, I believe, if we address the last question first. People’s sense of integrity requires that they be allowed to choose a word to describe their commitment to the full *authority* of Scripture. Because of this, one person may be comfortable using the word “inerrant” while another person may be very uncomfortable with that word and insists on using the word “infallible” when speaking of Scripture. Why is that? Because they believe the words they will not use are subject to the manipulations of a “theological taxidermist”—one who stuffs new meaning into a historically sound notion. Or they simply believe the other person’s word is inaccurate or, worse yet, false. So we soon learn that our choice of words will not automatically keep the wolves out or determine who believes as we do.

For example, there are people, such as the author, who freely use

the word “inerrancy”—“I believe the Bible is inerrant”—with the full knowledge that the scribes of old made errors while copying. (Then what do I mean when I speak of biblical inerrancy?) For this same reason (errors were made in the copies), other people refuse to use the word “inerrant,” for to do so, for them, violates their sense of integrity. So they may choose to use the word “infallible” to describe the modern texts of Scripture while referring to the entire body of propositional statements contained in the Bible. Yet still another person says he or she believes the Bible is “infallible” while meaning it is infallible in “the inner text,” not in its propositional form—a neo-orthodox formulation prescribed by Karl Barth. So no matter the words we may choose to describe our view of the full fidelity of Scripture, in all likelihood additional explanation will be called for by those who are trying

to find out where we really stand on the issues surrounding Scripture.

A belief in the full *authority*, *infallibility*, or *inerrancy* of Scripture may be discussed in a number of ways, but the following description will, I trust, be sufficient to communicate the larger issues that are associated with the topic. First of all, everybody has a set of presuppositions that covers at least three spans of both activity and time. They are:

- A) The recording of the original autographs—books of the Bible
- B) The centuries of scribal copying
- C) The contemporary use of “non-original” manuscripts

The three spans of time and activity that concern us may be placed on a continuum as follows:<sup>5</sup>

A	B	C
<b>Original Autographs</b> 1400 B.C.—95 A.D.	<b>Scribal Copying</b> 1400 B.C.—1500 A.D.	<b>Modern Translations</b> 1500 A.D.—Today

The time and activity span represented by Section A on the continuum represents the period of time in which the 66 original manuscripts of the Bible were written. The kinds of questions that are raised by both believers and doubters are: (a) Why should I believe the original autographs were inerrant?; (b) Did the author's personality play a part in the fidelity of the original writing, and, given the fact that they too were sinners, how could their work be pure?; (c) How did God superintend the writing of the original manuscripts?; and (d) Can we really trust our beliefs about the quality of the original manuscripts? Our purpose here is not to address such questions other than to say that the orthodox perspective holds that Scripture itself witnesses to the fidelity of its content and that Christ obviously accepted the Spirit-directedness of the Scriptures of His day—many of which were scribal copies even at that time.

The critical point for us in this discussion, however, is for us to be willing to answer the question, "Do I believe the original autographs were inerrant? Yes \_\_\_\_ ; No \_\_\_\_." If our answer is "no," then there is no need to go any further in the

discussion regarding the inerrancy of Scripture. If the original works were not without error, the modern translations of our generation could hardly be defended as inerrant, infallible, or truthful. If we believe the original manuscripts were inerrant, then we can move on to the second part of the continuum with the belief that the scribes who got the first autographs for copying got copies that were pure, i.e., were superintended by the Holy Spirit. (This author believes the original autographs were inerrant.)

The time and activity span represented by Section B on the larger continuum represents that period in which the biblical scribes were busy copying the original autographs and subsequent copies of the original manuscripts. The kind of questions that are asked about the work of carrying the Word of God forward from its origination to the subsequent generations are illustrated by the following: (a) Did subsequent scribes omit (intentionally or unintentionally) materials contained in the original manuscripts from the newer copies?; (b) Did subsequent scribes add (intentionally/unintentionally) materials to the manuscripts they received and were asked to copy?; (c) Were

there phrases, words, jots/tittles, tenses, and other grammatically important alterations made during the copying processes?; and (d) Are there many known "errors" in the copies of the manuscripts we possess in the archives today? The universal answer that is heard from orthodox, neo-orthodox, and liberal scholars is, "Yes," to all four of the questions posed above.

Illustrations of such problems are readily acknowledged in the marginal notes of most modern translations. The following are a few examples (from hundreds of possible ones) found in the notes of the New American Standard Bible, a translation that strives to remain faithful to the original Hebrew and Greek texts:

(A) II Samuel 10:18 reads, "...and David killed 700 charioteers of the Arameans and 40,000 horsemen..." The parallel account in I Chronicles 19:18 reads, "...and David killed of the Arameans 7,000 charioteers and 40,000 foot soldiers..."

(B) As one is reading Mark 16 and comes to verse 9, he or she will find the following marginal note: "Some of the oldest manuscripts do not contain vv. 9-20."

(C) While reading John 8:16 we find, "But even if I do judge,

My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and *He* who sent me." Next to the word *He* is a note that says, "Many ancient manuscripts read, 'the Father,'" an alternative to *He*.

Given these realities—there are numerous "errors" in the subsequent scribal manuscripts—what is one to do when he or she moves on to Section C of the continuum that concerns itself with the modern times and the fidelity of Scripture? Liberals are simply confirmed in their negative attitudes toward the Scripture, as are those who are neo-orthodox. This "confession to error" justifies their original pre-suppositions regarding Scripture—they never wanted it to be authoritative in the first place.

How does an orthodox Christian respond to her or his opponent's objections? To answer this, let us ask two additional questions: (a) Is there any evidence that any of the additions or deletions made by the scribes to the original autographs *added anything of substance or removed anything of substance* from the original autographs?; and (b) Is there any evidence that any of the errors made over the centuries of copying had any impact upon the *substance of the special*

*revelation*—was the view of God’s nature altered, was the view of man’s nature altered, was the biblical view of the world altered, or *was any doctrine of the Word* altered? The answer to these very important questions is a resounding, “NO!” Even liberal and neo-orthodox opponents of the inerrancy doctrine have not been able to demonstrate that a single negative consequence has resulted from the inadvertent or intended alterations to the original autographs. As importantly, none of the known alterations or errors are in areas of doctrinal substance. Finally, there is much reason to believe that God has protected the original autographs from serious or debilitating consequences, even while He allowed the realities of our human finitude to be exposed in such a critical area. (This exposes, in a new way, the critical role of *faith* in our lives and its underlying presuppositions.)

So orthodox Christians are able to affirm the inerrancy of Scripture—no deviations from the original doctrinal truths of Scripture, no errors in the biblically-derived world and life view, and no errors in its communication that affect our understanding of God’s will for mankind are detectable in the

Word of God. The Bible’s “inerrancy,” “infallibility,” “fidelity to truth,” and “full authority” are terms the author uses synonymously. The reader will have to use his or her own judgment as to whether or not they can do the same thing or if they need to select a particular term to communicate their personal thoughts on the subject.

### The “Perspicuity” of Scripture

Another very “tough nut to crack” is the charge: it is well and good to discuss the *sufficiency*, *necessity*, and *authority* of Scripture, but the big problem is the *perspicuity* of the Word—the Bible is not clear; the Bible is difficult to interpret. This involves the issue of hermeneutics—the art and science of biblical interpretation. How painful it is to hear someone say, “I am too orthodox! We simply disagree on our interpretation of the Bible.” What will be said in this treatise will not solve this problem, but four things can help us sort through such difficulties.

First, those of us who believe that the Bible is internally consistent and non-contradictory should follow the prescription of our Reformational forefathers and adopt the practice of *allowing the Bible to speak to the Bible*.

What is meant by this is that we should examine the meaning of a particular passage of Scripture in the light of all the other passages of Scripture that speak to the same subject. This allows Scripture to cast its light upon the Scripture—a truly wholesome practice.

Second, we should *allow the “simple” passages (truths) of Scripture to speak first*, and build the harder doctrines upon them. Or, putting it another way, let the easier passages of Scripture enlighten the harder or more obscure passages. The simple components of any physical or intellectual operation are always the building blocks of more advanced and complex systems of mechanics or thoughts. This understanding of how the world works also works well with the hermeneutical issues.

Third, whenever possible, *bring at least three passages of Scripture to bear* on any pronouncement of truth in the areas involving faith and learning. This simple principle will cause us all to be quiet more often than we might imagine. It is embarrassing to discover how often our presumed beliefs will break down under this simple procedure.

Finally, what has the church’s *tradition* been with regard to an issue that may be under investigation? Those of us who come from the “protesting” side of the Reformation may be guilty of “throwing out the baby with the dirty bath water” on some occasions regarding tradition. Scripture is certainly to be held in much higher regard than any tradition started by humans, but when “new” understandings appear on the scene to challenge old doctrines or understandings, be careful. Be good Bereans (Acts 17:11). They “...examined the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.” Every neo-orthodox idea begins with a challenge to the old interpretation. Nevertheless, tradition is right far more often than it is wrong.

### Conclusion

Any defense of the Bible’s full fidelity to God’s revealed purposes that rests its case exclusively on the arguments pertaining to the Scripture’s “inerrancy,” “infallibility,” or “full authority” will no longer suffice. The theological taxidermists have found too many ways to agree with our historic words, while restuffing them with “new” meaning. The

new line of defense must be broadened by defending the flanks of “inerrancy” through the addition of the bulwarks of *sufficiency*, *necessity*, and *perspicuity*.

If the Bible is not *sufficient* in and of itself to provide us with all the necessary and appropriate truth whereby Christ’s mind can be formed in us, to the extent that God has ordained it, then the *authority* of Scripture is incomplete and the Bible is dependent upon other authoritative sources of truth. Scripture **does not** acknowledge any other such source of truth.

Furthermore, if Scripture is not the singularly *necessary* resource given to us by God and used by the Holy Spirit to transform and renovate our hearts (seat and core of the intellect, desires, and will) into the likeness of Christ, then there must be other resources that He uses. God has given us no special revelation regarding any other such source of help. God does by His providence, however: (a) direct our paths; (b) test our spirits; and (c) confirm His truths in our lives. But He uses His Word, exclusively, to teach us His propositionally-revealed truth and its accompanying and governing presuppositions.

Finally, if we are truly unable to affirm the *perspicuity* of God’s Word, then the reliability of God’s Word is called into serious question. There is a profound difference between affirming the biblical pronouncement that some things in Scripture are hard to understand (II Peter 3:14-16) and stating that the Bible is not clear or that it is ambiguous. The doctrines of God’s foreknowledge, foreordination, election, and predestination, for example, are all attested to by many Christians as being hard to understand, but Scripture talks of them. On the other hand, God has never revealed why some people are called “the elect” and others are not. There is the knowledge God has given us, and there is the inscrutable mystery God has reserved for Himself (Deuteronomy 29:29). We all need to work hard to comprehend rightly what is hard to understand. Never, however, should the child of God declare God’s Word to be unclear. Nor is logic the way out of our need for the Spirit’s guidance and help, for logic is a fool’s tool when it is used to try and cross over the God-ordained chasm of mystery into human-generated truth.

Orthodoxy can only be maintained through the efforts of

the Holy Spirit, but He will work in and through Christ’s people as they confront the challenge put before them by Christ’s enemies. The author, for one, will continue the fight for the absolute integrity of God’s Word by raising and articulating the case for **S.N.A.P.**

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Those interested in an in-depth look at the role of presuppositions in our thinking should read the article “Relativistic Synthesis: Thwarting The Mind Of Christ” by Richard Chewing in the October 1997 issue of the *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business*, with particular attention being paid to the first major section, “Proposition #1: All Thinking Is Inherently Presuppositional In Character,” along with its accompanying footnotes.

<sup>2</sup>The two best works of Aquinas, “Summa contra Gentiles” and “Summa Theologiae,” contain a number of references that support the outline of Aquinas’ position as described above. His work opened the door to the proposition that reason could and sometimes should govern faith. Aquinas did, however, assert that should clear (a future issue regarding *perspicuity* that this treatise will visit later) “special revelation” and “natural revelation” contradict one another, then “special revelation” should be allowed to govern any conclusions.

<sup>3</sup>Gordon Clark’s book, *Religion, Reason, and Revelation* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1961), sets forth four concepts regarding the relationship between: (a) faith and reason; (b) faith without reason; (c) reason without faith (to Clark, an impossible absurdity); and (d) reason and faith. He sides with the Augustinian position of faith and reason and rejects the Aquinian position of reason and faith because of a number of logical flaws he identifies in its presuppositions.

<sup>4</sup>The arguments set forth against cloning in this paragraph are unquestionably too shallow to carry the debate to its proper conclusion (space in this treatise does not allow for its full development), but the substance set forth in the paragraph does demonstrate how a

conclusive argument could be structured from biblical principles to address issues of human endeavors that were not directly addressed in the days when the Scriptures were written. Surely the salvation of our children is foremost in the minds of parents who are themselves the children of God. I know I have rested on God’s covenant promises regarding the having and rearing of my children. To not be concerned with the salvation of our children is to make a mockery of other biblical revelations like Matthew 16:26, “For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul?”

<sup>5</sup>The dates in the continuum are to be understood as approximations, as no one is certain as to the exact dates of either Moses’ life or of his instruction for the writing of the early autographs of Scripture.

**JBIB**