

SESSION ONE

*DOCTRINE OF  
THE BIBLE*

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### I. STATE OF THE BIBLE

- A. American Bible Society Study 2021 <sup>1</sup>
- B. Gallup Poll, 2022 <sup>2</sup>

### II. FOUNDATIONAL VIEWS OF THE BIBLE

- A. Fellowship Bible Church Position.
  - 1. “We believe that the Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments are verbally inspired by God, in whole and in part, error-free in the original writings and the supreme authority of faith and practice for the believer in Jesus Christ.”
- B. Scriptures: Inspired authoritative text without error.
- C. Doctrine of Scripture should be grounded in our Doctrine of God.
- D. **Sola Scriptura** <sup>3</sup> (Scripture alone. Bible has the final say in all matters it addresses. Scripture has the final authority to judge doctrine, but not the only resource) .. not Solo Scriptura (Just me and my Bible; Subjects theology to the whims of subjectivism and is divisive because there is no room for theological disagreements.)
- E. **Psalms 119 shows us what to believe, what to feel, and what to do with the Word of God.** (Out of 176 verses – all but three speak of the word of God; includes many synonyms for the Word of God).
- F. **Scripture is the Word of God** (not “contains” or “becomes”).

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.barna.com/research/sotb-2021/>.

<sup>2</sup> Gallup Poll, 2022, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/394262/fewer-bible-literal-word-god.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> Lawson Murray, *Sola Scriptura or Solo Scriptura?* Jump into the Word; Bible Engagement Blog, 4/21/2020, <https://www.jumpintotheword.com/2020/04/21/sola-scriptura-or-solo-scriptura/>.

### III. **THE BIBLE:** God's Revelation to Us

#### A. **Revelation Defined**

1. "To unveil" or "to disclose" or "to make something known previously secret." <sup>4 5</sup>
2. Infers "content"
  - a. God's unveiling or disclosing of Himself to mankind.
  - b. God is communicating His message to man.
  - c. Revelation may occur in a single, instantaneous act, or it may extend over a long period of time. This revelation may be perceived by man in various degrees of fullness.
  - d. Only through God's revelation of Himself can there be accurate and propositional statements about Him. He discloses truth about Himself that man would otherwise not know.

#### B. **Two Types of Revelation**

1. General (unwritten) Revelation
  - a. God is revealing Himself in creation (nature), history, and conscience.
  - b. "All that man knows intuitively is revealed to him." He knows through his intellect, which is the "workmanship of God." <sup>6</sup>
  - c. Limited value: "General revelation can reveal the existence of God; suggest some of His attributes (power, majesty, glory, goodness), but it cannot save. This requires further 'special revelation.'" <sup>7</sup>
  - d. Purpose: To provide mankind with sufficient light about God to make him responsible.
  - e. All mankind, all places, all times, all cultures have equal access to General Revelation.
  - f. Types of General Revelation
    1. In Creation (Nature)
      - a. God reveals Himself in the material creation (cosmos, human body, etc.)

<sup>4</sup> Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages. (Romans 16:25, ESV)

<sup>5</sup> For my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel. (Luke 2:30-32, ESV)

<sup>6</sup> William GT Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, Third Edition, Alan W. Gomes (ed), (Phillipsburg, NJ, P&R Publishing, 2003), 85.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Cupp, "Bibliology" in *We Believe*, Fellowship Bible Church, 2013.

- b. Psalms 19:1-6 <sup>8</sup>
    - vs 2: Continuous—“day to day” and “night to night”
    - vs 3: Wordless—“no speech, nor are there words”
    - vs 4: Worldwide—“all the earth” and “end of the world”
  - c. Romans 1:18-21 <sup>9</sup>, Job 12:7-9 <sup>10</sup>, Ps 8:1-3 <sup>11</sup>, Other. <sup>12</sup>
2. In History <sup>13</sup>
    - a. God’s fingerprints are everywhere.
    - b. Providential control of human history <sup>14</sup>
  3. In Conscience <sup>15</sup>
    - a. God has placed intuitional knowledge of Himself inside the hearts of a man.
    - b. Moral law is built within us. You just know when something is not right.
  4. In Beauty and Music <sup>16</sup>

<sup>8</sup> The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. <sup>2</sup> Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. <sup>3</sup> There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. <sup>4</sup> Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun, <sup>5</sup> which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy. <sup>6</sup> Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat. (Psalms 19:1-6, ESV)

<sup>9</sup> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. <sup>19</sup> For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. <sup>21</sup> For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. (Romans 1:18-21, ESV)

<sup>10</sup> But ask the beasts, and they will teach you; the birds of the heavens, and they will tell you; <sup>8</sup> or the bushes of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. <sup>9</sup> Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? (Job 12:7-9, ESV)

<sup>11</sup> O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. <sup>2</sup> Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger. <sup>3</sup> When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place (Psalms 8:1-3, ESV)

<sup>12</sup> Isaiah 40:12-14, 26; Acts 14:15-17; Col 1:16-17; Psalms 97:6.

<sup>13</sup> The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. <sup>25</sup> And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. <sup>26</sup> From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. <sup>27</sup> God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. (Acts 17:24-27, NIV)

<sup>14</sup> ‘The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of people.’ (Daniel 4:17, NIV)

<sup>15</sup> For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. <sup>15</sup> They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them <sup>16</sup> on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. (Romans 2:14-16, ESV)

<sup>16</sup> For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10, NIV)

## 2. Special Revelation

- a. God makes Himself specifically known to specific people at special times.
- b. God has “opened the curtain more fully.”
- c. God is revealing Himself through Christ and the Scriptures.<sup>17 18</sup>
- d. The pinnacle of God’s revelation is the unveiling of Himself through Christ.<sup>19 20</sup>
- e. Two types of Special Revelation
  1. Jesus Christ (Living Word)
  2. The Scriptures (Written Word)<sup>21</sup>
  3. Combination of Living Word and Written Word (see “The Word of God: Two Living Relations” in Appendix A).
    - a. The Fullness of Revelation occurs when Living and Written Words combine.

## IV. **THE BIBLE:** God’s Inspired Word to Us

### A. Inspiration Defined

1. Method by which content becomes written revelation: Inspiration preserves and guarantees the accuracy of the revelation of God; otherwise the revelation of God may come into question.
2. “The Holy Spirit’s superintending over the writers so that while writing according to their own styles and personalities, the result was God’s Word written – authoritative, trustworthy, and free from error in the original autographs.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. (Hebrews 1:1-2, ESV)

<sup>18</sup> Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” <sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?” (John 14:8-9, ESV)

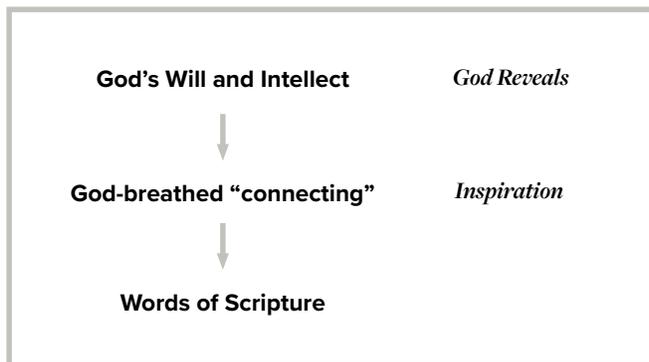
<sup>19</sup> No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known. (John 1:18, ESV)

<sup>20</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. (Col 1:15, ESV)

<sup>21</sup> The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; <sup>8</sup> the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; <sup>9</sup> the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. <sup>10</sup> More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. <sup>11</sup> Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. <sup>12</sup> Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults. <sup>13</sup> Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression. <sup>14</sup> Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. (Psalms 19:7-20, ESV)

<sup>22</sup> Paul P. Enns, *Moody Handbook of Theology*, 161.

3. "Inspiration is not sanctification. It is the operation of the Holy Spirit upon the human mind for the purpose of conveying religious truth to mankind."<sup>23</sup>
4. "The influence of the Holy Spirit upon a human person whereby he is infallibly moved and guided in all his statements while under this influence."<sup>24</sup>
5. Inspiration extends to the original text (autographs; autographa). "Copies and translations of the Bible do not possess original inspiration, but they have a derived inspiration insofar as they are faithful copies of the autographs."<sup>25</sup>
6. God is the source. Scripture is inspired by God—not the apostles or prophets.
7. Inspiration connects the intellect and will of God to the Words of Scripture. You are connecting what is coming from God (revelation or content) as the authority to the Words of Scripture.
8. The idea is that God divinely influenced the human authors of the Bible in such a way that what they recorded was the exact Word of God. "Inspiration" means "God-breathed." This means that the Bible truly is the Word of God.
9. "Spirit-moved men wrote God-breathed words that are divinely authoritative for Christian faith and practice."<sup>26</sup>
10. Everything flows from Inspiration.



<sup>23</sup> William GT Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, Third Edition, Alan W. Gomes (ed), (Phillipsburg, NJ, P&R Publishing, 2003), 98.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>25</sup> Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, "The Character of the Bible" in *From God to Us, How we got our Bibles*, (Chicago, Moody Publishers, 2012), 19.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

11. See Primary Biblical Texts on Inspiration (Appendix B).
12. See Proofs of Inspiration (Appendix C). God's Will and Intellect  
God reveals God-breathed "connecting" inspiration words of  
Scripture

## **B. The Divine Flow of Inspiration**

1. Divine Causality—Prophetic Agency—Written Authority.<sup>27</sup>
  - a. Divine Causality
    1. God revealed, and spokespersons of God recorded the truths that God revealed. God is the ultimate source and original cause of Biblical truth. This is the most fundamental factor.
  - b. Prophetic Agency
    1. The words the prophets wrote were the Words of God, but also the words of humans. Men used their own literary styles and personalities to convey God's Words. They were not automatons.
    2. Men were the immediate cause, but God was the ultimate cause.
    3. The Bible did not originate from mankind, representing our understanding of the divine, but rather from God to us.
  - c. Written Authority
    1. Scriptures are the final word on all matters of morals, doctrines, theology, and ethics.

## **C. Six Basic Elements to Inspiration**<sup>28</sup>

- a. The Bible has Divine origin.
- b. The Bible came through human agency.
- c. The Bible is a written authority.
- d. The Bible's authority is in the autographs.
- e. The Bible's original text is inerrant.
- f. The Bible has final authority.

<sup>27</sup> Geisler and Nix, 17-18.

<sup>28</sup> Cupp, 2013.

#### D. Biblical View of Inspiration

1. Verbal, Plenary Inspiration
  - a. Verbal—the very words themselves (not just ideas) of Scripture; every single word in the Scripture is the exact Word of God.
  - b. Plenary - complete or full; all of Scripture (2 Tim 3:16-17); extends to all parts and subject matters of Scripture (not just parts)
    1. God used the intellect, skills, and personalities of fallible men to write down what was divine and infallible (concurative operation).<sup>29</sup>
    2. Whole (Matt 5:17, 2 Tim 3:16), parts (John 12:14-16), words (Matt 4:4), letters (Matt 5:18).
    3. “They dared not to announce anything of their own, and obediently followed the spirit as their guide, who ruled in their mouth as in his whole sanctuary.”<sup>30</sup>
    4. When the authors wrote they “breathed-out” the words of God. In this scenario, the writings maintain the writer’s personalities. Think how many wrote differently, but the words are exactly God’s words.

#### E. Faulty views of Inspiration

1. An artist who develops insight into their next work of art
2. A speaker or teacher who “inspires” their audience
3. Modernist view - believes people (i.e. Paul, Moses, Jesus) had superior insight in the matters of God for their day and time, but that we are better today.
4. See *False Views of Inspiration* (Appendix D).

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#### *How could any authoritative book be authored by such lowly people?*

*“The fact that inspiration is instruction, not sanctification, and that revelation is an objective information from God which does not depend on subjective characteristics in the person chosen as the medium of communication explains how it is that a volume containing the most profound views of God and man that have yet been published on earth could have been produced among a people comparatively low in knowledge, civilization and culture.”<sup>31</sup>*

<sup>29</sup> Kevin DeYoung, *Taking God At His Word*, (Wheaton, IL, Crossway, 2014), 37.

<sup>30</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1541, Book 1, Chapter 7, Section 4.

<sup>31</sup> William GT Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, Third Edition, Alan W. Gomes (ed), (Phillipsburg, NJ, P&R Publishing, 2003), 99.

## V. **THE BIBLE:** God's Authoritative Word to Us

### A. **Authority Defined**

1. "Primary authority is that of truth itself."<sup>32</sup>
2. A result of God's revelation and inspiration to us
3. "Having the Bible as the source of your worldview... and trusting God to provide the answers to the big questions in life."<sup>33</sup>
4. The last word always goes to the Word of God—not science, not human experience, not church councils.
5. The Bible provides the answer.
6. What the Bible says—God says.
7. The Scriptures have the authority to command our conscience and bind our belief.<sup>34</sup>
8. God's Word is enough.
9. Joshua 1:8 should not leave your mind.<sup>35</sup>

### B. **The Scripture's Authority Conveys its Sufficiency**

1. Scripture contains everything we need for knowledge of salvation and godly living.
2. "Scripture is clear enough to make us responsible for carrying out our present responsibilities to God."<sup>36</sup>
3. "It takes away any excuses for disobedience. No one can say God has not revealed enough for us to be saved or to live a life pleasing to him."<sup>37</sup> We do not need to add or subtract from it.
4. Supports Sola Scriptura (not Solo Scriptura); tradition does not have equal say to the Scriptures.
5. We do not add to or subtract from it. (Rev 22:18-19; Deut 4:2, 12:32) We do not try to make it better or change to align with our views and we do not remove portions if culture demands.
6. "The sacred and divinely inspired Scriptures are sufficient for the exposition of the truth."<sup>38</sup>

<sup>32</sup> C.H. Dodd, *The Authority of the Bible*, Revised Edition, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960), 31.

<sup>33</sup> Josh McDowell, "What is Biblical Authority and Why is it so Critical Today? Interview with Josh McDowell," in SeanMcDowell.org, 8/15/16, <https://seanmcdowell.org/blog/what-is-biblical-authority-and-why-is-it-so-critical-for-the-church-today-interview-with-josh-mcdowell>.

<sup>34</sup> Kevin Lewis, *Elenctic Theology: Bibliology: Contemporary Challenges to Scripture, Part 1*, The Institute for Theology & Law, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZe\\_ola-66j8&list=PLqQBFAFqyVdQ1u-c8ENykhSDpkilIBTrdr&index=2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZe_ola-66j8&list=PLqQBFAFqyVdQ1u-c8ENykhSDpkilIBTrdr&index=2).

<sup>35</sup> Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; mediate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. (Joshua 1:8; NIV)

<sup>36</sup> John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2010, 226.

<sup>37</sup> Kevin DeYoung, *Taking God At His Word*, (Wheaton, IL, Crossway, 2014), 45.

<sup>38</sup> Athanasius, "Against the Heathen," Part 1, 1, 3. Accessed on 7/23/2025, from New Advent, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2801.htm>.

7. The biblical attribute most quickly doubted by believers (i.e. If only we could have something more than the Scripture; all would be better).
8. God's Word is final.

## VI. **THE BIBLE:** God's Inerrant Word to Us

### A. **Inerrancy Defined**

1. "When all the facts are known, the Scriptures in their original autographs and properly interpreted will be shown to be wholly true in everything they affirm, whether that has to do with doctrine or morality or with the social, physical, or life sciences."<sup>39</sup>

### B. **Copies: Inerrancy extends as long as it has been faithfully copied, translated, and passed down.**

### C. **"There is an internal, philosophical, and theological coherence and logic to inerrancy."**<sup>40</sup>

### D. **"Scripture did not come from the will of man; it came from God and if it is God's Word, then it must all be true, for in Him, there can be no error or deceit."**<sup>41</sup>

### E. **"The Bible makes no mistakes, can be understood, cannot be overturned, and is the most important word in your life, the most relevant thing you can read each day."**<sup>42</sup>

### F. **Logic of Inerrancy**<sup>43</sup>

1. God cannot err.
2. The Bible is God's Word.
3. Therefore, the Bible cannot err.

<sup>39</sup> Paul Feinberg, "The Meaning of Inerrancy," *Inerrancy*, Norman Geisler, (ed), (Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan, 1980), 294.

<sup>40</sup> Robert Cupp, "Bibliology" in *We Believe*, Fellowship Bible Church, 2013.

<sup>41</sup> DeYoung, 39.

<sup>42</sup> DeYoung, 16.

<sup>43</sup> Cupp, 2013.

### G. Ryrie's Logic of Inerrancy <sup>44</sup>

1. God is true.
2. Scripture is "breathed-out" by God.
3. Therefore, Scriptures are true.

"Finding a half-way house where some things in the Bible are true and other things (as we have judged them) are not is an impossibility." <sup>45</sup>

### H. Reasons to believe in Inerrancy <sup>46</sup>

1. God's character demands inerrancy. <sup>47</sup>
2. The Bible teaches inerrancy. <sup>48</sup>
3. Jesus affirms inerrancy. <sup>49</sup>
4. The Church over history has believed in inerrancy.

### I. Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy <sup>50</sup>

*"We affirm that a confession of the full authority, infallibility, and inerrancy of Scripture is vital to a sound understanding of the whole of the Christian faith. We further affirm that such confession should lead to increasing conformity to the image of Christ. We deny that such confession is necessary for salvation. However, we further deny that inerrancy can be rejected without grave consequences, both to the individual and to the Church."* <sup>51</sup>

– Chicago Statement of Biblical Inerrancy.

<sup>44</sup> Charles Ryrie as quoted by Robert Cupp, "Bibliology" in *We Believe*, Fellowship Bible Church, 2013.

<sup>45</sup> DeYoung, 39.

<sup>46</sup> Cupp, 38.

<sup>47</sup> John 17:17, Psalms 119:160, Proverbs 30:5, Titus 1:2.

<sup>48</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16, 1 Thessalonians 2:13, 2 Peter 1:21.

<sup>49</sup> Matthew 4:1-11; 22:23-33; 5:17-18.

<sup>50</sup> International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy*, 1978, [https://library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/ICBL\\_1.pdf](https://library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/ICBL_1.pdf).

<sup>51</sup> International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy*, Article XIX, 1978, [https://library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/ICBL\\_1.pdf](https://library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/ICBL_1.pdf).

“I find the whole American evangelical fixation on inerrancy and its bitter infighting so weird because outside of American evangelical subculture, among the global churches, no one treats inerrancy as the number one issue that separates the good guys from the bad guys.”<sup>52</sup>

– MICHAEL BIRD

## VII. SUMMARY

### A. Key concepts in the topics of Revelation, Inspiration Authority, and Inerrancy<sup>53</sup>

1. God electively revealed Himself to us through general and special revelation.
2. God-breathed Inspiration connected His will and intellect to the words of Scripture.
3. God’s Inspiration extends to both *verbal* (each word in every verse) and *plenary* (all Scripture).
4. The authoritative aspect of the Scripture means God Himself provided all the content.
5. Inerrancy means without any error or perfectly written.
6. Infallibility means the Scriptures are completely trustworthy, dependable and reliable.

<sup>52</sup> Michael F Bird, “What Is the Inerrancy Debate and How Should We Think about It?” *ZA Blog*, Oct 12, 2021, <https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/what-is-the-inerrancy-debate-and-how-should-we-think-about-it>

<sup>53</sup> Harold Wilmington, [https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1054&context=questions\\_101](https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1054&context=questions_101).

## VIII. STUDY QUESTIONS

- A. Explain in your own words the difference between general revelation and special revelation. List one or two Scripture verses that help understand each definition.
  
- B. Explain the concept of Biblical inspiration. Why is this important in discussing the reliability of Scripture?
  
- C. If the Bible is authoritative over our lives, how does it change the way we live?
  
- D. How would you reconcile the doctrine of inerrancy with our English Bible that has been translated from the original languages?
  
- E. What is the Christian response to those who argue that God has not revealed Himself to those in remote places?

Explain this response as part of question E.

*If you reject what you have, do you get more light?*

*If you accept what you have, will you receive more light?*

*Do you desire more? What would God do?* <sup>54</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Robert Cupp, "Bibliology" in *We Believe*, Fellowship Bible Church, 2013.

