

## THE WORD OF GOD

Truth – the way things really are

- **John 14:6** – “I am the Truth”
- **John 1:14 & 17** – grace AND truth
- **John 17:17** – Sanctify in the truth
- **Ephesians 6:14** – “gird your loins with truth”

If there is Truth, then my search for it will lead to an accurate understanding of reality and my reasoning will have grounds on which to validate various other truth claims.

**Epistemology** (theory of knowledge) addresses the nature of both correct reasoning in relation to truth and the process of knowing what is true.



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1. The Bifurcation of Truth

- Platonic Dualism – two “realms” of truth.
- This is what Francis Schaeffer calls a “two-story” view of reality:
  - Upper Story
  - Lower Story
- Plato: **Form** over **Matter**
- Aquinas: **Grace** over **Nature**
- Enlightenment: **Romanticism (religion and the humanities)** over **Enlightenment (science and reason)**
- Descartes: **Mind (spirit, thought, emotion, will)** over **Matter (a mechanical, deterministic machine)**



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Current view of truth:

- Upper Story: Values, Private Sphere  
(Personal Preferences, Nonrational, Noncognitive, Religion)
- Lower Story: Facts, Public Sphere  
(Scientific Knowledge, Rational, Verifiable, Science)

“Human reason was regarded as perfectly competent on its own for understanding the state, society, economics, philosophy—in fact, everything outside of theology. Thus the Christian mind itself began to be split. God’s Word was limited to the upper story, but was deemed irrelevant and unnecessary in directing the lower story.” (Pearcey)

A man of divided allegiance is unstable (**James 1:8**)



## THE WORD OF GOD

The Written Word of God: All Truth

**Renaissance (14<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup>) – humanism reigns**

- “the genius of man ... the unique and extraordinary ability of the human mind”
- Appraise ideas through a combination of reasoning and empirical evidence.



**Reformation (1517–1648) – Sola Scriptura**

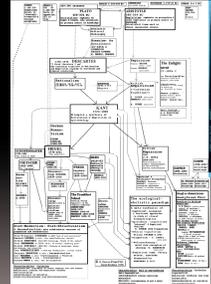
- Inspiration
- Divine Authority
- Clarity
- Efficacy
- Sufficiency – The Bible contains everything to obtain salvation.





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The Written Word of God: All Truth




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The Written Word of God: All Truth

2. The erosion of biblical Truth.

- Historically, the Bible was held to be God’s revelation of His will for mankind – **Revelation over Reason**
- Human reason was admitted to be fallible, the Bible was held to be infallible (or inerrant).
- **Julius Wellhausen** – held an uncompromisingly secular approach to the Bible – **Biblical Criticism**.
  - **Documentary Hypothesis** – the TORAH had its origin in a redaction of four originally independent texts dating from several centuries after the time of Moses.
    - Yehezkel Kaufmann – *Toledot HaEmunah Ha Yisraelit* (The Religion of Israel)
- **Religious Liberalism – Reason over Revelation**
  - Man’s reasoning ability, acting alone, was sufficient to answer the philosophical questions of life without Divine help.



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2. Truth – what has happened to it?

- Historically: The Bible was held to be God’s revelation of His will for mankind: **revelation over reason**
- Human reason was admitted to be fallible, the Bible was held to be infallible (or inerrant).
- Julius Wellhausen** – Uncompromisingly secular approach to the Bible.
  - Documentary hypothesis** – the Torah had its origins in a redaction of four originally independent texts dating from several centuries after the time of Moses.
    - Yehezkel Kaufmann – *Toledot HaEminah HaYisraelit (The Religion of Israel)*
- Religious liberalism – **reason over revelation**.
  - Man’s reasoning ability was sufficient to answer the philosophical questions of life without help from revelation

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3. Liberal (Natural) Theology

- Based on reason and ordinary experience (*a posteriori*), not scripture and religious experience (*a priori*)

- Arose as a result of the rationalism and experimentalism of the philosophers and scientists.
- It basically states that whatever does not agree with reason and science is to be questioned or rejected. (**reason over revelation**)
  - Most students leaving universities today are skeptics – question everything, believe nothing.
- As a result, liberal theology has rejected the historicity and scientific claims of the Special Revelation (the Word).
  - “The Bible isn’t a history book or a scientific textbook”

- The orthodox view of scripture is that it is a Special revelation of the way things really are (**revelation over reason**)
- It is **Total Truth**

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4. Textual Validation

- How could one verify or validate the Truth claims of a religious text?
- All religious texts, while describing how one gains access to “God” (or becomes God) also intersect two other disciplines: history and science.
- The Bible:
  - Soteriology – salvation through Jesus
  - History – man in and through time
  - Science – insights into the natural world (the creation account)

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Access to God     | Various truth claims concerning access to God could be validated and substantiated (notice: not “proved”) based on the accuracy of its scientific and historical mentionings. |
| Scientific Claims |   |
| Historicity       |   |

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Why Liberal Theology as a background?

- The Bible claims to be God’s inspired revelation of **Total Truth** to man.
- Therefore if it is Total Truth, it must be accurate (true) when it touches on historic events and scientific insights.
- More importantly, if it is not verifiable through external sources (history and science) then the truth claims concerning salvation **are not verifiable**.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Soteriology (or Theology) was verifiable by Biblical History and Scientific Revelation | Soteriology (or Theology)                |
|  | Secular History and Naturalistic Science |

- The fatal flaw in *Liberal Theology* is that it accepts as true the bifurcation of truth: It accepts a naturalistic account of science and history (lower story) while trying to find meaning and value in theology (upper story)
- It views the scriptures from a “salvation first” perspective.

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- The Bible:
  - Verification through history and science (archaeology):
    - Places: Eglon, Gath, Azekah, Libnah, Mareshah, Gezer, Taanach, Megiddo, Gaillee, Shachem, Samaria, Beth Shemesh, Beth Shean, Mizpah, Jerico, Lachish, Hazor, etc...
    - Events: Gibeon pool, Hezekiah tunnel under Jerusalem, walls of Jericho, siege ramp of Sennacherib, pool of Siloam, Shechem temple, Nehemiah’s wall, “Goliath” ostracon, etc...
- Other Holy Texts:
  - The book of Mormon:
    - Nephtes and Lamanites existed in the Americas from about 600 BC to AD 400. (no verification has ever been found)
    - The rise and fall of the Jaredite nation at the time of the Tower of Babel. (no verification has ever been found)
    - Donkey, bull, calf, cow, horse, ox, sheep, swine, goat, elephant, wheat, barley, silk, steel, bellows, brass, breast plates, iron, ore (mining), plows, chariots, etc... (did not exist in the Americas)

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5. Validated by History.

- History is similar to origin science in its goal of establishing the probability of singular events from the past.
- In Law, the trustworthiness of a witness is necessarily an important point at issue if his testimony is to be received.
  - Time and place are crucial.
  - “The verification process of the historical method is legal in nature in that the investigation involves establishing the truth or falsehood of eyewitness accounts.” (Geisler, *UF*)
- The Bible is based on historical evidence that can be tested and found to be true or to be false.
  - Luke 3:1-2** – These events are open to examination.

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### Orthodox View on Scriptures:

"We cannot stand and look over the apostles' shoulders, correcting their work. It is they who stand looking over our shoulders, correcting our work." (Karl Barth)

"When a professor behind a desk ... makes a pronouncement that differs from what Paul or Peter or James or John has said, then reject it, for that professor is some thousands of miles and some two thousand years too far away to make an adequate and proper judgment." (Ray C. Stedman)



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Conclusion: The trustworthiness of the revelation is predicated on the accuracy of external verification from history and science.

Remove these and there is no way to validate the truth claims.

"I myself have never encountered an alleged contradiction in the Bible which could not be cleared up by the use of the original languages of the Scriptures and/or by the use of accepted principles of literary and historical interpretation."

"I believe that the Bible is completely, entirely and verbally the word of God. I refuse to stand above and criticize it; I insist rather, on standing below it and letting it criticize me."

*Damned Through The Church* by John Warwick Montgomery (holds nine earned degrees in philosophy, theology, and law, and is the author of over forty books.)

