



# The EUCON Beacon

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*Volume 1, Issue #1*

*Winter 2011*

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### Publishing Data

Published by: EUCON International College and School, Saipan, Northern Marianas Islands

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## THE EUCON BEACON

Christian Wei

The Reformers had a motto that is carved onto The Reformation Wall in Geneva. It is *Post Tenebras Lux*, translated *After Darkness, Light*. This phrase crystallized the hope and faith of the Reformers. This phrase became the war cry of the Protestant Reformation. This phrase is the true meaning of education.

The English word "education" derives from the Latin word *educere*, which means "to guide out of" or "to lead forth." Therefore, education is basically a discipline that the teacher uses to guide the students out of ignorance and leads forth to knowledge, or to lead students out of the darkness of truth and lead forth into the light of truth. Dr. Guenter E. Salter writes in the following way:

It [education] is axiomatic that one leads forth from an area of lesser to an area of greater desirability: from darkness to light, from bondage to liberty, from ignorance to knowledge, from confusion to clarity, from error to truth.<sup>1</sup>

True education, thus, is bringing people from the darkness into the light. True education emphasizes the knowledge of Jesus Christ. From this correlation any education that does not emphasize Christ, the truth, is not true education. Education separated from Christ trains young people to be highly intelligent and professional sinners. It is our duty as the children of God to be separated from the world in our standards, dress, music, and education. The foundation of true education must be Jesus Christ and His Word.

Luke 2:52 says, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." If Christ increased in these areas of development, should not we as His followers do the same? True education should not only be centered on Christ, but it must also practice these five "spheres of influence": Character Education, Academic Education, Social Education, Physical Education, and Spiritual Education. The foundation for everything is spiritual education. Without spiritual education all the others are a waste. What use is it for a man to gain character, academic, social, or physical education and lose his own soul? We must teach our students that the cultivation of their spiritual lives is what influences the other areas of education for Christ.

How do we increase our spiritual education then? We do so by returning to the Word of God. The Reformers emphasized *sola gracia, sola fide, sola scriptura*, "By grace alone, by faith alone, and by scripture alone." Our spiritual walk with the Lord is connected to our loyalty to His Word, and one of the ways we show our loyalty to the Word is by following the Great Commission as outlined in Matthew 28:18-20. We are commanded to "go to all nations and make disciples."

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<sup>1</sup>Guenter E. Salter, "No Other Foundation" in *Some Light on Christian Education*, ed. James W. Deunk (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1984), 7.

The command of “all nations” includes an area of the world that we here at EUCON have considered to be our calling since our beginning in 1998: the 10/40 window. The term “10/40 window” refers to nations between ten and forty degrees north of the equator. This strip of the world contains over seventy percent of the world’s population, yet in the last sixty years has only been exposed to less than two percent of missionary endeavors. Part of the reason why there is an unbalanced mission work in this area is because the majority of the sixty-three nations in the 10/40 window are opposed to Christian faith in one form or another.

The question then is how we reach these nations for Christ? One of the key answers is education. By using education as a tool, we can reach untold millions where missionary activity is otherwise restricted. Most of the nations opposed to missionaries are not opposed to education and the benefits it can bring. By using education we have the opportunity to spend hours with each student. Each school that is started is able to have an internal church or covert ministry gathering where believers can be strengthened. Education can be used to train national pastors and Christian educators to start their own schools in other parts of the 10/40 window.

EUCON’s vision is to train the future leaders, pastors, and preachers of the church of Christ. We have combined Education and Bible majors to prepare them for their calling of the Great Commission. Our Bible Department is the heart of our ministry and *The EUCON Beacon* is our way of spreading our ministry for the Body of Christ.

May God Bless You and Guide You  
*Sola Gracia, Sola Fide, Sola Scriptura*



#### About the Author:

The founder and President of EUCON, Dr. Christian Wei, was saved on September 10, 1978. In 1980, he was called to preach. In 1986, Dr. Wei graduated both from National Chung Hsin University majoring in History and the Orient Fundamental Bible College in Taiwan. He was ordained to preach by Dr. Bob Jones, Jr. at his graduation. In May of 1987, he received his M. A. in Theology from Bob Jones University. In May of 1992, he graduated from BJU with a Ph.D. in Theology. Later in May of 1997, he also received his Ed. D. in Education from La Salle University. His vision is to reach out to the 10/40 window, using education as the tool.

## TOLERANCE

Sean Sartler

"How can you possibly say that two-thirds of the entire world is mistaken in its beliefs about God? Isn't that the height of arrogance? How can you be so intolerant?"

In a society that seems to be drenched in religious pluralism and infused with the necessity to be "tolerant," it is not unusual to run into people who make the aforementioned statements. I have myself on many occasions been subject to such queries about intolerance. Many who buy in to the assumptions of religious pluralism are often making such comments. Many people in various cultural contexts assert that being a Christian religious exclusivist is necessarily intolerant. For many, it is unthinkable that just one particular religion could be correct and the others incorrect. How did we get here? At what point did religious pluralism become the unofficial politically correct doctrine? Furthermore, at what point did "intolerance" become one of the most heinous sins in many cultures?

My thesis is that Christian religious exclusivism is not only tolerant, but it is bound by Scripture to be tolerant. In looking at the issue of religious tolerance, we are going to need to look at the definitions of religious pluralism, diversity, and Christian religious exclusivism. I will also explore some of the theological/philosophical reasons for why the Christian religious exclusivist should be tolerant.

When dealing with the issue of religious pluralism, one must first define several terms. Often people use the term *pluralistic* as a way of describing a diverse world around them. For instance, Langerak in his essay on tolerance describes the diverse world he sees (multi-cultural/multi-religious) as pluralistic.<sup>1</sup> However, when we use the term *religious pluralism* rarely does it mean merely a diversity of religions. The term is instead used in either a philosophical or civil context which transcends mere diversity. When religious pluralism is used in the civic/political sphere, it refers to accepting attitudes toward such diversity. I find Netland is helpful in distinguishing between the different levels of civic religious pluralism. He divides civic religious pluralism into three different tiers:<sup>2</sup>

- a. Acceptance in a legal sense of the constitutional right of diverse religious traditions to exist in practice within a given area.

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<sup>1</sup>Mehdi Razavi, David Ambuel, *Philosophy, Religion, and the Question of Intolerance* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 118.

<sup>2</sup>Harold A. Netland, *Dissonant Voices* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1991), 305-7 (Reprint).

- b. Social acceptance of "religious others" to live in our societies, practicing their religious traditions in a respective/responsible manner (encouraging their full participation in the social, economic, cultural, and political context).
- c. Positive affirmation of religious diversity is something good and healthy for the individual or communal welfare. This goes beyond mere tolerance of religious diversity to a celebration of religious diversity as something positive.

In a philosophical/theological sense, religious pluralism refers to the concept in which all religions are seen to be in contact with the real or the ultimate. All religions are basically equally true and equally adequate ways of responding to the ultimate. Or in other words, they are all on equal epistemic footing. Therefore, no single religion can claim to be absolutely more morally true for all peoples, cultures, and all times.<sup>3</sup>

It has been commonly insinuated that those who do not endorse the philosophical/theological aspect of religious pluralism are blind to the diversity of belief around them. This is far from the truth; it is merely a "sleight of hand" with argumentation, and in fact, we can and should recognize diversity at a civil level. Furthermore, we can and should encourage "religious others" to take part in social and political life. However, my denial of philosophical pluralism does not mean I deny actual cultural diversity nor am I insensitive to issues in diversity. Another way to view diversity of religion is from a religious exclusivist viewpoint. Religious exclusivism (as far as Christianity is concerned) maintains "that the central claims of Christianity are true, and that where the claims of Christianity conflict with those of other religions the latter to be rejected as false. Christian exclusivists also characteristically hold that God has revealed himself definitively in the Bible and that Jesus Christ is the unique incarnation of God, the only Lord and Savior. Salvation is not to be found in the structures of other religious traditions."<sup>4</sup> Within orthodox Christianity Christ is seen as the only Redeemer (Jn 14:6, Jn 3:16, Acts 4:12) in a fallen world and every other religion is false at best. Exclusivism may be a theological/philosophical position, but it is not a civic/political position. One could embrace exclusivism and at the same time encourage others to engage in the social/political sphere. To not do so, to keep "religious others" out of the social/political sphere is exclusionism or marginalization.

After defining religious pluralism, the next most important thing to define is tolerance itself. Langerak argues that toleration traditionally meant enduring differences and that it has been a feature of left wing liberalism that has redefined toleration into "accepting differences."<sup>5</sup> If the pluralist argues that we need to be tolerant of the beliefs of "religious others" and they mean toleration in the sense of accepting their beliefs as corrected, good, and right, then obviously the religious exclusivist is not going to be able to hold to that form of toleration. But if we define toleration as enduring differences (a more traditional definition of tolerance), then the religious exclusivist would have a much easier time accepting this form of toleration. A religious pluralist cannot insist that toleration means accepting differences without running straight into moral relativism.

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<sup>3</sup>Netland, *Dissonant Voices*, 10.

<sup>4</sup>Netland, *Dissonant Voices*, 9.

<sup>5</sup>Razavi, *Philosophy*, 111-117.

Someone of a more militant “Christian” attitude might believe that a group of “religious others” like Muslims do not have a right to go to a mosque on Friday and say regular prayers (we should not endure their different belief). After all, he might reason, they are not worshiping the one true God, but an idol. The only proper course of action would be marginalization, if not forced conversion. I believe differently. I believe that the Bible calls us to toleration based on a very important concept: evangelism.

We should be tolerant of "religious others" on the basis of our desire for evangelism. This seems like an odd combination, that our desire to see others brought into the truth of Christianity and into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ should propel us to tolerate their false beliefs. What is important to note here is that I am specifically defining tolerance as enduring rather than accepting another's variant belief system. Furthermore, tolerance is not the goal, but rather a means by which evangelism, and the glorification of God are achieved. I used to work with a man named Mohammed. Mohammed was a Shiite Muslim. I do not like Shiite Islam, and I do not believe it's true. Moreover, I believe that apart from Jesus Christ, Mohammed, is going to hell. But if I disdain Shiite Islam so much that I refuse to talk to Mohammed and instead seek to marginalize him, then he will never hear the truth of the Gospel from me. However, if instead I endure Shiite Islam and am more concerned with the glory of God and the salvation of Mohammed's soul, then there is no doubt that I will long to speak of the glories of Jesus Christ and challenge my friend to put his trust in the one true God. So in a very real sense, my desire for evangelism causes me to be tolerant of Mohammed's false beliefs. I find that true tolerance in this way flows from loving God and the person more than disdaining his false beliefs. Your chances of converting a marginalized person whom you just marginalized are very slim. Furthermore, if when I speak with Mohammed and all he sees is my disdain for his beliefs, why would he ever believe my claims that my God loves him, if I cannot show my love for him? In 2 Timothy 2:8-13 Paul is bound in a prison in Rome awaiting his death. Giving an evangelistic encouragement to Timothy, he says, "I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain salvation in Christ Jesus with its eternal glory" (2 Timothy 2:10). Here Paul has suffered a violation of his rights. Paul had been unjustly imprisoned and sentenced to death, yet he suffers these things that the elect might obtain salvation in Christ Jesus. Paul suffered physical and mental abuse at the hands of unbelievers that they might come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. If Paul is willing to endure torture and even death that some might be saved, then is it too much for us to we endure some false beliefs so that some may be saved? I think within the context of Paul's worldview, militant Christianity that seeks to marginalize rather than evangelize is shown for what it really is: selfishness masqueraded as righteousness. Therefore, it is not out of line for me to say that my tolerance of other beliefs is predicated upon my view of evangelism and its centrality to the Gospel message.

Inevitably, we come to the difficult question concerning the issue of tolerance. After having explained why a Christian religious exclusivist should be tolerant of other faiths and beliefs, the follow-up question is "Should we tolerate all things or are there limits to our toleration?" It would be moral relativism of the worst kind to think that we should tolerate all beliefs and all practices of all people. After all, was it not the followers of Moloch who caused their children to “pass through the fire”? Should we be tolerant of child sacrifice? After all, one

might reason, that if we are concerned with evangelism, shouldn't we in turn show toleration of their abhorrent practice and endure this horrible belief?

The best way, to answer this challenge is to categorize beliefs and practices into two major categories: "moral" and "non-moral (or preferential)" beliefs and practices. The categorization system is based not upon the beliefs of the "religious others," but upon the beliefs of the Christian religious exclusivist (for this is a system of how a Christian religious exclusivist can be tolerant). A believer's practices are considered "moral" if they are expressly endorsed or expressly condemned in Christian scripture. For instance, consider again the example of child sacrifice. Not only would this be murder (expressly forbidden in the Decalogue and 1 Jn 3:15; Mt 5:20-22), but human sacrifice is also forbidden in Ezekiel 16:20-22. Therefore, this would be a moral issue which would bind the conscience of the individual. The individual would be required by his conscience to take action concerning an abhorrent practice or belief. The range of action would vary depending on how abhorrent the practice or belief is and if the practice or belief is illegal. In the case of child sacrifice, the individual's conscience would be so bound that he would be required to intervene in some form or fashion to prevent such an event from happening.

While a moral situation, per the definition above, requires an individual to be propelled into action, due to his constrained conscience, the action that he takes can vary. The action that an individual takes is purely dependent upon the situation that he finds himself in. Some actions are more morally reprehensible than others, thus requiring greater action, while some actions are less morally reprehensible and do not require as great an action. Take for example child sacrifice again; an extremely morally reprehensible action. If an issue of child sacrifice arose, an individual facing such a situation would be required to involve the authorities and do everything possible to prevent the said action from occurring. Whereas if he is given an issue such as animal sacrifice, such an extreme reaction is not necessarily warranted. In the case of animal sacrifice, a person might be prompted to inform the authorities, but he might also be prompted to inform only the person doing the sacrifice of the legalities, or as the case may be the illegalities, of what he is doing. So the range of action that is required by the individual is consistently dependent upon the "wrongness" of the belief or practice with which the person is confronted. This is not situational ethics. We are not determining right and wrong based on the situation itself (for right and wrong are firmly lodged within the biblical text; the moral judgment has already been made), but instead we are determining the reaction to the belief or practice, or the penalty of the situation, based on the situation itself. This is more of a case of "how wrong is the belief or practice?" rather than "is the belief or practice wrong?"

Also, one needs to take into account the possibility of interference. It is impossible for me to interfere in some issues even though I may consider them moral issues. For example, I see abortion as wrong. Biblically, abortion is analogous to murder. However, considering that U. S. law has legalized abortion via *Roe versus Wade*, my ability to interfere with what I see as a moral issue is seriously hampered. This limits the range of action in which I can take part. I can counsel women to not get an abortion or I can work to change U. S. law; however, I cannot physically stop women from getting an abortion. Nor can I report them to the authorities so that the authorities can physically stop them. Some people have taken drastic interference methods, such as bombing clinics and killing physicians, but I believe that such action stems from a

misguided sense of conflicting moral issues.

The other side of the argument concerning moral decision-making is non-moral (preferential) beliefs and practices. The reaction to these beliefs and practices is considerably more flexible. It is in these beliefs and practices that we must be willing to practice religious tolerance even though we may not agree with said practices. For example, when I consider a Hindu's refusal to eat "the sacred cow," I might see this practice as misguided, especially in a nation in which so many people starve to death, but I am not compelled to interfere or enforce the Hindu to conform to my practices and beliefs. So the main difference between moral and non-moral beliefs and practices hinges on the question of interference. Immoral practices or beliefs need to be interfered with or stopped. Non-moral practices or beliefs should be changed, from my Christian religious exclusivist point of view, but do not necessarily need to be interfered with or stopped. Instead non-moral practices and/or beliefs need to be met with a sense of love, understanding, and ultimately a certain level of evangelism because the most loving thing we can do for an individual is to bring him into the community of believers who have found a salvation in the one true God, Jesus Christ.

The follow-up issue that arises concerning what we tolerate has to do with the category of moral issues. While it is true that non-moral issues clearly need to be tolerated, it is still unclear what we are to do in the cases in which there are differences of opinion concerning what is and what is not a moral issue and what to do when moral issues conflict. For instance, some people would categorize music and worship as a non-moral issue. However, some people would categorize this as a moral issue. Furthermore, what happens when our moral duty to preserve life conflicts with our moral duty to evangelize? Or what happens when human freedoms, even political freedoms, conflict with moral issues?

In order to answer these questions concerning moral conflicts, I recommend the use of a hierarchy of moral principles. This hierarchy of moral principles can also be called ethical hierarchicalism. The best definition of ethical hierarchicalism comes from Norman Geisler's book on ethics. He defines ethical hierarchicalism as "a hierarchical arrangement or ordering of ethical norms based on the relative scale of values they represent. It implies a pyramid of normative values which in and of themselves are objectively binding on men. But when any two or more of these values happened to conflict, a person is exempted from his otherwise binding obligation to a lower norm in view of the pre-emptory obligation of a higher norm."<sup>6</sup>

Geisler is saying that an individual has a specific set of moral values. When those moral values conflict, there is a higher moral value and a lower moral value. Furthermore, an individual is not required to maintain or hold to his lower moral value when it conflicts with a higher moral value. For instance, if a person makes you promise not to divulge any information that he is about to tell you and then he proceeds to tell you about his plan to murder someone, you are left with conflicting moral values. On the one hand, it is a good thing to keep one's promises, but on the other hand, murder is morally wrong. Under a hierarchy of moral principles, the value of the human life is far greater than the value of keeping one's promise; thus, it would not be wrong to

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<sup>6</sup>Norman L. Geisler, *Ethics: Alternatives and Issues* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 114.

break one's promise to keep quiet in order to save a life.

However, when we say that there are some ethical norms that have a pre-emptory obligation over and above other moral obligations, the question arises concerning which moral obligations are higher than others. Norman Geisler gives seven basic principles as a guide for decision-making when moral obligations conflict.<sup>7</sup>

1. Persons are more valuable than things.
2. The God is more valuable than the human person.
3. A complete person is more valuable than an incomplete person.
4. An actual person is of more value than a potential person.
5. Potential persons are more valuable than actual things.
6. Many persons are more valuable than few persons.
7. Personal acts which promote personhood are better than those which do not.
8. \*Our standard for moral versus immoral behavior is found in the Bible.<sup>8</sup>

For the Christian religious exclusivist, the Bible is the foundation for defining all moral and immoral behavior and questions of moral versus preferential. That is not to say that texts outside the Bible do not provide moral codes or even appropriate moral codes, but they are only appropriate in how they conform to the biblical standard. This includes not only acts that are specifically condemned or condoned in Scripture, but also principles that can be drawn from Scripture concerning acts that should or should not be done. For example, murder is expressly forbidden in Scripture. However, abortion is not expressly forbidden in Scripture. We can draw principles from the Bible concerning murder and personhood and apply them to the concept of abortion.

9. \*Obedience to God is far more valuable than obedience to the human person.

When a situation occurs in which you have conflicting commands, one from a human authority and one from God, it is always right to obey God instead of the human person. For instance, the missionary in Turkey who is preaching the Gospel to proselytize Muslims is breaking the law. In such a situation the missionary must uphold the Great Commission (Mt. 28:16-20) rather than uphold the command of the Turkish law not to proselytize Muslims.

10. \*When the commands of God conflict with one another, it is more important to promote the infinite rather than the finite.

Situations occur when the commands of God conflict with one another. In such cases, we should bear in mind that the redemption of man and his eternal status before God is far more important than anything on this earth. For example, the missionary in Turkey who is attempting to proselytize Muslims not only is in conflict with Turkish law but also with Romans 13 which calls Christians to obey the law. However, in such a case the eternal standing of a Muslim before God (i.e. whether or not he is going to hell) is of more importance than whether or not the missionary obeys the Turkish law or the command of Romans 13 that he obey the Turkish law.

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<sup>7</sup>The seven principles come from Geisler, *Ethics*, 115-120.

<sup>8</sup>\*Indicates the principles that I added.

So the question becomes “how does the moral hierarchy of principles fit into a question of religious tolerance?” Using the moral hierarchy of principles, we are able to determine which moral values are more important than others so that when conflicts arise over moral values, we can determine which ones retain their pre-emptory obligation. Thus, in a situation in which I see a moral issue at stake, for example the issue of abortion, I am able to determine whether the overriding concept of evangelism is more important than the moral issue of abortion. Or in the case in which we have conflicts over what is a moral value and what is a non-moral value (preferential), the individual who sees the case as a moral value can still evaluate which is the higher moral value. For instance, in the case of worship music, one individual might see this as a moral value while another individual might see it as a preferential issue. Either way the individual who sees worship music as a preferential issue is bound to provide religious tolerance based on the argument above. The one who sees worship music as a moral issue must then determine whether the issue of worship music supersedes the concept of religious tolerance. The concept of a hierarchy of moral principles combined with our differentiation between moral and non-moral principles allows us to define which situations we can reasonably tolerate and which situations we are morally obligated to take action against. The action that we take will be limited based on our ability to interfere with another's action.

As pastors and teachers it becomes vital that we are able to tackle the issue of religious tolerance in a way that is not only comprehensive for our people, but also sensitive to those who are not of our faith. It would not do for us to encourage the denial of the dignity of others just because they do not share the same faith as we do; such actions are antithetical to the Gospel message. We must be able to find a way to balance standing up for the truth, upholding moral righteousness, and evangelizing, but at the same time reaching out with the Gospel in a way that does not strip other people of their God-given dignity and does not deny their *Imago Dei*.

The issue of religious tolerance is increasingly an important one in this diverse society that we live in. As "religious others" become more prevalent in a "post-Christian" diverse environment operating among them and ministering to them is going to be more important. As such, it behooves us to be able to think through what biblical religious tolerance looks like and what issues we are willing to tolerate and what things we cannot (or should not) tolerate. We must have a clear understanding in which things we can contextualize and which things are central to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If we think through our moral decision-making process while at the same time balancing that with the biblical sense of why we should tolerate "religious others" we will find our impact upon the world around us to be more significant and far more culturally sensitive. Ultimately, in this regard we will find far more lives transformed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, God far more glorified, and His name lifted high, which is ultimately our aim as Christians.

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Sean Sartler received his Bachelors of Business Administration from the University of Wisconsin and his Masters of Divinity from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He has taught in the United States, the Philippines, and in South Korea. Currently, he is an instructor of Bible and Theology at EUCON International College located in Saipan.

## **BIBLICAL ROLES FOR THE PASTOR**

Jonathan Bright

There are many ideas of what a pastor is. The church belongs to the Lord, and the pastor must understand his biblical role. The pastor has three main biblical functions: preacher/teacher, shepherd/example, and administrator/leader. To fulfill the role God has given them, both the pastor and the church members must understand and obey their respective roles.

### **THE PASTOR AS PREACHER/ TEACHER**

The pastor is an ordinary man who has been called by God to minister to God's people. Scripture makes it clear that this called man must be consecrated. The content of his ministry must be centered on the Word of God.

#### **THE CALL OF THE MINISTER**

God uses the preaching of His Word to work in the hearts of men and women. Indeed, Paul asks "how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom.10:14). That an instrument the world deems "foolishness" (I Cor. 1:18, 21) could be used to redeem souls can only be to the glory of God. A minister must not be dependent upon his own abilities; only as the Holy Spirit uses him can lives be changed (I Cor. 2:4). God gives pastors and teachers to the church (Eph. 4:10).

The church must practice discernment in calling a minister. The danger of "grievous wolves" has not lessened since Paul warned the Ephesian elders of those who would follow him (Acts 20:29). God's under-shepherds must avoid "deceit" as well as "uncleanness" and "guile" (I Thess. 2:3). Integrity is vital for the ministry. The minister represents One who called Himself "the Truth"; any whiff of dishonesty on the part of God's minister casts disrepute upon our Master. Even those in fellowship with the church could cause division (Acts 20:30). Teaching ministers in the church are "worthy of double honor" (I Tim. 5:17), but must not be motivated by "filthy lucre" (I Peter 5:2). A "cloak of covetousness" can cause great damage (I Thess 2:5). It is a great danger for a minister to fall prey to that root of so many evils; the love of money.

Once the church has eliminated the destroying and covetous from consideration, it must check the call of the minister. The minister must desire to serve the church as well as meet the character qualifications found in the pastoral epistles. James warned, "Be not many masters" (James 3:1). Presenting God's Word is the great privilege for the minister, but James emphatically states that teachers will be judged by a higher standard. Shoddy sermons resulting from poor preparation earn condemnation from the Lord of the church. The church is, of course, a single body. Every member of the body of Christ has gifts given by the Spirit for the edification of other believers. Some have been called to serve in other ministries, but the preacher has a responsibility to give himself to prayer and ministry of the word (Acts 6:2-4). Like Paul, the minister must be "ordained" to teach and preach (I Tim. 2:7). God is the one who "appoint[s]" ministers (I Tim. 1:11).

The minister has a "necessity" laid upon him to share the message of the gospel (I Cor. 9:16-17). Paul would later repeat the instruction to the Ephesian elders to watch "all the flock..."

feed the church of God” (Acts 20:28). Breaking the Bread of Life to hungry souls is a solemn responsibility for the minister. Peter, too, commanded to “feed the flock of God” (I Peter 5:2).

## THE CONSECRATION OF THE MINISTER

A man called by God will give himself wholeheartedly to the Lord in consecrated living. The focus of his life will be “prayer” as well as “ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). The minister’s prayer closet must be visited often. Just as important as contending for the faith by opposing false teaching publicly is contending for the faith by praying privately. His ministry of the word will take place in the pulpit and in private counseling.

The sheep he cares for will be the object of his concern “night and day” (Acts 20:31; I Thess. 2:9). The minister must not shirk the task to which God has called him.

Because he does not want to be “ashamed” before the Lord, the man of God gives himself to the study of the Scripture (2 Tim. 2:15). Scripture will be the center of his life; he will give himself to the study of it. He endeavors to remain “pure from the blood of all men” by refusing to ignore sin (Acts 20:26). Although a false peace might be obtained by trying to avoid confrontations, as a watchman the minister must boldly and wisely confront the sins of his congregation. Of course, he will follow the biblical pattern of church discipline. Ministry uses God’s gifts for God’s glory (I Peter 4:10-11). The minister must be “blameless” (I Tim. 3:2). Not only must his doctrine be right, but he must also be able to communicate those doctrinal truths by teaching. He has been “put in trust with the gospel” and desires to be “pleasing...God” (I Thess. 2:4).

## THE CONTENT OF THE MESSAGE

To obtain the wisdom he needs, the pastor must search the Scriptures. Christ told the men on the road to Emmaus about Himself (Luke 24:27). Christ went back to the Old Testament “beginning at Moses and all the prophets” to reveal Himself. This key verse reveals Who is central to the Bible. It also reminds the minister not to neglect the Old Testament in his proclamation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As the minister preaches Christ and His gospel, he is able to speak with “confidence,” knowing he is speaking what the Scripture proclaims (Acts 28:31). When he proclaims the Word of God, he speaks authoritatively for God. To bring the church to maturity, the minister preaches Christ (Col. 1:27-28). As the minister proclaims Christ, he also warns of impending judgment. Wisdom is necessary, as the minister teaches the whole counsel of God. In addition to wisdom, meekness is mandatory as the minister rebukes and corrects his congregation (2 Tim. 2:25).

Of course, the minister must “preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:2). This involves a continual readiness to confront those in sin and encourage with teachings from Scripture. As he remains faithful to his Lord, the minister also must cling to God’s Word (Titus 1:9). The minister’s goal is to obtain repentance on the part of those who are harming themselves and others by sinning (2 Tim 2:25).

As the minister searches the Scriptures and preaches, he follows the example of his Master who Himself taught and preached as well as healed (Matthew 9:35). As “all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27) is proclaimed, the pastor reads the Scripture, exhorts, and fully proclaims the doctrines of Scripture (I Tim 4:13).

Today, the Lord Jesus sees that the laborers are few. There are still languages without Scriptures; there are people who have never heard the name of Christ. The multitudes remain without a shepherd (Matthew 9:36). In all this, the Savior places a demand upon the whole church: to pray for laborers (Matthew 9:37-38).

### **THE PASTOR AS SHEPHERD/ EXAMPLE**

The pastor of the local church has several roles. He is a preacher/teacher. He is also an administrator/leader. The third role of the pastor is shepherd/example. As a shepherd/example, there are opposites of what the shepherd/example should be. The Lord is the ultimate shepherd/example. There are also specific orders for the pastor as shepherd/example.

### **OPPOSITION TO THE SHEPHERD/EXAMPLE**

The kingdom of God has enemies. In the spiritual realm, Satan and demons oppose the will of God. Jesus charged unbelievers with having Satan as their father. Since God has ordered His kingdom with leadership, it should come as no surprise that Satan as a wily lion, seeks to infiltrate God’s kingdom. Often Satan’s servants are disguised as sheep or even under-shepherds, but they are truly “grievous wolves” who would destroy the flock of God if they could (Acts 20:29-30). Even the church of Ephesus where Paul ministered three years would not be spared their predations. The vulnerable sheep would be ripped at with “perverse” words aimed at dividing the flock (v. 30). The aim of such wolves is to draw people to follow themselves instead of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Old Testament prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel also castigated those who neglected their responsibility to shepherd God’s people. In Jeremiah 23:1-4 the Lord pronounces woe upon the pastor who causes destruction amidst His people. Instead of gathering, leading, and protecting the sheep as he should, this false shepherd scatters and destroys. In his selfishness the false pastor is a harm to the flock instead of a blessing. Obviously, such a leader has nothing of Christ in him. The Lord warns such false shepherds of coming judgment when He tells them “I will visit upon you the evil of your doings” (v. 2).

Ezekiel 34 also deals with those who fleece the flock of God. A true shepherd would protect the sheep, but these shepherds also looked for their own gain. The leaders of Israel sought all the wealth they could obtain. Under their cruel hands, the flock suffered. Disease ran rampant; their physical and spiritual needs were left unmet. It is no wonder that the Lord declared that He was against such “shepherds” as these! The leaders of Israel narcissistically sought their own well-being and left their people vulnerable and unprotected. There was no genuine concern for those whom they were responsible. As true under-shepherds for the Good Shepherd, the pastor will manifest concern for the sheep by providing for their spiritual nourishment. He is not serving for gain; he serves as one delegated authority to maintain the sheep.

The unconcern of the wolves and false shepherds is a natural product of the unregenerate heart. John 10 speaks of the thieves and robbers who would prey upon the flock of God. If a man is not coming through the door, through the Lord Jesus Christ, his work is destructive. Indeed, the motives for these dangerous men are “to steal, and to kill and to destroy” (v. 10). Whatever platitudes they may utter, they cannot be trusted! Fortunately, God’s sheep have discernment and will not follow a stranger.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel offer sobering warnings concerning the danger of false shepherds. Acts 20 urges discernment, while John 10 gives hope that God’s people will at length recognize the false shepherds and avoid them.

### CHRIST IS THE ORIGINAL SHEPHERD/EXAMPLE

In stark contrast to the antitype of the shepherd/example is the ultimate example of the Good Shepherd. Psalm 23 is David’s famous declaration that it is the Lord Himself who is his Shepherd. The Lord undertakes to provide for His people. His sheep will feed in the greenest pastures, by the calm refreshing waters. When Peter is told in John 21:15-17 to feed Christ’s sheep, he is told to follow the Lord’s example. The Lord leads us in righteousness. The Shepherd is faithful, abiding even through the valley of the shadow of death. It is He who comforts His people.

The Lord is also contrasted to poor shepherds in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. In Jeremiah 23:3-4 and Ezekiel 34:11ff, the Lord gathers His flock. He promises to provide shepherds who will care for the flock. The Lord promises to feed them. He says that they will not lack or fear. Where once the sheep faced danger, they are now safe because the Lord has undertaken for them.

The Gospels further clarify that the Lord Jesus Christ is the ultimate Good Shepherd. As Shepherd, Jesus felt compassion for His sheep (Matthew 9:36; Mark 6:34). The people had no shepherd; they lacked guidance and protection. They were scattered abroad, like their counterparts in the Old Testament. Another translation of Matthew 9:36 has the people “harassed and helpless.” Jesus saw their need and began to meet it by teaching. In His compassion for people, Christ is the pastor’s example of ministry.

The Good Shepherd had compassion on the multitudes, and He had compassion on individuals. Jesus told the parable of the lost sheep to explain that as the Good Shepherd, He would seek out individual sheep (Matthew 18:11:14; Luke 15:3-7). In Matthew 18:11, He stated directly that He came to save the lost. That statement is the introduction to the shepherd who left ninety-nine sheep to seek one lost. Christ concluded the parable in Matthew by saying the Father did not desire any little one to perish.

Christ’s most explicit claim to being the Good Shepherd is found in John 10. After stating that He is the door (vv 1-10), He tells of His ministry as the Good Shepherd. The sheep know Him. They recognize His voice. More importantly, He knows the sheep. Most importantly, He is the Shepherd who gives His life for the sheep. Like John 21:15-17, John 10 emphasizes that the sheep belong to the shepherd. John 10 emphasizes that they are bought with Christ’s blood; John

21 makes clear that the Good Shepherd expects His under-shepherds to continue the work of providing for the sheep.

#### THE SHEPHERD/ EXAMPLE ORDERS

Luke 15 contains a number of parables concerning lost things: the lost sheep, the lost coin and the prodigal son. In this relating of the lost sheep, it is not as clear the seeking shepherd is the Savior. The story of the prodigal is clearly the story of the Heavenly Father waiting for His lost child to come home. The parables of the coin and sheep also clearly indicate the value God places on the individual. Whereas Matthew 18 indicates the Lord Jesus is the Shepherd seeking the lost sheep, in Luke 15 the seeking shepherd might well be any soul winner.

As Jesus restored Peter in John 21:15-17, His concern for the flock is evident. Preaching on this passage rightly focuses on the relationship between Jesus and Peter, but the thrice repeated command to feed the sheep should not be neglected. Christ's concern for the sheep can be seen in referring to them firstly as "lambs," the vulnerable baby sheep that need extra care. In the second and third instances, believers are called "sheep". This command to feed the flock applies to every minister. As Christ fed the sheep by teaching, the pastor feeds God's people by preaching the Word of God. Peter would later enjoin elders to "feed the flock" and to be "ensamples" (I Peter 5:1-3).

The church is the object of great concern for the pastor who strives to be a shepherd/example. A good shepherd is diligent. He must "take heed" to the flock, diligently striving to see that each sheep is fed, cared for, and protected (Acts 20:28-31). The sheep are valuable; they have been bought at the price of Christ's own blood. Paul told the Ephesian elders to take care of the flock. He pointed to his own three year ministry of exhortation—not from duty alone, but also with tears. He was saying what he would later tell the Corinthians—imitate me in this manner of ministry (I Corinthians 11:1). Of course, his admonition to the Corinthians went beyond urging faithfulness and tears in ministry. He qualified his command with "even as I also [follow] Christ." Paul's testimony was such that he could urge his readers to follow him in this way. Think of Paul following the Good Shepherd as an under-shepherd. Paul, in turn, is followed by believers who are following *him* (Philippians 3:17). Some of those believers are followed by other sheep, as Timothy and Titus were (I Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7,8). The shepherding/example principle produces a chain reaction.

The shepherd/example role is on-going. Paul spoke of his "daily" concern for and care of the churches (2 Corinthians 11:28). Christ's compassion was reflected in Paul's gentle care of the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 2:7-12). As he had in Ephesus, he continually labored in Thessalonica. When others looked upon his life, they could testify that he was blameless. No mud could be thrown upon his testimony; he had lived in a just and holy manner. He showed paternal concern for the Thessalonians, first winning them to Christ, then exhorting and comforting them as believers.

The shepherd/example must keep his flock together. The Lord has organized the church with leaders who are accountable to Him (Hebrews 13:17). Both the false shepherds and true shepherds will give an account of their activities. Ephesians 4 deals with the unity of the church; Ephesians 4:11 enumerates offices within the church that the Lord uses to minister to His sheep.

Sheep are easily frightened. They must not be coerced. The shepherd/example following his Savior will be meek and humble (2 Timothy 2:24-25). When he is opposed, he exhibits the same patience God has given him. He is gentle to his flock because the Good Shepherd has been gentle with him. His example extends into all areas of life (I Tim. 4:12; Titus 2:7-8). His life will be like Paul's: one that is right to follow. He has charity and faith. His doctrine lines up with Scripture.

The pastor has a solemn responsibility to examine himself. He should check that his motives are not mercenary, like the motives of the false shepherds who were thieves and robbers. He should check that his methods benefit the flock. By looking at the Lord Jesus Christ as the ultimate Good Shepherd/example, he knows the standard is beyond his own ability. Even the Apostle Paul presents a challenging example of compassion and action. By God's grace, the pastor too can be the kind of shepherd/example that his flock can emulate.

### **THE PASTOR AS ADMINISTRATOR/ LEADER**

The pastor's role as an administrator or leader stands in contrast to his other roles. The preacher/teacher roles have a natural comparison to the secular world. Those with unregenerate eyes can understand how a teacher would teach. Although preaching is not a regular part of the world, the aspect of convincing others and speaking to them is a familiar role. The world can understand a pastor's shepherding/ caretaking role as companies receive awards for being "employee friendly" places to work. Though they cannot completely understand the spiritual aspects, the business world recognizes that caring for employees with certain benefits improves employee loyalty. As an administrator/ leader, however, the pastoral role stands in marked contrast to the world. Obedient leadership of the church differs from worldly leadership because of the Lord Jesus Christ's concept of servant leadership.

### **THE SERVICE PRIORITY**

The Lord Jesus Christ knows the natural inclination of those in authority is to acquire power for themselves (Matthew 20:25). When James and John sent their mother to ask Jesus for special status in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 20:20-24), simply sitting beside Jesus was *not* their primary consideration. Fellowship with the Lord was desirable, but Christ rebuked their desire for this kind of power in Matthew 20:25-28 when He debunked the foundation of their request.

The Lord Jesus contrasted natural leadership with spiritual leadership. The word "dominion" has the idea of "control, subjugate," according to *Strong's Concordance*. Gentiles lorded over those under their authority. When they became "great" they did not want to lose the slightest amount of authority, so they exercised authority. Jesus looked at the Gentile world and saw micromanagers and abusers of authority. He commanded that His followers instead be servants.

Matthew 20:26-27 clarifies that ambition is acceptable in Christ's kingdom, but that ambition must be channeled according to Christ's command. In verse 26, Christ says the "great among you" should "be your minister." "Minister" is the word for deacon, a word that carries the idea of waiting tables. The ESV translates "minister" as "servant." Those desiring to be "chief," Christ commands to be a "servant" or "bondservant." Practically speaking, the pastor must view

his leadership not as an opportunity to accrue power or fame, but as a chance to minister to “the least of these.”

If the pastor of the church must be a servant, how could he organize the church? Servants receive orders; they do not set policy! To prevent misconceptions, Christ explained that He Himself “came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). The Lord Jesus could have demanded royal treatment. Instead, His earthly ministry was spent teaching, preaching, and healing. Yet He retained His authority, giving direction to His disciples, nature, demons, etc.

While Matthew 20 contrasts church leadership with Gentile leadership, Matthew 23:11 contrasts church leadership with the religious leadership of the day. Matthew 23 describes Christ’s exposure of the scribes and Pharisees. These leaders’ lives did not match their teaching (v. 3). They worried about their reputations more than their congregation (vv. 5-7). Christ warned their self-promotion would result in humiliation (v. 12). Despite moving from the pagan Gentile world to the religious Jewish world, Christ’s command remained the same: position in His kingdom depends upon service (Matthew 23:11). The word for service is again the word for deacon. Later, Paul would describe himself as a slave in places and a steward in I Corinthians 4:2.

To the human mind, it might seem that recruiting servants to lead the church as pastors would be difficult. Christ commanded His disciples to pray for laborers in the vineyard. These laborers cannot be coerced into God’s service; they must come willingly of their own accord in response to God’s call (I Peter 5:2). The pastor rejoices in the task for which God has called him.

## THE SYSTEM PRESCRIBED

The church is Christ’s body (I Cor. 12:14-31; Romans 12:1-7). Christ leads and guides His church as its head (Col. 1:18, Eph. 1:22). This body has been purchased with the price of Christ’s own blood (Acts 20:28). The different members of the body have different roles. I Corinthians 12:28 describes “God hath set some” including “governments.” This word carries with it the idea of piloting. The pastor has a responsibility to guide and give vision to the church. Just as a pilot of a ship watches for the crags that would leave him stranded or sinking, the pastor must diligently scrutinize programs and philosophies embraced by his church so it does not go astray. The pastor has not put himself in this position, but “God hath set” him in place to lead the church. His authority comes from God. But this authority is a gift, for evangelists, pastors, and teachers are given by God (Eph. 4:11).

Pastors must set an example of godliness for their churches (I Peter 5:3). Because they have absorbed servant leadership, they will not act as “lords over God’s heritage.” Their character must reflect their Lord’s meekness. They must be faithful (I Cor. 4:2; 2 Tim. 2:2). Adversity will not deflect the faithful minister from the task to which God has appointed him.

Diligence is another characteristic of the church pastor (Romans 12:8). There is no room for a shirker in God’s kingdom. Pastors “labor” in the church as they “admonish” the congregation with God’s Word (I Thess. 5:12). As they prepare their messages and work with

their people, they must also “labor in the word and doctrine” (I Tim. 5:17). Their diligence will result in an organized ministry where plans are made, programs are implemented, and spiritual advancements are made as they “feed the flock of God” (I Peter 5:2, Acts 20:28). This will not be done in a haphazard way, but with care that things are “done decently and in order” (I Cor. 14:40). Nothing should be done chaotically or negligently.

Their “work” should result in a response of love from their people (I Thess. 5:13). Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24 describes not only the people’s love, but also the people’s expected obedience. The pastors, elders, and deacons of the church know that they must give an account to the Lord for their ministry. They are motivated by the fear of the Lord and a desire not to face Him with grief concerning their people. God has put the pastor into a position where he can be instrumental in “perfecting the saints,” helping them to be spiritually complete (Ephesians 4:12). His ministry will result in those saints being built up and edified.

I Timothy 5:17 makes clear the people should honor “the elders who rule.” Expositing the Scripture is particularly important.

## THE SPECIAL PREREQUISITE

The pastoral epistles were written with church leadership in mind. Both Timothy and Titus needed help. Paul wrote Timothy that the purpose for writing I Timothy was that he would know how to conduct himself in the church of God (3:15). The church has an important function as “the pillar and the ground of the truth.” Adequate preparation for Timothy was therefore essential. Titus, too, had a big responsibility of organizing the Church of Crete (Titus 1:5). The church there needed organization (Titus 1:5, I Corinthians 14:40). Upon Titus fell the duty of ordaining elders for the church, just as Timothy would organize his church leadership (2 Timothy 2:2).

I Timothy 3 and Titus 1 give the clearest qualification lists for church leadership. If the standards of the list are not met, the man is ineligible for office (and it is a man being discussed, I Timothy 2:12). The family has an immense role in a man’s ministry. They can greatly harm or greatly help it. God’s purpose is for the family to have a single goal, a common aim as the two individuals become one. The pastor’s example extends to family life as well. This area must be “blameless” along with every other area in the list (Titus 1:6).

The pastor must be “the husband of one wife” (Titus 1:6). Besides eliminating bigamy, the phrase also reflects the moral character of the man. He is to be a “one woman man.” He is content with the woman God has given him, so he does not covet another woman. He does not allow his eyes or his mind to stray. Like Job, he makes a covenant with his eyes not to look upon a maid. His wife is the key to his heart. From his wife he receives and gives counsel.

The requirement that the pastor be “a one woman man” makes the issue of a divorced pastor problematic. Titus 1:6 and I Timothy 3:4 seem to indicate that such a man is ineligible. It could be argued that a pastor deserted by his spouse remains a “one woman man,” but at that point he would no longer be “blameless” or “ruling his household well.”

Children can also influence a man's eligibility for the pastorate. The father of children must make sure his children are obedient (I Timothy 3:4). Children should not be disruptive (Titus 1:6). If the children do not receive the Lord Jesus Christ by the time they become teenagers, their father could be considered ineligible for the pastorate. The Greek word for children in both Timothy and Titus is the word for child, rather than a young child.

The pastor as an administrator/ leader must look after his own household. A neglected wife and children can bring disrepute to the whole church. Ephesians pictures Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church. If the pastor of the church will not maintain the parallel in his own home, how can he lead his church to be more fully prepared for the marriage supper of the Lamb?

As an administrator/ leader the pastor is servant to the church. He helps ensure order. He organizes his household well.

The Pastor has three God-ordained roles as preacher/teacher, shepherd/example, and administrator/leader. Each role has different emphases, but one motivation: to glorify the Lord of the church.



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## THE EXTENT AND IMPLICATIONS OF INSPIRATION: II TIMOTHY 3:16

Matthew Epperson

### *II Timothy 3:16 in Four Major Modern English Translations*

- ESV: All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,
- KJV: All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness
- NASB: All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.
- NIV: All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

### *Purpose and Importance*

Few doctrines merit the label “fundamental to the faith.” Of those doctrines, inspiration continues to receive much-deserved attention from Bible scholars. Because of the importance of the doctrine of inspiration, it has been under attack from within and without the evangelical church for the past 150 years. Misunderstandings of the extent and implications of the inspiration of Scripture have led some scholars to question the need for further discussion. These scholars neglect to realize that the inspiration of the Bible has far-reaching implications for the believer, both in his personal and practical theology.

When considering such an important doctrine, one must focus on the Bible’s testimony concerning itself. This article will define the doctrine of inspiration from a Biblical viewpoint, focusing on II Timothy 3:16, a passage which Kevin Smith calls, “The most definitive biblical text on the nature, function, and purpose of scripture.”<sup>1</sup> In light of Smith’s assertion, there can be no better place to turn for clarity about Scripture’s teaching on Scripture. This article will demonstrate that II Timothy 3:16 teaches the verbal, plenary inspiration of both the Old and New Testaments, which results in an entirely true and authoritative Scripture, that can and should be the Christian’s final and only authority for faith and practice.

### *Interpretation*

#### **All**

The debate over II Timothy 3:16 and inspiration begins with the very first word, “all” (*pasa*). Many commentators would agree with Fairbairn’s bold claim that the verse *must* read “every scripture” because of the absence of the article with the word translated Scripture (*graphie*).<sup>2</sup> The emphasis of Fairbairn’s declaration does not make it true. Lenski correctly observes, “The assertion that the Greek compels us to translate *pasagraphé* ‘every Scripture’ is

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<sup>1</sup>Kevin G. Smith, “A Grammatical Exposition of 2 Timothy 3:16-17,” *Conspectus* 9 (March 2010): 95.

<sup>2</sup>Patrick Fairbairn, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2002), 377.

untenable. The rule cited in support of this translation does not apply to abstract terms.”<sup>3</sup> The interpreters of all four major versions cited above appear to agree with Lenski, since they all have opted to translate the verse “all Scripture.”

Why would they choose to translate in this way? Philip H. Towner notes, “The choice between ‘all’ and ‘every’ for the adjective *pasa* is determined by the meaning of *graphe*—whether the singular means a text/passage of Scripture or the whole of the Scriptures.”<sup>4</sup> Apparently then, the interpreters believed that *pasagraphe* refers to the entire Bible. Bullinger calls this use “synecdoche of the whole,” which, he explains, “. . . is when the one is not merely of the same kind as the other, but actually a part or member of it.”<sup>5</sup> This figure of speech lets the reader know that inspiration applies to all of Scripture because every passage is inspired. Smith comments that the context also agrees with this interpretation: “While ‘every scripture’ seems the more natural reading of the Greek text in isolation, the way Paul elaborates about the uses of scripture later in verse 16 suggests that he was thinking of ‘all scripture’, since it is ‘all scripture’ which achieves the four purposes he lists; it would not be true to claim that ‘every scripture’ can achieve all four.”<sup>6</sup> Thus, the context confirms the answer to the first question: “all scripture” should be preferred to “every scripture.”

## Scripture

The next question focuses on the second word, scripture (*graphe*). What does this word refer to? The Greek word *graphe* refers to any writing, but Fairbairn explains, “There are as many as fifty passages in the New Testament in which *graphe* occurs; and in every one of them, whether it has the article or not . . . it signifies uniformly *sacred* Scripture, which virtually determines the meaning here.”<sup>7</sup> No one disputes that *graphe* describes Scripture, but many do question what should be included in “Scripture.”

Does Paul mean only a verse or passage? Plummer objects that if the whole of Scripture were to be concerned, the word should be plural.<sup>8</sup> Towner appears to agree with Plummer. He writes, “The singular *graphe* in 3:16 most likely refers to a passage or text within the collected OT Scriptures.”<sup>9</sup> Not all scholars are convinced, however. Lenski suggests that the singular is

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<sup>3</sup>R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1946), 841. Lenski refers to the rule on page 772 of A.T. Robertson’s *Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934): “Even without the article *pas* may be ‘all,’ if it is a proper noun... Abstract substantives also may be used with or without the article.”

<sup>4</sup>Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 587.

<sup>5</sup>E.W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968), 635-636.

<sup>6</sup>Smith, 99.

<sup>7</sup>Fairbairn, 378.

<sup>8</sup>Alfred Plummer, *The Expositor’s Bible: The Pastoral Epistles*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1898), 392.

<sup>9</sup>Towner, 587.

used as a collective.<sup>10</sup> Lenski means that the reader should view the Scripture as a unit. This view is supported by Lea and Griffin's remark, "It is clear from the context that Paul was not merely referring to a single passage of Scripture."<sup>11</sup> If Paul does mean to refer to more than one or two passages of Scripture, what does Paul have in mind?

Many scholars presume Paul means only the Old Testament. Lea and Griffin write, "Paul's reference to the 'holy Scriptures' in 3:15 is clearly a statement about the Old Testament. He continued to refer to the Old Testament in 3:16."<sup>12</sup> They wish to limit Paul's statement in verse 16 to the Old Testament Scriptures. Of course, Paul primarily referred to the Old Testament, but should not the New Testament also be included? Barnes comments, "This properly refers to the Old Testament, and should not be applied to any part of the New Testament, unless it can be shown that that part was then written, and was included under the general name of 'the Scriptures'."<sup>13</sup> Accepting Barnes' challenge, what can be shown about the acceptance of the New Testament as Scriptures by the early church? Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown would have the reader remember, "Most of the New Testament books were written when Paul wrote this his latest Epistle: so he includes in the clause 'All Scripture is God-inspired,' not only the *Old Testament*, in which alone Timothy was taught when a child (2 Tim. 3:15), but the New Testament books according as they were recognized in the churches."<sup>14</sup> To this statement one may add the words of Paul and Peter. Ryrie notes, "In 1 Timothy 5:18 Paul combined an Old and a New Testament reference and designated them both as Scripture... In 2 Peter 3:16 Peter labeled Paul's writings as Scripture, showing their early acceptance and recognized authority."<sup>15</sup> Paul and Peter apparently felt that the New Testament that had been written in their time also qualified as Scripture.

What about the New Testament books written later? Writing in that classic collection of essays, *The Fundamentals*, James Gray concludes this discussion: "...let us reflect that the inspiration of the Old Testament being assured as it is, why should similar evidence be required for the New? Whoever is competent to speak as a Bible authority knows that the unity of the Old and New Testaments is the strongest demonstration of their common source. They are seen to be not two books, but only two parts of one book."<sup>16</sup> This argument shows that every Bible book, regardless of the time of writing should be considered as part of "all scripture" and viewed as inspired.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Lenski, 841.

<sup>11</sup>Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, Jr., *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 34:235.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament, Explanatory and Practical: I Thessalonians to Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1949), 240.

<sup>14</sup>Robert Jamieson, A.R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Practical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), 1380.

<sup>15</sup>Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1999), 77.

<sup>16</sup>James M. Gray, "The Inspiration of the Bible," in vol. 2 of *The Fundamentals*, ed. R.A. Torrey (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 1998), 21-22.

<sup>17</sup>Note that "every Bible book" refers to the canonical writings of the Old and New Testament. Apocryphal and other extra-biblical writings do not meet the standards for Scripture.

## Given by Inspiration

The final question centers on the unique word *theopneustos*, often translated “inspired.” Some question the meaning of the word itself. Should it be considered actively, “the scriptures breathe God,” or passively, “God breathed the scriptures”? Lenski answers this question, “Why is this verbal passive beyond the shadow of a doubt?...Because God alone can be the agent.”<sup>18</sup> Lenski refers to a commonly accepted truth about adjectives formed by a compound between a verbal idea and *theos*: God is always the agent, the one who performs the action implied by the verbal idea. Therefore, it must be that God breathed the Scriptures. The theologian Lewis Sperry Chafer affirms this same truth when he says, “*theopneustos* does not refer to the *inspiring* into men of a message, but of the *outspiring* of that message from God.”<sup>19</sup> These two statements by Lenski and Chafer identify the sphere of inspiration, that is, what is inspired. Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown clarify, “*Inspiration* is here predicated of the *writings*, ‘all Scripture,’ not of the persons.”<sup>20</sup> According to these scholars, II Timothy 3:16 clearly teaches the inspiration of all the writings of Scripture.

Since the Bible claims to be inspired, or God-breathed, one must examine what exactly inspiration does or does not involve. Several theories about inspiration exist in popular theology, but, according to Lea and Griffin, only three common views of inspiration prevail among modern evangelical Christians:

“(1) A dictation theory, which asserts that God spoke through the writers as though they were dictating machines; (2) verbal plenary inspiration in which the result of inspiration is that God produced in all Scripture the very words he wanted; (3) a dynamic view in which the thoughts of Scripture are viewed as inspired but the choice of the words is left up to the individual writers.”<sup>21</sup>

The first of these views overstates the truths of inspiration. Plummer explains, “Inspiration is no mechanical process. It is altogether misleading to speak of it as Divine dictation, which would reduce inspired writers to mere machines.”<sup>22</sup> Although this assertion is correct, Plummer’s own view of inspiration is problematic. He denies the verbal inspiration of every aspect of Scripture in favor of partial inspiration (only spiritual truth is ensured by inspiration).<sup>23</sup> Plummer’s partial

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For a fuller discussion of the Biblical canon and the doctrine of canonicity, refer to Chafer’s *Systematic Theology* or Ryrie’s *Basic Theology*.

<sup>18</sup>Lenski, 842.

<sup>19</sup>Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1976), 1:77.

<sup>20</sup>Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, 1381.

<sup>21</sup>Lea and Griffin, 239. These are only a few ideas prevalent in modern theology, but since space and time do not allow for a discussion of every view, only these most significant views are considered here.

<sup>22</sup>Plummer, 393.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 393-395. He lists four things that inspiration does not guarantee. 1) “...it does not govern the language word by word. We have no reasons for believing in *verbal* inspiration...” 2) “Inspiration does not preserve the inspired writers from *every* kind of mistake.” 3) “...facts of

inspiration view proves worthless for both the Bible scholar and the man in the pew. Gray points out that “it is impossible to secure the religious infallibility of the Bible—which is all the objector regards as necessary—if we exclude Bible history from the sphere of its inspiration.”<sup>24</sup> Gray rightly concludes that if the Bible has mistakes in history or science, then no one can really trust it for matters of religion either. The Bible must be entirely inspired and trustworthy, or it must be counted as just another piece of classic literature, of no more spiritual worth than Aesop’s fables.

A comparison with an orthodox statement of the doctrine of inspiration reveals the deficiencies of partial inspiration, mechanical inspiration, or “dynamic” inspiration. Chafer gives an excellent summary of the true doctrine of inspiration in his *Systematic Theology*:

“By *verbal* inspiration is meant that, in the original writings, the Spirit guided in the choice of the words used. However, the human authorship was respected to the extent that the writers’ characteristics are preserved and their style and vocabulary are employed, but without the inclusion of error. By *plenary* inspiration is meant that the accuracy which verbal inspiration secures, is extended to every portion of the Bible so that it is in all its parts both *infallible* as to truth and *final* as to divine authority.”<sup>25</sup>

Chafer’s summary of inspiration finds biblical support in the passage at hand. The verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scripture is clearly taught in II Timothy 3:16. “Verbal” refers to the words, the writings, the *graphé*. “Plenary” means “all.” The whole Bible, even every Scripture passage, is inspired by God. *Theopneustos* indicates the means of inspiration. The Spirit of God breathed out the words to the writers. Chafer carefully notes that God uses the human instrument: “The divine and human authorship are both without impairment to either, wholly present in every word from the first to the last.”<sup>26</sup> How God worked this wonderful miracle of inspiration no one can fully understand, but the Bible clearly says that He did. L. W. Munhall encapsulates the excitement of this truth in his conclusion:

“It is all one to say, ‘Moses saith,’ ‘It saith.’ ‘the Scripture saith,’ ‘He saith’, since in all it is ‘God saith’—all this proves the ‘high place,’ the estimate and conception which Christ, His Apostles, and the whole Jewish and Christian Church, had of the ‘Scriptures’, and that they are a God breathed, oracular Book, created by the Breath of God—a verbally inspired Book, whose ‘words’ were the

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geology, or history, or physiology, which our own intelligence and industry can discover, we ought not to expect to find accurately set forth for us in the Bible.” 4) “Inspiration does not override and overwhelm the inspired writer’s personal characteristics.” Of these four, only the last point is consistent with the orthodox Biblical teaching of inspiration.

<sup>24</sup>Gray, 15.

<sup>25</sup>Chafer, 71.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 75.

‘Words of God’, infallible, authoritative, final, the court of last appeal, the very ‘Utterance’ and ‘Voice’ of God.”<sup>27</sup>

For reasons only fully known to Himself, God has reached out to man by breathing out the very words of Scripture through human writers. How marvelous that a sovereign and sinless God should personally make Himself known to a sinful creation!

### Synthesis of Key Terms

Having examined the meanings of the first three words of II Timothy 3:16, one must next determine how these words relate to each other. The key question for this section is whether to view *theopneustos* as a description of all Scripture or as an assertion about all Scripture. On the surface this question seems very insignificant. Fairbairn goes as far as to say “it is plainly of no moment, as regards the substantive import of the passage [which of these translations we choose].”<sup>28</sup> Were this opinion true, scholars would not have wasted page upon page trying to defend their favored translation. In fact, the translation chosen could not have more importance.

The choice for translating these first few words of II Timothy 3:16 generally comes down to two options: “All inspired scripture” or “All scripture is inspired.” Lenski writes, “The one is just as correct as the other as far as the Greek is concerned; and the meaning is exactly the same save for the insignificant shifting of the copula.”<sup>29</sup> While Lenski has rightly observed the grammatical possibility of both translations, he misses the mark when he claims that both translations have the same meaning. In reality, this subtle language change conveys two very different meanings. Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown explain, “The translation, ‘all Scripture that is God-inspired is also useful,’ would imply that there is some *Scripture* which is not God-inspired.”<sup>30</sup> This translation leaves the reader with the impossible task of determining what parts of Scripture God has indeed inspired.

The alternative, “all scripture is inspired,” creates a definite assertion of truth about the entire canon of Scripture. Aside from the benefit of certainty, four other arguments suggest that this second option should be preferred. First, context supports this interpretation. Lea and Griffin assert, “Paul was not raising the question of the inspiration of certain passages of Scripture. He affirmed the usefulness of Scripture based on its inspiration.”<sup>31</sup> The remainder of verse 16 and the continuation of thought in verse 17 require Paul to have the inspiration of the entire Bible in mind. Second, similar grammatical use in the New Testament supports this interpretation. Bullinger counts nine passages which have the same construction found in II Timothy 3:16, and consistent translation demands that this construction be translated the same way in all of its occurrences.<sup>32</sup> Consistent translation throughout the New Testament will yield “all scripture is

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<sup>27</sup>L.W. Munhall, “Inspiration,” in vol. 2 of *The Fundamentals*, ed. R.A. Torrey (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 1998), 50.

<sup>28</sup>Fairbairn, 378.

<sup>29</sup>Lenski, 840.

<sup>30</sup>Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, 1380.

<sup>31</sup>Lea and Griffin, 236.

<sup>32</sup>Bullinger, 45.

inspired.” Third, the translation within the verse itself will be more consistent. According to Ryrie, “By supplying ‘is’ two times, both adjectives (‘inspired’ and ‘profitable’) are understood the same way, as predicate adjectives, which is more natural.”<sup>33</sup> Although this claim is somewhat subjective, the previous evidence strengthens it. Fourth, the primary use of the conjunction (*kai*) supports this second option. Ryrie continues by saying, “the connective word, though it may be translated ‘also,’ much more frequently means ‘and’.”<sup>34</sup> Again, this argument alone is inconclusive, but it adds weight to the evidence already mentioned. These four arguments lead one to agree with Smith’s conclusion: “‘all scripture is God-breathed’ is the likeliest rendering in English.”<sup>35</sup> Grammatically, both translations may be possible, but logically and theologically, only “all scripture is inspired” explains all of the evidence.

### *Implications*

#### **Inerrancy**

Inspiration is the foundation of inerrancy. Inerrancy refers to the biblical doctrine that Scripture is inerrant (“without error”). The inerrancy of Scripture extends to every portion of Scripture that is inspired—the whole Bible. The entire Bible, in every subject that it discusses, is inerrant. Although some would teach that inerrancy extends only to religious truth, Ryrie points out the absurdity of such a claim: “If the Bible contains some errors, however few or many, how can one be sure that his understanding of Christ is correct?”<sup>36</sup> The inerrancy of Scripture results in absolute confidence in the accuracy and truthfulness of the words of all Scripture because they are the words of God. If the Bible has error, then God has erred. Still others will claim that inerrancy only applies to the original writings, which have long since disappeared. Such a doctrine of inerrancy proves worthless. One should rather agree with the statement of Smith, “It is proper to consider both copies and translations as inspired scriptures, while recognizing that in so doing we are referring to their true character rather than their absolute character.”<sup>37</sup> Recognizing these copies as translations as inspired, inasmuch as they reflect the original writings, they must also possess the characteristic of inerrancy. Inerrancy means that the reader can know that the Bible speaks the truth.

#### **Infallibility**

Inerrancy guarantees infallibility. According to Lea and Griffin, “The term ‘infallible’ suggests that the Bible does not mislead, is a sure reliable guide, and is fully trustworthy in all matters about which it speaks.”<sup>38</sup> Because the Bible is absolutely and entirely true, the reader can trust all that the Bible teaches. Infallibility expresses both the reliability and authority of Scripture. As Chafer shows, this doctrine originates with the fact of inspiration: “To predicate of the Scriptures, as they do of themselves, that they are God-breathed, is to assign to them the

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<sup>33</sup>Ryrie, 78.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Smith, 100.

<sup>36</sup>Ryrie, 87.

<sup>37</sup>Smith, 95.

<sup>38</sup>Lea and Griffin, 239.

supreme authority which belongs to God alone.”<sup>39</sup> Both the reliability and authority of Scripture stem from the character of the God who inspired it. The infallibility of Scripture means that the reader can have absolute confidence in the guidance of the Bible for their doctrine as well as their daily life.

## **Preservation**

Inspiration demands preservation. Although Plummer argued against verbal inspiration while making this statement, it nonetheless holds true: “Is it, then, reasonable to suppose that God would work a miracle to produce what He takes no care to preserve[?]”<sup>40</sup> Plummer’s remark could provide strong support for his argument against verbal inspiration, if one could demonstrate its validity, but the evidence actually proves that God has preserved His Word, even down to the very words. Gray affirms, “Do not the number and variety of manuscripts and versions extant render it comparatively easy to arrive at a knowledge of its text, and does not competent scholarship today affirm that as to the New Testament at least, we have in 999 cases out of every thousand the very word of that original text?”<sup>41</sup> God entrusted the preservation of the Scripture to His people. Gray has already demonstrated the preservation of the New Testament text, and the preservation of the Old Testament consonantal Hebrew text is virtually undisputed by conservative scholars. The high place afforded the Scripture by the Jews guaranteed that they would treat the text with the utmost care and respect. Preservation results in the confidence of today’s reader that he possesses an accurate record of God’s original inspired, inerrant, and infallible words.

## **Sufficiency**

Paul intended that his statement about the inspiration of Scripture would prove Scripture’s sufficiency and profitability. The last part of II Timothy 3:16 and all of verse 17 demonstrate Paul’s intention in making the claim of inspiration for all of Scripture. Paul did not want to give Timothy a theology lesson. Timothy already accepted the Scripture as the Word of God. Instead, Paul wanted to remind Timothy where the authority Timothy would need for decisions and doctrine in life and ministry originated. Corneliu Constantineanu explains the correlation between the authority of Scripture and the authority of God: “Following the Bible’s own view of authority, we see that Scripture points to the authority of God himself, and thus to speak about the authority of Scripture is to speak about the authority of God.”<sup>42</sup> Thus when confronted by opponents who ask, “By what right do you have to claim this is sin?” Timothy could answer, “Thus saith the Lord.” The authority of God transcends all earthly authority. Constantineanu continues, “The authority of God thus challenges our own authority, the authority of the world, and even the authority of the church!”<sup>43</sup> The authority of God gives the Christian confidence and guidance for every aspect of life and ministry.

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<sup>39</sup>Chafer, 94.

<sup>40</sup>Plummer, 393-394.

<sup>41</sup>Gray, 14.

<sup>42</sup>Corneliu Constantineanu, “The Authority of Scripture as the Word of God,” *Kairos: Evangelical Journal of Theology* 4 (2010): 19.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

Paul explains that God gave this authoritative, inspired Bible for the spiritual benefit of His people. II Timothy 3:16 details the four-fold profit of the inspired Scriptures: 1) doctrine; 2) reproof; 3) correction; and 4) instruction in righteousness. Doctrine simply means teaching. The Bible gives authoritative teaching on every subject which it discusses. Reproof and correction have been ably contrasted by Towner, “If convicting [reproof/rebuke] is regarded as a negative measure, the activity that follows, ‘correcting,’ is positive, aiming at the goal of recovery.”<sup>44</sup> Reproof tells the sinner that he is wrong. Correction tells him how to be right. Finally, “instruction in righteousness” explains how to stay right. The Bible encourages the believer who does right to continue in well-doing. Paul concludes his thoughts on inspiration by stressing that the ultimate aim of the inspired Scripture is the spiritual maturity of the believer.

### *Summary*

II Timothy 3:16 teaches the verbal, plenary inspiration of the entire Scripture. Every word of every passage of Scripture came directly from God. While this process seems inexplicable from a human perspective, it remains true. Inspiration implies the truthfulness and trustworthiness of every word and teaching of Scripture. The inspiration of Scripture also implies that God has preserved His Word. Finally, inspiration implies the authority and profitability of Scripture. The Bible is the *only and final authority* for doctrine and Christian living because it is the only authority that comes directly from God.

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<sup>44</sup>Towner, 591.

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