

If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do? (Psalm 11:3 KJV)

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. (Matthew 7:24-25)

Today we're going to consider the foundations of the Biblical worldview. We looked last time at the concept of the worldview, defined as "a network of related presuppositions in terms of which every aspect of man's knowledge and awareness are interpreted." [Bahnsen] A "presupposition" is a belief that is accepted without proof, such as the belief in the scientific method, an intuitive sense, or the teachings of the Quran. All these other groups have their distinctive presuppositions and everyone has a worldview – from the man digging a ditch to the philosopher in the university. People very rarely consider or question their own presuppositions – but if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? Well, the righteous builds his house upon a rock. Let us consider, therefore, the necessary and sufficient presuppositions of Christianity. We will do this with a short historical survey of the creeds and confessions of the church – that is, to see what they make explicit and what, if anything, is presupposed.

1. The Christian Worldview

a. First Foundation

- i. The ancient Apostle's Creed (no date) begins: "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: [...]", etc.
- ii. The Nicene Creed was written in 325 AD and confesses, "I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; [...]"
- iii. The Athanasian Creed (no date) begins, "Now the catholic faith is that we worship One God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the Persons nor dividing the substance. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, another of the Holy Spirit. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is One, the Glory equal, the Majesty coeternal. [...]"
- iv. The Gallican Confession (1559) was prepared by John Calvin and delivered by Theodore Beza to King Charles IX. It consists of 40 articles covering all aspects of the Christian religion. Article 1 is entitled, "Of One God" and begins as follows: "We believe and confess that there is but one God, who is one sole and simple essence, spiritual, eternal, invisible, immutable, infinite, incomprehensible, ineffable, omnipotent; who is all-wise, all-good, all-just, and all-merciful."
- v. The Scots Confession (1560), which was created under the direction of the great Reformer, John Knox and written by six other men all named John, has 25 chapters. The first chapter is entitled "God" and it begins like this, "We confess and acknowledge one God alone, to whom alone we must cleave, whom alone we must serve, whom only we must worship, and in whom alone we put our trust. Who is eternal, infinite, immeasurable, incomprehensible, omnipotent,

invisible; one in substance and yet distinct in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.”

- vi. The First London Baptist Confession of 1644 consists of 53 articles, the first of which begins:-- That God as he is in himself, cannot be comprehended of any but himself, 1 dwelling in that inaccessible light, that no eye can attain unto, whom never man saw, nor can see; that there is but 2 one God, one Christ, one Spirit, one Faith, one Baptism; 3 one Rule of holiness and obedience for all Saints, at all times, in all places to be observed.
- b. Response to First Foundation
 - i. In response to these great confessions of faith, it is absolutely fair for an unbeliever to ask, “How do you know?” and “By what authority should I believe them?”
 - ii. While, therefore, there may fairly be a question whether a course of Systematic Theology should begin with disquisitions relative to the being and character of God, as revealed, or with an inquiry what Natural Theology can teach, proceeding thence to the doctrines of Revelation, there can be no question that a Confession of Faith in revealed religion ought to begin with that revelation itself. This is the plan adopted by other Confessions. It begins with a chapter on the Holy Scriptures; [Hetherington - History of Westminster Assembly, p. 303]
- c. Second Foundation
 - i. The Second Helvetic Confession of 1564 was written by the Swiss Reformer Heinrich Bullinger following the death of Zwingli. It contains 30 chapters, the first of which is called, “Of the Holy Scripture Being the True Word of God,” and says “We believe and confess the canonical Scriptures of the holy prophets and apostles of both Testaments to be the true Word of God, and to have sufficient authority of themselves, not of men. For God himself spoke to the fathers, prophets, apostles, and still speaks to us through the Holy Scriptures.”
 - ii. The Irish Articles of Religion (1615) were written and influenced by the Irish Reformer James Ussher. These consist of 19 Articles and begin with the first Article, “Of the Holy Scripture and the three Creeds.”
 - 1. The ground of our Religion, and rule of faith and all saving truth is the word of God contained in the Holy Scripture.
 - 2. By the name of Holy Scripture we understand all the Canonical Books of the Old and New Testament, namely: [list of the 66 canonical books]
 - iii. The Westminster Confession of 1646 and the Second London Baptist Confession of 1689 both begin with the words, “The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience, although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and his will which is necessary unto salvation.”
- d. Response to the Second Foundation
 - i. The Westminster and London Baptist Confessions – which are very good expressions of the Reformed Christian worldview – lay down the principle of a

written divine revelation at the very outset – as the foundation of the Christian worldview. This is a very different starting point than the earlier creeds and confessions which began with a declaration of the existence and nature of God. In response to the question, “how do you know about this God?” theologians and apologists must point to the Bible as the only sufficient, certain and infallible source of knowledge.

- ii. The unbeliever will again press the question, “how do you know that the Bible is the Word of God?” and question the Reformed Christian about his first principle. We regularly are confronted with such objections when sharing the gospel. While many people and groups have some regard and respect for the Bible yet there is a great deal of ignorance about what it says about itself.

e. The Foundation Examined

- i. A proper statement of the principal foundation of the Reformed Christian worldview is needed at this point. The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy was produced in 1978 as “the first systematically comprehensive, broadly based, scholarly, creed-like statement on the inspiration and authority of Scripture in the history of the church.”
 - 1. **Article I.** WE AFFIRM that the normative authority of Holy Scripture is the authority of God Himself, and is attested by Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church. WE DENY the legitimacy of separating the authority of Christ from the authority of Scripture, or of opposing the one to the other.
 - 2. **Article XII.** WE AFFIRM that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit.
 - 3. **Article XI.** WE AFFIRM that Scripture, having been given by divine inspiration, is infallible, so that, far from misleading us, it is true and reliable in all the matters it addresses.
 - 4. **Article VII.** WE AFFIRM that inspiration was the work in which God by His Spirit, through human writers, gave us His Word. The origin of Scripture is divine. The mode of divine inspiration remains largely a mystery to us.
 - 5. **Article X.** WE AFFIRM that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original. (see <https://defendinginerrancy.com/chicago-statements/>)
- ii. Some points to consider:
 - 1. Inspiration is that extraordinary, supernatural influence (or, passively, the result of it,) exerted by the Holy Ghost on the writers of our Sacred Books, by which their words were rendered also the words of God, and, therefore, perfectly infallible. In this definition, it is to be noted: 1st. That this influence is a supernatural one — something different from the inspiration of the poet or man of genius. Luke’s accuracy is not left

by it with only the safeguards which "the diligent and accurate Suetonius" had. 2d. That it is an extraordinary influence — something different from the ordinary action of the Spirit in the conversion and sanctifying guidance of believers. Paul had some more prevalent safeguard against false-teaching than Luther or even the saintly Rutherford. 3d. That it is such an influence as makes the words written under its guidance, the words of God; by which is meant to be affirmed an absolute infallibility (as alone fitted to divine words), admitting no degrees whatever — extending to the very word, and to all the words. So that every part of Holy Writ is thus held alike infallibly true in all its statements, of whatever kind. [Warfield]

2. The Scriptures were written by men and yet every single word in the original was written by God. "every word indicted under the analogous influence of inspiration was at one and the same time the consciously self-chosen word of the writer and the divinely-inspired word of the Spirit. ... Once grasp this idea, and how impossible is it to separate in any measure the human and divine. It is all human — every word, and all divine. The human characteristics are to be noted and exhibited; the divine perfection and infallibility, no less." [ibid]
 - a. It is a valuable insight that the Word of God is fully divine and fully human. The humanity is necessarily sanctified and set apart from all error. The Word of God is first divine and then human such that the will of the human author is said to concur with the perfect will of the divine author, the Holy Spirit.
3. This involves a view of the human will which is utterly subordinate to God's will and is therefore consistent with the Reformed view of God's sovereignty and presupposes it. Scripture speaks with God's authority because it is God speaking.
4. Scripture presupposes the triune God of Scripture who has created all things and upholds all things by the Word of His power and created man in His own image.
 - a. Among the Persons of the Trinity, in the eternal generation of the Son, there was a communication of essence. And in virtue of this communication the Son also has life in Himself, as Christ said, "For as the Father hath life in Himself, even so gave He to the Son also to have life in Himself," John 5:26. [Berkhof] "for God giveth not the Spirit by measure to Him" (John 3:34).
 - b. The Father speaks to the Son — we have signposts of their communication in Scripture: "the LORD hath said unto Me, Thou are my Son; this day have I begotten thee" (Psalm 2:7). And "unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever" (Heb 1:8). And "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. (Psalm 110:1).

- c. Scripture reveals that God is Triune and that God spoke in order to create, "And God said, Let there be light." (Gen 1:3) communicates among the Divine Persons "Let us make man in our image," (Gen 1:26).
- d. Scripture reveals that God communicated to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden and gave them specific instructions and a commandment not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- e. Because of the fall there is the absolute need of a divine revelation for salvation. There is no hint of grace in fallen nature which is red in tooth and claw.
- f. The same God who is absolutely sovereign over the affairs of men to produce an inerrant Scripture has also preserved the same throughout the course of history.
 - i. The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation forever. (Psalm 12:6-7)
- 5. It can be seen that the presupposition of an inerrant Scripture presupposes the Triune God who created and upholds all things and so also extends to the preservation of the written revelation through the generations.

2. The dilemma

- a. In fact it then appears that the argument for the Scripture as the infallible revelation of God is, to all intents and purposes, the same as the argument for the existence of God. Protestants are required by the most basic principles of their system to vindicate the existence of no other God than the one who has spoken in Scripture. But this God cannot be proved to exist by any other method than the indirect one of presupposition. No proof for this God and for the truth of his revelation in Scripture can be offered by an appeal to anything in human experience that has not itself received its light from the God whose existence and whose revelation it is supposed to prove. [van Til]
- b. The Scriptures are self-attesting as God is self-attesting. Scripture attests to God and God attests to Scripture. A demonstration of the Bible's authority therefore requires an examination of what the Bible says about itself. If the Bible made no such claim about itself, it would be pointless for us to claim it on its behalf.
- 3. How then shall we demonstrate the inspiration, inerrancy and infallibility of the Scriptures?
 - a. Christ as the eternally-begotten Son of God, taking a human nature to Himself to be Incarnate as the God-man, the Word of God, is the primary Subject of Scripture.
 - i. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. (Genesis 3:15)
 - ii. Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14)

- iii. But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, (5) To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. (Galatians 4:4-5)
 - iv. And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. (Luke 24:27)
 - v. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. (1 Timothy 3:16)
 - vi. God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; (Hebrews 1:1-2)
- b. Christ teaches the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures.
 - i. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. (Matthew 5:18)
 - ii. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. (Matthew 24:35)
 - iii. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. (John 17:17)
 - iv. After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. (John 19:28)
 - v. If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; (John 10:35)
 - vi. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? (54) But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? ... (56) But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled. (Matthew 26:53-54, 56)
 - vii. And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. (Luke 24:44)
- c. Louis Gaussen wrote in his work Theopneustia, "We do not hesitate to say, that when we hear the Son of God quoting the Scriptures, the question of their Theopneustia is, in our judgment, settled. We want no further evidence. All the declarations of the Bible unquestionably are divine; but this example of the Saviour of the world at once tells us all. This proof does not require either long or learned researches; the hand of a child can grasp it as powerfully as that of a theologian." [François Samuel R. Louis Gaussen. Theopneustia: the plenary inspiration of the holy Scriptures (Kindle Locations 5027-5031).]
- d. The references of Christ's explicit statements regarding the Scriptures are just the tip of the iceberg. His constant appeal was to the Scriptures and against the traditions of men.
- e. The OT prophets claimed to speak God's words. David said, "The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue" (2 Samuel 23:2). The phrase "Thus saith the Lord" occurs over 400 times. The phrase "The word of the LORD came unto ____" occurs almost 150 times.

- f. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy that, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, (2 Timothy 3:16) In this verse, Paul coins a new word, THEOPNEUSTOS, and he wrote that “all Scripture is THEOPNEUSTOS”. Our version translates it as “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God” but this doesn’t really capture the strength of the expression. The word is literally THEOS + PNEUSTOS = “God-breathed” which presupposes the work of the Holy Spirit operating in and through the consciousnesses of men – “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21).
 - g. We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church of God to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scriptures; and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, and the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, and many other incomparable excellencies, and entire perfections thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God; yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts. [London Baptist Confession 1689, chap. 1, sect. 5]
4. Answers to Specific Objections
- a. Objection: The text of the New Testament been corrupted
 - i. To answer this, we need to understand how the NT has come down to us because our position is that the autographs, the manuscripts as originally written are inerrant. However, we do not possess any of the autographs. What we do possess is a huge number of manuscripts which are copies of those originals.
 - ii. Today, in Greek alone, more than 5,600 handwritten New Testament documents are known to exist. Many of these are fragmentary of course, especially the older ones, but the average Greek New Testament manuscript is more than 450 pages long. Altogether, there are more than 2.6 million pages of text, leaving hundreds of witnesses for every book of the New Testament. As more and more manuscripts come to light, we are getting closer and closer to the wording of the autographs.
 - iii. It is not just Greek manuscripts that help in this endeavor. Beginning in the second century, the New Testament was translated into a variety of languages—Latin, Coptic, Syriac, Georgian, Gothic, Ethiopic, Armenian, and a host of others. There are about 10,000 Latin manuscripts of the New Testament alone. No one really knows the total number of all these ancient versions, but the best estimates are between 5,000 and 10,000— besides the 10,000 in Latin. Altogether we have at least 20,000 handwritten manuscripts of the New Testament in various languages.
 - iv. Even if none of these documents existed, we would not be left without a witness. (Collectively, manuscripts, versions [or translations], and quotations of the New Testament by the church fathers are known as witnesses or external evidence.) That is because church fathers wrote homilies and commentaries on

the New Testament. To date, more than 1 million quotations of the New Testament by the Fathers have been recorded. “[I]f all other sources for our knowledge of the text of the New Testament were destroyed, [the patristic quotations] would be sufficient alone for the reconstruction of practically the entire New Testament.” [Steven B Cowan. In Defense of the Bible: A Comprehensive Apologetic for the Authority of Scripture (p. 146).]

- v. The vast majority of these variations involve easily understandable copyist errors in spelling, grammar, and style, or accidental omissions or duplications of letters, words, or phrases.
- vi. Finally, we respond with the Biblical argument from the sovereignty of the God who wrote the Scriptures through men – He is sovereign and has promised to preserve His word and has taken great care to preserve it in a vast number of witnesses. As Paul referred to the more than 500 brethren who witnessed the resurrected Christ, so here the Lord has provided over 5000 Greek mss, 20,000 mss translated into other languages, and more than 1 million quotations in the church fathers -- overall, close to 99 percent of the original Greek New Testament can be reconstructed beyond any reasonable doubt.
 - 1. We may look around at the vast differences that exist among the various people groups on the earth. Nevertheless we all have so much more in common with each other than the minor differences among us.
 - 2. Any two human beings are 99.9% identical – there is only one race, the human race – and though there are so many of us, and we appear so different, there is no doubt that we are all descended from the same original pair.
- vii. The Scriptures of the New Testament have come down to us in such a way that there is no possibility of corruption because of the great cloud of witnesses. John Owen concludes, Let me say without offense, this imagination, asserted on deliberation, seems to me to border on atheism. Surely the promise of God for the preservation of his word, with his love and care of his church, of whose faith and obedience that word of his is the only rule, requires other thoughts at our hands. [Owen, John, Integrity and Purity of the Hebrew and Greek Text, vol 16]
- b. Objection: The text of the Old Testament been corrupted
 - i. The textual background of the Old Testament is quite different from that of the NT. The Masoretic text. The text that has come to us from the Masoretes is relatively recent, from about AD 1000. This is the authoritative basis of the translation into the Old Testament. Given that the OT canon was closed with the writing of Malachi around 400 BC and that much of it was written long before that, as the writer of 1 Chronicles 4:22 indicates, the records of these names were ancient at that time. Now at least 2000 years passed between the time of David and the MT.
 - ii. However, the Jewish scribes were absolutely fanatical in their devotion to copying the word of God. There was a list of procedures followed which included:

1. There must be a review within thirty days, and if as many as three pages required corrections, the entire manuscript had to be redone.
 2. The letters, words, and paragraphs had to be counted, and the document became invalid if two letters touched each other. The middle paragraph, word and letter must correspond to those of the original document.
- iii. In 1946, a shepherd boy discovered some scrolls inside a cave West of the Dead Sea. These manuscripts dated between 300 B.C. and 100 A.D. Over the next decade, more scrolls were found in caves and the discovery became known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. Every book in the Old Testament was represented in this discovery except Esther. Numerous copies of each book was discovered (For example, 25 copies of Deuteronomy). [Manning]
 - iv. The text discovered in the charred Ein Gedi scroll is “100 percent identical” to the version of the Book of Leviticus that has been in use for centuries, said Dead Sea Scroll scholar Emmanuel Tov from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, who participated in the study. “This is quite amazing for us,” he said. “In 2,000 years, this text has not changed.”
 - v. Again, we must insist on the sovereignty and providential preservation of the Holy Scriptures. The same God who sovereignly breathed-out His word through His prophets providentially preserves His word throughout all generations.
- c. Objection: The Bible is full of contradictions
- i. This assertion directly contradicts the presupposition of the inerrancy of Scripture. And the stakes are high because a single actual contradiction would be sufficient to disprove inerrancy. But amazingly, in spite of being written over two thousand years but about 35 different authors, no contradiction has ever been demonstrated. That is not to say that there aren’t unresolved difficulties because there are plenty. However, in each case there are potential solutions and there need only be one potential solution to avoid the contradiction.
 - ii. Gaussen wrote that “the objections, when looked into, are changed into subjects of admiration; for, in compelling us, by a more attentive examination, to lay bare the gems of holy Scripture, their lustre has lit up new splendours, which have led us to fresh discoveries of more brilliant reflections of its divinity” [Gaussen. *Theopneustia: the plenary inspiration of the holy Scriptures* (Kindle Locations 3647-3651).]
 - iii. The quote of Gaussen brings to light the marvel of Biblical inerrancy. Just as our two eyes provide slightly different information which our brains are able to coalesce into a single vision with depth perception, so too do the multiple accounts in Scripture of the same events provide depth. When we are given, as we are, four independent eyewitness accounts of the resurrection in the gospel accounts, the accounts each contain information not found in the others. For instance, comparing Mark 16:1 with Matt 28:1, we note that both include Mary Magdalene, and another Mary but only Mark includes Salome.
 - iv. While we must freely admit that, as Peter wrote that in Paul’s writings, “are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable

wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. (2 Peter 3:16). This is no doubt the case but the criticism that Jesus leveled against the Sadducees, saying “Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?” (Mark 12:24) carries much weight as well.

- v. Be fully persuaded in your own mind that an adequate explanation exists, even though you have not yet found it.

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