

# THE EQUIP INSTITUTE

Theme: Baptist Beliefs

Topic: BF&M (2000): Article I: The Scriptures

Fall 2025

## Introduction

The Equip Institute exists to equip members of Taylors First Baptist Church to think rightly about God and his Word for the sake of living rightly before God in his world. The topic this week is Article I in the Baptist Faith and Message (2000), which is on the Scriptures.

## Article I

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

## Key Biblical Texts

<sup>8</sup>The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever. (Isa. 40:8)

<sup>17</sup>Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. (John 17:17)

<sup>14</sup>But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it <sup>15</sup>and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup>All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:14-17)

<sup>19</sup>And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, <sup>20</sup>knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. <sup>21</sup>For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Pet. 1:19-21)

## Observations

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## Exposition of Article I

### *Historical Context*

Since the Second London Confession (1677/1689), every major Baptist confession of faith has begun with an article on the Scriptures. This is symbolic of the centrality of Scripture in determining Baptist beliefs. Every edition of the BF&M has begun with an article on the Scriptures, including the BF&M (2000). When the BF&M was revised in 2000, this article provoked the greatest debate on the floor and in the months following its adoption.

### *Key Ideas*

The Bible is **inspired**. Though men wrote the words of the Scriptures, those same words were also ultimately written by God. The Bible is really and truly men's words, but far more important, it is also really and truly God's words. When the Bible speaks, God speaks.

The Bible is **authoritative**. The Scriptures alone are the ultimate standard for Christian faith and practice. Authentic Christian unity is rooted in conformity to the teachings of Scripture.

The Bible is **inerrant**. It is without error and is thus fully truthful and trustworthy. As stated earlier, this was the key theological point of contention among Southern Baptists at this time.

The Bible is **sufficient**. The Scriptures tell us everything God intends to communicate to all people verbally. This divine communication (revelation) is the basis upon which he will judge us at the end of the age.

The Bible is **purposeful**. The main purpose of the Scriptures is to communicate the means by which humans can be saved. This doesn't mean the Bible doesn't have other purposes. But this is the purpose that matters the most personally for every reader of the Scriptures.

The Bible is **Christ-centered**. The Scriptures in their entirety testify to Jesus, and he is the focus of divine revelation. From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is about Jesus.

Taken together, the BF&M (2000) provides a concise summary of the historic Protestant doctrine of Scripture. The article implicitly rejects a Roman Catholic understanding of Scripture, and it resists the revisions to the doctrine of Scripture advocated by modernist or even Neo-Orthodox theologians. Though the article isn't exhaustive, it is unquestionably theologically conservative.

## Controversy about the Article

Moderate Baptists objected to three revisions to the article on the Scriptures in the BF&M (2000). The first objection related to a phrase that was deleted. The 1963 edition said, "The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is the record of God's revelation of Himself to man." The 2000 revision changed this to, "The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man." Moderates claim this change elevates the Bible to the same status as God, which is idolatry. Conservatives claim this change reflects the historic Baptist view of the Scriptures. The Bible isn't just a record of revelation, but it is itself divine revelation. If we only claim the former, then it could imply that the Bible itself isn't God's written words but rather is just men writing about past human interactions with God. The latter claim is exactly what many moderates believe about the Bible.

The second objection is the addition of a new sentence in the BF&M (2000): "Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy." This sentence clarifies that the prior sentence, which says the Bible is "truth, without any mixture of error," means the Bible is inerrant. Many moderates believe the message of the Bible is inerrant, but not the actual words of the Scriptures. Conservatives believed the message is true because the words are true. God himself is fully and perfectly true and the source of all truth. He is the One who is communicating with us verbally through the Scriptures. Thus, the words and the message they convey reflect God's perfect character.

The final objection is related to a revision and clarification. The 1963 edition said, "The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ." The 2000 edition deleted this sentence completely and replaced it with the following: "All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation." Moderates complain the deletion undermines the centrality of Jesus. Conservatives claim the deleted sentence is problematic because the language could imply that Jesus is the "gold standard" by which all the other, sometimes outdated or even incorrect claims of the Bible should be evaluated. In fact, this is exactly what many moderates believe about the Bible. The new sentence better expresses how Jesus relates to the Scriptures, and it closes the door to all attempts to "pit" Jesus's recorded words against any other of God's written words.