

**“Scripture as Authoritative Divine Revelation
Contrasting with Human Subjectivity”
(A Position Paper on the Nature and Significance of the Bible
in Christian Experience with Particular Reference to
Human Subjectivity Applied in Religious Authority)**

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The Era of Written Scripture: When reference is made to the “era of written Scripture,” the meaning of this title points to the canonization of Scripture and the closure of the canon as written divine revelation. Although there were in the Old Testament both writing and non-writing prophets, the canon of the Old Testament was codified as the Word of God, including all divinely authorized declarations by those whom God sent to His people to proclaim His Word to them. Jesus references this codification several times in His life, sometimes shortening the reference to “Moses and the Prophets.” The New Testament writings were authoritative the moment they were written, and the first century church recognized this truth. I am not in this paper dealing with the process of canonization regarding the Bible or the manuscript evidence for such canonization. This is a different subject worthy of study. The assertion I am making here is that the written sixty-six books of the Bible form the authoritative canon of divine revelation, which is all-sufficient in human history and experience with reference to God’s revelation to humans. The Bible contains what God wants to say authoritatively as divine revelation to all people for all history; as such, the Bible contains the authoritative foundation and teaching for doctrine and moral wisdom that humans need for living in and under the sovereignty and pleasure of God.

Written Revelation: The term “written revelation” implies the interjection of God’s mind and thought into human experience through the vehicle of written language. This is in contrast to human experience separate from written language (e.g., hearing a voice, seeing a vision, dreaming a dream, etc.). The Scripture as the written revelation of God includes both Old and New Testaments; it also engages both chronological time periods in each of these Testaments. It is true that in both time periods (Old and New Testaments) there was human experience connected to divine revelation outside the context of writing (*A good example of this in the Old Testament would be those non-writing prophets who spoke for God at God’s call and leadership, and in the New Testament the term “prophecy” continued on; however, as time went by following the ascension of Jesus and*

Pentecost the emphasis grew more and more on the preaching aspect of prophecy, which in turn focused the spotlight on the written Scriptures), the overwhelming textual emphasis in the New Testament as it pertains to the teaching aspect of the Epistles (which were intended for the instruction of God's people as the church, especially for Christian leadership and preaching) is that the communication of the gospel to the world and the building up of God's people in sanctification and service all rest upon the preaching and teaching of the written Scriptures, which are intended for these matters.

The Nature and Purpose of Non-written Revelation and Written Revelation:

- **Progressive Revelation:** Quickly following an admission on our part that God has in human history past utilized non-written revelation to communicate with the minds and hearts of people, it must be asked what the nature and significance of such revelation might be, particularly as it compares and connects to written revelation. In general terms, divine revelation was sovereignly granted by God to people in a PROGRESSIVE fashion in both time and content. As such, earlier revelation came in more general ways. This includes revelation through CREATION (visual) and in VARIOUS HUMAN EXPERIENCES (i.e., dreams, visions, and theophanies). All of this came before Jesus Christ; but in the incarnation, we have a change in revelatory and redemptive history. There is a climax and culmination to revelation and redemption in Jesus Christ when He came to earth in incarnate flesh. The Bible says in Hebrews 1:1-3a, *"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world. He (Christ) is the exact radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature..."* In John 14:8 Philip said to Jesus, *"Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us."* To this request Jesus responded, *"Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know Me, Philip? Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father...The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own authority, but the Father who dwells in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me...(vv. 9-11)."* Jesus is making the extraordinary claim that He is the incarnational manifestation of deity in human form (as the Son of God; no intention is meant here to disregard the doctrine of the Trinity). He speaks and He acts in keeping with the Father's nature and will; to hear Jesus and to observe Jesus is to know the Father's nature and character in Jesus Christ. Revelation and redemption come to an exalted and completed form in Jesus Christ!

The New Testament teaches doctrine and instruction relative to Jesus Christ and the gospel. Although there is much to learn about truth that engages life in redemption and holiness (and we will continue to learn more about this in heaven), there is no further special revelation beyond Jesus Christ and the New Testament to be made; Jesus Christ and the message of the gospel form the final authoritative revelation from God to humanity. Jesus is the focus of prophetic Old Testament anticipation and meaning, and when Jesus came, this fulfilled God's promise in the person and saving work of Christ. This promise is still being fulfilled in human history and human experience. This will continue in a linear fashion until the second coming of Jesus Christ and the eschatos (the culmination of all things in Christ).

The progressive nature of written revelation takes its form for a variety of reasons. It allows for sequential receptivity and understanding within the context of the covenant of redemption. This begins with the Patriarchs and moves forward in the history of Israel. The people of God were characterized by their remembrance of and obedience to the teaching of God in the Law, as applied to the covenant nation of Israel. Everything in the Old Testament prophets always came back to what God has said in authoritative revelation as contained in the Law (the Old Testament prophets specifically referenced regularly the Law of God as given in *Deuteronomy*).

In the history of revelation, on occasion through early periods of progressive revelation, God utilized human experience and subjectivity in divine revelation. In the Old Testament, as part of the revelatory process, prophets and seers would experience other worldly perceptions of truth for the purpose of speaking for God to the people. And God was gracious to accommodate these prophets in their weaknesses, so that the truth might come to the people in the situations of life. However, a close examination of the writing prophets reveals that they most often were not adding new material to the Law, usually in the form of the Deuteronomic Law (*Book of Deuteronomy*). Thus, the Law was foundational to the prophetic word in the Old Testament. This is not totally representative of the prophetic ministry in the Old Testament, but this covers a large portion of the writing of the Old Testament prophets. The prophets, thus, were declaring in their

prophetic style and preaching the Law of God, as given to Moses and contained in the teaching of the Pentateuch.

As history progressed, this revelation became more and more clear through the development of Messianic prophecy. The typology of the exodus and the exile added to the understanding of redemptive purpose in history by God's people in the Old Testament context. This line of revelatory progression culminated in the sending of Jesus Christ the eternal Son of God in human flesh in the incarnation for the purpose of saving sinners and the world through His saving work in the cross and the resurrection. The Bible says in Galatians 4:4-5, "*In the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son...to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.*" Jesus showed a keen discernment in His earthly life for the Father's timing in His ministry. He always resisted the temptation to hurry. Everything was to be done in God's time! This relates to progressive revelation, as well as redemptive history. This maturation process prepares for the coming Messiah and is helpful to announce Him when He comes. As the incarnation serves as the pinnacle of revelation, so the New Testament looks back to Jesus' life and saving work in a didactic fashion to explain what it meant. The New Testament gives the trans-historical, trans-cultural, inerrant, and authoritative statement on the meaning of Christ's life and saving work. Nothing need be added to the New Testament, and no further human statement should be added to finish the revelatory message. The canon of Scripture is closed; the written Scripture is God's final word!

- Divine Revelation in Written Language: The apostles were chosen by Jesus Christ to serve a very special purpose. They were to be with Him to accomplish a very special task. They were to be witnesses to Christ's incarnation and resurrection that they might be trustworthy testifiers of Christ in His saving person and work through their writings.

In preparing these disciples for Jesus' death and departure, Jesus instructs them that the Holy Spirit would teach them, remind them, and help them to write down what the Lord wanted said in Scripture. See: John 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:12-15. Peter reflects on the certainty and importance of the written revelation through divine inspiration when he says in 2 Peter 1:19 "*We have the prophetic word (Peter's expression for written Scripture) more fully confirmed.*" This is comparative language. What is Peter

comparing the written word of God to? In verses 17-18 he refers to his experience on the mount of Jesus' transfiguration. What a glorious experience that must have been for Peter! And yet, Peter clearly states that the written word of God is more certain and confirmed than that! Speaking of the written word of God, he says, *"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 (vs. 19b).* Then Peter states that no Scripture is by *"one's own private interpretation (vs. 20)"* (by which Peter removes human subjectivity from the aspect of causation and interpretation with respect to Scripture). He completes his point in verse 21 by saying, *"No prophecy was ever produced by the will of man (again, no human subjectivity determines the word of God or the meaning of the word of God), but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."* The Holy Spirit superintended the process of revelatory transmission to those whom God chose to write Scripture. The Holy Spirit gave to the Scripture writers INSPIRATION and DIRECTION. It is best to understand this that the Holy Spirit used the writers within the scope of their human capacities and abilities but watched over the transmission of truth, so that the final product is inerrant and perfect!

It is difficult to overstate the significance of what Peter says in this passage as it pertains to our subject of authoritative divine revelation contrasting with human subjectivity. Peter did indeed have a life-transforming experience on the Mount of Transfiguration, but even this experience did not compare to the power and importance of the written Word of God! We would do well to take note of this. The written Word of God, the Bible, is more fully confirmed as God's revelation than any dream, vision, or experience!

- The Objectivity of Language: All of this requires that we understand God's Word in the context of LANGUAGE, especially written language, as the conveyance of divine truth. Language is the means by which gospel truth, doctrinal truth, soul-edifying truth is given to the human race. Written language enables the human mind (and redeemed soul) to meditatively contemplate truth claims and teachings given in the Scripture. This does not discount the ability of God to communicate through visuality and human subjectivity (dreams and visions), but written language is the essential vehicle of the conveyance of divine truth to the human mind!

Why is this so? First, language is intrinsically objective in nature. Many people miss this point; they think human language is totally subjective. This is incorrect. Objective truths require words that can bear the weight of meaning to truly and accurately communicate these truths to the human mind. The syntax and grammatical sentence structure are means by which objective truth is given through words and ideas contained in words to the mind for human understanding. It certainly is true that the mind must be regenerated for true understanding to occur, and the Holy Spirit's indwelling in the Christian's life gives illumination to the mind as the Christian studies prayerfully the Word of God. However, the objective nature of language invites investigation and contemplation making possible validation and discovery of truth. This actuates the intellectual capacities of the image of God in human essence and existence (through regeneration by divine grace and the Holy Spirit), instigating study and systematic analysis leading to the conceptual joy of understanding. None of this occurs to the same degree in the same way without written language. Without written language one is left with sensations and feelings, which might incite the senses, but cannot give the depth of understanding by which we enter into truth and grasp of it. The nature of understanding God's ideas and proclaiming and teaching them to others require language and written language by which this study occurs.

The Natural Limitation of Human Subjectivity and the Blessing of Divine

Revelation:

I am not intending in this paper to argue that human experience and subjectivity have no part to play in divine activity in and among God's people through revelatory history. What I am attempting to say is that human subjectivity is not the basis on which God rests His authoritative truth for understanding and transmission to others. To summarize what I have thus far said is this: God did speak and communicate in times past (Old Testament) in visualization (and in Creation, God still speaks concerning His awesome divine transcendence, as indicating in Romans 1) or in some auditory experience; however, the means by which God speaks concerning salvation and the kingdom, after the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the closing of the apostolic period (when John, the final apostle, died), is through the written Bible.

There is natural limitation to human subjectivity that restricts it as a medium for authoritative divine communication. As indicated before, there can be no validation of truth when human subjectivity is the basis for what God says and

expects in and among His people. Most often, the bottom line with human subjectivity ends with, “God told me, and you will just have to believe this is true.” God never wants His people to believe or to live in keeping with a humanly devised and subjective statement like that. Always (and I mean always!) God calls His people to read, understand, and obey God’s written Word.

I am not intending to disregard human emotion and the blessing of (and the gracious accommodation of) God’s merciful and providential activity in the lives of His people. God gave humans emotion, and in regeneration He actuates human affection for holiness and true eternal joy in Christ. There is much mercy and divine favor to be known in this regard, and there is much mystery to how God through His Spirit ministers to and undergirds His people during times of distress and hardship. Surely there is an emotional and subjective quality to this, for which we thank God. The only point I make in this paper is that human subjectivity is never God’s way of framing authoritative pronouncements regarding the Christian life and the church.

The Permanent and Unchangeable Nature of Written Revelation and Bible Translation

Although Christians believe in Bible translations, and a good translation philosophy of the Bible requires appropriate and helpful words and expressions conveying the original text and meaning of the text, the revelation of God as Scripture is permanent and unchangeable. The purpose of Bible translation is to make known in the receptive language what God said in the original autographs (manuscripts) of revelation (for more study on the biblical manuscripts and the self-validation of God’s Scripture, see Michael Kruger’s book entitled, “*Canon Revisited: Establishing the Origins and Authority of the New Testament Books*”). Translation must never be seen as making the Bible understandable and sensible to modern tastes and fashion (although good translations will utilize modern vocabulary to convey the original intent of the biblical text); this is the task of biblical exposition and interpretation. All Christian preaching, teaching, and ministry seeks to make known the word of God using Bible translations in the primary language of the hearers and with exposition and interpretation that builds bridges of understanding to the hearers. At no point of time in Christian ministry is a preacher or teacher to add to the biblical text. His task is to explain and apply the teaching of the Scripture to the hearers. It is the teaching of the biblical text that bears the full weight of doctrinal and moral authority!

The Echo of God's Attributes in Written Revelation

One of the most basic elements of written revelation is God's self-revelation in the Scripture. This means that in Scripture God reveals Himself. What does God reveal about Himself in Scripture? He reveals His nature and attributes. We are able to see the sovereignty, the goodness, and the transcendence of God in and through the Bible and its teaching. The Bible reveals God! Law, historical narrative, poetry, wisdom literature, prophecy, Gospel accounts, epistles, and apocalyptic writing all speak of God; God reveals His awesome, sovereign, and good nature to our minds. We learn about God through the Scriptures. Thus, we see what is right and what is good measured by God's nature revealed in Scripture.

This is important to note in a paper like this, because this helps us to understand the ultimate purpose of divine revelation in human history. God reveals Himself in divine revelation for the redemption of the world. He does this by His record of divine intervention in human history developing and pursuing redemption culminating in Christ. As the biblical record details God's message and actions in human history, revelation bears along divine redemptive promise and fulfillment in Christ. This is best explained and taught through written revelation. This shows God's love, grace, and righteousness.

The Role of the Holy Spirit in Written Revelation:

Let us spend some time thinking about the role of the Holy Spirit and written revelation (the Bible). This is important for a number of reasons, one of the most vital of which is the often mistaken ministry of the Holy Spirit in subjectivity revelation claims. Often the life and ministry of the Holy Spirit are twisted wherever human subjectivity is elevated. This results in people assuming authority by virtue of the Holy Spirit's ministry.

We must realize that there is no disagreement between the Bible and the Holy Spirit's ministry. Indeed, the Holy Spirit inspired the Scripture, and the Holy Spirit gives illumination to God's saved people for a right application of the Scripture. Those who seek to divide these two, seek to divide an indissoluble union. The teaching about the Holy Spirit in the New Testament (including the teaching about the coming and ministry of the Holy Spirit by Jesus in the *Gospel of John*) does not lead one away from a biblical focus of Christian truth; actually, it does the opposite. The Bible is a book from God and through the Holy Spirit engages our hearts and lives for the believer's continued repentance, growth in grace, and

comfort in the promise of God in the gospel. How is the Holy Spirit connected to the Word of God, the Bible?

- Transmission, Inspiration, and Superintendency – Throughout revelatory history the Holy Spirit transmitted the Word of God to the human writers; He inspired them to write, and He watched over them to superintend the communication process, so that the product of the writing of Scripture was perfect, inerrant, and authoritative.
- Regeneration and Illumination Interacting with the Human Soul – Many people confuse illumination with revelation. Christians, by God’s magnificent mercy and kindness, will sometimes find discernable guidance and help from God’s providential oversight as the believer studies and prays over the Scripture. Many times, Christians cannot detect or “see” how God is providentially working in their lives, but He is! But there is often a tie between the believer obeying the revealed will of God in Scripture with God’s providential guidance in life. If we are wise, we will limit our concern with God’s revealed will in the Bible, leaving the guidance in life to the Lord, as we prayerfully seek His leadership (Deuteronomy 29:29, *“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.”*)

With respect to the interpretation of the Scripture, the applicable and proper engagement by the Christian with the Scripture, and with a holy desire to obey the voice of Jesus contained in the Scripture (through mental and spiritual understanding of the meaning and power of the biblical text), the Holy Spirit gives to the Christian in Bible study and meditation of the truth a glorious illumination (understanding with a strong desire to believe truth and obey it) whereby the Christian comes to understand and love the biblical truth in the text, seeking to honor the Lord by application of the truth into life.

- The Scripture and Christian Discipleship – The use and application of the Scripture and its teaching in the life of the Christian is fundamental and vital for the living of the Christian life. The Scripture (not human subjective thinking and didactic teaching) serves the individual Christian and the church in the following ways.
 1. Authoritative Teaching – Authoritative moral and doctrinal teaching comes only from the Bible through proper biblical hermeneutics

(proper interpretation of the Bible). No other source of moral and doctrinal teaching must be considered from God. No human mind or idea may be considered authoritative unless it comes directly from the clear and consistent teaching of the Bible.

2. Binding the Conscience – For obedience to God, the human conscience (the moral regulator given by God to humans in the image of God) will be bound by conviction formed through belief that comes from understanding what God says and meant in the Bible. The human conscience does not stand alone; it must be bound by the teaching of the Scripture, which is the authoritative revelation of God for humans. No other moral or doctrinal teaching must be considered authoritative, except as it conforms to the clear and consistent teaching of the Scripture.
3. Obedience – The Christian must consider the teaching of the Scripture the framework that guides him in obedience in life. All human teaching is to be considered helpful only as it conforms to the teaching of the Scripture. The purpose of preaching and teaching the Bible is to be a help to Christians, so that they understand the meaning of Scripture for obedience to God.
4. Growth and Development – The Christian will grow in obedience and sanctification as described by the Scripture as the Christian grows in Christ and matures in the faith. The Scripture will be the instrument by which the Holy Spirit operates to give holy power through grace to mortify sin and develop godliness in character.
5. Proclamation and Ministry – The preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ comes from preaching the text of Scripture that presents the gospel and its doctrines. The preaching of the text of Scripture purifies, strengthens, and edifies the souls of Christians in their experience of salvation sanctification. Preachers and teachers must not preach and teach anything that is outside the bounds of the teaching of the Scripture (opinions may be offered, but authoritative pronouncements must be Scriptural). All human teaching is helpful to the degree that it elucidates and explains the meaning of the text of Scripture in the lives of others.

The Danger of Subjectivity as an Authoritative Basis

The use of the term “subjectivity” at this point refers to human understanding, human experience, and human thinking as sources and basis on which obligatory moral and theological ideas are based.

- Human Subjectivity as the Source – There is a major difference between human subjectivity as the source of God’s teaching in contrast with human writers being called and used by God to convey His eternal truth through them in the writing of Scripture. In the first case, human subjectivity becomes the final appeal to truth, while in the second case human experience is under the direct control of God to write God’s truth, and the Scripture written becomes the source of teaching. This makes God the source of teaching, not humans. When we reckon Scripture as authoritative, we give glory to God.
- Human Subjectivity as the Authority – There is also a major difference between thinking of human viewpoints and thoughts as authoritative compared to human Scripture writers giving and explaining what God wanted to say through divine inspiration presenting God’s revelation to people, which in turn serves as the written authority for moral and doctrinal belief and practice.
- Human Subjectivity as Application – It is important to apply the correct understanding of the Scripture; Bible study is incomplete without correct application of the biblical truth to life. But a problem comes when application of the Scripture is then turned into obligatory and authoritative belief preached to others. Human application (through human subjectivity) is not the foundation of belief and the framework by which we understand Christian orthodoxy. This belongs to Scriptural teaching.

The Great Risk of Mixing Human Subjective Authority and the Authority of Scripture

So far we have considered the dangers of human subjectivity as the means by which authoritative teaching is given. In this particular section, I want to address the specific and extreme danger presented to the church when Christian and church leadership use the HUMAN SUBJECTIVITY model for preaching and teaching, instead of the Bible.

- Signs and Symptoms of Inappropriate Subjective Christian Preaching and Teaching

What are some of the signs that a preacher or teacher is mixing biblical authority with human subjective authority? Here are some indicators that this is happening:

1. Using self as the source and emphasizing self, instead of the Bible
2. Avoiding biblical texts and teachings, and adding to the Scripture

3. Misusing, twisting, and manipulating the Scripture for validation of personal teaching

The essential problem indicated in this list is very clear: anytime a human being (preacher or teacher) presents himself as the authority and the embodiment of truth discernment and religious power, or when a human teacher changes the teaching of the text to fit a preconceived bias and desire, then this removes the emphasis on the Scripture and the authority of God found in the Scripture. An attack on the Bible is an attack on God! This is the age-old problem of the idolatry of self (elevation of self), which attempts to de-throne God from His sovereign and exalted position.

- **The Sad Harvest of Human Subjectivity in Christian Preaching and Teaching**

It is difficult to overstate the tragedy that occurs when humans substitute their thinking as authoritative, instead of the Bible. Here are some of the sad consequences that occur when humans displace the Scripture:

1. The Bible is neglected, eventually contradicted, and ultimately supplanted.
2. People are manipulated and abused by preachers and teachers.
3. People look to human leaders, instead of God, putting their faith in humans instead of God.
4. The people frame their hope and expectation on sinking sand (false teaching).
5. Leadership training perpetuates human thinking, instead of God's Word.
6. Christ is supplanted as the Lord of His church, and Satan attempts to destroy God's kingdom.
7. Apostasy occurs.

Human history is littered with the sad theological and moral collateral damage that has been caused in human lives when God's authority in Scripture is cast aside for human subject authority. Untold tragedies occur societally, religiously, theologically, and socially when this happens.

Positive Implications of the Proper Use and Application of Scripture as Authoritative

Let us consider some positive results that happen when Christians and the church properly and rightly view the Bible as God's Word, when we apply God's Word to preaching and teaching.

- Implications for Christian Discipleship and Church
 1. Individual Christian Discipleship – Christian growth and discipleship occur in the sunshine of the application of a right understanding of Scripture with the love and joy of Christ filling the soul. The journey of Christians may be difficult in this fallen and God-hating world, but the Scripture is our sword, our compass, the instruction, and the healing for our souls. The Lord has graciously given to us His mind and revealed will in the teaching of the Scripture. Sinners are saved when the Bible is preached, and Christians grow in discipleship when the Bible is studied and taught.
 2. Church – The church (the collective covenant body of believers banded together for the worship of the living God and the preaching and teaching of the Scripture) feeds off of the Scripture, and it ministers in Jesus’ name through the presentation of the Scriptures to others for the advancement of Christ’s kingdom on earth. The authoritative Scriptures create the church on earth by God’s saving grace and the operation of the Holy Spirit; the church does not create or validate the Scriptures. God’s authority rests in the Scripture, not in the church. The people of God and the church of God have no defense against human manipulation, except for the teaching of the Scripture. If the church allows for human subjectivity to become a basis for authoritative teaching, then the place of Scripture suffers, and people can then be deceived.
- Implications for Christian Preaching and Teaching
 1. Expository Preaching – Corporate worship centers on the Scripture as God’s authoritative revelation to humans. All aspects of worship utilize the truth of the Bible, and the preaching event in worship must be the right consideration, right interpretation, and right application of the Scripture to the lives of God’s people. The preaching of the Bible is the center of all worship experiences.
 2. Bible Teaching – The church must maintain a systematic and consistent Bible teaching ministry that helps the people grow in the understanding of the Scripture and our lives in Christ. A church that teaches Scripture as authoritative is a church that is grounded in truth and will endure the changing tides of culture and society.
 3. Leadership Development – The church rises and falls with the development of leadership in the teaching of the Scripture as

authoritative. The discipline and development of Christian leadership rests upon the Scripture both in knowledge and in application by God's grace. The future of the church rests in God's sovereign leadership seen and applied in godly and biblically trained church leadership.

The Human Affections of the Soul

Often, the improper elevation of human subjectivity centers on the elevation of emotion and sensationalism. This is a form of sensual gratification! However, we must understand that there is a proper use of human emotion and affections, and this use rightly connects with the correct understanding and embrace of truth given to us in the Scripture. However, if emphasis is given to human emotion this stifles the soul from its needed edification and maturation. The following is a four-fold categorization and consideration of the involvement of human affections in the Christian life. Each is to be understood as properly utilized in the Christian life and experience.

- Regeneration and Human Affections – When the sinner is born again, holy human affection is awakened and reorientated to God and all holy things. This results in sincere joy in the Lord Jesus Christ, and sincere pleasure is found in all truths contained in the Bible. Christians find fulfilling delight in godliness and obedience to God's truth.
- Christian Discipleship and Human Affections – Christian discipleship includes growth in truth and in grace. It shows maturation in Christian thought and living. It does not emotionally depend on sensationalism, but it seeks to prove all things by the teaching of the Scripture. The operation of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christ actuates human affection unto godliness. True discipleship includes a rich panoply of holy affections.
- Worship and Human Affections – True and genuine worship brings pleasure to God and sweetness to God's people. It is natural and normal for human affections to be heightened in worship; this is good and pleasing to the Lord if emotion is a servant to truth and not an idol, supplanting God and His truth. When human subjectivity and human authority are elevated beyond their appropriate levels, God is dishonored, human pride is exalted, and the Holy Spirit is grieved.
- Heaven and Human Affections – It is biblically certain that human emotions are part of our creation; God made us to enjoy Him, love Him, and praise Him. Heaven will be a time and place where our human emotions will be fulfilled in divine glory. We will see God in His beauty and enjoy God so that we will be fulfilled and completely satisfied (to God's glory). We

should not negate the reality of human affections, but we should be aware that there is a right way to experience this in our Christian lives.

Clarification: Divine Providence and Godly Human Experience

I want to take a moment to give a clarification concerning the larger issue of divine providence in godly human experience. There are a number of important aspects to this clarification, pertaining to the main point of this paper.

1. The Fact of Divine Providential Care for His People (related to Human Experience) – Nothing I have said in this paper should be interpreted to mean that God in any way is inherently limited to being “unable” to work with His people in a historical and personal way, to intervene in the lives of His people in practical and necessary ways for their godliness, or we do not state or imply that God is unable to connect with Christians in any sensory related fashion. No aspect of this biblical teaching regarding the authority of the Scriptures requires us to limit God’s sovereignty and capacity to act in any way that is within keeping with His holy will and the edification of His people. What we are considering here is not regarding God’s ability or capacity; rather, we are thinking together about God’s chosen means of communicating authoritatively with human beings. God chooses to communicate with humans in an authoritative and teaching fashion only through the Scriptures.
2. The Faithfulness of God in Providential Care for His People (related to Human Experience) – This leads to a second statement of clarification with respect to this topic; God is absolutely committed in the application of His covenant life and saving will to protect and care for His people in any way that is commensurate with His character and holy will. This may include His manifestation of His mercy and loving care for His people in times of extremities where Christians need God to minister to us in dramatic, personal, and provisionary ways. This does not necessitate personal awareness on our part; indeed, often God providentially works outside the boundaries of a Christian’s thoughts, observations, and perceptions. However, on occasion, when the situation demands it (and God’s will permits it) God can (and will, if He deems it wise and necessary) reach out to His people in an experiential way, so that we come to know in a personal (even intimate) way His love, care, protection, and provision for us, resulting in spiritual growth, in faith and godliness, to the praise of God’s rich mercy. A cursory study of biblical narratives with this issue in mind, leads me to suggest that God’s mercy and covenant love extend in

situations and personal experience to the level that is circumstantially required for the fullest application of divine providence to achieve God's plan and purpose in the lives of His people. However, this cannot demand or teach that God bypasses His Scripture in any authoritative way.

Affirmations and Denials

The impetus for this paper is drawn from concern for those at risk of being caught up in any and all movements that hold convictions that elevate human experience to the level of religious authority, thus denying the right place of the Scriptures as God's ONLY source of inerrant authority for the formulation of Christian doctrine, belief, convictions, and moral obligatory teaching.

In order to apply the theoretical affirmations previously expressed in this paper to practical life, let us consider some AFFIRMATIONS and DENIALS that will help us think through some relevant issues.

- **Affirmations:**
 1. We affirm human affections of the soul as intrinsic to the image of God in human life.
 2. We affirm the joys and love of Christ experienced in the human heart through divine grace.
 3. We affirm human experience as real and inevitable in Christian life and growth.
 4. We affirm the merciful condescension of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit to accommodate human weaknesses, limited only by God's eternal character, nature, and holy will.
 5. We affirm that the Bible (sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments) is the one and only authoritative revelation from God to humans for doctrine and moral teaching.
 6. We affirm that biblical teaching is God's truth and is absolute and transcendent in nature, extending beyond the capacities and understanding of the human mind and heart, yet is couched in human language so that we can understand the great moral and doctrinal truths presented to us in the Scripture. These truths never change, but we grow in our understanding of them.
 7. We affirm that the human experience in heaven will increasingly grow, resulting in the enjoyment of God's truth forever and ever.
 8. We affirm that God's revelatory truth is totally consistent with His nature.

9. We affirm that God's revelation in Christ is supreme, primary, exclusive, and absolute.
 10. We affirm that all Christian ministry must center on making the Scripture known in its true meaning determined by God through proper hermeneutical approach in the study of language applied to the text of Scripture; nothing can or should be added authoritatively to the text of Scripture, nor should we neglect or deny any truth taught in the Scripture.
- Denials:
 1. We deny that God continues to speak to humans in authoritative revelation after the ending of the apostolic era and the closing of the canon of Scripture.
 2. We deny that this view ignores God's providential intervention and leadership in human experience.
 3. We deny that humans can know God, obey God, follow God, and please God by any other means other than in Christian discipleship rooted in the right understanding and application of the Scripture.
 4. We deny that this view of Scripture and its use in the Christian's life disregards the ministry of the Holy Spirit; in fact, we strongly assert that the proper application of this view requires the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Christian's life.
 5. We deny that Christian preaching, teaching, and ministry can rightly be exercised outside the requirements of interpreting, preaching, teaching, and ministering the text of Scripture, in order to transmit the truth of God found in the text of Scripture for the salvation of sinners and the edification of Christians.

Contemplating Relevant Factors for those Exiting Movements that Improperly Exalt Human Authority and Subjectivity

This section of the paper is written for the benefit of those who have previously been caught up in religious movements that overly emphasized human emotion and subjectivity as a basis of authoritative reasoning. Those who, by God's mercy, have been brought to see their previous error and the need for a right understanding and application of Scripture as God's only authoritative revelation to humans, may need to consider the following issues. Under each category, sub-issues have been indicated and counsel given.

- The Improper Elevation of Human Emotion
 1. We need to rightly understand the role of human emotion as part of the image of God.
 2. Pray the Lord will wean you off of dependence and addiction to emotional highs.
 3. Watch out for overreaction!

- The Improper Dependence on Human Subjectivity
 1. Develop the discipline of Bible study, meditation, and systematic application of truth.
 2. Learn the balanced and proper role of Christian leadership.
 3. Do not elevate and exalt yourself to the point where you judge others; the Scripture corrects.
 4. Submit your experience to biblical truth; embrace the truth with love and joy.
 5. Watch out for growing anger and bitterness over inappropriate leadership in your past.

- The Need for Proper Biblical Hermeneutics
 1. You may need to unlearn a great deal of what you learned in the religious movement concerning interpretation of the Bible.
 2. Engage in formal study of the science of biblical hermeneutics.
 3. Apply proper biblical exegesis and hermeneutics to a disciplined Bible study program.

- The Need for a Balanced and Biblical Understanding of Prayer and Dependence on the Holy Spirit
 1. Prayer and the role of the Holy Spirit are often misrepresented in these movements.
 2. This may result in a need to overhaul one's understanding of each of these.
 3. Again, do not react against the role of prayer and the Holy Spirit.
 4. Remember, Satan attacks these two vital areas, because we need these so very much.

- The Problem of Obligatory Application Binding Consciences and False Systems of Perspective
 1. Learn the CORE of biblical theology in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

2. Learn the categorical aspects of biblical truth and how they are related to the core.
 3. Watch out for wrongly making application of the Bible obligatory teaching to others; no application of the text must be read back into the text as authoritative. We must not bind the consciences of others by applicable human reasoning from the biblical text. The clear teaching of the biblical text is the only authority in our human thoughts and lives.
- The Need to go back to Biblical Authority for Doctrine and Moral Teaching
 1. The Bible is God's only authoritative revelation for belief and practice.
 2. As such, Christians must learn to make a proper commitment to the Scriptures.
 3. Christians must learn to discern biblical teaching in preaching and teaching.
 4. Christians must obligate themselves to the teaching of the Scripture.
 5. Christians must identify with biblically grounded churches.
 6. Christians must teach others to understand and apply the Scriptures to life.

REVIEW AND QUESTIONS:

This section of the paper is intended to help the reader to review some important concepts taught in this paper. In this section, the reader will be enabled to also apply the ideas contained in this paper with the Christian life. These questions and topics might be used in a group setting when discussing this important issue.

1. What do we mean when we speak of the authority of the Scripture?
2. What do we mean when we speak of the authority of Scripture as being our ONLY authority?
3. God has revealed Himself in human history in a variety of ways, including in Creation, theophanies, dreams, and visions. Why do we assert that the written Scriptures are the ONLY way God speaks authoritatively today after the apostolic period?
4. Why is it important for Christian preachers, Christian teachers, and churches to preach the Bible, instead of human thinking or ideas?

5. Why is language the best conveyance for the communication of God's ideas for reading, study, and meditation?
6. What are some of the problems that arise if the Bible is neglected or disregarded in the Christian life and ministry?
7. Why is it vital that Christians and Christian leaders rightly interpret the Bible by proper application of biblical hermeneutics?
8. Share how you may have experienced some problems in your life by wrongly elevating human subjective teaching over the Scripture.
9. Share how you have been blessed by reading, studying, and applying the Scripture in your life.
10. Spend a moment in prayer, asking God to help you grow in your understanding of the Scripture. In prayer commit yourself to the teaching of the Word of God, and pray for your church that it will seek to be a true biblically grounded church.