

The Authoritative Function of Scripture

Tim Geddert

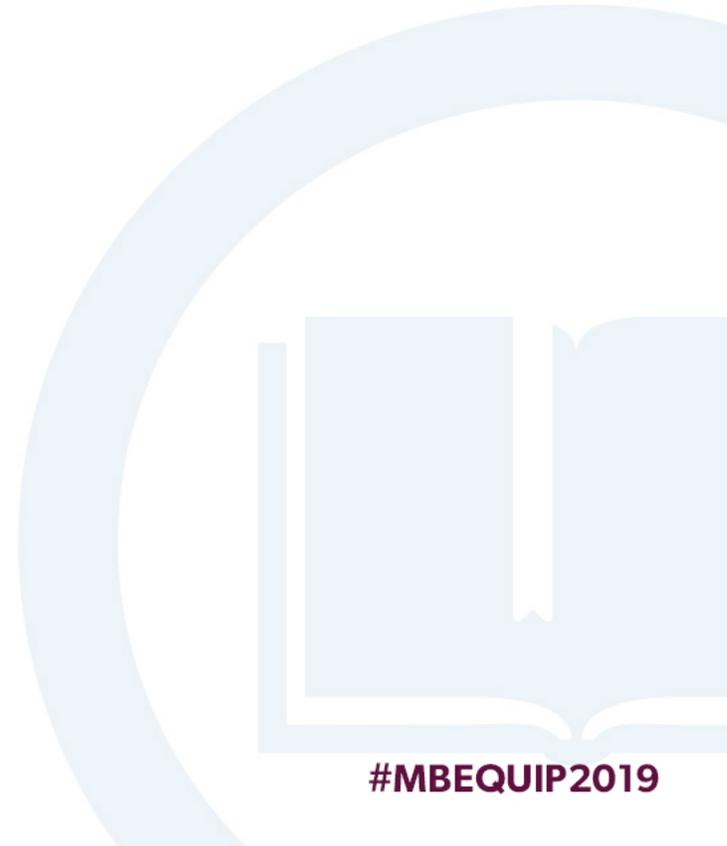


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I will be addressing:

- *what we mean by the Bible being authoritative;*
- *why we believe it is authoritative.*

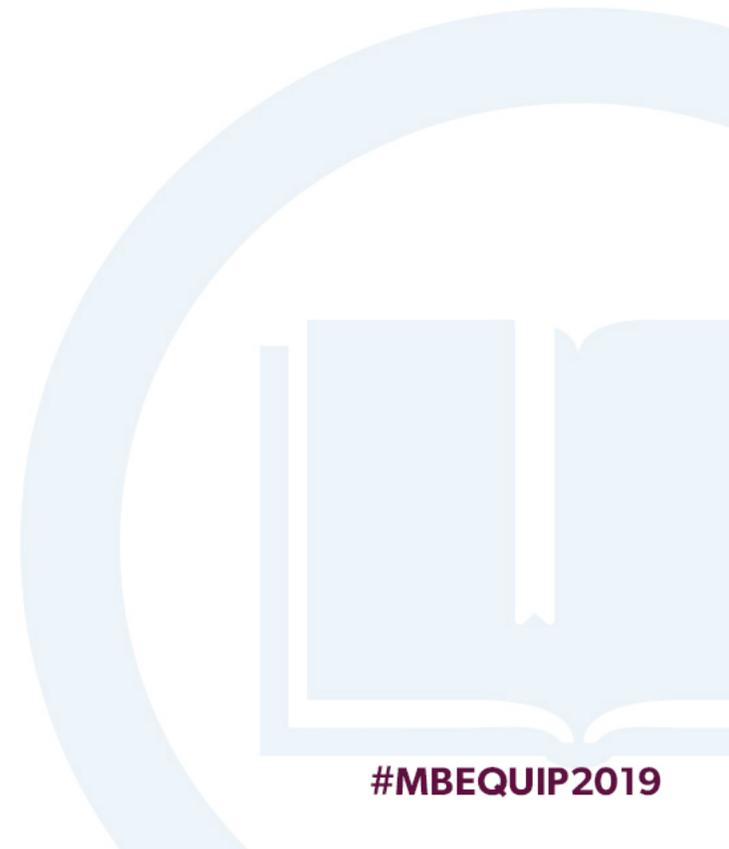
Second Peter



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Chapter 1:



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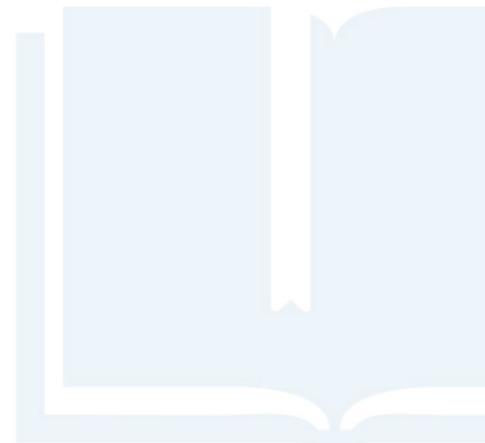
Second Peter

Chapter 1: Wonderful assurances that God has given us everything we need so that we might pursue a godly life.

Chapter 2: This is really tough reading!

Chapter 3: . . . containing two exceedingly important verses that bear directly on today's topic.

“Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking.” (2 Peter 3:1)



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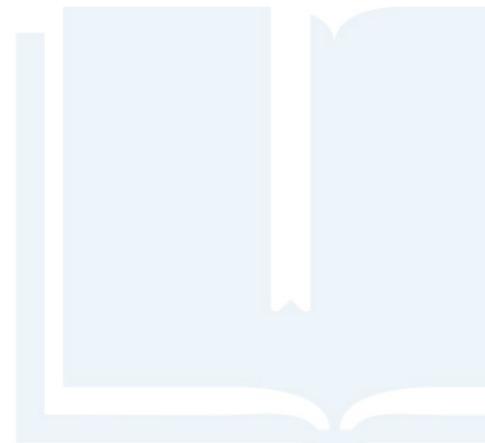
- 1. The ancient prophetic words*
- 2. The teaching of Jesus*
- 3. The apostolic tradition*

For the early church, Hebrew Scripture was considered authoritative, among other reasons, because Jesus declared it to be that. And yet that claim to authority was not understood to mean that everything commanded in those texts still needed to be practiced by followers of Jesus.

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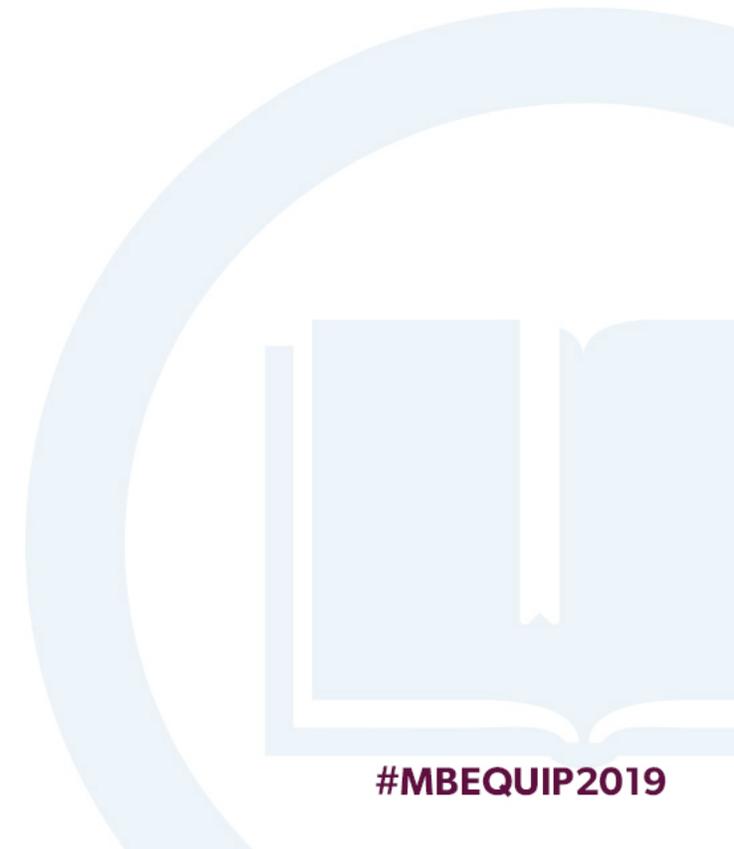
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- 2. The teaching of Jesus*
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“If you want reliable authoritative guidance for faith and life, go to the Scriptures, and if you want to know what to do with those Scriptures, check with Jesus, and if you don’t know what Jesus’s point of view on the matter was, check with the apostles. They are authorized to clarify these things.”



The reason that the Scriptures (Old Testament and New) provide authoritative guidance for the church is because God designed precisely that as the means by which a previously spoken word, and a previously present Living Word, and a faithfully preserved apostolic tradition could continue to be accessible to later generations.

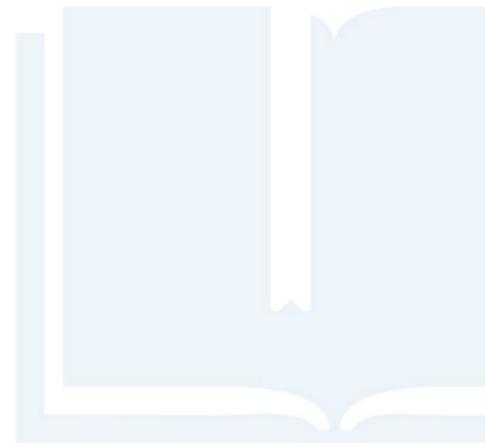
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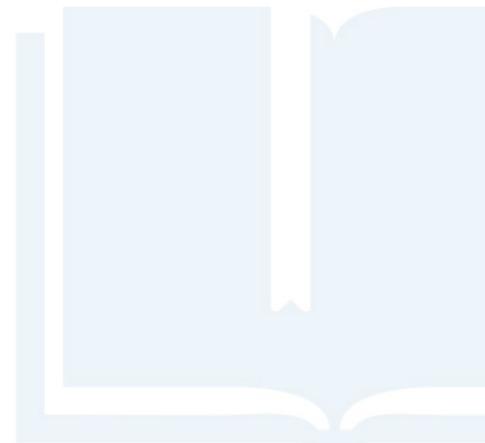


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*Scripture is “**The Word about THE WORD**” . . . i.e. the divinely authorized presentation of what the Living Word of God continues to say to us.*

*All subsequent reflection on Scripture, all theological claims about it, all Confessional Statements, indeed all Study Conference papers are, at most, “**words about The Word about THE WORD.**”*

“Paul’s letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures.” (2 Peter 3:16)

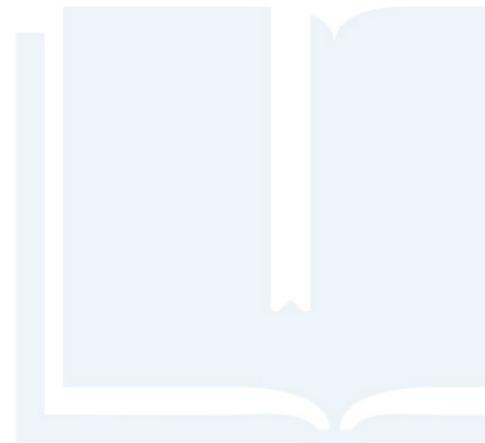


If we do not start with a conviction that the written texts of Scripture preserve and interpret earlier revelation by God, especially the living, walking, talking, serving, dying, rising revelation of God in Jesus, we have little chance of avoiding all the stuff that Peter talks about in chapter 2.

We believe that the entire Bible was inspired by God through the Holy Spirit. The same Spirit guides the community of faith in the interpretation of Scripture. The person, teaching and life of Jesus Christ bring continuity and clarity to both the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament bears witness to Christ, and Christ is the One whom the New Testament proclaims. We accept the Bible as the infallible Word of God and the authoritative guide for faith and practice. (MB Confession of Faith)

Our Confession of Faith uses these terms:

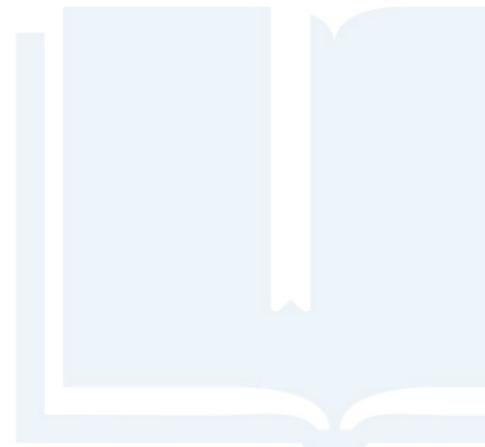
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The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy:

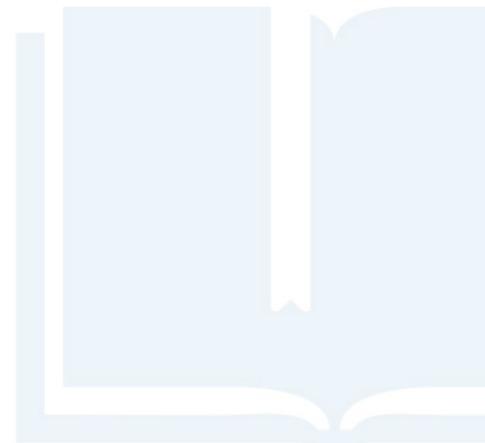
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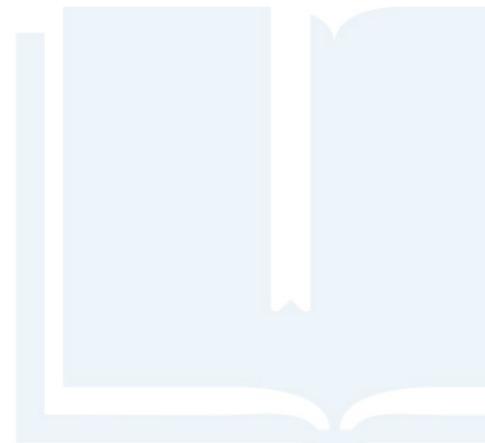
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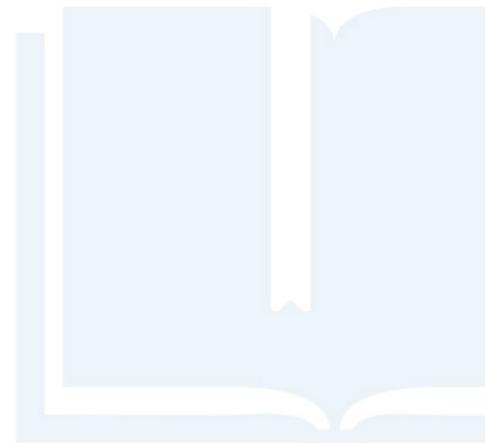


The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy:

- *composed in 1978 by more than 200 influential Evangelical Scholars*
- *1755 words to explain what “inerrancy” should be taken to mean*
- *defining “loopholes”*

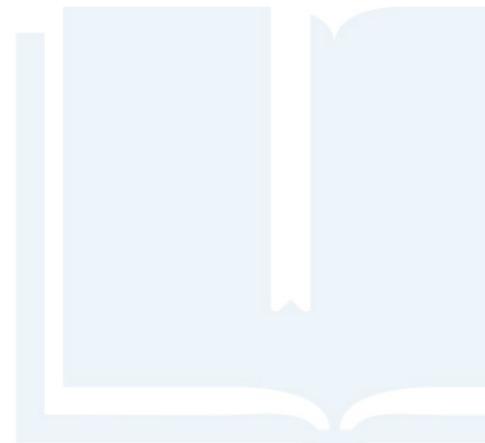


Our Confession of Faith avoids the term “inerrancy” and does so deliberately.



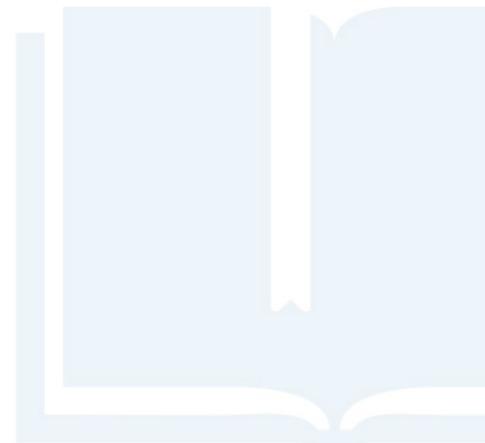
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We confess that the Bible is infallible. That means that we can trust the direction that the Bible takes us when we properly use it to discern the will of God. It won't lead us astray. It is trustworthy. If we still go astray, it will be because of our unfaithfulness, or because we have not properly discerned what the Scriptures teach.



If we do not start with a conviction that the written texts of Scripture preserve and interpret earlier revelation by God, especially the living, walking, talking, serving, dying, rising revelation of God in Jesus, we have little chance of avoiding all that stuff that Peter talks about in chapter 2.

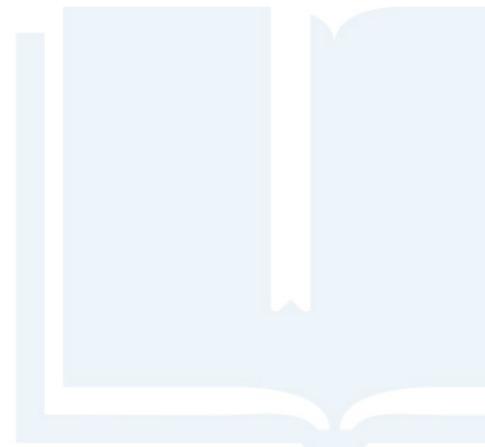
We need to guard against the assumption that if someone does not understand inspiration or inerrancy or infallibility exactly as we do, then presumably they do not consider the Bible authoritative.



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- the Ten Commandments



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*“Azor the father of Zadok,
Zadok the father of Akim,
Akim the father of Elihud.”*

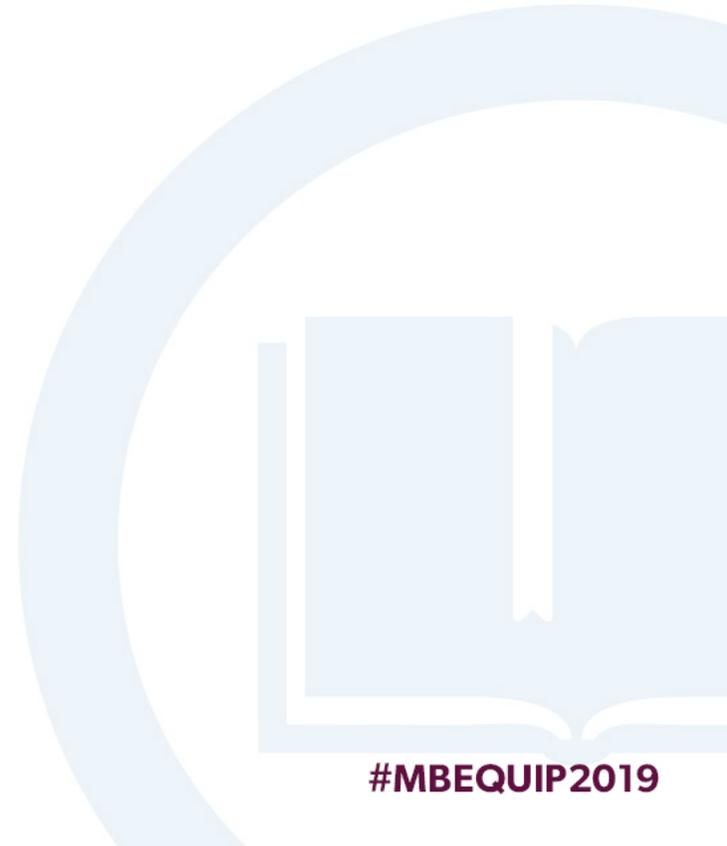
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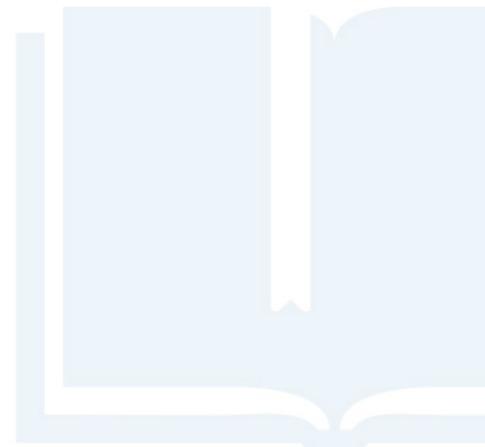
- 1. The Bible’s point of view is that slavery is wrong.***
- 2. On some topics (like slavery), the Bible’s point of view is wrong.***

Sometimes “the biblical viewpoint” seems wrong (at least from the perspective that now shapes our reading).

One of these must be true:

- 1. The Bible’s point of view is that slavery is wrong.*
- 2. On some topics (like slavery), the Bible’s point of view is wrong.*
- 3. Slavery is not necessarily outside the will of God.*

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When we speak of “the authority of Scripture” we should probably acknowledge that this is shorthand for what we really mean.

We declare that the Scriptures are authoritative, but what we really mean is that the authority of God, the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, is exercised, among other means, through the Scriptures that bear witness to Jesus.