

The Perfection, Or Sufficiency, Of Holy Scripture

Modern theology denies also the perfection, or sufficiency, of Holy Scripture. Zoekler, for example, asserts concerning the “use of the Bible as normative or judicial authority in doctrinal controversies” that “the possibility must be admitted that the appeal to Scripture very often results in a partial and incomplete settlement of the respective controversy.”

The modern theologians are here consistent in applying their principle. For if Scripture is a book in which the line of demarcation between truth and error cannot be clearly drawn, it certainly cannot serve as [judge](#) between truth and error.—The sufficiency of Scripture according to its own definition consists in its teaching everything that men must know to obtain salvation. To elaborate:

1. Scripture does not treat everything a man can know, for example, the things pertaining to the sphere of earthly or civil life. Scripture is certainly not, as some have put it, “a general encyclopedia of human knowledge.” It is not a textbook of [agriculture](#) or [architecture](#) or of medical science. It is not “a manual of history and geography.” And when the “enthusiasts” of ancient and particularly of modern times assert that wine is under all circumstances “poison,” we know from Scripture that this is not true. ([John](#) 2:1-11; 1 Tim. 5:23; etc.) Nevertheless, it must be maintained that the Bible is not a textbook of “universal human knowledge.” There is a large area of human knowledge that is based on natural reason and human experience.
2. The Scriptures do not reveal all divine matters. Concerning the knowledge of divine things attainable in this life it declares: “Now I know in part” (1 Cor. 13:12), and: “How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord?” (Rom. 11:33-34.) When modern theologians contend that the Christian religion is perfect or absolute in that it constitutes “a logical, complete system” in the eyes of reason, they

are in error and are setting up a false principle, which, consistently applied, would abolish the entire Christian religion.

3. But Scripture teaches perfectly whatever we need to know to obtain eternal life. It says concerning “the Holy Scriptures” (2 Tim. 3:15) that they “are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” Not only for Christians in general is Scripture a sufficient source of knowledge, but also for the teacher of the Church, who is perfect (ἄρτιος) through Scripture; he is “thoroughly furnished,” fully equipped for his duty, “for doctrine, for reproof,” etc., and so perfectly equipped that he is strictly commanded to continue in the words of Christ, which we have in the words of the Apostles ([John](#) 17:20), and not to take the liberty to change or add to these words (John 8:31-32; 1 Tim. 6:3 f.; 2 Tim. 1:13; Rom. 16:17; Gal. 1:6-9). It is certain, then, that the Scriptures, in order to attain their purpose of making men wise unto salvation, do not in any way need to be supplemented with any outside material, be that tradition, church decrees, Pope, the experience of the theologian, science, or what not.

It is self-evident that if the *perfectio*, or *sufficientia*, of Scripture be surrendered, the Scripture principle is given up. If a deficiency in the Bible must be supplied from some outside source, the Christian Church is *eo ipso* moved off its foundation, the Word of the Apostles and Prophets, and based on the Ego of the alleged supplementers. It is the old talk of Rome about a *perfectio implicita Scripturae Sacrae*—Scripture is perfect when supplemented by the “Church,” that is, of course, by the Pope. In the same sense Roman theologians have called Scripture a norma “*remissiva*”—it is perfect inasmuch as it calls upon the Church, that is, the Pope, to supply the deficiencies. Our theologians have answered: “A *norma remissiva* is no norm at all, but the authority to which one is referred. According to this notion it would have been sufficient if Scripture had simply told us: ‘Hear the Church,’ or rather, according to the Roman interpretation: ‘Hear the Pope!’ But the Pope is not the man of

whom Scripture says: ‘Hear ye Him,’ Matt. 17:5.” (Quenstedt, I, 147.) And in regard to the Roman *perfectio implicita* our old theologians remark: “Then every beggar would be rich *implicite*, since he can state where the riches are; and every dolt would have to be regarded as learned, since he can point out a university where learned men teach; and he would be richly provided with food who can point others to a table richly covered with sumptuous food” (Quenstedt, I, 148). It amounts to a similar mockery and abolition of Scripture when the neologists place the Scriptures under the control of the “experience” of the theologizing individual. And we know what is back of this.

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