

A WESLEYAN VIEW OF THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

WEBINAR: SEPTEMBER 14TH & 21ST, 2021

Beginning with a historical perspective, we will consider the role given to Scripture in the New Testament church, in the patristic era, at the Reformation, during the Enlightenment, and in the nineteenth century. That will bring us to consider the Reformation/Evangelical view today, including the questions raised by historians, scientists, and by hermeneutics. The Wesleyan position in all this will then be explored more specifically including what has been called 'the Wesleyan Quadrilateral' and how that should be properly understood.

It may be helpful to note the following terms:

- **Creatio Ex Nihilo:** creation out of nothing, the doctrine of the Christian Church.
- **Deism:** the view that we may prove by rational argument that the universe was created by God, but that God is remote, does not engage or intervene in the world; this implies Unitarianism, i.e. that God did not become incarnate in Jesus who was simply a great religious and ethical teacher.
- **Epistemology:** the philosophical study of how we know what we think we know.
- **Historical-Critical Method:** the method employed by historians to establish 'what actually happened' in the past, explaining events in terms of natural causes and human intentions and actions.
- **Inerrancy:** the view that there are no factual errors in the Bible, leading for some (but not all) to a fundamentalist position.
- **Fundamentalism:** the view that interpretation of the Bible is quite straightforward since everything it states is obvious and literally true and that we must therefore adopt creationism and (for some) dispensationalism.
- **Creationism:** a view which not only believes in the Christian doctrine of creation (*creatio ex nihilo*) but which also claims to have a scientific explanation different from modern science.
- **Dispensationalism:** the view originating with John Nelson Darby in the nineteenth century which divides biblical history into seven ages, ending with a literal millennium and including the rapture of the saints.
- **Infallible:** used to refer to the view that while we may not be able to explain all apparent discrepancies in the Bible or prove by historical research that all its statements are accurate and true, we nonetheless view the Bible as historically reliable, inspired by God, and our final authority on all questions of doctrine and ethics.
- **Naturalism:** the view that all that happens in the world may be fully explained by purely natural causes.
- **Transubstantiation:** the explanation developed in the medieval period using Aristotelian philosophy, that at Holy Communion, the bread and wine become literally (in 'essence') the body and blood of Christ while retaining the appearance (the 'accidents') of bread and wine.