

Sufficiency: A Current Application of a Common Confession

1.1 *The Holy Scripture is the **only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule** of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience.*

1. The nature of the current debate:

- a. Psychology and how it is to be used in the care of troubled souls¹ is at the center of the debate.
- b. The debate concerns the extent to which modern “science” is authoritative in the care of souls.
- c. Key approaches: Christian Psychology, Integration, and Biblical Counselors.

2. Key objections to the Biblical Counseling Movement (BCM):

a. Sufficiency as applied by the BCM was not a Reformation understanding and goes too far.

Answer:

- The Reformers were addressing contemporary theological issues including the doctrine of sufficiency or *Sola Scriptura* while using the doctrine of sufficiency in the debates.
- The BCM is addressing a contemporary theological issue with the same doctrine.
- This objection in effect freezes applications of theology in the Reformation era.
- The Confessions suggest that the Reformers *did* apply this doctrine to all of life (See the Helvetic Confession, Westminster, 2LBC, etc.).

b. The BCM “shuns every non-biblical source of knowledge”.

Answer:

- This is flatly false. Biblical counselors do *not* reject non-biblical knowledge outright, but they do subject it to “the only sufficient, certain, and infallible *rule*,” that is to Scripture.
- This represents a subtle denial of the noetic effects of the fall and assumes *goodness*.
- This misunderstands general revelation (cf. Psalm 19; Romans 1:19-20).

c. Objectively, the Bible does not address technical aspects of humanity (e.g. neurons, types of memory, personality traits, etc.).

Answer:

- This is true, but this argument betrays a presupposition that more detail is better and has more authority—it is really an argument for exhaustive knowledge.
- This asserts a presupposition that these things can be known accurately from science and that they are relevant to the issue at hand.
- However, none of these things are matters of the counseling room. People are not helped by technical discussions of neuro transmission.

d. All truth is God’s truth, so we should not deny the use of truths discovered by unbelievers.

Answer:

- It is certainly true that there is no truth outside of God, and that true things can be known by unbelievers, but this really isn’t the question being debated. The question is, Does the Bible sufficiently address the needs of the human soul? Acknowledging that true things can be known apart from the Bible does not answer this question.
- Because God’s Word is true, all other claims must be *subjected* to this “infallible rule”.

¹ It should be noted that the concept of “souls” is either philosophically or functionally rejected by most secular scientists, including those in psychiatry, psychology, and related fields. The fathers of psychology (e.g. Wundt, Freud, Jung, etc.) were largely materialists. Ironically, psychology is derived from the Greek *psyche*, meaning soul.

3. Understanding the categories of sufficiency:

a. Progressive sufficiency.

At every point of God's progressive revelation, His people had what they needed.

b. Completed sufficiency.

Christ has come, and the canon is closed.

c. Formal sufficiency.

Scripture contains all that is needed to interpret Scripture.

d. Material sufficiency.

i. In a general sense.

God has given us everything we need in whatever vocation we are.

ii. In a particular sense.

God has given us detailed revelation where it is needed.

4. The nature of suffering and the sufficiency of Scripture.

a. The real issues of counseling.

b. The real matters of the heart.

c. The real impact of denying sufficiency for the real issues.