

The Episcopal Church on The Authority of Holy Scripture

Based upon its official pronouncements and the historical development of its doctrine since its inception, the Episcopal Church's current position on the authority of the Bible can be summarized in the following eight points. They are shaped by the author's personal understanding of Episcopal Church teaching.

1. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the word of God.
2. Holy Scripture contains all things necessary for salvation. (Yet all things in the Bible are not required for salvation.)
3. The Bible is our most significant witness to Christian belief. It is the record of revelation, not the revelation itself. Above all, it is the church's most reliable witness to Jesus Christ, who is the incarnate Word of God.
4. The primacy (as distinct from supremacy) of the Bible continues to be recognized in the church. This means that the Bible is our first and most significant source of authority. It is the "rule and ultimate standard" of faith. However, the Episcopal Church does not stand in the Reformation tradition of *sola scriptura* as it is most commonly understood.
5. Tradition and human reason are consulted alongside — and sometimes in tension with — Holy Scripture. Scripture does not automatically trump tradition and reason, and Anglicans resist appeals to the "plain sense" of the Bible which exclude reflection upon its broader context.
6. The liturgies and lectionaries of the Episcopal Church are an authoritative framework for interpreting and applying Holy Scripture. In this hermeneutic, we affirm that Jesus Christ is Lord of all, including the Bible. Therefore, the life and teachings of Christ are the most authoritative interpreters of scripture.
7. We are called to grow in our learning and understanding of biblical wisdom. The critical study of the Bible is a legitimate means of seeking divine truth. The results of such study, however, must be weighed against the witness of previous church teachings. Extra-biblical sources of truth such as science and history are not to be ignored, even when they call into question the church's previous conclusions based on scripture.
8. The ancient books commonly referred to as the "Apocrypha" are helpful for learning and teaching, but no church doctrine may be based solely upon them.