

We recognise that our interpretation of Scripture is not infallible; nevertheless, we may gain a true and valid understanding of God’s mind revealed in the Scripture (Psalm 19:7–11; Proverbs 2:1–11). To this end, our interpretation must be governed by the author’s original intention and the context of the Scripture itself. Therefore, in seeking to understand a text, we depend on the illumination of the Holy Spirit, use the normal grammatico-historical rules of interpretation, and are assisted by the understanding of the true church throughout the ages (1 Corinthians 2:6–14; Ephesians 4:11–13; 2 Peter 3:15–16).

(Sola 5 Confession 2.4)

One of the biggest doctrinal controversies in the fourth century was over the deity of Jesus Christ. A man named Arius, and his followers, taught that Jesus Christ was a created being, who did not always exist. Athanasius strongly defended the deity of Jesus Christ and helped with that particular theological battle. The Council of Nicaea settled the matter, affirming believe in Jesus Christ as “the Son of God” who was “of the essence of the Father, God of God, and Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father.”

The Arians protested very loudly that the Creed contained nonbiblical language: “of the essence of the Father” and “of one substance of the Father.” This language, they argued, is found nowhere in the Bible. They were appealing to “no creed but the Bible” in order to defend their heresy.

This historical incident highlights that, while the Bible is sufficient, it is necessary that we accurately INTERPRET the Bible in order to guard the faith that was once-for-all delivered to the saints. Paul recognised this truth when he wrote to Timothy about the need to “do [his] best” to “rightly handl[e] the word of truth.” The Bible contains language that, to be properly understood, must be correctly interpreted.

The Confession strikes a balance between recognising human fallibility in interpreting infallible Scripture (**our interpretation of Scripture is not infallible**) and acknowledging that correct interpretation is not impossible (**we may gain a true and valid understanding of God’s mind revealed in Scripture**). How do the texts supplied as support of this affirmation support its claim?

Psalm 19:7–11: _____

Proverbs 2:1–11: _____

Why is it important to recognise that **our interpretation of Scripture is not infallible**? _____

Why is it important to affirm that **we may gain a true and valid understanding of God’s mind revealed in Scripture**? _____

If **our interpretation of Scripture is not infallible**, how do we know when a particular doctrinal difference is worth dividing over? _____

Since it is possible to correctly interpret Scripture, **our interpretation must be governed by the author’s original intention and the context of the Scripture itself.**

The Confession highlights two elements of correct Scriptural interpretation here: **the author’s original intention** and **the context of the Scripture itself**. What do you understand by each of these terms?

The author’s original intention: _____

The context of the Scripture itself: _____

Given the above convictions, we are committed to **understand a text** by following (at least) three important rules: **We depend on the illumination of the Holy Spirit, use the normal grammatico-historical rules of interpretation, and are assisted by the understanding of the true church throughout the ages.**

Why is it important to **depend on the illumination of the Holy Spirit** in our Bible interpretation? Consider 1 Corinthians 2:6–14 in this regard. _____

Practically, how do we **depend on the illumination of the Holy Spirit** in our Bible interpretation? _____

The **normal grammatico-historical rules of interpretation** rest upon the conviction that each Bible passage had one basic meaning, which is firmly rooted in historical truth, and relates accurately according to the common principles of human language. The Bible relates relating real, interconnected historical events, which must be acknowledged and understood before the teachings of the Bible make sense or have application. “Grammatical” suggests that the interpreter uses language the way any normal person would. What is the danger if we avoid this model of interpretation? _____

Our interpretation is **assisted by the understanding of the true church throughout the ages**. Why? _____
