

## The Holy Scripture

### Introduction

Why the Westminster Confession of Faith? – great on basics... wonderfully deep and comprehensive  
Today: why the Bible?

### Chapter 1 *Modern Language version – 1993 – OPC*

1. Although the light of nature and the works of creation and providence manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, to such an extent that men are without excuse, yet they are not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and of his will which is necessary for salvation. Therefore it pleased the Lord, at various times and in diverse ways, to reveal himself and to declare his will to his church; and afterward—for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh and the malice of Satan and of the world—to commit this revelation wholly to writing. Therefore the Holy Scripture is most necessary, God's former ways of revealing his will to his people having ceased.

2. Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the written Word of God, are all the books of the Old and New Testaments, namely:

[List of Bible books]

All these are given by inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life.

3. The books commonly called the Apocrypha, because they are not divinely inspired, are not part of the canon of Scripture, and therefore are of no authority in the church of God and are not to be approved, or made use of, in any manner different from other human writings.

4. The authority of the Holy Scripture, because of which it ought to be believed and obeyed, does not depend upon the testimony of any man or church, but entirely upon God, its author (who is truth itself); therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God.

5. We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church to a high and reverent esteem for the Holy Scripture. The heavenly character of its content, the efficacy of its doctrine, the majesty of its style, the agreement of all its parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), the full disclosure it makes of the only way of man's salvation, its many other incomparable excellencies, and its entire perfection, are arguments by which it gives abundant evidence that it is the Word of God. Nevertheless, our full persuasion and assurance of its infallible truth and divine authority is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.

### **General revelation: conscience, creation and providence**

Romans 1:20

### **Special revelation: the word of God**

to reveal himself... and salvation

Hebrews 1:1-2

the Bible (not dreams, visions, prophets etc)

### **Which Bible books are God's word**

the 66 books of our Bible

"inspiration" = "breathed out by God"

2 Timothy 3:15-17

### **The authority of the Bible**

Various reasons help persuade us to receive the Bible as God's word...

But God alone has authority to authenticate Scripture.

God's Word is self-authenticating

His Holy Spirit persuades us

6. The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory and man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly stated in Scripture or by good and necessary inference may be deduced from Scripture, unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or by traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that the inward illumination of the Spirit of God is necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word. We also acknowledge that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God and the government of the church—circumstances common to human activities and societies—which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.

7. Not all things in Scripture are equally plain in themselves or equally clear to all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation are so clearly stated and explained in one place or another in Scripture, that not only the educated but also the uneducated may gain a sufficient understanding of them by a proper use of the ordinary means.

8. The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old) and the New Testament in Greek (which at the time it was written was the language most generally known to the nations), being directly inspired by God and by his unique care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authoritative, so that in all controversies of religion the church is finally to appeal to them. But, because these original languages are not understood by all the people of God, who have a right to, and a vital interest in, the Scriptures and are commanded to read and search them in the fear of God, therefore the Scriptures are to be translated into the common language of every nation to which they come; so that, the Word of God dwelling abundantly in all, they may worship him in an acceptable manner and by perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures may have hope.

9. The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself. Therefore, when there is a question about the true and full meaning of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), that meaning must be searched out and ascertained by other places that speak more clearly.

10. The supreme judge by whom all controversies of religion are to be settled and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and claims to private revelations are to be examined, can be only the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture. With his decision we are to be satisfied.

### **The authority of the Bible**

the Bible will thoroughly equip – and we must not go elsewhere

“good and necessary consequence” = clearly implied by Scripture

no new revelations

qualifier 1: we need the Spirit's illumination  
1 Cor. 2:9-12

qualifier 2: worship and government – in some matters we use human wisdom

### **The clarity of Scripture**

The Bible isn't always easy! (humility)

But the Gospel IS clearly taught

And all Christians can grow as they study hard

### **Texts and translations**

Inspired and authoritative texts in Greek and Hebrew

Scriptures must be translated into every language: this is our “right”

### **Interpreting the Bible**

Inspiration → unity of Scripture – one coherent book

Let Scripture interpret Scripture

Need to know our whole Bibles!

“One” not many truths

Arguments? There is only one answer

**Response: for what should we give thanks... confess... pray?**