

Chapter 1^{1,2}
The Holy Scriptures
Baptist Confession of Faith Discussion
 December 3, 2020

Historical Background

- During the 1630s and 1640s, Congregationalist and Baptists separated from the Church of England.
- Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Baptists were successful in resisting government oppression because of their doctrinal agreement.
- Presbyterians stood by the Westminster Confession of 1647
- Congregationalists adopted the Savoy Declaration of 1658, for the congregational church government
- Baptists adopted the Second London Baptist Confessions in 1677 and 1689 (aka The Baptist Confession of Faith), for believer's baptism. For more than 300 years, it remains the doctrinal statement of most Baptist today.

The church is the *pillar and buttress* [foundation] *of the truth* (1 Tim 3.15).

As pillar and foundation of the truth, the church is responsible for preserving the truth (the revelation which God made to men), defending it against error and to pass it on to future generations. A creed or confession is simply a statement of faith.

Uses of Confessions

1. Public declaration and defense of truth, the church is to:
 - Follow the pattern of the sound words (2 Timothy 1:13)
 - contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3)
 - stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel (Philippians 1:27)
2. Public standard of fellowship and discipline, the church is:
 - to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3)
 - to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus (Romans 15:5)
 - united in the same mind and the same judgment (1 Corinthians 1:10)
 - Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand (Matthew 12:25)
3. A standard to evaluate ministers of the Word (2 Tim 2.2; Titus 1.9; 1 John 4.1; 2 John 10), the minister of the Word must:
 - faithful men (2 Timothy 2:2)
 - hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught ... able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it (Titus 1:9)
 We must guard against false teachers:
 - test the spirits to see whether they are from God (1 John 4:1)

¹ A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, 5th Edition: Revised and corrected, Samuel E. Waldron, pp. 13-61, 525-526

² All Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV), Copyright 2001 by Crossway Bibles, ESV Text Edition (2016)

- do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting (2 John 10)
- 4. Gives a sense of historical continuity
 - Our confessions tie us to heritage of faith received from the past that we may pass on to our children.

Paragraph 1

The Holy Scriptures are the only sufficient, certain, and infallible standard of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience.¹ The light of nature and the works of creation and providence so clearly demonstrate the goodness, wisdom, and power of God that people are left without excuse; however, these demonstrations are not sufficient to give the knowledge of God and his will that is necessary for salvation.² Therefore, the Lord was pleased at different times and in various ways to reveal himself and to declare his will to his church.³ To preserve and propagate the truth better and to establish and comfort the church with greater certainty against the corruption of the flesh and the malice of Satan and the world, the Lord put this revelation completely in writing. Therefore, the Holy Scriptures are absolutely necessary, because God's former ways of revealing his will to his people have now ceased.⁴

¹2 Timothy 3:15-17; Isaiah 8:20; Luke 16:29, 31; Ephesians 2:20. ²Romans 1:19-21; Romans 2:14,15; Psalm 19:1-3. ³Hebrews 1:1. ⁴Proverbs 22:19-21; Romans 15:4; 2 Peter 1:19, 20.

I. The Necessity of Scripture

- a. The ground of this necessity – Why is Scripture necessary?
Because the light of nature (general revelation) and the works of creation and providence are not sufficient to give the knowledge of God and his will that is necessary for salvation.
- b. The presupposition of this necessity – Because God's former ways of revealing his will to his people have now ceased (Heb 1.1-2).
- c. The reasons for this necessity
Preservation – Salvation of men depends on possessing a trustworthy record of redemptive revelation (To preserve and propagate the truth ... to establish and comfort the church). Writing was necessary because of the weakness and wickedness of men (Deut 17.18-20; 2Thess 2.1-2).

Publication – To propagate the truth ... (1Tim 3.14-15)

Selection (not in Confession) – Writing the redemptive revelation provided an inspired selection (Jn 20.30-31, 21.25; Col 4.16)
- d. The implication of this necessity
If God's sovereign purpose is to save men he will ensure that these "Testaments were inspired directly by God and by his unique care and providence were kept pure down through the ages" (Par 8). By God's providence the Scriptures will be guarded from corruption.

Paragraph 2

The Holy Scriptures, or the Word of God written, consist of all the books of the Old and New Testaments. These are:

THE OLD TESTAMENT: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

THE NEW TESTAMENT: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, Revelation.

All of these are given by the inspiration of God to be the standard of faith and life.⁵

⁵2 Timothy 3:16.

Paragraph 3

The books commonly called the Apocrypha were not given by divine inspiration and so are not part of the canon or standard of the Scriptures. Therefore, they have no authority for the church of God and are not to be recognized or used in any way different from other human writings.⁶

⁶Luke 24:27, 44; Romans 3:2.

II. Its Identity

A. *Defined inclusively* – ‘all the books of the Old and New Testaments’ (*Par 2*)

B. *Defined exclusively* – not the Apocrypha (*Par 3*)

Paragraph 4

The authority of the Holy Scriptures obligates belief in them. This authority does not depend on the testimony of any person or church but on God the author alone, who is truth itself. Therefore, the Scriptures are to be received because they are the Word of God.⁷

⁷2 Peter 1:19-21; 2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 John 5:9.

III. Its Authority

Paragraphs 4 and 5 show us two theological distinctions and these distinctions give us answers to two questions:

1. Why is the Bible authoritative?
2. How do we know that the Bible is the Word of God?

A. *The fact of its divine authority*

Evidence for the authority of the Old Testament

1. Sacred (2 Tim 3.15) and holy (Rom 1.2)
2. Its writings are the oracles of God (Rom 3.2; Acts 7.38; Heb 5.12), OT is the written sayings of God, divine utterance
3. God is the ultimate, speaker and author (Acts 2.16-17; 4.24-25; Matt 13.35)
4. Viewed as God's very word (Rom 9.17; Gal 3.8; Matt 19-4-5)
5. Since God is the author of the Scriptures, they can be written with the future in mind (Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 10:11).
6. Since God is the author of Scripture, it is also authoritative in detail. Arguments are built on the very form of a single word (Matt 22:32; Lk 16:17; Matt 22:41-6; John 10:35; Gal 3:16).
7. Since Scripture is divine, it demands fulfillment (Acts 1:16; 2:24-36; Acts 13:34-35; John 19:34-36, 24; Luke 22:37; Matt 26:54; John 13:18).
8. The five classic passages which articulate clearly the divine authority of the Old Testament are 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19-21; Matt 5:17-18; John 10:34-36; Matt 4:1-11.

Evidence for the authority of the New Testament

1. Its unity with the OT, the NT is the fulfillment of OT
The classic passages which teach the organic unity of the Old and New Testaments are Heb 1:1-2 and 2 Cor 3:10-11.
2. Equal in authority with the OT (Rom 16:25-26; 2 Pet 1:16-21; 1 Cor 14:37; 15:3-11; 2 Pet 3:1-2; John 2:22)

B. *The authentication of its divine authority*

The reformed view of the self-authentication (or *autopistia*) of the Scriptures can be properly understood by three Reformed doctrines.

1. *The self-authenticating character of general revelation* (Ps 19; Rom 1.18-32; Acts 17). In general revelation creation speaks to us of God. In special revelation God himself approaches us directly and personally speaks to us in words.
2. *The self-authenticating character of the Scriptures*
This doctrine resolves the problem of the authentication of the Bible. The Bible everywhere asserts that the Scriptures are never to be viewed as a dead letter, but as the living Word of God (Jer 23:28-29; Luke 16:27-31; John 6:63; 1 Pet 1:23-25; Heb 4:12-13). As the living Word of God, the Scriptures in and of themselves demand to be believed and bound all who hear them to believe.

The Scriptures are sufficient in their truthfulness which is required for saving faith (Deut 31:11–13; John 20:31; Gal 1:8, 9; Mark 16:15–16).

3. *The Testimony of the Holy Spirit to the Scriptures*

The Holy Spirit's testimony is necessary because of sin. Man's depravity perverts his whole being. It causes them to suppress the truth and so spiritually blinds them to the light of divine revelation (Rom 1:21; Eph 4:17–21; 2 Cor 4:3–4).

- a. The Bible teaches that if man is to think right, he must be right ethically (Ps 111:10; Prov 9:10; 1:7; 15:33; John 3:19–21; 7:16–17; 2 Tim 2:25; 3:7; John 10:26–27). Faith, fear, doing God's will, repentance—all these are produced in sinners by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.
- b. There are a number of passages which directly assert that it is the Spirit who enables us to see and understand spiritual truth (Matt 16:17; 1 Cor 2:14–16.; John 3:3–8; 1 Cor 2:4–5; 1 Thess 1:5–6; 1 John 2:20–21, 27).

Paragraph 6

The whole counsel of God concerning everything essential for his own glory and man's salvation, faith, and life is either explicitly stated or by necessary inference contained in the Holy Scriptures. Nothing is ever to be added to the Scriptures, either by new revelation of the Spirit or by human traditions.⁹

Nevertheless, we acknowledge that the inward illumination of the Spirit of God is necessary for a saving understanding of what is revealed in the Word.¹⁰ We recognize that some circumstances concerning the worship of God and government of the church are common to human actions and organizations and are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian wisdom, following the general rules of the Word, which must always be observed.¹¹

⁹2 Tim 3:15-17; Gal 1:8,9. ¹⁰John 6:45; 1 Cor 2:9-12. ¹¹1 Cor 11:13, 14; 1 Cor 14:26, 40

IV. The Sufficiency of Scripture

What the Confession does NOT mean by the sufficiency of Scripture:

- a. That all we need to know about the matters mentioned in the Confession are stated explicitly in Scripture.
- b. That the sufficiency of Scripture does not imply its all-sufficiency.

What then is the Scripture sufficient for? It is sufficient for everything essential for his own (God's) glory and man's salvation, faith and life.

1. It is sufficient to achieve the purposes of redemptive revelation.

It is not limited to showing us the way of salvation, it is more than that. For example:

- The Bible is not a textbook on biology, but it guides us on how to apply it (abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality).
- The Bible is not a textbook on geology, astronomy and history but it guides us understand our relationship to nature (recommend Dr. Jason Lisle).
- The Bible is not a textbook on government and political science, but it guides us how to govern, apply civil law, taxation, education).

- The Bible is not a textbook on economics, but it guides us on how to apply it (savings, investment).

The Bible is sufficient in showing us how we ought to live. The Bible is basic to all sphere of human knowledge.

2. The sufficiency of the Bible means it is sufficient in itself. It is sufficient to achieve the purposes of redemptive revelation without the addition of new revelation (charismatics, cults) or traditions of men.
3. The sufficiency of Scripture does not negate the necessity of the Spirit's teaching. The Scripture is not sufficient or clear to those without the Spirit (1Cor 2.14).
4. The sufficiency of Scripture does not negate the necessity of common sense (1Cor 14.26, 40).

Paragraph 7

Some things in Scripture are clearer than others, and some people understand the teachings more clearly than others.¹² However, the things that must be known, believed, and obeyed for salvation are so clearly set forth and explained in one part of Scripture or another that both the educated and uneducated may achieve a sufficient understanding of them by properly using ordinary measures.¹³

¹² Peter 3:16. ¹³ Psalm 19:7; Psalm 119:130

V. The Clarity of Scripture

Assertions:

1. The Bible is clear.
The clarity of Scripture is part of its sufficiency (2 Tim 3:16-17). The Scripture is adequate to equip the man of God for every good work because he clearly understood it. It would not be sufficient if it is not clear to him.
2. Its clarity is presupposed in its ability to produce conviction.
2 Timothy 3:14
¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and *have firmly believed*, knowing from whom you learned it
3. Its clarity is affirmed in many other places (Ps 119.105; 1Pet 1.19; Deut 30.11-14).
4. The Bible is not equally clear in all its parts (2Pet 3.16).
5. The Bible is not equally clear to all (2Tim 3.15-17).

Paragraph 8

The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, the native language of the ancient people of God.¹⁴ The New Testament was written in Greek, which at the time it was written was most widely known to the nations. These Testaments were inspired directly by God and by his unique care and providence were kept pure down through the ages. They are therefore true and authoritative^b, so that in all religious controversies the church must make their ultimate appeal to them.¹⁵ All God's people have a right to and a claim on the Scriptures and are commanded in the fear of God to read¹⁶ and search them.¹⁷ Not all of God's people know these original languages, so the Scriptures are to be translated into the common language of every nation to which they come.¹⁸ In this way the Word of God may dwell richly in all, so that they may worship him in an acceptable manner and through patience and the comfort of the Scriptures may have hope.¹⁹

^b*authentic*

¹⁴Romans 3:2. ¹⁵Isaiah 8:20. ¹⁶Acts 15:15. ¹⁷John 5:39. ¹⁸1 Corinthians 14:6, 9, 11, 12, 24, 28
¹⁹Colossians 3:16

VI. Its Availability

- A. *The fact of its availability: its preservation*
- B. *The necessity of its availability: its translation*
 - 1. The need for its translation
 - 2. The basis for its translation
 - 3. The extent for its translation
 - 4. The purposes of its translation

Paragraph 9

The infallible rule for interpreting Scripture is the Scripture itself. Therefore, when there is a question about the true and full meaning^c of any part of Scripture (and each passage has only one meaning, not many), it must be understood in light of other passages that speak more clearly.²⁰

^c*sense*

²⁰2 Peter 1:20, 21; Acts 15:15, 16.

Paragraph 10

The supreme judge for deciding all religious controversies and for evaluating all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, human teachings, and individual interpretations^d, and in whose judgment we are to rest, is nothing but the Holy Scripture delivered by the Spirit. In this Scripture our faith finds its final word.²¹

^d*private spirits*

²¹Matthew 22:29, 31, 32; Ephesians 2:20; Acts 28:23

VII. Its Finality

- A. *For scriptural interpretation in particular (Par 9)*
- B. *For religious questions in general (Par 10)*

Conclusions from these paragraphs and passages:

1. They underscore the sole and supreme authority of Scripture.
2. Pastors and teachers are necessary in the life of the people of God.
3. We must reject individualism.
4. We must maintain teachable, humble attitudes towards our instructors in the faith.
5. We must receive their instruction and search the Scriptures.
6. It should be our priority to put our self and our family under a faithful ministry of the Word.

Questions

1. How many kinds of revelation are there? Name them.
2. Is the 'light of nature' clear? Is it sufficient for salvation? Why or why not?
3. In what sense is the written Word necessary?
4. Summarize the biblical argument for the whole Bible, both Old and New Testaments, being the Word of God.
5. How do we know that the Scriptures are the Word of God?
6. Define the term 'inspiration' as it is used in this chapter (Pars 2, 3, 8).
7. What are some things that the sufficiency of the Scriptures does not mean?
8. For what are the Scriptures sufficient?
9. What is the classic biblical assertion of the sufficiency of the Scriptures?
10. How must the sufficiency of the Scriptures be qualified?
11. What three assertions about the clarity of Scripture are warranted by the language of the Confession?
12. What biblical passage clearly teaches that the Bible is not equally clear in all its parts?
13. Does this chapter teach the unlimited inerrancy of the Scriptures? Support your answer.
14. How can we be sure that God, once having given the Scriptures, would preserve them for all ages?
15. Does the Confession support the idea that a particular translation of the Bible may be viewed as the final court of appeal in controversy?