

# Studies in the Westminster Confession of Faith

Newtownabbey Free Presbyterian Church Rev Brian McClung 30th March 2011 Chapter 1 Part 5

*1 Corinthians 2:10-12*

We are continuing to dwell upon the opening chapter of the W.C.F. We come this evening to section 5:

*We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to a high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture. And the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God: yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.*

*Proofs: 1 Tim. 3:15; 1 John 2:20,27; John 16:13,14; 1 Cor. 2:10-12; Isa. 59:21.*

This fifth section, like section 4, of this chapter of the WCF continues to deal with the basis upon which we should accept and believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God. The previous section ruled out the authority of man or the church and pointed us to the authority of God for accepting the Scriptures.

**It is very true that the Church is to support, maintain, defend and bear witness to the truth.** The first proof text of this section states: *But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth, 1 Tim 3:15.*

However, there is no equal or higher authority in the world to authenticate the Scriptures than the Scriptures themselves. As Paul reminded us in *Hebrew 6:13: For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he by himself.* The same principle applies to the Scriptures, there simply is no equal or greater authority than the Scriptures own testimony to themselves.

There are a number of matters which bear testimony to the divine origin of the Scriptures. We mentioned A.A. Hodge's six arguments last time. This time we will highlight Robert Shaw's arguments. He divides these evidences into those that are external and those that are internal:

## I. External evidences:

- [1] The character of the sacred penmen. Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.
- [2] The miracles wrought by them, for the declared purpose of attesting their divine mission and inspiration. This happened both in Old & New Testament times.
- [3] The exact accomplishment of numerous prophecies recorded in Scripture.
- [4] The antiquity of the Scriptures, taken in connection with their wonderful preservation to this day. They have remained though assailed repeatedly by great foes.
- [5] The effects produced by the Scriptures, effects which could never have been accomplished by the lessons of philosophy, nor the force of human laws.
- [6] The influence which the Scriptures have had in the most barbarous nations, and in meliorating the condition of society at large, wherever the knowledge of them has been disseminated.

## II. Internal evidences:

- [1] The incomparable sublimity of the doctrines contained in the Scriptures, and their revealing many truths which could not be discovered by nature or reason.
- [2] The extent and purity of their precepts.
- [3] The representation which they give of the character and moral administration of God.
- [4] The exact adaptation of the revelation they contain to the state and wants of man.
- [5] The entire harmony of their several parts, though written by different persons, and in different ages.
- [6] The majesty of their style.
- [7] The scope and tendency of the whole to advance the glory of God, and secure the salvation of men.

**While arguments such as these may produce a rational conviction that the Scriptures are the Word of God, it is only by the work of the Holy Spirit that a wholehearted and saving conviction will be produced.** Belief in the Scriptures as the Word of God is ultimately an act of faith. No rational argument will ever convince anyone.

The faith that believes the Scriptures to be the Word of God is a gift from the Holy Spirit.

True faith always acts. If we truly believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God then we will act in a particular way. We will act by obedience to believe and receive them in every part. We will not quibble with the Scriptures, trying to explain them away or lessen their force. We will have a spirit that immediately wants to submit and yield to the teaching of the Word of God, *1 Thess 2:13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.*

Though many who believe the Scriptures are not able to demonstrate the inspiration of the Scriptures by rational arguments, yet, by the experience they have of their power and efficacy in their own hearts, they are infallibly assured that they are the Word of God. They can no more be convinced, by the reasonings and objections of infidels, that the Scriptures are the production of men, than they can be persuaded that men created the sun, whose light they behold: *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself, John 7:17.*

**Section 6. *The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word: and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions 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.***

*Proofs: 2 Tim. 3:15,16, 17; Gal. 1:8, 9; 2 Thess. 2:2; John 6:45; 1 Cor. 2:9-12; 1 Cor. 9:13, 14; 1 Cor. 14:26. 40.*

This section deals with the sufficiency of Scripture. This is a very important section in light of the Charismatic movement that is prevalent today which believes in its additional revelations, be they dreams, visions, words of knowledge or wisdom, tongues or whatever.

1. The Scriptures are a complete rule of faith and practice. They contain all that God has to say unto mankind. As pointed out previously special revelation is necessary because of our fall into sin and the subsequent marring of the knowledge of God written on our hearts at creation. With the completion of the canon of Scripture God has given to us all that we need to show us the way to heaven and for us to live a life that is pleasing and acceptable to Him, *2 Tim 3:16,17 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

2. God does not speak outside His Word. This Book alone is the final court of appeal on all matters. There is no need for and there are no new revelations from God. Nothing is to be added to this book by the traditions of men. The shibboleths of men are never to be elevated to the level of the Scriptures. We are not to believe a particular doctrine or follow a particular practice just because someone in Church history, is claimed to have done so. If it is not in the Scriptures then it is not to be tolerated.

3. There are matters in life and in the Church which are to be governed by the general rules of God's Word. All things are to be done decently and in order, *1 Cor 14:40.* We are to exercise our natural judgment as governed by the principles of Scripture. Sanctified common sense as it is sometimes called. For example: the particular order of a service is left to personal judgment along as it has praise, prayer and preaching as its elements because these are commanded by Scripture. The number of elders or deacons in a local church is another example.

This liberty is allowed only within the limits of the principles taught in the Scriptures. We must avoid the doctrine of expediency where we seek to render the things of God more acceptable and attractive to the world. Nothing must be tolerated because it is deemed expedient to do so. Whether in personal life or in the work of God only what the Scriptures warrant must be believed or practiced.