

Week 3, Wednesday, September 22, 2021: Of the Holy Scriptures (2 Pet. 1:3, 19-21)

WCF Chapter 1, “Of the Holy Scriptures”: B.B. Warfield writes: “There is certainly in the whole mass of confessional literature no more nobly conceived or ably wrought-out statement of doctrine than the chapter ‘Of the Holy Scripture,’ which the Westminster Divines placed at the head of their Confession and laid at the foundation of their system of doctrine.”⁹

WCF 1:1:¹⁰ *Although the light of nature and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men unexcusable;^a yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and of His will, which is necessary unto salvation.^b Therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal Himself, and to declare that His will unto His Church;^c and afterwards, 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 the same wholly unto writing:^d which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary;^e those former ways of God’s revealing His will unto His people being now ceased.^f* ^aRom 2:14-15; Rom 1:19-20; Ps 19:1-3; Rom 1:32 with Rom 2:1. ^b1 Cor 1:21; 1 Cor 2:13-14. ^cHeb 1:1. ^dProv 22:19-21; Luke 1:3-4; Rom 15:4; Matt 4:4,7,10; Isa 8:19-20. ^e2 Tim 3:15; 2 Pet 1:19. ^fHeb 1:1-2.

Why the Scriptures first (not God until chapter 2)?

- a) Doctrine of Revelation: General (to all) Special (to some). We know God savingly (and correctly interpret general revelation) truly only through God’s interpretive lens. Genesis 1-11 alone: origin of universe, life, mankind’s purpose (WLC 1, WSC 1), gender roles, worship, Sabbath, evil/fall/sin, redemption plan, explanation of history, Trinity. (WLC 6). NECESSITY OF SCRIPTURE (Inscripturation of Revelation¹¹). First axiom for all life.
- b) “former ways ceased” Revelation is complete. Heb 1:1-2, Rev. 22:18-19; Eph. 2:20). Against ongoing revelation/tongues. Redemptive acts required redemptive revelation/interpretation (so we see with Jesus and the Apostles to validate their words as God’s Word). As Christ fulfilled and completed all, revelation is closed after the apostolic writers. Thomas Watson writes, “Thus God has set a seal to the truth and divinity of the Scriptures by miracles.”¹² COMPLETENESS OF SCRIPTURE. See John 14:26; 16:12-15 as the understanding behind Luke 24:44.

WCF 1:2: *Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testaments, which are these:*

⁹ B. B. Warfield, “The Westminster Doctrine of Holy Scripture”, in *The Westminster Assembly And Its Work*, 155.

¹⁰ This and all other Westminster Confession of Faith sections throughout this booklet are taken (as public domain) from the following website and reformatted here: <https://www.fpchurch.org.uk/about-us/important-documents/the-westminster-confession-of-faith/#cp1>

¹¹ The “written Scriptures” are “the record of, revelation”. “The necessity of Scripture is thus made to rest on the insufficiency of natural revelation and the cessation of supernatural revelation ...” B.B. Warfield, “The Westminster Doctrine of Holy Scripture”, 194, 195. He also points to Luke 16:27-31 as a good Scripture to challenge naysayers, 199.

¹² Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity: Contained in Sermons Upon the Westminster Assembly’s Catechism* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1970), 29. He also writes, “Let not men so talk of a revelation from the Spirit, but suspect it to be an imposture. The Spirit of God acts regularly, it works in and by the Word ...”, 33.

OF THE OLD TESTAMENT:

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

OF THE NEW TESTAMENT:

The Gospels according to	Paul's Epistles to		
Matthew	the Romans	Thessalonians 1	The Epistle of James

Mark	Corinthians 1	Thessalonians 2	The first and second Epistles of Peter
Luke	Corinthians 2	To Timothy 1	The first, second, and third Epistles of John
John	Galatians	To Timothy 2	The Epistle of Jude
	Ephesians	To Titus	The Revelation of John
The Acts of the Apostles	Philippians	To Philemon	
	Colossians	The Epistle to the Hebrews	

*All which are given by inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life.^s
^sLuke 16:29,31; Eph 2:20; Rev 22:18-19; 2 Tim 3:16.*

- a) “Rule of faith and life” (WLC 3, 5-6, SC 2-4). SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE (2 Pet. 1:3).
- b) Have books/order memorized. CANON OF SCRIPTURE:
 - 1) Canon: “rule” or “standard”.
 - 2) Sixty-six books by 40 authors (39 OT – Masoretic Text broken up into more books, e.g. 1 & 2 Samuel, 27 NT)
 - 3) OT by the Jews in the Masoretic Text (they were known as the Masoretes), copied and completed (establishing not only books but lettering and vowel pronunciation) in the 7 to 10 centuries BC to preserve the Hebrew.
 - 4) NT by the Church through a process of time, 27 NT books in Eusebius (AD 325) of Caesarea’s *Ecclesiastical History*. In AD 367, Athanasius confirmed them in his “Easter” letter as “the wellsprings of salvation, from which he who thirsts may take his fill of sacred words.” Jerome and Augustine resolved satisfaction on this canon, and “in AD 397 the Third Council of Carthage demanded that nothing be read in the church under the title of divine Scripture except the ‘canonical’ books, and then it affirmed precisely the current collection of twenty-seven New Testament books as the New Testament canon.” Also “weeded out” were some contemporary Greek writings used like “Shepherd of Hermas”. [R. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology for the Christian Faith*, 64.]

WCF 1:3: The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon of the Scripture; and therefore are of no authority in the Church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved, or made use of, than other human writings.^h

^hLuke 24:27,44; Rom 3:2; 2 Pet 1:21.

COMPLETENESS OF SCRIPTURE

- a) Apocrypha (hidden books) excluded from OT: 1 & 2 Esdras Additions to Esther and Daniel; 1 & 2 Macabees; Tobias; Judith; Wisdom; Sirach; Baruch; Epistle of Jeremiah; Susanna; Prayer of Azariah; Prayer of Manasseh; Bel and the Dragon; Laodiceans [source for below, Rowland S. Ward, *The Westminster Confession of Faith: A Study Guide*, 67; and A.A. Hodge, *The Westminster Confession: A Commentary*, 33.]
- b) In the Latin Vulgate (R.C. Church, thus Wycliff's) due to Jerome's using a variant version for His (second) Latin Vulgate (he put an asterisk to say he thought they weren't canonical of OT). Catholic Church made official at Council of Trent in 1546. The 1611 KJV had it until 1885 when excluded by the British Bible Society. Note the WCF was published in 1640s.
- c) Why reject?
 - a) Internal:
 1. Never claim to be Scripture.
 2. Contradicts Bible's self-authority: Eg: 2 Maccabees, "If it [this book] is found well written and aptly composed, that is what I myself hoped for; if cheap and mediocre, I could only do my best." Nothing like, "Thus saith the LORD" in OT, or "But I say" in NT. David Dickson also shares, "you will read of an offering for the dead, prayers and reconciliation for the dead, that they might be delivered from sin, 2 Maccabees 12:43-45."¹³
 - b) External:
 1. Not in the Hebrew Bible/Masoretic Text.
 2. Never quoted in the NT.
 3. Early church fathers never embraced.
 4. Also, nothing else is the Word (Book of Mormon, Koran).

WCF 1:4: *The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man, or Church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof: and therefore it is to be received because it is the Word of God.*ⁱ
ⁱ2 Pet 1:19,21; 2 Tim 3:16; 1 John 5:9; 1 Thess 2:13.

Apologetic method, presuppositionalism: Bible is true because it is God's Word. AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE. Self-authenticating authority. 2 Sam. 23:2, 2 Tim. 3:16-17, 2 Pet. 3:16. Also, "Thus saith the Lord", "And the LORD said", etc. As well the Church (as the RCC would boast) is not the source of authorizing the books of the Bible, but simply the testimony to them. Watson writes, "... the church holds for the Scriptures [as the pillar and ground of the truth per 1 Tim. 3:15], but they do not receive their authority from the church, but from God."¹⁴

WCF 1:5: *We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to a high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture.*^k *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*

¹³ David Dickson, *Truth's Victory Over Error: A Commentary on the Westminster Confession of Faith*, Editor, John R. De Witt (Carlisle, Pa: Banner of Truth Trust, 2007) , 8.

¹⁴ Watson, 30.

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.¹

^k1 Tim 3:15. ^l1 John 2:20,27; John 16:13-14; 1 Cor 2:10-12; Isa 59:21.

Nonetheless, for believers, inner “evidences” are an encouragement to us and help our faith grow in the Scriptures. In particular, “consent of all the parts”: not inconsistent! (WLC 4). Packer writes, “Each book proceeded from the same divine mind, so the teaching of the Bible’s sixty-six books will be complementary and self-consistent ... It is certain that Scripture nowhere contradicts Scripture; rather, one passage explains another.”¹⁵ Only Holy Spirit convicts a person the Bible is God’s Word. (WLC 2) INSPIRATION¹⁶ (VERBAL AND PLENARY – 1 Pet 1:1; 2 Pet. 2:20-21; 2 Tim. 3:16), INFALLIBILITY, AND INERRANCY OF SCRIPTURES.

WCF 1:6: *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.^m 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.ⁿ 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.^o*

^m2 Tim 3:15-17; Gal 1:8-9; 2 Thess 2:2. ⁿJohn 6:45; 1 Cor 2:9-12. ^o1 Cor 11:13-14; 1 Cor 14:26,40.

SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE. Good and necessary deduction (what is implied is infallibly true¹⁷): such as regulative principle of worship, the Trinity, etc. Yet there are circumstances for times (like Robert’s Rules of Order, microphones, time of services).

WCF 1:7: *All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all:^p yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.^q*

¹⁵ J.I. Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1993), 7. He also warns against eisegesis (“What does the Scripture mean to me?”) when only exegesis will do (“What does God mean by this Scripture?”) “No meaning may be read into or imposed on Scripture that cannot with certainty be read out of Scripture ...”, 8.

¹⁶ “...inspiration [is] the distinguishing characteristic of Scriptural books.” Warfield, “The Westminster Doctrine of Holy Scripture”, 202.

¹⁷ Dickson: “... Christ himself proves that necessary point of faith, the resurrection from the dead, from the Scripture by a consequence (*Matt. 22:29, 31-32*) ... And in the same chapter ... verses 43, 45, Christ proves his deity by a consequence from Scripture against the Pharisees ... So doth Apollos (*Acts 18:28*) and Paul (*Acts 9:22*) prove from the Old Testament Jesus to be the Christ: but it is not expressly said in the Old Testament that he is Christ. Is not that which necessarily follows from Scripture, contained in it implicitly and implicitly revealed by God, infallibly true?”, 10.

p2 Pet 3:16. qPs 119:105,130.

Some things are harder to understand, but enough is easily understood by any to be saved. Scripture is “a river in which a lamb may wade, and an elephant may swim” (John Chrysostom).

PERPESCUITY OF SCRIPTURE. Apply “analogy of faith” to things harder to understand, per 1:9.

WCF 1:8: *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 of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God, and by His singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic;^r so as, in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal unto them.^s But, because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have right unto, and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded, in the fear of God, to read and search them,^t therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come,^u that the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship Him in an acceptable manner;^w and, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, may have hope.^x*

^rMatt 5:18. ^sIsa 8:20; Acts 15:15; John 5:39,46. ^tJohn 5:39. ^u1 Cor 14:6,9,11-12,24,27-28. ^wCol 3:16. ^xRom 15:4.

INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE in original autographs (immediately written in Hebrew/Greek – notice God has preserved them). When it speaks of some harder to understand, it is not teaching “analogous truth”, archetype/ectype analogical view of Scripture (see “Janus Alive and Well” critique of Scott Clark and Van Til on Resources page of our website). Deut. 29:29.

WCF 1:9: *The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one) it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.^y*

^y2 Pet 1:20-21; Acts 15:15-16.

This again is the “analogy of faith”. Difficult passages or exceptions to general rules must not take precedent to more clear Scriptures and the main rules. Thomas Watson writes, “Nothing can cut the diamond but the diamond; nothing can interpret Scripture but Scripture.”¹⁸

Remember that the Word in your tongue due to men such as John Wycliffe and William Tyndale is a privilege most of the Church did not enjoy – some were martyred so you can have it. The Roman Catholic Church in 1564 forbade to read or own a Bible in one’s own language without written license from a bishop, and those that endeavored to do this for their nations suffered persecution, exile, and death. Why? Tyndale said to a typically uneducated Catholic priest who was willing to trust the church and not have the Bible in his language, proclaimed that through an English translation he would “cause a boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scriptures”. “Vulgar” language was Luther’s German, Tyndale’s English, the KJV, even the Latin Vulgate. Common, basic language of a people. So was the Hebrew and the non-classical Koinonia Greek of the Bible.

WCF 1:10: *The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined; and in whose sentence we are to rest; can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.^z*

¹⁸ Watson, 31.

=Matt 22:29,31; Eph 2:20 with Acts 28:25.

God and His Word is judge of our doctrine/practice, not the Pope, not our conscience as Pope, not even standards nor tradition. *Semper Reformanda. Sola Scriptura*. Regulative Principle (not Lutheran, but Reformed). The Holy Spirit speaks in the Scriptures (not in our experiences of it, per the liberals and neo-orthodox theologians like Schleiermacher, Kierkegaard, and Bart). Acts 28:25; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 14:13.

In closing, to move us about God's Word and motivate us to dedicate ourselves in devotions in it, I'd like to share some excerpts from Thomas Watson's *Body of Divinity* (his book of collected sermons through the Westminster Shorter Catechism) on "The Scriptures", WSC Q&A 2:

"The two Testaments are the two lips by which God has spoken to us."¹⁹ "The Scriptures were not corrupted before Christ's time, for then Christ would not have sent the Jews to them. He said, 'Search the Scriptures.' He knew these sacred springs were not muddied with human fancies ... The mystery of Scripture is so abstruse and profound ... That eternity should be born; that he who thunders in the heavens should cry in the cradle; that he who rules the stars should suck the breasts; that the Prince of Life should die; that the Lord of Glory should be put to shame; that sin be punished to the full, yet pardoned to the full ..."²⁰ "Psa. cxix 140. 'Thy word is very pure,' ... It is so pure that it purifies everything else. John xvii 17."²¹ "The Scriptures having such an exhilarating, heart-comforting power in them, shows clearly that they are of God, and it is he that has put the milk of consolation into these breasts."²² "If the Scripture be of divine inspiration, then be exhorted, (I.) To study the Scripture. It is a copy of God's will. Be Scripture-men, Bible-Christians ... Col. iii.16 ... There is a majesty sparkling in every line of Scripture."²³ "Read the Bible with reverence. Think in every line you read that God is speaking to you."²⁴ "The Scripture will make us wise ... Psa. cxix 104 ... Love the Word written."²⁵ "Well then may we count those the sweetest hours which are spent in reading the holy Scriptures ... Conform to Scripture ... Oh that the Bible might be seen printed in our lives!"²⁶

Assigned Reading for Wednesday, September 29, 2021

Go online to read "The King James Version of the Bible", by Rev. Steven Houk: at http://www.prca.org/pamphlets/pamphlet_9.html

Suggested Reading/Viewing:

¹⁹ Ibid, 26.

²⁰ Ibid, 27.

²¹ Ibid, 28.

²² Ibid, 29.

²³ Ibid, 34.

²⁴ Ibid, 35.

²⁵ Ibid, 36.

²⁶ Ibid, 37.

- B.B. Warfield, “Inspiration and Authority of the Bible”
- Gordon H. Clark, *The Bible and Its Critics*
- B.B. Warfield, *Counterfeit Miracles*
- Gordon H. Clark, *First Corinthians*
- John MacArthur, *Charismatic Chaos*
- John MacArthur, *Strange Fire*
- Louis Gaussen’s *Theopneustia*: http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/book_theopneustia.html
- Greg L. Bahnsen, “Presuppositional Apologetics: Stated and Defended” Review by W. Gary Crampton). In *Trinity Review*, no. 298, Jan-Feb 2011. <http://www.trinityfoundation.org/journal.php?id=274>
- W. Gary Crampton, “Scripturalism: A Christian Worldview”. In *Trinity Review*, no. 299, March-May, 2011. <http://www.trinityfoundation.org/journal.php?id=276>
- “God’s Outlaw: William Tyndale”: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3Y8aFNTjjY>
- “John Wycliffe: The Morning Star of the Reformation”: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=muPQmD-bxxQ>