

I THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

- 1:1 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 men 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

¹Isaiah 8:20; Luke 16:29, 31; Ephesians 2:20; 2 Timothy 3:15–17

²Psalms 19:1–3; Romans 1:19–21; 2:14–15 ³Hebrews 1:1 ⁴Proverbs 22:19–21; Romans 15:4; 2 Peter 1:19–20

- 1:2 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

- 1:3 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

- 1:4 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

⁷1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19–21; 1 John 5:9

- 1:5 The testimony of the church of God may stir and persuade us to adopt a high and reverent respect for the Holy Scriptures. Moreover, the heavenliness of the contents, the power of the system of truth, the majesty of the style, the harmony of all the parts, the central focus on giving all glory to God, the full revelation of the only way of salvation, and many other incomparable qualities and complete perfections, all provide abundant evidence that the Scriptures are the Word of God. Even so, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority of the Scriptures comes from the internal work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.⁸

⁸John 16:13–14; 1 Corinthians 2:10–12; 1 John 2:20, 27

- 1:6 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 traditions of men.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

⁹ Galatians 1:8–9; 2 Timothy 3:15–17 ¹⁰ John 6:45; 1 Corinthians 2:9–12

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 11:13–14; 14:26, 40

- 1:7 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 2 Peter 3:16 ¹³ Psalms 19:7; 119:130

- 1:8 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,^a 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

^a *authentic* ¹⁴ Romans 3:2 ¹⁵ Isaiah 8:20 ¹⁶ Acts 15:15 ¹⁷ John 5:39

¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 14:6, 9, 11–12, 24, 28 ¹⁹ Colossians 3:16

- 1:9 The infallible rule for interpreting Scripture is the Scripture itself. Therefore, when there is a question about the true and full meaning^b 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

^b*sense.* ²⁰ Acts 15:15–16; 2 Peter 1:20–21

- 1:10 The supreme judge for deciding all religious controversies and for evaluating all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, teachings of men, and individual interpretations^c, 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

^c*private spirits* ²¹Matthew 22:29, 31–32; Acts 28:23; Ephesians 2:20