

## Lesson 2: 2LCF Chapter 1: Of The Holy Scriptures Paragraphs 1-5

*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*  
**2 Timothy 3:16-17**

Chapter 1 begins by summarizing the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures (Bibliology: Doctrine of the Bible). James Renihan comments on this first chapter by stating,

“Following with the traditional method of expressing theological loci, the three Puritan confessions begin with the ‘principium cognoscendi,’ [which is] the principle of knowing. Chapter one articulates the foundational epistemological basis of Christian theology, namely the Holy Scriptures. These provide the building blocks of all successive doctrinal heads. True theology is erected on the Word of God. It rests on exegesis, collates the results of that task, and carefully articulates the results. The ten paragraphs present here provide a concise yet full definition of the nature of divine revelation.”<sup>17</sup>

As with the study of all Christian theology, our study must first begin with the Word of God.

Additionally, we we will find with many sections of the confession, this chapter was “forged in the fire of historical controversies,” with each of it’s seven sections containing responses to Roman Catholic error that was identified and countered in the Protestant Reformation.<sup>18</sup>

Chapter 1 of the confession, which is comprised of 10 paragraphs has been divided into these seven parts.<sup>19</sup> These are:

- I) Its Necessity (Paragraph 1)
- II) Its Identity (Paragraphs 2-3)
- III) Its Authority (Paragraphs 4-5)
- IV) Its Sufficiency (Paragraph 6)
- V) Its Clarity (Paragraph 7)
- VI) Its Availability (Paragraph 8)
- VII) Its Finality (Paragraphs 9-10)

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<sup>17</sup> James M. Renihan, *To the Judicious and Impartial Reader: A Contextual-Historical Exposition of the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith*, Baptist Symbolics 2 (Cape Coral: Founders Press, 2022), 29.

<sup>18</sup> Samuel E. Waldron, *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Welwyn Garden City, UK: EP Books, 2016), 37.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 35-36.

In this lesson, we will focus on the first three parts of Chapter 1: The necessity (1), identity (2-3), and authority (4-5) of Scripture.

### Paragraph 1

The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience, 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 inexcusable; yet they are not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and His will which is necessary unto salvation. Therefore it pleased the Lord at sundry times and in diversified manners to reveal Himself, and to declare His will unto 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 the same wholly unto writing; which makes the Holy Scriptures to be most necessary, those former ways of God's revealing His will unto His people being now completed.

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

### Exposition

There have been some who have contended that the adoption of any kind of confession or doctrinal statement is antithetical to the Christian faith, because (as they claim) it immediately undermines the sufficiency of Scripture. Such a statement can hardly be levelled against the 2LCF.

Firstly, the confession was not written to compete with or supersede the Scriptures. The role of a sound confession is merely to summarize the teaching of Scripture. Sam Waldron once commented that the confession does no more to undermine the sufficiency of Scripture than the squeezing of orange juice does to undermine the sufficiency of an orange.

But, secondly, the 2LCF contains the strongest statement on the sufficiency and necessity of Scripture of any of the 3 Puritan confessions (2LCF, WCF, Savoy).

The confession begins with these words: ***"The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience..."***

Contrary to the papist notion that the church was/is to be guided and governed by both Scripture AND the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church, here the confession articulates a position that can be summarized with by one of the Latin refrains of the Reformation: "Sola Scriptura."

Here it articulates to the sentiments of Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms. In 1521, Luther was made to stand before the council of the Holy Roman Empire to recant of his views of be condemned as a heretic. Seeing all that was at stake in that moment, including his excommunication and even the possibility of execution, Martin Luther requested a day to consider his response. The following day, Martin Luther's stood before Johann von der Ecken, the general secretary of the bishop of Trier, and this was the reply to his charges: *"Unless therefore I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture, or by the clearest reasoning, unless I am persuaded by means of the passages I have quoted, and unless they thus render my conscience bound by the Word of God, I cannot and will not retract, for it is unsafe for a Christian to speak against his conscience. Here I stand, I can do no other; may God help me! Amen!"*

You can almost hear the echo of Luther's words in the confession.

Our authority is not the Roman magisterium. We can find no certainty in the utterances of the Pope, “ex cathedra” or not. It is not modern scientific discoveries that are to inform our faith. Nor is government legislation to be our rule of life.

It is only the word of God that is to be our infallible source for: 1) the knowledge of God and of ourselves, 2) the object and nature of our saving faith, and 3) God’s requirements for our obedience.

Interestingly, the mention of “obedience” is not found in the Westminster Confession of Faith or the Savoy Declaration. This is something that our Baptist forefathers sought to include, as they watched the growing influence of the Quakers and the appearance other excesses.

But, the confession qualifies this statement by stating, **“although the light of nature and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the good, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave me inexcusable...”**

Here the confession enters into a more modern debate between “inclusivists” and “exclusivist.”<sup>20</sup> Whereas inclusivists argue that men may be apart from the knowledge of redemptive revelation in the gospel, exclusivists argue that redemptive revelation in gospel proclaimed is needed for salvation.

Here the confession argues that every person has enough revelation be damned, but yet not enough to be saved. And, though some may find this assertion unpalatable, this is clearly the position of Scripture:

## General Revelation

### Psalm 119:1-6

- 1 The heavens declare the glory of God,  
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.
- 2 Day to day pours out speech,  
and night to night reveals knowledge.
- 3 There is no speech, nor are there words,  
whose voice is not heard.
- 4 Their voice goes out through all the earth,  
and their words to the end of the world.  
In them he has set a tent for the sun,
- 5 which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber,  
and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy.
- 6 Its rising is from the end of the heavens,  
and its circuit to the end of them,  
and there is nothing hidden from its heat.

### Romans 1:19-21

<sup>19</sup> For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. <sup>21</sup> For

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<sup>20</sup> Matt Smethurst outlines these positions in this article: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/what-happens-to-those-who-never-hear-gospel/>

although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

### **Romans 2:14-15**

<sup>14</sup> For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. <sup>15</sup> They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them

Theologians have referred to this as the “book of nature” or “general revelation.”

But, for the purpose of making man wise for salvation and instructing him with regard to redemption, and obedience, and a true knowledge of Himself, God gave the book of Scripture, or “special revelation.”

### **Special Revelation**

#### **Psalm 19:7-11**

- <sup>7</sup> The law of the Lord is perfect,  
reviving the soul;  
the testimony of the Lord is sure,  
making wise the simple;  
<sup>8</sup> the precepts of the Lord are right,  
rejoicing the heart;  
the commandment of the Lord is pure,  
enlightening the eyes;  
<sup>9</sup> the fear of the Lord is clean,  
enduring forever;  
the rules of the Lord are true,  
and righteous altogether.  
<sup>10</sup> More to be desired are they than gold,  
even much fine gold;  
sweeter also than honey  
and drippings of the honeycomb.  
<sup>11</sup> Moreover, by them is your servant warned;  
in keeping them there is great reward.

#### **2 Timothy 3:14-17**

<sup>14</sup> But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it <sup>15</sup> and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

#### **Romans 10:14-17**

<sup>14</sup> How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? <sup>15</sup> And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” <sup>16</sup> But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who

has believed what he has heard from us?" <sup>17</sup> So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

In God's wise provide, he saw fit to inscripturate redemptive revelation in the books that now comprise the Old and New Testaments. We find examples of this inspiration and inscripturation in the following places: Exodus 17:14, 34:27; Isaiah 8:1, 30:8; Jeremiah 25:13, 30:2; Daniel 12:4; Habakkuk 2:2; Galatians 1:12; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 1:1-2; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21; 2 Peter 3:16; 1 Timothy 5:18; John 14:26; John 16:12

## **Paragraph 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:

### OF 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, Ester
- Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, The Song of Solomon
- Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel
- Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

### OF 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 which are given by the inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life.

2 Tim. 3:16

## **Paragraph 3.**

The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon or rule of the Scripture, and, therefore, are of no authority to the church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved or made use of than other human writings.

Luke 24:27,44; Rom. 3:2

## **Exposition**

Paragraphs 2 and 3 address the identity and canonicity of Scripture.

Here the confession makes plain what was later exclaimed by B.B. Warfield:

No less than sixty-six separate books, one of which consists itself of one hundred and fifty separate compositions, immediately stare us in the face. These treatises come from the hands of at least thirty distinct writers, scattered over a period of some fifteen hundred years, and embrace specimens of nearly every kind of writing known among men. Histories, codes of law, ethical maxims, philosophical treatises, discourses, dramas, songs, hymns, epics, biographies, letters both official and personal, [prophecies],-every kind of composition known beneath heaven seems gathered here in one volume.<sup>21</sup>

But is this the only reason a complete listing of the books is included? Understanding a the history and revisiting of the canon may shed more light on the subject. Son this topic FF. Bruce writes:

The Authorized (King James) Version of 1611 was formally a revision of the last (1602) edition of the Bishops Bible; it included a version of the Apocrypha as a matter of course. Four years later, the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Abbot, a firm Calvinist in theology, forbade the binding or selling of Bibles without the Apocrypha on penalty of a year's imprisonment. This measure seemed to be necessary because of the increasingly vocal Puritan objection to the inclusion of the Apocrypha among the canonical books. In 1589 an attack on their inclusion by John Penry ("Martin Marprelate") had called forth a spirited reply from an earlier Archbishop, John Whitgift. Now, despite the penalty enacted by Archbishop Abbot, copies of the Av/KJV without the Apocrypha began to be produced in the years from 1626 onward.

The tide was running in the Puritan favour in those years: in 1644 the Long Parliament ordained that the Apocrypha should cease to be read in services of the Church of England. Three years later the Assembly of Divines at Westminster introduced their historic Confession of Faith with a chapter "Of the Holy Scripture." In order to make it plain precisely which books were comprised in the holy scripture the second paragraph [of Chapter One of the WCF/LBC was composed which included the names of the sixty-six books in the canon.<sup>22</sup>

## The Composition of the Canon

### Old Testament Books

There is very little debate about the 39 books that make up the Old Testament. On this point, Greg Lanier writes this: "Modern Jewish, Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant traditions fully agree on thirty-nine of the books. The Protestant tradition agrees with Judaism in stopping there. But the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Bibles include other books as Scripture."<sup>23</sup>

These books were recognized throughout the time of ancient Israel and were stored accordingly. Lanier adds:

Later Jewish historians likewise speak of 'Scripture which is laid up in the temple' and the 'books laid up in the temple' (Josephus, Ant. 3.1.7 and 5.1.17, respectively). The Letter of

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<sup>21</sup> B.B. Warfield, *The Works.*, 436.

<sup>22</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1988), 108-09.

<sup>23</sup> Gregory R. Lanier, *A Christian's Pocket Guide to How We Got the Bible* (Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2018), 26.

Aristeas (line 176) describes how the high priest of the temple approved the copies of the Jewish Scriptures being sent to Egypt. And 1 Maccabees describes how the Greek soldiers who defiled the Jerusalem temple in 168 BC burned 'the books of the law that they found' (1:54–57). In short, the Israelites and post-exilic Jews signaled their regard for divinely-given Scriptural books by depositing them in the house of God.<sup>24</sup>

There is evidence of a cessation in the Old Testament writings at the end of what is our Old Testament Canon:

This cessation of Spirit-inspired prophecy after the 400s BC is attested in several early Jewish writings (1 Macc 4:46; Prayer of Azariah 15; Josephus, Apion 1.8; 2 Apoc Bar 85.3) as well as the New Testament (Heb 1:1; Matt 11:13). By the early rabbinic period the consensus is that after 'the death of the last prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, the Holy Spirit departed from Israel' (b. Sanh. 11a and elsewhere)...

By the 400s BC, there was a clear 'inner-biblical' awareness of a collection of writings given by the Spirit of God, received as covenant Scripture for Israel, and deposited in the temple. The shape/boundaries of these Scriptures may not yet have reached full recognition, but that does not undermine how God had, by definition, 'closed the canon' through the cessation of divinely-inspired scriptural writings.<sup>25</sup>

In their current form today, the Hebrew Scriptures are divided into three separate categories by genre, which have been called the 'Tanakh':

'T' for Torah

'N' for Nevi'im (Prophets)

'K' for Ketuvim (Writings).

## **New Testament Books**

Addressing the New Testament, Greg Lanier again offers some helpful commentary:

The common misconception is that the Constantine and the bishops imposed the canonical books at the Council of Nicaea (325 AD), or that Athanasius did in his Festal Letter of 367 AD. The former is simply false; there is no record that the scriptural books were debated at that council.

The early church quickly came to agreement that God gave the Gospels and the Epistles of Paul as the nucleus of new covenant Scriptures. Bishops never picked these writings or granted them canonical status. The Gospels and Paul never asked, anyhow. They simply were. We will take them in turn and focus on two kinds of data: quotations/allusions (which may or may not be decisive indicators of canonical reception, as we have seen before, but they at least show the writings being used), and direct statements about them.

Origen writes that the 'texture of the net [of Scripture] has been completed in the Gospels and in the words of Christ through the Apostles' (Comm. Matt. 10.12), and even earlier Ignatius and Hippolytus assert that the two-fold source of authority in the church is the

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 32.

'gospel' and 'apostles.' But the details for each of the other books is case specific, with some facing more debate than others.<sup>26</sup>

## The New Testament and the Testimony of the Early Church Fathers

	Gospels- Acts	Paul+ Hebrews	General epistles	Revelation
Muratorian Fragment (2nd–4th century)	Y	– Hebrews	– James – 1–2 Pet – 3 John	Y
Origen (Eusebius, Hist. 6.25; Comm. John 5; Hom. Josh 7.1)	Y	Y	Y	Y
Eusebius (Hist. 3.3.5; 3.25.1–7)	Y	Y	James*, 2 Pet*, 2–3 John*, Jude*	Y
Clermont List (~300–350)	Y	Y	Y	Y
Cyril of Jerusalem (Catech. 4.36)	Y	Y	Y	–
Mommsen List (~359)	Y	– Hebrews	– James – Jude	Y
Athanasius (367)	Y	Y	Y	Y
Epiphanius (Pan. 76.22.5)	Y	Y	Y	Y
Apostolic Canons 85 (ca. 380)	Y	Y	Y	–
Gregory of Nazianzus (Carm. 12.31)	Y	Y	Y	–
Jerome, Augustine, Rufinus	Y	Y	Y	Y

### Apocrypha

The Apocrypha (meaning “spurious”) was not formally recognized as canonical by the Roman Catholic Church until the Council of Trent in 1546. On this point, Wayne Grudem adds this, “The Council of Trent was the response of the Roman Catholic Church to the teachings of Martin Luther, and the rapidly spreading Protestant reformation, and the books of the apocrypha contain support for the Catholic teaching of prayers for the dead and justification by faith plus works, not by faith alone.”<sup>27</sup> While the books of the apocrypha may be interesting, and may even be helpful at times, they must not be regarded as Scripture. They themselves do not claim to be Scripture, they are not regarded as Scripture by the Jews, they were never quoted as Scripture by Jesus or the New Testament, and their teachings often contradict those of the Bible.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 70, 73, 76.

<sup>27</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England : Grand Rapids, Mich: Inter-Varsity Press ; Zondervan Pub. House, 1994).



**Paragraph 4.**

The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, depends not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself), the author thereof; therefore it is to be received because it is the Word of God.

2 Pet. 1:19-21; 2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Thess. 2:13; 1 John 5:9

**Paragraph 5.**

We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church of God to a high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scriptures; and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, and 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, and many other incomparable excellencies, and entire perfections thereof, are arguments whereby it does 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.

John 16:13,14; 1 Cor. 2:10-12; 1 John 2:20,27