

THE 1689 BAPTIST CONFESSION OF FAITH

CHAPTER 1

"OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES"

PARAGRAPHS 1 - 3: THE NECESSITY AND IDENTITY OF SCRIPTURE

WHY USE A CONFESSION?

- A confession is not the same as Scripture. It is not the final authority, nor infallible. So why have one?
- Does the professed belief in the authority of Scripture stop serious arguments?
- Most often, heretics or dissenters don't want to announce their differences. They want to be "included" with the orthodox, yet be allowed to disseminate their differing views.

REVELATION, ILLUMINATION, INSPIRATION

- Revelation: that act of God whereby He gives information to men that would be otherwise unknown, or only fallibly surmised.
- Illumination: that act of God whereby He works in men by His Spirit to allow men to grasp, understand, and believe revelation.
- Inspiration: that act of God's Spirit whereby He superintends the speaking or writing of what has been revealed so that it is infallibly & perfectly spoken and written exactly as God intends.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF REVELATION

- Natural Revelation:
 - Creation: existence, order, beauty (Psalm 19; Romans 1)
 - Conscience: right & wrong; personal guilt (Romans 2:14-15)
- Special Revelation:
 - Dreams & interpretations; visions; special utterances; God directly speaking to men.
 - Written - i.e. Scripture

IS A WRITTEN BIBLE NECESSARY?

- Q: Who might say that it was unnecessary?
- Q: Who might say it was necessary, but act as if it weren't?
- Q: In what ways is the Bible treated as unnecessary?

THE NECESSITY OF SCRIPTURE

- Only the Scriptures are sufficient, certain, and infallible. [Note: The Baptist Confession adds this sentence - perhaps as a defense against the accusation of being Anabaptist.]
- Natural revelation is insufficient:
 - Creation only reveals God's existence and deity
 - Conscience only reveals right & wrong, & guilt

THE NECESSITY OF SCRIPTURE

- Other Special Revelation (dreams, visions) has problems:
 - Reliability of transmission to next generation
 - No "master copy" - who decides between differences?
 - Limited in content & scope. (How much can one person memorize?)
 - Prone to tampering / alteration

THE NECESSITY OF SCRIPTURE

- What would happen if there were no revelation from God? (Proverbs 29:18).
- Is Scripture the *only* sufficient rule? How do we correlate this to science? To history? To psychology?

THE IDENTITY OF SCRIPTURE

- "When you know yourselves, then you will be known, and you will understand that you are children of the living Father. But if you do not know yourselves, then you live in poverty, and you are the poverty." (*The Gospel of Thomas*)
- Q: How do we know what books of the Bible belong in the Bible, and which ones don't? Who decided this, and how did they decide?

THE IDENTITY OF SCRIPTURE - OT

- Philo of Alexandria (c. 25 BC - c. AD 50)
 - Has OT in tri-partite division: Torah, Prophets, the Writings
 - Quotes from OT over 2000 times
 - Treats it as Scripture
 - Never quotes from any Apocryphal books (e.g. Maccabees)

THE IDENTITY OF SCRIPTURE - OT

- Josephus (c. AD 37 - c. AD 100)
 - Against Apion
 - Understood the OT canon as closed
 - Canonicity is based on prophetic inspiration
 - Treats these things as if they were common among Jewish belief
 - Lists the books of the OT

THE IDENTITY OF SCRIPTURE - OT

- Dead Sea Scrolls
 - Qumran community existed from c. 150 BC to about AD 68.
 - Copies of every OT book except Esther
 - Isaiah scroll almost identical to modern Hebrew MT of Isaiah

THE IDENTITY OF SCRIPTURE - OT

- NT on the OT
 - Luke 24:44 shows tri-partite division of OT as well
 - NT has over 250 quotations from OT
 - All of the prophetic works are quoted or alluded to in the NT
 - Mt. 23:34-35 suggests a finished OT and a recognized, established order
 - Supports tri-partite order of Jewish Bible
 - Supports completeness of Jewish Bible, Genesis to 2Chronicles

THE IDENTITY OF SCRIPTURE - NT

- NT citing the NT:
 - 1Timothy 5:18 quotes Luke 10:7, and calls it Scripture, giving it the same authority as the OT he quotes.
 - 2Peter 3:15-16, Peter refers to "all [Paul's] epistles" and calls them Scriptures.

THE IDENTITY OF SCRIPTURE - NT

- Process: recognizing what was inspired
 - written under authority or oversight of an apostle
 - doctrinally consistent with rest of Scripture (including OT)
 - recognized by the churches
 - not an issue of the church making a writing Scriptural

THE IDENTITY OF SCRIPTURE - NT

- Clement of Rome (AD 96)
 - Quotes OT authoritatively
 - Familiar with at least one of the Synoptic gospels
 - States that the apostles were authoritative
 - Alludes to / quotes: 1Cor., Hebrews, Romans, Acts, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, 1Timothy, Titus, 1Peter, and James.

THE IDENTITY OF SCRIPTURE - NT

- Ignatius of Antioch
 - Martyred during reign of Trajan (AD 98 - 117).
 - OT is Scripture
 - Jesus Christ is key to understanding OT
 - Quotes / alludes to Matthew, John, most of Paul's epistles, James, 1 Peter.

THE IDENTITY OF SCRIPTURE - NT

- Polycarp
 - teacher of Irenaeus and Ignatius
 - wrote a letter on event of Ignatius' death
 - cites every NT book except John, Jude, and Revelation
 - treats NT as greater than OT

THE IDENTITY OF SCRIPTURE - NT

- Finalization of NT Canon: Eusebius of Caesarea (AD c.260 - c.340) listed four categories
 - Those known as Scripture by all churches (Four Gospels; Acts; Paul's 14 epistles; 1 Peter; 1 John; and Revelation)
 - Those still debated but generally accepted: James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 & 3 John
 - Those still debated and generally not accepted at all (Apocrypha, Acts of Paul, Shepherd of Hermas, etc.)
 - Those known as heretical: “gospels such as those of Peter and Thomas, and Matthias, and others besides, or Acts of Andrew or other apostles.”

THE IDENTITY OF SCRIPTURE - NT

- Athanasius' Easter letter, AD 367 cites all 27 NT books as we have them, as Scripture
- Synod of Laodicea (AD 367) lists NT, except Revelation
- 3rd and 4th Councils of Carthage (AD 397 and 419) list as canonical all of NT
- no Apocryphal books listed as canonical

THE IDENTITY OF SCRIPTURE - NT

- Does the process bother you?
- Consider:
 - Different authors and different destinations of originals. Not all portions of NT readily available to many during first generation.
 - Fakes
 - Carefulness shows high regard for true Scripture

THE IDENTITY OF SCRIPTURE - NT

- Would an authoritative list from Christ or one of the apostles have solved the problem?
- Ultimately, what is our basis for believing that the church got it right?