

# The 1689 Baptist Confession

Chapter 1  
Paragraphs 4-5

# Paragraph 4: The Authority of Scripture

- ◆ The Confession earlier stated that the Bible is the only rule. Why should we see the Bible as the final authority?
- ◆ Is the Bible authoritative because of any earthly support or decree?

# Paragraph 4: The Authority of Scripture

- ◆ "Hence there exists a close connection and communication between sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end. For sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit. To the successors of the apostles, sacred Tradition hands on in its full purity God's word, which was entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. Thus, by the light of the Spirit of truth, these successors can in their preaching preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known. Consequently it is not from sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore both sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same devotion and reverence."  
(from Second Vatican Council, "Dei Verbum")

## Paragraph 4: The Authority of Scripture

- ◆ "The Church does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the Holy Scriptures alone" (Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC] no. 82).
- ◆ The conclusion is that the magisterium of the RCC decides what is true, what is the Bible, and what is authoritative. The Bible is an authority because the RCC says it is.

# Paragraph 4: The Authority of Scripture

- ◆ Basis of this claim:
  - ◆ Peter has the keys. That is, what is given to the apostles continues in the church.
  - ◆ 1 Timothy 3:15
    - ◆ But this verse teaches that the church upholds truth to the world - not that it creates it or is the basis of truth.

## Paragraph 4: The Authority of Scripture

- ◆ At the other extreme, there are those who say that the Bible is authoritative because "it speaks to them;" or "because I believe it." The authority of the Bible then rests on subjective and individualistic claims.
- ◆ Finally, there are some who claim that the Bible is authoritative because they can prove its superior teaching and ideas. The authority of the Bible rests on their reason.

# Paragraph 4:

## The Authority of Scripture

- ◆ The Bible is to be received as our highest authority because of its Author - God.
- ◆ Proofs:
  - ◆ Over 2000 times the Bible uses a phrase like, "Thus says the LORD". It claims divine authorship.
  - ◆ 2Timothy 3:16; Mark 12:36; 2Peter 1:20-21; Heb. 1:1

# Paragraph 4: The Authority of Scripture

- ◆ Why is this important?
- ◆ If I believe the Bible is authoritative based on some testimony of man, then the real authority is something else.
- ◆ As such, everything else must be measured by the Word.



# Paragraphs 4 & 5: The Relationship

- ◆ Paragraph 4 is about the authority of the Bible. It answers the question, "Why should I submit to the Bible's teaching and commands?" Answer: because it is God's Word.
- ◆ Paragraph 5 is about the reason for believing the Bible is God's Word. "Why do I believe it is God's Word?" Answer: because the Holy Spirit has convinced me it is God's Word.
- ◆ Paragraph 4 is the basis of faith (God's Authority). Paragraph 5 is the cause or reason of faith (The Spirit's work of regeneration).

# Paragraph 5: The Cause for Believing

- ◆ There are reasons for believing the Bible is God's Word:
  - ◆ The testimony of the church (history)
  - ◆ The heavenliness of the matter (spirituality)
  - ◆ Efficacy of the doctrine (results)
  - ◆ Majesty of style
  - ◆ Consent (agreement) of the whole (consistency)
  - ◆ Scope (to give God glory)
  - ◆ Full treatment of salvation (grace)

# Paragraph 5: The Cause for Believing

- ◆ Each of these, however, requires regeneration. Only a born-again believer would see these qualities to begin with. [The error of classic apologetics is not the argument, but the depravity of men.]
- ◆ John Owen, *The Reason of Faith*: "We do not judge [these reasons] to contain the evidence which we have for faith to rest upon; yea, not that at all which renders it [faith] divine, supernatural, and infallible."

# Paragraph 5: The Cause for Believing

- ◆ What happens if faith is based on something other than the Holy Spirit?
  - ◆ If I believe because a man told me, what happens when I see his fallibility?
  - ◆ If I believe for reason's sake, what happens if someone else gives me superior reasons?
  - ◆ If I believe for the sake of an experience, how long before the experience wears off?

# Paragraph 5: The Cause for Believing

- ◆ Regeneration produces the kind of faith which accepts the Bible as God's Word. Saving faith, then, of necessity accepts the authority of Scripture.
- ◆ Men cannot be argued or debated into this kind of faith.
  - ◆ The issue isn't the argument, but depravity.
  - ◆ The debate may be used of God in the process of conversion; yet, it is still the Holy Spirit alone that can use it.