

LECTURES
ON THE
WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH
FOR
LAYMEN

FIRST IN SERIES

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

By

ALLAN A. MacRAE, Ph.D.
President, Faith Theological Seminary
Wilmington, Delaware.

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THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

The first chapter of the Westminster Confession of Faith

by ALLAN A. MacRAE, Ph.D.

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As we look at the table of contents of the Confession of Faith; we note that it contains more than thirty chapters. It is interesting to see which chapter comes first.

Does the Confession start with a discussion of human needs? There is much in it about human need and its satisfaction,, but that is not where the Confession begins.

Does the Confession begin with a statement about God and His attributes? Does it lay a foundation for belief in a certain type of God and then deduce everything else from that as a starting point? No; it does not start with God.

The Confession does not start with human need; it does not start with the presupposition of a certain theory or viewpoint about God; it starts with the Holy Scriptures. This was no accident, it was, instead, a clear expression of the viewpoint of the men who wrote the Confession of Faith of our church. They believed that there is one way) and only one way, in which we can learn what is vital about God and what is vital about the satisfaction of human need. They believed that God has given us a book which provides the knowledge that He desires us to have about sacred things, about Himself; and about the satisfaction of our needs, If we are going to find satisfactory answers to any of these questions, the place to start is with the Book which God has given us; this is the foundation viewpoint of the Westminster Confession,

There are men who think that a person can think and ponder and meditate, and can find within himself the answers to all the problems of the universe. That is not the view of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

Still others make a beginning, not, like the Westminster Confession, with the Bible, but rather with a particular idea of God, and maintain that from a correct idea of God all else will necessarily follow This is very different from the approach of the Westminster Confession. There is, of course, a logical coherence in the universe. After we learn correct views

about God from the Bible we can see how these views fit together with other Biblical teachings- and with the observed facts of life. But it is questionable how much coherence can safely be worked out by the human mind, without first gaining the facts from divine revelation. Sin has darkened the human intellect and it is dangerous to build our views on human reason. We must not think we can safely start with a particular idea of God. We must start where the Westminster Confession starts, with the Bible and then get our ideas about God directly from that source=

The view of the Westminster Confession is: we have just one source of truth in religious matters, and that is the Bible. In other words, all knowledge of religious truth must come through revelation. This view has been characteristic of the Presbyterian Churches right from their foundations.

WHAT IS REVELATION?

What do we mean by revelation? Is it some sort of old fashioned out-of-date idea? Is revelation a medieval concept which science has now displaced?

Such questions illustrate the present wide-spread ignorance of what revelation really is. It is not some bizarre or fantastic notion but one of the commonest facts of daily life. Revelation is merely communication from one personality to another. Divine revelation differs from ordinary revelation in that it comes from God rather than from another human being.

So far from being displaced by science; revelation is absolutely necessary to the progress of science. Science consists in gathering data, classifying them, building hypotheses, and then checking these hypotheses by further data. No man has ever been able to gather enough data in any field to build up a science all by himself. Each scientist must use many facts which others have observed. Knowledge of these facts reaches him through revelation from other personalities.

Every worker in science is constantly studying the results of the work of others. Data inaccessible to him are made available through communications from others. Thus revelation is one of the most vital factors in the increase of scientific knowledge. Without it no one man would have access to a large enough body of data to make a great advance in any science.

Personally I believe that our great progress in material

things in modern days is largely the result of application of the scientific method. And I believe that progress in religious understanding must also be based on the scientific method. The method is exactly the same, whether you are dealing with religion or with science. There is only one vital difference, That difference relates to the accessibility of the data. In every science much of the data is inaccessible to an individual student, and must be learned through revelation. In religion all the vital data must be learned in this way.

No man has direct access to the data from which he can learn about eternal things. What sort of a being is God, and what are His plans and purposes? Answers to such questions as these can be found in only one way. You must use exactly the same method as in any field of earthly knowledge that is not accessible to you. You must find someone who possesses this knowledge and get a communication from him--in other words, a revelation. Only in this way can you secure dependable knowledge about these matters. This was the belief of the framers of the Westminster Confession; and it was the belief of the founders of the Reformed churches throughout the world. To get knowledge of religion we must secure data from One who knows facts inaccessible to us. Then we study these facts and build up our conclusions on a basis of careful analysis of the data. We cannot get the facts out of our imagination, nor can we simply infer them by a logical process from a few ideas and pre-suppositions. We must learn the facts from One who knows- This is why the Confession of Faith begins with the chapter on the Holy Scriptures.

Thus a correct attitude toward the Bible is the very foundation of our knowledge of religious matters. Please do not misunderstand me. I said that a correct attitude toward the Bible is the very foundation of all dependable knowledge in the sphere of religion. I did not say that a belief in the verbal inspiration of the Bible is the beginning of the Christian life. Your Christian life is founded on your relation to the Lord Jesus Christ. Your salvation depends on a personal relationship to Him. Faith in Christ, and nothing else, is the basis of personal salvation.

You can be saved and know very little of the Bible, but without knowledge of the Bible you will not be an effective Christian worker. You will not be a Christian who is growing in grace. You will not be one who is going forward in the

Christian life as God wants you to go forward if you lack a clear understanding of the place that the Bible should have in the Christian life. It is the foundation of Christian knowledge and true knowledge is vital to progress in any one of these phases of Christian life.

Therefore it is from a viewpoint, not of the beginning of the Christian life, but of that Christian knowledge which is so vital to progress in the Christian life, that the Westminster Confession begins with this chapter on the Holy Scriptures,- and puts right at the start the fact that it is necessary to have revelation (communication) from someone who knows the facts and data in this field. You have to get God's revelation.

You don't have to know a great many facts about God to start getting religious knowledge. You don't have to know a great deal about what kind of a God He is; all you have to know is that He is, that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him (Heb, 11:6), and that He has given you a way to seek Him. He has given His revelation in which you may study what He has revealed about Himself. The way to learn about Him is to go to the revelation He has given. Naturally then, the Confession of Faith places the chapter on the Holy Scriptures at the very beginning,

GENERAL REVELATION

There has been much discussion by theologians of this question: Is there such a thing as general revelation? Some people say we cannot know anything about God except what we learn from the Bible. Others would say that we can know nothing about God except what He has directly revealed to some individual. They assert that we cannot learn about God from nature that we cannot start with the facts of nature and reach the knowledge that God exists. When men make statements like this they are sharply contradicting the Westminster Confession of Faith,

The Confession begins with the statement of a fact. It introduces this fact with the word "although", thus indicating that its importance should not be exaggerated, but nevertheless recognizing it as a fact.

Let us read the first words of the Confession; "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.” This opening statement in the Westminster Confession of Faith asserts that God has revealed His goodness, His wisdom, and His power through the light of nature and the works of creation and providence.

Many editions of the Confession have a footnote here, giving references to such passages as Psalm 19:1-4 and Romans 1:19-20. These verses make it clear that the Confession is standing squarely on the teaching of the Bible, when it says that God is revealed in nature. The Confession declares that “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.” It thus asserts that a man can know from nature that there is a God—that there is a good God; that there is a wise God, that there is a powerful God.

Here we see the reason why the Confession does not begin with God. Its writers believed that the basic facts about God were visible to all men, and that knowledge of additional facts about Him required special revelation. Therefore the Confession made the Bible the subject of its first chapter, as the only source from which knowledge about God can be obtained; beyond what is readily gleaned from general revelation,

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

There are many today who profess to doubt the existence of God. According to the Westminster Confession such doubts are without excuse. It is possible to see in nature sufficient evidence of the existence of God to compel the honest seeker to admit this vital fact. If he leaves it out of his thinking; he is building on a foundation which omits data that are readily accessible to him. Such an attitude is not worthy of any true scientist. The whole universe speaks of God: the whole creation declares the goodness, wisdom, and power of God. The Christian has important common ground with every human being in this world. We don't have to start by saying, “You are over there and we are over here, and there is an impassable gulf between us.” That is not true as far as knowledge is concerned. As far as knowledge is concerned the Christian and the unbeliever have vital common ground.

You remember the story of the Arab and the scientist in the desert. The scientist was making fun of the Arab for his simple faith in God. The scientist said: “How do you know there

is a God? You've never seen Him; you've never touched Him; you've never talked with Him." Night came and the two men retired to their beds. The next morning when they looked out from the tent they noticed footprints which had not been there the night before. The scientist said; "Someone must have passed by in the night." The Arab replied: "Did you see anybody?" "No." "Did you hear anybody?" "No. I slept right through." "Well, what makes you think that there was anybody here in the night?" The scientist answered: "Look at the footprints," Just then the sun came up coloring all the sky with lavender and purple. The Arab pointed to it and said, "Behold, the footprints of God! " The footprints of God are plainly visible in nature, if we but look for them. The Psalmist was right when he said: "The heavens declare the glory of God," (Ps. 19:1)

Suppose that two men came to a great railroad station, and saw trains coming in and going out, and all according to schedule. They observed the signs put up for a train, the people filling it, the train pulling out, and another soon coming in on the same track. Suppose one of them were to declare to the other that all this was pure accident! If he were serious people would soon begin to question his sanity, Anyone with any sense at all knows that someone must have established such an organization, and that someone must still be directing it

A man walking through a mountain area observes three or four stones piled neatly one upon the other, in the form of a little tower. Twenty or thirty feet away he sees another similar pile of stones. A short distance beyond this second pile he finds a third, and so on; indicating a wavy line that extends for miles and guides him to his destination. Anyone who ever walked in the mountains is familiar with this type of trail markers. If you should tell him that their presence was purely accidental, he would surely laugh at you. He has no doubt that a human being has put these stones in this arrangement as a means of conveying directions. They show the activity of human beings. A mind has been at work.

It is the viewpoint of the Westminster Confession that anyone with intelligence enough to make reasonable decisions on the practical matters involved in ordinary living is intelligent enough to see that this earth is not a mere heap of dirt, but a set-up — an organism. It could not have come into existence by accident. There is an intelligence back of it, con-

trolling it. There is a God who created it and who continues to direct its destiny. In this knowledge of God we have common ground with every human being on this earth. According to the Westminster Confession the fact that there is a God who is good, wise, and powerful is clearly seen in nature and in providence. When someone tells you that he does not believe there is a God, you can know that he is only kidding himself. If he has intelligence at all he knows deep down in his heart that there must be a God.

This does not, of course, mean that a man is lying when he says he is an atheist. It is possible to kid oneself to the point where one actually believes with his mind what he knows in his heart to be false.

A young woman told me of an interesting observation along this line. For a time she worked as a secretary in one of the offices of the DuPont Company. As the work involved the use of many chemical terms, she told the man for whom she was working that she would like to learn a little about these things. He suggested a certain book, which she found to be fascinating reading. It told about the various chemical elements, described their wonderful mathematical arrangement, and told how each was discovered. Chapter after chapter ended with words of praise for the wonderful brain of the particular scientist who had discovered a certain element. Yet there was no mention of the far greater Mind which originated these elements. She could not but be amazed! How stupid to be so entranced with the brilliance of a mind that could discover one of the wonders of nature, and yet to say nothing of the far greater Mind which originated all of them!

Personally I am convinced that people are not really quite as stupid as they pretend to be. Down underneath they know that God is revealing Himself in nature, and they know that they are inexcusable; they turn their face another way and pretend that they don't see it. Actually they are merely kidding themselves.

All of us kid ourselves at times in one way or another. We know what we ought to do but we just look the other way and try to forget it. We know at point after point what the Lord requires of us, or what a situation requires of us. We know what we ought to do but we look the other way and go straight on and hope that people will think that we are just stupid e-

nough not to see what we should do. At length we cease to think about the matter at all.

SPECIAL REVELATION

The statement about general revelation with which the Confession begins is introduced by the word “although”. The fact that all men can see proof of God in nature is taken as a starting point, but it is stressed that this is not sufficient for salvation. Much more must be known. And it can be learned only through a special revelation from God Himself,

The Westminster Confession of Faith begins with the claim that we have such a revelation in the Bible. The Scripture is the foundation of our knowledge in the field of religion.

Enemies of Christianity often speak of us as Bible-worshippers. The term is utterly wrong: nobody actually worships the Bible. But it is almost impossible to overstate the importance of the Bible in religion, for it is our one and only means of learning religious things beyond the bare fundamentals which are displayed in nature. It is our means of access to the vital facts. It is the foundation of our knowledge. Without it we are blind in this field, because we have no access to its data.

Recently I played a mean trick on my little boy. Though he is less than a year old he has learned how to turn on the radio and make it start playing. Time after time he would hit it just right, but one day I played a mean trick on him, I pulled out the cord. He did this and that- twisting first one dial and then another. That is exactly the religious situation in the world today. People are twisting this dial and that, but they have lost the connection. If you don't have the connection you will get nowhere; and the connection is the Word of God, We have to have God's Word if we are to learn facts in the religious field. As the Confession says, general revelation is not “sufficient to give that knowledge of God and of His will, which is necessary unto salvation”.

So the section goes on, and says that “therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal Himself, and to declare that His will unto His church; 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; which

maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary: those former ways of God's revealing His will unto His people being now ceased".

In the section which we have just read we notice that two aspects of the giving of the Bible are described. First; it is stated that God revealed His truth in various ways in the past, and second, that He chose "to commit the same wholly unto writing."

It is rather important to distinguish these two aspects. We call them revelation and inspiration. Revelation is communication from one personality to another. Inspiration is not, like revelation, a common occurrence in daily life. Just as divine revelation, in the sense of direct special revelation from God to an individual has now ceased, so has inspiration ceased in the sense in which it is applied to Scripture.

Inspiration is a special act of the Holy Spirit whereby He guided the writers of the books which were to be a part of His holy Scripture, so that their words should convey the thoughts He wished conveyed and should be free from errors of fact, of doctrine- or of judgment.

Thus parts of the Bible came as a direct revelation from God to the writer. All of it, however, is inspired, and kept from error. All of it, as a result of inspiration, becomes a revelation from God to us.

Let us never get these two aspects confused, because they are entirely different. Revelation is God giving truth, but inspiration is God guarding the writers from error in what they wrote.

Some people say that they believe in inspiration but not in verbal inspiration, you might just as well say that you believe in food but not in meat, vegetables, fruit or grain--it would make just as much sense. Inspiration does not mean getting an idea. Inspiration, in the theological sense, means writing thoughts down in words which are free from error. If you don't have verbal inspiration you don't have inspiration at all--it is the only inspiration there is. Revelation deals with ideas, but inspiration deals with words. When one says that he believes in inspiration but not in verbal inspiration, he is like the man who said to me—"I believe in the resurrection of Christ. That is just the great principle of the permanence of personality." He should rather have said that he

didn't believe in the resurrection of Christ at all! When Christians have expressed belief in the resurrection of Christ they have meant an actual resurrection. We should use words in their historic sense, and not try to twist them into something else. Historically the theological term inspiration has referred to words. If we believe in inspiration we believe in verbal inspiration. If we do not believe in inspiration we ought to say so.

Of course sometimes people mistakenly think that verbal inspiration means that God has dictated the Bible to the various writers. Such an idea is not involved in the phrase at all. Men wrote what God had revealed to them, or what they had observed. Inspiration means that they were kept from error in their choice of words to express the ideas they wished to convey.

“TO COMMIT THE SAME WHOLLY UNTO WRITING.”

The Confession says that God led the writers “to commit the same wholly unto writing”. The word “wholly” requires examination. It does not mean that everything God ever revealed to the prophets was necessarily written in the Scripture, God led them to write such things as He desired to have preserved for the guidance of His people in future ages. It does mean that everything which God wished preserved as His revelation for His people was included in the Scripture. All the facts which God has revealed about that area of knowledge which is otherwise inaccessible to us are included in the Bible

The Roman Catholic church claims to possess tradition passed on by word of mouth, just as vital as the revelation contained in the Bible itself. This claim the Westminster Confession denies, by using this word, “wholly”. It leaves no room for tradition, According to the Westminster Confession, nothing that has come down by word of mouth has any standing in the Christian Church.

SECTIONS TWO AND THREE — WHAT BOOKS ARE INSPIRED?

Thus the first section of this first chapter of the Confession of Faith explains the vital principles and declares the importance of divine revelation and inspiration.

The second section of the chapter names the books which are included in the Bible, We need not read the names now, but it is very important that we know what they are. Everyone of

the sixty-six books of our Protestant Bible is declared to be equally inspired

It has been the view of the Christian church since its foundation that God's revelation is definitely limited in extent, These particular books reveal God's will for us. These are the books from which we get our knowledge of religious truth and we do not get it in any infallible way from any other books. No other books are inspired of God, in the historic theological sense of the word. From these sixty-six books, and only from these sixty-six books, can we secure the data on which religious ideas can safely be based.

We should note that the Confession lists all sixty-six books as equally inspired and authoritative. It does not select certain books as more important than others. If one is to speak conclusively regarding any aspect of God's rule of faith and life., the Confession requires him to be familiar with every one of the books of the Bible,- for it declares that all of them are "given by inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life,"

THE APOCRYPHA

The third section of the chapter deals with those books which only the Roman Catholic church takes as authoritative. It is a brief statement but an important one. It says: "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."

It is noteworthy that the Confession does not say that the books commonly called the Apocrypha are bad books, I think this is important to keep in mind, because it is so easy when you are opposing error to say: "That is what they believe, therefore the opposite must be true"--it is very easy to say that. Some people even think they can find truth that way. I have heard it said that if you want to know about God, there are two ways to find out about Him. One is to name all the good qualities you can think of, and multiply each one thousands of times and this will give an idea of the good qualities of God The other is to name all the bad qualities you can think of., and then think of these as entirely absent from God. Well, you can't decide what God is like by working anything out of your head like that. If you want to find out what God is like, study

the Bible, You can't work out a theory or a presupposition or an idea that will tell you what God is like—the Word of God gives the data, and it is our only source for knowledge in this field

It is easy to think that we can learn what is right by simply taking the opposite of that which is wrong, but it does not work out that way. There is not a cult or a movement, that does not contain some truth. Its principal teachings may be wicked and wrong, but if everything it teaches were false it would immediately fall of its own weight. Very often the reason cults and false movements thrive is because they have gained hold on some great Scriptural truth which Christians are neglecting. Often it is so mixed with error as to be useless, but some truth is there. In our opposition to falsehood we must not go to an extreme, and oppose elements of the truth.

This chapter nowhere says that the Apocrypha are bad books; it says that they are not inspired books: They are not to be used in any way different from other human books. There is much that is good in them, but they are not authoritative. In opposing Roman Catholic error the Confession does not go to the other extreme: it seeks instead to find exactly what the truth is.

SECTIONS FOUR AND FIVE

The fourth section of the Confession says; “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.”

You would almost think this had been written quite recently, wouldn't you? How timely it is! You would think the framers of the Confession had picked up our newspapers and seen big advertisements stating that the Bible is the Creation of the Church—alleging that for three hundred years there was no Bible, but that the church had brought the Bible into existence. How flatly the Confession denies such unhistorical claims! The Bible's authority does not come from any church, nor does it rest on the word of any man. It derives its authority wholly from God.

This is a very important section. It is dealing with one

of the most central problems of our religion.

The fifth section continues the theme of the fourth. It is a wonderfully balanced section. Three-fourths of it is devoted to assuring us that reasonable arguments are valid as evidence of the fact that the Bible is God's Word. The last fourth of the section assures us that complete certainty does not come from reason alone, but "from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts".

The fourth section declared that our acceptance of the Bible as God's Word does not depend upon the authority of any man or church. This fifth section declares that the testimony of the church may induce us to a high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture. The church does have its place. The Bible as we have it did not just drop from heaven—there has been a church on the earth all through the ages. That church has passed on the Bible from generation to generation. God has used the efforts of Christian people as a means of calling attention to the truth of His Word. The testimony of the church through the ages has a real importance in the evidence of the Bible but the authority of the Bible does not rest upon any man but upon its Author, who is God Himself,

This section declares the validity and importance of various arguments and evidences of the truth of the Bible. It says that by these facts "it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God." Despite these statements of the Confession there are people who try to tell us that we have no common ground for discussion with the unbeliever. They say in effect: "Don't try to bring various arguments before the unbeliever to show him that the Bible is true. You have no common ground with him. All you can do is to tell him that he is over there and we are over here and he must give up all the bases of his viewpoint and adopt those of ours." Such an attitude is utterly contrary to that of the Westminster Confession of Faith. The Confession clearly teaches that there are many facts by which the Bible "doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God."

We do not need to take a presupposition or adopt a particular basis of thought before we can examine the evidence that the Bible is God's Word. This section of the Westminster Confession lists various types of evidence and then says that the

facts which it has stated “are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God”.

Yet arguments alone do not win men to Christ. People come face to face with the clear evidence and then turn and go the other way. This is because the truth contained in the Bible is so contrary to all the impulses of the sinful fallen human heart. It requires the supernatural activity of the Holy Spirit to induce sinful man to accept the conclusions to which the evidence clearly leads. In spite of the validity of these arguments, as declared by the Confession, the Confession goes on to say that full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority of the Scripture “is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts”.

Since the time is going rapidly we shall not be able to examine all the remaining sections of the chapter in detail. We must, however, briefly note their principal features.

SECTIONS SIX TO EIGHT

The sixth section has three main thoughts. First, it stresses the completeness and sufficiency of the Bible for revelation of those religious truths which God desires us to know. Second, it states that “the inward illumination of the Spirit of God is necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word”. Third, it points out that it is not to be expected that precise instructions for all acts of religion will be contained in the Bible. God expects His people to use the brains He has given them in working out satisfactory means of accomplishing desired ends, always keeping, of course, within the area of action circumscribed by “the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed”.

The seventh section opposes the idea that simple people must abstain from seeking to interpret the Word of God themselves, or that they must uncritically accept any view that learned men or church leaders claim to derive from it. Words of Scripture are clear enough that a simple Christian can judge as to the correctness of interpretations which may be presented. The necessary truths of salvation are so clearly stated “that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them”

I like the eighth section very much. It declares that the

Bible in the original languages is the final authority in all controversies of religion. But it balances this by a declaration that people who do not know the original languages are also commanded to read and search the Scriptures, and that therefore the Scriptures “are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come”.

It is to be feared that this declaration of the Westminster Confession is not sufficiently followed today. We have a wonderful translation of the Bible into the English language as it was spoken more than three hundred years ago. No one speaks it that way today. The King James version is not in “the vulgar language” of our nation; it is in a dialect which is rapidly becoming unintelligible to our people. Word after word phrase after phrase expression after expression in it is meaningless to the unlearned people of our day. The Confession declares that it is the duty of the learned to study the Bible in the original, which is the only final court of appeal in all controversies. The unlearned are to search through it in a good translation in their common speech. It would be absurd to call the King James version a translation into the common speech of America today

It is the glory of the King James version that it is the climax of a century of constant effort by many men to discover the best way to translate the Bible into the language of their day. Unless we make similar efforts to attain a thoroughly satisfactory translation into the language of our day, we are failing in one of the great obligations stressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith.

THE GREAT INTERPRETER OF THE BIBLE

The ninth section names the great interpreter of the Scripture. This is not a pope, nor a professor. It is not Luther or Calvin or Wesley. It is not even the Westminster Confession of Faith. Nor is it our idea of what is coherent, or what may seem to us logically to belong to a proper system. It is the Scripture itself.

The Westminster Confession is one of the great Calvinistic creeds. Naturally it follows the view of Calvin himself, who put the Bible high above all creeds. Truth is coherent with itself, and all truths together form a system of truth. But Calvin insisted that each element must be gained directly from the Scripture. The human mind is too prone to error to permit

it to build its system apart from dependence on the Bible at every point.

According to the Westminster Confession the sole infallible rule of interpretation of a passage of Scripture is other passages of Scripture. Plainly it upholds the scientific method of approach to the data of the Word. We must gather all the data on a given subject. If we leave out any passage that deals with the particular subject, we are in danger of making a false interpretation. We must interpret difficult passages in the light of plain ones. We must go from the simple to the complex. We must use exactly the same method of gaining truth in religion as we would in any other field of science. The Scripture itself is the only infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture

It is worthy of note, also that all Scripture is included in this authority. Our knowledge must not come from human speculation or logic, but from God's Word. We must be constantly alert to gain new insights into every part of the Bible. All of it is important. No one book or section is singled out. Sometimes I hear a book of the Bible cast aside with the statement: "Oh that is a symbolic book. We must base our doctrine upon the didactic portions of the New Testament. Such an attitude is in direct opposition to the views of the Westminster Confession of Faith, which insists that all Scripture is authoritative.

Every book of the Bible contains plain passages and every book contains passages that are less plain. We must gather the simple passages from all parts of the Bible, study them, and build our views upon what they seem to teach. Then we must check these interpretations by other passages; constantly increasing our knowledge of Scripture, and standing ready at all times to alter our formulations as better understanding gives us more light on the full meaning of Scripture. "The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself."

The tenth section sums up the authority of Scripture in the strongest possible terms. It puts it above all gatherings of Christians, all human creeds, all opinions of ancient writers. It declares that the Supreme Judge in all matters of religion "can be none other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture".