

Synopsis of Statements on Scripture

Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter 1¹

1. Our natural understanding and the works of creation and providence so clearly show God's goodness, wisdom, and power that human beings have no excuse for not believing in Him. However, these means alone cannot provide that knowledge of God and of His will, which is necessary for salvation. Therefore, it pleased the Lord at different times and in various ways to reveal Himself and to declare that this revelation contains His will for His church. Afterwards it pleased God to put this entire revelation into writing so that the truth might be better preserved and transmitted and that the church, confronted with the corruption of the flesh and the evil purposes of Satan and the world, might be more securely established and comforted. Since God no longer reveals Himself to His people in those earlier ways...
4. The Bible speaks authoritatively and so deserves to be believed and obeyed. This authority does not depend on the testimony of any man or church but completely on God, its author, who is Himself truth. The Bible therefore is to be accepted as true, because it is the Word of God.
5. We may be influenced by the testimony of the church to value the Bible highly and reverently, and Scripture itself shows in so many ways that it is God's Word—for example, in its spiritual subject matter, in the effectiveness of its teaching, the majesty of its style, the agreement of all its parts, its unified aim from beginning to end (to give all glory to God), the full revelation it makes of the only way of man's salvation, its many other incomparably outstanding features, and its complete perfection. However, we are completely persuaded and assured of the infallible truth and divine authority of the Bible only by the inward working of the Holy Spirit, who testifies by and with the word in our hearts.
6. The whole purpose of God about everything pertaining to His own glory and to man's salvation, faith, and life is either explicitly stated in the Bible or may be deduced as inevitably and logically following from it. Nothing is at any time to be added to the Bible, either from new revelations of the Spirit or from traditions of men. Nevertheless, we do recognize that the inward illumination of the Spirit of God is necessary for a saving

understanding of the things which are revealed in the Word. We also recognize that some provisions for the worship of God and the government of the church are similar to secular activities and organizations; these are to be directed according to our natural understanding and our Christian discretion and should conform to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.

7. The meanings of all the passages in the Bible are not equally obvious, nor is any individual passage equally clear to everyone. However, everything which we have to know, believe, and observe in order to be saved is so clearly presented and revealed somewhere in the Bible that the uneducated as well as the educated can sufficiently understand it by the proper use of the ordinary means of grace.
8. The Old Testament in Hebrew (the native language of the ancient people of God) and the New Testament in Greek (the language most widely known internationally at the time the New Testament was written) were directly inspired by God and have been kept uncontaminated throughout time by His special care and providence. They are therefore authentic and are to be the church's ultimate source of appeal in every religious controversy. The original languages of the Bible, however, are not understood by all of God's people. But all of God's people have a right to an interest in the Bible, and God Himself commands them to read it thoroughly with awe and reverence for Him. Consequently, the Bible should be translated into the native language of every people to whom it is introduced. Then, the Word of God will live fully in everyone; everyone will be able to worship God in an acceptable way; and all believers may have hope through the endurance and the encouragement of the Bible.
9. The infallible standard for the interpretation of the Bible is the Bible itself. And so any question about the true and complete sense of a passage in the Bible (which is a unified whole) can be answered by referring to other passages which speak more plainly.
10. The Holy Spirit speaking in the Bible is the supreme judge of all religious controversies, all decisions of religious councils, all the opinions of ancient writers, all human teachings, and every private opinion. We are to be satisfied with the judgment of him who is and can be the only judge.

Westminster Larger Catechism

- Q. 3. What is the Word of God?
- A. The holy Bible, made up of the Old and New Testaments, is the Word of God. It is the only authority for faith and obedience.
- Q. 4. What evidence is there that the Bible is the Word of God?
- A. The Bible clearly shows that it is the Word of God by its majesty and purity, by the agreement of all its parts, by its unified aim to give all glory to God, and by its illuminating power to convince and convert sinners and to comfort and build up believers unto salvation. However, only the Spirit of God, testifying by and with the Bible in our hearts, can completely persuade us that it is truly the Word of God.
- Q. 5. What does the Bible primarily teach?
- A. The Bible primarily teaches what we must believe about God and what God requires of us.
- Q. 157. How should the Word of God be read?
- A. We must read the Bible with high and reverent esteem, being absolutely convinced that it is truly God's Word and that only He can enable us to understand it. We should read with a desire to know, believe, and obey His will as revealed in the Bible. We should pay careful attention to its content and the extent of its meaning, meditate on it, apply it to our lives, deny ourselves under its direction, and use it as a basis for our prayers.

Westminster Shorter Catechism

- Q. 2. What authority from God directs us how to glorify and enjoy him?
- A. The only authority for glorifying and enjoying him is the Bible, which is the word of God and is made up of the Old and New Testaments.
- Q. 3. What does the Bible primarily teach?
- A. The Bible primarily teaches what man must believe about God and what God requires of man.

Preface to “Essentials to Our Faith”²

All Scripture is self-attesting, and being Truth requires our unreserved submission in all areas of life. The infallible Word of God, the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, is a complete and unified witness to God’s redemptive acts, culminating in the incarnation of the Living Word—the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible, uniquely and fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, is the supreme and final authority on all matters on which it speaks. On this sure foundation, we affirm these additional Essentials of our faith...

Book of Government³

The second ordination vow:

Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, totally trustworthy, fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, the supreme, final, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice? [G.13-2-A.2 and B.2]

8th General Assembly⁴

The Assembly adopts as a resource for its congregations “The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy” (Act of Assembly 88-19). “The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy” can be found in print and online, including www.reformed.org and www.theopedia.com.

*Approved by the 30th General Assembly
June 2010*

¹The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms are constitutional documents of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and must be subscribed to by all ministers, elders, and deacons.

²The document “Essentials of Our Faith” is part of the constitution of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and every minister, elder and deacon must affirm every part of it without exception.

³The Book of Government is part of the constitution of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.

⁴Acts of the General Assembly are authoritative decisions made at the annual meeting of the denomination.