

**A modern exposition  
of the  
1689 Baptist Confession  
of Faith**

*Samuel E. Waldron*



**EP BOOKS** (Evangelical Press) Registered Office: 140  
Coniscliffe Road, Darlington, Co Durham DL3 7RT  
admin@epbooks.org  
www.epbooks.org

EP Books are distributed in the USA by:  
JPL Books, 3883 Linden Ave. S.E.,  
Wyoming, MI 49548  
order@jplbooks.com  
www.jplbooks.com

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First published 1989

This (fifth) edition 2016

**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data available**

ISBN: 978-1-78397-187-9

Unless otherwise indicated. Scripture quotations in this publication are from the New American Standard Bible.

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## Preface to 5th edition (August, 2016)

**I**t is right and appropriate that prefaces like this one include thanks to the many persons which make them possible. Thanks, first of all, must be given to the Triune God who in His gracious providence has given the effort to serve His church through this book a usefulness far beyond what I could ever have expected. First published in 1989 this is now the Fifth Edition of *A Modern Exposition* in English. It has also been translated into Spanish, German, Russian, and Romanian. I am both amazed and deeply grateful to a gracious providence for the privilege of being thus useful to the church of God.

Many people have been the human instruments of this gracious providence. Evangelical Press and its Managing Director, Graham Hind, have made my dealings with this publishing company a genuine pleasure over the last several years. Without his and their support for this project, it would not have seen the light of day. I am also grateful to the Administrator of Covenant Baptist Theological Seminary, Rex Semrad, who with his daughter Danielle have gone above and beyond the call of duty to help with preparation and editing of this 5th Edition. I cannot fail to mention my beloved wife, Charlene, who through the years keeps putting me back together when I am about to fall apart and who has been my faithful comfort, companion, and friend for over 41 years of marriage.

Let me say something about the reason and necessity for this 5th

Edition. In the 2nd and 3rd Editions of *A Modern Exposition* a number of important improvements to the first edition were made. You can see what they were by reading the prefaces repeated in the previous pages. Somehow in the 4th Edition published in 2009 these improvements were forgotten and the manuscript reverted to its original (1st Edition) form with all of its inaccuracies. I only discovered the extent of the problem in the last year. Graham Hind Evangelical Press immediately responded to the problem by withdrawing the remaining unsold copies of the 4th Edition from circulation for sale. They also agreed to publish this 5th Edition as soon as I could prepare it for publication.

In this 5th Edition of *A Modern Exposition* the improvements found in the 2nd and 3rd Editions are restored. I have made further (what I think to be) improvements by revising two appendices found in previous editions and adding two more. The reader (in my opinion) will be greatly helped by turning to the back of the book and reading these appendices first.

Finally, let me dedicate to Dr. Robert Paul Martin and his family this 5th Edition of *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession*. His *Introduction on the Legitimacy and Use of Confessions* has stood at the beginning of *A Modern Exposition* in each of its editions including the present one. He has in my view never received the credit he deserves for that outstanding little essay. “Dr. Bob” passed away a few months ago in 2016, but his godliness and labors for Christ’s Kingdom are not forgotten.

**Sam Waldron**

August 2016

# 1.

## OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

1. The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith and obedience,<sup>1</sup> 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;<sup>2</sup> yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and his will which is necessary unto salvation.<sup>3</sup> Therefore it pleased the Lord at sundry times and in divers manners to reveal himself, and to declare that his will unto his church;<sup>4</sup> 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 maketh the Holy Scriptures to be most necessary,<sup>5</sup> those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased.<sup>6</sup>

1. Isaiah 8:20; Luke 16:29; Ephesians 2:20; 2 Timothy 3:15-17

2. Psalm 19:1-3; Romans 1:19-21, 32; 2:12a, 14-15

3. Psalm 19:1-3 with vv. 7-11; Romans 1:19-21, 2:12a, 14-15 with 1:16-17; and 3:21

4. Hebrews 1:1-2a



5. Proverbs 22:19–21; Luke 1:1–4; 2 Peter 1:12–15; 3:1; Deuteronomy 17:18ff; 31:9ff; 31:19ff; 1 Corinthians 15:1; 2 Thessalonians 2:1–2,15; 3:17; Romans 1:8–15; Galatians 4:20; 6:11; 1 Timothy 3:14ff; Revelation 1:9,19; 2:1, etc.; Romans 15:4; 2 Peter 1:19–21

6. Hebrews 1:1–2a; Acts 1:21–22; 1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:7–8; Ephesians 2:20

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: [There follow the names of the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New.] All of which are given by the inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life.<sup>1</sup>

1. 2 Timothy 3:16 with 1 Timothy 5:17–18; 2 Peter 3:16

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.<sup>1</sup>

1. Luke 24:27, 44; Romans 3:2

4. The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church,<sup>1</sup> but wholly upon God (who is truth itself), the Author thereof; therefore it is to be received because it is the Word of God.<sup>2</sup>

1. Luke 16:27–31; Galatians 1:8–9; Ephesians 2:20

2. 2 Timothy 3:15; Romans 1:2; 3:2; Acts 2:16; 4:25; Matthew 13:35; Romans 9:17; Galatians 3:8; Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11; Matthew 22:32; Luke 16:17; Matthew 22:41; John 10:35; Galatians 3:16; Acts 1:16; 2:24ff.; 13:34–35; John 19:34–36; 19:24; Luke 22:37; Matthew 26:54; John 13:18; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19–21; Matthew 5:17–18; 4:1–11

5. We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church of God to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scriptures;<sup>1</sup> 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 doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God;<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

1. 2 Timothy 3:14-15

2. Jeremiah 23:28-29; Luke 16:27-31; John 6:63; 1 Peter 1:23-25; Hebrews 4:12-13; Deuteronomy 31:11-13; John 20:31; Galatians 1:8-9; Mark 16:15-16

3. Matthew 16:17; 1 Corinthians 2:14ff; John 3:3; 1 Corinthians 2:4-5; 1 Thessalonians 1:5-6; 1 John 2:20-21, with v.27

6. The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelation of the Spirit, or traditions of men.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word,<sup>2</sup> and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.<sup>3</sup>

1. 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Deuteronomy 4:2; Acts 20:20, 27; Psalms 19:7; 119:6, 9, 104, 128

2. John 6:45; 1 Corinthians 2:9-14

3. 1 Corinthians 14:26, 40

7. All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves,<sup>1</sup> nor alike clear unto all;<sup>2</sup> yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of ordinary means, may attain to a sufficient understanding of them.<sup>3</sup>

1. 2 Peter 3:16
2. 2 Timothy 3:15-17
3. 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Psalms 19:7-8; 119:105; 2 Peter 1:19; Proverbs 6:22-23; Deuteronomy 30:11-14

8. The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old),<sup>1</sup> and the New Testament in Greek (which at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic;<sup>2</sup> so as in all controversies of religion, the church is finally to appeal unto them.<sup>3</sup> But because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have a right unto, and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded in the fear of God to read and search them<sup>4</sup>, therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar [i.e. common] language of every nation unto which they come,<sup>5</sup> that the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship him in an acceptable manner, and through patience and comfort of the Scriptures may have hope.<sup>6</sup>

1. Romans 3:2
2. Matthew 5:18
3. Isaiah 8:20; Acts 15:15; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; John 10:34-36
4. Deuteronomy 17:18-20; Proverbs 2:1-5; 8:34; John 5:39, 46
5. 1 Corinthians 14:6, 9, 11, 12, 24, 28
6. Romans 15:4; Colossians 3:16

9. The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched by other places that speak more clearly.<sup>1</sup>

1. Isaiah 8:20; John 10:34-36; Acts 15:15-16

10. The supreme judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient

writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Scripture delivered by the Spirit, into which Scripture so delivered, our faith is finally resolved.<sup>1</sup>

1. Matthew 22:29, 31–32; Acts 28:23–25; Ephesians 2:20

## Outline of the chapter<sup>1</sup>

### **Para 1**

#### I. Its necessity (or indispensability)

A. The sphere of its indispensability: ‘all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience’

#### B. The basis for its indispensability

##### 1. Because of the insufficiency of general revelation

What general revelation does do

What general revelation cannot do

##### 2. Because of the inscripturation of special revelation

The background to inscripturation: redemptive revelation

The description of inscripturation

(a) Its period

(b) Its purposes

(c) Its extent

The impact of inscripturation

### **Paras 2–3**

#### II. Its identity

A. Defined positively or inclusively—‘all the books of the Old and New Testaments’ (para 2)

B. Defined negatively or exclusively—not the Apocrypha (para 3)

### **Paras 4–5**

#### III. Its authority

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<sup>1</sup> Note the helpful (and in several respects different) outline of B. B. Warfield, *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield*, vol. VI (New York: Oxford University Press, 1931, reprinted Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981), pp. 191, 192.

- A. In itself (or the fact of its divine authority) (para 4)
- B. With us (or the authentication of its divine authority), (para 5)
  - 1. The nature of the evidence
    - The external evidence of the testimony of the church
    - The internal evidence of the excellencies of Scripture
  - 2. The efficacy of the evidence ('from the inward work of the Holy Spirit ...')

### **Para 6**

#### IV. Its sufficiency

- A. The statement of its sufficiency
  - 1. The scope of its sufficiency
  - 2. The mode of its sufficiency
  - 3. The implications of its sufficiency
- B. The qualifications of its sufficiency
  - 1. As to the illumination of the Spirit
  - 2. As to sanctified common sense

### **Para 7**

#### V. Its clarity

- A. Its qualification
- B. Its articulation

### **Para 8**

#### VI. Its availability

- A. The fact of its availability: its preservation
- B. The necessity of its availability: its translation
  - 1. The need for its translation
  - 2. The warrant for its translation
  - 3. The extent of its translation
  - 4. The purposes of its translation

### **Paras 9, 10**

#### VII. Its finality

- A. For scriptural interpretation in particular (para 9)
- B. For religious questions in general (para 10)