

Chapter 1

The Holy Scriptures

Part 1: Catechism (Q3–6)

Q3. How may we know there is a God?

The light of nature in man and the works of God plainly declare there is a God. Still, His Word and Spirit only do it fully and effectually for the salvation of sinners.¹

- Review the Scripture references.
- What does nature reveal to us about God? In what way is nature, or natural revelation, insufficient?
- What person of the Godhead applies and illuminates the Scriptures to us? How can we show our affirmation of this truth?
- Why is God's Word, or Holy Scripture, necessary?

Q4. What is God's Word?

The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are God's Word and the only certain rule of faith and obedience.²

- Review the Scripture references.
- What is included in the Christian canon and recognized as the Word of God?
- Why might we say the Holy Scriptures are the only certain rule of faith and obedience?
- What other rules might people try to introduce?

Q5. May all men make use of the Holy Scriptures?

¹ Psalm 19:1, 2, 3; Acts 17:24; Romans 1:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 2:10; 2 Timothy 3:15, 16.

² Ephesians 2:20; 2 Timothy 3:16.

Confessing Sound Words

All men are not only permitted but commanded and encouraged to read, hear, and understand the Holy Scriptures.³

- Review the Scripture references.
- What excuses do we make not to make use of the Holy Scriptures?
- How can a church and pastors aid their congregation in reading, hearing, and understanding the Holy Scriptures?
- What habits should we develop to ensure we make use of the Holy Scriptures?

Q6. What are the Holy Scriptures mainly about?

The Holy Scriptures are mainly about what man should believe concerning God and what duty God requires of man.⁴

- Review the Scripture references.
- Why is it essential that we understand that Scripture is mainly about what we should believe concerning God and our duty to Him?
- What are some things the Bible does not address in detail?
- What are the dangers of using the Bible to address what it is not mainly about?

Part 2: Bible Study (Psalm 19)

Read

- Read the passage multiple times.
- Read the passage in a few different translations.
- Take note of what is similar and what is different.

Context

- What sort of writing is this passage: a letter, narrative, poem, wisdom literature, and/or prophecy?

³ John 5:38; 17:17–19; Acts 8:30; Revelation 1:3.

⁴ 2 Timothy 1:13; 3:15, 16.

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- Are there any clues about the circumstances under which it was written?
- What is before and after this passage?
- Are there any persons or places that are mentioned that you do not know? (Search them out earlier in the book or with a commentary)
- Does this passage allude to or quote any Old Testament passages or events that precede this text?
- Is this passage quoted elsewhere in the Old Testament or the New Testament?

Observation

- Are there any significant sub-sections or breaks in the text?
- Who is speaking?
- What is the main point or points?
- What surprises are there? What are some things you don't understand?
- What are the keywords? What words or ideas are repeated?

Meaning

- How does this text relate to other parts of the book?
- Does this anticipate something happening in the future?
- Are there any commands?
- How does the passage relate or point to Jesus?
- What does this teach us about God?
- How could we sum up the meaning of this passage in our own words?

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Application

- What are some differences between you and the original audience?
- How does this passage challenge or confirm my understanding?
- Is there some attitude I need to change?
- How does this passage call on me to change the way I live?

Part 3: Bible Memory (2 Timothy 3:16, 17)

Putting 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 into context: 2 Timothy is the apostle Paul's final letter as he approached his execution. He wrote to encourage Timothy to boldness, endurance, and faithfulness. He encouraged him to stand firm in sound doctrine as the Holy Scriptures teach it. There is a warning of the godlessness of the last days in the preceding section. There is an encouragement to preach the Word in the section that follows.

- What is the nature of Scripture, and what is its source?
- What does it mean to say Scripture is profitable?
- What is it profitable for?
- What is teaching?
- What is reproof?
- What is correction?
- What is training in righteousness?
- What is the purpose of Scripture's inspiration and profitability?

Part 4: Confession

Read

The Holy Scriptures

1. The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience.⁵ 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; yet they are not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and his will which is necessary unto salvation.⁶ Therefore it pleased the Lord at sundry⁷ times and in divers⁸ manners to reveal himself, and to declare that his will unto his church;⁹ 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 makes the Holy Scriptures to be most necessary, those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased.¹⁰

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:

Of the Old Testament

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, The Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

Of the New Testament

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, The Acts of the Apostles, Paul's Epistle to the Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, Epistle of James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, The Epistle of Jude, Revelation.

All of which are given by the inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life.¹¹

3. The books commonly called Apocrypha,¹² not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon or rule of the Scripture, and, therefore, are of no authority to

⁵ Isaiah 8:20; Luke 16:29, 31; Ephesians 2:20; 2 Timothy 3:15-17.

⁶ Psalm 19:1-3; Romans 1:19-21; 2:14, 15.

⁷ *Sundry* meaning various.

⁸ *Divers* meaning diverse.

⁹ Hebrews 1:1.

¹⁰ Proverbs 22:19-21; Romans 15:4; 2 Peter 1:19, 20.

¹¹ 2 Timothy 3:16.

¹² The Apocrypha is a collection of about fourteen pre-Christian books.

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the church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved or made use of than other human writings.¹³

4. The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, dependent not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself), the author thereof; therefore it is to be received because it is the Word of God.¹⁴

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; 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 does abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God; 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.¹⁵

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.¹⁶

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,¹⁷ 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.¹⁸

7. All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all;¹⁹ yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded²⁰ and opened in some place of Scripture or

¹³ Luke 24:27, 44; Romans 3:2.

¹⁴ 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19–21; 1 John 5:9.

¹⁵ John 16:13,14; 1 Corinthians 2:10–12; 1 John 2:20, 27.

¹⁶ Galatians 1:8, 9; 2 Timothy 3:15–17.

¹⁷ John 6:45.

¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 2:9–12; 11:13, 14; 14:26, 40.

¹⁹ 2 Peter 3:16.

²⁰ *Propounded* meaning to put forward.

other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of ordinary means, may attain to a sufficient understanding of them.²¹

8. The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), and the New Testament in Greek (which at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations),²² being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic; so as in all controversies of religion, the church is finally to appeal to them.²³ 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,²⁴ and search them,²⁵ therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come,²⁶ 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.²⁷

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.²⁸

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.²⁹

Answer

- What does it mean to say Scripture is sufficient? What is Scripture sufficient for?
- What are the types of revelation? Why is Scripture necessary?
- What books are within the Holy Scriptures? What books are not?

²¹ Psalm 19:7; Psalm 119:130.

²² Romans 3:2.

²³ Isaiah 8:20.

²⁴ Acts 15:15.

²⁵ John 5:39.

²⁶ 1 Corinthians 14:6, 9, 11, 12, 24, 28.

²⁷ Colossians 3:16.

²⁸ Acts 15:15, 16; 2 Peter 1:20, 21.

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

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- What does it mean to say that the Scriptures are inspired?
- What are some traits required for a book to be canonical? How does a person come to full persuasion and assurances of the divinity and authority of the Scriptures?
- What is contained within the Scriptures? What is necessary for a saving understanding of them?
- What does it mean to say that Scripture is clear? Are all things equally clear within the Scriptures?
- What are the original languages of the Scriptures?
- What is the infallible rule of interpreting Scripture?
- What does it mean to say that Scripture is authoritative?
- How does the biblical portrayal of the doctrine of the Scripture in the first chapter of the Confession challenge you and encourage you?
- How will you apply what you have learned or been reminded of?

Chapter 2

Of God and of the Holy Trinity

Part 1: Catechism (Q7–9)

Q7. What is God?

God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.¹

- Review the Scripture references.
- What does each of the above-listed attributes mean (Spirit, infinite, eternal, unchangeable, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth)?
- What is the appropriate response to God and his attributes?
- How are the above attributes comforting to those who are in a relationship with this God?

Q8. Are there many gods?

There is only one, the living and true God.²

- Review the Scripture references.
- What are some of the false gods discussed in the Scriptures?
- How does God assert His supremacy over them?
- What does it mean to say God is living? Why is it so important to understand that the one true God is living?

Q9. How many persons are there in the Godhead?

There are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are one God, the same in essence, equal in power and glory.³

- Review the Scripture references.

¹ Exodus 3:14; 34:6; Job 11:7, 8, 9; Psalm 110:2; 147:5; John 4:24; James 1:17; Revelation 4:8; 15:4.

² Deuteronomy 6:4; Jeremiah 10:10.

³ Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14.

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- How should the truth that God is triune affect our private and corporate worship?
- Does this combat the idea that God was alone before creation and therefore created man? If so, how?

Part 2: Bible Study (Matthew 3:13–17)

Read

- Read the passage multiple times.
- Read the passage a few different translations.
- Take note of what is similar and what is different.

Context

- What sort of writing is this passage: a letter, narrative, poem, wisdom literature, and/or prophecy?
- What has happened so far? What notable characters have been introduced, and what significant events have taken place?
- What is before and after this passage?
- Are there any persons or places that are mentioned that you don't know? (Search them out earlier in the book or with a commentary)

Observation

- Who are the main characters? What do you learn about them?
- Is there any dialogue or speaking? Who speaks? What do they say?
- What is the main point or points?
- What surprises are there? What are some things you don't understand?

- What are the keywords? What words or ideas are repeated?

Meaning

- Does the author provide any commentary for the event? How does this help us understand the story?
- Is any behaviour commended or portrayed as positive? Is any behaviour rebuked or negatively portrayed?
- What does this passage teach us about Jesus (His Person and Work)?
- What does this teach us about God?
- How could we sum up the meaning of this passage in our own words?

Application

- What are some differences between you and the original audience?
- How does this passage challenge or confirm my understanding?
- Is there some attitude you need to change?
- What does this passage teach about being one of Jesus' disciples?
- How is the Trinity revealed in the present passage? What other passages help us develop the doctrine of the Trinity in more detail?

Part 3: Bible Memory (Deuteronomy 6:4; 2 Corinthians 13:14)

Putting Deuteronomy 6:4 into context: Deuteronomy is the concluding book of the Pentateuch/Torah. It contains three addresses to the generation that would enter and take the land of Canaan. It includes a retelling of what had happened in the prior generation, a retelling of the Ten Commandments, instructions for life in the land, promises of blessing for obedience, and warnings of curses for disobedience. The prior generation with Moses would not enter the promised land due to their sin.

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This book is Moses' final words to his people. Deuteronomy 6:4 is a fundamental confessional truth that Israel is to believe and pass down.

- What commands are there in Deuteronomy 6:1-9?
- Why is it so important that Moses emphasized that there is only one God? Why is it essential for today?
- What can we do to remind ourselves of this truth and pass it to those in our sphere of influence? (spouse, kids, friends, church, co-workers?)

Putting 2 Corinthians 13:14 into context: The memory verse is the final verse in Paul's last letter to the Corinthians. In the first letter, Paul called the Corinthian church to unity within. The second one called them to unity with him. 2 Corinthians 13:14 is a short but powerful prayer for the church Paul loved and one of the most explicit trinitarian passages.

- What blessing is attributed to each member of the Trinity in the prayer? What does this blessing teach about their role in our redemption?
- How can we cultivate an awareness of God being Trinity in our life and prayer?

Part 4: Confession

Read

1. The Lord our God is but one only living and true God;⁴ whose subsistence⁵ is in and of himself,⁶ infinite in being and perfection; whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but himself;⁷ a most pure spirit,⁸ invisible, without body, parts,⁹

⁴ Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Corinthians 8:4, 6.

⁵ *Subsistence* meaning a particular being, in this instance the confession is saying God is self-existent.

⁶ Isaiah 48:12; Jeremiah 10:10.

⁷ Exodus 3:14.

⁸ John 4:24.

⁹ *Without parts* meaning God is a simple and uncompounded being. God is his attributes.

or passions,¹⁰ who only has immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto;¹¹ who is immutable,¹² immense,¹³ eternal,¹⁴ incomprehensible, almighty,¹⁵ every way infinite, most holy,¹⁶ most wise, most free, most absolute; working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will,¹⁷ for his own glory;¹⁸ most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek him,¹⁹ and withal²⁰ most just and terrible in his judgments,²¹ hating all sin,²² and who will by no means clear the guilty.²³

2. God, having all life,²⁴ glory,²⁵ goodness,²⁶ blessedness, in and of himself, is alone in and unto himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creature which he has made, nor deriving any glory from them,²⁷ but only manifesting his own glory in, by, unto, and upon them; he is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things,²⁸ and he has most sovereign dominion over all creatures, to do by them, for them, or upon them, whatsoever himself pleases;²⁹ in his sight all things are open and manifest,³⁰ his knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature, so as nothing is to him contingent³¹ or uncertain;³² he is most holy in all his counsels, in all his works,³³ and in all his commands; to him

¹⁰ *Without passions* meaning God is impassible. He experiences no emotional change. He does not suffer in his being.

¹¹ Deuteronomy 4:15, 16; 1 Timothy 1:17.

¹² Malachi 3:6.

¹³ 1 Kings 8:27; Jeremiah 23:23.

¹⁴ Psalm 90:2.

¹⁵ Genesis 17:1.

¹⁶ Isaiah 6:3.

¹⁷ Psalm 115:3; Isaiah 46:10.

¹⁸ Proverbs 16:4; Romans 11:36.

¹⁹ Exodus 34:6, 7; Hebrews 11:6.

²⁰ *Withal* meaning along with, or likewise.

²¹ Nehemiah 9:32, 33.

²² Psalm 5:5, 6.

²³ Exodus 34:7; Nahum 1:2, 3

²⁴ John 5:26.

²⁵ Psalm 148:13.

²⁶ Psalm 119:68.

²⁷ Job 22:2, 3.

²⁸ Romans 11:34–36.

²⁹ Daniel 4:25, 34, 35.

³⁰ Hebrews 4:13.

³¹ *Contingent* meaning dependent.

³² Ezekiel 11:5; Acts 15:18.

³³ Psalm 145:17.

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is due from angels and men, whatsoever worship,³⁴ service, or obedience, as creatures they owe unto the Creator, and whatever he is further pleased to require of them.³⁵

3. In this divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences,³⁶ the Father, the Word (or Son), and Holy Spirit,³⁷ of one substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence, yet the essence undivided.³⁸ the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father;³⁹ the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son;⁴⁰ all infinite, without beginning, therefore but one God, who is not to be divided in nature and being, but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties and personal relations;⁴¹ which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependence on him

Answer

- List the attributes in the first paragraph and provide a brief definition of them.
- What responses should these attributes elicit?
- Are there any of the attributes you do not understand? If so, which ones?
- How is God related to his creatures? (See paragraph 2)
- Why might this biblical portrayal of God, his attributes and relation to his creatures be offensive/repulsive to some? Is it offensive/repulsive to you?

³⁴ Revelation 5:12–14.

³⁵ The last two sentences of paragraph two allude to the distinction between natural (moral) law and positive law. Moral law is eternal, written on man's heart by virtue of his creation in God's image, is summarized in the Ten Commandments, and is right because it is an extension of God's nature. Positive law is temporary and attached to specific covenantal arrangements. Positive law is right because God says so. An example of positive law was for Adam to abstain from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

³⁶ *Subsistences* meaning an individual instance of a given essence. In this case, the divine essence subsist undivided and equally in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Moreover, it is a different and more technical way of saying persons.

³⁷ Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 John 5:7.

³⁸ Exodus 3:14; John 14:11; 1 Corinthians 8:6.

³⁹ John 1:14, 18.

⁴⁰ John 15:26; Galatians 4:6.

⁴¹ *Peculiar relative properties and personal relations*, meaning how they relate to and are distinguished from one another, which are referred to earlier in the paragraph. The Father is unbegotten nor preceding. The Son is eternally begotten of the Father. The Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.

Of God and of the Holy Trinity

- On the flip side of the above question, why is this biblical portrayal of God comforting?
- Look up the Nicene/Constantinople creed. How does the summary of the doctrine of the Trinity in the *Confession* compare? What might this say about the views of the framers of the *Confession* regarding the early creeds?
- Summarize the doctrine of the Trinity in your own words. What must be affirmed?
- What do you think “the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependence on him” means? According to this phrase, why is the doctrine or reality of the Trinity important for the Christian life and spirituality?

