

The Canon – Belgic Confession Article 7

The sufficiency of Holy Scripture

From article 7 of the Belgic Confession:

'We believe that this Holy Scripture fully contains the will of God and that all that man must believe in order to be saved is sufficiently taught therein.'

Everything we need to know for our salvation is written in the Bible. We don't need anything besides the Bible, in order to be saved. The purpose of the Bible is to teach us, so that we know God and the will of God for our salvation.

The Bible is no science book. It doesn't tell us everything about God's creation and doesn't reveal God's complete will either. But it does clearly teach us what is necessary for us to be saved.

We may not add to the Bible, nor take away from it (Revelation 22:18-19), because by doing so we would take away from our own salvation and declare God to be a liar. We should not want to know it better than God.

The necessity of Scripture

From article 7 of the Belgic Confession:

The whole manner of worship which God requires of us is written in it at length. It is therefore unlawful for any one, even for an apostle, to teach otherwise than we are now taught in Holy Scripture: yes, even if it be an angel from heaven, as the apostle Paul says (Gal 1:8). Since it is forbidden to add to or take away anything from the Word of God (Deut 12:32), it is evident that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects.

We know how God wants to be worshiped from the Bible. We do not need to live in uncertainty about that. We have to submit to this teaching in the Bible and not develop our own ideas about how to serve and worship God. God has given His revelation to us perfectly in His Word, the Bible. No human mind could ever say it better than God did it in His Word:

Revelation 22:18-19:

For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

Deuteronomy 12:32:

Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.

Romans 10:17:

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Romans 1:18:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

From article 7 of the Belgic Confession:

We may not consider any writings of men, however holy these men may have been, of equal value with the divine Scriptures; nor ought we to consider custom, or the great multitude, or antiquity, or succession of times and persons, or councils, decrees or statutes, as of equal value with the truth of God, since the truth is above all; for all men are of themselves liars, and lighter than a breath (Ps 62:9)

In Romans 10:17 Paul makes it clear that the preaching of the gospel is needed to work faith. That is the means which the Holy Spirit uses.

That is also what the Heidelberg Catechism states, when it says in Lord's Day 25 that the Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts by the preaching of the gospel. And in Lord's Day 21 the Heidelberg Catechism teaches us that Christ gathers His Church through His Word and Spirit.

We can only believe because the Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts. From ourselves we would suppress the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18). Therefore, we confess that no human writing can ever be of equal value with the divine Scriptures. No human writing or whatever came up in a human mind will ever be able to lead us to salvation.

Therefore, it is human arrogance that believes that the Bible is not good enough for today and needs human interpretation to make it applicable for our time. We believe that the Bible is clear enough and explains itself:

The clarity of Scripture

From article 7 of the Belgic Confession:

We therefore reject with all our heart whatever does not agree with this infallible rule, as the apostles have taught us: Test the spirits to see whether they are of God (1 Jn 4:1). Likewise: If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting (2 Jn 1:10).

The Bible is clear in itself and we can understand the message of the Bible. We don't need the help of leaders with extra-scriptural revelations, with secret knowledge. What God taught us through the apostles and prophets is sufficient. We don't need anything that adds to that. And anyone who brings something different is a heretic and we should not accept him as a brother (or her as a sister).

Those who preach and explain the Bible must not go beyond what is written in the Bible itself.