

## **The Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures to be the Only Rule of Faith (1)**

*Text: Belgic Confession 7; Revelation 22:10-21*

The subject of *Belgic Confession* article 7 is the sufficiency of Scripture, which simply means that the Bible is enough. We do not need anything in addition to it. The article expresses this clearly, using key adverbs and adjectives that underscore the point. The Holy Scriptures “fully” contain the will of God. All doctrine is “sufficiently” taught therein. The entire manner of worship God requires is written “at large.” The text also uses adjectives such as “whole,” “most perfect” and “complete in all respects.” Nothing more is required because Scripture is wholly adequate. Even if an apostle or an angel from heaven were to add anything, it would not be permitted. This reference to Galatians 1 makes it clear that neither men nor angels may supplement God’s revelation.

### **Manmade Additions and Ongoing Claims**

Groups that add to Scripture deny its sufficiency. Roman Catholicism adds two major things: tradition and the Apocrypha. Rome claims apostolic tradition is authoritative alongside Scripture and includes books not found in the Hebrew canon. The Pope, in his declarations on faith and morals, often becomes the mouthpiece for that tradition. Eastern Orthodoxy likewise elevates tradition, though it lacks a single head like the Pope. Its Apocrypha includes books not found in Rome’s collection. Both reject *sola scriptura*.

Cults also deny sufficiency. The Mormons have *The Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants*, and *The Pearl of Great Price*. Christian Science uses Mary Baker Eddy’s *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. Seventh-day Adventists elevate Ellen G. White’s writings, though they deny adding to Scripture. Jehovah’s Witnesses offer no extra inspired book but alter the text itself with their *New World Translation* (e.g. in John 1:1).

Pentecostals and Charismatics claim ongoing revelation through experiences, prophecy, and “words of knowledge.” Even milder mysticism appears in evangelical circles, where decisions are guided by feelings or verses taken out of context. Revivalists often speak of ministers being “called” through a text that “leapt off the page.” However, the Reformed tradition teaches that the call

to ministry is confirmed through Scripture, qualifications, the church's confirmation and providence. Jonathan Edwards critiqued mysticism during the Great Awakening.

### **Sufficiency Undermined in Practice**

Hymns can become functional rivals to Scripture. Some claim their lyrics are divinely inspired, confusing human poetry with the Spirit-breathed Word. Believers may quote hymns to support doctrine or practice, forgetting they are not Scripture.

Higher critical scholars and liberal theologians likewise reject sufficiency. The "Jesus Seminar" promotes apocryphal gospels and grades sayings of Christ by probability. Others advocate a "world scriptures" model, combining the Bible with texts like the *Quran* or Taoist writings, asserting no single religious text is sufficient.

Liberalism also denies sufficiency in doctrine and ethics. It concedes that texts like I Timothy 2 and I Corinthians 14 prohibit women's ordination but appeals to cultural change as overriding Scripture. Likewise, Genesis is seen as insufficient for understanding origins, so secular science fills the gap. In each case, the Bible is viewed as inadequate for governing the church and life today.

### **The Reformed Confession of Sufficiency**

By contrast, we confess the sufficiency of Scripture. This is canonical sufficiency. The 66 books are enough. We do not need the Apocrypha, pseudepigrapha or cultic additions. Nor do we need direct revelations or mystical impressions. The extraordinary offices of apostle and prophet were foundational (Eph. 2:20) and have ceased.

Rome claims canonical books have been lost, but Scripture itself denies this. Numbers 21:14 mentions the "book of the wars of the Lord," and other passages refer to records like the "book of Jasher" or Paul's lost letter to the Corinthians (I Cor. 5:9). These are not lost Scripture but non-inspired writings referenced historically. The canon is complete.

*Belgic Confession* Article 7 begins, "We believe that those Holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God." This refers to the 66 books listed in article 4, not the Apocrypha rejected in article 6. The article continues, "[I]t is forbidden to add unto or take away anything from the Word of God," echoing Revelation 22:18–

19. Some claim this warning applies only to Revelation, but its placement at the close of the Bible implies broader application. The Reformers understood it as applying to the whole canon.

Article 7 concludes: “[I]t doth thereby evidently appear that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects.”

The sufficiency of Scripture is a precious doctrine. It safeguards us from error, grounds our faith and calls us to submit humbly to God’s final Word. As Psalm 19:7 declares, “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.”

This final section affirms that we have all we need in the written Word. No other writings, revelations or traditions are necessary. The Bible is not only sufficient but final.

