

D. Scripture

1. Historical statements of the doctrine

a. The Second Helvetic Confession (A. D. 1566)

Chapter I. -- Of the Holy Scripture Being the True Word of God

We believe and confess the Canonical Scriptures of the holy prophets and apostles of both Testaments to be the true Word of God, and to have sufficient authority of themselves, not of men. For God himself spake to the fathers, prophets, apostles, and still speaks to us through the Holy Scriptures.

And in this Holy Scripture, the universal Church of Christ has all things fully expounded which belong to a saving faith, and also to the framing of a life acceptable to God; and in this respect it is expressly commanded of God that nothing be either put to or taken from the same (Deut. 4:2; Rev. 22:18-19).

We judge, therefore, that from these Scriptures are to be taken true wisdom and godliness, the formation and government of churches; as also instruction in all duties of piety; and, to be short, the confirmation of doctrines, and the confutation of all errors, with all exhortations; according to that word of the Apostle, "All Scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof," etc. (II Tim. 3:16-17). Again, "These things write I unto thee," says the Apostle to Timothy, "that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God," etc. (I Tim. 3:14-15). Again, the self-same Apostle to the Thessalonians: "When", says he, "ye received the word of us, ye received not the word of men, but as it was indeed, the Word of God," etc. (I Thess. 2:13). For the Lord himself has said in the Gospel, "It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of my Father speaketh in you;" therefore "he that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me" (Matt. 10:20; Luke 10:16; John 13:20). Wherefore when this Word of God is now preached in the church by preachers lawfully called, we believe that the very Word of God is preached, and received of the faithful; and that neither any other Word of God is to be feigned, nor to be expected from heaven; and that now the Word itself which is preached is to be regarded, not the minister that preachers; who, although he be evil and a sinner, nevertheless the Word of God abides true and good....

Chapter II. -- Of Interpreting the Holy Scriptures; and of Fathers, Councils. and Traditions.

The Apostle Peter has said that "the Holy Scriptures are not of any private interpretation" (II Pet. 1:20). Therefore we do not allow all kinds of exposition. Whereupon we do not acknowledge that which they call the meaning of the Church of Rome for the true and natural interpretation of the Scriptures; which, forsooth, the defenders of the Romish Church do strive to force all men simply to receive; but we acknowledge only that interpretation of Scriptures