

RGC Articles of Faith 1.1

Proposed Revision

Article 1.1

Current Language

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 insufficient to give that knowledge of God and His will which is necessary for salvation. Therefore, it pleased the Lord at various times and in different ways to reveal Himself, and to declare His will to His people. Moreover, 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, He also committed His revelation to writing, in the form of the Holy Scriptures, which as His special revelation are necessary for our salvation and edification.

Article 1.1

Original 1689 / Westminster

Westminster

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 are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of His will, which is necessary unto salvation; therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal Himself, and to declare that His will unto His church; and afterwards 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 Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God's revealing His will unto His people being now ceased.

1689

The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience, 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 are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and his will which is necessary unto salvation. Therefore it pleased the Lord at sundry times and in divers manners to reveal himself, and to declare that his will unto his church; 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, those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased.

Article 1.1

Why

- Long Term Outlook - 20-30 years from now
- Clear stand, that for our salvation and edification, only God's Word is sufficient
- Only what can be derived from scripture can be conscious binding
 - Derived by being expressly laid out in scripture
 - Necessarily Contained
 - Good and Necessary Consequences
- Avoiding "strange fire."
- Retaining a scriptural emphasis centered on Jesus our Christ

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What we are not saying

- That continuationists or charismatics are outside the faith by virtue of being charismatic or continuationist
- That there is an end to supernatural activity

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Foundational Role of the Apostles

- Hebrews שליח (Shaliach), verb form שלח (Shalach)
 - Sent one
 - Does not occur as a noun in the OT, but verb form occurs with regularity and is frequent in literature from the Intertestamental era
 - Genesis 24, servant sent to obtain wife is an example, based on Rabbinic literature, of an "sent one."
 - In Jewish affairs, a Shaliach is one who carries out the legal affairs of the one sending-an official agent
 - e.g. A man may appoint a shaliach to betroth a woman on his behalf. A woman may choose to accept betrothal through a shaliach.
- Meaning of αποστολος (apostolos), Verb form αποστειλω (apostello)
 - Sent one
 - Hebrews 3:1-2
 - In NT, as we'll see, there's a specific usage (for a specific group of apostles) and a more general usage

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Foundational Role of the Apostles: Definitions

- Hebrews שליח (Shaliach), verb form שלח (Shalach)
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- Meaning of αποστολος (apostolos), Verb form αποστειλω (apostello)
 - Sent one
 - Hebrews 3:1-2
 - In NT, as we'll see, there's a specific (or unique) usage (for a specific group of apostles) and a more general usage
 - Ridderbos: "Recent Research has shown that the formal structure of the apostolate is derived from the Jewish legal system in which a person may be given the legal power to represent another. The one who has such power of attorney is called Shaliach. The uniqueness of this relationship is pregnantly expressed by the notion of the Shaliach of a man, is as the man himself."

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Foundational Role of the Apostles: Uniqueness

- There is a uniqueness to apostles such as Peter, John, and Paul
 - 1 John 1:1-3: That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.
 - John 15:26-27: But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.
 - Galatians 1:1-2: Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead— **and** all the brothers who are with me...

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Foundational Role of the Apostles: Characteristics

- Eyewitnesses (as in physical eyes) of the Resurrected Christ
 - Acts 1:21-22: So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.
 - Acts 10:39-41: And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.
 - 1 Corinthians 9:1: Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord?
 - Acts 9:1-8: Paul saw the resurrected Jesus on the road to Damascus

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Foundational Role of the Apostles: Characteristics

- Appointed Directly by Jesus Christ
 - Mark 3:14: And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach
 - Luke 6:13: And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles:
 - Acts 1:1-2: In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.
 - Galatians 1:1: Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—
- Matthias Appointment
 - Acts 1:24-26: And they prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two **you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship** from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” **And they cast lots** for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

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Foundational Role of the Apostles: Characteristics

- Confirmed Mission by Miraculous Signs
 - Matthew 10:1: And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction.
 - 2 Corinthians 12:12: The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.
 - Acts 2:42-43: And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.
 - Acts 4:33: And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.
 - Acts 5:12: Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico.
 - Acts 8:14-18: Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money,

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Foundational Role of the Apostles: Characteristics

- Confirmed Mission by Messianic Authority
 - 1 Corinthians 14:37-38: If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.
 - 2 Corinthians 13:2-3: I warned those who sinned before and all the others, and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit, that if I come again I will not spare them—since you seek proof that Christ is speaking in me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you.
 - 1 John 4:4-6: Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error

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Foundational Role of the Apostles: Other Uses of the Word

- A Necessary Distinction
 - What we've just described can be described as "Apostles of Christ."
 - There's another use called "Apostles" (or messengers) of the church.
 - Philippians 2:25: I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and *your* messenger (apostle) and minister to my need,
 - 2 Corinthians 8:23: As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker for your benefit. And as for our brothers, they are **messengers of the churches**, the glory of Christ.
 - These speak on behalf of particular churches or groups of churches. It's why, in baptist polity, people sent by churches to associational meetings who represent those churches are called "messengers."
 - Just as *πρεβυτερος* (presbyteros-elder) is understood specifically as a church officer in some places and in others it refers to an older man
 - Romans 16:7: Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me.

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Foundational Role of the Apostles: When

- A Foundational and Historical Role
 - Built on the *foundation* of the apostles and prophets with Christ as the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20)
 - Galatians 2:7-9: On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles), and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.
 - Shows that an apostle of the original 12 has to be present to *commend* another to the office
 - Yet, the apostles still speak today: through their witness of Christ we see in the scriptures. Rather, the word of Christ was more fully confirmed,
 - "For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:16-21)

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Prophets: The Old Testament Prophets

- Old Testament Prophets were held to this standard: Dt. 18:15-22:
 - “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen— just as you desired of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.’ And the Lord said to me, ‘They are right in what they have spoken. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.’ And if you say in your heart, ‘How may we know the word that the Lord has not spoken?’— when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him.
- Tasked with revelation

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Prophets: The Old Testament Prophets

- Testified of Christ to Come
 - Luke 24:27
 - And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.
 - 1 Peter 1:10-12
 - Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

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Prophets: Prophets in the New Testament

- Jesus is the final revelation from God: Hebrews 1:1-3
 - Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,
- Foundational
 - Ephesians 2:20
 - built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,
 - Could be Old Testament Prophets
 - Could be New Testament Prophets (would still be held to Dt. 18:15-22)
 - Could be eponymous of Apostles
 - Still foundational and of a revelational nature
- A Gift to the church: Eph. 4:11-13
 - And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

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Prophets: Prophets in the New Testament

- Abiding: 1 Corinthians 13:8-13
 - Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.
 - Continuationists argue that the "perfect" is the second coming of Christ and not the closing of the canon: I agree with the assessment but disagree with them using it for continuationism
 - It isn't talking about tongue speakers or prophets, but tongues and prophecies
 - v. 12: emphasis is not on prophecies or tongues, but it is on the knowledge we have from them
 - Thus the contrast between what is partial and perfect is the knowledge of our present state vs. the eternal state
 - Thus, it is not an argument for continuation of gifts-- it must be found elsewhere

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- Defer to foundational nature of Ephesians 2:20

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Prophets: Prophets in the New Testament

- The Prophetic word has been made sure and we rest in that, not in "new words."
- If there is a prophecy, or any other form of continued revelation, it must be akin to scripture
- If so, where we find God's certain and unadulterated will is in the scriptures
- Over the last few years, we've seen the dangers of looking to continued revelation
 - Prophecies about elections
 - Prophecies about return of dead figures
- We don't need a new revelation: we need to believe the one we already have

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Further Considerations

- If the apostles were speaking on behalf of Christ and making revelation, and were of a foundational and historical purpose, and if prophecy, as direct revelation from God, has served its purpose in this age, God isn't revealing His will and person other than what's already been revealed.
 - The only certainty we have is in God's word (Romans 15:1-4)
- What of Muslims who have visions of Jesus that bring them to faith
 - Assume for sake of argument they are legitimate
 - What is being made known other than that which is already revealed? Thus there is no new revelation
 - Further, we should press and see what kind of contact they had with the gospel? We may find that such a person had exposure to the gospel, thus confirming the truth of Romans 10:17: So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

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Further Considerations

- What of life decisions?
 - Whom should I marry, which job should I take, which socks should I wear?
 - There's revelation and then there's wisdom based on that revelation
 - Impressions (a person we can't get out of our mind, a sense of caution, etc.) are not revelation.
 - "What some people today call 'prophecies' are actually impressions from God. He can use impressions to guide and lead us, but they aren't infallible and must always be tested by Scripture. We should also consult with wise counselors before acting on such impressions. I love my charismatic brothers and sisters, but what they call 'prophecy' today isn't actually the biblical gift of prophecy. God-given impressions aren't the same thing as prophecies." -Tom Schreiner
- We already have all we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3)
 - His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,
- Note from Keith McFaul's treatment of the Article of Faith:
 - It may have been more advisable to leave the original wording about cessation in the Articles of Faith and simply clarified situations where God could perhaps work in a special way, if necessary, even today, to bring his elect to faith, particularly those who do not have copies of the Bible at hand. Our Charismatic and Pentecostal brethren might not see it this way, however, and might take this omission, as broader, believing in the fact that God does reveal himself, even today, in special ways outside of his written Word, even to believers. We don't have to go this far, however, with this omission.

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The Proposed Revision, Redux

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 - Whom should I marry, which job should I take, which socks should I wear?
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Suggested Revision

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Modern 1689 from Founders

The Holy Scriptures are the only sufficient, certain, and infallible standard of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience. The light of nature and the works of creation and providence so clearly demonstrate the goodness, wisdom, and power of God that people are left without excuse; however, these demonstrations are not sufficient to give the knowledge of God and his will that is necessary for salvation. Therefore, the Lord was pleased at different times and in various ways to reveal himself and to declare his will to his church. To preserve and propagate the truth better and to establish and comfort the church with greater certainty against the corruption of the flesh and the malice of Satan and the world, the Lord put this revelation completely in writing. Therefore, the Holy Scriptures are absolutely necessary, because God's former ways of revealing his will to his people have now ceased.