

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

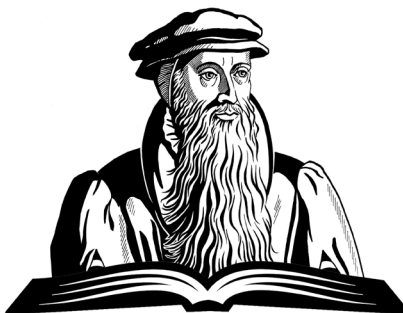
Video Lecture Series

by Robert D. McCurley, ThM

STUDY GUIDE

Module 1:
**INTRODUCTION and
THE DOCTRINE OF FIRST PRINCIPLES**

Lecture 7:
THE CANON OF HOLY SCRIPTURE



The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education

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Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the Authorized King James Version.

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STUDY GUIDE

Module 1

Introduction, and The Doctrine of First Principles

Introduction:

1. Methodology
2. Creeds and Confessions

The Doctrine of First Principles:

3. Scripture
4. Revelation
5. The Inspiration of Scripture
6. Properties of Inspired Scripture
- 7. The Canon of Holy Scripture**
8. Preservation and Translation of Scripture
9. Interpretation of Scripture
10. The Continuity of Scripture

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Module 1:

THE DOCTRINE OF FIRST PRINCIPLES

Lecture 7:

The Canon of Holy Scripture

Introduction

Most of us know what a library is. Whether in a public building, or in a private home, a library is a depository of printed literature—a collection of books—arranged in an orderly fashion by categories. When we think of the Bible, we usually think of it as one large book. But in another sense, it is a small library comprised of sixty-six different books written by various human authors with diverse backgrounds, over the course of many centuries, all of which are inspired by God himself, the ultimate author of every word. In this lecture, we will consider the canon of Holy Scripture. The word “canon” comes from a Greek word for a straight rod used for measuring, which served as a standard or norm. The word was applied to the Holy Scriptures, which are the inspired standard or authoritative rule for faith and practice in all ages.

Theme: *The Canonicity of Scripture*

I. Scriptural Basis

“What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.”—Romans 3:1–2

1. God supplied the Holy Scriptures, and committed this divine revelation to the church.
2. The chief advantage of the church is having the Word of God.
3. God’s intention is for the church to have his complete revelation, and to have complete confidence in those Scriptures, as the very Word of God, their only rule for faith and practice.

Questions:

1. How do we know that, at the time of the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, they already possessed a complete collection of the Old Testament Scriptures, and they recognized the divine authority of those Scriptures?

2. When did the process of collecting the New Testament Scriptures begin and finish?

3. Meditate on the passage in Romans 3:1–2. How does the “advantage” implicate the church?

II. Doctrinal Overview

Summarized in *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, chapter 1, paragraphs 2 and 3.

1. The canon is self-authenticating.
2. The self-authenticating nature of the New Testament canon is reinforced by apostolicity.
3. The self-authenticating nature of the New Testament canon is reinforced by its internal contents.
4. The self-authenticating nature of the New Testament canon further explains its universal reception by the church.

Questions:

1. Why do we say that the nature of the canon must be distinguished from the recognition of the canon? Explain your answer.

2. What does “apostolicity” mean? and how does this affect the self-authenticating nature of the New Testament canon? Please give clear Scriptural evidences.

3. How do the internal contents of the New Testament canon show us its self-authenticating nature?

4. Please compile a list of the New Testament texts which show its universal reception by the church.

III. Polemical Exposition

1. The difference between Roman Catholic doctrine and the biblical Protestant doctrine.
2. The Apocrypha.

Questions:

1. What are the main claims of the Roman Catholic church regarding the canon? How does this affect the doctrine of canonicity?

2. Explain the Roman Catholic doctrine which says that the church has infallible interpretation. How does that differ from Protestant doctrine regarding interpretation of Scripture?

3. What is the “Apocrypha,” and when was it written? How does it compare with the self-authenticating character of the New Testament canon? How do we know that the Apocryphal books are not a part of the New Testament canon?

IV. Practical Exposition

1. The doctrine of canonicity leads to a high and holy esteem of the Scriptures.
2. We have a Holy Bible—one that is set apart from all other books, and one of perfect purity.
3. Understanding the doctrine of canonicity cultivates confidence in the Word of God.

Questions:

1. What should be the right attitude and affection towards the Scripture?

2. What are some confusing thoughts which can shake the believer’s confidence in Scripture? Why should we place an emphasis on the doctrine of canonicity?

V. Self-Reflection

It would be very helpful and edifying for you to meditate on the various Scripture passages that were quoted in this lecture, and that may increase your understanding about the canonicity of the New Testament. We recommend you do your own research to see if you can find more to help you stand strong against doctrinal error.