

Review:

I. *The necessity of Scripture*

-General revelation gives us knowledge of God's goodness, wisdom, power; leaves us without excuse.

-But general revelation is not sufficient to give us the knowledge of God necessary for salvation.

-God therefore has revealed directly himself to his people (dreams, visions, prophets, his son).

-He has now "committed 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."

II. *The content of Scripture*

"Under the name of holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testaments...All which are given by inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life."

III. *The Apochrypha is not Scripture*

"The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the Canon of the Scripture"

IV. *The source of Scripture's authority*

"The authority of the holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God."

V. *The basis of our assurance of Scripture's divine origin*

"Our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth [of the holy Scripture], and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts."

VI. *The scope of Scripture & the role of the Spirit*

"All things necessary for [God's] own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture..."

"Nevertheless we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word."

"There are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed."

VII. *The clarity of Scripture*

“All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed, for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.”

VIII. *The Scripture and human language*

-The OT Scriptures in Hebrew and the NT Scriptures in Greek were “immediately inspired by God” and have been kept pure by his special providence throughout the ages — they are therefore “authentic” and “in all controversies of religion the Church is to appeal unto them.”

-“But because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God who have right unto, and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded, in the fear of God, to read and search them, therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come, that the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship him in an acceptable manner, and, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, may have hope.”

IX. *The rule of Scripture’s interpretation is Scripture*

“The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.”

X. *Scripture’s authority is ultimate and all-encompassing*

“The Supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.” (a)

a. Mat 22:29, 31; Eph 2:20 with Acts 28:25.

“All religious controversies are to be determined by the Holy Spirit speaking in Scripture, in the original languages of the Old Testament (Hebrew) and New Testament (Greek). All decrees of church councils are to be examined the light of Scripture. All the writings of the church fathers are to be considered in terms of how far they correspond to the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking in Scripture. All human teachings of whatever origin...are similarly to be examined. Moreover, we are to “rest” in the judgment of Scripture; that is, it is to be our authority, too. This is a comprehensive assertion of biblical authority. The Assembly obviously expected the papacy to submit to Scripture.” - Robert Letham

This paragraph communicates the fundamental principle of “Sola Scriptura.” Sola Scriptura does not mean that we do not rely on others (including the church through the ages) to help us interpret Scripture. But it does mean that ultimately, Scripture alone is the Supreme Judge of all doctrines of the church.

This paragraph leads to a very important principle for Reformed and Protestant Christians - any teaching, creed, or confession of the church is amendable by future generations of the church based on a deeper understanding of the Scriptures. This principle applies to the Westminster Confession of Faith — and its writers intended that to be the case.

-Note the example of John Calvin’s Institutes and the contemporary example of John Frame.