

Colleyville Presbyterian Church
Westminster Confession of Faith: Week 4 - Of Scripture (sections 6-8)
January 8, 2023

Chapter 6 - *“The Sufficiency of Scripture”*

VI. The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his 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: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. (a) 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; (b) and that 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. (c)

a. Gal 1:8-9; 2 Thes 2:2; 2 Tim 3:15-17. • b. John 6:45; 1 Cor 2:9-12. • c. 1 Cor 11:13-14; 14:26, 40.

“The Bible is thought of as authoritative on everything of which it speaks. Moreover, it speaks of everything. We do not mean that it speaks of football games, of atoms, etc., directly, but we do mean that it speaks of everything either directly or by implication. It tells us not only of the Christ and his work, but it also tells us who God is and where the universe about us has come from. It tells us about theism as well as about Christianity. It gives us a philosophy of history as well as history. Moreover, the information on these subjects is woven into an inextricable whole. It is only if you reject the Bible as the word of God that you can separate the so-called religious and moral instruction of the Bible from what it says, e.g., about the physical universe.

This view of Scripture, therefore, involves the idea that there is nothing in this universe on which human beings can have full and true information unless they take the Bible into account. We do not mean, of course, that one must go to the Bible rather than to the laboratory if one wishes to study the anatomy of the snake. But if one goes only to the laboratory and not also to the Bible one will not have a full or even true interpretation of the snake.” – Van Til, *Christian Apologetics*

“[‘By good and necessary consequence’] is a profoundly important statement. It points to the need for careful thought in reading, preaching, and thinking about the Bible. It mandates theology. In order to begin to grasp the whole counsel of God, we need to be able to make legitimate deductions from the Bible... This statement raises the question of the relationship between Scripture and tradition, and opens the door for a biblically based understanding of the development of dogma. It also preserves the role of human reasons in reflecting on Scripture, and guards against a literalistic fundamentalism. It is paradigmatic for all that follows [in the Confession]... It rules out a fundamentalist requirement that proof texts be produced for everything.” - Robert Letham

“The reemergence in recent controversies of the plea that the authority of Scripture is to be confined to its express declarations, and that human logic is not to be trusted in divine things, is, therefore a direct denial of a fundamental position of Reformed theology, explicitly affirmed in the Confession.” - B. B. Warfield

Chapter 7 - *“The Perspicuity of Scripture”*

VII. All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; (a) 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. (b)

a. 2 Pet 3:16. • b. Psa 119:105, 130.

“The common person can come to a clear knowledge of the gospel through the Word of God propounded in the ordinary way by the ministry of the Church. These comments imply that everything taught in the Scriptures is not of equal weight or significance. Some things—those things necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation—have a strategic significance and shed light on the rest. They are paradigmatic for the whole.” - Robert Letham

“Scripture is open to all through the use of ordinary means, so there is no need for an infallible teaching authority, such as the Roman magisterium, nor for special inner light, as with the enthusiasts and the emerging Quakers. Yet the teaching of the church nevertheless has an integral place. The means of grace are there to lead us to the knowledge of those things that are necessary for salvation, with the indispensable illumination of the Holy Spirit. In short, the Bible has to be interpreted; it needs a human interpreter and the divine illuminator.” - Robert Letham

Chapter 8 - *“The Text and Translation of the Scriptures”*

VIII. The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), and the New Testament in Greek (which at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentical; (a) so as in all controversies of religion the Church is finally to appeal unto them. (b) 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, (c) therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come, (d) that the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship him in an acceptable manner, (e) and, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, may have hope. (f)

a. Mat 5:18. • b. Isa 8:20; John 5:39, 46; Acts 15:15. • c. John 5:39. • d. 1 Cor 14:6, 9, 11-12, 24, 27-28. • e. Col 3:16. • f. Rom 15:4.

“It is not often that the Westminster assembly spoke of the ‘rights’ of Christians. But the men gathered there were convinced that every child of God has an equal right to hear his or her Father’s voice. Every child of God has an interest, has something invested, in hearing and reading God’s word. And every person under heaven has a duty to read and search the Scriptures.” - Chad Van Dixhoorn

“Translations are required so all can read and hear the Word of God in their own language, so that every nation can worship God in an acceptable manner—note again the missionary vision of the Assembly, extending to the ends of the earth. This is a far cry from Islam, for which the Koran is only the Koran in its Arabic original.” - Robert Letham