

**The Theology of the Westminster Standards**  
**A Survey of the Confession and WCF 1.1 on the Necessity of Scripture**

**I. The WCF at 10,000 Feet**

A. The chapters of the WCF are well-organized.

1. Q. If you were to write a confession of faith, what would you begin with?

*Q. What is your only comfort in life and in death? A. That I, with body and soul, both in life and in death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ ...*

– Heidelberg Catechism Q&A #1 (1563)

*“The ground of our religion, and rule of faith, and all saving truth, is the Word of God, contained in the Holy Scripture.”*

– Irish Articles, 1.1 (1615)

*“Insist most on those points that tend to affect sound belief, sincere love to God, repentance for sin, and that may persuade to holiness of life ... avoiding all exotic phrases, scholastic terms, unnecessary quotations of authors, and forced rhetorical figures, since it is not difficult to make easy things appear hard, but to render hard things easy is the hardest part of a good orator as well as preacher.”*

– James Ussher (1581–1656), the primary author of the Irish Articles, on preaching

B. The chapters of the WCF deal with basic, difficult, and unexpected doctrines.

C. The chapters of the WCF generally follow the flow of redemptive history.

**II. WCF 1.1 – On Holy Scripture**

*“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.”*

A. A Key Distinction

1. General Revelation – God's self-disclosure of His existence, attributes, and requirements in nature, history, and conscience—revealed to all people at all times (i.e., general).
2. Special Revelation – the verbal, supernatural revelation delivered “in many ways and at various times” (Heb 1:1) throughout Bible history, climaxing in Christ and written down as Holy Scripture.

B. According to WCF 1.1, what is general revelation adequate to do? What is it insufficient to do?

**Psalm 19:1** – *“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.”*

**Rom 1:18–21** – *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. <sup>19</sup> For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. <sup>21</sup> For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.”*

*“The entire universe is a creation and therefore a testimony to God. Nothing is atheistic in the absolute sense.”* – Herman Bavinck

*“The far country into which the prodigal had gone and where he thought he was beyond the father’s control was nevertheless the father’s country, and the father was ‘pulling the strings’ there.”* – Cornelius Van Til

C. WCF 1.1. speaks of the necessity and finality of Scripture. In what sense is Scripture necessary?

*“God indeed was not bound to the Scriptures, but he has bound us to them”* – Francis Turretin

### III. Application

1. Grow in your enjoyment of God’s glory revealed everywhere (general revelation), especially in a saving way in the Scriptures (special revelation), which introduce us to Christ!
2. God has given you the Scriptures for your salvation (2 Tim 3:15), comfort (Rom 15:4), and equipping (1 Tim 3:16). Use it!

*“It remains to be said that we owe a great debt to God for these gifts of revelation. How thankful we can be that men and women and children who do not have a Bible do have a conscience! How grateful we are that as we go about our day’s work or study that the very heavens declare the glory of God (Ps 19:1–3)! And how much we owe to God simply because he gave the church his Word! ... Let us praise him for his Word by centering our worship every week around the singing, reading and preaching of that Word which, through Jesus Christ, gives us life and hope and eternal rest.”* – Chad Van Dixhoorn, *Confessing the Faith*, 7.