

The Theology of the Westminster Standards WCF 1.6 – The Sufficiency of Scripture

“For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” (Rom 15:4)

I. Review

- A. General Revelation – **Ps 19:1** – *“The heavens declare the glory of God”*
- B. Special Revelation – **Heb 1:1–2** – *“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son ...”*
- C. Westminster Confession of Faith, Ch. 1, Sections 1–5
 1. Section 1 – The Necessity of Scripture – *“... which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased.”*
 2. Section 2 – The Content of Scripture – *“... the books of the Old and New Testaments ... All which are given by inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life.”*
 3. Section 3 – The Apocrypha vs. Scripture – *“The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon of the Scripture ...”*
 4. Section 4 – The Authority of Scripture – *“The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, and obeyed, dependeth ... wholly upon God (who is truth itself) ...”*
 5. Section 5 – Our Persuasion Concerning Scripture – *“... our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit ...”*

“We can say all the right things about the Bible, and even read it regularly, but when life gets difficult, or just a bit boring, we look for new words, new revelation, and new experiences to bring us closer to God.” – Kevin DeYoung

II. Section 6 – The Sufficiency of Scripture

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. 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: 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. (WCF 1.6)

- A. First, Scripture's sufficiency has a narrow focus, but a broad application.

1. A Narrow Focus: Scripture is *“the rule of faith and life”* (WCF 1.2)

WSC Q. 3 – *What do the Scriptures principally teach?* A. The Scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God [“faith”], and what duty God requires of man [“life”].

3. Broad application: all things are to be done to the glory of God under the light of Scripture!

- a) **2 Tim 3:16–17** – *“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable... ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”*

“Sufficiency in the present context is not sufficiency of specific information but sufficiency of divine words. Scripture contains divine words sufficient for all of life.” – John Frame, *Doctrine of the Word of God*, 221

B. Scripture teaches more than what it explicitly states.

1. We must know not only what Scripture explicitly says, we must know what Scripture’s teaches “by good and necessary consequence.”
 - a) Good: consistent with the rest of Scripture
 - b) Necessary: inevitably follows from the text of Scripture

“[Man] is not a trunk or a brute, but a rational creature and (being capable of reasoning) bound to search the Scriptures (Jn. 5:39) and not to be satisfied with the shell of the words but to penetrate to the very kernel and sense that he may gather from what he has read something which he has not read.”
– Francis Turretin, *Institutes*, 1:38–39

C. The illuminating power of the Holy Spirit is still necessary.

1. **1 Cor 2:12** – “Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.”

“It now remains to pour into the heart itself what the mind has absorbed. For the Word of God is not received by faith if it flits about in the top of the brain, but when it takes root in the depth of the heart that it may be an invincible defense to withstand and drive off all the stratagems of temptation... The Spirit accordingly serves as a seal, to seal up in our hearts those very promises the certainty of which it has previously impressed upon our minds.” – John Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.2.36

III. Implications of Scripture’s Sufficiency

A. Our conscience is kept safe as it is bound to the sufficient Scriptures.

1. Good works – which ones?
2. Worship of the church – what kind?

B. Our love for others is refined as we submit to the sufficient Scriptures.

1. The strange and alien love, for the sake of Christ: **Acts 26:24–26** – “And as he was saying these things in his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, “Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind.”²⁵ But Paul said, “I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words.”” (Acts 26:24–25)

C. Our confidence in the sufficient Scriptures’ relevance for today grows.

“[W]e must bring forth from [Scripture’s] inexhaustible treasures, in exposition, proclamation, and application—application to every sphere of life—what is the wisdom and power of God for man in this age and in all the particularity of his need, as for man in every age. There will then be commanding relevance, for it will be the message from God in the unction and power of the Spirit, not derived *from* the modern mentality, but declared *to* the modern mentality in all the desperateness of its anxiety and misery.”

– John Murray, “The Finality and Sufficiency of Scripture,” in *Thy Word is Still Truth*, p. 975.