The Necessity and Nature of the Holy Scripture

Westminster Confession of Faith 1.1–1.5

I. Introduction: Why do we have a confession, and what is it?

A. A confession means that our doctrine is public knowledge, we are accountable to it.

i. We are joining Christians from _____, & throughout centuries.

B. The WCF was written by an assembly of 119 English Reformed theologians in _____.

II. WCF 1.1: The Necessity of Scripture

A. Interestingly, the 1st sentence is about _____ revelation—God reveals himself in creation.

i. The idea of _____ or _____ revelation comes from Scripture (Rom 1:19–20).

B. But is that natural revelation enough for us to gain a _____ knowledge of God?

i. This is debated: Rationalism, Pelagianism, & Roman Catholicism say "yes."

ii. But Paul says that God reveals himself in nature, "So that they are _____."

C. Are we then lost in our sin, doomed to die without saving knowledge of God?

i. _____ 1:1: "At many times & in many ways, God spoke to our fathers."

ii. God spoke to his people through the prophets—_____ revelation.

D. But this oral form of revelation has flaws: it depends on _____ & can be easily corrupted

i. So, over many thousands of years, God committed this revelation to _____.

ii. Main point: God spoke to his people; & God still speaks to his people today, in Scripture.

E. Now that God has given written revelation, does God continue to give _____?

i. This is also debated: Pentecostals, Anabaptists, Roman Catholics all say "yes."

ii. But the Protestant doctrine of _____ says "No."

III. WCF 1.2–3: The Canon of Scripture

A. After concluding that Scripture is necessary, the next logical question is, what is Scripture?

i. WCF 1.2: The 39 books of the OT & 27 of NT are "given by _____ of God."

ii. The term comes from 2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is breathed out by God."

B. Another heated debate: Rome has 73 books, and Orthodoxy has 76, instead of 66.

i. But in 1.3, it says that the 66 books of the Bible are inspired, the _____ are not

IV. WCF 1.4–5: The Authority and Testimony of Scripture

A. If Scripture is God's inspired Word, then it is _____.

i. In other words, the authority of Scripture depends wholly upon _____.

ii. Also debated: Rome says that Scripture depends on the pope and his church.

B. The next logical question is, how do we know that God is the author of Scripture?

i. As helpful as the church is, and as much as Scripture commends itself to us, our sinful hearts would still suppress the truth in unrighteousness on their own.

ii. So, we need an _____ in order to accept and believe Scripture (illumination).

Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter 1, Sections 1–5
Of The Holy Scripture

1. 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 unexcusable; 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.

2. Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testament, which are these:

Of the Old Testament:
Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings, 1–2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther
Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, The Song of Songs
Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Lamentations, Daniel
Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

Of the New Testament:
The Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
The Acts of the Apostles
Paul's Epistles to the Romans, 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1–2 Thessalonians, 1–2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon
The Epistle to the Hebrews; The Epistle of James; The first and second Epistles of Peter; The first, second, and third Epistles of John; The Epistle of Jude
The Revelation of John

All which are given by inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life.

3. The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon of the Scripture, and therefore are of no authority in the church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved, or made use of, than other human writings.

4. 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 (who is truth itself) the author thereof: and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God.

5. We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture. And the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God: yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.