The Content and Interpretation of the Holy Scripture

Westminster Confession of Faith 1.6–10

I. WCF 1.6: The Sufficiency of Scripture

A. Sufficient for what? Scripture is the only infallible rule of _____ & _____.

i. Nothing is ever to be _____ to or alongside Scripture (Deut 4:2; Rev 22:18–19).

B. But what about doctrines that aren't explicitly written in Scripture?

i. Not every doctrine is explicit, some are _____ & _____ consequences.

ii. This is a point of disagreement with rationalism and _____.

C. The confession lists two exceptions to the sufficiency of Scripture.

i. First is the necessity for the inward _____ of the Spirit.

ii. The second exception is the necessity to use human reason when Scripture is _____.

II. WCF 1.7: The Perspicuity (or Clarity) of Scripture

A. Not all Scripture is clear, but the _____ is clear enough for anyone to understand.

i. The clarity of Scripture shows us God's _____.

B. Even the least educated can understand the Gospel "in a due use of the ordinary means."

i. The ordinary means of grace—the _____ (esp. preached) & _____.

ii. We still need the church! But we don't blindly accept everything the church says.

III. WCF 1.8: The Language and Translation of Scripture

A. How do we read Scripture in order to understand it? What version is authentic?

i. Rome: the Latin _____ "is to be held as authentic" (Trent, session 4).

ii. But WCF says "The OT in _____ and the NT in _____… are authentical."

B. But if Heb & Gk are authentic, do you need to know Heb & Gk in order to read the Bible?

i. No! Scripture must be _____ so that all Christians can read it!

ii. So "that… they may _____ [God] in an acceptable manner."

IV. WCF 1.9: The Interpretation of Scripture

A. We know that Scripture must be translated, but how is it interpreted once it's translated?

i. Rome: the _____ is the only infallible interpreter of Scripture.

ii. But WCF: "The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the _____ itself."

V. WCF 1.10: The Relation of Scripture to Church Councils and Fathers

A. But what about other interpreters, like ancient creeds? Do we need to reject them?

i. Rome puts creeds & councils (& the pope) on the same level as Scripture.

ii. _____ and Biblicists reject councils and creeds altogether.

B. But WCF takes a balanced approach: Scripture is "The _____ judge."

i. Subordinate judges can be helpful, but must be _____ by Scripture.

ii. We accept the early church councils, fathers, etc., but we read them _____.

Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter 1, Sections 6–10
Of the Holy Scripture

6. 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.

7. 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.

8. 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; so as, in all controversies of religion, the church is finally 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.

9. 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.

10. 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.