

**The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 1 – “Of the Holy Scriptures”, Message # 18 –
“The Self-Authenticating Scriptures”, Presented in the Adult Sunday
School Class, by Pastor Paul Rendall on October 27th, 2019.**

Chapter 1, Paragraph 5 – We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church of God to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scriptures; and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, and 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, and many other incomparable excellencies, and entire perfections thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God; yet notwithstanding, our h) 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.

h) John 16: 13-14 1st Corinthians 2: 10-12 1st John 2: 20,27

Having now spent some time talking about the authority of the Holy Scriptures from Paragraph 4, I would today like to spend some time talking about the testimony of the Church to the Holy Scriptures and whether or not by itself, the testimony of the Church is enough to convince us that the Scriptures are the word of God. We are talking about the authentication of the Scriptures Divine Authority. The conclusion of our Confession is that the Scriptures are self-authenticating.

1st – We may indeed be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church of God to a high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scriptures.

Acts 20: 22-32 – “And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.” “But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.” “And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more.” “Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.” “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” “For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.” “Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” “Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.” “So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”

We see here that the Apostle Paul is very concerned to communicate some very important things to the elders of Ephesus. As the Apostolic author of 14 books of the New Testament Scriptures he points them to the fact that he is going bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing what would happen to him there, but the Holy Spirit, His constant Divine companion, testified to him in every city telling him that chains and tribulation awaited him. But, he says, none of these things moved him. And he didn’t consider his own life dear to himself so that he might finish his

race with joy, and the ministry which he received from the Lord Jesus to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. He reminds them of certain things: That they would most likely see his face no more. He testifies to them that he was innocent of the blood of all men, for he had not shunned (hupesteilamen) in the Greek – meaning to disguise; He had not disguised any important truth) to declare to them the whole counsel of God.

Now what do you think this whole counsel of God was, that he had not shunned to declare to them? Well, it most certainly is the truth of the gospel; all of the truths related to Christ having died for our sins; His having purchased redemption for all of God's people, and how He applied it by the Holy Spirit's working in their hearts. But I think it also relates to his having written inspired letters to the churches. Albert Barnes says that the word counsel (bouele) denotes properly consolation, deliberation, and then "will or purpose". He says that it means here the will or purpose of God, as revealed in regard to the salvation of people. He further says that Ministers ought to declare all that counsel, because God commands it; because it is needful for the salvation of people; and because the message is not theirs, but God's, they have no right to change, to disguise, or to withhold it."

This is very true. But I think that this word counsel also relates to his having written inspired letters to the churches. In these letters written by inspiration of God, using his gift of prophecy, he gives the church the whole counsel of God. In them are laid out all the important doctrines of our faith, and all of principles of truth in relation to keeping the commandments of God, and being faithful to God in every area of our lives. The one who prophesies speaks edification, and exhortation and comfort to men, he says in 1st Corinthians 14: 5. His letters which became part of the Scriptures do all of these things in a lasting an ongoing way for the church in all generations of this Church age. So Paul goes on to say to the elders of Ephesus, that they were to take heed to themselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit had made them overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. Paul often wrote of this matter of savage wolves and false teachers in his letters. They are just as much the counsel of God as the gospel itself is.

He then warned them that after his departure savage wolves would come in among them, not sparing the flock, and even from among themselves men would rise up speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. They were to watch against them, and remember his example of not ceasing to warn everyone night and day with tears about holding fast the truth. And then he says this marvelous thing. He commends them to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among those who are sanctified. What is he commending them to? He is commending them to the gospel of Christ's grace, the word concerning Christ and what He did to purchase grace for all believers. The word of his grace has power. It is able to build you up. It says in Hebrews 4: 12 – "For the word of God is living and powerful (dunameno in the Greek). It is powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword..."

But when Paul says this, he is also commending them to all of the Scriptures which speak of all the particulars of what grace is and what it does in the lives of believers; in other words, the gospels and the epistles which make up the New Testament writings; the letters which he and the other apostles and their helpers, had written down. They are self-authenticating. He directs them to the Scriptures because he knows that they will see them in this very way, and prove these things that he was saying, for themselves, to be necessary and true in living the Christian life to the glory of God. We may indeed be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church of God to a high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scriptures, because this testimony concerning the Scriptures was given to the whole church through the apostle Paul. The reason that Paul commended them to the word of God's grace was because he knew that the Scriptures were self-authenticating. He knew that even though he would no longer be able to be with them, he could

point them to the standing permanent witness; to the whole counsel of God which they would find in the Scriptures.

2nd – The incomparable excellencies, and entire perfections of the Scripture, are arguments which abundantly evidence it to be the Word of God.

Going on in Paragraph 5 it says – “The heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, and 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, and many other incomparable excellencies, and entire perfections thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God.”

First – The heavenliness of the matter, the doctrine and the majesty of the style...
In order to open up this truth I would like to have you turn with me over to:

Psalm 119, verse 105 – “Your word is a lamp to light to my path.” We see here that God’s word is heavenly in its matter because it is a book given by God, who is Himself is Light in His Essence. 1st John 1: 5 – “This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.” Therefore the word that He has given to us lights our way; we should use it as a lamp that is held by us in our hand to read, to show us the way that we should walk; the way that we should live. It lights our path. The Scriptures give us direction on the way that we ought to live in relation to the most important issues in our life. We are guided into the truth of God’s word by His Holy Spirit; the Spirit of God who is pure and perfect spiritual Light shines light into the darkened minds of men in means common grace and more particularly to God’s elect in giving special saving grace. But all of the light that He gives is always meant to be received by us in relation to His written word, the Scriptures of truth if we have access to them. Look also over a few verses to:

Psalm 119, verse 130 – “The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.” What this is saying that when you read the word of God, or if it is being read to you or preached to you, if the words of scripture enter your soul; your mind and your heart, and you think about it, ponder it and receive its instruction, then you will understand more about God and His will, and how you might know Him or know Him better. They give light, they give wisdom and understanding to you who are simple. What does it mean to be simple?

Thomas Manton says this: “It is a good question – What is meant by the simple? The word is sometimes used in a good sense, sometimes in a bad.” “In a good sense: 1st – For the sincere and plain-hearted: Psalm 116, verse 6 – “The Lord preserves the simple: I was brought low, and He helped me.” 2nd Corinthians 1: 12 – “For our boasting is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you.” 2nd – For those that do not oppose the presumption of carnal wisdom to the pure light of the word: so we must all be simple, or fools, that we may be wise; 1st Corinthians 3: 18 – “If any man among you seems to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise; that is, in simplicity of heart submitting to God’s conduct, and believing what He hath revealed.”

2nd – In a bad sense, for the ignorant. 1) In the general, every man is naturally dull and ignorant in divine things: Job 11, verse 12 – “For an empty-headed man will be wise, when a wild donkey’s colt is born a man.” That is, he is simple for grossness as well as not being able to be

tamed.” “So every man is simple.” And 2nd – Those that are naturally weak of understanding, or of mean capacity.” (He means those who are not very intellectually gifted or developed because they are young) Proverbs 8: 5 – “O you simple ones, understand prudence, and you fools, be of an understanding heart.” “Listen for I will speak of excellent things.” This is what the teacher , the preacher, the father, the mother, and all instructors in spiritual things need to convey – “The entrance of God’s word gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.” So will you not share it? It is self-authenticating because it is God’s word, not the words of mere men.