

How Do We Know the Bible is God's Word? Recovering the Doctrine of a Self-Authenticating Scripture

Michael J. Kruger

I. What do we Mean When We Say Scripture is "Self-Authenticating"?

A. What We Do *Not* Mean

1. We are not merely saying the Scriptures *claim* to be God's Word (though they do)
2. We are not saying historical evidences/facts are never allowed in the discussion

B. What We Do Mean

1. Scripture bears evidence within itself of its own divine origins
2. The Reformers argued the Scripture bore "divine qualities" or *indicia*

II. Where Do We Get the Idea of a Self-Authenticating Scripture?

A. From Scripture!

1. God is Self-Authenticating

"God swore by himself." Heb 6:13

2. Analogy of General Revelation

"If the heavens declare the glory of God and therefore bear witness to their divine Creator, the Scriptures as God's handiwork must be also bear the imprints of his authorship." –John Murray

3. God's People Recognize the Voice of their Lord

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me." –John 10:27

B. Best Articulated by the Reformers (e.g., Calvin, Owen, Turretin, Bavinck)

WCF 1.5: 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.

III. What are these 'Divine Qualities' of Scripture that Show it to be from God?

A. The Beauty and Excellency of Scripture

"How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Ps 119:103)

B. The Power and Efficacy of Scripture

"For the Word of God is living and active...piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow" (Heb 4:12).

C. The Unity and Harmony of Scripture

"[God] never lies." Titus 1:2

IV. Objections to the Self-Authenticating Nature of Scripture

A. How Can These Divine Qualities Really Be There if So Many People Reject the Scriptures?

1. Due to the Fall, the natural man cannot recognize the things of the Spirit
2. One needs the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit (*testimonium spiritus sancti internum*) to rightly recognize God's Word.

B. Doesn't a Self-Authenticating Bible Lead to Subjectivism?

1. No because the Reformed view is based on the objective qualities of Scripture, not an experience with the Spirit.
2. This distinguishes the Reformed view from its imitators (Barthianism, Mormonism)