



The Reason of Faith

John Owen

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ABOUT THIS BOOK



A rigorous exploration of **why Christians believe Scripture to be the Word of God**. Owen moves beyond external evidences — historical proofs, the testimony of the church, rational arguments — to argue that the Bible possesses a **self-evidencing light** discernible only through the illuminating work of the **Holy Spirit**. Engaging Roman Catholic, rationalist, and skeptical objections alike, he builds a compelling case that true faith in Scripture rests not on human authority or bare reason, but on **divine testimony apprehended through supernatural grace**. A landmark of Reformed epistemology, deeply relevant wherever questions of biblical authority persist.



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TITLE PAGE



The Reason of Faith. Or an Answer to the Question: Why We Believe the Scripture to Be the Word of God. With the Causes and Nature of that Faith by Which We Do So. The grounds on which the Holy Scripture is believed to be the Word of God with divine and supernatural faith are declared and defended.

By John Owen, Doctor of Divinity.

If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead (Luke 16:31).

London, Printed for Nathaniel Ponder, at the Peacock in the Poultry, near Cornhill. 1677.

TO THE READER



TO THE READER.

I have added a brief account of the design, order, and method of this discourse in an appendix at the end, so I will not repeat those details here. But a few things remain that I think are necessary to mention. Whoever you are, I am sure we will not disagree about the importance of the argument at hand — whether the truth we are defending is correct or not, no one can deny that settling it and putting men's minds at rest on the matter is of the highest importance. Since so much has recently been written by others on this subject, further discussion of it might seem either unnecessary or ill-timed. Something should therefore be said to show the reader that this work does not fall into either of those categories. If those previous discourses had fully accomplished their purpose, there would be no reason to renew the effort. But since opposition to Scripture and to the grounds on which we believe it to be a divine revelation continues openly among us, a continued defense of both cannot reasonably be considered unnecessary or ill-timed. Moreover, most of the discourses recently published on this subject have had their own particular aims, which this present work does not directly address. Some of them aimed

primarily to prove that we have sufficient grounds to believe Scripture without any appeal to, or reliance on, the authoritative declaration of the Church of Rome — which they have sufficiently demonstrated beyond any rational contradiction from their opponents. Others have argued for and defended those rational considerations by which our acceptance of the divine origin of Scripture is strengthened and confirmed against the objections of those whose love of sin and determination to continue in it tempts them to seek refuge in an atheistic contempt for the authority of God as revealed in Scripture. While neither of these aims is entirely overlooked in the following discourse, its particular purpose is different. The questions it addresses are: What obligation do we have to believe the Scripture to be the Word of God? What are the causes, and what is the nature, of the faith by which we do so? What does that faith rest on and ultimately depend upon, so that it becomes a divine and acceptable duty? These questions directly concern the consciences of people and the way they may find rest and assurance in believing. Since it is clear that many are frequently shaken in their minds by atheistic objections against the divine origin and authority of Scripture that they often encounter — and that many do not know how to escape the troubling questions with which they are attacked — not for lack of genuine acceptance of Scripture, but from not rightly understanding what the true and proper reason for that acceptance is, what firm basis and foundation it rests on, and what direct and confident answer they may give to the question, "Why do you believe the Scripture to be the Word of God?" — I have endeavored to provide directions that, upon careful examination, they will find consistent with Scripture itself, right reason, and their own experience. I am therefore not

entirely without hope that this brief discourse may prove useful and that it is offered at the right time. Furthermore, I think it is necessary to inform the reader that while I have given all the arguments made by others to prove the divine authority of Scripture their proper weight and place, wherever I differ in explaining anything on this subject from the views of other men, I have honestly examined their opinions and the arguments supporting them — without twisting their words, picking at their expressions, or making personal attacks on any of the authors. Since I have often been treated otherwise by many, and may well be again, I hereby release persons of such a disposition from any concern about a reply from me or any acknowledgment of whatever they may choose to write or say. Such writings matter no more to me than the many false reports some have spread about me — most of them so absurd and foolish, so far removed from my principles, practice, and manner of life, that I cannot help but wonder how anyone claiming to be serious and sober is not aware of how their credulity and biases are being exploited in hearing and repeating them. Finally, I will inform the reader of the occasion for this discourse. About three years ago I published a book on the work of the Spirit of God. That book was only the first part of what I planned on that subject. The second part was to address the work of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of illumination, of prayer, of comfort, and as the direct source of all spiritual offices and gifts — both extraordinary and ordinary. This present discourse concerns one aspect of His work as a Spirit of illumination, which — at the earnest request of some familiar with its content — I have allowed to be published on its own, so that it might be more widely useful and more easily obtained.

May 11, 1677.

THE REASON OF FAITH; OR, THE
GROUNDS WHEREON THE
SCRIPTURE IS BELIEVED TO BE THE
WORD OF GOD WITH FAITH DIVINE
AND SUPERNATURAL



THE REASON OF FAITH. OR THE GROUNDS ON WHICH
THE SCRIPTURE IS BELIEVED TO BE THE WORD OF
GOD WITH FAITH DIVINE AND SUPERNATURAL.

The main purpose of the larger work of which this treatise is a part is to explain the work of the Holy Spirit in illuminating the minds of men. This work is specifically and prominently attributed to Him, or to the power of God's grace given through Him (Ephesians 1:17-18; Hebrews 6:4; Luke 2:32; Acts 13:47; Acts 24:45; Acts 26:18; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 Peter 2:9). The objective cause and outward means of this illumination are the subjects now under consideration. This will lead to two inquiries.

1. On what grounds, or for what reason, we believe the Scripture to be the Word of God with divine and supernatural faith, as required of us as a matter of duty.

2. How, and by what means, we may come to rightly understand the mind of God in Scripture — that is, the revelations of His mind and will made to us therein.

By illumination in general, as it describes an effect worked in the minds of men, I mean the supernatural knowledge that any person has, or may have, of the mind and will of God as revealed through supernatural means — knowledge given as the rule for their faith, life, and obedience. As far as this concerns the first of these inquiries, that is what we are now setting out to explain, while reserving the second for a separate discourse. Some preliminary observations should be made before addressing the first inquiry.

First, supernatural revelation is the only objective cause and means of supernatural illumination. These two things correspond to each other. There is a natural knowledge of supernatural things, both theoretical and practical (Romans 1:19; Romans 2:14-15). And there can be a supernatural knowledge of natural things (1 Kings 4:31-34; Exodus 31:3-6). But for this supernatural illumination, it is required both that its object be things revealed only by supernatural means — or things considered as supernaturally revealed (1 Corinthians 2:9-10) — and that it be worked in us by a supernatural power, that is, by the immediate working of the Spirit of God (Ephesians 1:17-19; 2 Corinthians 4:6). This is what David prayed for in Psalm 119:18. "Open my eyes" — bring light and spiritual understanding into my mind — "that I may behold" (with unveiled face, or as the Syriac reads, with a revealed or uncovered face, the veil being removed; 2 Corinthians 3:18) "wondrous things from Your law." The inner light he prayed for was entirely directed toward the outward doctrine of the law. The apostle states this

fully in Hebrews 1:1-2. The various supernatural revelations God has made of Himself, His mind, and His will from beginning to end are the sole and sufficient object of supernatural illumination.

Second, this divine external revelation was originally given in various ways — which we have explained elsewhere — to certain individuals directly, partly for their own instruction and guidance in the knowledge of God and His will, and partly so that through their ministry it could be passed on to the church. This was the case with Enoch, the seventh from Adam, who received revelation and on that basis prophesied to warn and instruct others (Jude 14-15). And with Noah, who became through it a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5). And with Abraham, who on that basis commanded his children and household to keep the way of the Lord (Genesis 18:19). Other similar examples can be found in Genesis 4:26 and Genesis 5:28. God continued this pattern for a long time — from the first promise all the way to the giving of the law — before any revelations were committed to writing, a period of 2,460 years. For that long a season, God enlightened the minds of men through supernatural, external, direct, and occasional revelations. Several things may be observed about this divine arrangement.

1. These revelations sufficiently demonstrated themselves to be from God — both to the minds of those who directly received them and to those to whom the revelations were passed on through these messengers. During this period Satan used every effort to fill people's minds with his deceptions under the pretense of divine supernatural inspiration. All his oracles and enthusiasms among the nations of the world originated from this. Therefore, a divine power and effectiveness accompanied all genuine divine revelations, convincing and infallibly assuring the minds of men that

they came from God. If this had not been the case, people could never have been certain they were not being deceived by Satan's cunning tricks — especially in revelations that seemed to contradict reason, such as the command given to Abraham to sacrifice his son (Genesis 22:2). Therefore, these direct revelations would not have been a sufficient means to secure the faith and obedience of the church if they had not carried their own evidence that they were from God. We will examine what the nature of that evidence was later. For now I will only say that it was evidence for faith, not for the senses — just as the evidence we now have through Scripture is for faith. It is not like the evidence the sun gives of itself through its light, which requires no reasoning to perceive, since the senses are irresistibly affected by it. Rather, it is like the evidence that the heavens and the earth give of being made and created by God, and thus of His being and power. This they do undeniably and infallibly (Psalm 19:1-2; Romans 1:19-21). Yet to perceive this evidence, people must exercise their rational abilities in observing and reflecting on creation. Where this is neglected, people sink into atheism despite the open and visible evidence to the contrary. God gave out these revelations of Himself in a way that required the exercise of the faith, conscience, obedience, and reason of those who received them — and in this way those revelations gave full assurance of coming from Him. So He tells us that His word differs from all other claimed revelations as wheat differs from chaff (Jeremiah 23:28). But it is still our duty to sift the wheat from the chaff — otherwise we may not clearly distinguish between them.

2. The things revealed in this way were sufficient to guide and direct all people in the knowledge of their duty to God — in everything required of them in faith and obedience. From the beginning God revealed knowledge of His will in various parts and stages, yet every age and generation had enough light to guide them in the full obedience required of them and to build them up in it. They had enough knowledge to offer sacrifices in faith, as Abel did; to walk with God, as Enoch did; and to teach their families the fear of the Lord, as Abraham did. The world did not perish for lack of sufficient revelation of God's mind at any time. Indeed, when we consider the divine instructions that are on record — those God granted to the people of those ages — it is hard for us to see how they were sufficiently enlightened in all that was necessary for them to believe and do. But to them those instructions were like a light shining in a dark place. Set a single candle in a dark room, and it will sufficiently light the room for people to go about what they need to do. But when the sun rises and shines through every window, the candlelight grows so dim and useless that it is hard to imagine how anyone could have benefited from it. The Sun of Righteousness has now risen upon us, and immortality has been brought to light by the Gospel. When we look now at the revelations given to people in ancient times, we can still see there was light in them — but it gives us little more benefit than the light of a candle in full sunlight. Yet to those who lived before this sun arose, those earlier revelations were a sufficient guide for all duties of faith and obedience. For —

3. During this period there was a sufficient ministry for declaring the revelations God made of Himself and His will. There was the natural ministry of parents, who were required to teach their

children and households the truth they had received. This began with Adam, who first received the promise along with everything necessary for faith and obedience — so the knowledge of it could not be lost without the willful neglect of parents in teaching or of children and households in learning. There was also the extraordinary ministry of those to whom God entrusted new revelations to confirm and expand what had been received before — all of them preachers of righteousness to the rest of mankind. It can be shown that from the giving of the first promise — when divine external revelations began to serve as the rule of faith and life for the church — to the writing of the law, there was always someone alive who, having received divine revelations directly, served as a kind of infallible guide to others. If this was ever not the case, it was after the death of the patriarchs and before the call of Moses — a time during which everything descended into darkness and confusion. Oral tradition alone was not sufficient to preserve the truth of earlier revelations. But for those who did receive these instructions, they had a sufficient outward means of illumination before any divine revelations were written down. Yet —

4. This way of instruction, imperfect in itself and subject to many disadvantages, proved insufficient through the weakness, negligence, and wickedness of men to keep the knowledge of God alive in the world. Under this arrangement the great majority of mankind fell into a terrible apostasy from God and gave themselves over to the guidance and service of the devil — the ways, means, and stages of which I have discussed elsewhere. As a result, God no longer regarded them but "allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways" (Acts 14:16), giving them up to the desires of their own hearts to follow their own counsel, as it is expressed in

Psalm 81:12. Although this came about through the horrible wickedness and ingratitude of the world, the fact that there was then no fixed standard of divine truth to which people could return made it easier for them to break away from God, due to the weakness of this arrangement. If someone objects that since God's will was committed to writing, people have still apostatized from the knowledge of God — as is evident in many nations that once professed the Gospel but are now overrun with paganism, Islam, and idolatry — I say this did not happen because of any defect in the means of illumination or the communication of truth to them, but because God gave them up to destruction for their wickedness and ingratitude; and unless we repent, we will all likewise perish (Romans 1:18; 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12). Where the standard of the Word is once established, there is a stable means of preserving divine revelations. Therefore —

Third, God has gathered into Scripture all divine revelations He has given from the beginning of the world, and all that He will give to the end of it, that are of general use to the church — so that the church may be thoroughly instructed in the whole mind and will of God and directed in all the worship of Him and obedience to Him necessary to gain acceptance with Him now and to bring us to the eternal enjoyment of Him hereafter. When God first committed the law to writing along with everything that accompanied it, He bound the church to the use of that writing alone, without additions of any kind. He would not have done this had He not expressed in it — that is, in the books of Moses — everything necessary for the faith and obedience of the church. He not only commanded them to attend diligently to His Word as then written for their instruction and direction in faith and obedience, attaching all

kinds of promises to doing so (Deuteronomy 6:6-7), but also expressly forbade them, as already noted, to add anything to it or join anything to it (Deuteronomy 4:2; Deuteronomy 12:32) — which He would not have done had He left out other divine revelations previously given that were in any way necessary for the church. Just as He added many new revelations, so He gathered in all the old ones from the unreliable repository of tradition and fixed them in writing given by divine inspiration. As for all other divine revelations given to the church for its general use under the Old Testament, they are all contained in the books that follow. This, to my knowledge, has never been questioned by anyone claiming to be reasonable — though some who are eager for any excuse to challenge the completeness and perfection of Scripture have fruitlessly quarreled about the loss of certain books, which they cannot prove were certainly of divine origin. The full revelation of the whole mind of God — to which nothing claiming to be revelation is ever to be added — was committed to and completed by Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-2). That the revelations of God made by Him, whether in His own person or by His Spirit to His apostles, were also committed to writing by divine inspiration, is expressly affirmed regarding what He delivered in His personal ministry (Luke 1:4; Acts 1:1; John 20:31), and can be proven by compelling arguments for the rest. Just as the Scriptures of the Old Testament were closed with a warning and exhortation to the church to hold fast to the law and testimony, with a curse on those who did otherwise (Malachi 4:4-6), so the writings of the New Testament are closed with a curse on anyone who presumes to add anything more to them (Revelation 22:18). Therefore —

Fourth, Scripture has now become the only external means of divine supernatural illumination, because it is the only repository of all divine supernatural revelation (Psalm 19:7-8; Isaiah 8:20; 2 Timothy 3:15-17). Claims for tradition as a parallel means of preserving and communicating supernatural revelation have been so often shown to be false that I will not press that case further. Moreover, in this discourse I am addressing those who acknowledge the Bible to be sufficient, perfect, and the only treasury of divine revelations. Whatever anyone has offered to weaken its reputation — by attacking its credibility, perfection, or sufficiency for its own proper ends — has brought no benefit to the church and no good to the faith of believers. But yet —

Fifth, in asserting that Scripture is the only external means of divine revelation, I do not exclude those institutions of God that are subordinate to it and appointed as means to make it effective in our souls.

1. Our own personal efforts in reading, studying, and meditating on Scripture so that we may rightly understand what it contains are required for this purpose. Everyone knows how often this duty is urged upon us, and what promises are attached to the performance of it (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Deuteronomy 11:18-19; Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2; Psalm 119; Colossians 3:16; 2 Timothy 3:15). Without this, it is useless to expect illumination through the Word. We therefore see multitudes living and walking in extreme darkness even though the Word is everywhere near them — bread, which sustains life, will still nourish no one who does not obtain it and eat it, and neither would manna unless it was gathered and prepared. Our own nature and the nature of divine revelations, and what is necessary for one to be applied to the other, makes this

clear. God instructs us in His mind and will as rational beings, working in and through the rational faculties of our souls. An external revelation is not capable of making any other impression on us than one that is so received. Therefore, when I say that Scripture is the only external means of our illumination, I include within that all our own personal efforts to come to a knowledge of the mind of God in it — a matter that will be addressed further later. Those who under any pretense keep, drive, or persuade men from reading and meditating on Scripture are taking an effective course to keep them in the power of darkness.

2. Mutual instruction in the mind of God from Scripture is also required for this purpose. We are obligated by the law of nature to seek the good of others in various relationships — our children, our families, our neighbors, and all with whom we associate. And the greatest good, absolutely considered, that we can give to others is to instruct them in the knowledge of the mind of God. This entire duty in all its aspects is expressed in the command: "You shall teach my words diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deuteronomy 6:7). In the same way, when our Savior found His disciples talking about the things of God along the road, He took the role of a private traveler and instructed them in the meaning of Scripture (Luke 24:26-27, 32). The neglect of this duty in the world is so great that even mentioning it, or any attempt to practice it, is met with scorn and contempt — and this neglect is one cause of the great ignorance and darkness that still abounds among us. But the foolishness of

this attitude — by which men wish to be regarded as Christians while openly despising all the duties of Christianity — will in due time be exposed.

3. The ministry of the Word in the church is what is primarily included in this statement. Scripture is the only means of illumination, but it becomes so primarily through its application to the minds of men in the ministry of the Word (Matthew 5:14-15; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Ephesians 4:11-15; 1 Timothy 3:15). The church and its ministry are God's appointed means for making His mind and will, as revealed in the Word, known to the children of men — and through this they are enlightened. Any church and ministry for which this is not the first and primary aim and work is neither appointed by God nor approved by Him. People will one day find themselves deceived by trusting in empty names — it is duty alone that will bring comfort and reward (Daniel 12:3).

Sixth, for Scripture — which contains the whole of divine revelation — to serve as a sufficient external cause of illumination for us, two things are required.

1. We must believe it to be a divine revelation — that is, the Word of God, or a declaration of Himself, His mind, and His will, proceeding immediately from Him — and that it is of a purely divine origin, proceeding neither from human foolishness or deceit nor from human skill or good intention (2 Peter 1:19-21; Hebrews 1:1; 2 Timothy 3:16; Isaiah 8:20). Scripture offers no light or instruction under any other description than as coming directly from God — not as the word of man, but as it truly is, the Word of the living God (1 Thessalonians 2:13). Whatever anyone may learn from or through the Scriptures under any other understanding

does not belong to the illumination we are examining here (Nehemiah 8:8; Isaiah 28:9; Hosea 14:9; Proverbs 1:6; Psalm 119:34; Matthew 15:16; 2 Timothy 2:7; 1 John 5:20).

2. We must understand the things declared in Scripture — that is, the mind of God as revealed and expressed therein. If Scripture is given to us as a sealed book that we cannot read — either because it is sealed or because we are unable to read — whatever light or vision it contains, we will gain no benefit from it (Isaiah 29:11-12). It is not the words of Scripture alone but our understanding of them that gives us light (Psalm 119:130). "The entrance of Your word gives light" — it must be opened, or it will not enlighten. So the disciples did not understand the testimony of Scripture concerning the Lord Christ, and were not enlightened by it, until He explained it to them (Luke 24:27, 45). We have the same example with the Ethiopian official and Philip (Acts 8:31, 35-36). To this day the Jewish people have the Scriptures of the Old Testament and hold the outward letter of them in such high esteem and reverence that they nearly worship them — yet they are not enlightened by them. The same has happened among many who are called Christians — otherwise they could never embrace such foolish opinions and practice such idolatries in worship as some of them do, even while possessing the letter of the Gospel.

This brings me to my main purpose, which all of the foregoing has been preparing the way for — to show that both of these come from the Holy Spirit: that we truly believe the Scripture to be the Word of God, and that we savingly understand the mind of God in it, both of which belong to our illumination.

The first question I will examine is how and on what grounds we come to believe the Scripture to be the Word of God in a proper manner. That this is required of us as a duty — namely, that we should believe the Scripture to be the Word of God with divine and supernatural faith — will not be denied, and will be proven further on. And what the work of the Spirit of God is in this will be our first inquiry.

Second, since we observe by experience that not all who have or possess the Scripture actually understand it or come to a truly saving knowledge of the mind and will of God revealed therein, our other inquiry will be how we may come to understand the Word of God rightly, and what is the work of the Spirit of God in the help He gives us toward that end.

Regarding the first of these inquiries, to which this present discourse is entirely devoted, I affirm that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to enable us to believe the Scripture to be the Word of God — that is, the supernatural and direct revelation of His mind to us — and to make this infallibly evident to our minds so that we may spiritually and savingly rest in it. Some, misunderstanding this claim, seem to suppose that we are reducing all faith to private impressions of the Spirit or to deceptive pretenses of the Spirit. Others may be ready to think that we are confusing the efficient cause and the formal reason of faith, making all rational arguments and external testimonies useless. But in fact, there is and will be no occasion for these fears or misunderstandings. We will argue nothing in this matter that is not consistent with the faith and judgment of the ancient and present church of God, as will be fully demonstrated as we proceed. I know that some have found other ways by which they think the minds of men can be suffi-

ciently satisfied regarding the divine authority of Scripture. But I have tasted their new wine and have no desire for it, knowing the old to be better — though what they argue has its proper use in its proper place.

My purpose requires that I keep this discourse within as narrow bounds as possible, and I will do so, showing —

1. What it means in general to infallibly believe the Scripture to be the Word of God, and what is the ground and reason for doing so. Or, what it means to believe the Scripture to be the Word of God as we are required to believe it as a matter of duty.

2. That there are external arguments for the divine origin of Scripture that are effective motives for leading us to give a sincere assent to it.

3. That God nevertheless requires us to believe Scripture to be His Word with faith that is divine, supernatural, and infallible.

4. To demonstrate the grounds and reasons on which we do so believe, and ought to do so.

Most of what follows in the first part of this discourse can be organized under these headings.

It is fitting that we should clarify the foundation on which we build and the principles on which we proceed, so that what we intend to prove may be better understood by all kinds of readers, whose growth we have in mind. These things equally concern the learned and the unlearned. Therefore some things must be addressed that are generally known and acknowledged. Our first inquiry is: what does it mean to believe the Scripture to be the Word of God with divine and supernatural faith, as it is our duty to do so?

In our believing, or our faith, two things must be considered. First, what it is that we believe. Second, why we believe it. The first is the material object of our faith — the things we believe; the second is the formal object of faith, or the cause and reason why we believe them — and these are distinct. The material object of our faith is the things revealed in Scripture, presented to us as statements of truth. Things must be presented to us in this way, or we cannot believe them. That God is one in three persons, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and similar statements of truth — these are the material objects of our faith, the things we believe. And the reason we believe them is that they are set forth in Scripture. The apostle expresses exactly this in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4: "I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." Christ's death, burial, and resurrection are the things presented for us to believe, and so they are the objects of our faith. But the reason we believe them is that they are declared in the Scriptures (see Acts 8:28-30). Sometimes the expression "believing the Scriptures" by a figure of speech refers to both the formal and material objects of our faith — the Scriptures themselves as such, and the things contained in them — as in John 2:22: "They believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had said," meaning the things delivered in the Scripture and further declared by Christ, which they had not previously understood. They believed what was declared in the Scriptures because it was declared there — both aspects are included in the same expression, "they believed the Scripture," under different aspects (Acts 26:27). The material object of our faith, therefore, is the articles of our creed, by listing

which we answer the question "What do we believe?" — giving an account of the hope that is in us, as the apostle does in Acts 26:22-23. But if we are also asked the reason for our faith or hope — why we believe the things we profess, such as that God is one in three persons or that Jesus Christ is the Son of God — we do not answer "because that is so," for that is itself what we believe, which would be a circular and meaningless response. We must give some other answer to that inquiry, whether it comes from others or from ourselves. The proper answer to this question contains the formal reason and object of our faith — that on which it rests and into which it is ultimately resolved. And that is what we are now seeking.

2. In this inquiry we are not concerned with just any kind of persuasion or faith, but only that which is divine and infallible — both of which it is because of its formal reason or objective cause. People may be able to offer some kind of reasons for believing what they profess to believe, reasons that will not hold up or survive examination in this case, even though they themselves may be satisfied with them. Some, perhaps, can give no other account than that they have been taught these things by those they had sufficient reason to trust, or that they received them by tradition from their fathers. Now, whatever persuasion these reasons may produce in people's minds that the things they profess to believe are true, if these reasons stand alone they do not produce divine faith but merely human faith — since it rests only on human testimony or an opinion based on probable arguments. No faith can be of any higher kind than the evidence on which it rests. I say this about where such reasons stand alone — for I have no doubt that some who have never thought beyond the teaching of their instructors as the reason for their belief, nevertheless have such evidence within

their own souls of the truth and authority of God in what they believe, that with respect to that inner evidence their faith is divine and supernatural. The faith of most people has a beginning and development not unlike that of the Samaritans in John 4:40-42, as will be explained later.

3. When we speak of faith that is infallible, or of believing infallibly — which we will show is necessary in this case — we do not mean an inherent quality in the believer, as though one who believes with infallible faith must himself also be infallible. Much less do we speak of infallibility in an absolute sense, which is a property of God alone, who from the perfection of His nature can neither deceive nor be deceived. Rather, we mean that property of the mind's assent to divine truths or supernatural revelations by which it is distinguished from every other kind of assent. This property comes from the formal object of faith — the evidence on which we give this assent. The nature of every assent is determined by the nature of the evidence it proceeds from or relies on. In divine faith, this evidence is divine revelation — which, being infallible, makes the faith that rests on and is resolved into it infallible as well. No one can believe something that is false, or that may be false, with divine faith — because what makes it divine is the divine truth and infallibility of the ground and evidence on which it is built. But a person may believe something that is truly and infallibly true, and yet his faith still not be infallible. That the Scripture is the Word of God is infallibly true, yet a person's faith in this may be fallible — because his faith is only as certain as his evidence. He may believe it on the basis of tradition, or the testimony of the Church of Rome alone, or on external arguments — all of which are fallible — and so his faith is fallible too, even though the thing he assents to is in-

fallibly true. Therefore, for this divine and infallible faith, it is not required that the person holding it be infallible. Nor is it sufficient that the thing believed be infallibly true. It is also required that the evidence on which he believes it be infallible. This was the case with those who received divine revelations directly from God — it was not enough that the things revealed to them were infallibly true; they also needed infallible evidence of the revelation itself. Then their faith was infallible, though they themselves were fallible. With this faith a person can believe nothing but what is divinely true — and therefore it is infallible. The reason is that God's truthfulness — He who is the God of truth — is its only object. So the prophet says in 2 Chronicles 20:20: "Believe in the Lord your God and you will be established" — that is, faith that is in God and His Word is grounded in truth and is therefore infallible. The question in this case is therefore: what is the reason why we believe anything with this divine or supernatural faith? Or, what is it about the believing of it that makes our faith divine, infallible, and supernatural? Therefore —

4. The authority and truthfulness of God in revealing the material objects of our faith — that is, what it is our duty to believe — is the formal object and reason of our faith, from which it arises and into which it is ultimately resolved. That is, the only reason why we believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, or that God is one single essence existing in three persons, is because God — who is truth (Deuteronomy 32:4), who cannot lie (Titus 1:2), whose word is truth (John 17:17), and whose Spirit who gave it out is truth (1 John 5:6) — has revealed these things to be so. And believing these things on that ground makes our faith divine and supernatural. This also presupposes the subjective work of the Holy Spirit in

producing faith in our minds, which will be addressed later. To be precise: our faith is supernatural with respect to its being produced in our minds by the Holy Spirit; it is infallible with respect to its formal reason, which is divine revelation; and it is divine in contrast to what is merely human — on both accounts.

As things are presented to us to be believed as true, faith in its assent looks only to the truth or veracity of God. But since this faith is required of us as a matter of obedience — and is considered not only in its nature but also morally as our duty — it also respects the authority of God, which I therefore join with the truth of God as the formal reason of our faith (see 2 Samuel 7:28). These are the things Scripture argues when faith is required of us in the way of obedience. "Thus says the Lord" is what is presented to us as the reason we should believe what is spoken — to which divine names and titles are often added, signifying the authority of the One requiring us to believe: "Thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel" (Isaiah 30:15); "Thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy" (Isaiah 57:15); "Believe in the Lord your God" (2 Chronicles 20:20). "The word of the Lord" precedes most revelations in the prophets, and the Scripture proposes no other reason why we should believe (Hebrews 1:1-2). In fact, the insertion of any other authority between the things to be believed and our souls and consciences — besides the authority of God — destroys the nature of divine faith. I do not mean the use of other means through which we come to believe, of which sort God has appointed many, but the insertion of any other authority on which we are to believe, such as the claimed authority of the Church of Rome. No one may be a lord over our faith, though they may be helpers of our joy.

5. The authority and truth of God, considered in themselves absolutely, are not the immediate formal object of our faith — though they are the ultimate ground into which it is resolved. For we can believe nothing on their account unless it is evidenced to us, and this evidence of them is found in the revelation God is pleased to make of Himself — for that is the only means by which our consciences and minds are affected by His truth and authority. We therefore rest on the truth and veracity of God in any matter only as we rest on the revelation He makes to us — for that is the only means by which we are affected by them. It is not "the Lord is true" in the abstract, but "thus says the Lord" and "the Lord has spoken" that we look to directly. Through this alone are our minds affected by the authority and veracity of God, and by whatever means it is made known to us, it is sufficient and able to affect us in this way. At first, as has been shown, revelation was given directly to certain people and preserved for others through an oral ministry — but now all revelation, as has also been shown, is contained in the Scriptures alone.

6. It follows that our faith, by which we believe any divine supernatural truth, is resolved into Scripture as the only means of divine revelation — the means by which our minds and consciences are affected by the authority and truth of God. Or in other words: Scripture, as the only immediate, divine, and infallible revelation of the mind and will of God, is the first and immediate formal object of our faith — the sole reason why and ground on which we believe the things revealed, with faith that is divine, supernatural, and infallible. We believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Why do we believe this? On what ground or reason? It is because of the authority of God commanding us to do so, and the truth of God

testifying to it. But how, and by what means, are our minds and consciences affected by the authority and truth of God so as to believe with respect to them — which is what makes our faith divine and supernatural? It is through the divine, supernatural, and infallible revelation He has made of this sacred truth and of His will that we should believe it. But what is this revelation, and where is it to be found? It is Scripture alone that contains the entire revelation God has made of Himself in all things He would have us believe or do. Therefore —

7. The final inquiry follows: how, on what grounds, and for what reasons do we believe the Scripture to be a divine revelation proceeding immediately from God — to be that Word of God which is divinely and infallibly true? Our answer is: solely on the evidence that the Spirit of God, in and through Scripture itself, gives us that it was given by direct inspiration from God. The ground and reason on which we believe the Scripture to be the Word of God are the authority and truth of God evidencing themselves in and through it to the minds and consciences of men. Therefore, just as whatever we assent to as proposed in Scripture, our faith rests on and is resolved into the veracity and faithfulness of God — so it is also in this matter of believing Scripture itself to be the infallible Word of God, since we do so on no other grounds than its own evidence that this is the case.

This is the main point to be proved, and so some preliminary explanation is needed to prepare the way and remove any obstacles or misconceptions.

1. There are several compelling arguments drawn from external considerations of Scripture that establish on rational grounds that it is from God. All of these are motives for credibility — effec-

tive persuasives to regard and acknowledge it as the Word of God. And although they neither are, nor ever can be, the ground and reason on which we believe it to be so with divine and supernatural faith, they are still necessary for strengthening our faith against temptations, opposition, and objections. These arguments have been presented by many with great usefulness, so there is no need for me to dwell on them at length. They are essentially the same in both ancient and modern writers, though some have handled them with greater learning, skill, and force of reasoning than others. It should therefore not be expected that in this brief discourse, designed for another purpose, I should significantly improve upon them. However, I will briefly touch on those that seem to me most compelling, focusing on what I believe to be the heart of their strength. I do this to show that, although we argue that no one can believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God with divine, supernatural, and infallible faith except on the basis of its own internal divine evidence and effectiveness, we nevertheless acknowledge and make use of all those external arguments for its sacred truth and divine origin that others present — giving them as much weight and force as those others claim for them, and acknowledging the persuasion they produce to be as firm as anyone might say it is. We simply do not judge them to contain the whole of the evidence on which faith rests and into which it is ultimately resolved — and certainly not that element which makes it divine, supernatural, and infallible. The rational arguments that are or may be used in this matter, along with the human testimonies that support them, may and should be employed and insisted upon. It is a false claim that our other assertions make their use unnecessary — as though, where faith is required, all supporting use of reason is thrown out

and our faith thereby made irrational. The assent that the mind ought to give to the divine origin and authority of Scripture on the basis of these arguments we grant to be as high a level of assent as is claimed for it — namely, moral certainty. Moreover, the conclusion that unprejudiced reason will draw from these arguments is more firm, better grounded, and more defensible than one built merely on the sole authority of any church. But we assert that there is a different kind of assent required of us regarding the divine origin and authority of Scripture — namely, that of divine and supernatural faith. No one will claim that this can be produced by, or resolved into, the best and most compelling rational arguments and external testimonies, which are entirely human and fallible. For it is a contradiction to believe infallibly on the basis of fallible evidence. Therefore I will prove that, beyond all these arguments and their effect on our minds, there is an assent to Scripture as the Word of God required of us with divine, supernatural, and infallible faith — and therefore there must be a divine evidence which is the formal object and reason of it, which alone it rests on and is resolved into, which will also be declared and proved. But yet, as was said at the outset, because these external arguments serve to level the ground and clear away the rubble of objections so that we may build more safely on the sure foundation, I will mention some of those I consider most rightly pleadable in this cause. And —

1. The antiquity of these writings, and of the divine revelation contained in them, is presented as evidence of their divine origin. And it may deservedly be so. Where it is absolute, it is beyond question — that which is most ancient in any kind is most true. God Himself uses this argument against idols: "You are My witnesses," says the Lord. "I, even I, am the Lord, and there is no

Savior besides Me. I have declared and saved and proclaimed, and there was no strange god among you; so you are My witnesses," says the Lord, "and I am God" (Isaiah 43:10-12). What He asserts is that He alone is God and there is no other. He calls the people to testify to this by the argument that He was among them as God — in the church — before any foreign god was known or named. In the same way, it is rightly argued on behalf of this revelation of the mind of God in Scripture: it existed in the world long before anything else or any other writing claimed to serve the same purpose. Therefore, whatever came afterward with a similar claim must either compete with it or stand in opposition to it — and over all of these, Scripture has the advantage simply by its antiquity. Since these writings, in their earliest books, are acknowledged to be more ancient than any other writings in existence — or that ever existed — and can be proven to be so, it is beyond all reasonable expectation that they should be of human origin. We know how low, weak, and imperfect all human inventions are at their beginning — how crude and unrefined in every area, until time, observation, and successive improvements have shaped, formed, and developed them. But this writing came into the world as absolutely the first of its kind, directing us in the knowledge of God and of ourselves — and from its very first appearance it was so completely perfect that no human art, effort, or wisdom has ever found any legitimate defect in it, or been able to add anything to it by which it might be improved. From the beginning it would never accept additions except those coming from the same fountain of divine revelation and inspiration, distinguishing itself in every age from all human additions and accretions. This at the very least sets this

book apart in a unique way and presents it with such reverence and majesty that it is the height of arrogance not to treat it with sacred respect.

This argument has been pursued at length by many, generating a great variety of historical and chronological observations. It has been so thoroughly examined and developed that nothing remains for current or future effort except to give it a fresh presentation. But the real force of the argument lies in considering the people among whom this revelation first appeared in the world, and the time in which it did so. At a time when some nations had so developed and cultivated the light of nature as to greatly excel others in wisdom and knowledge, they generally looked upon the Jewish people as ignorant and uncivilized. And the more wise any of them considered themselves, the more they despised the Jews. Indeed, the Jews were completely unfamiliar with the arts and sciences by which the minds of men are naturally enlightened and expanded. They did not claim any wisdom that could compete with other nations — only what they received through divine revelation. God Himself had taught them to regard this alone as their only wisdom before all the world (Deuteronomy 4:6-8). We do not need to examine what the earliest attempts of other nations looked like in expressing their understanding of divine things, human duty, and human happiness. The Egyptians and Greeks were the ones who competed for reputation in the development of such wisdom. But it is well known and generally acknowledged that the best their efforts produced was things foolish, irrational, and absurd — contrary to the being and providence of God, and contrary to the light of nature — leading mankind into a maze of folly and wickedness. Consider what they ultimately achieved after the fullest possible

development of knowledge, wisdom, shared learning, experience, mutual communication, rigorous study, and observation. After adding to and subtracting from the inventions of all previous ages since time began, after drawing on and refining the reasoning, wisdom, invention, and guesses of all who had previously pursued this wisdom, and after discarding whatever experience showed to be out of step with natural light and common human reason — even then, it must be acknowledged that the apostle passes a just verdict on their highest achievements: they became futile in their thinking, and the world through wisdom did not know God. How then is it that from one nation — regarded as uncivilized, and truly so in terms of those arts and sciences that distinguished other nations — at a time when reason and wisdom had not yet developed significantly, without the benefit of interaction, learning, or accumulated experience, there should immediately come such a law, doctrine, and instruction concerning God and humanity so firm, certain, and consistent that it not only incomparably surpassed all the products of human wisdom for that same purpose — however favored by time and experience — but also remained unchanged through every generation, so that whatever has been advanced in opposition to it, or even just differing from it, has quickly collapsed under the weight of its own unreasonableness and foolishness? This single consideration, unless a person is determined to be contentious, gives sufficient reason to conclude that this book could have had no other origin than what it claims for itself — namely, that it came directly from God.

2. It is clear that God in every age has taken great care of Scripture and exercised His power in preserving it. If the Bible were not what it claims to be, there would have been nothing more

in keeping with the nature of God and more appropriate for divine providence than to have removed it from the world long ago. For to allow a book to exist in the world from the earliest times, falsely claiming His name and authority, and leading so great a portion of mankind into a destructive and ruinous turning away from Him — as it must do and does if it is not of divine origin — and exposing countless multitudes of the best, wisest, and most serious among them to every kind of terrible suffering on its behalf, seems entirely inconsistent with the infinite goodness, wisdom, and care by which this world is governed from above. On the contrary, though the crafty malice of Satan and the full force of human rage and power have combined to destroy and completely suppress this book — at times advancing so far that no way of escape appeared possible — yet through the watchful care and providence of God, sometimes manifested in miraculous events, it has been preserved to this day and will be so until the end of all things. The fulfillment of what our Savior said in Matthew 5:18 powerfully confirms God's approval of this book, just as that approval confirms its divine origin: "Until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the law." God's unceasing watch over the Scriptures through so many ages — so that not a single letter should be utterly lost, and nothing bearing on its purpose should perish — is sufficient evidence of His regard for it. This would be even more clear if we were to consider the remarkable judgments and severe expressions of divine vengeance against its opponents, instances of which could easily be multiplied. If anyone refuses to attribute this preservation of the books of the Bible — not only in their existence but in their purity and integrity, free from any legitimate suspicion of corruption or the mixing in of anything human

or foreign — to the care of God, then it is up to him to identify some other cause proportionate to such an effect, given that it was in the interest of heaven and the aim of earth and hell to have it corrupted and destroyed. For my part, I cannot but judge that anyone who fails to see the hand of divine providence stretched out in the preservation of this book — its very words and syllables over thousands of years, through all the upheavals and floods of calamity that have come upon the world, preserved through weak and limited means, and despite the fact that in some ages those with the power to corrupt it — such as the apostate churches of both Jews and Christians — had every worldly reason to do so, and despite open opposition — does not believe in divine providence at all. It was first written in the very infancy of the Babylonian Empire, alongside which it afterward existed for some 900 years. This empire oppressed, destroyed, and carried into captivity the very people to whom alone these oracles of God had been entrusted. Yet the book was preserved among them while they were entirely under the power of their enemies — even though it condemned those enemies and all their gods and religious worship, which we know is enough to fill people with violent rage. Satan had enthroned himself as the object of Babylonian worship and the source of all their forms of religious devotion. They clung to these as their central interest, as all people cling to what they consider their religion. In the whole world, nothing judged, condemned, or opposed Satan or their idolatry but this book alone — and it was now entirely in their power. Had it been destroyed by any means at a time when it was in the hands of only a few — most of whom were corrupt in their lives, hostile to its contents, and wholly under the power of their adversaries — the interest of Satan and of world-

wide idolatry would have been secured. But through the sheer provision of divine care, it outlived that empire and witnessed the ruin of its greatest enemies. So it was also during the Persian Empire that followed, while the Jewish people were still under the power of idolaters — against whom this was the only testimony in the world. Under certain branches of the Greek Empire a fierce and determined effort was made to destroy it completely — but it was still snatched by divine power out of the furnace, without so much as a hair singed or the slightest damage to its completeness. The Romans destroyed both the people and the city designated until then for its preservation, carrying the ancient copy of the law in triumph to Rome after conquering Jerusalem. And while all absolute power and authority in the entire known world was in Roman hands, they waged war against it for several ages — with no more success than its former enemies had achieved. From the very beginning, all the efforts of those who openly opposed it have been entirely frustrated. Even those into whose keeping it was outwardly entrusted — the Jews first, and afterward the corrupted, apostate Christian church — not only fell into beliefs and practices completely inconsistent with it, but built all their present and future interests on those very beliefs and practices. Yet none of them ever dared to corrupt a single line of it; instead they were forced to secure their position by appealing to additional traditions and by keeping the book itself, as much as they dared, out of the hands and knowledge of all who were not invested in their own cause. Where could all this come from except the watchful care and power of divine providence? And it is foolish stubbornness not to believe that what God so carefully protects originally came from

Himself, especially when it claims to do so — for every wise man will take greater care of what is genuinely his own than of what has been falsely imposed on him to his dishonor.

3. The design of the whole and all its parts bears the mark of divine wisdom and authority. This design has two parts: first, to reveal God to men, and second, to direct men toward the enjoyment of God. That these are the only two great concerns of human nature — of any rational being — would be easy to prove, but it is acknowledged by all those I am addressing. Now, no book or writing in the world, no individual or combined effort of humanity or of spirits, has ever offered a law, rule, guide, and light for all mankind universally in both of these areas — the knowledge of God and of ourselves — except this book alone. Any other that has attempted to do so, like the Quran, has quickly exposed its own foolishness and become an object of contempt for all wise and thoughtful people. The only question is: how well has it accomplished this design? For if it has completely and perfectly fulfilled it, then not only is it evident that it must be from God, but also that it is the greatest benefit and kindness that divine goodness has ever granted to mankind — since without it all people would necessarily wander in an endless maze of uncertainty, never reaching light, rest, or blessedness, in this life or the next. Therefore —

1. As Scripture speaks in the name and authority of God and delivers and commands nothing that is not consistent with His infinite holiness, wisdom, and goodness, so it makes such a declaration of Him — His nature, being, and subsistence, along with the necessary attributes and acts of each, His will, and all His voluntary works that concern us — that we may know Him rightly and form true and accurate thoughts of Him, to the fullest extent our

finite, limited understanding can reach. We do not here simply appeal to His authority, but look at the evidence of His reasoning as compared with the outcome and the facts. What horrible darkness, ignorance, and blindness covered the whole world with respect to the knowledge of God? What confusion and degradation of human nature followed from it, while God "allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways" and "overlooked the times of their ignorance" — the apostle sets this out in detail in Romans 1:19 to the end of the chapter. In summary: the only true God had become unknown to them — as even the wisest among them acknowledged (Acts 17:21) and as our apostle proved against them. The devil — that murderer from the beginning and enemy of mankind — had under various pretenses placed himself in God's position and become "the god of this world," as he is called in 2 Corinthians 4:4, and had claimed all the religious devotion and worship of the great majority of mankind for himself. "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God," as our apostle states in 1 Corinthians 10:20 — and this can be easily demonstrated; I have shown it in abundance elsewhere. It is acknowledged that a few philosophical thinkers among the pagans did seek after God in the terrible darkness surrounding them, and labored to form their ideas of His being in terms of what reason could perceive of infinite perfections and what creation and providence could suggest. But they could never arrive at any certainty or consistency in their own thinking, advancing little beyond conjecture — as is the way of those who search for something in the dark — much less agreeing with one another to present anything of common value to the world on these matters. Nor could any of them ever free themselves from the grossest practical idolatry in worshiping the devil,

the source of their apostasy from God, or in the least affect the minds of most people with any proper understanding of the divine nature. This is the subject and substance of the apostle's argument against them in Romans 1. In this condition, the misery and confusion the world lived in for many ages, and the endless labyrinth of foolish and oppressive superstitions and idolatries it had fallen into, I have described in detail in another work. With respect to this situation, Scripture is rightly called by the apostle Peter "a light shining in a dark place" (2 Peter 1:19). It gives all people at once a perfect, clear, steady, and consistent declaration of God — His being, subsistence, attributes, authority, rule, and works — which makes itself evident to the minds and consciences of all whom the god of this world has not completely blinded through the power of prejudice and sinful desires, confirming them in hostility and hatred toward God Himself. In fact, nothing more is required to free mankind from this terrible darkness and its distorted ideas about the nature of God and idol worship than a calm, unprejudiced consideration of the revelation of these things in the book of Scripture. We may therefore say to all the world with the prophet: "When they say to you, 'Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter,' should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no light in them" (Isaiah 8:19-20). This also plainly demonstrates that Scripture is of divine origin. For if this declaration of God — this revelation of Himself and His will — is incomparably the greatest and most excellent benefit our nature is capable of in this world, more necessary and useful to mankind than the sun in the sky for the proper end of their lives

and existence; and if none of the wisest people in the world, individually or collectively, could arrive at this knowledge of God themselves, or make it known to others — so that we may say with our apostle, "in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God" (1 Corinthians 1:21) — and since those who attempted such things "became futile in their thinking" and speculations, so that not one person in the world dares submit the regulation of their mind entirely to those notions and ideas — even though those thinkers had every advantage of wisdom and the exercise of reason over most of those who wrote and published the books of Scripture — then it cannot reasonably be questioned whether those books were given by inspiration from God, as they claim and assert. They accomplished what all the world could not accomplish, and without which all the world must have remained eternally lost — and who could do this but God? If anyone should judge that the ignorance of God among the ancient pagans, or among peoples today who have never heard the Gospel, is not as serious a matter as we make it, or that there is any way to free them from it other than the outpouring of light from Scripture, he is dwelling on the borders of atheism — and I will not divert myself to engage with him. I will only add that whatever true ideas about God and His nature may be found in philosophers who lived after the preaching of the Gospel in the world, or are found today among Muslims or other false worshipers — ideas that go beyond those of the earlier pagans — they all derive from the fountain of Scripture and were drawn from it through various means.

2. The second purpose of this doctrine is to direct mankind in their proper way of living toward God and attaining the rest and blessedness they are capable of and cannot help but desire. These

things are essential to our nature — without them it would be better not to exist at all. For it is better to have no existence in the world than to spend that existence always wandering and never moving toward its proper end, since all that is truly good for us lies in our movement toward that end and our attainment of it. Now, these matters were never settled in the minds of most of mankind — people lived in perpetual confusion. The inquiries of the philosophers about the chief end of man, the nature of happiness or blessedness, and the ways of attaining it, are nothing but uncertain and fierce debates, in which no truth is stated and no duty prescribed that is not corrupted or undermined by its circumstances and aims. Moreover, the philosophers never so much as guessed at the most important matters of religion — without which it can be demonstrated by reason that it is impossible for us ever to attain the end for which we were made or the blessedness we are capable of. They could never give any account of our falling away from God, of the corruption of our nature, or of the cause or necessary cure of it. In this lost and wandering condition of mankind, Scripture presents itself as a light, rule, and guide for all — directing them in their whole course toward their end and bringing them to the enjoyment of God. It does this with such clarity and force that it dispels all darkness and puts an end to all the confusion of the human mind, just as the rising sun puts an end to the shadows of night — unless people willfully close their eyes against it, "loving darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." For all the confusion of the human mind — from which people tried to escape by plunging into endless and pointless questions — arose from their ignorance of what we originally were, what we now are, how we came to be this way, by what means we may be delivered, what

are the duties of life, what is required of us to live toward God as our highest end, and wherein the blessedness of our nature consists. All the world was never able to give a tolerably satisfying answer to any one of these questions — yet unless they are all infallibly answered, we are incapable of the least rest or happiness beyond that of the animals that perish. But now all these things are so clearly declared and settled in Scripture that it comes with the force of a light from heaven upon the minds and consciences of those who are not blinded by prejudice. What was the condition of our nature in its first creation and constitution, along with the blessedness and advantage of that condition; how we fell from it; and what was the cause, the nature, and the effects of our present corruption and falling away from God; how help and relief have been provided for us in this by infinite wisdom, grace, and generosity; what that help is; how we may receive it and be made partakers of it; what system of duties and course of obedience to God is required of us; and wherein our eternal happiness consists — all of these are so plainly and clearly revealed in Scripture that, in general, mankind is left with no ground for doubt, inquiry, or speculation. Set aside deep-rooted prejudices from tradition, upbringing, and false ideas into which the mind has been molded — as well as the love of sin and the control of sinful desires, which have an astonishing power over the minds, souls, and feelings of people — and the light of Scripture on these matters is like the sun at noon, which closes off any need for further searching and draws the mind irresistibly to rest in it. In particular, the direction Scripture gives for the conduct of human life — in order to the obedience owed to God and the reward expected from Him — there is no conceivable instance of anything that serves that purpose which is not

prescribed there, nor anything contrary to it that is not forbidden. Those, therefore, whose desire or interest it is that the boundaries and distinctions between good and evil should remain blurred and confused — who are afraid to know what they were, what they are, or what they will come to; who care to know neither God nor themselves, neither their duty nor their reward — may despise this book and deny its divine origin. Others will keep a sacred reverence for it, as the offspring of God.

4. The testimony of the church may in like manner be argued in support of this same conclusion — and I will address it here, partly to explain what its true nature and force consist in, and partly to refute the old claim that even we who have departed from the Church of Rome receive Scripture on its authority, and that on the same ground and reason we should also accept whatever else it puts before us.

1. The church is said to be "the pillar and support of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). This is the only text argued with any seriousness to support the claim that the authority of Scripture as it concerns us depends on the authority of the church. But the weakness of this argument for that purpose has been so thoroughly demonstrated by many others that it needs no further attention. In brief: the church cannot be the pillar and support of truth in the sense that truth is, as it were, built on and resting on the church as its foundation — for this is directly contrary to the same apostle, who teaches us that the church itself is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:20). The church cannot be the ground of truth and truth the ground of the church in the same sense. Therefore,

the church is the pillar and support of truth in the sense that it upholds and declares Scripture and the things contained in it to be such.

2. In receiving anything from a church, we may consider either its authority or its ministry. By the authority of the church in this matter we mean nothing more than the weight and importance of its testimony — since testimonies vary in value according to the worth, seriousness, honesty, honor, and reputation of those who give them. For to suppose that any church, or all the churches of the world combined, possesses an authority properly so called — one that our reception of Scripture depends upon, as something that grants it authority toward us and gives our faith adequate warrant — is a strange idea. The authority and truth of God neither need nor are capable of such attestation from human beings; all that people can rightly offer is humble submission to them, along with testimony of that submission and the reasons for it. The ministry of the church in this matter is the church's duty of presenting and declaring Scripture to be the Word of God — doing so as occasion arises, to all the world. This ministry may also be considered either formally — as something appointed by God for this end and blessed by Him — or materially — merely as the thing being done, even when the grounds and manner of doing it are not divinely approved.

We fully deny that we receive Scripture, or ever did, on the authority of the Church of Rome in any sense whatsoever — for reasons that will be given immediately. But it may be granted that along with the ministry of other churches in the world, and many other providential means of preservation and transmission, we did in fact receive the Scriptures through the ministry of the Church of

Rome as well, since they also were in possession of them. But this ministry we allow only in the latter sense — as an actual means serving God's providence, without reference to any special divine institution.

As for the authority of the church in this matter — in the sense in which it is allowed, meaning the weight and importance of a testimony that, when strengthened by various circumstances, may be said to carry great authority — we must be careful in deciding to which church we grant it. For whatever names or titles people may claim for themselves, if the majority of them are corrupt or morally disreputable in their lives, and if they have significant worldly advantages which they greatly value and carefully cultivate from what they claim Scripture gives them — call them a church or whatever you like — their testimony in this matter is worth very little, since everyone can see they have an earthly, self-interested stake in it. It will be said that if such persons knew the whole Bible to be a fable (as one pope is said to have expressed it), they would not give up professing it unless they could benefit themselves more in the world by some other means. Therefore, since it is obvious to all that those who lead the Roman Church have gained and continue to gain for themselves great earthly and temporal advantages — in honor, power, wealth, and reputation in the world — through their profession of Scripture, their testimony may reasonably be regarded as so influenced by self-interest as to carry very little weight.

The testimony I have in mind, therefore, is that of multitudes of people of unspotted reputation in every other area of life — people beyond any credible accusation of deliberate wrongdoing or conspiracy among themselves for corrupt purposes — who had not

the slightest worldly benefit from what they testified to, and who were therefore completely beyond any objection that common reason or common practice among mankind can raise against any witness whatsoever. To show the force that lies in this consideration, I will briefly describe: First, who they were that gave and continue to give this testimony, in some notable examples. Second, what they gave this testimony to. Third, how, or by what means, they did so.

First, the testimony of those by whom the various books of Scripture were written must be considered — they all, individually and together, testified that what they wrote was received by inspiration from God. This is argued by the apostle Peter on behalf of them all in 2 Peter 1:16-21: "For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty." "For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such a declaration as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory: 'This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased'" "and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain." "So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts." "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation," "for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." This is the consistent testimony of both the Old and New Testament writers — namely, that they had certain knowledge of the things they wrote, and that their writing was by inspiration from God. So in particular, John bears witness to his revelations in Revelation 19:9 and Revelation 22:6:

"These are true and faithful words of God." And the weight to be placed on this is stated in John 21:24: "This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true." He testified to the truth of what he wrote — but how did the church mentioned there know ("we know that his testimony is true") that it was indeed true? He was not someone to be believed simply on his own authority — yet here it is spoken in the name of the church with the highest assurance: "We know that his testimony is true." I answer: their assurance did not arise merely from his moral or natural qualities or his holy counsel, but from the evidence they had of his divine inspiration — which we will address later.

The things argued to give force to this testimony are everything that such a testimony is capable of — and they are so numerous that it would take a substantial work on its own to present, discuss, and confirm them all. But taking the testimony they gave as established, I will, in keeping with my own purpose, reduce the evidence of its truth to two considerations: First, their persons; and second, their manner of writing.

1. As to their persons, they were completely beyond any reasonable suspicion of deceiving or being deceived. The ingenuity of all the atheistic minds in the world cannot identify a single thing that would serve as a tolerable ground for any such suspicion about the integrity of these witnesses — if such a testimony were given in any other case. Unsupported suspicions in matters of this kind — with no arguable basis — must be regarded as suggestions of the devil, atheistic fantasies, or at best the false imaginings of weak and troubled minds. The nature and purpose of their work; their complete lack of interest in any worldly gain; their lack of

prior acquaintance with one another; the times and places where the events they reported happened; the ease with which they could have been exposed as liars, had what they wrote about matters of fact — which is the foundation of everything else they taught — been false; the evident certainty that this exposure would have happened, given the known desire, ability, will, and interest of their adversaries to do so, had it been possible — since it would have secured their opponents victory in the fierce conflicts in which they were engaged, and would have immediately settled the disputes and upheaval in the world about their teaching; their agreement with one another without any conspiracy or prior arrangement; the sufferings which most of them endured without hope of relief or reward in this life, solely on account of the doctrine they themselves taught; along with all the other countless circumstances that can be argued to prove the sincerity and integrity of any witnesses — all of these concur to prove that they were not following cleverly invented fables in what they declared about the mind and will of God as directly from Himself. To confront this evidence with bare, baseless suspicions, incapable of any rational support or confirmation, is only to demonstrate the crude shamelessness to which unbelief and atheism are forced to retreat for shelter.

2. Their style and manner of writing deserves special consideration. For impressed upon it are all those marks of divine origin that can be communicated through such an outward aspect of divine revelation. Notwithstanding the distance of the ages and periods in which they lived, the difference of the languages in which they wrote, and the great variety of their backgrounds, abilities, upbringing, and circumstances, yet upon the whole and all the

parts of their writing there is a gravity, majesty, and authority — combined with plainness of speech and complete freedom from any trace of seeking esteem or applause, or of anything else that comes from human weakness — that must excite admiration in all who seriously consider it. I have addressed this at length elsewhere. I have also shown in the same place that there is no other writing in the world that has claimed to be of divine origin — such as the apocryphal books alongside the Old Testament, and certain fragments of spurious writings claimed to have been written in the days of the apostles — that does not expose its own pretensions, not only from its content but from the manner of writing itself, which bears the clear marks of human craft and weakness, and openly convicts itself of its false claims. This must necessarily be the case with everything that, being merely human, pretends to have come directly from God. When people have done all they can, the difference between these things will be as obvious as the difference between wheat and chaff, between real fire and painted fire (Jeremiah 23:28-29).

2. To the testimony of the divine writers themselves, we must add the testimony of those who in every age have "believed in Christ through their word" — which is the description the Lord Jesus Christ gives of His church (John 17:20). This is the church — those who wrote the Scripture and those who in every age have believed in Christ through their word — and it bears witness to the divine origin of Scripture; and we may add that we know this witness is true. I would rather entrust my faith and eternal condition to these than to any society or real or pretended church whatsoever. Among these, special consideration must be given to the innumerable multitudes who in the early days of Christianity testi-

fied to this confession throughout the entire world. For they had many advantages over us in knowing the certainty of various matters of fact on which the truth of our religion depends. And we are directed to give special regard to their testimony, which is highlighted by Christ Himself. In the great judgment to be passed on the world, the first to appear are the souls of those who were beheaded "for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God" (Revelation 20:4). And there is at present a special regard for them in heaven on account of their witness and testimony (Revelation 6:9-11). These were the ones who, at the cost of their lives by the sword and other violent means, gave testimony to the truth of the Word of God. To bring this to a rational level: who can have the slightest reason to suspect all these people of folly, weakness, credulity, wickedness, or conspiracy among themselves — when such a widely scattered multitude was entirely incapable of conspiracy? Nor can anyone dismiss their testimony without effectively siding with their adversaries against them — who were generally known to be among the worst of people. And who is there that believes in God and an eternal future state, who would not rather have his soul with Paul than with Nero, with the holy martyrs than with their brutal persecutors? Therefore this collective testimony, begun from the time the Scripture was first written and continued by the best of men in every age, made brilliantly glorious in the early days of Christianity, must for all wise people carry unavoidable weight — at least enough to prompt a careful and calm consideration of what they testified to, and enough to scatter all the prejudices that atheism or godlessness may raise or suggest.

Second, what they gave testimony to deserves careful consideration. It was not merely that the book of Scripture was good, holy, and true in all its contents — but that the whole and every part of it was given by divine inspiration, as their faith in this matter is expressed in 2 Peter 1:20-21. On this account, and no other, did they themselves receive Scripture, believe its contents, and yield obedience to what it contained. Nor would they allow their testimony to be received if the whole world was content to acknowledge or obey Scripture on any other or lesser terms. Nor will God Himself accept assent to Scripture under any other conception than as the word spoken directly by Himself. Therefore, those who refuse to believe it are said to "deny the Lord and say it is not He" (Jeremiah 5:2), and indeed to "make God a liar" (1 John 5:10). If all mankind were to agree together to receive and use this book as one that teaches nothing but what is good, useful, and beneficial to human society — as a complete guide for everything people need to believe or do toward God, the best means under heaven to bring them to settled satisfaction and assurance in the knowledge of God and themselves, the safest guide to eternal blessedness, and therefore necessarily written by persons of incomparable wisdom, holiness, and honesty, who had the knowledge of God and His will necessary for such an undertaking — even all this would fall short of the testimony that the church of believers in every age has given to Scripture. It was not lawful for them — nor is it for us — to make such a compromise with the world on this matter. That the whole Scripture was given by inspiration from God, that it was His Word, His "true and faithful sayings" — this was what they testified to first of all, and we are obliged to do the same. They never claimed any other assurance for what they professed, nor any other reason

for their faith and obedience, than that the Scripture in which all these things are contained was given directly from God — that it was His Word. And therefore, those who gave up their Bibles to persecutors were always regarded as no less traitors to Christianity than those who denied Jesus Christ.

3. The manner in which this testimony was given adds to its importance. First, many of them — especially in certain periods — gave their testimony accompanied by miraculous works. Our apostle presents this as a confirmation of the witness given by the first preachers of the Gospel to its truths (Hebrews 2:4), as was also done by all the apostles together (Acts 5:32). It must be granted that these miracles were not performed directly to confirm this single truth, that Scripture was given by inspiration of God. Rather, the purpose of miracles is to serve as a direct witness from heaven — God's attestation to the persons and ministry through whom they were performed. His presence with them and approval of their doctrine were publicly declared through these miracles. But the miracles performed by the Lord Christ and His apostles — by which God gave direct testimony to the divine mission of their persons and the infallible truth of their doctrine — might not have been written down, as most of them were not; or they might have been written and their doctrine recorded in books not given by inspiration from God. Moreover, as to the miracles performed by Christ Himself, and most of those of the apostles, they were performed among people who already acknowledged the books of the Old Testament as the oracles of God, and before the books of the New Testament were written — so they could not have been performed in direct confirmation of either one. Nor do we have any infallible testimony about these miracles except Scripture itself, in

which they are recorded — which means that we must first believe Scripture to be infallibly true before we can believe the miracles recorded in it to be so on infallible grounds. Therefore I grant that the whole force of this consideration rests on this alone: that those who testified to Scripture as the Word of God had their ministry attested by these miraculous works — concerning which we also have good corroborating evidence.

2. Many of them confirmed their testimony with their sufferings, being not only witnesses but martyrs in the full sense that word carries in the church — a sense grounded in Scripture (Acts 22:20; Revelation 2:13; Revelation 17:7). So far were they from any worldly advantage through the profession they made and the testimony they gave, that in confirming both they willingly and cheerfully endured whatever is most terrible and destructive to human life in all its temporal concerns. It is therefore beyond question that they had the highest possible assurance of the truth in these matters — the highest that the human mind is capable of. The development of this argument is the main purpose of the apostle throughout the entire eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Having stated the nature of faith in general — that it is "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (verse 1) — that is, such an assent to and confidence in invisible things, things incapable of demonstration by the senses or reason, as looks to divine revelation alone and is ultimately resolved into it alone — he produces a long catalog of those who through faith did great things, endured great suffering, and obtained great rewards, for our encouragement and firm establishment in the same. What he particularly emphasizes is the hardships, miseries, cruelties, tortures, and various kinds of death they endured — es-

pecially from verse 35 to the end. He calls these a "cloud of witnesses" by whom we are surrounded (chapter 12:1), giving testimony to what we believe — that is, to divine revelation — and in particular to the promises contained in it, for our encouragement in the same duty, as he there declares. And certainly, what was thus testified to by so many great, wise, and holy persons, in such a manner and by such means, carries as great an outward evidence of its truth as anything of that nature in this world is capable of.

3. They did not give their testimony casually, on some extraordinary occasion alone, by a single solemn act, or in some one particular way, as other testimonies are and can only be given. Rather, they gave their testimony to this cause in their entire manner of life — in everything they thought, said, and did in the world, and in the whole ordering of their ways, lives, and actions — as every true believer continues to do today. For a man who gives verbal testimony to the divine origin of Scripture on some occasion, while in the meantime ordering the whole course of his life, his hopes, aims, and ends without any genuine regard for Scripture, gives testimony that is worthless and has no influence on the minds of serious and thoughtful people. But when people demonstrate and show by their lives that the declaration of the mind of God in Scripture holds sovereign divine authority over their souls and consciences absolutely and in all things, then their witness carries real power and effectiveness. There is to me a thousand times more weight and force in the testimony given for this purpose by some holy individuals — who in all things relating to this world and their eternal condition, in all their thoughts, words, actions, and ways, genuinely experience within themselves and express to others the power and authority of the Word of God in their souls

and consciences, living, acting, suffering, and dying in peace, assurance of mind, and consolation based on it — than in the verbal declarations of the most impressive and numerous church in the world that shows no such inward sense of its power and effectiveness. There is therefore such force in the real testimony that has been given in every age by all such persons — without a single exception — to the divine authority of Scripture, that it is highly arrogant for anyone to question its truth without clear proof of its being a fraud, which no person of any genuine seriousness has ever pretended to provide.

I will add finally the consideration of the success that the doctrine drawn entirely from Scripture and resolved back into it has had in the world — upon the minds and lives of people, especially in the first preaching of the Gospel. Two things immediately present themselves for consideration: first, the persons by whom this doctrine was successfully carried forward in the world; and second, the way and manner of its spread. Both of these Scripture notes in particular as evidence of the divine power that truly accompanied the Word. The persons to whom this work was entrusted — the apostles and first evangelists — were, in terms of their outward position in the world, poor, lowly, and despised in every way; and in terms of the abilities of their minds, they lacked all those gifts and advantages that might have given them either reputation or any likelihood of success in such an undertaking. The Jews noted this with contempt (Acts 4:13). The Gentiles also generally despised them for the same reason. They gave our apostle no better title than "babbling" (Acts 17:18). And for a long time the prevailing public opinion in the world was that Christianity was the religion of fools and the illiterate. But God had another design in

this arrangement, which our apostle explains while acknowledging the utter lowliness of those to whom the dispensation of the Gospel was committed: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves" (2 Corinthians 4:7). The reason God chose to use only such instruments in so great a work was that through their lowliness His own glorious power might be more clearly seen. Nothing is more common or more natural among people than to admire the excellences of those of their own kind, and to wish to have all evidence of divine supernatural power obscured and hidden from them. If therefore people had been employed as instruments in this work whose powers, abilities, qualifications, and gifts could plausibly have been claimed as sufficient and direct causes of such an effect, no one would have noticed the divine power or the glory of God. But the person who cannot see that power in the accomplishment of so mighty a work through means so far below it is under the power of the unrelievable prejudices that our apostle describes in this case (2 Corinthians 4:4-5, 7).

Second, the means to be used toward this end — subduing the world to faith in and obedience to the Gospel, thereby establishing the spiritual kingdom of Christ in the minds of people who had previously been under the power and dominion of His adversary — must be either force and arms, or eloquence and persuasive reasoning. And great things have been accomplished by both of these. By the former, empires have been set up and established, and the superstition of Muhammad imposed on many nations. The latter has also had great effects on the minds of many. It might therefore have been expected that those who had committed themselves to so great a design as this would resort to one or the other of these

means — for human ingenuity cannot devise any way to such an end that does not reduce to one of these two, since no other is imaginable either from the principles of nature or the rules of human wisdom and policy. But both of these ways were abandoned by the apostles, and they declared against using either of them. As for outward force, power, and authority — they had none, and the use of all worldly weapons was entirely inconsistent with this work and design. The other way — persuasive speeches, enticing words, attractive arts and eloquence, and similar products of human wisdom and skill — were all carefully avoided by them in this work, as things extremely harmful to its success (1 Corinthians 2:4-5). Instead, they took only this single approach: they went about preaching to Jews and Gentiles that Jesus Christ died for our sins and rose again according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). And they did this by virtue of those spiritual gifts that were the hidden powers of the age to come — gifts whose nature, virtue, and power others were entirely unacquainted with. This preaching of theirs — this preaching of the cross, both in its subject matter and its manner, without art, eloquence, or oratory — was regarded as a remarkably foolish thing, a sweaty sort of babbling, by all those who had gained any reputation for learning or cleverness among people. Our apostle discusses this at length in 1 Corinthians 1. In this state of affairs, by every rational calculation, everything was stacked against success as completely as could be imagined. Moreover, along with the Gospel doctrine they preached — which was new and strange to the world — they also taught the practice of religious worship in meetings, assemblies, and gatherings specifically for that purpose, all of which were prohibited by the laws of the world (Acts 18:13; Acts 16:21). As soon as the rulers and

governors of the world began to take notice of them and what they were doing, they concluded it was all tending toward sedition and that trouble would follow. These things stirred up the great majority of mankind against them and their converts, who therefore attacked them with incredible fury. And yet, notwithstanding all these disadvantages and against all this opposition, their doctrine prevailed to bring the world into submission to it. One or two additional observations about the state of the world at that time may be added to these, which highlight the significance of this work and show it to have been from God.

First, in the New Testament the writers consistently divide all those they dealt with in the world into two groups: Jews and Greeks — the latter of which we render as "Gentiles," the other nations of the world falling under that designation because of their prominence in various respects. Now, at that time, the Jews possessed in full all the true religion that existed in the world, and they boasted of this as their privilege, sustaining themselves by the thought and reputation of it everywhere and on every occasion — it being at that time their great occupation to gain converts to it, on which their honor and advantage also depended. The Greeks, on the other side, were in as full possession of arts, sciences, learning, and all that the world calls wisdom as the Jews were of religion. They also had a religion received through long tradition from their fathers since time immemorial, which they had variously developed and adorned with mysteries and ceremonies to their complete satisfaction. Moreover, the Romans — the ruling part of the Gentile world — attributed all their prosperity and the entire rise of their extraordinary empire to their gods and to the religious worship they gave them. It was therefore a fundamental maxim of

their policy and government that they would prosper or decline according as they observed or neglected the religion they had received. Indeed, not only those who acknowledged the true God and His providence, but all peoples — before idolatry and superstition gave way to atheism — solemnly attributed all their achievements and successes to their gods, as the prophet speaks of the Chaldeans (Malachi 1:11). And the first writer to record the exploits of the nations of the world consistently assigns all their good and evil to their gods, as they were pleased or provoked. The Romans in particular boasted that their religion was the cause of their prosperity — as their great orator states in his Oration on the Haruspices' Response: "In piety, religion, and in this one wisdom — that we have recognized all things to be ruled and governed by the power of the immortal gods — we have surpassed all peoples and nations." And Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a great and learned historian, giving an account of the religion of the Romans and the ceremonies of their worship, states that he does so "that those who have been ignorant of Roman piety should cease to wonder at their prosperity and successes in all their wars, since by reason of their religion they had the gods always favorable and supportive toward them" (Antiquities of Rome, book 2). These beliefs made the Romans so stubborn in their attachment to their existing religion that when, after many ages and hundreds of years, some books of Numa — their second king and the chief organizer of their commonwealth — were accidentally discovered, instead of honoring them they ordered them burned, because someone who had read them swore under oath that they were contrary to their current worship and practice. And it was this same conviction that, when the Roman Empire began to decline after the spread of Christian

religion, caused those who stubbornly clung to paganism to lay the blame on the Christians — fiercely insisting that the abandonment of the old religion was the cause of all their disasters. It was primarily to answer this accusation that Augustine wrote his excellent work, *The City of God*.

Into this state of affairs, the preachers of the Gospel came — bringing not only a new doctrine under all the disadvantages already mentioned, but also the added obstacle that the One who was its Head had just recently been crucified by the existing powers of the earth as a criminal. Moreover, this was a doctrine that expressly aimed to take away the religion from the Jews, the wisdom from the Greeks, and the fundamental maxim of policy from the Romans — on which they believed they had built their empire. It would be easy to describe how all those groups were motivated by worldly interest, honor, reputation, and self-preservation to oppose, condemn, and reject this new doctrine. And if a group of lowly craftsmen was able to fill a whole city with uproar against the Gospel merely because they feared it would hurt their trade (Acts 19), what can we imagine was done throughout all the world by all those stirred up by far greater provocations? For the Jews, giving up their religion meant something like death — both because of their conviction of its truth and the honor they believed it gave them. And for the Greeks, to have all the wisdom that they and their forefathers had labored to develop over so many generations now rejected as irrelevant foolishness by the worthless preaching of a few uneducated persons — this provoked the highest indignation. And the Romans were astute enough to guard the fundamental principle of their state. The world seemed to be extremely well defended against the admission of this new and strange doctrine

on the terms it was offered. Surely there was no real danger of it making any significant headway. But we know that things turned out quite differently — religion, wisdom, power, honor, profit, self-interest, and reputation were all forced to give way to its power and effectiveness.

2. The world at that time was enjoying the greatest peace, prosperity, and abundance it had ever known since the entrance of sin — and it is well known how such conditions are typically used to make provision for the flesh to satisfy its desires. Whatever pride, ambition, greed, or sensuality anyone could desire, the world was full of satisfactions for it. Most people lived in eager pursuit of their desires and in full supply of what those desires demanded. In this condition, the Gospel was preached to them — requiring at once, and unconditionally, a complete renunciation of all those worldly desires that had previously been the spice of their lives. If anyone intended to embrace it or have any share in it, all their pride, ambition, luxury, greed, sensuality, malice, and desire for revenge had to be put to death and rooted out. Had it merely been a new doctrine and religion declaring a knowledge and worship of God they had never heard of before, they could not but have been very cautious about welcoming it. But when it also required, at the very first moment, that for its sake they must "pluck out their right eye" and "cut off their right hand" — to give up everything that was dear and useful to them, and which had such a powerful hold over their minds and affections as corrupt desires are known to have — this could not but make them even more firmly resistant to admitting it. And yet this too was forced to give way, and all of Satan's fortifications within it were thrown down by the power of the Word, as our apostle describes it in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 — where

he gives an account of the warfare by which the world was brought into submission to Christ through the Gospel. Now, a person bent on making himself a specimen of proud foolishness may speak as if all of this contains no evidence of divine power testifying to Scripture and the doctrine it contains. But the marks of that power are so plainly visible to every modest and calm observer that they leave no room for doubt or hesitation.

But the force of the whole argument is open to one objection of considerable weight, which must therefore be addressed and answered. For since we argue the power, effectiveness, and spread of the Gospel in former days as evidence of its divine origin, the question will be asked: why is it not still accompanied by the same power and producing the same effects? For we see that its profession is now confined to far narrower limits compared to what it once extended to, and we do not see it gaining ground anywhere in the world — rather it seems more and more constrained every day. Therefore either the early success claimed for it, and argued as evidence of its divinity, actually came from other accidental causes operating in an effective though unseen way — and was not the result of power flowing from the Gospel itself — or the Gospel is not now what it once was, since it does not have the same effect on or power over the minds of men as it once had. We may therefore hesitate to press this argument from what the Gospel once accomplished, lest it reflect badly on what we currently profess.

Answer: 1. Whatever different outcomes may occur in different seasons, the Gospel is the same as it has ever been from the beginning. There is no other book containing another doctrine that has crept into the world in place of what was once delivered to the saints. And whatever various views people may hold, through

weakness or prejudice, about the things taught therein, those things are in themselves absolutely the same as they have ever been — without the loss or change of a single meaningful word or syllable in the manner of their delivery. I have proven this elsewhere, and it is something that can be most clearly demonstrated. Therefore, whatever reception the Gospel meets with in the world today, its former success may rightly be used to justify its divine origin.

2. The cause of this situation lies primarily in the sovereign will and pleasure of God. For although Scripture is His Word, and He has testified that it is so by His power put forth in its administration to men, yet that divine power is not locked or enclosed within the letter of Scripture so that it must produce the same effect wherever it goes. We do not claim that in Scripture itself, its doctrine, its preaching, or its preachers, there is such a power as to produce these effects naturally and automatically. Rather, it is an instrument in the hand of God for His own work, and He exerts His power in it and through it as it seems good to Him. And if He at any time puts forth His divine power in administering it, using this instrument in such a way that its great worth and excellence manifests itself as coming from Him, He gives sufficient testimony to it. Therefore, the times and seasons of the Gospel's spread in the world are in the hand and at the sovereign disposal of God. Since He is not obligated — "for who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor?" — to accompany it with the same power at all times and seasons, the evidence of His own power going along with it at any time, while it openly claims to be of divine origin, is an undeniable attestation of it. So at the first preaching of the Word, to fulfill the promises made to the fathers from the

foundation of the world, to glorify His Son Jesus Christ, and to glorify the Gospel He had revealed, He put forth that effectual divine power in its administration by which the world was brought under submission to it. And the time will come when He will revive the same work of power and grace to bring the world once more into subjection to Jesus Christ. And although in these later ages He does not cause it to run and prosper among the nations that have not yet received it as He once did, still, given the state of things in the world today, the preservation of it among that small remnant who obey it in sincerity is no less glorious evidence of His presence with it and care over it than was its remarkable spread in former days.

3. The righteousness of God must likewise be considered in these things. For whereas He had given the incomparable privilege of His Word to many nations, they through their horrible ingratitude and wickedness "suppressed the truth in unrighteousness" — so that the continued presence of the Gospel among them was in no way to the glory of God, nor even to their own benefit. For neither nations nor individuals will ever benefit from an outward profession of the Gospel while living in contradiction and disobedience to its commands — indeed, nothing can be more destructive to the souls of men. God is at this day taking vengeance on the nations of the world for this wickedness, having utterly cut off many of them from the knowledge of the truth, and given others over to "strong delusion, to believe a lie" — though they still retain the Scriptures and an outward profession of Christianity. How far He may proceed in the same way of righteous judgment toward other nations, we do not know, but we ought to tremble as we consider it. When God first granted the Gospel to the world, although the

great majority of mankind had greatly sinned against the light of nature and had rejected all the supernatural revelations that had at any time been given to them, they had not yet sinned against the Gospel itself or its grace. It pleased God therefore to pass over that time of their ignorance, so that His justice was not provoked by their former sins to withhold the effectual power of His Spirit in the administration of the Gospel — by which He called them to repentance. But now, after the Gospel has been sufficiently offered to all nations, and has been rejected by most of them — whether in terms of its profession or in terms of its power and the obedience it requires — things are quite otherwise. It is from the righteous judgment of God, taking vengeance for the world's sins against the Gospel itself, that so many nations have been deprived of it and so many others left in obstinate rejection of it. Therefore the present state of things does nothing to weaken or undermine the evidence given to Scripture by that mighty power of God which accompanied its administration in the world. For what has since come to pass, there are secret reasons of sovereign wisdom and open causes in divine justice to which it must be attributed.

These things I have briefly reviewed — not as though they are all of this kind that could be argued, but only to give some example of the external arguments by which the divine authority of Scripture may be confirmed.

Now these arguments are capable, on their own, of producing in the minds of sober, humble, intelligent, and unprejudiced people a firm judgment and conviction that Scripture proceeds from God. Where people are firmly gripped by deep-seated prejudices formed through an upbringing in which they have absorbed principles opposed to Scripture, and have further hardened these preju-

dices through a fixed and inherited hostility toward all who acknowledge the divinity of Scripture — as is the case with Muslims and some indigenous peoples — these arguments may not immediately succeed in producing their assent. The same is true for those who, out of love and delight in the ways of vice, sin, and wickedness — which Scripture condemns absolutely and severely, without the slightest possibility of exception for those who remain under their power — refuse to give these arguments due consideration. Such people may talk and reason about them, but they never weigh them seriously in proportion to the importance of the matter. For if men are to examine them as they ought, they must do so with a calm recognition that their eternal condition depends on reaching a right conclusion on this question. But for those who can barely free themselves from the service and power of their desires long enough to seriously consider what their condition is or is likely to be, it is no wonder if they discuss these things in the casual manner of the present age, without any real impression on their minds and feelings, or any practical influence on their judgment. But our inquiry is into what constitutes sufficient evidence to convince rational and unprejudiced people and to defeat objections to the contrary — which these and similar arguments fully answer.

Some think it right to stop here — that is, to rest in these or similar external arguments, or rational motives of faith, of the kind that make the Scriptures so credible that it would be unreasonable not to assent to them. The certainty that can be reached on the basis of these arguments and motives is (they say) the highest that our minds are capable of with respect to this subject — and therefore it includes all the assent required of us to the proposition that Scripture is the Word of God, and all the faith by which we believe

it to be so. When I speak of these arguments, I mean not only those I have discussed, but all others of the same kind — some of which others have pressed and developed with great diligence. In the variety of arguments available in this cause, each person selects what seems to him most compelling, and some gather together all they can find. Now these arguments, with the evidence they offer, are such that nothing but stubborn prejudice can keep people from giving a firm assent to them. And nothing more is required of us, they say, than that in response to the motives and arguments presented, we arrive at a judgment and conviction called moral assurance of the truth of Scripture, and endeavor to yield obedience to God accordingly.

It would be desirable if there were more people truly affected by these arguments and motives than one fears there are — for in truth, tradition and upbringing practically carry the whole weight in this matter in practice. But when all this is granted, it will still be objected that all of this is merely a natural work, requiring nothing beyond the natural exercise and operation of our own reason and understanding; that the arguments and motives used, though strong, are human and fallible, and therefore the conclusions drawn from them are also fallible and liable to error; and that an assent grounded in and resolved into such rational arguments alone is not faith in the sense Scripture intends. In short, it will be said that we are required to believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God with faith that is divine and supernatural — faith that cannot be deceived. Two things are replied to this.

1. That where the things believed are divine and supernatural, so is the faith by which we believe them and give our assent to them. Whatever the kind of motives and arguments on which we

give our assent, as long as the assent is genuine and real and the things believed are divine and supernatural, the faith by which we believe them is so also. But this is like saying, in natural things, that our sight is green when we see what is green, and blue when we see what is blue. This would follow in moral matters if acts were defined by their material objects — but it is certain that acts are not always of the same nature as the things they are concerned with, nor are they changed from what they are in themselves — whether natural or supernatural, human or divine — by those objects. Now, divine things are only the material object of our faith, as has been shown — and by listing them we answer the question, "What is it that you believe?" But it is the formal object or reason of all our acts from which they are named and defined. The formal reason of our faith, assent, or believing is what moves us to believe and on whose account we do so — and it answers the question, "Why do you believe?" If this formal reason is human authority, arguments that are highly probable but absolutely fallible, or motives compelling but only capable of producing a moral persuasion, then whatever we believe on that basis, our faith is human, fallible, and amounts to moral assurance only. Therefore it is said —

2. That this assent is sufficient — all that is required of us — and contains in itself all the assurance our minds are capable of in this matter. For no further evidence or assurance is ever to be sought in any case than the subject matter will admit of. And so it is in this case, where the truth is not available to the senses, nor capable of scientific demonstration, but must be received on such reasons and arguments as raise it above the highest probability — though they leave it below certainty, strict knowledge, or infallible assurance — if indeed such a persuasion of mind exists.

Yet I must say that, although those external arguments by which learned and rational people have proved — or may further prove — Scripture to be a divine revelation from God, and the doctrine in it to be heavenly truth, are of great value in strengthening the faith of those who believe by defending the mind against temptations and objections that will arise, and also for the conviction of those who contradict it, nevertheless to say that these arguments contain the formal reason of the assent required of us to Scripture as the Word of God — that our faith is their product, rests upon them, and is resolved into them — is both contrary to Scripture, destructive of the nature of divine faith, and excludes the work of the Holy Spirit in the whole matter.

Therefore I will do two things before proceeding to our main argument. First, I will give a few reasons to prove that the faith by which we believe Scripture to be the Word of God is not a mere firm moral persuasion built on external arguments and motives of credibility, but is divine and supernatural — because its formal reason is also divine and supernatural. Second, I will explain the nature of the faith by which we do and ought to believe Scripture to be the Word of God, what is the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to it, and what is its proper object. In the first I will be very brief, for my purpose is to strengthen the faith of all — not to undermine anyone's convictions.

Divine revelation is the proper object of divine faith. With such faith we can believe nothing except what is divinely revealed, and what is so revealed can be received by us in no other way. If we do not believe it with divine faith, we do not truly believe it at all. Such is Scripture as the Word of God, everywhere presented to us — and we are required to believe it: first, to believe it to be the

Word of God, and then to believe the things contained in it. For the proposition that Scripture is the Word of God is itself a divine revelation, and must be believed as such. But God nowhere requires, nor has He ever required, that we believe any divine revelation on such grounds as external arguments — much less on such grounds alone. These arguments are left to us as consequential to our believing — to be used when arguing on behalf of what we profess and in justifying it to the world. But what requires our faith and obedience in the receiving of divine revelations — whether directly given and declared, or as recorded in Scripture — is His own authority and truthfulness: "I am the Lord, the High and Lofty One." "Thus says the Lord." "To the law and to the testimony." "This is My Son; listen to Him." "All Scripture is given by inspiration from God." "Believe the Lord and His prophets." This alone is what He requires us to resolve our faith into. So when He gave us the law of our lives — the eternal and unchangeable rule of our obedience to Him in the ten commandments — He gives no other reason to obligate us than this alone: "I am the Lord your God." The sole formal reason of all our obedience is drawn from His own nature and our relationship to Him. Nor does He offer any other reason why we should believe Him, or the revelation He makes of His mind and will. And our faith is part of our obedience — its root and principal part — so the reason of both is the same. Neither our Lord Jesus Christ nor His apostles ever used such arguments or motives to generate faith in the minds of men, nor have they given directions for the use of any such arguments to this end. But when they were accused of following cleverly invented fables, they appealed to Moses and the prophets, to the revelations they had themselves received, and to those already recorded. It is true that they per-

formed miracles in confirmation of their own divine mission and of the doctrine they taught. But the miracles of our Savior were all performed among those who already believed the whole Scripture then given to be the Word of God, and those of the apostles were performed before the books of the New Testament were written. Their doctrine, considered in its content, and their authority to teach it, were sufficiently — indeed abundantly — confirmed by those miracles. But divine revelation, considered formally and as written, was left resting on the old foundation of the authority of God who gave it. No such method is prescribed, and no such example is given in Scripture, of using these arguments and motives for the conversion of souls to God and the generating of faith in them. In fact, in some cases the use of such means is declared to be ineffective, and the sole authority of God putting forth His power in and through His Word is appealed to instead (1 Corinthians 2:4-5, 13; 1 Corinthians 14:26-27; 2 Corinthians 4:7). Yet in a preparatory and supporting role — in making ready to receive Scripture as the Word of God, and in defending it against opponents and their objections — their use has been granted and shown to be valid. But from first to last in both Old and New Testaments, the authority and truth of God are constantly and consistently presented as the immediate ground and reason for believing His revelations — and it cannot be shown that He accepts or approves of any kind of faith or assent that is not built upon and resolved into these. In summary: we are obligated as a matter of duty to believe the Scriptures to be a divine revelation when they are presented to us through ministry or providence — more on this later. The ground on which we receive them is the authority and veracity of God speaking in them — we believe them because they are the Word of God. This

faith by which we so believe is divine and supernatural, because its formal reason is divine and supernatural — namely, God's truth and authority. Therefore we do not, and should not, believe Scripture as highly probable, or with a moral persuasion and assurance built on arguments that are absolutely fallible and merely human. For if the formal reason of faith is the veracity and authority of God, then if we do not believe with divine and supernatural faith, we do not truly believe at all.

2. The moral certainty being discussed is a mere product of reason. Nothing more is required for it than that the reasons offered for the required assent be such as the mind judges to be convincing and persuasive — from which an inferior kind of knowledge, a firm opinion, or some kind of persuasion (which as yet has no clear name) necessarily follows. On this view, therefore, there is no need for any work of the Holy Spirit to enable us to believe or to work faith in us — for nothing more is required than what necessarily arises from the bare exercise of reason. If it is said that the inquiry is not about what the Spirit of God does in us, but about the reasons and motives for believing that are presented to us — I grant this, but what I urge here is that the act which is produced by such motives, or the persuasion begotten in our minds by them, is purely natural, and requires no special work of the Holy Spirit in us to produce it. Now this is not faith, and we cannot in the scriptural sense be said to believe by it — and so in particular we cannot by it believe Scripture to be the Word of God. For faith "is the gift of God" and "is not from ourselves" (Ephesians 2:8). It is given to some on behalf of Christ (Philippians 1:29) and not to others (Matthew 11:29; Matthew 13:11). But this assent on external arguments and motives comes from ourselves, and is equally open and

available to all. "No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3). But the one who truly believes Scripture, rightly and according to his duty, does say this. "No one comes to Christ unless he has heard and learned from the Father" (John 6:45). And as this is contrary to Scripture, so it is expressly condemned by the early church — in particular by the Second Council of Orange, canons 5 and 7. Canon 5: "If anyone says that not only the increase, but also the beginning of faith and the very desire to believe — by which we believe in him who justifies the ungodly, and come to the generation of holy baptism — is not a gift of grace, that is, an inspiration of the Holy Spirit who corrects our will from unbelief to faith, from godlessness to godliness, but is naturally present in us, that person contradicts the teaching of the apostles." And plainly, canon 7: "If anyone affirms that by the power of nature he can think any good thought which belongs to the salvation of eternal life, or choose it, or agree to the saving proclamation of the Gospel, without the illumination and inspiration of the Holy Spirit who gives to all sweetness in consenting to and believing the truth, he is misled by a heretical spirit."

It is still granted that the arguments in question — that is, all of them that are genuinely valid and will hold up under strict examination, for some commonly used in this cause will not survive scrutiny — are of good use in their proper place and for their proper end, which is to produce such an assent to the truth as they are capable of producing. For although this is not what is required of us as a duty — being inferior to it — the mind is nonetheless prepared and made ready by them to receive the truth in its proper evidence.

3. Our assent can be of no other nature than the arguments and motives on which it is built or by which it is produced in us — and in degree it cannot exceed their evidence. Now these arguments are all human and fallible. Raise them to the highest possible esteem — still, because they are not demonstrations and do not necessarily produce certain knowledge in us (which, if they did, would leave no room for faith or obedience in our response), they produce only an opinion, though of the highest kind of probability and firm against objections. We will allow the fullest assurance that can be claimed on their basis. But this still excludes all divine faith as to any article, matter, or object to be believed. For example: a person professes that he believes Jesus Christ to be the Son of God. Ask him why he believes this, and he will say: because God, who cannot lie, has revealed and declared Him to be so. Press further and ask: where or how has God revealed and declared this? He will answer: in Scripture, which is His Word. Now ask the further necessary question: why does he believe this Scripture to be the Word of God, or a direct revelation from Him? For we must reach something here that we can ultimately rest in — something that by its own nature excludes all further inquiry — otherwise we can have neither certainty nor stability in our faith. On this view, his answer must be: he has many compelling arguments that make it highly probable, arguments that have moved him to conclude it to be so and on which he is fully persuaded, having the highest assurance about it that the matter allows — and so he firmly believes them to be the Word of God. But it will be replied: all these arguments are by their kind or nature human, and therefore fallible — they may conceivably be false, since everything not immediately from the first and essential Truth can be so. This assent to the

Scriptures as the Word of God is therefore human, fallible, and such that one may be deceived in it. And our assent to the things revealed cannot be of a different kind than what we give to the revelation itself. For our assent to revealed things is resolved into and reduced to our assent to the revelation — the water cannot rise higher than its source. And so at last we end up believing Jesus Christ to be the Son of God with a faith that is human and fallible, and which may in the end deceive us — which is to "receive the word of God as the word of men, not as it truly is, the word of God," contrary to the apostle (1 Thessalonians 2:13). Therefore —

4. If I believe Scripture to be the Word of God with human faith only, then I believe whatever is contained in it in no other way — and this destroys all faith properly so called. And if I believe what is contained in Scripture with faith that is divine and supernatural, I cannot but also believe Scripture itself with the same faith — which removes the moral certainty being discussed from the picture. The reason is that we must believe the revelation and the things revealed with the same kind of faith, or we bring confusion into the whole work of believing. No one living can distinguish in their own experience between the faith by which they believe Scripture and the faith by which they believe the doctrine in it or the things it contains — nor is any such distinction or difference suggested in Scripture itself. All our believing is absolutely resolved into the authority of God revealing. Nor can it be reasonably supposed that our assent to the things revealed should be of a kind and nature superior to what we give to the revelation itself. For however evident and compelling the arguments into which it is resolved, however firm and certain the assent itself, it remains human and natural — and as such it is inferior to what is divine and

supernatural. And yet on this view, that which is of a superior kind and nature is wholly resolved into that which is inferior, and must turn to it on every occasion for support and confirmation. For the faith by which we believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God is on every occasion completely melted down into that by which we believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God.

But none of these things are my present primary concern, and I have dwelt long enough on them. I am not inquiring into what grounds men may have for building an opinion or any kind of human persuasion that the Scriptures are the Word of God, nor even into how we may prove or defend this against those who deny it. My question is: what is required so that we may believe Scripture to be the Word of God with faith that is divine and supernatural, and what is the work of the Spirit of God in this?

But it may further be said that these external arguments and motives are not, by themselves and considered apart from the doctrine they testify to, the sole ground and reason of our believing. For if it were possible that a thousand arguments of comparable force were offered to confirm any truth or doctrine, if that doctrine did not have a divine worth and excellence in itself, those arguments could give the mind no assurance of it. Therefore it is the truth itself — the doctrine contained in Scripture that these arguments testify to — that gives them life and effectiveness. For there is such majesty, holiness, and excellence in the doctrine of the Gospel, and moreover such a fitting correspondence to unprejudiced reason, and such an answering of all the rational longings and expectations of the soul, as to make evident that it proceeds from the fountain of infinite wisdom and goodness. It must be seen as impossible that such excellent and heavenly mysteries, of

such benefit and use to all mankind, could be the product of any created effort. Let a person know himself — his state and condition to any degree — with a desire for the blessedness his nature is capable of and cannot help but seek. When Scripture is presented to him through the ministry of the church, attested by the arguments discussed, there will appear to him in the truths and doctrines of it — in the things it contains — such evidence of the majesty and authority of God as will move him to believe it to be a divine revelation. And this persuasion is such that the mind is established in its assent to the truth, so as to yield obedience to all that is required of us. And since our belief of Scripture serves only to enable the right performance of our duty — all the obedience God expects from us, our minds being guided by its commands and directions and duly influenced by its promises and warnings — no other faith is required of us beyond what is sufficient to obligate us to that obedience.

This being, as far as I can understand, the substance of what some learned men propose and hold to, it will be briefly examined. I will say here, as I have said on other occasions, that I would rejoice to see more of such faith in the world — faith that would effectively oblige men to obedience out of a conviction of the excellence of the doctrine and the truth of the promises and warnings of the Word — even if learned men never agree about the formal reason of faith. Such ideas about truth, when most carefully examined, are like sacrifice compared with obedience. But the truth itself is also to be diligently sought.

This view, therefore, either assumes what we are about to declare — namely, the necessity of an internal and effective work of the Holy Spirit in illuminating our minds, enabling us to believe

with divine and supernatural faith — or it does not. If it does, then it will be found, I believe, to coincide in substance with what we will later assert and prove to be the formal reason of believing. However, as it is usually presented, I cannot fully agree with it, for two reasons among others.

1. It belongs to the nature of faith — of whatever kind it may be — that it be built on and resolved into testimony. This is what distinguishes faith from any other conception, knowledge, or assent of the mind arising from other reasons and causes. And if this testimony is divine, so is the faith by which we give assent to it, on the side of the object. But the doctrines contained in Scripture — the subject matter of the truth to be believed — do not in themselves have the nature of a testimony, but are the material and not the formal objects of faith, which must always differ. If it is said that these truths or doctrines so evidence themselves to be from God that in and through them we have the witness and authority of God Himself presented to us, into which our faith is resolved, I will not further argue the point. I will only say that the authority of God — and therefore His veracity — manifests itself primarily in the revelation itself, before it does so in the things revealed, and that is what we are arguing for.

2. The excellence of the doctrine — or the things revealed in Scripture — relates not so much to their truth in the abstract as to their goodness and suitableness to the souls of men in their present condition and in view of their eternal end. But things considered in that light belong not so much to faith as to spiritual sense and experience. And no one can have a proper appreciation of such a goodness — a goodness suited to our constitution and condition, with absolute usefulness in the truth of Scripture —

apart from that prior assent of the mind to it which is believing. Therefore this goodness cannot serve as the reason why we believe in the first place.

But if this view does not proceed on the assumption I am about to prove necessary, but requires nothing more for our satisfaction in the truth of Scripture and assent to it than the proper exercise of reason — or the natural faculties of our minds — as it is presented to us, then I consider it to be very far from the truth, and for many reasons, including the following.

1. On this assumption the whole work of believing would be a work of reason. Let it be so, some say — nor should it be conceived otherwise. But if so, then the object of it must be things so self-evident in their own nature that the mind is, as it were, compelled by that evidence to assent and cannot do otherwise. If there is such light and evidence in the things themselves with respect to our reason in its right use and exercise, then the mind is thereby necessarily driven to assent — which both overthrows the nature of faith by substituting assent on natural evidence in its place, and absolutely excludes the necessity or use of any work of the Holy Spirit in our believing, which serious Christians will hardly accept.

2. There are some doctrines revealed in Scripture — and these are among the most important revealed there — which concern and contain things so far above our reason that without some prior supernatural preparation of the mind, they carry no evidence of truth to mere reason, nor any appearance of suitableness to our constitution and end. Before reason can even be satisfied with the truth and excellence of such doctrines, both the spiritual elevation of the mind through supernatural illumination and a divine assent to the authority of the revelation itself are required. Such are the

doctrines concerning the Holy Trinity — the subsistence of one single essence in three distinct persons — the incarnation of the Son of God, the resurrection of the dead, and various others that are the most distinctive subjects of divine revelation. There is a heavenly glory in some of these things which reason, being finite and limited, can never fully comprehend. As reason exists in us by nature, it can neither receive these things nor delight in them as doctrines presented to us, even with all the aids and assistance mentioned. "Flesh and blood has not revealed these things to our minds, but our Father who is in heaven." Nor does any person know these mysteries of the kingdom of God except one to whom it is given, nor does any truly learn them except those who are taught of God.

3. Take our reason on its own, apart from any consideration of divine grace and illumination, and it is not only weak and limited but depraved and corrupted. And the carnal mind cannot bring itself into submission to the authority of God in any supernatural revelation whatever. The truth is that the doctrines of the Gospel — those that are purely and distinctively Gospel doctrines — are so far from carrying a convincing evidence in themselves of their divine truth, excellence, and goodness to the unrenewed reason of men, that they are foolishness and deeply unattractive to it — as I have proven at length elsewhere. We shall therefore move on.

There are two things to consider with respect to our believing the Scriptures to be the Word of God in a proper manner, as duty requires. The first concerns the subject — that is, the mind of man — and how it is enabled to believe; the other concerns the object to be believed, and the true reason why we believe Scripture with faith that is divine and supernatural.

The first of these must necessarily come under our consideration here — for without it, whatever reasons, evidences, or motives are presented to us, we will never believe in a proper manner. For since the mind of man — the minds of all people — are by nature depraved, corrupt, and hostile to God, they cannot of themselves, or by any innate ability of their own, understand or assent to spiritual things in a spiritual manner, as we have sufficiently proven and established before. Therefore, the assent produced in us by mere external arguments — consisting in the rational conclusions and judgments we draw from their truth and evidence — is not the faith with which we are to believe the Word of God.

Therefore, for us to believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God as our duty requires — as God requires it of us — in a way that is useful, profitable, and saving, above and beyond that natural human faith and assent which is the product of the arguments and motives of credibility previously discussed, along with all others of that kind, there is and must be worked in us by the power of the Holy Spirit a faith that is supernatural and divine, by which we are enabled to do so — or rather, by which we do so. This work of the Spirit of God is distinct from, and in the order of nature prior to, all divine objective evidence of the Scriptures being the Word of God — or the formal reason that moves us to believe it. Therefore, without it, whatever arguments or motives are presented to us, we cannot believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God in the manner required of us as a duty.

Some may think these things irrelevant and beside the present point. For while we are inquiring into the grounds on which we believe Scripture to be the Word of God, we seem to turn aside to the work of the Holy Spirit in our own minds — which may seem irra-

tional. But we must not be ashamed of the Gospel, or of its truth, simply because some do not understand or will not carefully consider what is being proposed. It is necessary that we return to the work of the Holy Spirit — not with specific reference to the Scriptures to be believed, but with reference to our own minds and the faith with which they are to be believed. For it is not the reason why we believe the Scriptures, but the power by which we are enabled to do so, that we are inquiring into at this point.

1. That the faith by which we believe Scripture to be the Word of God is worked in us by the Holy Spirit can only be denied on the basis of two assumptions. First, that it is not divine and supernatural faith by which we believe this to be so, but only a kind of moral assurance. Second, that this divine and supernatural faith comes from ourselves and is not worked in us by the Holy Spirit. The first of these has already been disproved and will be further refuted later — and probably very few actually hold that view. For in general, whatever men suppose to be the primary object, principal motive, and formal reason of that faith, they all acknowledge it to be divine and supernatural. And as for the second: what is divine and supernatural is the operation of the Spirit of God. For to say that faith is divine and supernatural is to say that it is not from ourselves — that it is the grace and gift of the Spirit of God, worked in us by His divine and supernatural power. Even those in the Church of Rome who would resolve our faith objectively into the authority of their church still acknowledge subjectively the work of the Holy Spirit in producing faith in us, and that this work is necessary for us to believe Scripture in a proper manner. As Canus writes in *Loci Theologici*, book 2, chapter 8: "All external and human persuasions are not sufficient for believing, however compe-

tently the things of faith may be proposed by men. Beyond these there is necessary an inner cause — namely, a certain divine light moving us to believe, and certain inner eyes given by God's benefit for seeing." Nor does any theologian of that church dissent from this. We therefore do not assert any such divine formal reason for believing that the mind would have no need of supernatural assistance enabling it to assent to it. On the contrary, we affirm that without this assistance there is no true faith in any person at all — whatever the arguments and motives on which he believes, however forceful and filled with evidence they may be. It is in this matter as with natural things: neither the light of the sun nor any persuasive argument urging people to look up at it will enable them to see it unless they have the proper faculty of sight.

And on this point Scripture is explicit beyond any possibility of contradiction. Nor has it, to my knowledge, been expressly denied by anyone as yet. For indeed that all that is properly called faith with respect to divine revelation — and that is accepted by God as such — is the work of the Spirit of God in us, or is given to us by Him, cannot be questioned by anyone who accepts the Gospel. I have also proved this elsewhere so fully and thoroughly that I will give it no further confirmation here, other than what will necessarily come out in the description of the nature of that faith by which we believe, and the way or manner in which it is produced in us.

The work of the Holy Spirit for this purpose consists in the saving illumination of the mind, and its effect is a supernatural light by which the mind is renewed (Romans 12:1; Ephesians 1:18-19; Ephesians 3:16-19). It is called "a heart to understand, eyes to see, and ears to hear" (Deuteronomy 29:4). It is called "the opening of the eyes of our understanding" (Ephesians 1:18). And "the giving of

understanding" (1 John 5:20). By this we are enabled to discern the evidence of the divine origin and authority of Scripture that resides in Scripture itself, as well as to assent to the truth contained in it — and without it we cannot do so. For "the natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14). And for this purpose it is written in the prophets, "they shall all be taught of God" (John 6:45). That there is a divine and heavenly excellence in Scripture cannot be denied by anyone who, on any grounds or motives, acknowledges its divine origin. For all the works of God display His glory, and it is impossible for anything that proceeds directly from Him not to bear clear marks of divine excellence upon it — and in the communication of these marks of Himself, He has "magnified His word above all His name." But we cannot discern these marks — however illustrious they may be in themselves — without the effective communication of this light to our minds, that is, without divine supernatural illumination.

In this work, He who commanded light to shine out of darkness "shines in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). He illuminates the mind with a spiritual light by which it is enabled to discern the glory of spiritual things — something those cannot do "in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (verse 4). Those who are under the power of their natural darkness and blindness — especially where there are also added prejudices produced and deepened by the craft of Satan, as there are in all unbelievers — cannot see or

discern that divine excellence in Scripture without which no one can rightly believe it to be the Word of God. Such people may assent to the truth of Scripture and its divine origin on the basis of external arguments and rational motives — but believe it with divine and supernatural faith on those arguments and motives alone, they cannot.

There are two things that hinder or prevent people from believing with divine and supernatural faith when any divine revelation is objectively presented to them. First, the natural blindness and darkness of their minds, which has come upon all people through the fall and the resulting corruption of our nature. Second, the prejudices with which, through the crafts of Satan the god of this world, their minds have been filled through tradition, upbringing, and social influence. This second obstacle or hindrance can be removed to a considerable extent by external arguments and motives of credibility, so that people may on their basis arrive at a moral persuasion concerning the divine origin of Scripture. But these arguments cannot remove or take away the mind's innate blindness, which is removed only by renewal and divine illumination. Therefore, no one (I think) will positively claim that we can believe Scripture to be the Word of God in the way and manner God requires, without a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit upon our minds in illuminating them. So David prays that "God would open his eyes, that he might behold wondrous things out of the law" (Psalm 119:18). That "He would make him understand the way of His precepts" (verse 27). That "He would give him understanding and he would keep the law" (verse 34). So also the Lord Christ "opened the understanding of His disciples, that they might understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45). As He had previously affirmed

that it was "given to some" to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, and not to others (Matthew 11:25; Matthew 13:11). And these things are neither spoken in vain, nor is the grace they describe unnecessary.

The communication of this light to us Scripture calls "revealing" and "revelation" (Matthew 11:25). "You have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children" — that is, enabling them to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven when these were preached to them. "And no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him" (verse 27). So the apostle prays for the Ephesians, "that God would give them the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know" etc. (Ephesians 1:17-19). It is true that these Ephesians were already believers, or considered as such by the apostle. But if he judged it necessary to pray for them — that they might have the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to enlighten the eyes of their understanding — with respect to further degrees of faith and knowledge, or as he says elsewhere, "that they might attain all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery" (Colossians 2:2), then it is all the more necessary for those who are not yet believers and are entirely strangers to the faith.

But as a false appeal to this work has been abused, as we will see later, so arguing for it is liable to be misunderstood. For some are ready to suppose that this appeal to a Spirit of revelation is nothing but a pretense for dismissing all rational arguments and introducing enthusiasm in their place. Now although the charge is serious, yet because it is groundless we must not abandon what

Scripture plainly affirms and teaches us, simply to avoid it. Scripture testimonies may be interpreted according to the analogy of faith, but they must not be denied or despised, however contrary they may seem to our own understanding of things. Some (I confess) seem to disregard both the objective work of the Holy Spirit in this matter — which we will address later — and His subjective work in our minds, so that everything may be reduced to sense and reason. But we must grant that a Spirit of wisdom and revelation to open the eyes of our understanding is necessary to enable us to believe Scripture to be the Word of God in a proper manner — or else we must give up the Gospel. And it is our duty to pray continually for that Spirit, if we intend to be established in the faith of it.

But we are not arguing for external, direct revelations of the kind granted to the prophets, apostles, and other writers of Scripture. The revelation we are describing differs from those in both its specific subject and its formal reason — that is, in its entire nature and kind. First, the subject matter of divine prophetic revelation by direct divine inspiration concerns things not previously made known — things hidden in God, or the counsels of His will, "revealed to the apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Ephesians 3:5, 9-10). Whether doctrines or events, they were, at least in terms of their immediate circumstances, disclosed from the counsels of God through their revelation. But the matter and subject of the revelation we are discussing is nothing other than what is already revealed. It is an internal revelation of what has already been outwardly revealed — it does not extend beyond those existing bounds. If anyone claims to receive direct revelations of things not previously revealed, we have no stake in those claims. Second, they also differ in their nature or kind. For direct, divine, prophetic

revelation consisted of an immediate inspiration or divine breath, or of visions and voices from heaven, with a power of the Holy Spirit temporarily affecting the minds of those to whom they were granted, guiding their tongues and hands, so that they received and expressed divine impressions — much like a musical instrument responds to the skill of the hand that plays it. The nature of this kind of revelation I have discussed more fully elsewhere. But this revelation of the Spirit consists in His effective operation in freeing our minds from darkness, ignorance, and prejudice, and enabling them to rightly perceive spiritual things. And such a Spirit of revelation is necessary for those who would rightly believe the Scripture or anything else that is divine and supernatural contained in it. If people who, through the power of temptations and prejudices, are in the dark or at a loss concerning the great and foundational principle of all religion — namely, the divine origin and authority of Scripture — will insist on relying entirely on their own understanding and having the whole question settled by the natural powers and faculties of their own souls, without seeking divine help and assistance, or earnestly praying for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to open the eyes of their understanding, they must be content to remain in their uncertainty or to escape it without any benefit to their souls. Not that I would deny men the use of their reason in this matter, or discourage them from it — for what is reason given to them for, if not to use it in the things of greatest importance? Only I must be allowed to say that reason alone is not sufficient to enable us to fulfill this duty, without the immediate help and assistance of the Holy Spirit of God.

If anyone on the basis of these principles now asks us, "Why do you believe Scripture to be the Word of God?" — we do not answer: "Because the Holy Spirit has enlightened our minds, worked faith in us, and enabled us to believe it." We do say this: without the Spirit of God working in us and upon us in this way, we neither would nor could believe with divine and supernatural faith. If God had not "opened the heart of Lydia," she would not have "paid attention" to the things Paul preached so as to receive them — and without this work, the light often shines into darkness, but the darkness does not comprehend it. But this is not and cannot be the formal object of our faith, or the reason why we believe Scripture to be from God, or anything else — nor do we, nor can we rationally, answer this question of why we believe by appealing to it. This reason must be something external and clearly presented to us. For whatever ability of spiritual assent exists in the understanding as the result of this work of the Holy Spirit, the understanding cannot assent to anything — with any kind of assent, natural or supernatural — except what is externally presented to it as true, and presented with sufficient evidence that it is so. Therefore, what presents anything to us as true, with evidence of that truth, is the formal object of our faith — the reason why we believe. And what is so presented must be true, and must be evidenced to be true, or we cannot believe it. And according to the nature of that evidence, such is our faith — human if that evidence is human, and divine if it is divine. Now the saving light infused into our minds does none of this, and is therefore not the reason why we believe what we do.

Therefore, some who seem to think that the only general ground for believing Scripture to be the Word of God consists in rational arguments and motives of credibility, while granting that private individuals may have their own assurance of this through the illumination of the Holy Spirit — though it cannot be argued to others — are granting something that, as far as I know, no one actually asks for, and which is in itself not true. For this work of the Spirit consists solely in enabling the mind to give that kind of assent which is divine and supernatural faith — presupposing that an external and formal reason for it has been properly presented — and so it is not the reason why anyone believes, nor the ground into which their faith is resolved.

It remains only to inquire whether our faith in this matter is not resolved into an immediate internal testimony of the Holy Spirit — an assurance of the divine origin and authority of Scripture — distinct from the work of spiritual illumination described above. For it is the common view of Protestant theologians that the testimony of the Holy Spirit is the ground on which we believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God, and the sense in which it is so will be explained immediately. But on this account they are generally charged by those of the Church of Rome and others with resolving all the ground and assurance of faith into their own individual spirits — or the spirit of anyone who might claim it. And this is regarded as sufficient warrant to accuse them of encouraging enthusiasm and exposing people's minds to endless delusions. This matter must therefore be examined a little further. And —

By an internal testimony of the Spirit, some may mean an extraordinary direct impression or new immediate revelation. People may suppose they have, or ought to have, an individual internal

testimony that Scripture is the Word of God — one by which, and by which alone, they may be infallibly assured that it is. This is supposed to be of the same nature as the revelation given to the prophets and writers of Scripture — for it is neither an external presentation of truth, nor an internal ability to assent to such a presentation. And beyond these two, there is no divine operation of this kind except a direct prophetic inspiration or revelation. Therefore, on this view, such a revelation or direct testimony of the Spirit is the only reason we believe, and it alone is what our faith rests on and is ultimately resolved into.

This is what is commonly attributed to those who deny that the authority of the church, or any other external arguments or motives of credibility, is the formal reason of our faith. However, there is no one of them, that I know of, who has ever asserted any such thing. I therefore deny that our faith is resolved into any such private testimony, immediate revelation, or inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And this for the following reasons.

1. Since the completion of the canon of Scripture, the church is not in such a state as to stand in need of new extraordinary revelations. The church lives by the internal gracious operations of the Spirit, which enable us to understand, believe, and obey the perfect and complete revelation of the will of God already given — but new revelations it neither needs nor has any use for. To suppose them, or a necessity of them, not only undermines the completeness of Scripture, but also leaves us uncertain whether we know everything we are to believe for salvation, or our full duty, or when we might know it. For it would then be our duty to spend all our days in expectation of new revelations — and neither peace, assurance, nor consolation are consistent with such a posture.

2. Those who are to believe will not, on this assumption, be able to secure themselves from delusion and from being deceived by Satan. For this new revelation is either to be tested by Scripture, or it is not. If it is to be tested and examined by Scripture, then it acknowledges a superior rule, judgment, and testimony — and so it cannot be what our faith is ultimately resolved into. If it is exempt from that rule of testing the spirits, then first, it must produce evidence of that exemption, since the rule extends generally to all things and doctrines relating to faith and obedience. Second, it must declare what are the grounds and evidences of its own self-credibility — and how it may infallibly and certainly be distinguished from all delusions, which can never be done. And even if some tolerable case could be made for these things, we will show immediately that no such private testimony — even if real — can be the formal object of faith or the reason for believing.

3. It has generally come about in the providence of God that all who have surrendered themselves in matters of faith or obedience to the pretended guidance of direct revelations — even while claiming to respect Scripture as well — have been led into beliefs and practices directly contrary to it. And this, for all serious people, is sufficient reason to reject this claim.

But this internal testimony of the Spirit is explained by others in quite a different way. They say that beyond the work of the Holy Spirit already discussed — by which He removes our natural blindness and, by enlightening our minds, enables us to discern the divine excellences in Scripture — there is another internal operation of His by which we are moved, persuaded, and enabled to believe. By this we are taught of God, so that, finding the glory and majesty of God in the Word, our hearts by an ineffable power assent to the

truth without hesitation. And this work of the Spirit carries its own evidence in itself, producing an assurance above all human judgment — one that requires no further arguments or testimonies. It is into this, they say, that faith rests and is resolved. Some learned men seem to embrace this view because they suppose that the objective evidence given in Scripture itself is only moral — capable of producing only a moral assurance. But since faith ought to be divine and supernatural, so must be what it is resolved into — and it is so from its formal reason alone. And they can find nothing in this work that is immediately divine except this internal testimony of the Spirit, in which God Himself speaks to our hearts.

But even as explained in this way, we cannot allow it to be the formal object of faith, or that in which faith rests. For —

1. It does not have the proper nature of a divine testimony. It may be a divine work, but it is not a divine testimony — and it is of the nature of faith to be built on an external testimony. Therefore, however much our minds may be established and enabled to believe firmly and steadfastly by an ineffable internal work of the Holy Spirit — of which we may also have certain experience — yet neither that work nor its effect can be the reason why we believe, or the means by which we are moved to believe. It is only the means by which we do believe.

2. What is the formal object of faith — the reason on which we believe — is the same and common to all who believe. For our inquiry is not how or by what means this or that person came to believe, but why anyone and everyone ought to do so, to whom Scripture is presented. The object presented to all to be believed is the same, and the faith required of all as a duty is the same — of

the same kind and nature. Therefore the reason why we believe must also be the same. But on this assumption there would have to be as many distinct reasons for believing as there are believers.

3. On this assumption, it cannot be anyone's duty to believe Scripture to be the Word of God who has not received this internal testimony of the Spirit. For where the true formal reason for believing is not presented to us, it is not our duty to believe. Therefore, although Scripture is presented as the Word of God, it would not be our duty to believe it to be so until we have this work of the Spirit in our hearts — if that were the formal reason for believing. But without pressing further into the problem of how people may be deceived and deluded in their sense of such an internal testimony of the Spirit — especially if it is not to be tested by Scripture, for if it is tested by Scripture it loses its self-credibility, and if it is, it traps us in the circular argument that the Roman Catholics charge us with — it cannot be admitted as the formal object of our faith, because it would divert us from what is public, proper, and in every way certain and infallible.

However, a work of the Spirit that may be called an internal real testimony must be acknowledged as something that belongs to the stability and assurance of faith. For if He worked in us and upon us only by communicating spiritual light to our minds and enabling us to discern the evidence in Scripture of its divine origin, we would often be shaken in our assent and unsettled. For since our spiritual darkness is only partially removed, and at best while we are here we see things only dimly, as in a mirror — all believed things carrying some degree of difficulty or obscurity — and since temptations will frequently shake and disturb the proper relationship of the mind's faculty to the object, or interpose mists and

clouds between them, we can have no assurance in believing unless our minds are further established by the Holy Spirit. He therefore assists us in believing in three ways, and assures our minds of the things believed, so that we may hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm and steadfast to the end. For —

1. He gives to believers a spiritual sense of the power and reality of the things believed, by which their faith is greatly established. And although the divine witness into which our faith is ultimately resolved does not consist in this, yet it is the greatest corroborating testimony of which we are capable. This is what brings us to "the riches of full assurance of understanding" (Colossians 2:2; also 1 Thessalonians 1:5). And because of this spiritual experience, our perception of spiritual things is so often described in terms of the physical senses — tasting, seeing, feeling — as means of assurance in natural things. When believers have arrived at this, they find the divine wisdom, goodness, and authority of God so present to them that they need no argument, motive, or anything else to persuade or confirm them in believing. Since this spiritual experience that believers receive through the Holy Spirit is such that it cannot reasonably be debated — for those who have received it cannot fully express it, and those who have not cannot understand it or the power it has to secure and establish the mind — it is left to be determined by those alone who have "their senses trained to distinguish good from evil." And this belongs to the internal subjective testimony of the Holy Spirit.

2. He assists, helps, and relieves us against temptations to the contrary, so that they will not prevail. Our first and primary assent to the divine authority of Scripture on its proper grounds and reasons will not secure us against future objections and temptations,

arising from every kind of source and occasion. David's faith was so assaulted by them that he said in his distress, "All men are liars." And Abraham himself, after receiving the promise that in his seed all nations would be blessed, was reduced to the anxious cry, "Lord God, what will You give me, since I am childless?" (Genesis 15:2). And Peter was so battered by Satan that although "his faith did not fail," he greatly faltered and gave way in its exercise. And we all know what fears from within and conflicts from without we face in this matter. Of this kind are all those atheistic objections against Scripture that are so abundant in our day — which the devil uses as "fiery darts" to inflame the souls of men and destroy their faith. Indeed this is the chief work that the powers of hell are engaged in today. Having cut off many branches, they now lay the ax to the root of faith — so that in the very midst of the profession of the Christian religion, there is no greater controversy than whether the Scriptures are the Word of God or not. Against all these temptations the Holy Spirit gives a continual supply of spiritual strength and assistance to believers, so that they will never finally prevail, and their faith will never entirely fail. In such cases, the Lord Christ intercedes for us that our faith may not fail, and God's grace is sufficient against the buffetings of these temptations. The truth of Christ's intercession, along with God's grace and its effectiveness, are communicated to us by the Holy Spirit. What those internal aids are by which He establishes and assures our minds against the force and prevalence of objections and temptations against the divine authority of Scripture — how they are communicated to us and received by us — this is not the place to describe in detail. It is pointless for anyone who denies

these things to claim the name of Christian. And these also have the nature of an internal real testimony by which faith is established.

Since it is somewhat remarkable that after so long a quiet and widespread profession of faith in Scripture, and general assent to its authority, there should now arise among us such open opposition to the divine authority of Scripture as we actually experience, it may be worthwhile in passing to identify the main causes or occasions of this. For if we were to add up in one reckoning all those who either openly oppose and reject Scripture, or who use or disregard it as they please, or who set up other guides in competition with it or above it, or who otherwise show they have no sense of the direct authority of God in it, we would find them to be so great in number and force compared to those who uphold it, that it is only lack of coordination, confidence, and a unifying interest that keeps them from throwing off all restraint. I will name three causes only of this alarming and dangerous development.

1. A long-continued outward profession of the truth of Scripture, without any inward experience of its power, eventually leads people to question the truth itself — or at least to stop regarding it as divine. To confess the Scriptures to be the Word of God is to acknowledge that a divine majesty, authority, and power are present in and with it. Therefore, after people who have long made this profession find that they have never had any real experience of such divine presence — no effects on their own minds — they gradually grow indifferent to it, or reduce it to a very ordinary place in their thoughts. When they have worn off the impressions made on their minds by tradition, upbringing, and custom, they do not so much believe it as simply refrain from opposing it. And once

reverence for the Word of God on the basis of its authority is lost, assent to it on the basis of its truth will not long remain. And all such people, when a concurrence of temptations and outward occasions arises, will either reject it or prefer other guides above it.

2. The power of sinful desire rising to a settled resolution of living in sins to which Scripture unavoidably attaches eternal ruin has led many to cast off its authority. For as long as they are resolved to live in an outrage of sin, to acknowledge a divine truth and power in Scripture is to place themselves under a present torment, as well as to confirm their future misery. For no other can be the condition of one who is constantly aware that God always condemns him in all he does and will assuredly take vengeance on him — which is the consistent language of Scripture concerning such people. Therefore, although they may not immediately fall into open and atheistic opposition to Scripture — since that might not be consistent with their reputation and interests in the world — yet, looking on it as the demons looked on Jesus Christ, as something that "comes to torment them before the time," they keep it as far from their thoughts and minds as possible, until they have formed a settled habit of contempt for it. Since there is an utter impossibility of reconciling acknowledgment of the Scriptures as the Word of God with a settled resolve to live in excess of known sin, multitudes allow their minds to be bribed by their corrupt desires to abandon any regard for it.

3. The disgraceful quarrels and disputes by those in the Church of Rome against Scripture and its authority have greatly contributed to the ruin of many people's faith. Their overriding aim is to establish by every means the power, authority, and infallibility of their church. Of these things they say continually, as the apostle in

another case said of the sailors, "Unless these men remain in the ship, you cannot be saved." Without acknowledging these things, they would have it that men can neither believe now nor be saved hereafter. To secure this position, the authority of Scripture must by every means be questioned and undermined. They will grant it a divine authority in itself — but with respect to us, they say it has none except what it gains through the vote and testimony of their church. But since authority, by its very nature, consists essentially in its relation to those who are to be subject to it, to say that Scripture has authority in itself but none toward us is not only to deny that it has any authority at all, but to mock it with an empty title. They deal with Scripture as the soldiers dealt with Christ — they put a crown on His head and clothed Him in a purple robe, and kneeling before Him mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews." They ascribe to Scripture the crown and robe of divine authority in itself — but toward not a single person in the world. And so, if it pleases them, God shall be God, and His Word shall enjoy some credit among men. They continually use this approach to trap those of weaker understanding, pressing them vehemently with the question, "How do you know the Scripture to be the Word of God?" — always having ready a store of sophisticated arguments to weaken any evidence brought forward in its defense. Nor is that all: at every opportunity they insinuate objections against it based on its supposed obscurity, imperfection, lack of order, difficulties, and apparent contradictions — all designed to detach people's minds from firm assent to it or reliance on it. It is as if a company of men were to conspire through cunning and repeated insinuations — broadcast on every available occasion — to undermine the reputation of a virtuous and sober woman. Although they cannot

strip her of her virtue, unless the world were wiser than it usually appears, they will gradually erode her deserved esteem. And this is as bold an attempt as can well be made in any case. For the first tendency of such tactics is to make men atheists — after which success, it is left to uncertain chance whether they will become Roman Catholics or not. Therefore, just as there could be no greater or more shameful reflection on the Christian religion than that it has no evidence or testimony of its truth except the authority and witness of those who currently profess it and who have notable worldly advantages from doing so, so the minds of multitudes are secretly poisoned by these disputes into thinking it in no way necessary to believe Scripture to be the Word of God — or at least they are shaken loose from the grounds on which they had professed it to be so. A similar disservice is done to faith and to the souls of men by those who advance an inner light or direct inspiration into competition with Scripture, or in its place. For as such notions take hold and prevail in people's minds, their respect for Scripture and all sense of its divine authority decay — as experience plainly demonstrates.

It is, I say, from an unusual combination of these and similar causes and occasions that there is among us at present such a decline in, abandonment of, and opposition to the belief of Scripture as perhaps no former age could match.

But against all these objections and temptations, the minds of true believers are secured by supplies of spiritual light, wisdom, and grace from the Holy Spirit.

There are several other particular gracious acts of the Holy Spirit on the minds of believers that also belong to this internal real testimony by which faith is established. These include His

anointing and sealing of them, His bearing witness with them, and His serving as an earnest within them — all of which must be addressed elsewhere. By these means our faith is more and more increased and established day by day. Therefore, although no internal work of the Spirit can be the formal reason of our faith, or the ground into which it is resolved, yet it is such that without it we can never sincerely believe as we ought, nor be established in our believing against temptations and objections.

It was with reference to this work of the Holy Spirit that theologians at the first Reformation generally resolved our faith in the divine authority of Scripture into the testimony of the Holy Spirit. But they did not do so to the exclusion of the proper use of external arguments and motives of credibility — whose supply is indeed great and whose fountain is inexhaustible, since they arise from all the undeniable knowledge we have of God and ourselves in relation to our present duty and our future happiness. Still less did they exclude that evidence which the Holy Spirit gives to Scripture in and through itself. Their position is well expressed in the excellent words of one of them: "Let this therefore remain fixed: those whom the Spirit has inwardly taught solidly acquiesce in Scripture, and this indeed is its self-authentication, and is not subject to proof and reasoning — and yet the certainty it deserves in our minds, it does obtain through the testimony of the Spirit. For though in its own Majesty it gains reverence for itself, yet it truly affects us only when it has been sealed to our hearts by the Spirit." "Being therefore enlightened by its truth, we no longer believe by our own or others' judgment that Scripture is from God; but above all human judgment, with complete certainty, we determine — not otherwise than if we were beholding the very majesty of God

Himself — that it has come to us from the very mouth of God through the ministry of men." "We seek no arguments or probabilities to rest our judgment upon, but we submit our judgment and mind as to a matter beyond all estimation." "Not as wretched men are accustomed to subject their captive minds to superstition, but because we feel there a power of divine energy, alive and breathing, by which we are drawn and kindled — knowingly and willingly, yet more vividly and effectively than human will or knowledge could produce." "Such therefore is the persuasion that requires no reasons; such the knowledge that has the best reason for it — namely, that in which the mind rests more safely and consistently than in any reasonings; and finally, such the sense that can only come from heavenly revelation." "I say nothing other than what each believer experiences within himself — though words fall far short of a full explanation of the matter." (Calvin, Institutes, book 1, chapter 7, sections 7-9.)

We may here briefly summarize what we have covered so far. First, we showed in general both the nature of divine revelation and divine illumination, along with their mutual relationship to each other. Second, what the principal external arguments or motives of credibility are, by which Scripture may be proved to be of divine origin. Third, what kind of persuasion results from them, or what is the assent we give to the truth of Scripture on their basis. Fourth, what objective evidence there is in the doctrine of Scripture — evidence directed to reason — to induce the mind to assent to it. Fifth, what is the nature of the faith by which we believe Scripture to be the Word of God, and how it is worked in us

by the Holy Spirit. Sixth, what is the internal testimony given to the divine authority of Scripture by the Holy Spirit, and what is its force and use. The most important part of our work still remains.

The question we have been preparing for, and which is now our only remaining inquiry, is this: what is the work of the Holy Spirit with respect to the objective evidence we have concerning Scripture as the Word of God — the evidence that is the formal reason of our faith and into which it is resolved? That is, we come now to inquire and give a direct answer to the question: why do we believe Scripture to be the Word of God? What does our faith rest upon here? And what makes it the duty of every person to believe it to be so, to whom it is presented? The reason I will be relatively brief here is that I have long since addressed this argument in another work, and I will not repeat here what was delivered there — since whatever has been said against it or objected to it to this day has been of little weight or consideration. To this great inquiry, then, I say —

We believe Scripture to be the Word of God with divine faith for its own sake alone. Our faith is resolved into the authority and truth of God alone, as He reveals Himself to us in and through it. And this authority and veracity of God infallibly manifest and demonstrate themselves to our faith — to our minds in the exercise of it — through the revelation itself in Scripture, and in no other way. In other words, "Thus says the Lord" is the reason why we ought to believe, and why we do so — why we believe at all in general, and why we believe anything in particular. And this we call the formal object or reason of faith.

And it is clear that this formal reason is not God Himself considered in the abstract — for so He is only the material object of our faith: "He who comes to God must believe that He exists" (Hebrews 11:6). Nor is it the truth of God in the abstract, for that we believe as we do other essential attributes of His nature. Rather, it is the truth of God as He reveals Himself, His mind, and His will to us in Scripture. This is the sole reason why we believe anything with divine faith.

It may be asked — or it is often asked — why we believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, or that God is one in nature, subsisting in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. My answer is: because God Himself, the first Truth, who cannot lie, has revealed and declared these things to be so — and He who is our all requires us to believe them. If it is asked how, in what, or through what God has revealed and declared these things, or what that revelation is that God has made of them, I answer: it is Scripture, and Scripture alone. And if it is asked how I know this Scripture to be a divine revelation, to be the Word of God, I answer: first, I do not know it demonstratively, on rational or scientific principles — because a divine revelation is not capable of such demonstration (1 Corinthians 2:9). Second, I do not assent to it or hold it to be so merely on arguments and motives that are highly probable or morally compelling, as I am persuaded of many other things for which I have no certain demonstration (1 Thessalonians 2:15). Rather, I believe it to be so with divine and supernatural faith, resting on and resolved into the authority and veracity of God Himself — evidencing themselves to my mind, soul, and conscience through this revelation itself, and in no other way.

Here we rest, and deny that we believe Scripture to be the Word of God formally for any reason other than Scripture itself — which assures us of its divine authority. If we do not rest here, we must either run aground on mere moral certainty, which undermines the foundation of all divine faith, or fall into the endless circular reasoning of proving two things mutually by each other — the church by Scripture and Scripture by the church, going around in circles forever. Unless we intend to wander in this way, we must come to something in which we may rest for its own sake — not with a strong opinion, but with divine faith. And nothing can rationally claim this privilege except the truth of God manifesting itself in Scripture. Therefore those who will not allow it this place wisely deny, some of them, that the Scripture being the Word of God is the direct object of divine faith at all — claiming it to be only the object of moral persuasion based on external arguments and considerations. And I believe they would grant that if Scripture is to be believed in this way, it must be believed for its own sake. For those who would have us believe Scripture to be the Word of God on the authority of the church presenting it to us and testifying it to be so, although they present what appears to be an easy and ready path to faith, yet when things are examined carefully, they so confuse all kinds of considerations that they do not know where to stand. But it is not now my task to examine their claims — I have done that elsewhere. I will therefore prove and establish the assertion laid down, after I have prepared the way with one or two preliminary observations.

1. We presuppose here all the motives of credibility mentioned before — that is, all the external arguments that strongly persuade us that Scripture is the Word of God and by which it may be de-

fended against objections and temptations to the contrary. All of these have their proper use and may be insisted on in their proper place. They ought especially to be pressed when Scripture is attacked by an atheism arising from the love and practice of those desires and sins that are severely condemned in it and threatened with the severest judgment. For others, they may be considered as prior inducements to believing, or as concurrent means of strengthening faith in those who already believe. In the first way — as means of producing faith in the first place — I confess that from the best of my observation of things past and present, their usefulness is not great, nor has it ever been so in the church of God. For certainly the great majority of those who sincerely believe the divine origin and authority of Scripture do so without any great attention to these arguments, and without being much influenced by them. Many are, as Augustine says, saved by "simplicity of believing" and not by "subtlety of disputing" — people who are not able to examine these arguments closely, or even to grasp much of their force and effectiveness when they are presented. Most people are therefore effectively converted to God and come to saving faith — whereby they believe Scripture and virtually everything it contains — before they have ever once considered these arguments. God forbid we should think that none believe Scripture rightly except those who are able to grasp and use the subtle arguments of learned men produced in its support. On the contrary, we affirm that those who believe Scripture on no other grounds than these have in fact no true divine faith at all. Therefore these arguments were not in former times insisted on as means of producing faith in those to whom the Word was preached, nor are they ordinarily so used to this day by those who understand what their work and

duty is. But in the second way — wherever there is occasion from objections, opposition, or temptations — they may be used to good purpose. And those who are unavoidably exposed to such trials would do well to be furnished with them. As for the practice some follow of disputing about the Scriptures and their authority at all times and in all places — this gives support to atheism and is to be abhorred by all who fear God; its consequences are sufficiently evident.

2. The ministry of the church, as it is the pillar and support of truth — holding it up and declaring it — is in the ordinary course of things previously necessary to believing. For "faith comes by hearing, and hearing through the word of God." We believe Scripture to be the Word of God for itself alone, but not by itself alone. The ministry of the Word is the means God has appointed for declaring and making known the testimony that the Holy Spirit gives in Scripture to its divine origin. And this is the ordinary way by which people are brought to believe Scripture to be the Word of God. Through the church's ministry — owning, witnessing, and affirming it to be so, and instructing all kinds of people from it — faith in Scripture as the Word of God is produced in them, together with a sense and perception of the truth and power of the things taught and revealed in it.

3. We also presuppose here the internal effectual work of the Spirit producing faith in us, as declared before — without which we can believe neither Scripture nor anything else with divine faith, not for lack of evidence in them but for lack of faith in ourselves.

With these things presupposed, we affirm that it is the authority and truth of God, as manifesting themselves in the supernatural revelation given in Scripture, that our faith arises from and is re-

solved into. And herein consists the testimony that the Spirit gives to the Word of God that it is so — "for it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth." The Holy Spirit, being the immediate author of the whole Scripture, does in and through it give testimony to its divine truth and origin by the marks of divine authority and veracity impressed upon it and evidencing themselves in its power and effectiveness. And let it be noted that what we assert relates to the revelation itself — the Scripture, the writing — and not merely to the things written or contained in it. The arguments produced by some to prove the truth of the doctrines of Scripture do not reach the matter in hand. For our inquiry is not about believing the truths revealed, but about believing the revelation itself — Scripture itself — to be divine. And this we do only because of the authority and veracity of the Revealer — that is, of God Himself — as they manifest themselves therein.

To demonstrate this fully, I will do the following things.

1. Prove that our faith is resolved into Scripture as a divine revelation, and not into anything else — that is, we believe Scripture to be the Word of God for its own sake, and not for the sake of anything else, whether external arguments or the authoritative testimony of any human authority.

2. Show how or by what means Scripture demonstrates its own divine origin — or how the authority of God is evidenced in it and through it — so that we need no other formal cause or reason for our faith, whatever motives or means of believing we may make use of. And as to the first of these —

1. What serves as the formal reason on which we believe is what Scripture itself presents as the only reason why we should believe — why it is our duty to do so — and what it calls our assent to. Now this is Scripture itself as it is the Word of God, and because it is so. Or to say it differently: Scripture presents the authority of God within itself, and that alone, as what we are to rest in — and the truth of God, and that alone, as what our faith is to rest upon and be resolved into. It does not require us to believe it on the testimony of any church, or on any other arguments it gives us to prove it is from God — but speaks to us directly in His name, and on that basis requires faith and obedience.

Some may ask: does this prove Scripture to be the Word of God simply because it says so of itself, when any other writing could say the same? But we are not here giving arguments to prove to others that Scripture is the Word of God. We are only proving and showing what our own faith rests on and is resolved into — or at least what it ought to be resolved into. How Scripture evidences itself to our faith as the Word of God we will address later. For our present purpose it is sufficient that God requires us to believe Scripture for no other reason than that it is His Word — a divine revelation from Him. If so, then His authority and truth are the formal reason why we believe Scripture, or anything contained in it. Testimonies to this purpose abound in particular, in addition to that general attestation given in the sole preface of all divine revelations: "Thus says the Lord" — and therefore it is to be believed. We must mention some of them.

Deuteronomy 31:11-13: "When all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God at the place which He will choose, you shall read this law in front of all Israel in their hearing. Assemble the

people, the men and the women and children and the alien who is in your town, so that they may hear and learn and fear the Lord your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law. Their children, who have not known, will hear and learn to fear the Lord your God." It is plain that God here requires faith and obedience from the whole people — men, women, and children. The question is: what does He require it toward? It is toward this law — this written law in the books of Moses — which was to be read to them out of the book, and upon hearing which they were obligated to believe and obey. To demonstrate that law to be His, He presents nothing except the law itself. But it may be said that that generation was sufficiently convinced that the law was from God by the miracles they witnessed at its giving. But beyond that, it is commanded to be presented to children of future generations who have known nothing, that they may hear and learn to fear the Lord.

That which by God's appointment is to be presented to those who know nothing so that they may believe — that is the formal reason of their believing. But this is the written Word: "You shall read this law to those who have known nothing, that they may hear and learn," etc. Whatever use there may be of other motives or testimonies to commend the law to us — especially the ministry of the church, which is here required for the presentation of the Word to people — it is the law itself, the written Word, that is the object of our faith and that we believe for its own sake. See also Deuteronomy 29:29, where "the revealed things belong to us and to our children, that we may do them" — that is, that we may receive them on the basis of their divine revelation.

Isaiah 8:19-20: "When they say to you, 'Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter,' should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?" "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no light in them." The question here is by what means people may come to satisfaction in their minds and consciences — what their faith and trust is to rest in. Two things are presented for this purpose. First, direct diabolical revelations, real or pretended. Second, the written Word of God — the law and the testimony. To this we are directed, and solely on account of its own authority — in opposition to all other claims to assurance or security. And the sole reason any person does not rest by faith in the written Word is that they have no light of truth shining on them. But how are we to know the law and testimony — this written Word — to be the Word of God, to believe it to be so, and to distinguish it from every other claimed divine revelation that is not? This is explained next —

Jeremiah 23:28-29: "The prophet who has a dream may relate his dream, but let him who has My word speak My word in truth." "What does straw have in common with grain?" declares the Lord. "Is not My word like fire?" declares the Lord, "and like a hammer which shatters a rock?" It is supposed that two people have reputations as prophets with claims to divine revelations. One merely pretends to be a prophet and declares the dreams of his own imagination, or the divinations of his own mind, as the Word of God. The other has the Word of God and faithfully declares it from Him. But how are we to tell them apart? Even as people know wheat from chaff — by their different natures and effects. For as false and pretended revelations are like chaff that every wind will scatter, so

the true Word of God is like a fire and like a hammer — accompanied by such light, effectiveness, and power that it manifests itself to the consciences of people as being what it is. On this basis, God calls us to rest our faith in it in opposition to all other claims.

But does Scripture have this authority and effectiveness in itself? See Luke 16:27-31: "Then he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house — for I have five brothers — in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'" "But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'" "But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!'" "But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'" The question here between Abraham and the rich man in this parable — and in reality between the wisdom of God and the superstitious ideas of men — is about the way and means of bringing unbelievers and the unrepentant to faith and repentance. The man in hell thought that nothing would make them believe but a miracle — one rising from the dead and speaking to them. Many today think the same: that marvelous works would have great power and influence on them to settle their minds and change their lives. They think that if they were to see someone rise from the dead and come and speak with them, this would convince them of the immortality of the soul and of future rewards and punishments — giving them such sufficient evidence that they would surely repent and change their lives. They claim they have no sufficient evidence of these things as matters stand, so they doubt them to such a degree that they are not truly moved by them — but give them one real miracle and you would have them forever. This, I

say, was the opinion of the man represented as being in hell — and it is the opinion of many who are rushing there quickly. The one who was in heaven thought differently — and in his words we have the immediate judgment of Jesus Christ on this matter, settling the controversy. The question concerns what constitutes sufficient evidence and power to cause us to believe things that are divine and supernatural. And Christ determines this to be found in the written Word — Moses and the Prophets. If the one who will not believe on the single evidence of the written Word as a divine revelation of God's will, will also never believe on the evidence of miracles or any other motives, then that written Word contains within itself the entire formal reason of faith — all the evidence of God's authority and truth on which divine and supernatural faith rests. That is, it is to be believed for its own sake. But our Lord Jesus Christ Himself says: "If they do not hear" — that is, believe — "Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded even if one rises from the dead" and comes and preaches to them — a greater miracle than they could have desired. Now this could not be said if Scripture did not contain within itself the entire formal reason for believing — for if it lacked this, something necessary for believing would still be missing, even if one had received the benefit of the miracle. And this is directly affirmed —

John 20:30-31: "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." The signs Christ performed evidenced Him to be the Son of God. But how do we come to know and believe these signs? What is the means by which we do so? The blessed

apostle says: "These things are written that you may believe" — this writing of them by divine inspiration is, in itself, sufficient to produce and assure faith in us, so that through it you may have eternal life through Jesus Christ. For if the writing down of divine things and revelations is the means appointed by God to cause people to believe unto eternal life, then as such it must carry with it sufficient reason why we should believe and grounds on which to do so. And the apostle Peter settles this matter in the same way —

2 Peter 1:16-21: "For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty." "For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory: "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased"" "and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain." "So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts." "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation," "for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." The question here is about the Gospel — about the declaration of the powerful coming of Jesus Christ — whether it was to be believed, and if so, on what grounds. Some said it was a cleverly invented fable; others, that it was the fanatical story of madmen, as Festus thought when Paul preached it (Acts 26:24). Very many are of the same mind still. The apostles, on the contrary, affirmed that what was said concerning Him were "words of truth and soberness" — indeed "a trustworthy saying,

worthy of full acceptance" (1 Timothy 1:15). That is, it was to be believed for its own worth and truth. The grounds and reasons for this are two. First, the testimony of the apostles, who not only conversed with Jesus Christ and were eyewitnesses of His majesty — beholding His glory, "the glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14) — which they offered as evidence of the truth of the Gospel (1 John 1:1), but who also heard a miraculous testimony given to Him directly from God in heaven (verses 17-18). This gave them indeed sufficient assurance — but into what shall those resolve their faith who did not hear this testimony? They have a more sure — that is, a most certain — word of prophecy: the written Word of God, which is sufficient in itself to secure their faith in this matter, especially as confirmed by the testimony of the apostles, by which the church comes to be built in its faith on "the foundation of the prophets and apostles" (Ephesians 2:20). But why should we believe this word of prophecy? May it not also be a cleverly invented fable, and the whole Scripture merely the product of men's own spirits, as is objected? Verse 20: everything is finally resolved into this — that its writers were "moved and carried along by the Holy Spirit," and from this divine origin it carries its own evidence with it. In plain terms, what the apostle teaches us is: we believe all other divine truths for Scripture's sake — because they are declared therein; but Scripture itself we believe for its own sake, because holy men of God wrote it as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

The whole object of faith is presented in the same way by the same apostle in 2 Peter 3:2: "the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandments of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles." And because our faith is resolved into these,

we are said to be "built on the foundation of the prophets and apostles" (Ephesians 2:20) — that is, our faith rests solely, as on its proper load-bearing foundation, on the authority and truth of God in their writings. To this we may add that of Paul —

Romans 16:25-26: "According to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith." The matter to be believed is the mystery of the Gospel, which had been kept secret since the foundation of the world — or from the giving of the first promise — not absolutely, but with respect to the full manifestation it has now received. This God commands to be believed; the eternal God — who has sovereign authority over all — requires faith as a matter of obedience. But what ground or reason do we have to believe it? This alone is presented: the divine revelation made in the preaching of the apostles and the writings of the prophets — "for faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). This course, and no other, did our Savior take — even after His resurrection — to produce and confirm faith in the disciples (Luke 24:25-27). That great testimony to this purpose in 2 Timothy 3:14-17 I do not discuss in detail here, because I have addressed it thoroughly in another work.

From these and many other testimonies to the same purpose that could be produced, it is evident —

1. That it is Scripture itself — the Word or will of God as revealed or written — that is presented to us as the object of our faith and obedience, which we are to receive and believe with divine and supernatural faith.

2. That no other reason is presented to us — either as a motive to encourage us, or as an argument to assure us that we will not be mistaken — except its own divine origin and authority, which makes our duty necessary and secures our faith infallibly. And these testimonies carry a thousand times more weight with me than the plausible reasoning of any who would argue otherwise. With some it has become a matter of contempt to quote or cite Scripture in their writings — such regard do they have for the ancient fathers, some of whose writings are nothing but a continuous weaving of Scripture. But those who claim to despise these testimonies in this case do so either because they do not understand what the testimonies are being used to confirm, or because they cannot answer the proof they contain. For it is not unlikely that some people, who are highly confident in their own understanding in matters where they are most ignorant, will pride themselves on the supposed ridiculousness of proving Scripture to be the Word of God by testimonies drawn from it. But as was said, we must not abandon the truth simply because some people will not or cannot understand what we are arguing.

2. Our assertion is confirmed by the consistent practice of the prophets, apostles, and all the writers of Scripture in presenting the divine revelations they received by direct inspiration from God. For what was the reason of faith for those to whom they first declared those divine revelations, is also the reason of our faith now that they are recorded in Scripture. For the writing down of them — being appointed by God — takes the place of and supplies what their oral ministry provided. On whatever grounds people were obligated to receive and believe divine revelations when made to them by the prophets and apostles, on those same grounds we are

obligated to receive and believe them now they are given to us in Scripture, since the writing was by divine inspiration and appointed as the means and cause of our faith. It is true that God was sometimes pleased to bear witness to their personal ministry through miracles, signs, and wonders — "God also testifying with them" (Hebrews 2:4). But this was only on some occasions and with some of them. What they universally insisted on — whether they performed miracles or not — was that the Word they preached, declared, and wrote was not the word of man, did not come by any private suggestion or from any invention of their own, but was indeed the Word of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13), declared by them as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21).

Under the Old Testament, although the prophets sometimes referred people to the Word already written as the final resting place of their faith (Isaiah 8:20; Malachi 4:4) — setting forth its power and excellence for all the purposes of faith and obedience (Psalm 19:7-9; Psalm 119), and appealing to nothing else, no other motives or arguments, to produce and require faith, but its own authority alone — yet as to their own specific messages and revelations, they laid the foundation of all faith and obedience they required in this alone: "Thus says the Lord, the God of truth." And under the New Testament, the infallible preachers and writers of it first present the writings of the Old Testament to be received for their own sake, or on the basis of their divine origin (John 5:45-47; Luke 16:29-31; Matthew 21:42; Acts 18:24-25, 28; Acts 24:14; Acts 26:22; 2 Peter 1:21). Hence they are called "the oracles of God" (Romans 3:2). And oracles always required assent for their own sake — they appealed to no other evidence. And for the revelations they added, they claimed to have received them "directly from God

through Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:1). And this was accompanied with such infallible assurance in those who received it that it was to be preferred above even a supposed miracle in support of anything contradicting it (Galatians 1:8). For if an angel from heaven were to preach any other doctrine than what they revealed and presented in the name and authority of God, they were to regard him as accursed. For this reason they constantly appealed to their apostolic authority and commission — which included infallible inspiration and direction — as the reason for the faith of those to whom they preached and wrote. And as for those who were not themselves divinely inspired, or in cases where those who were inspired were not acting by direct inspiration, they proved the truth of what they delivered by its agreement with the Scriptures already written, referring the minds and consciences of people to them for their ultimate satisfaction (Acts 18:28; Acts 28:23).

3. It was granted before that, as something subordinate to believing — as a means of it, or of the resolution of our faith into the authority of God in the Scriptures — the ministerial presentation of the Scriptures and the truths contained in them is required, along with God's command for obedience to them (Romans 16:25-26). This ministry of the church — whether extraordinary or ordinary — God has appointed to this end, and ordinarily it is indispensable for it (Romans 10:14-15): "How are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?" Without this, ordinarily we cannot come to believe Scripture to be the Word of God, or the things contained in it to be from Him — though we do not believe either one because of this ministry. I grant that in extraordinary cases, external providences

may substitute for this ministerial presentation, since it makes no difference to our duty by what means Scripture comes to us. But given this ministerial presentation of the Word — which ordinarily includes the whole duty of the church in its testimony and declaration of the truth — I want to know whether those to whom it is presented are obligated, without any further external evidence, to receive it as the Word of God, to rest their faith in it, and to submit their consciences to it. The rule seems plain that they are so obligated (Mark 16:16). We may consider this under two forms of its presentation: extraordinary and ordinary.

Upon the preaching of any of the prophets by direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit, or upon their declaration — whether by preaching or writing — of any new revelation they had received from God (take Isaiah or Jeremiah, for example), I want to know whether all people were bound to receive their doctrine as from God, to believe and submit to the authority of God in the revelation made through them, without any external motives or arguments, and without the testimony or authority of the church witnessing to them. If they were not so bound, then all who refused to believe the message they declared in the name of God were entirely excused and guiltless in despising the warnings and instructions they gave. For they used no external motives, and the existing establishment of the church mostly condemned them and their ministry — as is plain in the case of Jeremiah. Now it is impious to imagine that those to whom they spoke in the name of God were not obligated to believe them — such an idea tends to the overthrow of all religion. If we say they were so obligated — and under penalty of divine displeasure — to receive the revelation made through them, or their declaration of it, as the Word of God, then it must contain in itself the

formal reason for believing: the full and entire cause, reason, and ground why they were to believe with divine and supernatural faith. Let some other ground of faith in this case be put forward, if there is one.

Suppose the presentation is made in the ordinary ministry of the church. Through this, Scripture is declared to people as the Word of God — they are made acquainted with it and what God requires of them in it, and they are charged in the name of God to receive and believe it. Does any obligation to believe arise from this? Some may say that no immediate obligation does; they will only grant that people are bound to inquire into such reasons and motives as are offered for its reception. I say, there is no doubt that people are obligated to consider all such things as are offered to them, and not to receive Scripture with a blind, unthinking belief. For receiving it must be an act of people's own minds and understandings, on the best grounds and evidences that the nature of the thing presented is capable of. But assuming that people do their duty in diligently examining the whole matter, I want to know whether through the ministerial presentation described, an obligation to believe comes upon them. If it does not, then all those who refuse to receive the Gospel when it is preached are entirely innocent with respect to that preaching — which, to say so, is to overthrow the whole purpose of the ministry. If they are obligated to believe upon the preaching of it, then the Word must contain in itself that evidence of its divine origin and authority which provides sufficient ground for faith and reason for believing — for what God requires us to believe upon has always been such.

As the conclusion of this whole discussion, it is affirmed that our faith is built on and resolved into Scripture itself, which carries with it its own evidence of being a divine revelation. And therefore this faith ultimately rests in the truth and authority of God alone — not in any human testimony such as that of the church, nor in any rational arguments or motives that are absolutely fallible.

It may be objected that if Scripture thus evidences itself to be the Word of God — as the sun manifests itself by light, or fire by heat, or as the first principles of reason are self-evident without further proof or testimony — then everyone, upon the presentation of Scripture and its own bare assertion that it is the Word of God, would necessarily assent to it on that evidence alone and believe it to be so. But this is not the case — all experience is against it — and there is no reasonable ground for thinking that it is so, or that it ought to be.

In answer to this objection, I will do two things.

1. I will show what it is — what faculty or power in the minds of men — to which this revelation is presented and by which we assent to its truth, at which point the errors on which this objection is based will be exposed.

2. I will mention some of those things by which the Holy Spirit bears witness and gives evidence to Scripture in and through itself, so that our faith may be immediately resolved into the veracity of God alone.

1. First, we may observe that there are three ways by which we assent to anything presented to us as true and receive it as such.

1. By innate principles of natural light and the first rational acts of our minds. This in reason corresponds to instinct in non-rational creatures. God therefore complains that His people neglected and sinned against their own natural light and the first dictates of reason, while even brute creatures do not forsake the guidance of their instincts (Isaiah 1:3). In general, the mind is necessarily determined to assent to the proper objects of these principles — it cannot do otherwise. It cannot but assent to the primary dictates of the light of nature; indeed those dictates are nothing other than its assent. The mind's first apprehension of the things embraced by natural light — without explicit reasoning or further consideration — is this assent. In this way the mind embraces within itself the general principles of moral good and evil, and the distinction between them — even if it does not practically comply with what they require (Jude verse 10). And so it assents to many principles of reason — such as that the whole is greater than the part — without allowing any debate about them.

2. By rational consideration of things externally presented to it. Here the mind exercises its discursive faculty, drawing one thing from another and concluding one thing from another. On this basis it is able to assent to what is presented in various degrees of certainty, according to the nature and degree of the evidence it works from. Hence it has certain knowledge of some things, and of others a prevailing opinion or persuasion against known objections — which may be true or false.

3. By faith. This draws on that power of our minds by which we are able to assent to anything as true that we have no innate principles about, no built-in notions of, and from more familiar principles can draw no certain rational conclusions about. This is our as-

sent upon testimony — by which we believe many things that no sense, innate principles, or reasonings of our own could have either acquainted us with or given us assurance of. And this assent also has not only various degrees but is also of diverse kinds — according to the testimony from which it arises and on which it rests — being human if that testimony is human, and divine if it is divine.

According to these distinct faculties and powers of our souls, God is pleased to reveal and make known Himself, His mind, and His will to us in three ways. For He has implanted no power in our minds whose primary use and exercise is not meant to be directed toward Himself and our living for Him — that being the purpose of them all. To neglect the use of these powers for this end is the highest aggravation of sin. It is an aggravation of sin when people misuse God's created things in ways He has not appointed, or fail to use them for His glory — when they take His grain and wine and oil and spend them on their desires (Hosea 2:8). It is a greater aggravation when people in sinning abuse and dishonor their own bodies, for these are God's principal external work, made for eternity, whose preservation for His glory is committed to us in a special way. The apostle declares this to be the particular aggravation of the sin of sexual immorality and impurity of any kind (1 Corinthians 6:18-19). But the height of impiety consists in the abuse of the faculties and powers of the soul, which are given to us specifically and directly for the purpose of glorifying God. From this abuse arise unbelief, godlessness, blasphemy, atheism, and similar corruptions of the spirit and mind. And these are sins of the highest provocation. For the powers and faculties of our minds

being given to us only to enable us to live for God, diverting their principal exercise to other ends is an act of enmity against Him and an affront to Him.

1. He makes Himself known to us through the innate principles of our nature, to which He has communicated both a power of apprehension and an indelible sense of His being, His authority, and His will — insofar as our natural dependence on Him and moral subjection to Him require. For there are two things in this natural light and the first dictates of reason: first, a power of conceiving, discerning, and assenting; and second, a power of judging and determining based on what is so discerned and assented to. By the first, God makes known His being and essential attributes; by the second, His sovereign authority over all.

As to the first, the apostle affirms in Romans 1:19 that "what can be known about God" — His essence, being, subsistence, and necessary essential attributes — "is plain to them," that is, it has a self-evidencing power, operating in the minds of all people endowed with natural light and reason.

And as to His sovereign authority, He demonstrates it in and through the consciences of people — which represent the judgment they make, and cannot help but make, of themselves and their actions with respect to the authority and judgment of God (Romans 2:14-15). And in this way the mind assents to the principles of God's being and authority prior to any actual exercise of the discursive faculty of reason, or of any other testimony.

2. He reveals Himself to our reason in its exercise, by presenting to its consideration things from which it may — and cannot but — conclude in an assent to the truth of what God intends to reveal

to us in this way. He does this through the works of creation and providence, which present themselves unavoidably to reason in its exercise, instructing us in the nature, being, and attributes of God.

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse shows His handiwork." "Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge." "There is no speech nor are there words where their voice is not heard" (Psalm 19:1-3). But they do not thus declare, evidence, and reveal the glory of God to the first principles and notions of natural light without the actual exercise of reason. They do so only when "we consider His heavens, the work of His fingers, the moon and the stars which He has set in place" — as the same psalmist says in Psalm 8:3. A rational consideration of them — their greatness, order, beauty, and purpose — is required for the testimony and evidence that God gives in and through them of Himself and His glorious being and power. To this purpose the apostle speaks at length about the works of creation (Romans 1:20-22) and also about those of providence (Acts 14:15-17; Acts 17:24-28), and the rational use we are to make of them (verse 29). So God calls people to exercise their reason about these things, reproaching them with stupidity and obtuseness where they fail to do so (Isaiah 46:7-9; Isaiah 44:18-20).

3. God reveals Himself to our faith — that power of our souls by which we are able to assent to the truth of what is presented to us on the basis of testimony. And He does this through His Word, the Scriptures, presented to us in the manner and way described above.

He does not reveal Himself through His Word to the principles of natural light, nor to reason in its exercise. But yet these principles, and reason itself, along with all the faculties of our minds, are

consequently affected by that revelation and drawn into their proper exercise by it. But in the Gospel "the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith" (Romans 1:17) — not to natural light, sense, or reason in the first place. And it is faith that is "the assurance of things hoped for" — as revealed in the Word (Hebrews 11:1). For this kind of revelation, "Thus says the Lord" is the only ground and reason of our assent — and that assent is the assent of faith, because it is resolved into testimony alone.

And regarding these various ways of communicating or revealing the knowledge of God, it must always be noted that there is a perfect harmony in the things revealed by all of them. If anything claims to derive from one of them what is absolutely contradictory to another — or to our senses as the means of them — it is not to be received.

The foundation of all this — as with all the workings of our souls — lies in the innate principles of natural light, or the first necessary dictates of our intellectual, rational nature. As far as these principles extend, they serve as a rule for all our understanding in everything that follows. Therefore, if anyone claims, through the exercise of reason, to conclude something about the nature, being, or will of God that directly contradicts these principles and dictates, that conclusion is not a divine revelation to reason — it is a paralogism, a logical error arising from a defect in reason's exercise. This is exactly what the apostle charges against and argues forcefully against the pagan philosophers. They had innate notions within themselves of the being and eternal power of God, and these were so evident to them that they could not deny them. From there, they set their discursive faculty to work in considering God and His being. But in doing so, they were so foolish as to draw con-

clusions directly contrary to the first principles of natural light and the unavoidable notions they had of the eternal being of God (Romans 1:21-24). Many people, upon their supposed rational consideration of the seemingly random events of the world, have foolishly concluded that all things had a chance beginning and either happen by chance or are driven by a chain of prior causes operating with blind necessity — not ordered by an infinitely wise, unerring, and holy providence. This conclusion also directly contradicts the first principles and notions of natural light, and thereby exposes itself not as a product of reason rightly exercised, but as a mere delusion.

Likewise, if anyone claims to receive revelations by faith that contradict the first principles of natural light or reason properly exercised about its proper objects, that claim is a delusion. On this basis, the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation is rightly rejected — it presents as a revelation of faith something that directly contradicts our senses and reason operating properly about their proper objects. And if any such thing were possible, it would mean that the different ways God reveals and makes Himself known would work against and contradict one another — which would leave us with no certainty in anything, whether divine or human.

Yet while these means of divine revelation harmonize and perfectly agree with one another, they are not equally extensive or covering the same ground, nor are they on the same level — they are subordinate to one another. Therefore, there are many things discernible by reason in its exercise that do not appear through the first principles of natural light alone. The sober philosophers of old arrived at many true and profound conceptions of God and the excellencies of His nature — reaching further than those who either

could not or did not cultivate and develop the principles of natural light in the same way. It is therefore foolish to claim that what God has made known in this way is not infallibly true and certain simply because it is not immediately obvious from the first conceptions of natural light without the proper exercise of reason — as long as it does not contradict those principles. And there are many things revealed to faith that lie above and beyond what reason can grasp, even at its best and fullest exercise. All the principal mysteries of the Christian religion are of this kind. It is the height of folly to reject them, as some do, simply because reason cannot fully comprehend them — since they do not contradict reason. Therefore, these ways of God's self-revelation are not equally extensive or covering the same ground, but are subordinate to one another in such a way that what one lacks, another supplies — together accomplishing the whole and complete purpose of divine revelation, with God's truth remaining the same throughout all of them.

The revelation God makes of Himself through the first way — by the innate principles of natural light — sufficiently and infallibly evidences itself as coming from Him; it does so in, to, and through those principles themselves. This revelation of God is infallible, and the assent it produces is infallible, because the infallible evidence it carries within itself makes it so. We are not here debating what a few atheistic skeptics claim, since their errors have been sufficiently exposed by others. All reasonable people in the world agree that the light of the knowledge of God — communicated through the innate principles of our minds and consciences — sufficiently, undeniably, and infallibly manifests itself as coming from Him, and that the mind neither is nor possibly can be deceived in

its apprehension of that knowledge. If the first dictates of reason concerning God did not evidence themselves as coming from God, they would be neither useful nor authoritative — for they cannot be confirmed by external arguments, and everything written about them is meant to show their force and evidence, not to supply it. Therefore, this first way of God's self-revelation to us is infallible and infallibly evidences itself in our minds, in keeping with the capacity of our natures.

2. The revelation God makes of Himself through the works of creation and providence — addressed to our reason in its active exercise, that is, to our souls as they reason discursively, drawing conclusions from one thing to another — sufficiently and indeed infallibly evidences and demonstrates itself to be from Him, so that it is impossible for us to be deceived in it. It does not evidence itself to the innate principles of natural light by themselves, unless those principles are actively engaged in reasoning about the means of the revelation — that is, we must rationally consider the works of God in both creation and providence, or we cannot learn through them what God intends to reveal of Himself. But when we do so consider them, we cannot be deceived. "For the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead" (Romans 1:20). They are clearly seen, and therefore may be perfectly understood — regarding what they teach about God — without any possibility of error. Wherever people fail to receive the revelation intended in the way it was intended — that is, wherever they do not firmly conclude that what God teaches through His works of creation and providence, namely His eternal power and Godhead along with their essential attributes of infinite

wisdom, goodness, and righteousness, is certainly and infallibly true — this failure is not due to any defect in the revelation or its self-evidencing power. It is due only to the depraved and corrupt habits of their minds, their hostility toward God, and their dislike of Him. So the apostle says that those who rejected or failed to benefit from God's revelation did so because "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge" (Romans 1:28). For this reason God so severely punished their willful unbelief, as is described there. See also Isaiah 46:8 and Isaiah 44:15, 19-20. The main point I draw from this is that the revelation God makes of Himself through the works of creation and providence does not evidence itself to the first principles of natural light in such a way that assent would be given without the active exercise of reason and the discursive faculty of our minds about those works. But to reason in its active exercise, it does infallibly evidence itself. In the same way, Scripture may have — and does have — a self-evidencing power, even though this power does not appear to the first principles of natural light, nor even to bare reason in its exercise. For, —

3. To our faith, God reveals Himself through Scripture — His Word, which He has magnified above all His name (Psalm 138:2), meaning He has stamped on it more marks of Himself and His attributes than on any other means by which He reveals or makes Himself known to us. We acknowledge that this revelation of God through His Word is not suited to evidence itself to the light of nature or the first principles of our understanding in such a way that, by the bare presentation of Scripture as being from God, we would immediately assent to it through those principles — the way people assent to self-evident natural principles such as "the part is less than the whole." Nor does it evidence itself to our reason in its

merely natural exercise, so that by virtue of reason alone we could reach a demonstrative conclusion that Scripture is from God and that what it declares is certainly and infallibly true. It does have external evidences accompanying it that make a significant impression on reason itself. But the power of our souls to which Scripture is presented is the faculty by which we can give assent to truth on the testimony of the one presenting it — without any other evidence. And this is the principal and most noble faculty and power of our nature. There is an instinct in non-rational creatures that has some resemblance to our innate natural principles, and they act on that instinct — sharpened by experience — in a way that strongly resembles reason in its exercise, though it is not truly reason. But as for the power or faculty of giving assent to things on the basis of witness or testimony, there is nothing in the nature of non-rational creatures that has even the slightest shadow or resemblance of it. And if our souls lacked only this one faculty — assenting to truth on the basis of testimony — all that remained would not be sufficient to guide us through the affairs of everyday natural life. This most noble faculty of our minds, therefore, is the one to which the highest way of divine revelation is addressed.

4. We have already declared and proved that our minds, in order for our assent to conform to God's mind and to fulfill our duty, must be prepared and assisted by the Holy Spirit. Given this, the revelation God makes of Himself through His Word evidences itself to our minds in the exercise of faith as being from Him no less than His revelation through the works of creation and providence evidences itself to our minds in the exercise of reason — and it does so with no less infallible assurance than what we receive through the dictates of natural light. When God reveals Himself —

that is, His eternal power and Godhead — through the things He has made, through the heavens declaring His glory and the expanse showing His handiwork, the reason of people, stirred up and brought into exercise by these things, infallibly concludes from the evidence within that revelation that there is a God, eternally powerful and wise — without needing any further arguments to prove that the revelation is true. In the same way, when God reveals Himself through His Word to the minds of people, thereby drawing faith into exercise — that power of the soul to assent to truth on the basis of testimony — that revelation evidences itself no less infallibly as divine and from God, without any external arguments to prove it so. If I tell a man that the sun has risen and is shining on the earth, and he questions or denies it and asks how I will prove it, a sufficient answer is that the sun manifests itself by its own light. And if he adds that this is no proof to him because he cannot see it, suppose that is true — it is a satisfactory reply to tell him he is blind. If he is not blind, then there is no point arguing with someone who contradicts his own senses, for he leaves no standard by which what is said can be tested or judged. And if I tell a man that the heavens declare the glory of God and the expanse shows His handiwork — or that the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made — and he asks how I prove it, a sufficient answer is that these things in and by themselves make evident to the reason of every person, rightly and properly exercised, that there is an eternal, infinitely wise and powerful being by whom they were caused, produced, and made. Anyone who knows how to use and exercise their reasoning faculty in considering these things — their origin, order, nature, and purpose — must necessarily conclude

that this is so. If someone says this does not appear to him — that the being of God is not revealed to him in this way — the sufficient reply, if he truly lacks this perception, is that he is irrational and not using his reason rightly. If he is using it rightly, then he is arguing in direct contradiction to his own reason, as can be demonstrated. Even the pagan philosophers granted this. Cicero writes in *On the Nature of the Gods*, book 2: "What can be so evident and clear, when we look up at the heavens and contemplate celestial things, as that there is some supreme mind of outstanding excellence by which these things are governed? One who doubts this, I truly cannot understand why the same person cannot also doubt whether the sun exists at all." Likewise, if I declare to someone that Scripture is the Word of God — a divine revelation — and that it evidences and manifests itself to be so, and they say they have the use and exercise of sense and reason as much as anyone else, yet it does not appear so to them, the sufficient reply — as far as the present inquiry about Scripture's authority goes, though other means may be used to bring them to conviction — is simply this: "not all people have faith," and it is through faith alone that the evidence of Scripture's divine authority becomes discernible. It is only in the light of faith that we can read those marks of its divine origin which are impressed upon and communicated to it.

If Scripture does not evidence itself as a divine revelation in this way, and yet it is our duty to believe it to be so, the reason must be one of two things: either our faith is not fitted, suited, or able to receive the kind of evidence God gives through His Word — even if God were willing to give it the same kind of self-evidencing power He has given to the light of nature and the works of providence — or God was unwilling or unable to give His Word such ev-

idence as would manifest itself to be from Him. And neither of these can be affirmed without casting serious doubt on the wisdom and goodness of God.

That our faith is capable of giving such assent is evident from the fact that God works it in us and bestows it on us for precisely this purpose. God requires us to believe infallibly what He presents to us — at least when we have infallible evidence that it is from Him. As He appoints faith to this end and approves of its exercise, so He also judges and condemns those who fail in it (2 Chronicles 20:20; Isaiah 7:9; Mark 16:16). Indeed, our faith is capable of giving an assent that is — though of a different kind — more firm and accompanied with greater assurance than any assent given by reason even in its best conclusions. The reason is that the power of the mind to assent upon testimony — which is its most noble faculty — is elevated and strengthened by the divine, supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, as described previously.

To say that God either could not or would not give such power to the revelation of Himself through His Word — such that it could evidence itself as being from Him — is deeply dishonoring to His glory, especially since the eternal welfare of human souls is immeasurably more at stake in this revelation than in the others mentioned. What reason could be given for Him to implant less evidence of His divine authority on this revelation than on those others, seeing that He designed far greater and more glorious ends through this one? If someone says the reason is that this kind of divine revelation is simply not capable of receiving such evidence, that claim must mean either that no clear marks of divine authority, goodness, wisdom, and power can be implanted in or attached

to it — or that no power to manifest those marks can be communicated to it. That both of these objections are wrong will be demonstrated in the final part of this discourse, which I now turn to.

It has already been declared that it is the authority and veracity of God — revealing themselves in and through Scripture — that constitute the formal reason of our faith, or our supernatural assent to Scripture as the Word of God.

It remains only to inquire, in the second place, into the way and means by which they evidence themselves to us — and through them, Scripture itself as the Word of God — so that we may believe it to be so without doubt or uncertainty. Now, because faith, as we have shown, is assent upon testimony, and therefore divine faith is assent upon divine testimony, there must be some testimony or witness in this case on which faith rests. That testimony, we affirm, is the testimony of the Holy Spirit — the author of the Scriptures — given in them and through them. This work or testimony of the Spirit may be organized under two main headings, each of which will be addressed in turn.

1. The impressions or marks which the Holy Spirit — the author of Scripture — has objectively left in and upon it of all the divine excellencies and attributes of the divine nature, are the first means by which that testimony of the Spirit evidences itself — the testimony on which our faith rests. These marks give the first evidence of Scripture's divine origin and authority, on the basis of which we believe it. The way we learn the eternal power and deity of God from the works of creation is precisely through those marks, tokens, and impressions of His divine power, wisdom, and goodness stamped upon them. By considering the existence, greatness, order, and purpose of created things, reason necessarily con-

cludes that there is an infinite, self-existing being of whose power and wisdom these things are the manifest effects. These things are clearly seen and understood through what has been made; we need no external arguments to prove that God made the world — the world itself carries that proof. It bears within it and upon it the infallible marks of its origin. See the blessed meditation of the psalmist on this in Psalm 104 throughout. Now the written Word contains greater and more evident impressions of divine excellencies — stamped on it by the infinite wisdom of its author — than are communicated to any of God's works, of whatever kind. David, comparing the works and the Word of God in their power to instruct us and declare God and His glory, ascribes much to the works of creation — yet he places the Word incomparably above them (Psalm 19:1-3, 7-9; Psalm 146:8-9; Psalm 19:19-20). And these marks reveal the Word to our faith as being from God more clearly than the works of creation reveal themselves to our reason as being from God. I am not aware that anyone denies this — or asserts the contrary — namely, that God, as the immediate author of Scripture, has left within the very words themselves clear tokens and impressions of His wisdom, foreknowledge, omniscience, power, goodness, holiness, truth, and other divine and infinite excellencies, sufficiently evidenced to the enlightened minds of believers. Some speak ambiguously on this point, I admit; but until they directly deny it, I need not argue it further here, having done so at length in another work. I leave it to be considered whether it is morally possible that God should immediately from Himself — out of the eternal counsels of His will — reveal Himself, His mind, and the thoughts and purposes of His heart, which had been hidden in Himself from eternity, specifically that we should believe

them and obey Him according to that declaration, and yet not give with it or leave upon it any infallible token evidencing Him to be the author of that revelation. Those who are not ashamed of their Christianity will not be ashamed to profess it, seal that profession with their blood if necessary, and rest their eternal concerns on the security they have found in this: that there is a manifestation of God's glorious attributes in and through Scripture as a divine revelation — one that incomparably surpasses in evidence all that reason receives about His power from the works of creation.

This is the basis on which we believe Scripture to be the Word of God with divine and supernatural faith — if we believe it to be so at all. Within Scripture itself there is evidence of its divine origin — marks of divine excellency left upon it by its author, the Holy Spirit — and it is in this evidence that faith quietly rests and is resolved. This evidence is just as clear to the simplest and most unlearned person as it is to the wisest philosopher. The truth is, if rational arguments and external motives were the sole ground for receiving Scripture as the Word of God, it would follow that learned men and philosophers would always have been the quickest to accept it and the most firmly committed to it and its profession. For since all such arguments persuade people in proportion to their ability to perceive and evaluate their force, philosophers would have had an incomparable advantage over everyone else. Yet some have recently claimed that it was the wise, rational, and learned who were the first to readily receive the Gospel — an assertion that nothing but gross ignorance of Scripture itself and of all the historical writings about the origin of Christianity, whether by Christians or pagans, could give the slightest support to (see 1 Corinthians 1:23, 26). For this reason, Scripture is so often compared to light —

called light, a light shining in a dark place — which will evidence itself to all who are not blind, or who do not willfully shut their eyes, or whose eyes have not been blinded by the god of this world, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. I have addressed this point at length elsewhere.

2. The Spirit of God evidences the divine origin and authority of Scripture through the power and authority He exercises in it and through it over the minds and consciences of people, and through its divine effects on them. The apostle expressly states this as the reason and cause of faith in 1 Corinthians 14:24-25: "But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you." This acknowledgment and confession that God is among them is a profession of faith in the Word proclaimed by the apostles. Such people assent to the divine authority of the Word, or believe it to be the Word of God. The evidence or ground on which they did so is expressly stated. It was not through the force of any external arguments presented for that purpose. It was not through the testimony of this or that church, or any church at all. It was not through being convinced by any miracles they witnessed confirming it. Indeed, the ground of the faith and confession described is specifically contrasted with the gift of tongues and its effectiveness (verses 23-24). The only evidence on which they received the Word and acknowledged it to be from God was the divine power and efficacy they personally experienced within themselves. "He is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, and so the secrets of his heart are disclosed" — and on that

basis he falls down before it, acknowledging its divine authority, finding the Word coming upon his conscience with an irresistible power of conviction and judgment. He cannot help but grant that there is a divine efficacy in it or accompanying it. What especially affects his mind is that the secrets of his heart are laid bare by it. All people must acknowledge this to be an effect of divine power, since God alone is the one who searches, knows, and judges the heart. And if the woman of Samaria believed that Jesus was the Christ because he told her everything she had ever done (John 4:29), there is every reason to believe that a Word which lays bare even the secrets of our hearts is from God. And although I understand that in Hebrews 4:12, "the Word of God" refers primarily to the living and eternal Word, the power and efficacy ascribed there is nonetheless the power He exerts through the word of the Gospel. And so that word also, in its place and use, "pierces to the dividing of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and is a discerner" — or passes a searching judgment — "on the thoughts and intentions of the heart," or lays bare the secrets of people's hearts, as it is expressed there. In this way, then, the Holy Spirit evidences the divine authority of the Word — through the divine power it exerts on our souls and consciences — so that we rest assured it is from God. So the Thessalonians are commended for receiving the Word "not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God, which also works in you who believe" (1 Thessalonians 2:13). It distinguishes itself from the word of men and evidences itself to be indeed the Word of God through its effective operation in those who believe. And one who has this testimony within themselves has a higher and more firm assurance of the truth than can be attained through the force of external arguments or the weight of human testimony.

I say, therefore, in general: the Holy Spirit gives testimony to and establishes the divine authority of the Word through its powerful operations and divine effects on the souls of those who believe. So that, though it is weakness and foolishness to others, it is — like Christ Himself to those who are called — the power of God and the wisdom of God.

I must say that even if a person is equipped with every kind of external argument for the divine origin and authority of Scripture, even if they find their reasons for credibility effectively persuasive, and even if they have the authority of any or all the churches in the world backing their persuasion — yet if they have no personal experience of Scripture's divine power, authority, and efficacy, they do not and cannot truly believe it to be the Word of God in the proper way, with divine and supernatural faith. But the one who has this experience has a testimony within themselves that will never fail.

This will become clearer as we consider a few of the many instances in which Scripture exerts its power, or the effects it produces.

The principal divine effect of the Word of God is the conversion of sinners' souls to God. We have described the greatness and glory of this work at length elsewhere. All who are acquainted with it through Scripture and have experienced it in their own hearts consistently cite it as an example of the surpassing greatness of God's power. It may not be improper — as some of the early church fathers suggested — to regard the work of the new creation as displaying even more evident marks of almighty power than the work of the original creation. Now the Word is the only instrumental cause through which this great and glorious effect is produced —

the means through which divine power operates and expresses itself. For we are born again, born of God, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the Word of God, which lives and abides forever (1 Peter 1:23). For of His own will God brought us forth by the word of truth (James 1:18). The Word is the seed of the new nature within us — the means by which our whole nature, our souls and all their faculties, are changed and renewed into the image and likeness of God. By that same Word this new nature is nourished and sustained (1 Peter 2:2), and the whole soul is carried forward toward the enjoyment of God. It is for believers an implanted word that is able to save their souls (James 1:21). It is the word of God's grace, which is able to build them up and give them an inheritance among all those who are sanctified (Acts 20:32). And this is because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (Romans 1:16). All the power God exerts in communicating grace and mercy to believers — by which they are gradually carried forward and prepared for salvation — He exerts through the Word. In this especially, the divine authority of the Word is evidenced by the divine power and efficacy the Holy Spirit has given to it. The work accomplished in the regeneration, conversion, and sanctification of believers' souls infallibly evidences to their consciences that this is not the word of man but the Word of God. It will be said that this testimony exists only privately in the minds of those on whom this work has been done. I grant that and press it no further — but "he who believes has the testimony in himself" (1 John 5:10). Let it be granted that all who are truly converted to God by the power of the Word have within their own souls and consciences that infallible evidence and testimony of its divine origin, authority, and power — and that on this basis, to-

gether with the other evidences already mentioned as parts of the same divine testimony, they believe it with divine and supernatural faith — and that is all I am aiming at here.

Yet, though this testimony is received privately — though in itself it is not private but common to all believers — it can still be appealed to publicly within the church as a principal motive for belief. A declaration of the divine power that some have personally experienced in the Word is an ordinance of God to convince others and bring them to faith. Indeed, of all the external arguments that can be offered to vindicate the divine authority of Scripture, none is more powerful or compelling than this: its mighty efficacy throughout all ages in the souls of people, visibly and manifestly changing, converting, and renewing them into the image and likeness of God.

Moreover, there are other particular effects of the divine power of the Word on the minds and consciences of people — belonging to this general work, either preceding or following it — that are clearly perceptible and that broaden the evidence. These are as follows.

1. The work of conviction of sin on those who did not expect it, did not desire it, and would avoid it by any means possible. The world is full of examples of this kind: while people have been deeply attached to their sins, at peace in them, and drawing pleasure and advantage from them, the Word has come upon them in its power — filling them with awe, disturbing and terrifying them, stripping away their peace, destroying their hopes, and making them conclude — against their own desires, inclinations, and

fleshly appetites — that if they do not comply with what is set before them in that Word, which they had previously ignored and had no regard for, they will face either present or eternal misery.

Conscience is the territory or domain of God within people — a domain He has so reserved to Himself that no human power can possibly enter it or exercise any control over it. But in this work of conviction of sin, the Word of God — Scripture — enters into the sinner's conscience, takes possession of it, and governs it toward peace or distress by its own laws and rules, and by nothing else. Where the Word brings disquiet, all the world cannot bring peace; and where it speaks peace, nothing can bring distress. If this were not the Word of God, how could it speak in His name this way and exercise His authority in people's consciences as it does? Once it begins this work, conscience immediately acknowledges a new rule, a new law, a new government — directing it toward God's judgment on itself and all its actions. It is contrary to the nature of conscience to accept any such rule on its own — it would not do so unless it sensibly perceived God Himself speaking and acting in it and through it (see 1 Corinthians 14:25-26). An intrusion may be made against the outward duties that conscience directs toward, but not against its internal workings. No power under heaven can cause conscience to think, act, or judge otherwise than it does in its immediate regard to God. For conscience is the mind's self-judgment with respect to God — and whatever does not involve that is no act of conscience. Therefore, to coerce an act of conscience implies a contradiction. Conscience may be defiled, bribed, seared, and ultimately corrupted — but it cannot admit any superior power above or over itself except God.

I am aware that conscience can be prepossessed with prejudices, and through upbringing and the insinuation of tradition may take on false, corrupt, and superstitious principles as if they carried divine authority — as is the case with Muslims and other false worshippers in the world. But the divine convictions we are discussing are plainly different from such prejudiced opinions. Where false opinions are not imposed through obvious tricks and delusions, they take hold of people's minds and inclinations through tradition, before they are capable of forming sound judgments about themselves or other things — and they are generally wrapped up in and protected by people's worldly interests. The convictions we are discussing, by contrast, come from outside, breaking in on people's minds with a perceptible power that overcomes all their prior thoughts and inclinations. False opinions first affect and deceive the intellectual part of the soul, by which conscience is subtly misdirected into disordered responses and deceived in its recognition of God's voice — whereas divine convictions immediately engage the practical understanding and the soul's self-judging power. Such false opinions are gradually insinuated into the mind and are admitted without resistance or reluctance, never arriving at first with any worldly disadvantage attached. But these divine convictions through the Word fall upon people — some when they are thinking of anything but that, and wanting anything but that; some when they are intending something else entirely, like amusing their ears or entertaining company; and some who go expressly to mock and scoff at what is being spoken from the Word. It might further be noted how firmly settled some have been in their carnal peace and security through love of sin, compounded by countless deep-rooted prejudices; how

many have suffered loss and ruin in their outward circumstances by admitting these convictions; what force, effort, and cunning have been deployed to resist them; what assistance Satan has contributed to that end — and yet against all of this, the divine power of the Word has absolutely prevailed and accomplished its full intended effect. See 2 Corinthians 10:4-5; Jeremiah 23:29; Zechariah 1:6.

2. The Word evidences its divine authority through the light that is in it and the spiritual illuminating power that accompanies it. Hence it is called a light shining in a dark place (2 Peter 1:19) — the light by which God shines into the hearts and minds of people (2 Corinthians 4:4, 6). Without Scripture, the whole world is in darkness. "Darkness covers the earth and thick darkness the peoples" (Isaiah 60:2). It is the kingdom of Satan, filled with darkness and confusion. Superstition, idolatry, and empty delusions — where people do not know what they are doing or where they are going — fill the entire world, just as they do to this day. And by nature, people's minds are in darkness; there is a blindness on them so that they cannot perceive spiritual things, even when those things are plainly set before them — as I have thoroughly demonstrated elsewhere. No one can provide stronger evidence that this is so than the person who denies it. With respect to both kinds of darkness — the darkness of the world and the darkness of the natural mind — Scripture is a light, accompanied by a spiritual illuminating power, and thereby evidences itself to be a divine revelation. For what but divine truth could recall people's minds from all their wanderings in error, superstition, and the other effects of darkness — darkness which they love more than truth by nature? When everything is filled with vanity, error, confusion, and dis-

torted ideas about God and ourselves — about our duty, our purpose, our misery, and our blessedness — Scripture, where God's providence brings it, comes in as a light into a dark place, clearly and steadily illuminating all things that concern either God or ourselves, our present or future condition, causing all the phantoms and false images that people had fashioned and imagined in the dark to vanish and disappear. This is the finger of God — nothing less than the power of God. But primarily, Scripture evidences this divine efficacy through the spiritual and saving light it conveys into and implants in the minds of believers. Therefore, any of them who have gained any experience through observing God's dealings with them — even if they cannot fully understand the ways and methods of the Spirit's work through the Word — can still say with the man whose sight the Lord Jesus restored: "One thing I know: I was blind, but now I see." The apostle describes this power of the Word as the instrument of the Spirit of God for communicating saving light and knowledge to human minds in 2 Corinthians 3:18 and 4:4, 6. It is through the efficacy of this power that Scripture evidences itself to be the Word of God. Those who believe find through it a glorious supernatural light introduced into their minds — a light by which people who previously saw nothing distinctly or with any impact in spiritual matters now clearly discern the truth, glory, beauty, and excellence of heavenly mysteries, and have their minds transformed into their image and likeness. And there is no person who bears within themselves the testimony of this heavenly light being kindled in their mind by the Word who does not also carry within themselves the evidence of its divine origin.

3. In a similar way, Scripture evidences its divine authority through the awe it places on the minds of the great majority of people to whom it is made known — an awe that keeps them from absolutely rejecting it. There are multitudes to whom the Word is proclaimed who hate all its commands, despise all its promises, abhor all its warnings, and like nothing and approve of nothing that it declares or proposes — and yet they dare not absolutely refuse or reject it. They treat it the same way they treat God Himself, whom they also hate according to the revelation He has made of Himself in His Word. They wish He did not exist; sometimes they hope He does not; they would be glad to be free of His rule — and yet they dare not and cannot absolutely deny and disown Him, because of that testimony for Himself which He keeps alive in them whether they will or not. The same is the attitude of their hearts and minds toward Scripture — and for no other reason than that it is the Word of God and manifests itself to be so. They hate it, wish it were not, hope it is not true — but they cannot by any means shake off the unease they feel in the awareness of its divine authority. This testimony it has lodged in the hearts of multitudes of its enemies (Psalm 45:5).

4. Scripture evidences its divine power by bringing powerful comfort in the deepest and most hopeless distress. There are situations of this kind — and many people fall into them — in which all means and hopes of relief are utterly removed and taken away. This is the case when people's miseries are unknown to anyone who might even pity them or wish them relief, or when their miseries are known and there may be an eye to pity them, yet no hand to help. Such has been the condition of countless souls — particularly those under the power of persecutors, when they have been

locked in filthy, wretched dungeons, to be brought out only to die by the most refined tortures that the malice of hell could devise or the brutal cruelty of man inflict. Yet in these and similar forms of distress, the Word of God by its divine power and efficacy breaks through every intervening difficulty and every dark and discouraging circumstance, sustaining, refreshing, and comforting such poor suffering souls — and often filling them, under overwhelming calamity, "with joy inexpressible and full of glory." Though they are in chains, the Word of God is not bound; neither all the power of hell nor all the diligence or fury of men can prevent the Word from entering prisons, dungeons, and flames, and from administering powerful consolation against all fears, pains, deprivation, dangers, death, or whatever we may face in this mortal life. Many other examples of this kind could be offered, in which the Word gives clear demonstrations to the minds and consciences of people of its own divine power and authority — and this is the second way the Holy Spirit, its author, gives testimony to its origin.

But our aim was not only to set out the grounds and reasons for believing Scripture to be the Word of God. The whole work of the Holy Spirit in enabling us to believe this was also proposed for consideration. And beyond what we have already discussed, there is yet a further particular work of His by which He effectually assures our minds that Scripture is the Word of God — a work by which we are ultimately established in that faith. I cannot help but both marvel and grieve that any who would be considered Christians should deny this. Therefore, if it becomes necessary, I will take the opportunity in the second part of this discourse to further confirm this point as it has been argued thus far — namely, that God by His Holy Spirit secretly and effectively persuades and

satisfies the minds and souls of believers in the divine truth and authority of the Scriptures, thereby infallibly securing their faith against all objections and temptations whatsoever, so that they can safely and confidently commit their souls in all concerns — both for this life and for eternity — to the unfailing truth and guidance of Scripture. But I will not press these matters further at present.

Three things arise from what has been discussed and call for consideration.

1. What is the reason why the simplest and most unlearned believers assent to the truth that Scripture is the Word of God with no less firmness, certainty, and assurance of mind than the wisest and most learned among them? Indeed, the faith of the former kind is often of stronger growth and greater consistency under opposition and temptation. Now no assent of the mind can carry any greater assurance than the evidence it results from and is resolved into will afford. Nor does any evidence of truth produce an assent to it in the mind except as that evidence is perceived and understood. Therefore, whatever the evidence of this truth consists in, it must be something that is perceived, grasped, and understood by the simplest and most unlearned true believers. For, as was said, they assent to it and hold to it no less firmly than the wisest and most learned. The evidence cannot consist in subtle and learned arguments whose meaning they cannot grasp or follow. But the things we have argued are of a different character entirely. The marks of divine wisdom, goodness, holiness, grace, and sovereign authority stamped on Scripture by the Holy Spirit are just as legible to the faith of the simplest believer as to the most learned. And they are no less capable of an experiential understanding of Scripture's divine power and efficacy in all its spiritual operations

than those who are more skilled at evaluating the force of external arguments and reasons for credibility. It must therefore necessarily be granted that the formal reason of faith consists in those things whose evidence is equally accessible to all kinds of believers.

2. It follows from this why the assent of faith — by which we believe Scripture to be the Word of God — is commonly said to be accompanied with greater assurance than any assent that results from scientific reasoning based on the most demonstrative principles. Those who affirm this are not considering faith as it exists in any particular individual, or even in all sincere believers, but in its own nature and essence — and what it is suited and able to produce. The scholastic theologians distinguish between a certainty of evidence and a certainty of adherence. In the latter, they say, the certainty of faith exceeds that of scientific knowledge; but it is less in respect of the former. Yet it is not easy to understand how certainty of adherence could exceed certainty of evidence with respect to any object whatsoever. What seems to account for the difference in this case is that the evidence we have in scientific matters is merely speculative and affects only the mind, while the evidence we have through faith also effectively engages the will — because of the goodness and excellence of the things believed. Therefore the whole soul adheres more firmly to the objects of faith on the evidence it has of them, than to other things of which it may have clearer speculative evidence but in which the will and affections are little or not at all involved. Bonaventure offers a reason of considerable weight for why faith is more certain than science, not in speculative certainty but in certainty of adherence: namely, that faithful Christians cannot be brought or inclined by arguments,

torments, or inducements to deny even verbally the truth they believe — whereas no expert in any scientific field would die by the severest tortures to defend a geometric or arithmetic conclusion, for it would be foolish and ridiculous for a geometer to face death in a geometric dispute, except insofar as faith dictates that one must not lie. Whatever may be said about this distinction, it cannot reasonably be denied that there is a greater assurance in faith than in any scientific conclusion — until as many wise and good people are willing to surrender all their worldly concerns and their lives under the most painful tortures to confirm a truth accepted purely on rational grounds, as have done so on the certainty of faith that Scripture is a divine revelation. For in bearing witness to this, countless multitudes of the best, holiest, and wisest people who ever lived have cheerfully and joyfully sacrificed all their temporal concerns and staked all their eternal interests. They did this with full confidence that in giving up all temporal things, they would be either eternally blessed or eternally miserable, depending on whether their persuasion of faith proved true or false. Therefore, three things contribute to the firmness and constancy of our assurance in faith.

1. The ability to assent upon testimony is the highest and most noble power or faculty of our rational souls; and therefore where it has the highest evidence of which it is capable — which it has in the testimony of God — it gives us the highest certainty or assurance of which we are capable in this world.

2. The assent of divine faith requires a special internal work of the Holy Spirit. This makes it something of a different nature from any merely natural act or operation of the mind. Therefore, if the assurance of faith cannot properly be said to exceed the assurance

of scientific knowledge in degree, it is only because it is of a more excellent kind — and therefore cannot be compared to it in terms of degrees.

3. The revelation God makes of Himself, His mind and will, through His Word is more excellent and is accompanied with greater evidence of His infinitely glorious attributes — in which alone the mind can find absolute rest and satisfaction, which is its assurance — than any other discovery of truth of any kind is capable of providing. Nor is the assurance of the mind absolutely perfect in anything short of the direct enjoyment of God. Therefore, as the soul by faith makes the closest approach it can in this life to the eternal source of being, truth, and goodness, it finds the highest rest, satisfaction, and assurance in this life that it can attain.

3. From this it follows that those who would deny either of these two things — or who would so separate them as to exclude the necessity of either one for the duty of believing — that is, the internal work of the Holy Spirit on the minds of people enabling them to believe, and the external work of the same Holy Spirit giving evidence in and through Scripture of its own divine origin — are effectively trying to drive all true divine faith out of the world and substitute a mere probable persuasion in its place.

To close this discourse — which has grown considerably longer than originally intended — I will address some objections that are commonly raised against the truth argued and defended here.

The first objection is that the case argued here cannot be maintained without serious harm to Christianity. For if we remove the rational grounds on which we believe the doctrine of Christ to be true and divine — and place the entire evidence of its truth on

things that are not only mocked by those of atheistic minds, but are in themselves things that cannot be discerned by anyone except those who already believe — on what grounds can we proceed to convince an unbeliever?

Answer: First, it is one thing to prove and believe the doctrine of Christ to be true and divine; it is another to prove and believe Scripture to have been given by the inspiration of God — and it was only the divine authority of Scripture that was proposed for consideration here. A true and divine doctrine may be written and presented to us in writings that were not divinely and infallibly inspired — and the doctrine of Christ could theoretically have come to us that way, though it would have been to the immeasurable disadvantage of the church. And there are various arguments that powerfully and effectively prove the doctrine of Christ to have been true and divine, which are not able to prove the divine authority of Scripture — though on the other hand, whatever proves the divine authority of Scripture also equally proves the divine truth of the doctrine of Christ.

2. There are two ways of convincing unbelievers: the way the apostles and their followers principally used, and the way some learned men have used since their day. The way the apostles principally used was preaching the Word itself in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit — through the power of which, making God's authority in the Word manifest, people were convinced, and "falling down they acknowledged that God was among them of a truth" (1 Corinthians 2:4-5; 14:25-26). It is likely that in their proclamation of the Gospel and its doctrines and truths to unbelievers, those of atheistic minds both mocked the apostles and the message — and indeed that is what happened, with many dismiss-

ing them as babblers and their doctrine as utter foolishness. Yet they did not stop pursuing their work in the same way, and God gave it success. The other way is to prove to unbelievers that Scripture is true and divine by means of rational arguments — an effort in which some learned people have labored, especially in recent generations, to good effect. Their labors are certainly greatly to be commended, provided they observe two rules. First, they should produce only arguments that are genuinely compelling and not open to fair objection. For if they put forward arguments that can be answered and refuted — whether to display their own skill or learning — they seriously harm the truth by exposing it to uncertain dispute, when in itself it is clear, firm, and sacred. Second, they should not claim that these rational arguments are the sole foundation on which faith rests or into which it is ultimately resolved. For that would be the surest way to set up an opinion in place of supernatural and divine faith. Grant these two conditions, and it is fully acknowledged that the rational arguments in question may rightly be used to convince opponents, and that they ought to be so used. For no one who pleads the self-evidencing power of Scripture denies that external motives and arguments are also needed to silence atheists and to further strengthen those who already believe. These things are subordinate to one another and in no way inconsistent.

The truth is, if we attend to our own experience and the experience of the whole church of God, the ordinary way we come to believe Scripture to be the Word of God is this, and no other. God, having first given His Word as the foundation of our faith and obedience, appointed the ministry of people — at first extraordinary, afterwards ordinary — to set before us the doctrines, truths, com-

mands, promises, and warnings contained in it. Along with presenting these things, ministers are appointed to declare that they come not from themselves or their own invention (2 Timothy 3:14-17). And this is done in various ways. To some, the Word of God comes through this ministry while they are in a condition not only totally unacquainted with its mysteries but filled with contrary ideas and therefore prejudiced against it. This was how it came to the pagan world in earlier times, and how it must come to individuals and nations who are still in the same condition today. The first preachers of the Gospel did not go to these people with the book of Scripture and tell them it was the Word of God and would evidence itself to them as such. That would have been to disregard the wisdom and authority of God in the ministry He had appointed. Instead, they preached the doctrines of Scripture, grounding themselves on the divine revelation contained in it. And this proclamation of the truth — this preaching of the Gospel — was not left by God to work its way into people's reasoning by its own suitability to it; rather, being His own institution for their illumination and conversion, He accompanied it with divine power and made it effective for its intended ends (Romans 1:16). The result among people was that this new doctrine was mocked and scorned by some, while others, whose hearts God opened to attend to it, embraced and submitted to it. Among those who, after the spread of the Gospel, are born within what is called the church, the same doctrine is instilled in people in various ways through the duties others have to instruct them. Chiefly, the ministry of the Word is ordained by God for this purpose, the church being the pillar and ground of truth. Both groups — those reached by mission and those born within the church — are directed to the Scriptures as

the sacred repository of this teaching. They are told that these things come by revelation from God and that this revelation is contained in the Bible, which is His Word. Upon this presentation and subsequent inquiry and consideration of it, God cooperating by His Spirit, such evidence of Scripture's divine origin is communicated to their minds — through its power and efficacy and through the marks of divine wisdom and holiness stamped upon it — that they are now enabled to perceive it, believe it, and rest in it as the immediate Word of God. This is what happened with the woman of Samaria and the people of Sychar in their coming to faith in Jesus Christ (John 4:42). This is the ordinary way people are brought to believe the Word of God (Romans 10:14-15) — not through external arguments or motives, by which no soul was ever converted to God; not by the mere bare presentation of a book; not by miracles; not by immediate revelation or a purely private inward testimony of the Spirit — nor is their faith a persuasion they can give no account of, beyond the fact that they are so persuaded.

But it will be objected further: if there is such clear evidence in the thing itself — that is, in the divine origin and authority of Scripture — that no one who uses their reason freely can deny it, then that evidence must lie either in the bare presentation of the matter to the understanding, or it does not. If it lies in the bare presentation, then everyone who assents to the proposition "the whole is greater than the part" must likewise assent to the proposition that Scripture is the Word of God. But if it does not lie in the bare presentation, then the evidence must lie in the effective work of God's Spirit in the minds of those to whom Scripture is presented.

Answer: 1. I know of no theologian, ancient or modern, Catholic or Protestant, who does not affirm that a work of the Holy Spirit on the minds of people is necessary for rightly believing Scripture to be the Word of God. This consideration ought not to be left out by any Christian. But they do not say that this is the objective testimony or evidence on which we believe Scripture to be the Word of God — which is the only question we are examining here.

2. We are not arguing how far or by what means the proposition "Scripture is the Word of God" may be evidenced merely to our reason, but rather how it is evidenced to our understanding as capable of giving assent upon testimony. It is not claimed that this is a first principle of reason, though it is a first principle of faith, nor that it is capable of mathematical demonstration. The proposition "the whole is greater than the part" is self-evident to reason upon first presentation — but no one claims Scripture is like that, because it is a subject that does not admit of that kind of evidence. Nor do those who deny Scripture's self-evidence claim, through their arguments for its divine authority, to give reason the kind of evidence found in first principles or mathematical demonstrations — they are satisfied with what they call moral certainty. But it is by faith that we are obliged to receive the truth of this proposition, which concerns the power of our minds to assent to truth upon testimony — assenting infallibly to that which is infallible. And to our faith, Scripture evidences its own truth not with the same kind, but with evidence and certainty of a higher nature and nobler kind than that of the strictest demonstration in natural matters or the most forceful argument in moral ones.

3. It will be objected: if this is so, then no one can be obligated to receive Scripture as the Word of God who does not have faith — and since no one has faith except those in whom it is worked by the Spirit of God, everything is ultimately resolved into that.

Answer: 1. There is in fact no room for this objection, because the whole work of the Spirit is being appealed to only as the efficient cause of believing — not as the objective ground, or reason, why we believe. But —

2. We must not be ashamed to trace all that we do well — spiritually, in obedience to God's command — back to the effective work of the Holy Spirit in us, unless we intend to be ashamed of the Gospel. But even this makes His internal work the efficient cause, not His internal testimony the formal reason, of our faith.

3. It is a separate question entirely whether all obligation to duty must be proportionate to our own unaided strength — which we deny. We affirm that we are obligated to many things by virtue of God's command, which we have no power to perform except by virtue of His grace.

4. Where the presentation of Scripture takes place in the manner described earlier, those to whom it is presented are obligated to receive it as the Word of God on the basis of the evidence it gives of being so. Indeed, every genuine divine revelation made to people — and every presentation of Scripture by God's providence — carries with it sufficient evidence of being from God to oblige those to whom it is made to believe it, under the penalty of His displeasure. If this were not so, then either God would be obliged to confirm every divine revelation with a miracle — a requirement that itself raises difficulties as a basis for obligation to believe —

which He has not done, as with many of the prophets, nor does He do so today at the first proclamation of the Gospel to pagan peoples — or, when He requires faith and obedience through the ordinary means He in His wisdom has appointed, namely the regular ministry of the Word, people are not actually obligated by it, and it would not be their sin to refuse to comply with His will.

5. If this difficulty can only be avoided by affirming that the faith God requires of us regarding His Word is nothing but a natural assent to it based on rational arguments and considerations — something we are capable of without any spiritual assistance from the Holy Spirit or any regard to His testimony as described above — which would overturn all faith, especially divine faith — I would ten thousand times rather accept all the legitimate consequences that follow from the position we have stated than accept that alternative. But this is not among those consequences: that those to whom Scripture is presented are in any way exempt from the obligation to believe.

Similarly, there is no real difficulty in the familiar objection regarding particular books of Scripture — why we receive some as canonical and reject others, such as Proverbs but not the Wisdom of Solomon, or Ecclesiastes but not Ecclesiasticus. For —

1. As to the books of the Old Testament, their canon is given to us in the New Testament, where it is stated that "the oracles of God" were entrusted to the Jewish church — which both confirms all that we receive and excludes all that we exclude. And for the New Testament, no books have ever been seriously put forward as candidates for inclusion, nor have they ever been such as to put the faith of anyone to any meaningful test.

2. Every book that has either claimed divine origin for itself or has been argued by others to be of that kind has been — and can be — shown from itself alone, without further assistance, to be falsely making that claim. All such books have, in their subject matter or manner of writing, in plain admissions or other sufficient evidence, manifested themselves to be of human origin. There is little danger to be feared from any future works that may appear with the same pretension.

3. We are not required to refuse the ministry of the church, or the advantages of providence by which Scripture is brought to us, or the testimony that various parts of Scripture give — directly or indirectly — to one another. Although Scripture is to be believed for its own sake, it is not ordinarily to be believed in complete isolation, without the help of other means.

4. On these grounds I do not hesitate to affirm that every individual book of Scripture — including those specifically named — bears those divine marks and criteria sufficient to distinguish it from all other writings whatsoever and to testify its divine authority to the minds and consciences of believers. I say, of believers — for we are not asking on what grounds unbelievers, or those who do not believe, come to believe the Word of God, nor even directly on what external motives such persons might be brought to do so. Our sole inquiry at present is what the faith of those who do believe is ultimately resolved into. It is not being claimed, therefore, that when our Lord Jesus Christ came and preached to the Jews — for we acknowledge that the same principle applies to the original giving of divine revelations as to Scripture — mere words like "I am the light of the world" carried all this evidence in themselves by themselves, for nothing He said of that kind can be separated from

its circumstances. But given the testimony Scripture had provided beforehand concerning His person, work, timing, and manner of coming, along with the evidence of God's presence with Him in declaring His doctrine and Himself as the Messiah — the Jews were obligated to believe what He taught and that He was the Son of God, the Savior of the world, and indeed many of them did so upon His preaching alone (John 4:42). In the same way, they were obligated to believe the doctrine of John the Baptist and to submit to his institutions, even though he performed no miracles — and those who did not, rejected God's counsel for their good and perished in their unbelief. Although our Lord Jesus Christ performed no miracles to prove that the existing Scripture was the Word of God — since He worked among those who already firmly believed it — God's wisdom saw it necessary to confirm His personal ministry by miracles. Yet without an inward sense of the power and efficacy of divine truth in the doctrine presented, miracles themselves will be despised — as they were by some who were afterwards converted by the preaching of the Word (Acts 2:13; 3:7-8) — or they will produce only a false faith, or an astonished assent born of amazement that will not last (Acts 8:13, 21).

APPENDIX



APPENDIX.

A summary account of the nature and reason of the faith by which we believe Scripture to be the Word of God, together with some testimony given to the substance of what has been argued concerning it, will bring this discourse to a close. As to the first part of this aim, the following points are set out.

1. In answering the question of on what grounds and for what reason we believe Scripture to be the Word of God, many things are assumed as agreed on by all parties — things whose demonstration or proof belongs to a different work. These are:

1. The existence and self-sufficiency of God, together with all the essential attributes of His nature.

2. Our relationship to Him and dependence on Him as our Creator, Benefactor, Sustainer, Judge, and Rewarder — both in temporal and eternal things. And therefore —

3. Whatever may be known of God by the light of nature — whatever is made evident in or from the works of creation or providence, and through the necessary workings of conscience regard-

ing the being, rule, and authority of God — is taken as acknowledged in this inquiry.

4. That beyond what the light of nature can guide and direct, a supernatural revelation of God's mind and will is necessary — especially given the condition all of humanity has been in since the entrance of sin — so that people may live unto God, believe in Him and trust Him as they ought, in the obedience He requires, and so come to the enjoyment of Him.

5. That all those to whom God granted divine revelations directly from Himself — for their own use and for communication to others — were infallibly assured that those revelations came from God, and that their minds were in no way deceived in them.

6. That all these divine revelations, insofar as they are in any way necessary to guide and instruct people in the true knowledge of God and in the obedience He accepts, are now contained in the Scriptures — those books of the Old and New Testament that are commonly received and acknowledged among all branches of Christianity.

These things, I say, are assumed for the present inquiry and taken for granted, so that the reader should not expect a direct proof of them in the preceding discourse. But on these assumptions it is argued and demonstrated that —

1. All people to whom Scripture is duly presented as such are obligated to believe these Scriptures — the books of the Old and New Testament — to be the Word of God, that is, to contain and set forth an immediate, divine, supernatural revelation of His

mind and will, insofar as is at all necessary for them to live unto Him, and that everything contained in them is of the same divine origin.

2. The obligation of this duty — to believe Scripture to be the Word of God — arises partly from the nature of the thing itself and partly from God's specific command. For since it is that revelation of God's will without knowledge of and assent to which we cannot live unto God as we ought or come to the enjoyment of Him, we must believe it for those ends — and God requires us to do so.

3. We cannot believe this as a matter of duty except on the basis of sufficient evidence and compelling testimony that it is so.

4. There are many compelling arguments, testimonies, and considerations that persuade, convince, and satisfy unprejudiced persons that Scripture is the Word of God — a divine revelation — and that are fully sufficient to silence objectors, proceeding from principles of reason that the great majority of people accept and approve. Arguments of this kind may be drawn from nearly every consideration of God's attributes, His governance of the world, our relationship to Him, and what belongs to our present peace and future happiness.

5. From arguments and testimonies of this kind, a firm persuasion of mind — one that can be defended against all objections — that Scripture is the Word of God may be attained: a persuasion such that those who do not live in contradiction to their own conscience and reason through the power of their desires cannot help but judge it their wisdom, their duty, and their interest to yield obedience to God's will as revealed there.

6. Yet the persuasion of mind that may be attained in this way — resting wholly on these arguments and testimonies — is not entirely the faith by which we are obligated in duty to believe Scripture to be the Word of God. For it must not be merely human — however firm the persuasion may be — but divine and supernatural, of the same kind as the faith by which we believe the contents of Scripture itself.

7. We cannot thus believe Scripture to be the Word of God — nor any divine truth contained in it — without the effective illumination of our minds by the Holy Spirit. To exclude consideration of His work here is to remove the entire inquiry from the realm of Christian religion.

8. Yet this work of the Holy Spirit in illuminating our minds — by which we are enabled to believe as a matter of duty with divine and supernatural faith — is not the ground or reason why we believe, nor the evidence on which we do so, nor is our faith ultimately resolved into it.

9. While there are also various other acts of the Holy Spirit in and upon our minds — establishing this faith against temptations to the contrary and further assuring us of Scripture's divine origin, or bearing witness to it — none of them individually, nor all of them together, constitute the formal reason of our faith or the ground on which we believe. Yet they are such that just as without His first work of divine illumination we cannot believe at all in a proper way, so without His subsequent operations we cannot believe steadfastly against temptations and opposition. Therefore —

10. Only those whose minds are enlightened and who are enabled to believe by the Holy Spirit can rightly believe Scripture to be the Word of God as a matter of duty.

11. Those who do not believe fall into two groups: those who actively oppose and reject the Word as a cleverly invented story, and those who are willing to give it fair and unprejudiced consideration. The first group may be resisted, opposed, and rebuked through external arguments and moral considerations that strongly support the divine origin of Scripture — and their objections and criticisms may be answered from the same principles. The second group are to be guided toward believing through the ministry of the church in the proclamation of the Word itself, which is God's appointed means for that purpose. But —

12. Neither group ever comes to truly believe — neither those brought along by the force of moral arguments alone, nor those brought along by the authority of the church through whose ministry Scripture is presented to them. Therefore —

13. The formal reason of the divine and supernatural faith by which we believe Scripture to be the Word of God — as a matter of duty and as it is required of us — is the authority and veracity of God alone, evidencing themselves to our minds and consciences in and through Scripture itself. And in this consists the divine testimony of the Holy Spirit which, as it is testimony, gives our assent to the Scriptures the general nature of faith — and as it is divine testimony, gives it the particular nature of faith that is divine and supernatural.

14. This divine testimony to Scripture's divine origin — given in and through Scripture itself, and into which our faith is ultimately resolved — is evidenced and made known both by the marks of the infinite perfections of the divine nature that are in and upon it, and by the authority, power, and efficacy it exercises over the souls and consciences of people, together with the satisfying excellence of the truths contained in it.

15. Therefore, although there are many compelling external arguments by which a morally firm persuasion of Scripture's divine authority may be attained — and though it is the chief duty of the true church in every age to bear witness to it, which the church has done in unbroken succession from the time it was first entrusted with it — and though there are many other means by which we are induced, persuaded, and enabled to believe it — yet it is for Scripture's own sake alone, as it effectively manifests itself to be the Word of God, and on the divine testimony given in it and through it, that we believe it to be so with divine and supernatural faith.

Corollary: Those who deny either the necessity of an internal, subjective work of the Holy Spirit enabling us to believe, or the objective testimony of the Holy Spirit given to Scripture in and through itself, or who deny their joint cooperation in and for our believing, deny all faith that is properly divine and supernatural.

This being the substance of what is declared and argued in the preceding treatise, I will add — to forestall the criticism of some and to confirm the judgment of others — the testimony of ancient and modern writers given to its principal points, on which all other assertions in it depend.

Clement of Alexandria discusses this at length in *Stromata*, book 7. "We have the Lord Himself as the principle or beginning of doctrine, who by the prophets, the Gospel, and the blessed apostles, in various ways and by degrees, goes before us and leads us into knowledge." [This is what we set forth as the reason and ground of faith — namely, the authority of the Lord Himself instructing us through the Scriptures.] So he adds: "And if anyone supposes he needs any other principle, the principle will not be maintained." [That is: if we need any other principle into which to resolve our faith, the Word of God is no longer a principle to us.] "But He who is faithful by Himself is worthy to be believed in His sovereign writing and voice, which, as it appears, is administered by the Lord for the benefit of humanity." "And certainly we use it as a rule of judgment for the discovery of things." "But whatever is judged is not credible until it is judged; and that which stands in need of being judged is no principle." His meaning is that God, who alone is to be believed for His own sake, has given us His Word as the rule by which we are to judge all things. And this Word is to be believed in such a way that it is not subject to any higher judgment — because if it is, it can be neither a principle nor a rule. He continues: "Therefore it is right that we, embracing by faith the most sufficient, indemonstrable principle, and taking our demonstrations of the principle from the principle itself, are instructed by the voice of the Lord Himself to the acknowledgment of the truth." In brief, he states the substance of what we have argued. We maintain nothing more in this matter than what Clement asserts here — namely, that we believe Scripture for its own sake, as something that requires no prior or external demonstration, but whose evidence and demonstration of its divine origin is to be

drawn from itself alone. He further confirms this: "For we would not simply yield to the definitions of men, since we also have the right to define in contradiction to them." "And since it is not sufficient merely to say or assert what appears to be truth, but also to produce belief in what is said, we do not look for the testimony of men — we confirm what is under inquiry with the voice of the Lord, which is fuller and firmer than any demonstration, and which is in fact the only demonstration." "Thus we, taking our demonstrations of Scripture from Scripture itself, are made certain by faith as by demonstration." And in other places — as in *Stromata*, book 4 — he plainly affirms that the way of Christians was to prove Scripture by Scripture, and all other things by Scripture.

Basil speaks to the same purpose on Psalm 115. "Faith, which draws the soul to assent above all methods of reasoning — faith which is not the effect of geometrical demonstrations, but of the efficacy of the Spirit." The nature, cause, and efficacy of the faith by which we believe Scripture to be the Word of God are affirmed by him.

Nemesius, *On the Nature of Man*, chapter 2: "The teaching of the divine oracles has its credibility from itself, because of its divine inspiration."

The words of Augustine, though noted by all, may be reported here again. *Confessions*, book 12, chapter 3: "Let me hear and understand how You made the heavens and the earth. Moses wrote this, he wrote it and departed hence to You; he is no longer before me. For if he were, I would take hold of him, ask him, and in Your name beseech him to open these things to me, and I would apply the ears of my body to the sounds breaking from his mouth. But if

he spoke in the Hebrew language, his words would strike my senses in vain, and nothing of it would touch my mind. If he spoke in Latin, I would know what he said — but how would I know that he spoke the truth? And if I knew that, would I know it from him? Within me, in the dwelling-place of my thought, Truth itself — neither in Hebrew, nor Greek, nor Latin, nor any other language, without the organs of mouth and tongue, without the noise of syllables — would say, 'He speaks truth'; and I, at once made certain of it, would say confidently to that servant of Yours, 'You speak truth.' Since then I cannot ask him, I ask You, O Truth, with which he, being filled, spoke what is true. O my God, I ask of You: pardon my sins; and You who gave Your servant to speak these things, give also to me the ability to understand them."

What is most remarkable in these words is that Augustine plainly affirms that faith would not follow even from the declaration of the prophets themselves if they were present with us, unless there were an internal work of the Holy Spirit on our minds to enable and persuade us toward it. And indeed he seems to place all assurance of the truth of divine revelations in the inward assurance God gives us of them by His Spirit — which we have already considered.

The Second Council of Orange gives full testimony to the necessity of the internal grace of the Spirit for believing. Canon 7: "If anyone affirms that he is able to assent to the preaching of the Gospel without the illumination and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he is deceived by a heretical spirit."

Coming down to more recent times — in which these matters have been much disputed — the truth has shone so clearly into the eyes of many that it has compelled their acknowledgment when

they have honestly examined themselves about it. The words of Baptista Mantuanus are remarkable, from *On Patience*, book 3, chapter 2: "I have often thought to myself: from what source is Scripture itself so persuasive? From where does it so powerfully flow into the minds of its hearers, drawing them not merely to form an opinion, but to believe firmly and solidly? This is not to be attributed to the clarity of arguments, which it does not employ; nor to the refinement of art or smooth words suited to persuasion, which it does not use. But see whether this may be the cause: that we are persuaded it came from the First Truth itself. But from what source are we so persuaded, if not from Scripture itself? As though its own authority effectually draws us to believe it. But from where, I ask, did it gain this authority? We did not see God preaching, writing, or teaching — and yet, as though we had, we believe and hold firmly that what we read proceeded from the Holy Spirit. Perhaps this is the reason we adhere to it so firmly: that truth in it is more solid, though not necessarily more clear, than in other writings; for all truth has a drawing power, and greater truth has greater power, and the greatest truth the greatest efficacy of all. But then why do not all believe the Gospel? Answer: Because not all are drawn by God. But why is any long argument needed? We believe the Scriptures firmly because we have received a divine inspiration assuring us of them." And in what sense this is to be understood has been explained in the preceding discourse.

I will close the whole with the testimony of those by whom the truth we assert is most vehemently opposed — when it comes into conflict with a particular interest of their own.

There are two things in particular that are objected to in the Protestant doctrine concerning our belief of Scripture. The first concerns the Holy Spirit as the efficient cause of faith: Protestants teach that no one can believe Scripture to be the Word of God in a proper and dutiful manner without the real internal aid and operation of the Holy Spirit, however Scripture may be presented and however strongly its divine origin may be confirmed by arguments. This is charged against them as an error and a fault. The second is this: Protestants also affirm that there is an inward testimony or witness of the Holy Spirit by which He assures and establishes the minds of believers in the faith of the Scriptures, with an efficacy that surpasses all the persuasive evidence of external arguments and motives. This too is made a charge against them by some. And yet those within the Roman church who are regarded as most opposed to the resolution of faith that most Protestants accept do expressly maintain both of these assertions.

Stapleton's purpose in *On the Principles of Faith*, controversy 4, book 8, chapter 1 is to prove "that it is impossible to produce any act of true faith, or to believe with faith rightly so called, without special grace and the divinely infused gift of faith." He there proves this with various arguments. Bellarmine speaks to the same effect in *On Grace and Free Will*, book 6, chapter 3: "The arguments which render the articles of our faith credible are not such as to produce an undoubted faith, unless the mind is divinely assisted."

Melchior Canus, in *Loci Theologici*, book 2, chapter 8, argues expressly to this point: "It must be firmly held that human authority and all the motives previously mentioned — or any others employed by one who presents the object of faith — are not sufficient

causes of believing as we are obligated to believe; there must be in addition an internal efficient cause moving us to believe, which is the special help and aid of God." And a little further on he speaks even more plainly: "Therefore all external and human persuasions are not sufficient causes of faith, however adequately the things of faith may be set forth by people; there is further required an internal cause — that is, a certain divine light inciting to belief, and a certain interior vision given to us by the grace of God." All other learned men of the same theological tradition speak to the same effect.

On the second assertion they comply no less fully. Stapleton writes: "The secret testimony of the Spirit is altogether necessary if a person is to believe the testimony and judgment of the church concerning the approval of the Scriptures." And the words of Gregory of Valencia are remarkable, from his commentary on Thomas, volume 3, disputation 7, question 1, section 2: "Although we have so far presented arguments for the authority of Christian doctrine which by themselves ought to be sufficient to dispose prudent minds to believe, yet I do not know whether there is not an argument greater than all of them — namely, that those who are truly Christians find and feel by experience that their minds are so affected in the matter of faith that they are moved and obliged to believe firmly, not mainly on account of any argument we have offered, nor of any similar argument that could be devised by reason, but on account of something else that persuades in another manner and far more powerfully than any argument whatever." Let anyone compare these words with those of Calvin in the Institutes, book 1, chapter 7, section 5 — which I believe I have already cited — and he will recognize from where the sense of them was drawn.

And to show what he means by this internal argument and persuasion, Gregory of Valencia affirms elsewhere that "it is God Himself who, by the voice of His revelation and by a certain internal instinct and impulse, testifies to the minds of people the truth of Christian doctrine and of Holy Scripture."

These few testimonies I have produced from among the many that could be brought to the same purpose — not to confirm the truth we have argued for, which rests on far surer foundations — but only to remove prejudices from the minds of some who, not being well acquainted with matters of this kind, are ready to charge what has been presented here with being novel or eccentric.

THE END.

THANKS FOR READING



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