

Disputations

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**THEOLOGICAL DISPUTATION ON THE AUTHORITY OF HOLY
SCRIPTURE
AGAINST THE PAPISTS. FIRST PART.**

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I. It ought indeed to seem remarkable, and rightly lamentable, that whereas formerly disputes were conducted from Scripture, matters have now come to such a point that there is dispute about Scripture itself—whose majesty ought to have been sacrosanct among Christians. This, surely, has been the cunning of the Papists: finding insufficient support in Scripture, they have resorted to objections against it; and in order to decline its tribunal under a more plausible pretext, appealing instead to the Church—that is, to their own Doctors and the Pope—so that they themselves might sit as both witnesses and judges in their own cause, they have attempted, if not utterly to overthrow its authority and dignity, at least in a remarkable way to shake and undermine it. Hence it has come about that although controversies concerning Scripture are not usually reckoned among the primary ones—but secondary—which we have with the Papists (because disputation did not begin from this point), nevertheless they ought to be considered no less serious and weighty; indeed, they have now become all the more necessary because they come as the basis and foundation to be laid for the rest. For since Scripture is the principle and rule of our faith, that faith will always waver and remain uncertain unless its authority has once been asserted and demonstrated.

The question of the authority of Scripture is twofold: 1. Against Atheists. 2. Against Papists, which is treated here.

II. Now since the question of the authority of Scripture can be taken up in two ways, against two kinds of people: first, against Atheists and Epicureans, who are wholly alienated from religion and acknowledge no authority or divinity of that Word; second, against Papists, who although they profess to believe and embrace it, yet suspend its authority so much upon the authority of the Church and its testimony that without it, even if not in itself, at least as regards us, it cannot be known. Setting aside the first for now (which can be treated more conveniently elsewhere), we take up the latter, and undertake with God's help to prove that Holy Scripture is so self-authenticating and divine in itself that it obtains authority neither in itself nor for us from the Church.

III. But here, lest we stumble at the threshold, first the opinion of each side must be laid open, so that the hinge of this most vexed controversy may be more easily grasped. And as regards the Orthodox indeed, they maintain that Holy Scripture derives all its authority from God, from whom it proceeds, and is so authentic in itself that its authority can and ought not to be suspended upon the testimony of any church whatever, much less of the Roman See. Not that the testimony of the true and purer Church lacks its own weight, but that it is neither the sole nor the chief testimony, but only secondary and ministerial; without which also this divine Word possesses its own self-authenticating character—unless we wish to contradict God speaking and call into doubt a testimony confirmed by divine authority.

It is considered in three ways: either with respect to Scripture, or the Spirit, or the Church.

IV. Furthermore, for a fuller declaration of this opinion, it must be observed that three things can concur to persuade us of the divinity of Scripture: namely, either Scripture itself, or God speaking in Scripture, the Spirit testifying in the heart, and the Church handing down Scripture to us. For just as there can be a threefold cause which concurs to the persuasion of something—either objective, which comprises the argument or motive on account of which I believe; or efficient principal, which denotes the principle by whose power I believe; or instrumental, which designates the means and organ through which I believe—so too for corporeal vision three things are necessarily required: a visible object, a visual faculty, and a transparent medium which transmits the species or rays from both sides. In this way, Scripture stands as the foundation and argument on account of which I believe; the Holy Spirit as the principle and efficient cause by whose force and efficacy I believe; and the Church as the instrument through which I believe. Hence if it is asked: Whence is the authority of Scripture proved or made known to us?—we judge that it must be answered in three ways according to the threefold sense of the question. For either it is asked: By what argument or why and on account of what is it believed? And then it is answered: On account of Scripture alone and the criteria inherent in it, not on account of anything else outside itself is Scripture known and believed to be divine. Or it is asked: By what instrument and means, or through what do we recognize it as such? And here it is answered: Through the ministry of the Church we ordinarily obtain that knowledge—to whose care God has willed to commit His oracles. Or finally the question is: From what principle, or by what efficient cause does that faith which acknowledges the divinity of Scripture arise? To this indeed it is answered: This is done best by the Holy Spirit working inwardly, the sole author of saving faith.

What is the testimony of Scripture?

V. When we speak of the testimony of Scripture itself, we do not mean only an inartificial argument—as if Scripture simply demanded faith in itself because it claims to be divine—but an artificial and rational one, insofar as God has impressed upon it marks and criteria of such a kind as cannot belong to merely human writing. Such are the divine truth of the Word, the admirable sublimity of the mysteries, the candor and *παρρησία* (frankness) of the writers, the mutual harmony of the parts, the holiness and efficacy of the doctrine, and other things of this sort. In these are found the inimitable characters of singular majesty and wisdom, and such a blending of gravity with simplicity, which by a certain hidden power steals into the soul of the pious reader, subdues and overcomes it. Indeed, from the contemplation of these things we easily gather that Holy Scripture is not a book elaborated by human effort, but composed under the special guidance of the Holy Spirit, and therefore truly divine and *αὐτόπιστον* (self-authenticating).

And here we think a distinction must be made between the object or foundation of faith and its argument or motive. For the foundation can be nothing other than divine revelation, or the Word divinely revealed. But the marks which we perceive in this divine revelation supply the argument for our faith; these, like so many rays, demonstrate the splendor of its divinity. So that the Word or divine revelation is, as it were, the material which faith embraces, and by which the question “What do you believe?” is answered. But the formal element or motive on which our faith rests, and by which the question “Why do you believe?” is answered, gives rise to a certainty not merely probable and moral (otherwise our faith would be no more certain than any historical assent given to human writings), but theological and infallible—a certainty which cannot deceive

the believer enlightened by the Holy Spirit, because it rests not on the word of men (who can both err and deceive), but on the Word of God (who can neither err nor deceive).

What is the testimony of the Church?

VI. To the testimony of Scripture—which is κυρίον (proper) and primary—there is added the λειτουργικὸν (ministerial) and ministerial testimony of the Church, which we do not deny also has some importance here. For although absolutely speaking no human agency is necessary for knowing the divinity of Scripture (since God can immediately reveal his Word to whom he pleases—as the Apostle testifies concerning himself in Galatians 1:12, when he declares that he “did not receive it from man, nor was he taught it, but through a revelation of Jesus Christ”), nevertheless, because in the ordinary way of providence God has seen fit to use human agency in bringing people to faith, he willed to commit his oracles to his Church so that they might be handed down to the faithful. Hence, this testimony often carries no small weight in moving human minds and arousing reverence for Scripture.

From this arises the Church’s manifold office concerning Scripture: First, that of Guardian: who ought to preserve this divine Testament with the utmost fidelity, like a public notary. In this sense Paul repeatedly exhorts Timothy to “guard the deposit” (1 Timothy 6:20; 2 Timothy 1:14). Second, that of Witness: who ought to point out to us the sacred books and guide us to them—just as John pointed out Christ to the Jews (“Behold, the Lamb of God,” John 1:29) and the Samaritan woman pointed out the Messiah to her fellow citizens (John 4). Third, that of Vindicator: who defends and upholds the genuine books by distinguishing them from adulterated and spurious ones, lest human words be passed off as divine and bronze be substituted for gold. To this belongs Paul’s notable commendation when he calls the Church “the pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15). Fourth, that of Interpreter: whose task it is to open up the true and genuine sense and to “rightly divide” the Word according to the analogy of faith and Scripture itself (Romans 12:6; Ephesians 4). Fifth, that of Herald and Messenger: who sets forth and proclaims that Word as an edict and law in the name of the supreme Ruler, so as to bring people to the obedience of faith. In this sense ministers are called ambassadors, heralds, messengers (Romans 10:15; 2 Corinthians 5:19–20; Isaiah 40:5), and their ministry is called proclamation.

VII. Although the Church’s role regarding Scripture is manifold, all of it pertains to ministry, not magisterium. Just as a guardian, defender, herald, or interpreter confers no authority on the matters entrusted to them, but only deals with them organically and ministerially, so whatever the Church does regarding the Word extends no further than ministry. Through her we are said to believe, but not on account of her—just as the Jews were to believe through John (John 1:7), and the Samaritans through the Samaritan woman. For she performs the same office for us as that woman did for her fellow citizens: she led them to Christ and gave the Samaritans access to know Him; once they knew Him, they embraced Him far more certainly on His own account. “Now we believe,” they said, “not because of your speech, for we have heard Him ourselves and know that this is indeed the Savior of the world” (John 4:42). So the Church is a guiding medium because she leads us to Scripture and places it in our hands. But as long as we remain at this stage, faith is only human, not divine—or rather a step toward faith rather than faith itself—until we come to Scripture and embrace it for its own sake. Hence we do not reject the testimony of the Church,

but assign it its proper place; we do not neglect ministry, but we refuse magisterium; we regard her as the instrument through which we believe, not as the argument on account of which we believe; as a guide to faith, not as the primary motive that persuades it; as a testimony greater than any other human testimony, but inferior to God speaking in Scripture, since she borrows all her authority, however great it may be, from Him.

VIII. Now the Church can be considered either as collective with respect to the faithful, or as representative with respect to the pastors. Here the question concerns chiefly the latter, not the former. Moreover, according to various circumstances of time, her testimony can be more or less certain. For if we speak of the ancient and Apostolic Church, her testimony is to be equated with divine testimony, since the inspired Apostles were still active in her. The testimony of the Church that followed the Apostolic age was less than that of the Apostles because it was not infallible; yet it was more certain than today's testimony because it closely followed the Apostolic age and was still distinguished by various miracles and signs. But the testimony of the present-day Church is inferior to the others and therefore far less weighty—and yet it is chiefly this testimony that is in question here. Indeed, the Papists do not want the testimony of just any church to be heard, but that of their own, which they assume to be true without proving it—though that is what especially needed to be proven, since it is useless to assert the authority of the true Church in theory unless it is demonstrated in fact that the Roman Church is such.

IX. Although Scripture and the Church speak here, yet the voice of both would be in vain unless there were added, thirdly, the working of the Holy Spirit acting inwardly. Hence we have said that this third testimony is necessary for obtaining full persuasion of the divinity of Scripture. But when we speak of testimony, we must not imagine here some inner voice of the Spirit speaking and persuading us of something apart from the Word—as Enthusiasts and Fanatics would have it, from whom we differ immensely. Rather, we understand nothing else than the force and efficacy of the Spirit acting inwardly and opening the eyes of the mind to discern the rays of divine truth shining in the Word, and thus generating faith in our souls. Hence we must distinguish a twofold working of the Spirit: one in the Word, which is called external testimony; another in the heart, which is internal testimony. For the same One who speaks in the Word to explain heavenly doctrine also speaks in the heart to apply it; and as He testifies in the Word objectively by way of argument, so He also testifies in the heart by way of principle. In this sense John (1 John 5:6) lists the Spirit among the witnesses of the truth of the Gospel and the divinity of Christ: “The Spirit testifies that the Spirit is truth”—that is, the Spirit in the heart testifies that the Spirit in the Word (or the doctrine delivered by the Spirit) is truth.

Moreover, the necessity of the Spirit is shown not only by the blindness of our minds, which do not grasp the things of God, but also by the sublimity of the heavenly mysteries, which could never have been conceived or apprehended by human reasoning, however sound. And just as in vision not only is light required in the object seen, but also in the seeing subject (for in vain would the sun shine for a blind person), so the Spirit, who has shone in the Word for the revelation of truth, must shine in the heart for the illumination of the eyes of the mind. From this arises the assent of faith and that full assurance of heart which acknowledges and embraces the divinity of Scripture.

X. But lest we go astray in discerning the work of the Holy Spirit, It must be observed: I. That this inward testimony of the Spirit is never separated from the Word contained in Scripture; nor does His operation aim at anything other than sealing that divine truth in our souls. The Word is like seed cast into the earth; the Spirit is like the life-giving power by which it takes root and sprouts in us. The Word is the object presented to the faculty; the Spirit is the power that disposes the faculty to embrace it. To this point refer those passages: Isaiah 59:21, “The word that I have put in your mouth, and the Spirit who is in you, shall not depart,” etc.; and what Christ says in John 16:14, “He will take of mine and declare it to you.” Hence it is clear how utterly foreign this is to the Anabaptist spirit, which both despises Scripture and indulges in private and extraordinary revelations. II. This testimony indeed serves for the personal confirmation of individual believers, in whom the Spirit dwells and works, but it cannot be used to convince or convert others. For since it is known and perceived only by the believer (Revelation 2:17), His testimony can only persuade the believer to whom it is given, and it does not benefit others except by means of the effects which are outwardly seen (2 Corinthians 4:13). Hence I would rightly deserve ridicule if I tried to persuade another that Scripture is divine because the Holy Spirit testifies this in me. III. The Spirit may be called “private” with respect to the subject, because He is in each believer, but not with respect to His principle and origin, because He is common to the whole Church (2 Corinthians 4:13)—just as the sun, illuminating the whole world and enlightening each individual, is not a private torch kindled for each one. So the Spirit, who permeates the believing heart with His light, cannot be called private, because it is the same Spirit who has always breathed in the Church, who inspired the Word in the prophets and apostles, and who moves and stirs the mind of the true believer, bringing into the sanctuary of the heart the same light of doctrine which He kindled in the sanctuary of the Word. Hence it is clear how unjustly the Papists accuse us of holding a “Private Spirit,” when we affirm that He is common to all believers. IV. The Spirit does not testify in all hearers of the Word, but only in the elect—yet not all with equal clarity or certainty. That He does not testify in all is clear not only from the parable of the sower (Matthew 13), but also from the fact that the Spirit is not given to all (John 14:16–17), just as faith is not (2 Thessalonians 3:2), but only to the elect, to whom God deigns to reveal His mysteries by special grace (Matthew 11:25–26). So it is no wonder that many doubt the truth of Scripture—indeed, even fall away from faith in it (John 6:64, 66). That He testifies in all believers is certain, because He is given to them for this very purpose: to testify concerning those things which have been given to us (1 Corinthians 2:12); and unless one has the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him (Romans 8:9). But just as He is communicated to believers in different measure—according to their stages in sanctification, so that some are more advanced than others both in faith and in love (1 Corinthians 2:6; Hebrews 5:13–14)—so also the certainty and clarity of the testimony He gives in them is greater or lesser. And hence it has happened that not all the sacred books have always been equally regarded by all as canonical; rather, some have been rejected by those by whom they had been received. V. In order that the divine testimony of the Spirit may be distinguished from the contrary testimony of a fanatical spirit, no other more certain criterion can be applied than Holy Scripture—so that it may be examined according to the standard of Sacred Scripture. This is so both because this rule is set before us (Deuteronomy 13:1–3; Isaiah 8:20; 1 John 4:1–3, 8) and because the Spirit is the Spirit of truth, always consistent and conformable to Himself, nor does He testify in the heart otherwise than He has testified in the Word. Yet from this the Papists wrongly charge us with circular reasoning (of

which they themselves are clearly guilty), since Scripture proves the Spirit objectively, while the Spirit proves Scripture effectively—a point we have demonstrated elsewhere in a special discussion concerning circular reasoning.

XI. From these premises, it is readily gathered what the opinion of the Orthodox is in this most weighty question: namely, that for the inward persuasion of the divine authority of Scripture, the operation of the Holy Spirit in our hearts is absolutely necessary. But the argument or motive which He uses to beget that faith is not the testimony of the Church—though even in this respect it may have some importance—but solely the marks shining forth in the Word, which radiate with such splendor that we believe Scripture on account of itself and not on account of something else. Hence, if the resolution of faith is sought, they hold that it can be considered in two ways: either with respect to its foundation or external object, and in this respect faith is ultimately resolved into the divine revelation alone expressed in Scripture; or with respect to the subject or internal principle, and then it is resolved into the Spirit bearing witness in the heart.

The Opinion of the Papists

XII. But the Papists here go off in a completely different direction, although they speak very obscurely and are not always consistent with themselves. First, it is certain that some have spoken more harshly, others more mildly. For those who originally defended Popery most fiercely in the memory of our fathers, setting aside ambiguities, did not hesitate to assert that all authority of Scripture depends on the Church, and that, apart from the testimony of the Church, it is no more worthy of belief than the Koran, Titus Livius, or Aesop's fables. Hence those blasphemous statements which no pious person can read without horror: "In a pious sense it can be said that the Scriptures are of no more value than Aesop's fables if they are deprived of the authority of the Church"—which Cardinal Hosius has in Book III against Brentius; and which Baylius the Jesuit openly declares in Tract 1, Catechism, question 12: "that without the authority of the Church he would put no more faith in Matthew than in Titus Livius." And Andradius says in Book II of his Defense of the Council of Trent: "There is nothing of divinity in those books in which the sacred mysteries are written, nor is there anything found in them that compels and binds us by religion to believe what is contained in them; but the Church has such force and amplitude that no one can resist it without the greatest mark of impiety"—and many other things of this kind, which are read in Eck's Enchiridion chapter 1, Pighius's Book I On the Hierarchy of the Church chapter 2, Bellarmine's Book IV On the Word of God chapter 4, and others.

XIII. But because more recent writers have noticed that these things are spoken too crudely and grossly, they have therefore spoken more cautiously, explaining their view in such a way that they indeed concede that Scripture is absolutely and in itself divine, even without the testimony of the Church; but relatively and with respect to us, they wish that this authority does not obtain except through the testimony of the Church, by whose benefit it becomes known to us as divine and is received by us. Thus the Church does not indeed make Scripture true—for it has this from God its author—but only that it may be acknowledged and believed as true. Hence arises the common distinction between authority in itself and authority with respect to us, which they use in this argument and complain that they are wronged by our side and that the state of the question is perverted when it is framed thus: "Does the authority of Scripture depend on the Church?"—as if

the Church made Scripture authentic and conferred upon it some authority which it did not have of itself—when this is only to be understood with respect to us, because it would not become known to us except on account of the testimony of the Church. So that the question is not whether Holy Scripture is true and whence it has that, for it has this from God its author; but by what reason and whence it is certain to us that it is true and divine—which they judge depends on the Church: in exactly the same way as Solomon’s famous judgment did not make the infant about whom there was a dispute to be the son of the true mother, but only revealed whose son it was.

XIV. But however they may attempt to coat their dogma, if we examine the matter more deeply, it will be clear that this distinction was devised for the purpose of creating a false appearance and avoiding ill-will, rather than for explaining the truth; and that while the words have indeed been changed, the same meaning always lies behind them. First, because no authority can be given in itself which is not also an authority for us—not only because it is in the nature of relative things, which necessarily include a relation to something else, but also because what makes Scripture divine and authentic in itself must also make it such for us. Indeed, the arguments and criteria that establish its authority in itself ought also to establish it with respect to us, so that nothing can be called an absolute foundation which is not also a foundation for us. For if something moves or can move us to assent, it is the foundation of faith absolutely, not only for us; and if it does not move nor can move us to assent, it is neither an absolute foundation nor one for us. Hence, even if the Church were to say a hundred times that Scripture must be held as divine, I could not and should not assent if it were not divine in itself; and although the Church might deny that it should be received as divine, it would still have to be received by the very fact that it is established as true and divine in itself.

Moreover, when our adversaries say that the question among us is not whence the authority of Scripture comes, but how it becomes known to us, they either mean the reason and motive on account of which we know and believe it as such, or simply the means and instrument by which we are led to know it. If they mean the latter, they change the state of the question and do not have us in disagreement—for, as said before, we do not deny that the Church contributes to pointing out Scripture to us. But if they mean the former—as they must if they wish to uphold their hypothesis and speak consistently with their own view—then this distinction is brought forward in vain. For if the testimony of the Church is the principal reason why I believe Scripture is divine, then it must also confer authority upon Scripture in itself, and so its authority will always depend on the Church—which is what earlier writers, who spoke more plainly, intended.

Nor can Solomon’s judgment help them; indeed, it supports our position. For his judgment was not the foundation or reason by which the true mother was known, but only the means by which she was made known—since by his intervention a stirring of maternal affection occurred, which was the proper cause of that recognition. So too, when the Church leads us to Scripture and shows the rays of divinity shining in it, it is indeed the means by which we believe it is divine, but not the foundation itself or formal reason on account of which we believe.

XV. Furthermore, it must not be concealed that the Papists seem to think and speak more soundly when they deny that the Church is the principal foundation or formal reason on account of which we believe by divine faith that Scripture is truly the Word of God—but only either a necessary

condition required for eliciting that act of faith (as Valentia says in Tom. 3, disp. 1, qu. 1, and Gretserus in his treatise on recognizing the canonical Scriptures, ch. 7), or a cause of the acceptance of faith (as Becanus says in *De Circulo Calvinistico*). But if it is asked on what foundation, then, divine faith rests by which the divine authority of Scripture is believed—or what is the formal reason on account of which we believe by divine faith that this is the Word of God—they answer that it is divine revelation; that is, they believe this on account of the authority of God who reveals, as both Gretserus and Becanus extensively prove.

Yet it is not difficult to strip off this mask by which they try to deceive the simpler sort, and to show that they either speak inconsistently or commit a glaring prevarication—taking away with one hand what they seem to give with the other. For while they rightly assert that divine revelation is the foundation or formal reason of faith, if one further asks where that revelation is on account of which we believe Scripture is the Word of God—and which is the first and best known of all, which ought to be received by us on its own account and for its own sake, not on account of any other—here they must falter. For either they will say it is Scripture itself, and so they come over to us, who desire nothing else than that Scripture be believed on account of Scripture itself; or they will say it is some unwritten tradition—but then the same question will arise concerning that tradition: how is it established as divine? Or they will say it is the voice of the Church itself, in which and through which God speaks—which, however, they seemed to want to deny.

XVI. Indeed, it is gathered that this is their genuine meaning from their own words: For through the testimony of the Church, they ordinarily respond to the question, “Why do you believe this Word to be the Word of God?” In fact, they consider that no other answer can conveniently be given. Bellarmine, in Book III, On the Word of God, Chapter 10, in response to argument 13, states: “It is certain that we do not know with certainty what God has revealed except from the testimony of the Church.” And in Book VI, On Free Will, Chapter 3: “Catholics believe what they believe because God has revealed it, and they believe that God has revealed it because they hear the Church saying and declaring it.” Stapleton, in Book I, On the Authority of the Church against Whitaker, Chapter 8: “Therefore, now the supreme external testimony on earth is the voice of the Church.” And in Chapter 9: “God speaking through the Church speaks no differently than if He were speaking to us immediately through visions and dreams, or by any other supernatural mode of revelation.” And in Chapter 14, Section 12: “The whole formal reason for our faith is God revealing through the Church.” Gretser, in *On Recognizing the Canon of Scripture*, Chapter 7: “Only the testimony of the Church is suitably given in response to the question, ‘How do you know that Scripture is divinely revealed?’” Thus, they do not deny that Scripture is the Word of God, but they maintain that it cannot become known to us as such except on account of another revelation, which must ultimately be sought in the Church, as through which God speaks today as through an infallible organ, just as He formerly spoke through the Prophets and Apostles.

The State of the Question.

XVII. From these points, we can now easily gather the state of the controversy and what agreement or disagreement exists between us and our adversaries. First, it is clear that the

question here is not about the principle or efficient cause of faith by which we believe the divinity of Scripture—namely, whether the Holy Spirit is necessary to generate that faith. For our adversaries cannot deny this and have often professed to acknowledge the necessity of this principle. Stapleton, against Whitaker, more than once complains that a grave injury is done to them when the contrary is ascribed to them: “The secret testimony of the Divine Spirit,” he says, “is absolutely necessary for anyone to believe the testimony and judgment of the Church concerning the approval of Scripture; and without this internal testimony of the Divine Spirit, even if the Church testifies, commends, promulgates, and approves the Scriptures a thousand times, faith will not follow, nor will it be persuaded to the hearing people.” So also Cano, in his Theological Places, Book II, Chapter 8, Response to the fourth argument, and others. But the question concerns the argument or principal motive that the Holy Spirit uses in persuading us of that truth. Is it the non-artificial argument of the testimony of the Church, as the Papists would have it? Or is it an artificial argument drawn from the marks of Scripture itself? This is what we maintain. These two must be distinguished all the more accurately because otherwise they can cast great darkness upon this dispute. And hence it has happened that various writers seem not to have dealt successfully enough in resolving this controversy against our adversaries, as if only this were being asked: whether the authority of Scripture depends rather on the internal persuasion of the Spirit than on the testimony of the Church. For as we have just said, the Papists do not deny the necessity of the Spirit for persuading us of this authority. And if any difficulty occurs in this part, it would pertain to the question of Free Will, not of Scripture. For it is one thing to ask whence or by what means and through what instrument divine Scripture is known; it is another to ask why, on account of what, and by what argument it is believed. For as to the former, there has been agreement thus far between the parties that this happens through faith by means of the power of the Spirit. But in the latter there is a serious dispute. For they say that we believe Scripture on account of the Church; but we say that the Church is to be heard on account of Scripture. They say that Scripture is to be believed insofar as it receives testimony from the Church; we, on the contrary, say that the Church is to be believed insofar as it speaks in agreement with Scripture.

XVIII. 2. It is also clear that the question is not simply about the testimony of the Church—whether any regard should be had for it—but about its weight and authority: whether it is the primary and chief means which the Holy Spirit uses. For we do not deny that the Church has its own role in this matter, as we noted earlier, while it performs the office of Guardian, Herald, Defender, and Interpreter. But whatever it does here, we say it only works ministerially and organically, so as to be a λειτουργικὸν and εἰσαγωγικὸν medium which the Holy Spirit uses, not a κύριον and principal one; so that it preserves the truth but does not establish it; proposes it but does not constitute it; indicates and defends it, but does not judge αὐτοκρατορικῶς. Just as the edicts of princes and magistrates do not derive their authority from the heralds and royal ministers, although they are made known to the people through them; as a goldsmith, distinguishing gold from copper or other metals by a balance or touchstone, does not make the gold but only indicates that it is genuine; and as a faithful interpreter ought not to invent or introduce anything of his own, but only bring out and elicit the hidden meaning through diligent examination. But those with whom we are dealing want not merely ministry, but magisterium; not that we should believe only through the Church, but also because of it. Indeed, they arrogate to

themselves a censorial right even over God Himself, and they not only suspend our faith upon their own judgment, and their own upon themselves, but even the voice of God Himself—imitating the ancient arrogance of the Roman Senate, in whose presence “divinity was weighed by human judgment,” as Tertullian says in his *Apology*, chapter 5. For they claim the same right over Holy Scripture. Hence the blasphemous audacity of Pope Nicholas, who in *Distinction 19*, Canon “*Si Romanus Pontifex*,” did not blush to decree: “Only that is to be approved which has been approved or disapproved by the vote of the Roman Pontiffs, and therefore finally the Old and New Testament are to be received because Pope Innocent decreed by his authority and judgment that they should be received.” 3. The question is not whether the public testimony of the Church is to be preferred to the private testimony of any believer—as some wrongly frame the state of the question. For besides the fact that it is falsely supposed that the Spirit testifying in us is our own, when it is common to the Church, as seen earlier; the Spirit testifying in a believer does not function as an object or argument, but as a principle. And so no legitimate opposition can be set up between the testimony of the Church and that of the Spirit. But the question is whether the testimony of the Church is to be preferred to the testimony or marks of Scripture itself—so that we believe Scripture more on account of the former than on account of the latter. The Papists want the former; we hold to the latter.

XIX. 4. Nor is it questioned whether there are certain marks and criteria in Scripture by which its divinity can be shown and commended—for this the Papists do not deny, and together with us they prove the divinity of Scripture from them. Indeed, they often acknowledge (so great is the power of Scripture that it sometimes extorts true testimony even from its enemies) “that nothing is more evident, nothing more certain, so that one must be utterly foolish to deny that faith ought to be placed in it,” as Bellarmine says in *Book 1, On the Word of God*, chapter 2; so also Valentia in *Book 1, On the Analysis of Faith*. But whether those marks are sufficient in themselves to ground faith in its divinity in our souls? Or whether they are the chief motive by which we are led to believe, and upon which faith rests? This we affirm; but they deny it, taking away with one hand what they had given with the other.

XX. 5. It is not questioned whether divine revelation is simply and absolutely the formal reason of our faith—that on account of which we believe something by divine faith—for our adversaries acknowledge this along with us, or at least profess to acknowledge it. But what is that revelation with respect to us—the first and best known—which ought to be believed by us for its own sake and on its own account, not on account of any other? Is it to be sought in Scripture, or indeed in the Church? We judge that it is contained in Holy Scripture, which is the first and most perfect rule, and cannot or ought not to be sought outside it; but the Papists hold that it must be sought in the voice and testimony of the Church—or in the brain of the Pope, into whom all things are ultimately resolved. Hence the question finally comes down to these terms: “Whence or on account of what, or by what chief argument does the Holy Spirit make use of to prove to us the authority of Scripture—whether by the testimony of the Church, or indeed by that of Scripture itself—that is, by arguments and criteria inherent in it.” The Papists assert the former; we affirm the latter and undertake to demonstrate it.

The authority of Scripture does not depend on the Church: proved 1. by elimination.

XXI. We can establish the proof of our position in two ways: 1. κατ' ἄρσιν, by showing that the authority of Scripture does not depend on the Church. 2. κατὰ θέσιν, by demonstrating that it is entirely founded on Scripture itself.

As to the first point, it is sufficiently and abundantly clear from this single argument: The authority of the Church depends entirely on Scripture; therefore, it cannot confer any authority upon Scripture, either in itself or with respect to us. The reasoning behind this consequence is self-evident: It is impossible for the same thing, in relation to itself, to be both cause and effect, principle and derived; otherwise, it would be both prior and posterior, more known and less known. The premise is confirmed by multiple reasons: 1. Because the Church is founded on Scripture and derives its specific being from it. For there is no Church without a calling, and no calling except through the Word. Hence, it is said to be built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles (Ephesians 2:20). Therefore, just as no house can exist unless a foundation is first laid, so too the Church cannot exist unless Scripture is established. 2. Because no certain knowledge of the Church can be obtained except from the Word. For before we hear the voice of the Church, we must first be certain about the Church: Whether it exists, what it is, and where it is. Since these cannot be perceived by sense or reason, it follows that all this knowledge comes from Scripture, which not only teaches that there is a Church but also describes it with such marks and characteristics that we cannot remain ignorant of it. Therefore, if the Church is known from Scripture, Scripture itself will be better known, and its authority with respect to us will not depend on the Church. 3. Because the foundation of the Church's authority can be sought from no other source than Scripture. How else can we be certain that the Church possesses such authority? Shall we suppose this is established by the Church's own authority? But that is precisely the point in question. Nor can it be a common intuition, since it is so hotly debated. Therefore, it follows that we must derive this from the Word, and thus the Word already possesses authority among us beforehand. Our adversaries cannot deny this; for when pressed by our side—“How do you know that the Church has this authority in confirming the canon of Scripture?”—They immediately reply that this is so because it is guided by the Holy Spirit. But if you press further, “How is it certain that it is so guided?” They at once cite various testimonies of Scripture, by which they attempt to prove that Christ promised this to the Church (Matthew 18:20; 28:20; John 15:26; 16:13, etc.). Thus, they draw all their proofs from Scripture. But how could this properly be done unless Scripture were first known and believed to be divine? So they slay themselves with their own sword: while attempting to establish the dignity of the Church by the authority of Scripture, they abandon their own position and—whether unwittingly or unwillingly—confirm our view.

XXII. To this argument they object by denying the consequence: “If the authority of the Church with respect to us depends on the authority of Scripture, it does not follow that the authority of Scripture does not depend on the Church; for both can be true at once—that the Church borrows its authority from Scripture, and Scripture in turn its authority from the Church.” And lest they seem to assert this without reason, they attempt to prove it with examples: John the Baptist, they say, bore witness to Christ, and Christ to John; Paul's letters commend his authority magnificently, yet they receive their authority from their author. We do not receive the creed on any external authority except that of the Church, yet in it the Church itself is proposed as an object of belief. Thus, there is nothing absurd if both the Church depends on Scripture and, in turn, Scripture depends on the Church. And this can be said with greater certainty because the

same Scripture that is said to establish the authority of the Church expressly affirms that it is “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15). This could not truly be said unless it, by its testimony, conferred authority in turn upon the truth contained in Scripture. Hence Bellarmine (Book VI, *On the Church*, Chapter 14) says: “If the Church is the pillar and firmament of truth, then the truth of faith with respect to us rests on the authority of the Church, and whatever the Church approves is true, whatever it disapproves is false.”

XXIII. But they strive in vain to evade the force of the Argument; First, they gratuitously suppose both to be true: that the Church gives authority to Scripture, and in turn takes it from Scripture. For although in a different kind of cause it may sometimes hold true that a cause is proved by its effect a posteriori, which proves the effect itself a priori; yet in the same kind it is inconsistent, unless we wish the same thing to be both more known and less known—more known because it is assumed for the proof of another, but less known because it is itself proved through another. Thus we do not deny that the Testimony of the Church can prove Scripture a posteriori, by way of instrument or means, but we utterly deny that it has the force of a principal argument and motive.

Second, in the examples brought forward, they commit the fallacy of equals. It is one thing to bear witness to Christ; it is another to win authority for Him. The former is rightly said of John the Baptist, but the latter is not. Hence Christ Himself, in John 5:31, denies that He receives testimony from men, so as to rely on it, but says He has a testimony greater than that of John—namely, both His own works, and the voice of the Father, and the Scriptures themselves. Nothing therefore prevents testimony from having been borne to Christ by John, and in turn Christ from having borne witness concerning John, because the manner of testifying was different: John testified as a minister concerning the Lord; but Christ as the Lord concerning the servant. John, as a guide, led people to Christ by pointing to Him as with a finger; but Christ, as a King, confirmed the proclamation of His servant by His own authority. Therefore, just as they believed in Christ through John, but not on account of John—for “he came to bear witness to the light, that all might believe” δι' αὐτοῦ (through him), not δι' αὐτὸν (on account of him)—so we believe in the Word through the Church, not on account of her. She testifies concerning the Word when she indicates and sets it forth. But the Word testifies concerning the Church when He founds and establishes her. The epistles of Paul commend the majesty of their Author a posteriori, as a work praises its maker; but Paul, as a man of God, θεοπνευστος (inspired by God), confers upon them whatever authority they have a priori.

Third, it is wrongly asserted that the Creed has no authority except from the Church, since it has its entire authority from Scripture, from which—if not αὐτολεξεί (in the very words), at least as regards the matters themselves—it has been drawn. Therefore, if it proves the Church, the whole force of the argument depends on Scripture itself, in which it is founded; nor could the Church give any authority to the Creed, but delivered it to the faithful as a summary of things to be believed, drawn from Scripture.

XXIV. Regarding the passage 1 Timothy 3:15, however, since it is extremely controversial and is frequently brought against us as an irrefutable argument, it must be discussed a little more fully.

I know that it has occurred to some learned men to change the punctuation of this passage, so that “the Church of the living God” completes the period, while “the pillar and ground of the truth”

refers not to the Church, but to “the mystery of godliness” mentioned in the following clause. They do so partly because Paul does not usually begin his thought with the particle “and,” and partly because this manner of speaking is very common among the Jews, who call the principal articles of their faith “foundations,” “pillars,” and “roots,” as well as “heads of faith.” And whenever they set out to discuss their doctrines, they write at the outset “the foundation of foundations” or “the foundation of wisdom,” as is clear from Maimonides, who begins his book on the foundation of the Law thus: “The foundation of foundations and the pillar of wisdom is to know that there is a First Being.”

But although this interpretation is ingenious and would entirely remove every difficulty, I doubt whether it is equally solid; for it is clear to any reader of the words themselves that there is some forcing in this interpretation, which separates what ought to be joined and joins what ought to be separated. Hence all the versions—Syriac, Arabic, and Latin—follow the received reading and refer it to the Church, as do also the Fathers. And indeed, even if the passage were left undisturbed, the sense would be no less fitting; indeed, Paul’s reasoning would cohere very well.

For the Apostle puts forward two arguments to stir up Timothy to greater reverence and zeal for holiness. The first is drawn from the dignity of the Church which he served—a dignity such as ought to inspire a kind of holy awe in all who gird themselves for this sacred ministry: “That you may know how you ought to behave in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” The second is drawn from the sublimity and excellence of the mystery, the proclamation of which was entrusted to him: “which is the great mystery of godliness.” Hence he adds: “and without controversy great is the mystery of godliness,” etc.

Moreover, the foundation of wisdom for the Rabbis is one thing; the ground of truth for the Apostle is another. For Maimonides’s “laws” and “foundation of wisdom” are the first principles of faith and the primary heads of religion, which must be held by all and presupposed for the rest of doctrine—such as the existence of God, etc. In this sense, the Apostle in Hebrews 6:1 calls “foundation” the first principles and rudiments of the Christian religion. But in this passage Paul is not dealing with the elements of Christianity, but with the great mystery, which embraces its more difficult and sublime heads—what elsewhere he calls “wisdom among them that are perfect” (1 Corinthians 2:6).

XXV. Although the common reading is retained—and we judge that it should be retained—nevertheless, nothing is thereby added to the opinion of the Pontifical party, nor taken away from ours. 1. For if the Church is said to be the pillar and ground of the truth, this cannot be understood absolutely and simply, but only in a certain respect. - Absolutely speaking, the truth is the pillar and foundation of the Church. - By it the Church is so established and upheld that, while truth stands, the Church stands; but if truth were to fall or be removed, the Church would fall. - For there would be no Church at all if truth were once banished from it. But the situation is far different with respect to the Church: - Even if there were no Church on earth, truth would not perish; it would always remain in God, in the angels, in the blessed, and in Scripture itself. Therefore, the Church is said to be the pillar of truth, and truth the pillar of the Church, in very different senses. - They render mutual assistance, but in different ways: - Truth is the pillar of the Church properly and principally. - The Church is the pillar of truth ministerially and

improperly. - Truth is the pillar of the Church by really founding it and effectively sustaining it. - The Church is the pillar of truth by preaching it and presenting it to the world. - Truth gives being to the Church; the Church guards and defends truth against the slanders of Satan and the world. - Truth is the pillar of the Church in an architectonic sense, as they say; but the Church is the pillar of truth in a political sense. Hence Chrysostom, inverting the statement, says that truth is the pillar of the Church. Irenaeus (Book III, Chapter 11) says: "The pillar and ground of the Church is the Gospel and the Spirit of life." To this may be referred what Theodoret rightly maintains—that "pillar of truth" should be taken not actively (as though it supports truth), but passively (because it is supported by truth), so that "truth" denotes the cause and "pillar" the effect. In this sense Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria (in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book VI, Chapter 41), calls martyrs "firm and blessed pillars of the Lord"—not because they support the Lord (far from it!), but because they were so strengthened by Christ that they stood steadfast even to bloodshed, preferring to give up life rather than faith. So also "the foundation of God" (2 Timothy 2:19) means not that on which God is founded, but that which God has founded and laid. Likewise, "the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:19) means not that which fills God, but that which is filled by God. Hence Contarenus on this passage says: "It is not called 'pillar' because the Church strengthens and upholds truth, but because it is strengthened by truth."

XXVI. Second, it is one thing to be a "pillar and foundation of the truth," and another to be the "foundation" itself. The Church is indeed called the former, but not the latter, because it does not support the truth; rather, it is itself supported by the Truth as its foundation. Hence Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:11, "No one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ." Elsewhere, Christ is called the living and cornerstone, upon which the members of the Church, as so many living stones, must be built—as in 1 Peter 2:7 and Ephesians 2:20.

Thus Irenaeus, in Book III, Chapter 1, calls "the writings of the Apostles the foundation and pillar of faith." And Bede, in Book I on John, Chapter 12, says, "The foundation of the Church lies in the solidity of the faith of the Apostles and Prophets."

Third, the title "pillar and firmament of the truth" does not always imply infallibility or authority in the one to whom it is attributed. For example, in Eusebius's *History*, Book V, Chapter 1, the faithful of Lyons say of the martyr Attalus that he was "a pillar and firmament of the churches." Likewise, Basil in Epistle 70 calls the leading orthodox bishops who opposed the Arian heresy "pillars and stabilizers of the truth"—οἱ στύλοι καὶ τὸ ἐδραῖωμα τῆς ἀληθείας ἐν διασπορᾷ. Gregory Nazianzen also honors Athanasius, Basil, and Eusebius with the same title (Tom. I, p. 389). Yet no one would say that they conferred such authority upon the evangelical truth that it depended on their testimony. Rather, the ancient writers intended only to show that these were outstanding servants of God who steadfastly preached the doctrine of the Gospel not only by word but even by their own blood.

In the same sense, Christ promises the victor in Revelation 3:12 that he will be a pillar in the house of God, upon whom will be written the name of God, of Christ, and of the city of God—signifying the unchangeableness and constancy of a blessedness that corresponds to their own steadfastness and faithfulness. For as they were firm pillars on earth in defending the truth against

all kinds of temptations, so they will be stable and immovable pillars in heaven for the enjoyment of blessedness.

So too in Galatians 2:9, Peter and James are called pillars because they appeared as primary supports of the Church. Indeed, even among non-Christians (τοὺς ἔξω) the same comparison often occurs: thus in a republic, upright and incorrupt judges are called pillars and firmaments of justice; men distinguished for piety are called pillars and lights of the world; and in Euripides, children are called οἴκων στύλοι—pillars of households.

Hence it is clear that although the Church is called a pillar and firmament of the truth, it does not immediately follow that the authority of truth depends upon it.

XXVII. Fourth, this is also most clearly proved by the fact that these words of the Apostle are certainly used concerning a particular church—namely, the church at Ephesus, where Timothy was then residing. For he speaks of the house of God in which he dwelt. But even Papists acknowledge that no particular church can be granted the privilege of infallibility. And indeed this very church at Ephesus later fell into error—indeed, it perished according to Christ's own warning in Revelation 2:4.

Fifth, even if this were referred to the Catholic Church, it would no more favor our adversaries—first, because it is clear that this must be understood of the collective Church or congregation of believers, over which Timothy was to preside, not of the representative body of prelates to whom they wish to assign this privilege as their own; second, because this title—like most others—is attributed to the Church not indiscriminately with respect to both believers and hypocrites who share in its external communion (in which sense Papists understand the Church as external, composed equally of good and evil), but only with respect to the pious, who properly constitute the Church and to whom alone this title belongs.

Hence Jerome says on John, Chapter 26: "The Church, which is the congregation of all saints, is called a pillar and firmament of truth on account of its eternal stability in the Lord." But the impious—who are unstable (ἀστήρικτος), neither loving nor firmly holding the truth—do not belong to this pillar, nor to the house of God mentioned here, since God does not dwell in them nor does truth have a fixed abode in them.

XXVIII. Sixth, whatever is attributed here to the Church pertains to the duty entrusted to it, and it is not so much a matter of what the Church always does, but rather what it is bound to do to preserve and defend the truth—as in Malachi chapter 2, verse 7, where the lips of the priest are said to guard knowledge, because he is bound by his office to do so, even if he does not always fulfill it in fact, as verse 8 shows. For the Church of Ephesus, which the Apostle is specifically addressing here, had already turned away from him, as has been said. Therefore, the subject of the proposition must be understood with some limitation—namely, that the Church is called the pillar and foundation of the truth only insofar as it is the house of the living God, and insofar as He dwells in it through the Word and the Spirit; insofar as it cultivates the truth and lifts it up; and insofar as it holds to the foundation of the Prophets and Apostles, upon which it must be built, as in Ephesians 2:20. Otherwise, if it departs from that foundation—as an external assembly sometimes certainly does—it should no longer be called the pillar and foundation of the truth, but

rather a pillar of falsehood and a seat of error. For in this way it loses its function and its name, and is no longer properly a church, but only in name—indeed, falsely so—if instead of the mystery of godliness it presents a mystery of lawlessness, and turns aside to everything other than what truth directs.

And from this we solidly demonstrate that the Roman Church can claim this commendation less than others, inasmuch as it can no longer be considered the house of the living God, but rather a chapel of Antichrist; nor is pure and uncorrupted truth heard there any longer, but rather the foulest falsehood and countless most dangerous errors. For this reason, it has long been rightly called by its own members—such as Petrarch, Mantuanus, and others—the mother of heresies and the school of error. Indeed, so far are the Papists from finding any support in this passage that, on the contrary, we forcefully argue against them on the basis of their own hypothesis. For by the very fact that they use these words to prove the authority of the Church, they sufficiently show that Scripture must be authentic for us prior to any testimony of the Church; otherwise, their reasoning would be worthless and would run in a circle, from which they could never extricate themselves.

XXIX. And from these points, it is now sufficiently clear—unless I am mistaken—that our adversaries wrongly place a great defense of their cause in this oracle of the Apostle. But since its genuine meaning is not yet established, let us briefly consider what Paul intended and to what he chiefly alluded.

Now, just as he uses figurative and metaphorical language here, it is beyond doubt that he had in mind some use of columns. But because this use can be manifold—either architectural, for the support of a building, or political, for the promulgation and preservation of laws and edicts that are posted there—Paul could not have been referring to the first. Not only because, in that sense, the Truth supports the Church and is not itself supported by her, but also because he had just called it the House of God, which accordingly needed Truth as its foundation and pillar on which to rest, much less to be able to support it. Therefore, he must necessarily have alluded to the second use, according to which columns very frequently served—as in front of courthouses and praetoria—for laws and decrees of magistrates to be posted by public authority, and for proclamations or edicts to be affixed so that they might become known to all. On this point, see Demosthenes in his oration against Leptines, and Pliny in Natural History, Book VI, Chapter 29.

Thus, the Church is most aptly called the pillar and foundation of the truth for a twofold reason: both on account of promulgation and proclamation—because she is bound to proclaim the decrees and laws of God sanctioned by His inner counsel (for this reason, “the oracles of God were entrusted to them”), and through her the heavenly Truth becomes known to people as though posted up; and on account of protection and guardianship—because she ought not only to set it forth but also to defend and guard it from every corruption. For this reason, she is called not only a “pillar” but also a “foundation of the truth,” because she is the dwelling-place of truth and, as it were, its fixed throne and seat upon which it sits. Phavorinus interprets ἐδραίωμα as “a support,” namely something on which another thing rests and stands no less than on a column. The very etymology of the word makes this clear: for ἐδραίωμα comes from ἐδραῖον, which denotes something firm and stable; and ἐδραῖον comes from ἔδρα, which designates a seat, chair,

or throne on which seated images of the gods were displayed—"the place in which an idol is set up." Hence, because images of the gods were placed on columns (as we shall say later), "columns" and "thrones" are often joined in Pausanias's *Corinthiaca* and *Eliaca*. Indeed, columns are said to support a throne, just as Paul here associates "pillar" and "foundation."

Now, just as neither images of the gods nor laws and edicts derived their authority from the columns on which they were posted—since their dignity depended entirely on the author—so too does Truth not derive its authority from the Church, even though she is called its pillar and foundation. This was the mind of Jerome: "The Church," he says, "is the pillar and foundation of the truth because in her alone truth stands firm, which alone supports the building of the Church." So also Cajetan on this passage: "The truth of the divine mysteries is, as it were, upheld on high in the Church, while it is asserted and honored above all things, and it is so founded in the Church itself that it is not found outside her."

XXX. But since the Apostle does not seem to have referred only to that general use of columns, but to have alluded to something more specific when he mentions the House of God, let us see what could have been the foundation of this expression. And without saying anything about the two columns—one of brick, the other of stone—which men before the flood erected to inscribe their discoveries, as Josephus relates in Book I, Chapter 3 of the *Antiquities of the Jews*; nor about the pillar of cloud and fire, which Moses reports was shown as a guide to the Israelite people and in which God is said to have dwelt; it is certain that in the Temple of Jerusalem, which was called the House of God in a special sense, there were various columns to which Paul could have pointed his finger. Just as he called the Church the House of God with reference to the Temple, so he could call the same Church a pillar under another figure, alluding either to those two bronze columns, one called Jachin and the other Boaz, mentioned in 1 Kings 7:21, which aptly signified the firm constancy and invincible strength of the Church; or to that memorable bronze pillar which Solomon is said to have set up in the court of the Temple, mentioned in 2 Kings 11:14 and 2 Chronicles 6:13, which is sometimes called a standing pillar and sometimes a bronze base and platform—fittingly corresponding to our "foundation"—which had the form of a column and also served as a platform and royal throne, on which kings used to sit whenever they were inaugurated, as is said of Joash when he was made king in place of Ahaziah (2 Kings 11:14), or whenever they made a covenant with God and took care to reform the worship of God for the better, as is narrated of Josiah (2 Kings 23:3), who "stood by the pillar and made a covenant with Jehovah," etc., or whenever they performed some solemn act, as Solomon is said to have leaned upon it at the dedication of the Temple (2 Chronicles 6:12). For this reason, it was called the royal pillar by the Jews. Thus, by an elegant allusion, the Apostle presents Truth as a Queen, resting upon the Church as upon a pillar and throne. But just as that pillar and platform supported the king and raised him up high so that he might be seen by the people, yet did not confer authority upon him, so the Church sets forth, preserves, and displays the truth so that it may be seen by men, yet adds no authority or weight to it. And this may refer to what Chrysostom and after him Theophylact hold—that an antithesis is set up with the Jewish Church and with the legal shadows, so that the truth of the Gospel is opposed to them, which now most clearly sets before our eyes the mysteries that were more obscurely presented under the Mosaic shadows—in which sense "truth" is taken in John 1:17. And so let Timothy know what kind of holiness befits this House of God—not legal and shadowy, but true and real.

XXXI. Although we may easily be led to believe that the Apostle had this in view, nevertheless, since it is not unusual for the Sacred Writers, for the greater illustration of the argument they are treating, often to allude to various things in the same expression, we do not think the conjecture of learned men should be rejected, who hold that Paul here also alluded to the temples of the Gentiles. For it is certain from ancient monuments that those temples were everywhere adorned with various columns, which were of various kinds and had multiple uses—not only for the support of the building, but also for majesty and splendor. Hence, on their summits, images of the gods or effigies of princes were often placed, as Pausanias observes (*Corinth*, p. 59, and *Eliac*, p. 174): “Statues are wrought upon a column.” On others, arms, shields, and other trophies of victory were hung; on others certain inscriptions were placed, such as eulogies, treaties, historical narratives of deeds done, so that they might be a monument to posterity—as Lactantius relates from Euhemerus (*Book I, Chapter 11*) concerning a golden column placed in the temple of Triphylius Jupiter by Jupiter himself. Likewise, laws and decrees, moral precepts, and even oracles, as Pausanias testifies in his *Boeotica*. So Athenaeus (*Book IV*) notes that in the shrine of Hercules, which was called Cynosarges, a certain decree of Alcibiades was hung on a column; and Demosthenes in his oration against Neaera observes that in the very ancient temple of Bacchus, which was at Limnae, near the altar, there was a stone column on which a law was inscribed concerning the king taking a wife from a citizen and a virgin. This we could confirm with various examples if the plan of our work allowed it. But from these things the Apostle’s meaning can be clearly gathered: namely, as he had already contrasted the house of God not only with the Temple at Jerusalem but also with the profane shrines of the Gentiles, so he institutes another antithesis between the worship and ornamentation of both. For if in those temples columns wrought with wonderful artistry were seen, they were nothing else than columns of falsehood and error, where nothing but mere fables, profane myths, and images of false gods were set forth. But in that mystical temple, he says, there is a column far different—not of falsehood, but of truth—and on it are displayed not images of false gods, but the living and most express image of the true God manifested in the flesh, who is Himself “the image of the invisible God” (*Col. 1:15*); not “cunningly devised fables,” such as were set forth on the columns of the Gentiles, but “wisdom in a mystery” (*1 Cor. 2:7*), indeed “the great mystery of godliness” (*1 Tim. 3:16*); finally, not the ambiguous oracles of some Apollo “the Oblique,” but the most certain oracles of the true and eternal God. For the Church by its proclamation sets forth nothing else than the most holy truth of God and His oracles, laws, and covenants, to be beheld and followed by all eyes and transmitted to posterity.

XXXII. And from these things—so that we may no longer dwell on the explanation of this passage—it is clear that the Apostle intended here to commend the dignity and office of the Church in setting forth and upholding the truth. But by no sophistries will our adversaries be able to extract from this that its authority and infallibility are here confirmed. Nor should Bellarmine be listened to here, who insists that if nothing else is attributed to the Church than the custody of the truth, the same could be said of booksellers’ shops and of boxes or cases that preserve the Scriptures. For who does not see the very great difference between the material and local preservation of Scripture, which takes place in the boxes and libraries of the ungodly, and the moral and formal custody, preaching, and defense of the truth, which belongs to any Church as long as it duly performs its office? Thus, if the Church is called a guardian, it is not a mute and

irrational one, but a living and rational one, which so guards that it also preaches and by its proclamation commends what has been entrusted to it—which no one would say of libraries.

XXXIII. Bellarmine also adds in vain that the Apostle does not recall the Scriptures, but only the Truth. For if he does not refer to Scripture, why then in the preceding verse does he say that he writes these things so that Timothy may know how he ought to conduct himself in the House of God? Why elsewhere does he testify that the Scriptures are able to make him wise unto salvation? Indeed, by the very fact that he recalls the Truth, he also recalls the Scriptures, since nowhere can that Truth of which the Apostle speaks (namely, the saving and Gospel Truth which is especially distinguished by this name because it is the most perfect of all, just as eternal life is preeminently called life) be found except in the Scriptures. Hence, when the study of the Word of God is commended to us, we are directed to nothing other than the love of Scripture, as in Isaiah 8:20, John 5:39 and 17:17, 1 John 2:20, 2 Peter 1:19, because Scripture alone is the most perfect rule of heavenly Truth, which the Church preserves like a pillar through its ministry. And if the Apostles proclaimed anything by word, they later reduced it to writing, as Irenaeus rightly observes in Book III, Chapter 1. And from this is resolved what Stapleton objects regarding Ephesians 2:20, that by the foundation of the Prophets and Apostles is understood the preached Doctrine. For since the Word, whether written or preached, is essentially the same and differs only in the manner of revelation; if the preached Word is the foundation of the Church, the same must necessarily be conceded concerning Scripture. Hence Paul, who testifies that he has set forth the whole counsel of God to his disciples, nevertheless affirms that he taught nothing beyond Moses and the Prophets, Acts 20:27 and 26:22. And concerning these matters, thus far. The remaining points pertaining to this subject will, God willing, be examined in the next Disputation.

**THEOLOGICAL DISPUTATION ON THE AUTHORITY OF HOLY
SCRIPTURE AGAINST THE PAPISTS,
THE SECOND PART.**

Respondent: JOHANN JEGER OF BERN.

I. Recently we undertook the weighty and momentous Controversy which exists between us and the Papists concerning the Authority of Scripture, and we saw what contributed to the clarification of the State of the Question, so that it might be clearly established what agreement or disagreement there was between the parties. We have also already set forth and defended several arguments for the confirmation of the Orthodox opinion. We must now proceed to other arguments by which the same truth may be demonstrated, and the independent authority of Scripture from the Church may be asserted.

The authority of Scripture does not depend on the Church: proved 2. because it is fallible.

II. Thus, therefore, we demonstrate again that the Authority of Scripture depends neither in itself nor for us on the Testimony of the Church. If human and fallible testimony cannot establish divine and infallible faith, the Testimony of the Church will not be able to confer any Authority upon Scripture. But the former is true; therefore, the latter is also true. The minor premise is self-evident; for since nothing gives what it does not have, that which is human and uncertain cannot be the cause and foundation of divine certainty. The consequence, moreover, is drawn from this: that whatever the Testimony of the Church may be, it is nothing other than human, as being the testimony of men either collectively or individually, and therefore fallible and doubtful. This is further confirmed by the fact that Christ, speaking of the testimony of John in John 5:34, declares that "He does not receive testimony from man," to teach that although He uses it to accommodate Himself to the Jews, who held John in high esteem as a man sent from God and therefore did not dare to reject his testimony, yet He does not seek or require it as if He needed it to secure authority for Himself; for He has a far greater Testimony by which He may be more certainly known, namely His own Works, the Oracle of the Father heard from heaven, and then attested in Scripture, verse 36. Hence Chrysostom on this passage says: "I indeed, being God, did not need his testimony, which is human," implying that it is absurd for God to need human testimony, as if the Lord could depend on a servant, the Creator on a creature, God on man, and the primary and infallible Truth on the uncertain and fallible word of mortals. But since Scripture is the Word of Christ, the same reasoning must apply to both, and what is said of Christ's Person ought also to be said of His Doctrine. This, however, is not said with the intention that we wish to entirely remove the Testimony of the Church from this matter—for we have previously shown that it has its own role in this affair—but only to show that it is not absolutely necessary, nor can it lead us further than to human faith, according to the nature of the principle from which it proceeds.

III. I know that the adversaries falsely suppose here—namely, that the testimony of the Church is merely human, and consequently doubtful and fallible. For they teach that the word of the Church—that is, of a Council or of the Pope teaching *ex cathedra*—is entirely the word of man, subject to error, and not in any way the Word of God, spoken as it is with the assistance and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Thus, since God speaks through the Church, they hold that the

certainty of the testimony depends on Him, not on men. And they think this is clearly confirmed by the fact that the Spirit who is promised to the Church must lead it into all truth (John 16:13).

Reply: It is not difficult to refute this assault of the adversaries. 1. *By force of argument:* Since the Papists derive the infallibility of their Church from Scripture alone, their reasoning will either be frivolous and absurd, or it is necessary that the authority of Scripture itself be known and affirmed prior to any testimony of the Church. 2. *They err by a false hypothesis:* as if God, by speaking through the Church, immediately renders it infallible. For a twofold inspiration must be distinguished: - One is *special and extraordinary*, which occurred to the Prophets and Apostles when they spoke as “carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21), which truly secured for them *autopistia* (self-convincing authority) and *infallibility*. - The other is *common and ordinary*, which is promised to pastors and teachers duly performing their office—indeed, even to individual believers (1 Corinthians 2:12)—to whom is given the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. Although this is true in its own order, it does not place God’s servants beyond all danger of error, because it does not so fill their minds with the splendor of its light as to leave no remnants of ignorance and error in them—which prevent their testimony from being divine and infallible. For only that is called divine which depends immediately on God Himself and on those whom He willed to be *theopneustoi* (God-breathed). Since this has been granted to no one after the Prophets and Apostles, it is in vain for the present-day Church to claim this for itself.

IV. Nor should it be replied here that the truth of the Divine Word is the same no matter by whom it is proclaimed. For aside from the fact that it is assumed—and not proven—that God always speaks through this Church (since it is all too certain that people often impose their own inventions and visions of their heart in place of the divine voice), it also follows that the authority of no teachers can be compared with that of the canonical writers. Their word must always be weighed by the standard of Scripture, so that nothing may be admitted which is not in agreement with it. Hence Augustine says in *Against Faustus the Manichaeon*, Book II, Chapter 5: > “In the writings of others, even if the same truth is found, yet the authority is unequal, because it is not certain that it is always the same truth.” And to Jerome, in Epistle 19, he says: > “I have learned to show this fear and honor only to those writers who are now called canonical, so that I dare not believe that any of them erred in their writing.”

V. In truth, they strive in vain to prove their own interpretation from the passage in John, because it is certain that the Apostles are primarily and chiefly referred to here. As founders and architects of the Church, they necessarily had to possess the gift of infallibility and indeed obtained it through the extraordinary outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost—a fact acknowledged by Toletus, Jansenius, and others among the Pontifical writers.

Nor does the objection raised by Bellarmine from John 14:16 stand in the way, where it is said, “This Spirit will remain with them forever.” Since this cannot be said of the Apostles, who did not live perpetually, it must necessarily refer to their successors. For everyone knows that “eternity” is not always taken in an absolute sense but often κατά τι, to denote a memorable duration extending throughout the entire life of those concerned. Thus, the Spirit is said to remain with the Apostles forever in the sense that He would never forsake them throughout their whole lives. So says Lucas Brugensis: “‘In eternity,’ that is, not for three or four years, but as long as you live in this world; for His fellowship with you will not be temporary, as mine was,” as

Theophylact notes. Similarly, in 1 Timothy 6:14, Paul urges Timothy to keep the commandment until the glorious coming of our Lord Jesus Christ—not because Timothy would live that long, but so that he might devote himself perpetually to its observance and, hypothetically, if he could live that long, resolve to keep the commandment until then.

Although we do not deny that Christ's promise can be analogically applied to each and every faithful pastor—indeed, even to individual believers—and secondarily fulfilled in them insofar as they are guided by the Spirit, who leads them into all saving truth so that they never finally or totally fall away from the faith, yet no one would say that this gift belongs to them in the same degree as to the Apostles themselves, or that it renders them infallible. In the same way, the anointing is said to teach all believers (1 John 2:20), although it is certain that believers do not know all things absolutely, but only what is necessary for salvation, nor are they so taught that they can no longer err at all. Thus, Christ's promise must be understood with this limitation: that the Spirit will lead the Church into all truth mediately through Sacred Scripture, insofar as He will lead them to the Word of God, which is the most perfect norm of all truth. As long as they follow it, they will never go astray. Christ Himself sufficiently hints at this when He adds, "This Spirit will not speak on His own authority, but will announce whatever He has heard," etc., lest anyone think He would propose new dogmas; rather, He would confirm the same doctrine preached by Christ. And so He would lead into all truth only by opening minds to understand the Scriptures.

Furthermore, although we grant that the Holy Spirit is always present to the true Church, ruling and teaching her so that she does not fall away from the faith, it cannot be immediately inferred from this that all who claim the title of Church for themselves and boast of this Spirit cannot err. For the Spirit is not bound to the succession of bishops, or to the See of the Pope, or to the external ministry of any church—which can be corrupted and often errs from the truth—but He regards the internal constitution of true believers, through which it comes about that they never entirely fall away from the truth.

Finally, if this gift pertains to the successors of the Apostles, they must be understood either individually and distributively, or all gathered together in a Council. But neither can be maintained: not the former, because even Bellarmine testifies (in his work on Councils, Book II, Chapter 2) that the Spirit does not lead bishops existing separately into all truth, since they can err; not the latter, because if individuals can err, why would all together be infallible? It remains, therefore, that the Spirit is promised to the Apostles with respect to extraordinary gifts, but to others with respect to ordinary ones.

Argument against the testimony of the Church

VI. Second, if the authority of Scripture for us depended on the Church, this would be either by the collective Church—that is, the whole body of the faithful—or by its representative body or rulers, whether considered individually or gathered together in a council, or finally by some singular pastor in whom all power is vested, such as the Pope, as our opponents claim. But none of these can be maintained.

For, first, even the Papists themselves acknowledge that the collective Church does not possess this right. Second, the representative view is no more tenable; since pastors, whether considered individually or together, are liable to error, how can they possibly give certain and undoubted testimony? Nor can the Papists deny this, for they admit that councils—not only particular ones but even general and ecumenical councils, even those legitimately convened by the Roman Pontiff himself—can err, as is clear from Bellarmine (Book I, on Councils, chapters 6 and 7; Book II, chapters 8 and 9).

Moreover, if it concerns pastors gathered in a council, the question returns: by what authority are they gathered? Either by their own will and some peculiar impulse of the Spirit, or by written authority. But the Church has never approved private enthusiasms and condemned them in the Montanists and other heretics. If it is by Scripture—as must ultimately be the case—then Scripture must already have its own authority before they are gathered.

Next, it is also asked: how is it certain to us that the council did not err in its testimony? Either this certainty arises from the voice of the Church itself—but that Church is the very council whose authority is in dispute—or from the voice of Scripture itself. But who can give assurance unless its authority is known beforehand?

Again, since a council—as our opponents themselves testify—does not make Scripture divine but only declares and pronounces it to be so, I ask: on what foundation does its judgment rest, and by what reasons could it have been led to make such a declaration? Either it did so by its own will and for no other reason than because it so pleased them—but who would persuade himself that they acted without reason and demanded belief simply on their own account? Or it did so by the authority of preceding councils and according to the testimony of the ancient Church—but even then the difficulty is not removed, for we must eventually come to the first council unless we wish to go on infinitely. Or it did so by the impulse of the Holy Spirit—but apart from the fact that we cannot be certain of the divinity of that Spirit except from Scripture (since it is never separated from the Word), if the Spirit impelled the council to declare the authority of Scripture, it did so only by demonstrating the rays of divinity shining in the Word, from whose contemplation the council rightly pronounced the Word to be truly divine. Now if the testimony of the council concerning the Word is founded on the Word itself, how can it establish its authority among us?

VII. But let us press our opponents even more closely: For if our faith in the Divinity of Scripture depends on the authority of a general Council, then by the same divine faith we must believe in the authority of the Council as we believe other articles of faith because of the Council's authority. And since the Council has no authority unless it is legitimate, it is equally necessary to know by divine faith that this or that Council is legitimate. But this cannot be done, since it can only be proved by human testimony—indeed, it cannot even be proved with certainty. For me to know that a Council is legitimate, I must be certain: Were all who ought to be present lawfully summoned and did they attend? Were the Bishops legitimate and duly ordained? Were the votes free, and so on? Since these matters are doubtful and uncertain, the authority of the Council must also be uncertain.

Again, if a Council must establish the authority of Scripture, it ought first to possess that authority in our eyes. But how can it obtain that authority when it has not yet been decided whether the Council is above the Pope or the Pope above the Council? As long as nothing certain has been established on this matter, the case is still pending, and neither side ought to be held as certain and indubitable. Now everyone knows that among the Papists this question was once fiercely debated and is still debated today, remaining undecided—as Bellarmine himself testifies in Book 2, Chapter 13 of *On Councils*—with some attributing this authority to the Council above the Pope, others to the Pope above the Council. If it remains undefined to whom that supreme authority should be granted, and if it is open to anyone to doubt in whom that infallible judgment resides, then our faith will always remain wavering if it relies on no other foundation. And whatever a Council or the Pope may judge concerning Scripture will always be doubtful, since it depends on a doubtful and uncertain principle.

VIII. But let us even grant that the Pope holds this right—which is the opinion of the Jesuits and flatterers of the Roman See—so that the testimony of the Church is nothing other than the judgment of the Pope. Even so, they will not better their cause or strengthen our faith. First, because it is always uncertain who is the true and genuine Pope. For, according to our opponents' hypothesis, an absolute intention of the minister is necessary for administering a sacrament; without it, neither baptism nor ordination can be validly performed. And since no one can be certain of another person's intention, who does not see that no one can be sure whether this or that Pope was truly baptized and duly ordained? And thus the whole Papal religion, which rests on the authority of Popes, becomes uncertain and doubtful.

Moreover, the same question always returns: How can we be certain that the Pope holds this right and does not err in his judgment? For we shall either know this from Scripture itself, which declares that this power was given to the Pope by Christ—but what force can that testimony have if we still doubt Scripture? Or we shall know it from ancient Tradition—but the same difficulty about the truth of that Tradition returns. Or we shall know it from the testimony of the present Church—but since, in their view, the whole Church is ultimately reduced to the Pope alone, it follows that he bears witness about himself, and so we must simply believe him because he said so—which everyone sees is utterly absurd.

Again, since the Pope ought to have a reason for his judgment, it will either depend solely on the mere will of the human judge—so that his will stands for reason—and thus he has pronounced what must be believed because he so pleases. But if this were so, from whom could he obtain faith? And why should his will rather than mine be my rule of belief? Or the foundation of his judgment must be sought from Scripture itself—so that he declares it divine because he has diligently discerned it to be such in reality from its divine marks. But in this way Scripture will always have its authority for him prior to his judgment—which is what we want.

IX. This is more strongly confirmed by the fact that, since there is one faith for all, as Scripture expressly testifies (Eph. 4:5), the same principle of faith and the primary ground of belief ought to be the same both for individual believers and for those who hold the office of overseers and are called by the name of the representative Church. Therefore, since the Church cannot itself be the primary ground of belief—so that it believes Scripture on its own account—but must necessarily

have some foundation for its faith in Scripture outside itself, neither can nor ought it be imposed upon the Christian people as the primary ground of belief, so that they accept without examination whatever the Church pronounces and ultimately rest their faith upon it. Rather, the same ground of belief that was for the Church ought to be for individual believers: that they believe indeed through its ministry, but not on account of its authority, only on account of God speaking in Scripture, upon which the judgment of the Church necessarily rests and to which it directs us by its testimony.

X. Thirdly, the authority that the Word had before it was committed to writing ought to be the same after it has been recorded in writing. For so far is it from being diminished by being written down, that its authority is rather more firmly established. Hence the prophetic word—which is none other than the Scripture of the Old Testament—is called by Peter (2 Pet. 1:19) a “more sure word,” namely with respect to us, not only than the testimony of any man speaking on earth, but even than the voice of God Himself speaking from heaven. Now, before the Word was committed to writing, it was authentic in itself to those to whom it was delivered and did not require another external testimony; for there was no external tribunal that believers, to whom the Word was preached, could consult; no authority of the Church commended that revelation, but it was received by its own authority. For how, I ask, did the ancient patriarchs recognize that the Word revealed to them was the Word of God? Did any authority or judgment of the Church intervene here? Or could the Word delivered by the prophets not be regarded as divine by believers without resorting to some supreme tribunal of the Church—when we see that often, even against the will of the rulers of the Church itself, they set forth the Word of the Lord to the people, as Jeremiah testifies concerning himself (Jer. 8:8; 28; 36)? So also, if we speak of the apostles: how did it come about that the Gospel preached by them obtained its authority among their hearers? Was it by some testimony of the Jewish Church? But so far was it from approving it by its vote, that on the contrary it tried with all its might to suppress it and persecuted its preachers with fire and sword. Did the apostles put forward their own authority here? But who does not see that this would have been utterly ridiculous among those to whom they were entirely unknown (as among the Gentiles) or among those to whom they were hated and suspected (as among the Jews), to whom the better known they were, the more contemptible they became? It remains, therefore, that their Word obtained its authority among believers from no other source than the sublimity, gravity, and excellence of the doctrine itself. And indeed, the Thessalonians, upon hearing Paul alone, without any testimony of a church, embraced his doctrine as the Word of God (1 Thess. 2:13); the Galatians received him as an angel of God, indeed as Christ Jesus (Gal. 4:14), without any commendation from a church; and the Bereans (Acts 17:11) did not subject his word to the judgment of any church, but only to the standard of Scripture alone.

XI. Again, if any decree or testimony of the Church had to intervene to demonstrate the divinity of Scripture, it was either particular or universal. The former is absurd and useless, because it concerns the faith of all Christians everywhere; the latter is false, for none can be produced from which the Scriptures received their authority among us. For the Council of Jerusalem did not even touch this question; and the Old Testament already had its authentic Canon, not only among the Jews but also among Christians, who from the very beginning confirmed their faith by the Prophetic sayings. After the Council of Jerusalem, there was no universal judgment of the Church until the Council of Nicaea, that is, 325 years after Christ. I know that the Councils of Laodicea

and the Third Council of Carthage are cited; but besides the fact that they were only Provincial, and therefore particular, not universal and ecumenical, it is certain that they did not establish the Canon but presupposed it as already made. The Canon of Laodicea, 59, says: "Private psalms ought not to be recited in the Church, nor books outside the Canon read, but only the Canonical books of the New and Old Testament." So says the Third Council of Carthage: "Because we have received these from the Fathers to be read." Therefore, the Canon was already established at that time, and no one can produce any Father who does not testify that it had been established before his time. Certainly, this is clearly gathered from the Council of Nicaea itself, where Arius could not have been condemned from Scripture, as Athanasius testifies in Eusebius was done, "from written words of piety understood," unless the Canon of Scripture had already been established and acknowledged. But why need many proofs, when the golden words of Emperor Constantine to the Fathers of the Council, which are found in Theodoret, History, Book 1, Chapter 7, remove all scruple? He says: "The Evangelical and Apostolic Books, as well as the Oracles of the ancient Prophets, teach us what is to be thought concerning divine matters; therefore, laying aside discord, let us take from the divinely inspired words the solution of the question." If, therefore, the Scriptures were received by the Fathers and held as Canonical without any decree of the Church, either particular or universal, who does not see that their authority is wrongly suspended upon the testimony of the Church?

XII. And indeed, the Ancients were so far from suspending the authority of Scripture upon the Church that, on the contrary, they judged that the Church itself is to be sought nowhere else than in the Scriptures and known from them. Let Augustine stand for all, who everywhere inculcates this against the Donatists, but nowhere testifies more clearly than in his book *On the Unity of the Church*, Chapter 2: "Between us and the Donatists there is a question where the Church is; what then shall we do? Shall we seek it in our words or in the words of its Head? Suppose we ought rather to seek it in His words, who is the Truth and knows His own Body best." So Chapter 3: "Let us not hear 'I say this,' 'you say that,' but let us hear 'Thus says the Lord.' There are the Lord's Books, to whose authority we both consent, we both believe, we both submit; there let us seek the Church, there let us discuss our case." And a little later: "Let those things be removed which we recite against each other not from the divine Canonical books but from elsewhere; for I do not wish the Holy Church to be demonstrated by human documents but by divine Oracles." And Chapter 16: "Whether they," namely the Donatists, "hold the Church, let them show it only by the Canonical books of the Divine Scriptures; for we do not say that we ought to be believed because we are in the Church of Christ—because Optatus or Ambrose or other innumerable Bishops of our Communion held that same Church which we hold—or because so many wonders are performed in it. Whatever such things are done in the Catholic Church are to be approved because they are done in the Catholic Church; not therefore is the Catholic Church made manifest because these things are done in it. The Lord Jesus Himself, when He had risen from the dead and offered His body to be seen by the eyes and touched by the hands of His disciples, lest they should think they suffered any illusion, judged that they ought rather to be confirmed by the testimony of the Law and the Prophets. These are the evidences of our cause, these its foundations," etc. These words prove more clearly than noonday that according to Augustine's opinion, the Church is to be demonstrated from Scripture.

XIII. But since a passage from his book "Against the Epistle of the Foundation," chapter 5, is often repeatedly brought up against us, where he says, "Indeed, I would not believe the Gospel unless the authority of the Catholic Church moved me," before we move on to other matters, let us briefly consider whether this has any weight in confirming the opinion of our adversaries. It can easily be demonstrated that this passage is wrongly cited against us.

For, not to mention that our faith relies neither on human example nor on human testimony—and therefore, whatever Augustine's view may have been, it cannot be pressed against us, who stand or fall solely by our Lord and His oracles—there are many points that can be raised here, from which it clearly appears that the meaning our adversaries attach to these words is far removed both from the truth and from Augustine's own mind.

First, many Roman Catholic writers of no small note teach that this is to be understood not of the present Church, on whose behalf authority is here contended, but either of the primitive Church—which, as Gerson says in his treatise on the Spiritual Life of the Soul, Lecture 2, "is the congregation of those faithful who saw Christ, heard Him, and became witnesses"—and in this sense are Gerson, Driedo, and Durandus; or they hold that Augustine is not speaking of the principal foundation on which the authority of Scripture is believed, but of the means by which unbelievers and novices in the faith are first brought to the knowledge of Holy Scripture. This is the view of Peter of Alliaco, Cardinal of Cambrai, who in Question 1 on the First Book of Sentences, Article 3, discusses Augustine's testimony as follows: "From Augustine's authority it is not held that he believed the Gospel through the authority of the Church as through a theological principle by which the Gospel is theologically proven true, but only as through a cause moving him to faith in the Gospel—as if he or another had said, 'I would not believe the Gospel unless the holiness of the Church or the miracles of Christ moved me.' In this saying, although some cause for faith in the Gospel is assigned, yet it is not some prior principle on whose faith it depends that the Gospel is believed."

So also Canus, in Book II of Theological Commonplaces, chapter 8: "He does not teach that the faith of the Church is founded on the authority of the Church, but simply that there is no certain way by which either unbelievers or novices in the faith may approach the sacred books except through the one and same consensus of the Catholic Church."

But whichever of these meanings we follow, nothing will thereby be added to the opinion of the Roman Catholics.

XIV. Secondly, it is certain that Augustine here speaks of himself, not as he then was—a Catholic—but either as he had formerly been a Manichaean, or in the person of a Catechumen. Therefore, although he acknowledges that he was led by the authority of the Church to believe the Gospel, it does not follow that faith depends on that authority, for the reasoning of beginners is one thing, that of the proficient or more perfect is another. Indeed, with respect to the former, the Church can be a guide leading to faith in Scripture, as we said before, but it cannot immediately be the primary and decisive motive for the faithful. But lest anyone object that Augustine seems to speak of himself as already a Catholic—because he uses the imperfect tense "commoveret" and "crederem," rather than the pluperfect "commovisset" and "credidissem"—it is easy to reply that this phrasing was familiar to him from African usage. Thus, in Volume 1 of *De Vita Beata*, he

says: “I was so inflamed that I wished to break all those anchors, were it not that the opinion of certain men moved me.” Here “vellem” and “commoveret” are used instead of “voluissem” and “commovisset.” So also in *Confessions*, Book 2, Chapter 8: “If I then loved those pears that I stole and desired to enjoy them, I could have done so even alone”—where “amarem,” “cuperem,” and “possem” stand for “amavissem,” “cupivissem,” and “potuissem.” Likewise in *Retractationes*, Book 1, Chapter 3: “Nor would we use that name if we were now sufficiently instructed in ecclesiastical writings”—where “uteremur” and “essemus” replace “usi fuisset” and “fuissemus.” So too in Optatus, Book 1: “If peace had remained as it was given—whole and inviolate—and had not been disturbed by the authors of the schism”—where “turbaretur” stands for “turbata fuisset.” Innumerable examples of this kind could be brought forward to prove the frequent use of this manner of speaking in Augustine. But even if we do not go so far, the meaning will be perfectly clear if we note that Augustine there assumes a different character—namely, that of a novice and Catechumen being led to faith. This is evident from the context and sequence of words. He was dealing with the Manichaeans, who without controversy wished to be believed when they promised they had the truth but did not demonstrate it. And because, in order to establish faith for their Manichaean doctrine, they put forward the Gospel, he asks what they would do if they met someone who did not even believe the Gospel, so as to bring him over to their view: “If you found someone who did not believe the Gospel, what would you do if he said to you, ‘I do not believe’?” Immediately taking up the role of the unbeliever, he adds: “Indeed, I would not believe the Gospel, etc.”—as if to say: “Set before your eyes someone who does not yet believe; for example, suppose I do not believe. Certainly I would not believe the Gospel unless the authority of the Church moved me.” This is confirmed from Chapter 3, where before addressing the matter, he states that he is taking on the role of a novice: “Let none of us say that he has already found the Truth; let us seek it as though it were unknown to both sides. It can be sought diligently and harmoniously if it is not believed to have been found and known by any rash presumption. Or if we cannot obtain even this from you, at least grant this: that I may now hear you as though unknown, now examine you for the first time,” etc. Nor does it contradict this when Stapleton replies that Augustine calls it the Catholic Church—something he would seem unable to do if he were still estranged from it. For why could he not call it Catholic in a distinguishing sense? Either because he commonly heard it so called (since at that time the usage had prevailed that by this name “Catholic” the true Church was distinguished from all sects which dared to claim for themselves the name of Church and Christian), or because it really was such even then—though he did not then regard it as such—and because it was now recognized by him as such. Thus in *Confessions*, Book 3, Chapter 10: “I used to mock those holy servants and prophets of yours.” Not because he acknowledged them as prophets at the time when he mocked them—for how would he have mocked them?—but because they really were such and were held as such by him when he wrote.

XV. Third, Augustine discusses an external motive for faith, one that is ministerial and human, not an infallible principle of belief. For although he admits that the authority of the Church can be among the motives for faith with respect to beginners, so that those not yet believing may be prepared for faith in the Gospel—which he calls a suitable starting point for inquiry (On the Usefulness of Believing, ch. 7)—he nevertheless acknowledges that it is not the only or principal motive; rather, the Truth itself contained in the Scriptures is far to be preferred to it. This is clear

from chapter 4. After adducing various things by which he was held in the Catholic Church, he adds: “But among you,” namely the Manichaeans, “since there is none of those things that invite and hold me, only the promise of truth resounds. If this is shown so perfectly that it cannot be called into doubt, it is to be preferred to all those things by which I am held in the Catholic Church; but if it is only promised and not exhibited, no one will move me from that faith which binds my soul to the Christian Religion by so many and such great ties.” So in chapter 14: “Let us follow those who invite us first to believe when we are not yet able to see” (this is the first step and introduction to faith) “so that, made stronger by faith itself, we may deserve to understand what we believe” (that is, obtain it, according to the usage of that age) “no longer by men, but by God Himself inwardly strengthening and enlightening our mind.” From these passages, it is easy for anyone to gather that it was not the mind of this holy man that the faith we have in the Scriptures should depend on the judgment of the Church, but only that he indicated—which we also acknowledge as true—that those not yet enlightened are led by reverence for the Church to docility, so that they may undertake to learn the faith of Christ from the Gospel, and in this way the authority of the Church is like an introduction by which we are prepared for faith in the Gospel. Hence Vessellus of Groningen rightly says in his book *On the Power of the Church* that it is a word of origin concerning belief, not of comparison and preference. And to this may aptly be referred Augustine’s use of the word “moving,” not “persuading” or any other term, to imply that the Church contributes to faith not principally and primarily, but initially and organically, and indeed as an assisting cause, not as an essential and primary cause.

XVI. Fourth, the Authority of which Augustine speaks is not one of law and command, such as our adversaries imagine here—as if one ought to believe simply because the Church said so—but an Authority of dignity, which was sought from the great and illustrious evidences of divine Providence in the Church, in which he recognized the finger of God, such as miracles, the consensus of peoples, antiquity, succession, and other things of that kind. Thus in chapter 4: “To pass over that Wisdom which you do not believe exists in the Catholic Church, there are many other things which most justly hold me in its bosom: The consensus of peoples and nations holds me; Authority holds me, begun by miracles, nourished by hope, increased by charity, strengthened by antiquity.” So against Faustus the Manichaean (Book II, ch. 2), explaining how the genuine writings of the Apostles are known, he says: “You see in this matter how much weight the Authority of the Catholic Church has, which is confirmed by the succession of bishops from the very well-founded sees of the Apostles up to the present day and by the consensus of so many peoples.” In this sense we do not deny that this Authority of the Church can assist faith in converting and confirm it in the converted, but it will never extend so far as to be its primary foundation, which is not to be sought outside the Truth itself contained in Scripture.

That Scripture is proved by itself is shown.

XVII. And from these points we have sufficiently and more than sufficiently proved that Scripture does not derive its authority from the Church, neither with respect to itself nor with respect to us—which was the first head of our proof. We now proceed to the second, to demonstrate that Scripture is proved from no other source than itself and is believed to be divine on its own account. This indeed can be demonstrated in more than one way:

1. From the Nature of First Principles.

First, from the nature of the highest genera and first principles: For if the highest genera of things and the first principles in the order of natural things have this peculiar property—that they are known through themselves and cannot be demonstrated from elsewhere, otherwise things would proceed to infinity—then certainly Scripture, which is the first principle in the order of supernatural Revelation, upon which the rest depend, ought to have authority from itself and not borrowed from elsewhere. The Philosopher notes in the first book of the *Topics* that this is characteristic of first principles: “True and primary are those which have their credibility not from other things but from themselves; for in scientific principles one must not seek the reason why, but each of the principles must be credible in itself.” To this pertains that saying of Basil on Psalm 115: “It is necessary that in every branch of learning the principles be unquestioned by those who learn.” If, therefore, the principles of other sciences do not borrow their authority from elsewhere but become known through themselves to those endowed with natural light, who would say that Scripture—which is the first principle of faith—needs some adventitious light to become known to those who have enlightened eyes of the mind? Hence Lyra in the Prologue to the Bible: “Just as in philosophy truth is known by reduction to first principles known through themselves, so also in the Scriptures handed down by the holy Doctors, truth is known concerning those things which are to be held by faith by reduction to the canonical Scriptures.” Nor does Stapleton avail at all; indeed, he supports our position when he makes an exception: that principles indeed are not proved in themselves and are indemonstrable in regard to the *reason why*, but on account of our slowness they are sometimes explained to us as to the *fact that*; thus the Scriptures are demonstrated through the Church—not what they are in themselves, but what they are in relation to us, so that they may be accepted by us. For now we are not asking by what means Scripture can become known to us in relation to ourselves, but by what argument or on account of what it is held by us as divine. The former is the *fact that*, but the latter is the *reason why*. If, therefore, Stapleton concedes that Scripture cannot be proved from elsewhere as to the *reason why*, but only as to the *fact that*, he comes over to our side and freely grants what we want. For we admit that Scripture can be proved *a posteriori* through its own marks, but we deny that it can be proved *a priori* from elsewhere.

XVIII. Second, from Analogy: Just as objects of the senses are so constituted by nature that they are immediately judged by their properly disposed faculties as soon as they are applied to them—without any other external argument—being imbued with those qualities by whose impact they are easily discerned, on account of the hidden proportion and harmony, of course, between the faculty and the object, as matter is to form. For example: the Sun is seen by its own rays and innate brightness; food is known by its own sweetness; a scent is perceived by its own fragrance. So that, even with no one testifying, we easily recognize the light of the Sun, the pleasantness of food, and the fragrance of a scent by themselves, and distinguish them from others.

The same occurs in grace, and especially in this matter. Holy Scripture, which is set before us with respect to the new man and his spiritual senses (Heb. 5:14), is sometimes presented under the image of the Sun and wonderful light (Ps. 119:105; 2 Pet. 1:19), sometimes as the most pleasant food and sweetest honey (Ps. 19:10; 119:102–103; Isa. 55:1–3; 1 Pet. 2:2), sometimes as a most fragrant scent (Song 1:3), sometimes as a most delightful voice (John 10:27; 1 John 1:1),

sometimes as a sharp sword and most penetrating fire (Heb. 4:12; Jer. 23:29). By itself, it is easily discerned by the senses of the new man, and by its own light, sweetness, fragrance, and efficacy it offers itself to be known, so that there is no need to seek arguments from elsewhere.

Hence, the Sun of righteousness no sooner rises and spreads its shining rays in the Word than the believer with the divine eye of faith immediately beholds it and rejoices in its light (Mal. 4:2; John 5:35). The beloved voice of Christ no sooner sounds in our ears than we hear and inwardly recognize it, as His sheep (John 10:27; Song 2:8). The bread of life and the honey of divine consolations are no sooner set before him than he immediately swallows it and tastes that the Word of God is good (1 Pet. 2:3; Heb. 6:5; Song 2:3), and experiences its sweet fruit on his palate. The satisfaction and righteousness of Christ—a sweet fragrance (Eph. 5:2)—cannot be set before him without his running after the fragrance of His ointments (Song 1:3) and, like a heavenly eagle, immediately flying to that divine prey (Matt. 24:28). Finally, the fire and sword of heavenly truth cannot be drawn and applied without immediately inflaming the soul and penetrating to the innermost recesses of the heart (Luke 24:32), without that living and effective Word of God showing itself sharper and more penetrating than any two-edged sword, reaching even to the division of bones and spirit, of joints and marrow, and judging the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Heb. 4:12).

Therefore, since Scripture calls itself Light, Food, Voice, Fragrance, Fire, and Sword, by that very fact it testifies that it has an inherent and innate power which provides a clear proof of itself to all those who have senses trained to distinguish between true and false, good and evil. Hence, if anyone asks by what means we are persuaded that it comes from God unless we take refuge in the Church, it is just as if someone were to ask how we learn to distinguish light from darkness, white from black, sweet from bitter. For Scripture does not present a more obscure sense of its truth than white and black things do of their color, or sweet and bitter things do of their taste.

Hence Lactantius rightly says (Institutes, Book 3, Chapter 1): “So great is the power of truth that it defends itself by its own clarity even in small matters.”

XIX. This very point can be further confirmed by a similar argument. For if in nature there is no effect that does not bear certain marks and characters of its cause—whether in natural or voluntary things—if each work of God presents to us the admirable virtues of the Maker to be observed, and so represents Him that He may be known not obscurely from them—who would believe that Scripture, which is a great work of God, bears no criteria of its Author? Indeed, He ought to have presented Himself more clearly in it for our contemplation because He willed to deliver it for this purpose: that it might be a most splendid mirror of divinity and an unerring standard of faith and morals. Otherwise, it would have to be said that God either could not or would not express Himself in it—both of which are no less impious than absurd and equally repugnant to the goodness, wisdom, and power of God.

XX. Thirdly, we gather this very point from the nature of Scripture itself. For the relation that Law has to Subjects, a Testament to the Keeper to whom it is entrusted, a Rule and Standard to the Craftsman who uses it—that same relation must Scripture have to the Church. For Scripture is both the Law of the supreme Ruler, and the Testament of the heavenly Father, and the most certain Rule and Canon of faith and morals. But neither does a law derive its authority from the

subjects to whom it is given, or from the heralds by whom it is proclaimed, but has it solely from the Prince who enacts it; nor does a testament have its force for us from the one to whom it is entrusted, but from the will of the testator; nor does the power of a gauge or rule depend on the skill and cleverness of the craftsman handling those tools, but on its internal and essential property, which God, the author of order and truth, gave it. So too, although the Church receives this eternal Law of the King of kings as a Subject, and proclaims it as a Herald; although it guards the Testament of the heavenly Father as a Notary, and applies this infallible Rule and uses it like a skilled craftsman for the building up of faith; yet no one would say that the Church confers authority upon Scripture, since all of it depends on its own nature and essential property, which was implanted in it by the Father of lights, its Author. Hence, a faithful ministry is indeed entrusted to the Church, but no authority; and if it adds to or takes away from the commands which it has received from the Lord, it falls into the same crime as a notary corrupting the tablets of a testament, or a herald proclaiming a false edict and forging a royal decree—indeed, the crime is so much more heinous as divine things excel human, and eternal things excel perishable.

XXI. Nor should we omit here what the Papists themselves assert: that Scripture in relation to the Church is like Letters of Credence (so Cardinal Perronius called them), which confirm its faith in its ministry. For although the Cardinal wrongly infers from this the insufficiency of Scripture—on the ground that letters of credence do not contain everything that was given in the instructions to the legate—because Scripture is not only letters of credence but also an Edict and Law of the Prince, which decrees all that must be believed and done, so that it is forbidden to add or take away anything from it; nevertheless, we can use that argument in debate to confirm the position we defend. For just as letters of credence do not have their authority from the Prince's legate among those to whom he is sent, but only from themselves and from the seal of the Prince affixed to them; so too Scripture, although it is brought to us through God's ambassadors, can never receive its weight and authority from them, but only from itself and from the marks inherent in it, which are as so many seals of the supreme Prince, by which it is most certainly recognized as divine and infallible in itself.

XXII. Finally, lest we heap up more arguments: If Scripture is authentic in itself and with respect to itself—as our adversaries seem willing to admit—then it cannot fail to be equally authentic with respect to us. For whatever attributes authority to Scripture in itself, making it divine and self-authenticating, must necessarily also commend it to us in our regard. Since the authority of Scripture is nothing other than its divine dignity and excellence, by which it merits faith and obedience from humanity, what prevents that which makes it such in itself from also making it such for us? Indeed, if Scripture is divine in itself because of the admirable sublimity of the mysteries it contains, the perfect harmony of all its parts, the heavenly doctrine that everywhere breathes nothing earthly, the supreme holiness and purity of both its teachings and precepts, the great efficacy of the Word—which penetrates more powerfully than any two-edged sword into the innermost recesses of the heart—and because of other such inherent criteria, why would these same arguments, when set before the eyes of the mind, not generate faith in us? Either they are not sufficient in themselves to establish its authenticity or to demonstrate it to us. But the former cannot be said, since our adversaries themselves admit that Scripture is authentic in itself; nor can the latter, because it is the nature of those qualities by which something is constituted as such that they also make it known to us—if only we are willing to attend to them. Just as the heat by which

fire is constituted as hot also makes it known to us; as the flavor by which food is constituted as savory reveals itself to those with any taste; as the character or style of a book leads us to knowledge of its author, even without any other testimony—so that one practiced in reading Aristotle or Cicero can easily distinguish their genuine writings from forgeries by style and manner of expression, even if no one testifies about them— why then should not the divine characteristics of Scripture, which constitute its majesty and authority, also declare the same to us—if only we are willing to open the eye of faith and apply ourselves to know them? I do not deny that the work of the Church may intervene so that through its mediation Scripture becomes known to us; but the ministry by which we are brought to faith is one thing, and the foundation and chief motive on which our faith rests is another. Nor can Bellarmine deny this, since he uses the same method. For, disputing against the Libertines, he proves the divinity of Scripture from its inherent characteristics (Book 1, On the Word of God, Chapter 2). Either he has solidly proved Scripture by its own marks—and so Scripture can be proved by Scripture—or he has not, and thus he falls into inconsistency. For in the same place he openly declares: “There is nothing more evident, nothing more certain than the Sacred Scriptures contained in the Prophetic and Apostolic writings, so that one must be utterly foolish to deny that faith ought to be placed in them.” Many among the Pontifical writers are of the same opinion, compelled by the force of truth to acknowledge that Scripture is proved by itself. For brevity’s sake we omit their testimonies here; see Canus, Book 2, Theological Lectures, Chapter 8; Gregory of Valencia, Book 1, On the Analysis of Faith, Chapter 15; Peter a Soto, Chapter 47, Catholic Defense; Valdesian Doctrine of Faith, Book 2, Chapters 20 and 21; Scotus, Question 2, Prologue to the Sentences, etc. From these points—to proceed no further—we conclude that Scripture is so self-authenticating that its authority depends on the testimony of the Church neither with respect to itself nor with respect to us. This was what had to be demonstrated.

XXIII. Several objections are raised here by our opponents, but since many have already been discussed in the preceding sections, we add here only one, which is frequently brought against us as an insoluble difficulty. They demand the necessity of some infallible, speaking, and visible authority in the Church to persuade us of the authority of Scripture and the truth of the Articles of Faith. For they contend that the way of Scripture, or the examination of it, is not only difficult but almost endless and impossible; therefore, it is necessary to resort to the way of the Church’s authority, unless we wish to suppose that God has failed His faithful in a matter of such great importance. They assert that this way of examining Scripture is beset with so many difficulties that it is inaccessible and impracticable not only for unlearned and simple believers but even for the most learned. For here it is first required to settle the intricate question of the Canonical Books, to determine whether the passage in question is truly authentic. Second, whether the translation we use conforms to the original, which requires knowledge of the original languages. Third, whether there are various readings in the cited passages that weaken the strength of the argument. Fourth, that the meaning of the cited passage be seriously weighed—whether parallel or contrary passages occur that compel us to assign a different sense to it—and other such matters which cannot be resolved without great labor and not without risk of error. Hence they conclude that another, shorter and safer way must be followed, namely, the way of the Church’s authority, in which the faithful may easily and without danger acquiesce. This notion has lately been revived by new defenders of the Roman Church—the Bishop of Meaux, Arnould, Nicole, and

others—who greatly pride themselves on it and thrust it upon our people as an invincible Achilles' argument.

XXIV. But it is not difficult to blunt this assault of our opponents. First, by retortion: because whatever is brought against Scripture recoils upon the Church itself. For since the infallible authority of the Church is one of the matters most in controversy, it cannot and ought not to be admitted unless it has first been proved. But how can it be proved? Either by immediate revelation—but that, by our adversaries' own admission, is not given today—or from Scripture; but neither can this be said, both because it is supposed to depend on the Church's authority and because, by our adversaries' hypothesis, the way of Scripture is long and hindered by a thousand obstacles. Or from Tradition; but the same difficulties recur. For here a true Tradition must be accurately distinguished from a false one; originals must be consulted, various readings weighed, and the genuine sense inquired into—and all the other things that must be done concerning passages of Scripture must be undertaken with far greater diligence, since the danger of corruption and deception is greater. And since all these matters are beyond the grasp of common people, this way too is rendered impossible. Perhaps they will say that this knowledge can be had from the marks of divinity and infallibility which are perceived in the Church. But this also fails to satisfy: first, because such notes and marks for the most part apply also to false societies and schismatic churches, which are not only not infallible but are actually in error; second, because several of these marks are either falsely and deceptively attributed to the Roman Church or conclude far less than what is intended; third, because in the Roman Church there are many contrary marks from which it is clear not only that it is fallible but that it has actually erred. Finally, no less labor is required in investigating the truth of these marks with respect to the Roman Church. In a word, the way of authority which is here proposed necessarily presupposes some prior examination: first, that we may know whether there is such an infallible authority in a visible and speaking Church—a point which is rightly disputed and constantly denied by the Reformed; second, where that authority resides—in which Church, and in which person or see? Third, whether it has certain and evident notes and marks by which it may be recognized. From all this it follows that whatever objections are twisted against Scripture are rightly turned back against the Church when its authority is exalted.

XXV. Secondly, we directly respond to the gratuitous assumption that the way of Examination requires a full and accurate discussion of all questions that may arise either concerning the Canonical Books or concerning the translation or meaning of any passage—which would demand skill in languages and a great apparatus of learning. For it must rightly be observed that Scripture can be a rule of faith in two ways: either for producing faith in that degree of perfection and fullness of which a person is capable in this life; or only in the degree of simple sufficiency for salvation. In the former respect, it is certain that much study and labor are required in weighing all that is contained in Scripture, in scrutinizing terms and style, in comparing translations with the sources, in attending to the sequence of speech, the subject matter being treated, the purpose of the speaker, and other circumstances to be carefully considered one by one—all of which do not fall within the capacity of simple folk, rustics, or women. But in the latter respect, where it is a matter of the degree of faith regarding simple sufficiency for salvation, which arises from the essential doctrines, such extensive discussion is not necessary, because such doctrines are set forth clearly enough in Scripture—not in one place, but in many—and are sufficiently recognized

by the faithful endowed with efficacious grace as divine and, as it were, felt, so that neither variety of readings nor diversity or imperfection of translations can prevent them from being apprehended; even though they have not examined the question of the Canonical Books nor learned the original languages.

XXVI. We do not say this as if we think that the faithful can, without any examination, recognize the divinity of Scripture or the genuine meaning of any passage; for then faith would be blind and implicit, which we condemn in the Roman Church, which demands belief without examination because it boasts itself infallible. But a distinction must be made between two kinds of Examination: one is the full discussion of all difficulties that may arise either concerning the marks of Scripture or concerning the meaning of any passage; the other is a partial discussion, or attention and application of the mind to the truth to be believed. We acknowledge that the former belongs only to the learned, and we do not deny that its path is long and difficult, demanding great labor and study and requiring a broad measure of learning. But we contend that the latter also pertains to the simpler folk, who can engage in it fruitfully if only they are guided by right reason under the light of the Holy Spirit, by which the eyes of the mind being enlightened believe and embrace mysteries otherwise impervious and inaccessible to sense and reason. This is the examination and judgment to which the Apostles often exhort the faithful when they wish them to test the spirits, to judge for themselves about what was being said—which the Bereans put into practice when they compared Paul's words with Scripture, through whose intervention faith in the Gospel is strengthened in us by the impact of truth, as a supernatural light which is received by a mind imbued with efficacious grace, in the same way as corporeal light is received by a well-disposed eye through the impression of a luminous body.

XXVII. And from this it is clearly perceived how a sufficient degree of certainty can be had for engendering true persuasion in the soul: namely, as external light by itself offers itself to be seen by us certainly without any other medium; as objects of the senses affect our senses by themselves (as said before), so that no other cause is needed for us to be persuaded that we truly see light, truly taste food, and perform other sensory operations of that kind; so also heavenly Truth, which is usually designated in Scripture through objects of the senses, affects our spiritual senses immediately through its own light or sweetness so that it does not allow itself to be ignored, but engenders in it a certainty sufficient for the full assurance of faith—not indeed that of evidence and scientific demonstration, but of sense and experience, which suffices to remove scruples of doubt, to tranquilize the conscience, and to engender hope of salvation, insofar as such objects can fully satisfy the legitimate and natural desires of the soul for obtaining perfect happiness, thus insinuating themselves into our minds so that they are received as divine and true by all, both weak and simple as well as learned and advanced. Hence this sense of conscience suffices for discerning truth from evil and for rejecting erroneous and destructive doctrines, since they cannot stand with the essential and fundamental truths of Religion with which each of the faithful is imbued. For example, the principle of worshipping one God, which is the first foundation of Religion, suffices in simpler folk to reject the worship of creatures, even if they have never seen the question that exists between us and the Roman Church concerning this point. The principle of the one Sacrifice of Christ suffices to reject human satisfactions, Purgatory, and Papal Indulgences. The principle of the truth of Christ's human Nature, like us in all things except

sin, suffices to reject real presence, Transubstantiation, the Sacrifice of the Mass, and the adoration of the Host—and likewise holds in other cases.

XXVIII. I know that opponents here rejoin that, according to our view concerning the certainty of truth discovered through the aforementioned examination, it follows that any private individuals are made infallible by us—because no one can be certainly persuaded of a truth discovered by way of examination unless he believes himself infallible. But many things can be set against this fiction.

1. It is gratuitously assumed that no truth can be discovered by way of examination without infallibility; otherwise, nothing certain could ever be found in the sciences and arts, because no mortal is infallible. Therefore, it is one thing to be persuaded that one is absolutely infallible and can never err; it is another to be persuaded that one has not erred in this or that particular point. Although no one is absolutely infallible, it does not follow that there can never be anyone who is certain that he has not erred. For there are certain truths so evident and perceptible, both in nature and in grace, that they imprint their certainty in the mind, as seen above.

Nor should it be objected that heretics can likewise boast of a certain persuasion they have about their errors. For the empty and vain persuasion of those who rely on illusions and false prejudices ought not to render void the true certainty of the faithful, which rests on indubitable foundations and criteria. And even if we cannot easily recognize the marks that distinguish false persuasions from true ones, it does not follow that the latter are any less true and real.

From these points thus established, it is clear that God has not failed the faithful in necessary matters, even though He has not left an infallible and visible authority in the Church to settle all controversies. For Scripture alone, as an infallible norm, can suffice for them—if they meditate on it with study and the help of the Holy Spirit.

Nor should it therefore be said that the Church is placed in a worse condition than all other societies because it is exposed to the factions of heretics and schismatics. For Paul teaches that there must be heresies (1 Cor. 11:19), and the matter itself proves this. For if such an infallible remedy had been instituted by Christ, why then has it not obtained its effect? Why were heresies and schisms not suppressed in the times of the Apostles and in the following centuries? Why have the Greek and Latin Churches been torn by various dissensions and are daily torn? Surely, a remedy must be inept which is said to produce an effect it has never produced. And indeed, enough on these matters.

THEOLOGICAL DISPUTATION ON THE PAPAL CIRCLE

Respondent: ELIAS SAVRINUS OF PRATALGIDA

I. Among the various arguments which the Orthodox are accustomed to use against the Papists in the much-troubled question concerning the Authority of Scripture, it is well known that they especially press upon them the Circle in which the latter constantly go astray in demonstrating it—while they endeavor to prove Scripture from the Church, and again the Church from Scripture. But since, in order to extricate themselves from this absurdity, they are accustomed to seize upon various evasions—and even do not hesitate to throw back upon us in turn the Circle which we charge against them, as if we prove Scripture from the Spirit and the Spirit from Scripture—it has seemed not useless to us to devote some effort to briefly unraveling this argument: both to uphold the justice of our accusation against the exceptions of our adversaries, and to demonstrate the injustice of their charge once the truth of our position is established.

II. Two things must be demonstrated here by us: First, that a circular progression is most justly charged by our side against the Papists in establishing their faith concerning the Authority of Scripture, nor can this inconvenience be removed by any of their contrivances. Second, that such a circle is most unjustly imputed to our position. But beforehand, a few things must be noted in general about a Circle, so that it may be clear what it is and why such a method of arguing is faulty.

III. A circle, in Greek κύκλος, is called a reciprocal proof by which one thing is concluded and demonstrated from the other in turn, and so it is metaphorically said to appear to run back into itself like a circle, as when, after something has been demonstrated from propositions by a conclusion, from that conclusion in turn the same propositions are demonstrated, so that from the conclusion comes a proposition, and from the proposition a conclusion. Aristotle dealt with this more than once, but particularly in the first and second books of the Prior Analytics, chapters 5, 6, and 7, where he effectively shows that circular demonstration—by which some early philosophers asserted that all things can be known—is absurd and useless. Some are accustomed to distinguish between a logical circle and an ἄλογος or sophistic one.

The logical circle is said to consist of two syllogisms, one of which is deduced and formed from the other, while the conclusion of the first becomes one of the premises in the second, and the other premise, but converted, is joined to it. From this follows a conclusion which was the major premise of the first syllogism; for example: All justified through Christ have peace with God; but all believers are justified: therefore, all believers have peace with God. From this is deduced the later syllogism: All believers have peace with God; all justified are believers: therefore, all justified have peace with God. Or more simply, it occurs when what is taken as the middle term in the prior syllogism becomes the conclusion in the later one, and what was the conclusion in the prior becomes the middle term in the later: thus, Whoever has peace is justified; the faithful have peace: therefore, the faithful are justified. Then, taking the conclusion as the middle term: Whoever is justified has peace; the faithful are justified: therefore, the faithful have peace. In this way, from peace as an effect I prove justification, and in turn from justification as a cause I prove peace.

But although to some this manner of arguing is called a circle, it is better called by others a regress, which takes place in converting a demonstration that (ὅτι) into a demonstration why (διότι), and vice versa, when there is progress from effect to cause and again from cause to effect: an unknown cause is inferred from a better-known effect, and afterward by regressing from that same cause distinctly known, the same effect is demonstrated.

IV. Strictly speaking, no circle exists except a faulty one, namely when there is an infinite progress of proofs, and either the same thing is demonstrated through itself, or something doubtful through something doubtful in an endless recurring round. Two things are chiefly required for a circle to be formal and perfect: first, that it goes from the same to the very same; second, that it proceeds by the same path and the same kind of cause, preserving the same kind of knowledge—or as others say, without any new cognition of the terms acquired. Hence Tannerus, in his *Disputation on Faith, Hope, and Charity*, and Gretserus in his treatise *On Recognizing the Scriptures*, chapter 14, say: "A circle is a progression from the same to exactly the same, with no variation of terms intervening with respect to the manner of knowledge." This happens when a consequent inferred from an antecedent is supported and proved by no other knowledge than that of the antecedent, and is then assumed for proving its own antecedent; for example (to use Aristotle's example), there will be a circle if from A we demonstrate B, and again from B we demonstrate A, and each is a principal demonstration that declares through the proximate cause why the effect exists.

A regress, however, occurs between cause and effect when they are reciprocal and the effect is better known to us than the cause; since we must always proceed from what is better known to us, we first demonstrate an unknown cause from a known effect, then—the cause having been known—we regress from it to demonstrate the effect, so that we may know why it exists. Hence it is clear that this is the difference between a circle and a regress: in a regress the prior process is a demonstration that (quod), but the later process is a demonstration why (propter quid); whereas in a circle both processes are demonstrations why (propter quid).

V. However, such a circle cannot be admitted by the consensus of philosophers, because it would follow that the same thing is both prior and posterior to itself, better known and less known, cause and effect—which cannot even be imagined. For that which is assumed for the proof of another must be prior and better known, since that by which something is such must itself be more so. But by the very fact that something is proved and demonstrated from another, it must be posterior and less known than that other.

You may say that the same objection can be raised against a regress—namely, that the same thing would be both better known and less known—and that this difficulty cannot be resolved by saying that the cause is better known than the effect according to nature, while the effect is better known than the cause to us. For every demonstration is carried out for our sake, not for nature's, and therefore every demonstration ought to proceed from what is better known to us.

I reply that the reasoning is different in each case, for neither the path nor the kind of knowledge is the same. In the prior progression, when the cause is inferred from the effect, the effect is better known to us by a confused knowledge of the cause; but in the posterior progression, when the effect is proved from the cause, the cause is better known to us by a distinct knowledge of the

effect. In the first case, the process moves a posteriori through a demonstration of the fact (τοῦ ὅτι); in the second, a priori through a demonstration of the reasoned fact (τοῦ διότι). Nor is it a process from the same to the same; for although it goes from an effect to the same effect, the end of the demonstration is not precisely the effect, but knowledge of it—and this knowledge is not the same at the end of the regress as at the beginning. For we begin with a confused knowledge of it, and we end with a distinct and perfect knowledge; thus, the process moves from confused to distinct knowledge, from knowing that it is to knowing why it is.

But in a circle, there is a process from the same to the same; for in both progressions, the middle term is the proximate cause of the major extreme in a demonstration of the reasoned fact. Thus, it proceeds from distinct knowledge to the same distinct knowledge—that is, by exactly the same path—than which nothing more absurd can be conceived.

VI. Once this is established, it is easy to demonstrate that the Pontificals involve themselves in an inexplicable circle when they prove the authority of Scripture. For wherever there is a progression from the same to the same, known in the same way and by the same path, there must be a formal and properly so-called circle.

That the Pontificals proceed in this way in this matter is clear from their practice and doctrine. For on account of the Church's infallibility in testifying—believed by divine faith—they believe the authority of the Word by divine faith; and again, on account of the authority of God's Word—believed by divine faith—they believe in the Church's infallibility in testifying. Here there is a process from the Church's infallibility (believed by divine faith) to that same infallibility believed in the same way, and thus from the same to the same by the same path.

Let us state it more clearly: If you ask the Pontificals how we know that Scripture is canonical and divine, they immediately reply that this is on account of the testimony of the Church—"because," they say, "the Church says so." But if you ask in return why they believe the Church, they add: "Because it is led by an infallible Spirit." And if you ask why they believe this, they answer: "Because Scripture testifies that it is 'the pillar and ground of truth' (1 Tim. 3:15), and that it has 'the promise of the Holy Spirit' (John 16:13), etc." Now if you ask again how we can be certain of the truth of this testimony in Scripture, they say: "Because Scripture is the Word of God." But why do you believe it is God's Word? They answer: "Because the Church, which is led by an infallible Spirit, says so." Thus they return to the point from which they began their argument.

Here there occurs neither a different question nor a different path; for in both cases, it is a question about the reason and argument on account of which we believe—not about the faculty or instrument through which we believe. Indeed, when they prove Scripture from the Church, they understand it in such a way that faith in Scripture rests on the testimony of the Church as an inartificial argument—that is, so that this testimony is the cause on account of which we believe. Again, when they demonstrate the infallibility of the Church from Scripture, they intend that testimony of Scripture to be the cause and argument on account of which we believe in the Church—as will be proved below. Therefore, there occurs a process from the same to the same: from distinct knowledge and knowledge of the reasoned fact to that same knowledge—which constitutes a true and proper formal circle.

VII. From this it is clear that the Papists proceed to infinity in their proofs, and have no first credible principle on which faith first rests and into which it is ultimately resolved—which is the most absurd of all absurdities. For if there were some first credible principle, it would be either Scripture or the Church; but neither can be so designated according to their hypothesis: not Scripture, because it is believed on account of the Church, nor can anyone be persuaded of its truth and authenticity except by the infallible testimony of the Church; not the Church, because it is believed on account of Scripture—for unless Scripture taught its truth and infallible authority, our faith could never rest in its testimony. Thus the process is infinite, from Scripture to the Church and in turn from the Church to Scripture, and whatever they may attempt, they will never be able to extricate themselves from this inexplicable labyrinth and inextricable snare in which they are entangled.

VIII. Nevertheless, they try to escape in various ways; and in order to achieve this goal more easily, they seek different hiding places of distinctions in which, as it seems to them, they can safely take refuge. But if we bring the torch of truth a little closer, their falsity and weakness will immediately become apparent. Various authors respond in various ways; we will touch only upon the principal replies and those that have a greater appearance of truth, omitting others that are either irrelevant or can easily be refuted on their own. First into the fray steps Gregory of Valencia (Tom. iii, disp. 1, q. 1, punct. 1, § 10), distinguishing: 1. The principal cause on account of which we believe, and the condition required for believing. He says the infallibility of the Church is believed on account of the authority of the Word, as the principal cause on account of which we believe; but the authority of the Word is believed on account of the testimony of the Church, not as the principal cause of belief, but as a condition required for believing the authority of the Word—and therefore progress is made here toward the same thing, but by a different path. 2. He distinguishes the cause of faith in itself, in which our faith rests as in the principal ground of belief, from the cause of the acceptance of faith, which first impels and moves us to begin believing. If one asks about the cause of faith in itself, one must stop at divine revelation as the ultimate moment of resolution, because divine revelation is the sole ground of our faith in which we must therefore rest; but the testimony of the Church is the cause of the acceptance of faith because, as they say, it is the first door by which one comes to believe the canonical books, or the motive by which we are induced to believe. This same reply is also given by Becanus in his opusculum *On the Calvinistic Circle*.

IX. But each either deceives and plays with words, or openly abandons the argument.

1. If the testimony of the Church is not the principal cause of belief, then the authority of the Word is not believed on account of it, and faith cannot be resolved into that testimony. Yet this is precisely the doctrine of the Papists. Bellarmine, in Book III, On the Word of God, Chapter 10, in reply to argument 13, says: "We do not know with certainty what God has revealed except from the testimony of the Church." From this it clearly follows that divine revelation is not believed on account of itself, but on account of the testimony of the Church. Similarly, in Book VI, On Free Will, Chapter 3: "Catholics believe what they believe because God has revealed it, but they believe that God has revealed it because they hear the Church saying or declaring it." If this is true, then the Church will properly be said to be the cause of belief, not merely a condition.

2. A condition required for belief can be understood in two ways: either as denoting only the instrument and ministry through which the Scriptures are delivered and explained to us, or as signifying some foundation that supplies arguments and motives. If Valentinian understands condition in the first sense, we readily grant that the circle is broken, but at the same time agreement with the Papists is also broken, for they contend that the Church holds not only the place of an instrument—which we also readily grant—but also that of a foundation. If in the latter sense, how must he necessarily understand it if he speaks consistently with the opinion received among his own? Then Scripture is not believed on account of itself, but on account of the Church—which he was unwilling to admit—and the circle always remains.

3. The distinction between the cause of faith in itself and the cause of the acceptance of faith is futile. For what establishes faith in itself is also by its nature apt to establish the acceptance of faith, since no faith can exist in a subject which is not at the same time accepted by that subject. Therefore, if divine revelation is the cause of faith in itself, it must also be the cause of its acceptance.

4. Here there are mere evasions and verbal tricks. They say that the authority of Scripture ought to be believed on account of divine revelation, yet they neither teach nor can teach where that revelation is to be found. For it is either Scripture itself or some other revelation outside Scripture in some unwritten tradition. If it is Scripture itself, then we have what we want—namely, that the authority of Scripture is sufficiently manifested through Scripture itself and ought to be believed on account of Scripture itself. If it is some tradition, the same question will recur concerning how it is known to be divine; for it can be known neither from Scripture, nor from tradition itself, nor from any other source, because the same question will always return, and so on to infinity. This difficulty so constrained Valentinian that he was forced to yield and admit with us that divine revelation is not only believed on account of itself without another revelation, but also reveals itself and manifests its divine authority to us. He says, in Volume III, Disputation 1, Question 1, Point 1, §5: "Faith gives assent to revelation as revealed not through another revelation but through itself."

5. If one must take a stand on divine revelation, there will be no need to proceed to the testimony of the Church. But this is the chief foundation of our opponents' opinion, as we have just seen, while they profess that it cannot be known with certainty what God has revealed, or whether this or that revelation is divine, except from the testimony of the Church.

X. 2°. Others reply that the same method is not preserved here; for the authority of the Word is believed on account of the infallible testimony of the Church, as something better known to us, and conversely, the infallibility of the Church in testifying is believed on account of the authority of the Word, as something prior and better known by nature. Thus Malderus, Bishop of Antwerp, in II-II, q. 1, art. 1. To this also pertains the common distinction among them between authority in itself and authority with respect to us: that Scripture indeed does not have authority in itself, but with respect to us, from the Church.

Reply: But without examining that distinction more deeply—which they are accustomed to repeat again and again—let it suffice to note that it is vain and plainly unsuitable. For since authority is relative, it ought not to be considered absolutely; so whatever gives authority to

something in itself also gives it authority with respect to us, and vice versa. If the Word has authority in itself without the Church, it ought also to obtain that authority with respect to us without her; if, however, it obtains that authority with respect to us from the Church, likewise also in itself. For the motive by which I am led to believe the Word is the same as that which gains authority for the Word itself, whatever it may be.

2. The knot cannot be untied by the aforementioned evasion. For we readily concede that where there is a process from what is better known to us to what is better known by nature, and vice versa, and from effect to cause and conversely from cause to effect, the mode of knowledge varies—and thus it is not properly called a circle—since the knowledge acquired by the prior process is confused and imperfect, while that obtained by the latter is distinct. But here the matter stands otherwise: there is no variation of knowledge in the papal circle. For just as they know the authority of the Word from the infallible testimony of the Church with certain knowledge and divine faith, so in turn they know the infallibility of the Church from the Word with knowledge of divine faith. The same faith is present in both, the same knowledge.

3. It is falsely supposed that Scripture is believed on account of the Church, since, as we have said, it is only an instrument and medium for faith, not an argument; and we believe through it, not on account of it. Or if it sometimes takes on the role of a motive, it is only a secondary and less principal motive, which can somewhat illuminate faith in a believer but cannot ground it in an unbeliever.

4. If the infallibility of the Church is better known to us than the authority of the Word—so that on account of it the authority of the Word is believed—then the Church ought to be believed before the authority of the Word. Now, either the Church is believed by divine and infused faith or by acquired and human faith. Not by divine faith, because no such faith is given which does not rest upon the word of God, as they themselves admit. If by acquired faith, it cannot be a suitable foundation for that act of divine faith by which the authority of the Word of God is believed; for whatever is the foundation of divine faith must itself be believed with firm and infallible faith.

XI. 5. A twofold knowledge can be given: one confused, the other distinct and certain. The Church can be better known to us than the Word by a confused knowledge—insofar as it first meets the senses and proposes and commends to us the Word itself (still unknown) like a Herald or Interpreter. And thus we do not deny that the testimony of the Church can be an introductory and ministerial means for believing the authority of Scripture.

Nevertheless, although in this way it can prepare and lead by the hand to faith, it cannot itself generate faith—or that faith will be only human and fallible according to its foundation. So acted the Samaritan woman toward her fellow citizens in introducing them to Christ: not founding their faith, but only arousing and leading them by the hand to Him—whence they professed that they believed not because of her word, but because of Christ's words, since they had heard and seen for themselves (John 4:42).

But if we are speaking of certain and distinct knowledge—which ought to ground not human and probable faith but certain and divine faith (which is what we are disputing about here)—we deny

that the Church is better known to us than the Word, because such distinct knowledge of the Church can only be drawn from the Word itself.

Thus far, therefore, our adversaries deceive and are deceived when, in order to avoid the circle, they seek this wretched subterfuge.

XII. 3. There are those who, to defend their reasoning from the charge of circularity, make the following exception: a circle occurs only when a consequence inferred from an antecedent—supported and proven by no other knowledge than that of the antecedent—is then used to prove that very antecedent. It is otherwise, however, when the consequence, being better known from another source than from the antecedent, is employed to prove its own antecedent. This, they say, happens in the present question: for when the authority of Scripture is believed on account of the testimony of the Church, then the infallibility of the Church is not believed on the authority of Scripture itself, but on the common motives of faith. Likewise, when the infallibility of the Church is believed on the testimony of Scripture, Scripture is not regarded precisely as it is learned from the infallible testimony of the Church, but as its authority is urged by the common motives of faith. Thus argues Gretser in his treatise on recognizing Scripture, chapter 4, and with him Tanner, in his disputation on faith, hope, and charity, thesis 80.

This same refuge was also sought by Cardinal Richelieu in his French treatise on “converting those who have seceded from the Church,” book 1, chapter 10: “The knowledge of the Church,” he says, “does not depend necessarily on Scripture; for the Church can be known without Scripture, as is clear from the fact that it was acknowledged by the faithful from creation up to Moses, who first committed the word of God to writing, and by the first Christians before the Apostles and their disciples composed the Gospel and the books of the New Testament. Therefore, since knowledge of the Church does not depend necessarily on Scripture—although Scripture cannot be infallibly known except from the Church—one does not fall into a vicious circle which proves the same thing by itself,” etc. But if you press the point—how can the Church now be known without Scripture?—he replies that the Roman Church is recognized as the true Church: first, because it has never yet been lawfully convicted of falsehood; second, because it possesses all those marks and characters which we know by natural light ought to belong to the true Church—such as antiquity, perpetuity, visibility, and other marks of that sort from which reason judges the truth of any church. Since all these are found in the Roman Church, from this it is sufficiently known, even without Scripture, that it is the true Church.

XIII. Although our adversaries greatly applaud themselves in this contrivance, it is not difficult to show its absurdity.

First: The supposition that the authority of the Word is known from some source other than the testimony of the Church is openly repugnant to their own hypothesis. For if they truly believe—as they everywhere profess—that the authority of the Word cannot be believed with certainty or known except from the infallible testimony of the Church, how can they maintain that it becomes known to us from elsewhere, unless they depart from their accepted opinion? We indeed admit and acknowledge that the Word is proved from sources other than the Church—namely, from its own proper and inherent marks and characters. If by “common motives of faith” they mean these,

they will have us in agreement; but by that very fact the necessity of the Church's testimony falls away.

Second: Those common motives on which they wish faith to rest are either certain or not. If certain, then the papal principle collapses—that no means suffice for faith in Scripture unless joined by the infallible testimony of the Church, as we said before. If not certain—as those who acknowledge this faith not to be divine but conjectural and fallible (and as they themselves say, an assent of preliminary prudence) do not deny—then they labor in vain who seek something certain through them. For the foundation of a certain and infallible faith must itself be certain and must be certainly known and believed by us.

XIV. 3. I declare it most false that either the truth of the Church or its infallibility can be known certainly and truly from any source other than the Word. The reasons are as follows:

1. Because the Church is founded upon the Word and from it obtains its specific being; for there is no Church without a calling, and no calling except from the Word, as in Ephesians 2:20.

2. "Faith comes from hearing," Romans 10:17, and hearing comes from the Word. Therefore, either the truth of the Church cannot be believed and known by divine faith, or it must be held from the Word.

3. The safest and most certain method of investigating the Church is undoubtedly through its marks and properties. Now, these marks of the Church are made known to us either through the Church itself, through common motives, or through Scripture, and by these we are rendered infallibly certain of them:

- Not through the Church, because it is the Church itself that is in question, and a mark must be known from something other than the thing of which it is a mark—besides which, the true Church is still unknown to those who are investigating it.

- Not through common motives, because:

- First, whether they are said to be certain or uncertain, in either case there is a difficulty, as we have just stated.

- Second, if such motives by themselves suffice for having certainty of faith in the truth of the Church, why do they not also suffice by themselves for having certainty of faith in the authority of Scripture? And conversely, if these motives by themselves and without the infallible testimony of the Church do not suffice for having certainty of faith in the authority of Scripture, then neither do they suffice by themselves for having certainty of faith in the Church.

- Third, those motives are drawn either from reason and natural light or from revealed light in the Word. If from the latter, they coincide with Scripture; if from the former, then either they will not ground divine faith (which is what is sought here), or faith will be from reason and not from the Word—contrary to Paul in Romans 10:17.

It remains, therefore, that the certainty of our faith concerning the truth of the Church depends on Scripture alone, so that the true and genuine marks and properties of the Church can clearly be

drawn only from the Word. Moreover, what is said about the truth of the Church must also be said about its infallibility. For how could it be known apart from the Word, since it depends entirely on the Word and is founded upon it?

4. The Fathers support this:

- Augustine, in Epistle 166: “We have learned about the Church in the Scriptures.”
- In his book *On the Unity of the Church*, chapter 3: “The Church is demonstrated not by human documents but by divine oracles.”
- And in chapter 10: “Whether they,” namely the Donatists, “hold to the Church, let them show it only from the testimonies of the divine Scriptures.”
- The author of the *Imperfect Work*, Homily 50: “Whoever wishes to know the true Church of Christ—from where shall he know it except only through the Scriptures?”

5. Even our adversaries admit this:

- Stapleton, Volume 1, *Principles of Doctrine*, chapter 24: “We say, therefore, and most gladly say with Augustine, that the Church must be sought in the Scriptures—that is, what are the marks, gifts, and properties of the Church must be investigated from the oracles of Sacred Scripture, not from human documents.”
- Becanus, in his *Apology for the Jewish Controversy*, chapters 3–7, admits this proposition as true: “Scripture alone primarily and infallibly determines and defines the question about the Church by way of a norm.”
- Driedo of Louvain, in Book 2 *On the Doctrines of the Church*, chapter 3, in the solution to article 4, says: “Faith is no longer to be proved from persons, but persons are proved by their faith, just as from the sacred Scriptures is known that which is now the Church.”

Nor does the ordinary practice of the Papists mean anything else; for when they are pressed by us concerning the truth and infallibility of their Church—namely, from where they believe their Church to be infallible—they immediately refer us to Scripture and repeatedly cite the illustrious promises made to the Church or the praises attributed to it there. They would undoubtedly not do this unless they believed that faith in the infallibility of the Church can be drawn with certainty from no other source than the Word.

XV. The Arguments of the Cardinal are of no avail whatsoever. For the first one childishly confuses Scripture considered materially and formally—that is, with respect either to the substance of doctrine or to the accident of writing. Indeed, we do not deny that the Church was known without Scripture considered formally and with respect to the accident of writing, since for two thousand years and more the Church lacked the written word. But we deny that it was known without Scripture materially—that is, without the word of God, which has always and everywhere been the one foundation of the Church. For the same Word, which the Lord willed to be set down in writing to guard against the deceits of the Devil and the corruptions of men, had already been handed down by living voice to the Patriarchs in visions and dreams and other

modes of revelation—“at many times and in many ways,” Hebrews 1:1. And although Christians did not have the New Testament in written form from the beginning, they nevertheless had the Old, which was perfect and sufficient in its kind, 2 Timothy 3:15.

The second Argument absurdly begs the question and assumes what was to be proved—namely, that the Church and its marks can be known with certainty by the light of nature. We have previously shown this to be false, because the proper marks and characteristics of the Church can be derived only from the Word. I pass over the fact that he foists upon us as true marks those which are in fact spurious and counterfeit—such as antiquity, visibility, etc.—which apply neither to the Church alone, nor to the whole Church, nor always. I pass over the fact that here he reasons sophistically from the undistributed to the distributed—from the Church in general to the Roman Church of today in particular—assuming it to be the true Church, which we can neither grant nor will they ever prove. For when he so presumptuously boasts that his Roman Church is true because it has never been convicted of falsehood, in this he betrays either gross ignorance or shamelessness. How many and how great are the volumes of the Orthodox that appeared a hundred years ago, which showed more clearly than noonday that the Roman Church has often erred, and that in its present state it neither is nor can be regarded as the true Church of Christ. And this alone can easily be proved by the following argument: That Church which does not retain the saving doctrine handed down by Christ cannot be the true Church of Christ; but the Roman Church is such. The minor premise—which will no doubt be denied by them—will easily be proved when we come to examine doctrine.

XVI. 4. Others distinguish between the formal object of faith and the rule of faith: they say that the faith by which they believe in the infallibility of the Church rests on the authority of the word of God as the formal object of faith, but that the faith by which they believe in the authority of the word of God rests on the infallible testimony of the Church—not as a formal object, but as a rule of faith—and thus there is no formal circle or circular reasoning. Reply: But not even by this reasoning can they escape, as will easily appear if we attend to the terms of the distinction and consider what is meant by “object” and what likewise by “rule” of faith.

A twofold object of faith is posited: one material, the other formal. The material is that which we believe and by which we answer the question, “What do you believe?” The formal is that on account of which we believe and by which we answer the question, “Why do you believe?” For example, all those things proposed in the word of God to be believed—such as the creation of the world, providence, redemption, etc.—are the material object of faith, for they are that which we believe, and by them we answer the question, “What do you believe?” But the authority of the word is the formal object of our faith, because it is the formal reason on account of which we believe all other things, and it is itself believed not on account of something else but on its own account.

Now, “rule of faith” means something different from either. For it is neither simply the material object considered individually and in particular, nor is it the formal object or reason on account of which we believe. Rather, it denotes the system and collection of all things to be believed, or the principle according to which we ought to believe. Thus it differs from the formal object in several ways:

1. The rule of faith relates as an exemplary cause, which faith in all things ought to follow and conform itself to; but the formal object has the nature of an objective cause or foundation on account of which we believe principally and formally.
2. The rule of faith limits and determines that latitude and extension which faith has with respect to material objects, while it teaches how many and which things are to be believed; but the formal object specifies and grounds the assent of faith.
3. The rule of faith is a comprehension and summary of all things to be believed; but the formal object is that on account of which we believe with divine faith both the rule itself and all things proposed in it to be believed. Hence our faith is ultimately resolved not into the rule itself but into the formal object.

XVII. Given this, the vanity of the objection is clear. 1. We accept the confession which truth wrests from them—namely, that faith rests upon the authority of the Word as its formal object. For if they profess and believe this in good faith, they are bound to yield to us and abandon the papal cause. For if it is the formal object, then the ultimate analysis of faith will terminate in the authority of the Word, and not in the infallible testimony of the Church—which, however, is the received opinion among our adversaries, which we here impugn. Let Stapleton be heard (lib. viii. princip. doct. cap. 21): > “The formal ground of faith is not God revealing, but God revealing as such—that is, through the Church.” And in his *Controversial Relections*, controversy iv, question 3, article 2, he lays down this conclusion: > “The whole and complete formal ground of our faith, speaking ordinarily, is God revealing through the Church.” If they believe that the formal reason why we believe is God speaking through the Church, those doctors wrongly say that the authority of the Word does not rest upon the infallibility of the Church as its formal object. 2. And that which they here suppose is utterly false—that the Church is the rule of faith. For only the Word, which contains the sum of all things to be believed, is that full and perfect norm to which nothing ought to be added or taken away, as has so often been prescribed by the Holy Spirit. If, therefore, the Church cannot be called the rule of faith, then the Word cannot be believed on account of the Church as on account of a rule.

XVIII. 5. Some take refuge in different respects—both of persons and of rules of believing. For sometimes there are different persons erring concerning different things—for example, when one denies the authority of the Church, another that of Scripture—then no circle is admitted if someone convinces the former from Scripture (which he admits) concerning the truth of the Church, and conversely proves Scripture to the latter through the Church (whose infallibility he does not doubt). Thus Becanus (in *Tract. de Circulo Calvin.*, §2) guards against a circle by appealing to different respects of rules of believing, which, as so many causes—and causes mutually to one another—by mutual comparison are more illustrable and demonstrable through one another; and then it is not a circle, but a regress such as occurs in different kinds of causes—as Aristotle and all wiser philosophers prove. **Reply:** But neither of these responses removes the difficulty. Not the first, because: 1. We do not only argue that our adversaries proceed circularly against those who deny either the authority of Scripture or that of the Church separately, but also in establishing their own faith and rendering an account of it—while they profess to believe the authority of Scripture on account of the testimony of the Church, and again the infallible

testimony of the Church on account of Scripture—even though they admit both and deny neither.

2. This response supposes that one who doubts or denies the infallibility of the Church can be convinced from Scripture. But this is expressly contrary to the hypothesis of our adversaries, who openly profess that no controversy can be sufficiently determined from Scripture, and no dogma can be firmly believed on account of the authority of Scripture unless there is added the infallible testimony and interpretation of the Church. And indeed, if they are heard, they can assign no foundation of faith on which the faith of those who doubt the infallibility of the Church may rest and acquiesce. For it will be either the Church itself, or Scripture, or unwritten Tradition. But none of these can be said: - Not the Church, because its infallibility is what is doubted; - Not Scripture or unwritten Tradition, because their authority and legitimate sense—according to our adversaries’ opinion—necessarily depend on the infallible testimony of the Church; and consequently we can believe nothing simply on their authority unless we first believe that the Church which bears witness to them is infallible. Hence it is clear that here too they have no place where they can set their foot.

XIX. But it is not safer for their cause to have a defense based on the varying regard for rules of belief, which are both mutually causes of one another and are demonstrated by each other. For:

1. It is gratuitously assumed—which is most false—that there are multiple rules of belief, since there can only be one total and perfect rule; if several are given, neither will be a rule.

2. Reciprocal demonstration of causes may be set up for the purpose that, from mutual comparison, not indeed primarily and chiefly that each be proved a priori, but only that they be more clearly illustrated and their agreement appear. But the Pontificals proceed far otherwise: they prove Scripture to be the word of God from the testimony of the Church, not so that faith already begun may be more confirmed, but so that its authority may be established for Scripture—which otherwise could not be established for it—and in turn they prove the infallibility of the Church from Scripture, so that its authority may be established for the Church—which cannot be sufficiently proved from any other source. Thus they want the authority of Scripture necessarily to depend on the Church, and conversely the authority of the Church necessarily to depend on Scripture—a thing which cannot even be imagined or invented, for thus it would follow that the authority of Scripture cannot be believed unless the infallibility of the Church is first believed, and in turn the infallibility of the Church cannot be believed unless the authority of Scripture is first believed, which is absurd.

3. The Aristotelian regress differs greatly from the Pontifical circle. For:

a. In the regress new knowledge is acquired while proceeding from confused to distinct knowledge; but here nothing new is added, for one proceeds from the authority of the word believed by divine faith to the same authority of the word believed by divine faith.

b. In the regress there is a diverse process: from effect to cause, from cause to effect, from demonstration that something is to demonstration why it is, and vice versa—so the kind of cause cannot be the same. But in the Pontifical circle there is no diverse process, but one of the same order and kind, namely, from the objective cause of faith (on account of which we believe) to the

same objective cause; for in both cases it is asked on account of what either the authority of Scripture or the infallibility of the Church is believed.

XX. 6. Finally, Stapleton, in his defense of the authority of the Church, book 3, chapter 3, asserts that there is nothing absurd in the idea that the authority of the Church, as far as we are concerned, depends on the authority of Scripture, and conversely, the authority of Scripture, as far as we are concerned, depends on the authority of the Church—that both can be true at the same time: that the Church borrows its authority from Scripture, and Scripture in turn borrows its authority from that same Church. This is similar to how we see John bearing witness to Christ, and in turn Christ to John; John the Evangelist to his Gospel, and again the same Gospel to John, etc.

Reply: But here there is a manifold error.

1. It is one thing to bear witness to someone, and another to confer authority upon that person. Nor is it correctly taken as the same thing to have testimony from someone and to borrow all one's authority from that same person. Certainly, nothing prevents John and Christ from having commended each other by mutual testimony; but that Christ borrowed His authority from John is utterly false. He says, "I do not receive testimony from man, and I have a testimony greater than that of John" (John 5:34, 36). Hence, in John 1:7, it is said that "John came to bear witness to the Light, that all might believe through him." It is rightly said "through him" (δι' αὐτοῦ), not "because of him" (δι' αὐτόν), because he was only a minister who led to Christ, not the foundation and formal cause of faith in Him.

2. Necessary testimony and non-necessary testimony are confused. Testimony is necessary when no certainty about the thing testified can be had by us except through that testimony—that is, when it depends necessarily and essentially on that testimony. Testimony is non-necessary when it illustrates or confirms the thing testified, yet in such a way that the thing testified has sufficient certainty for us from another source. Two different witnesses can bear witness to each other and mutually commend one another if it is a matter of testimony that is not necessary from either or at least from one side—such as those mutual testimonies of Christ about John the Baptist and of John the Baptist about Christ, or of John about his Gospel and of the Gospel about John.

But if we speak of necessary testimony, it is entirely absurd and involves an open contradiction to say that the authority of two witnesses, as far as we are concerned, depends essentially and necessarily on their mutual testimony about each other. For in that case, as we said just now, the same thing would be both better known and less known by itself. For example:

- If the Church bears necessary testimony for us to all the Word of God, it is impossible for us to believe in its authority by divine faith except on account of the testimony of the Church. Yet we cannot believe anything on account of the Church's testimony unless the Church first obtains its authority with us. For that on account of which we know or believe something must itself first be known and believed by us; no legitimate proof comes from what is unknown.

- Likewise, if Scripture bears necessary testimony for us concerning the Church, it is impossible for us to believe in the infallibility of the Church except on account of the testimony of Scripture.

Yet we cannot believe anything on account of the authority of Scripture unless Scripture first obtains its authority with us.

Thus, no matter how they twist their position, those entangled in this reasoning are always caught and will never be able to free themselves from this inextricable labyrinth.

Hence, it is clear what must be decided about that religion which can assign no foundation and principle of faith on which it rests and into which it may be resolved.

XXI. But perhaps we are clearly guilty of the very crime we charge against others: This certainly has been more than once thrown at us by our Adversaries, from which Becanus and others have even invented a "Calvinistic Circle," which they are accustomed to attack with great zeal. Let us therefore see with what right they do so. They object, namely, that we prove Scripture from the Spirit, and again the Spirit from Scripture, and that this cannot be done without a circular process—because just as Scripture is believed to be the Word of God from the internal testimony of the Spirit, so the testimony of the Spirit is believed on account of Scripture, in which the Holy Spirit is promised to believers. Thus Becanus in his little work *On the Calvinistic Circle*, section 6, and Gretser in his treatise *On Recognizing Scripture*, chapter 4. But how grossly they err here will be abundantly shown by a simple explanation of our position.

First, the Orthodox rightly hold that a careful distinction must be made between: - the efficient cause *by which* we believe, and - the objective ground *on account of which* we believe; between the *energetic* principle which effectively generates faith in a truth, and the motive or argument which objectively moves and excites us to embrace that faith.

For example, if the subject is love: - it is one thing to speak of the efficient cause by which it is produced, - and another to speak of the motives by which it is aroused. The sole and principal efficient cause is the Holy Spirit; the motives are those various arguments set forth in Scripture concerning the ineffable love which God has shown us in His Son.

In the same way, we ought to reason about faith, especially in this argument: - No other efficient cause of our faith can be given except the Spirit, without whom we cannot even will or accomplish—indeed, not even think. Nor do our adversaries themselves deny this, for they acknowledge that the Spirit is necessary for generating faith, as Stapleton often testifies against Whitaker, complaining that he is wronged by him as if he denied it.

But the objective ground on account of which we believe is the Word itself with its marks—or rather, those heavenly criteria and rays of divinity which shine in the Word and prove themselves by their own inherent light, majesty, and splendor, just as the sun demonstrates itself by its own native light.

Hence, according to that twofold principle of faith, a twofold question arises, to which different answers may be given: - If it is asked about the objective ground on account of which we believe in the divinity of Scripture, the answer is: the very Word of God by its inherent marks. - But if the question is about the efficient cause by which and by whose power we believe, it is said to be the Holy Spirit who imparts to us the power of believing.

And so we most truly say that Scripture is demonstrated from the Spirit—that is, by His power and efficacy, which generates faith in our souls. But because anyone could easily deceive himself and others by boasting of a Spirit he does not possess, therefore, in order that one may be persuaded of the truth of that Spirit, it must be proved from Scripture itself—insofar as it supplies us with various marks and criteria by which we discern whether the Spirit who is in us is truly from God or not, whether it is the Spirit of Christ or of the world. Thus Scripture proves the Spirit not effectively but objectively—by the reasons and arguments which shine forth in it.

XXII. From this it is now clearly concluded that we neither proceed to infinity in the resolution of our faith, nor are we driven in a circle.

As to the former, an infinite progression cannot occur because we ultimately rest in a final credible truth that is believed not on account of something else, but for its own sake—namely, Holy Scripture itself, which is believed to be the Word of God not because of anything else, but for itself.

The latter is also evident because the questions are different: when we prove Scripture by the Spirit, this is done by way of efficient cause; but when we prove the Spirit by Scripture, we proceed by way of objective cause. In the first question, we ask by what faculty we believe, or under what disposition in the subject, or through what means we believe; in the other, however, we ask by what argument, or under what formal reason in the subject, or on account of what we believe.

Therefore, since the questions are different, there is no begging of the principle, nor is there a process from the same to the same. For faith is resolved differently into each of these principles: into Scripture as the objective cause, or its formal object and first credible truth—which Stapleton calls the doctrinal principle—and into the Spirit as the principal efficient cause.

If you ask how we know that Scripture is divine—that is, by what power and faculty—I answer: through the Holy Spirit, who testifies in our hearts. If you press further, how we know that we have the Holy Spirit—that is, by what argument—I answer: from those various marks and effects which are attributed in Scripture to the Holy Spirit; when these are discerned in us, we conclude with certainty that the Spirit is in us. If you inquire further how we know that such effects are in us, we do not then turn to Scripture—which names no one—but must rely on the inner vision of the heart and on the working of the Spirit, whose presence cannot be demonstrated otherwise than a posteriori, just as a person perceives his own life through sensation, motion, and other vital operations.

If, on the other hand, you ask how I know that Scripture is αὐτόπιστον (self-authenticating), or by what argument and on what account? I answer: because Scripture is the Word of God. If you press further, how do I know that Scripture is the Word of God? I will not now say that this is known from the Spirit, because the Spirit is only the efficient cause, not the objective one, but from the heavenly criteria and marks with which it is distinguished.

We do not go beyond this; for if someone again insists how we perceive those rays and marks—that is, by what argument—I reply that he acts absurdly. For in this order of arguments or

objective reasons there is nothing higher, and to perpetually seek reasons for reasons is madness—no different from asking by what light we see light. Thus, in the genus of objective cause, the Word is believed immediately and for its own sake, although for this belief the internal working of the Holy Spirit is most necessary, who effectively moves the intellect in the genus of efficient cause to believe the authority of Scripture—just as we assent to the principles of sciences for their own sake, although to produce that assent the habit of mind called the habit of principles and understanding is necessary.

These points demonstrate more clearly than midday light that we are wrongly accused of circular reasoning: because we prove the divinity of Scripture through the Spirit not on account of Him, but we prove the truth of the Spirit from Scripture objectively, not efficiently through it.

XXIII. You will say, yet many among the Orthodox seem to distinguish the Testimony of the Spirit from the Testimony of the Church in such a way that they understand it as a testimony of the same order and kind—that is, in the category of an objective cause, not merely an efficient one. See Whitaker, Controversy 1, question 3, chapter 11; Chamier, book 6, chapter 1. Nor does the Gallican Confession, article 4, intend anything else when it says: “We acknowledge these books to be canonical—that is, we hold them as the norm and rule of our faith—and that not only by the common consent of the Church, but much more by the testimony and intrinsic persuasion of the Holy Spirit, by whose prompting we are taught to distinguish them from other ecclesiastical books, which, though useful, are not such that any article of faith can be established from them.”

I respond:

1. If there are those who have wished to oppose the internal testimony of the Spirit—or that heart-penetrating power by which it effectively produces faith in us—to the testimony of the Church as if they were of the same order and kind, they have spoken somewhat inaccurately. For the issue between us and the Papists is not whether the testimony of the Spirit or its power and efficacy is required for knowing and proving the divinity of Scripture—since the Papists freely grant this to us, and no one can deny it unless they wish to openly cross over into the camp of Pelagius—but only whether the testimony of the Church is that chief and infallible means and motive on account of which we believe Scripture, or whether some other more principal motive is required.

Therefore, those who expend much effort in gathering Scripture passages and arguments to prove that the Spirit must necessarily intervene here do not seem to have touched upon the main hinge of the question, which was placed not in whether the work of the Spirit is necessary for believing, but in whether the Spirit uses either the testimony of the Church alone or primarily (as the Papists contend) to persuade us of this authority, or rather reasons drawn from the Word (as the Orthodox maintain).

2. The testimony of the Spirit is taken either broadly or strictly: strictly, as it denotes only that divine power which effectively produces faith in us; broadly, insofar as together with that efficacious power is joined the reason and motive which it uses to persuade our minds of the truth of something. In the first way, it takes on only the notion of an efficient cause by which we believe; in the latter, also that of an objective cause. Because these two are always connected in this testimony of the Spirit (since its operation in us tends to nothing else than to powerfully

apply to our minds the heavenly truth delivered in the Word, and thus deeply imprint those rays of majesty, sublimity, efficacy, truth, holiness, etc., shining around in it), hence it has come about that some have joined both that relation—both objective and efficient—in the testimony of the Spirit.

And in this sense the Gallican Confession is to be understood when it says that “the sacred books are acknowledged as canonical not only by the common consent of the Church, but much more by the testimony and intrinsic persuasion of the Holy Spirit.” For by “testimony of the Spirit” it understands not only the efficacious power by which faith is effectively produced, but properly the reason and motive of the word which the Spirit uses to persuade us of this truth—namely, the heavenly doctrine itself applied to our hearts by the Spirit, in opposition to natural reason and human sense and judgment, which is plainly blind in discerning these mysteries (1 Cor. 2:14).

But when the testimony of the Spirit is taken strictly for that efficacy of grace which holds on the side of the subject or intellective power—which is rendered fit and apt for perceiving those things which are proposed and which consists in the infusion of the habit of faith and the bestowal of special help necessary for believing—then it has only the character of an efficient cause, not an objective one, nor is it properly distinguished from the testimony of the Church.

XXIV. Before concluding, we must briefly address the double accusation commonly brought against Orthodox teaching concerning this Spirit: 1. That it is fanatical and Anabaptistic; 2. That it is private. For the first is utterly false and slanderous, since fanatics separate the Spirit from Scripture and indulge in extraordinary revelations and enthusiasms. But the testimony of the Spirit, by which we contend that the divinity of Scripture is persuaded in us, does not introduce any new and extraordinary revelation immediately proceeding from the Holy Spirit without the Word. Rather, it is nothing other than a powerful and effective application and impression—on the part of the object—of the revelation made in Scripture itself. Thus, neither the Spirit without Scripture, nor Scripture without the Spirit, should here be considered separately; rather, they must be joined by an indivisible bond according to the covenant of God, as in Isaiah 59:21: “The word that I have put in your mouth and the Spirit that is in you shall not depart,” etc. The Word is set forth externally; the Spirit works internally. The Word moves and persuades; the Spirit deeply moves and convinces. The Word is like seed cast into the earth; the Spirit is like the life-giving power by which it takes root in us and sprouts. Nor does Christ imply anything else in John 16:14 when He says that the Spirit will take from what is His: “He will take of mine and declare it to you.” For the operation of the Holy Spirit, insofar as He is the Paraclete and Comforter, tends to nothing else than the application of Christ’s benefits; yet His testimony, insofar as He is the Teacher of truth, refers to the sealing of the doctrine delivered in the Gospel. Therefore, since the Spirit of whom we speak never departs from Scripture but leads to Scripture and is wholly occupied in explaining it, it is clear that to call this teaching Anabaptistic and fanatical is not without notable calumny.

XXV. But it is said with no less injury that the Spirit is called private and personal, as Stapleton asserted. He used to proclaim that a private spirit of pride was being cast off by us, and others have since objected that we, contrary to 2 Peter 1:20, make prophecy a matter of private interpretation.

Response: For a private spirit can be spoken of in two ways: either originally or subjectively—that is, either with respect to the principle from which it arises, or with respect to the subject and faculty in which it resides; either according to each person’s own inclination and will, or as God’s gift proper to each believer. In the latter sense, we grant that the Spirit may be called personal and private, because it is given to individual believers and abides in them. But in the former sense, by no means—because it does not arise from us privately, but is dispensed communally by Christ to the whole Church. For we do not boast of a spirit that is the private offspring of our own free will, but of one that is Christ’s special gift.

Therefore, just as you would wrongly call the sun private because it cannot enlighten anyone who does not inwardly receive its light, so too with no better right will you call the Spirit—given by Christ to all of us for our enlightenment—private, because it ought not merely affect us externally but must choose its seat within each believer.

The same must be affirmed concerning faith. For although faith considered subjectively—that is, the faith by which one believes—is each person’s own (since the righteous lives by his own faith, not another’s), nevertheless faith objectively—that is, what is believed—is common to all. For the same heavenly Truth, the same Word, in both cases grounds our faith, and it is received equally by all believers.

Nor does the passage from Peter cited above lead elsewhere: “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation.” For whether we interpret ἐπίλυσις as “impulse” or “inspiration” (which our Calvin preferred), or render it as “interpretation” and “exposition” (the more common opinion)—from ἐπιλύειν, which means “to loose” or “to explain,” and often corresponds to the Hebrew פתר—nothing will favor the cause of the Papists. For this ἰδίᾳ ἐπίλυσις, whatever it may be, is not to be understood subjectively but originally—namely, as referring to a person’s private will and mind, in opposition to supernatural grace and the adventitious gift of the Holy Spirit. For Peter’s purpose here is to teach the faithful that the true and certain explanation of Scriptural prophecy (which he had treated in the preceding verse) does not depend on the reader’s own will and sense when he brings something of his own into Scripture, but on the gracious revelation of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, a private interpretation drawn from one’s own brain has no place here; rather, what belongs is a public and divine one derived from the Word itself and intrinsic, so to speak, to the Scriptures themselves.

This is confirmed by the parallel in verse 21 concerning the sole author of prophecy: for just as prophecy was first put forth, so also ought it to be explained. The same one who was its author alone can be the best and legitimate interpreter of his own words. But the Spirit alone delivered the Word to us: “For prophecy came not by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” Thus what in the preceding verse he called “private interpretation,” here he calls “the will of man”—not only that which is in man, but that which arises from his own will.

In this sense Peter rightly asserts—and we with him—that neither private interpretation nor a private spirit should be brought into the handling of the mysteries of faith. However, he does not deny that the Holy Spirit who speaks to all in the Word also testifies privately in the heart of each believer concerning its truth and divinity. Otherwise John could not have said (1 John 5:6), “The

Spirit bears witness because the Spirit is truth,” nor Paul (1 Corinthians 2:12) that the Spirit has been given to us “that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God.”

Only let it be observed that this internal testimony of the Spirit, since it belongs to practical and private discernment—not public authority—cannot be urged upon others, but only applies with respect to ourselves. It serves not for convincing others, but for our own persuasion. For what suffices for me to give full faith to the Word—because I know it and feel it in me, and its operation cannot be deceptive—would be applied in vain toward others who neither see nor acknowledge it in me, unless the same power inwardly affects them and effectively persuades by powerfully insinuating into their minds the arguments latent in the Word.

Thus far, therefore, let it be concluded that both the Spirit and the Word are rightly joined by us in this matter, and that one is rightly proved by the other—yet not so that any just charge of circular reasoning can be laid against us.