



The Scriptures Sufficiency

To Determine All Matters of Faith,

Made good against the PAPIST:

OR, That a Christian may be infallibly certain of his Faith and Religion by the Holy Scriptures.

By that Great and Famous Light of God's Church, William Twisse D.D. And Prolocutor of the late Assembly of Divines.

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SIR,

I have read this learned and satisfactory answer to the perplexing question and doubtful case of conscience, in the lifetime of Dr. Twisse, and if you shall please to give it your imprimatur, I think it may be advantageous in this juncture of time. I rest,

Yours, Ja. Cranford.

May 3, 1652.

Imprimatur,

Edm. Calamy

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THE APPROBATION OF That Reverend Father of the Church, Joseph Hall, Bishop. of NORWICH. In a Letter to his worthily respected friend, Mr. W. S. Respected Sir,

I extend to you my gratitude for the favour you have bestowed upon me by providing me with the opportunity to peruse this substantial and timely work by Dr. Twisse, which provides a comprehensive

response to this alleged inquirer. This individual, masquerading under the guise of a Preacher of the Gospel presenting a perplexing moral dilemma, audaciously issues a somewhat nonsensical challenge to all Protestant Divines. Had you not disclosed the identity of the author of this comprehensive response and supported it with another's endorsement, I would still have recognised and attested to it. There exists a distinctive style by which we scholars recognise one another, not dissimilar to identifying a person through their visible countenance. Anyone who has delved into the witty and acute treatises of this author on the writings of Doctor Jackson will effortlessly recognise his presence in both form and substance within this treatise. This concealed challenger could not have encountered a more suitable adversary—a figure of eminence in Scholastic Theology, whose strength has been keenly felt by the Jesuits, and whom the States of the Netherlands, recognising his worth, sought to entice away with generous offers of a Public Professorship in one of their Universities. I only wish that he had been confronted by a more capable opponent. For surely, as I indicated in my previous communication, this challenger, whoever he may be, whether due to misapprehension or cunning, is pursuing the wrong path and fruitlessly pursuing a misconception. He foolishly assumes that differences in non-essential matters constitute different religions, and naively believes that because there are numerous false claims to truth in the world, God has not equipped us with sufficient means in His revealed Word to distinguish truth from error. It is as if, because counterfeit coins are in circulation, it would be unsafe for a person to accept or even discern genuine currency. However, if his intellect had served him better, he might have realised that everything that must be done and believed for salvation (which alone distinguishes religion) is clearly elucidated in the sacred Scriptures. If any stubborn soul chooses to unjustly dispute this, they can either be convinced or put to shame through the resources that God has

provided to His Church. In the meantime, there is no reason for his absurd obstinacy to cast a shadow on the unmistakable face of truth or to hinder those who possess a better understanding and whose unprejudiced souls, exercising the gift of discernment that God has bestowed upon all wise Christians, can provide themselves with complete satisfaction in all vital truths. They can confidently rest in these truths, boldly defying all opposition.

If this inquirer had only consulted the erudite Bishop Davenant's irrefutable treatise, "De iudice ac norma fidei," he would have refrained from muddling his paper and spared himself the effort of crafting this convoluted and evasive formulation of his so-called perplexing question. In reality, this question is nothing more than an antiquated and frequently debunked quibble, recently polished with a deceptive appearance of conscientious uncertainty. The man will discover that he has been more than adequately answered, perhaps receiving more credit from such an adversary than he deserves. As the saying goes, "Aeneae magni dextrâ cadis." Now, since you have expressed a desire for my assessment of the entire work, to be candid, I must admit that I encountered one or two passages in this learned and weighty discourse (particularly concerning the name and number of the Apocalyptic Beast, 666) with which I do not entirely concur. That mystery is destined to remain hidden, despite the scrutiny of the sharpest minds and judgments. Nevertheless, with regard to all the doctrinal points, I cannot help but applaud them as fitting for the author and satisfying for the reader, and as a rebuke to the adversary. Farewell, from one who is devoted to you,

J.H.B.N.

Higham, April 29, 1652.

A Perplexing Question:

OR, A doubtful Case of CONSCIENCE, Of a certain Preacher of the GOSPEL. OUR Religion is our Faith; Faith either saves or condemns; we ought to be able, therefore, to understand and prove our Faith justly.

But now there arises a great doubt to me, and other simpler Christians, whether it is possible for us to have an infallible certainty of our Faith from the holy Scriptures and, consequently, to rely on and trust in this faith as an unshaken foundation?

The reason for our doubt is this: Both Papists and Calvinists, holding contrary opinions, maintain and prove from the holy Scriptures (as they believe) the opposite of what Lutherans hold. They earnestly assert that the Lutheran Religion is condemned in the Scriptures, and theirs is confirmed. No one can deny that this is clear evidence of the obscurity of the holy Scriptures. If there are two equally learned Physicians, both with the same intention of curing the sick, desiring to cure the disease, and if these Physicians should extract from one and the same Book, one concluding that a Fever is cured with wine, and the other that wine is as harmful as poison to those with a Fever, how, I ask, can we determine which of these two to side with? One can only conclude that the remedy for that disease is ambiguously expressed in that Book.

Some may object that the Sects do not follow the Scriptures alone, but they add their traditions; the Calvinists include their reason, and the Anabaptists their dreams.

I answer: 1. They do so in those matters not clearly taught in the holy Scriptures. However, in their disputes with Lutherans, they do not proceed in this way. They argue against Lutheran Tenets using Scriptures they believe confirm their own, and they strive to defend their own with the help of the Scriptures, which Lutherans condemn using Scriptures. Moreover, there are some (specifically the Anabaptists) who emphasize the literal interpretation of the Scriptures more than the rest. The Calvinists employ their reason and draw arguments from the Scriptures, which Lutherans also do, never allowing any of their arguments to contradict the Scriptures.

2. If it is objected to them that they knowingly and against their consciences condemn Lutheran Tenets and confirm their own, they will answer that this would be a grievous sin, and people should not assume that they would falsify and corrupt the Letters and Commands of their Lord to His sons and subjects, let alone maliciously lead themselves and others into the peril of their salvation. To tell the truth, it is unlikely that so many hundreds of thousands of men would reach such a level of malice, even if one were to suggest it, especially since they are willing to confirm their honest intentions with an Oath. Therefore, unless they are proven to be maliciously and knowingly erring, we would unjustly slander them.

3. It may be objected, perhaps they are influenced by preconceived opinions. I reply, how so? You might say that they are raised from birth with their own religion, forsaking the Bible and other books. I respond, this is true for those in Popery, but not for Calvinists and others who emphasize the Bible more than we do. They have greater exposure to other religions. Don't the children of Lutherans also become accustomed to their religion from childhood? Do they learn a Popish or Calvinistic catechism

before they learn a Lutheran one? Isn't the religion to which they become accustomed their own? How would a child or a layperson, who hasn't been taught any religion, distinguish between Lutheranism and Calvinism? Wouldn't they adopt the religion that is presented to them first? Besides, no preconceived opinion is so firmly entrenched that it won't yield to clear demonstrations, as acknowledged by everyone. Thus, we won't be able to refute any religion solely on the basis of preconceived opinions.

What more can I say? Do other religions lack secular learning? Among them, you find sufficiently learned and intelligent individuals, and often they have much better and more suitable means for advancing learning than Lutherans do. This is particularly true for the Papists, who select the brightest minds and engage them almost from birth to adulthood in nothing but study, meditation, and continuous exercises. They abundantly provide them with everything that aids or appears to aid their progress and advancement. They diligently remove any hindrance to their pursuit. They study the Scriptures and the writings of the Church Fathers night and day, leaving no stone unturned in understanding the foundation of their own religion and in comprehending the errors of others. Moreover, the method and manner of learning, comparing Scriptures, interpreting in accordance with the rule of faith (the "regula fidei"), refraining from imposing personal interpretations on the Scriptures, and other such rules, cannot be unknown to them.

Objection: But perhaps God has not granted them His Spirit and grace.

I reply: God, when sought and implored through prayers, does not withhold His grace and the Spirit of Truth from anyone. People of

other religions seek from God the enlightenment of their minds and guidance in the right path no less fervently than we do, and perhaps even more so, as far as we can discern. We must not assume that they request these blessings insincerely and deceitfully, mocking God. Therefore, it should be accepted that the Spirit is present where the fruits of the Spirit are evident, and no one should boast above others in this regard. Furthermore, the ability to understand the Scriptures is a special gift of the Spirit, granted to others no less than to us. It is indeed true that only those with the Spirit who inspired the Scriptures truly understand them, and just as in worldly laws, no doctor's interpretation or judgment is valid until it is approved by the legislator. Yet, one who boasts of such approval by the Spirit is obligated to demonstrate it, unless they wish to be regarded as an ordinary scholar.

Objection: If someone were to object that the Scriptures themselves testify to their own clarity, as in "Thy Word is a Lamp to my feet," and "you have a more sure Word," I respond: All of God's Commands are His Word, and so are all His Works that exist through His Word. It is universally acknowledged that God communicates His Word through Nature, Creation, Signs, Wonders, and in countless other ways. Additionally, the Scriptures themselves testify that many things neither are nor can be written. Therefore, the term "Word of His Voice" is understood in various ways in the Scriptures. Consequently, not everything referred to as God's Word necessarily pertains to the Scriptures. Furthermore, it should be noted that at that time, many parts of Scripture had not yet been written. Therefore, the evidence clearly proves that this is not referring to the entire content and text of the Scripture. For instance, the symbolic aspects of the prophecies in the Book of Revelation, as well as countless other details concerning the fulfillment of those prophecies, were hidden even from the Prophets themselves and the

Fathers, much less from others, and they remain hidden. Christ Himself speaks in parables so that people may hear with their ears and not understand. The Scripture itself, in numerous places, attests to the fact that the Word of God is secret, obscure, hidden, and revealed only to the Spirit or to the Godly, to whom God discloses it. Thus, in the Scriptures, there are more testimonies to their obscurity than to their clarity. However, this does not imply that the Scripture should be rejected or disregarded. Even before the Law was given and written, people possessed a certain degree of understanding through which they might have discovered the truth more clearly than we can today, if they had been willing. While a great light has risen in the New Testament, we should not assume that there was utter darkness in the Old Testament. From this, we can infer that God did not find it necessary to reveal all things to us. Although it may not be necessary to know all things, there could still be a certain infallible method of interpretation that can help us resolve the majority of essential controversies. If we put this method to the test, it may shed a clear light and bring about genuine harmony even in those Scriptures that many consider obscure. Moreover, there might be several other ways to illuminate what is unclear, though this method alone may not be sufficient. Other agreements arising from the same Spirit and Word may be admitted and used, sometimes even when there is no direct proof.

I am not swayed by the objection that it is sufficient for Lutherans to be assured of the truth of Lutheranism, even if others cannot see or believe it. For that is not my concern. My inquiry is how a person can be certain not of their own opinion but of the truth itself. If I believe and assert that something is true, it remains my opinion, but it does not become the truth, as truth and opinion share no commonality. A steadfast conviction does not alter the essence of the matter about which one is convinced. Otherwise, melancholic individuals, whose

opinions are unwavering, could perform miracles and make all their conceptions intrinsic truths. True knowledge must be demonstrable, not just to me or some people, but to everyone, gaining agreement from anyone, just as two plus three equals five. A matter that is disputed, with some understanding it one way and others another, can never make me certain and free from doubt regarding whether I possess the truth or not. A person who knows nothing other than what they assert may be excused from malice and hypocrisy. However, the argument, "I and my followers are certain of this thing, therefore it is true," is an unreasonable argument.

Finally, if we base our religion solely on the Scripture, the educated will have a significant advantage over the uneducated in matters of faith and religion, and they will be more indebted to God. Consequently, religion will tend to favour and adhere to those with higher intelligence. Furthermore, many individuals possess a deep understanding of the Scripture or are more inventive and imaginative than others. Therefore, if someone could dispute and reason their way to refuting a particular thesis, effectively taking away another person's belief and emerging as the victor, they would also take away that person's religion. The defeated individual would then be compelled either to adopt the victor's religion or, against their conscience, maintain their own.

Nor will that answer suffice: "Our divines and pastors can answer you, though I cannot." For in that case, I would believe based on another person's assertion, but faith must be my own, not someone else's, or else salvation would also belong to another. If religion is the service of God, it is necessary that I understand the service I must render to my Lord. Since God will not accept another person's service as my own, and cannot be served by a substitute, we must conclude that controversies are to be left to learned individuals and

are not absolutely necessary. It might be argued in response, "Then religion must also be left to the learned, for controversies are an integral part of our religion. Without considering them, there is no distinction between Papists and Protestants; as much as a person knows about controversies, that's how much they know about their own religion." The state of a person's salvation corresponds to their religion and faith, and there is only one salvation and one faith. But if controversies are the domain of the learned only, why have laypeople endured so much suffering, hardship, and even death for the sake of these controversies?

I am aware that a Calvinist doctor, Doctor Bergius, a preacher in Bremen, asserts in his recently published sermons that controversies are not strictly necessary for salvation. He claims that the Scripture is plain and clear in matters necessary for salvation and that there has never been any fundamental contradiction between the various religions. This perspective appears to be the aim of the Leipzig Colloquy between Lutherans and Calvinists.

I am persuaded that this is indeed true. If the Holy Spirit had deemed these controversial questions necessary for salvation, it would have clearly and plainly presented them in the holy Scripture, especially since those epistles were sent to simple laypeople. Moreover, it does not seem plausible that so many articles of faith were drawn from the Scriptures as are now found in catechisms, theological treatises, and compendia written by divines. To date, no fixed number of articles has been determined, as some divines have proposed more, while others have proposed fewer. Additionally, certain religious denominations have either added or omitted entire articles over time. After enduring numerous trials and suffering for the defense of certain articles, some have adopted a more moderate approach, deeming what was previously considered damnable to be

tolerable and indifferent. Nonetheless, there are so many articles that one may reasonably question their absolute necessity. This appears to be the best solution to untangle and calm perplexed, uncertain, and troubled consciences.

But could thousands of divines from previous ages have been ignorant of this? Have wars not been waged for this cause? Could those learned individuals allow thousands of people to rush headlong, both in actions and sufferings, into the peril of body and soul for the sake of religion, when it is possible for a person to be saved without engaging in religious controversies? However, if this is indeed God's command, under the threat of temporal and eternal punishment, to fight for these controversies, how can we excuse the compromised agreements concerning faith, religion, and the worship of God? A servant may not withhold anything due to their master.

Let this matter be considered, as it is so perplexing and leads me and many others to turmoil of mind. For these perplexities of conscience, it is undeniable that a remedy should be sought from those who share Christian sympathy. Such a remedy could be found if all the divines from the various sides that have separated from Popery would be willing to provide a wise, gentle, and well-grounded written response, free from partiality, bias, or passion.

The Doubting Conscience Resolved.

In Answer to a (pretended) Perplexing Question.

Consideration.

It is an old saying that *Universus Mundus exercet histrioniam*, but I think it has never been more evident in any age than in this. There was a time when the Devil played his part in the form of a Dragon with seven heads and ten horns (Rev. 12.3, 7, 9). However, after the war in heaven between Michael and his Angels on one side, and the Dragon and his Angels on the other, the Dragon was cast out into the earth, and his Angels were cast out with him. But he continued to play the part of an old Serpent, deceiving the whole world. He is the *Adversarius* who, in open and ineffective persecutions, resorts to hidden methods of harm. It's not surprising that intelligent spirits are cunning and crafty. Nature has made him extremely astute, and his long practice in evil has honed his skills. Later, he found powerful means to harm the Church of God. He wielded the sword of the mouth (*Gladio oris*) just as he had previously wielded the sword (*ore Gladii*). He did this through another Beast who had two horns like a Lamb (Rev. 13.11, 13) but spoke like the Dragon. This Beast initially used deceit, performing great wonders such as making fire come down from heaven in the sight of men and deceiving the inhabitants of the earth with his miracles. This is the Man of Sin mentioned by St. Paul, whose coming was marked by Satan's effective power, with signs and lying wonders, and every form of unrighteous deception (2 Thes. 2.9, 10). He eventually acquired as many heads on his body and horns on his head as the Dragon had, and he also found a mistress like himself, the Whore of Babylon, whom John saw drunk with the blood of the Saints and Martyrs of Jesus (Rev. 17.6). This is evident in the massacres and barbarous acts committed against the Waldenses, who were the first to proclaim to the world that Rome was the Whore of Babylon and the Pope was Antichrist. In recent days, the Lord has exposed that Man of Sin to the breath of His mouth and broken off many horns from the Beast, provoking those

generations steeped in Antichristianism to a high degree (Rev. 12). The Devil undoubtedly has greater wrath now than ever because he knows his time is short. In recent years, his chief agents, the Jesuits, have not hesitated to express despair about prevailing in their cause through disputation, as evident in Weston's preface to his book *De triplici hominis statu*: "The Gordian knot of Controversies in Religion must be cut asunder by some Alexander's sword." Apparently, this sect was aware of certain plans to raise such meteors, which eventually erupted into the storms that have since engulfed all of Germany, if not all of Western Christendom. I have read a discourse written by someone who was formerly the Pope's secretary, revealing the practices of those times and describing a council for propagating Religion instituted by Pope Clement VIII, a hypocritical Pope who concealed the bloody and barbarous intentions of his heart. Some say that despite his hypocritical facade, he was as impure as he was cruel. Now that these schemes, which they worked on for many years, have come to light, it's quite astonishing that they persist in their speculative learning, which is of the basest nature and resembles more a charm than a rational remedy for curing Error. I cannot help but suspect that some vile Jesuit has a hand in this argument, styling himself a preacher of the Gospel. While he may hold the Pope as the judge of controversies, I presume that when he preaches, he does not take his text from the Pope's canons but from the Word of God. We know there are Dutch Jesuits as well as Spanish Jesuits, and I have heard that during the height of the Arminian disputes in the Netherlands, some Jesuits infiltrated the ranks and preached in their congregations to promote the Arminian cause, disguising themselves as their own ministers.

This Preacher of the Gospel shapes his discourse as he pleases, calling it a Perplexing Question or a Doubtful Case of Conscience, whereas it contains nothing but a threadbare and old worn-out

Argument. He was ashamed to say that it concerns the Scripture, lest the conscience of every sober Christian should rise against it. Therefore, he avoids that and shapes it to revolve around the foundation of the Religion of the Protestants and others who have separated from the Pope. Now, this foundation is nothing other than the Scripture of the Prophets and Apostles, which Saint Paul calls the foundation upon which the Church is built. And the Perplexing Question and Doubtful Case of Conscience come down to this: Whether the Scripture or the Pope is the foundation upon which the Church is built? I don't quite understand what he means by distinguishing those who have separated from the Pope into Protestants and others. For no one separates from the Pope without reason, mainly due to the corruptions found in the Church of Rome in the form of Error, Heresy, Superstition, Idolatry, and their cruel disposition towards those who oppose their abominations. Protestants derive their name from their protestation against these practices.

As for the Question, "Is any Christian entirely and infallibly certain of his Faith and Religion through the holy Scriptures and can safely rely on it against all temptations and objections?" Is this the Perplexing Question? Is this the Doubtful Case of Conscience? It has been over 1600 years since Christ's Resurrection and the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost. Has anyone ever questioned this in the Church of God until the last hundred years when such a great and widespread separation occurred, not from the Church of God but from communion with the Church of Rome? Following Christ's example in countering Satan in a manner suitable for every simple Christian, not revealing the Devil's adulteration of the Text (Psal. 91), where the Devil omitted the last clause "in all thy ways" but responded (Mat. 4), "It is written, 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.'" Christ rebuked the

Sadducees for not knowing the Scriptures and the power of God, attributing their error to their ignorance. He also demonstrated that there was little need for someone to rise from the dead to warn people of the place of torment if they had Moses and the Prophets. He argued that those who would not believe Moses and the Prophets would not believe even if a man were to rise from the dead (Luk. 16). He urged the Jews to search the Scriptures (Joh. 5) and justified their belief that the Scriptures were sufficient to guide them to eternal life. Later, the Apostles subjected their Doctrine to examination by the Word of God. The Bereans were commended for this (Act. 7), and it was affirmed that the Scriptures were able to make us wise unto salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 3.15). The ancient Fathers called for the resolution of Controversies to be sought from the Word of God, and Constantine at the Council of Nice urged all the assembled Bishops to proceed accordingly. Both Chrysostom and Augustine professed that all things necessary for salvation were clearly laid out in Scripture. Even some more intelligent Papists have confessed that the final resolution of our faith should be based on the Word of God. The contradictory nature of the Popish Tenet in proving the true Church by the Scriptures and the Scriptures by the Church was exposed by Divines. After all this, I must say that a Preacher of the Gospel being brought forward to propose such a Question as "Can any Christian be certain of his faith by the holy Scriptures?" and not only proposing it but calling it a Perplexed Question and a Doubtful Case of Conscience, is such a shameless act that, in my opinion, it is fitting only for someone with an audacious forehead who cannot feel shame.

Yet I consider the condition of these present times in Germany, where the Antichristian Congregations have confederated themselves and taken counsel against God's Secretaries. Just as Pharaoh

pursued the Israelites thinking to overtake them, and that their desires would be satisfied upon them, these adversaries have not only thought so but done so. It is not impossible that some weak Preacher of the Gospel may fall into their hands and be so charmed with fears or hopes, or both, as to be drawn into their trap and brought to do them this service, namely, proposing such a Question and naming it in this manner: For these times are the very hour and power of darkness, and Satan is not yet bound, although we trust his binding is not far off. It is not strange that men should be given over to believe lies and become, in a way, Jesuits' Proctors, calling upon men to relieve a scrupulous and perplexed conscience, and entreating all Christians (especially the Calvinist Divines and Preachers) with all due respect to provide a Solution to this proposed Question, and this in Dutch, whereas I had thought that this Question had neither existence, life, nor motion in any other part of the Christian world but only in our England. Well, let us consider what makes the perplexity of this Question.

Discussion: Our Religion is our Faith; Faith either saves or condemns; justly ought we therefore to be able to understand and prove our Faith.

Consideration: The first proposition, that our Religion is our Faith, is introduced without a purpose. The Argument here used stands well enough without it, as it is. The faith that saves is an act in man, but that which is to be proven is no act in man, but the object of that act, the thing believed. What conscience the Author of this discourse had, I do not know, but I doubt he will appear to have little wit.

Discussion: But now there arises a great doubt to me and others of the simpler sort of Christians, whether it is possible for us to have an infallible certainty of our Faith from the holy Scriptures, and

consequently to rely and trust in this faith as an unshaken foundation.

Consideration: Let my Faith be never so certain, and my Repentance and good works never so sincere, I trust in neither the one nor the other. Christ is the Rock and foundation upon which God's Church is built. We are built upon Him by the knowledge of Christ and faith in Christ alone. In Him alone I trust, both for keeping me in this knowledge and faith of Christ and for bringing me thereby unto salvation. As Paul says, 1 Cor. 1:20, "I know whom I have trusted, and I know that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him." And 1 Cor. 1:30, "God has made him unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption."

Whoever doubts whether it is possible to have any certainty of faith from the holy Scriptures, I ask them whether they doubt the possibility of a man having any certain faith at all. If they doubt whether this is possible, it would be more appropriate to propose this question first and proceed to inquire about how this certainty may be attained afterward. If they do not doubt that it is possible, then let them show us how or by what means they are assured of this, whether by natural reason, the word of the Pope, or the word of an Angel. Indeed, if the Question were presented fairly and distinctly, we would soon see that there is little reason to call it a Perplexed Question or a Doubtful case of Conscience, as these terms lack learning and judgment. Any perplexity in this argument is not in the Question itself; if there is any, it is solely the fault of the one proposing it in a perplexing manner, making its meaning difficult to unravel. The perplexity arises from discovering the truth in it, especially when the reasons on both sides are of equal weight, hindering the clear and convincing evidence from emerging.

Now, as for a case of Conscience, that is a very unrelated notion and poorly applied in this context. Cases of Conscience concern what one should do in a particular situation. However, this question pertains to the possibility of assurance, specifically whether we can have certain faith through the holy Scriptures. Let us proceed with distinction.

1. Let us inquire whether a man can have any certain faith at all. I answer:
2. Yes, many have had it, as defined by Saint Paul in Hebrews 11 as "the evidence of things not seen, the ground of things hoped for." In this chapter, the Apostle lists many who had such faith. Presumably, the one proposing this question, if they are a Christian, does not doubt this. Abraham, the Father of the faithful, was undoubtedly such a believer, as described in Romans 4:18-20. He believed against hope, did not weaken in faith, and did not stagger at the promise of God through unbelief. He was strong in faith and gave glory to God. All true children of Abraham possess a similar faith.
3. Let us distinguish the concept of "possibility" in relation to the power of Nature and the power of God. According to this distinction, I answer that it is utterly impossible to believe this by the power of Nature. As mentioned in Matthew 16, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." In 1 Corinthians 2:14, we read that the natural man cannot perceive the things of God. Isaiah 53:1 questions, "Who hath believed our report? And to whom hath the arm of God been revealed?" In John 12:39, it states that some could not believe because God had blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts. Romans 8:8 confirms that those in the flesh cannot

please God, and faith, which pleases God, cannot be possessed by them. However, it is true that, by the power of God, a man may believe, as Acts 18:27 mentions, "They believed through grace," and Philippians 1:29 adds, "To you it is given not only to believe in him, but to suffer for him." Belief and finding mercy at God's hands are described in Romans 11:30.

Now, if we agree that faith can be obtained with any degree of certainty, then what sober Christian can doubt that if we question the means by which we may have it, it can be obtained by the holy Scriptures as well as by any other means, if not better? Considering that faith is essentially the assent to something based on the authority of the speaker, and if the speaker is human, it is merely human faith; but if the speaker is God, that alone makes it divine faith. We all acknowledge that the holy Scripture is the Word of God, so if faith can be obtained through any word, regardless of the degree of certainty, it can certainly be obtained through the Word of God. This is how divine faith can be obtained, not through the word of a creature, whether man or Angel. If someone questions whether this Author, due to a confused mind, has not yet been able to express his true meaning clearly, we should examine the content of the Discourse itself to see if it presents a better state of the Question than what we have seen so far. In the end, I believe the Question will come down to this:

Whether it is possible for us, by the holy Scripture, to have any certain assurance of its meaning.

Disc. The reason for our doubting is this: Both Papists and Calvinists, holding contrary opinions, maintain and prove by the holy Scriptures (as they suppose) the opposite of what Lutherans hold. They seriously affirm that, in the Scriptures, Lutheran Religion is

condemned, and theirs is confirmed. No one can deny that this is clear evidence of the obscurity of the holy Scriptures. If there are two Physicians of equal learning, both equally intent on curing the sick, that is, equally desirous of curing the disease, and if these Physicians should gather from one and the same Book, one concluding that a Fever is cured with wine, and the other that wine is as harmful as poison to those with a Fever, how shall we know which of these two to trust? One can only conclude that the remedy for that disease is obscurely expressed in that Book.

Consid. The essence of all this is that the Scripture is obscure. What the Author aims to infer from this is that it is impossible to be sure of its meaning. Thus, the Perplexed Question and Doubtful case of Conscience ultimately come down to this in plain terms: Is it possible for a person to be sure of the meaning of Scripture? The Author maintains the negative and proves it because the Scripture is obscure. He argues that the obscurity of Scripture is proven by the fact that people differ in its interpretation. Now, I will examine this step by step. Firstly, I must observe the evasive nature of this Author and the clear evidence of his biased intentions. It appears that he does not seek the truth but rather tries to manipulate it. His argument to prove that Scripture is obscure rests on the fact that Divines differ in their interpretation of it. Yet he chooses to focus on Papists and Calvinists joining together in interpreting Scripture contrary to the Lutherans. Couldn't he have just as easily cited Papists and Lutherans agreeing in the interpretation of Scripture against Calvinists? Or Lutherans and Calvinists joining together in interpretation against Papists? Certainly, he could have, for it is an indefinite proposition, and the matter is evidently contingent. An indefinite proposition in a contingent matter is considered in Schools to have no greater force than that of a particular proposition. In other words, it simply means that they differ from each other in the

interpretation of some Scriptures. This can very well be true, not only of Papists differing from Protestants but also Papists differing from Papists, such as Maldonado from Jansemus, and Protestants differing from Protestants, not only Lutherans from Calvinists but one Lutheran from another, and one Calvinist from another in the interpretation of some passages of Scripture. Even Fathers of the Church differ from each other in this manner. Modern Divines, both Papists and Protestants, take the liberty of dissenting from all the Ancients in interpreting some passages of Scripture. Maldonado, for instance, interprets Matthew 5, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," in a way different from all the Ancients, as he confesses. Cardinal Cajetan, when he began writing commentaries on the Scriptures due to his debate with Martin Luther, who insisted on Scripture alone, stated that if a new interpretation arose that was consistent with the text and not discordant with Church doctrine, even if it differed from the consensus of the holy Doctors, it should be received with fairness. When Augustine noted the multiplicity of Scripture translations, he was not offended but professed that it brought more benefit than harm to the Church. Why can't the same apply to different interpretations? It is easier to judge which one is correct, or by refuting them all, to discover the true interpretation, than to find the correct meaning right away.

2. Observe the absurd and malicious conduct of this Author. 1. He shapes different religions based on different interpretations of Scriptures, whereas I have shown that the force of the proposition is only specific, namely, that they differ in the interpretation of some passages of Scripture. This difference can be found, and has always existed to a greater or lesser extent, even among those of the same religion. Among the Ancients, different interpretations of Scripture were found, yet no Christian accuses them of differing in religion. He might as well

claim that Papists among themselves, Lutherans among themselves, and Calvinists among themselves belong to different religions.

3. We acknowledge differing opinions between Lutherans and Calvinists, just as there are different opinions among Lutherans themselves and among Calvinists themselves. However, we categorically deny that they represent different religions. We consider Lutherans to be true churches that agree with us on fundamental points of faith and are free from idolatry. Although they have images in their churches, which we find concerning, they do not worship them. Despite their belief in the real presence in the sacrament, they do not adore it.

So, while we may think that some of their opinions contradict Scripture, and they may hold similar views about some of ours, neither we nor they claim that our religion is contrary to Scripture, let alone condemned by it.

Now, let's address the main objective of this Author's discourse, which is to prove that the Scriptures are obscure and, consequently, that we cannot be sure of their true meaning. Our response is as follows:

1. We deny the consequence, which is this: Because Divines differ in the interpretation of Scripture, therefore Scripture is obscure.

We demonstrate the weakness, untruth, and fallacy of this argument.

1. It is weak; at most, it suggests that Scripture is obscure only in some places. As I have shown, the difference in interpretation is limited to some passages, and the proposition's strength is no greater than that of a particular statement.

2. It is absurd; using the same reasoning, I could prove that Scripture is clear. Here is the argument: Scripture is clear in its interpretation when individuals of different opinions and religions agree on it. Individuals with different opinions and religions do agree on the interpretation of divine Scripture; therefore, divine Scripture is clear. In fact, we find that we agree on the interpretation of not just some but many passages of holy Scripture. It is quite absurd for a disputant to argue in such a way that his argument can be turned against him with equal or even greater force. When individuals with differing opinions interpret Scripture differently, it may be due to their own attachment to their opinions, which makes Scripture appear to support their views. However, when they concur on Scripture's interpretation, despite other differences, this suggests that Scripture is clear enough. We know that Bellarmine, for instance, would reject an opinion or interpretation of Scripture simply because it is associated with Calvin, seeking to differ from those he despises without just cause and bending Scripture to suit his agenda.
3. Finally, the consequence is as false as it is weak and absurd. The cause of this difference may lie in the darkness of the understanding of those who attempt to interpret it, rather than in the darkness of Scripture itself. Whether we consider the Law or the Gospel, both are described as light by the Spirit of God. David says, "Your law is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119). Our Saviour speaks of the Gospel, saying, "Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness rather than light" (John 3). Their condemnation will be all the greater.

As for the example given to support the conclusion, about two Physicians:

1. The specific example provided is quite inappropriate and entirely fictitious.
 2. However, I do not doubt that Galen and Hippocrates may have allowed for different interpretations in various places. Therefore, I respond as follows:
 3. Such differences in interpretation may not necessarily result from the obscurity of the text but could be due to the fault of the interpreter.
 4. It is highly inappropriate to compare the Word of God with the word of Man. Man can contradict himself, but God cannot. Man may forget what he said at one time, but God cannot.
 5. There is a vast distinction between human matters and divine matters. While natural reason and instruction may be sufficient for a person to understand another person's writing, only supernatural illumination is sufficient for someone to discern the things of God. I admit that some discerning readers might find a flaw in this argument, but I believe that upon careful consideration, such an attempt will prove futile. Only a Socinian, who denies the existence of infused faith and only acknowledges acquired faith, a natural faith, might oppose this argument. Mr. Chillingworth appears to have shrewd suspicions in that direction, as if he acknowledges no faith other than natural faith.
2. But let it be granted that the Scripture is obscure.
 3. Consider the strength of this proposition; it is merely indefinite, and the subject matter is evidently contingent. Without a doubt, it was entirely at God's discretion to speak in whatever manner He saw fit. Consequently, the force of this proposition is

equivalent to that of a particular proposition, in other words, it implies that in certain places, the Scripture is obscure. In truth, as Gregory of old professed, Holy Scripture is like a river ford where a lamb may wade and an elephant may swim. Similarly, before him, Saint Paul tells us that the Scripture provides both milk for infants and strong meat for adults. There is sufficient, and it is expressed clearly enough to satisfy the hungry. However, it is also sufficient, and deliberately obscure in certain parts, particularly in prophecies about future times.

The first promise of the Covenant of Grace was, "The seed of the woman shall break the Serpent's head." In this general notion, there are two concealed mysteries. The first is the mystery of Christ's Person, indicated by "the seed of the woman," which implies more, much more than just a simple human seed. The second is the mystery of His Office, hinted at merely in the general idea of "breaking the Serpent's head." In the time of grace, we know that this was accomplished by Christ's death for our sins and His resurrection for our justification. However, if Satan had known this, as we do now, it is hardly credible that he would have persuaded Judas to betray Jesus to the high priests. We know that on the Cross, Christ spoiled Principalities and Powers, making a public spectacle of them and triumphing over them. Undoubtedly, the day of Christ's Resurrection was a day of extreme confusion for the Devil and all his agents of darkness. Thus, the Jews, had they known the mystery of His Person, would not have crucified the Lord of glory, as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 2:8. However, this wisdom of God in a mystery was concealed from them (1 Corinthians 2:7), and because they neither recognized Him nor the words of the Prophets, they fulfilled the prophecies in condemning Him (Acts 13:27). If all that is necessary for salvation is clearly laid out in Holy Scripture, as both

Chrysostom, a Greek Father, and Augustine, a Latin Father, have affirmed, how are we worse off due to its obscurity?

2. But let's assume that everything in Scripture is obscure. Are there not degrees of obscurity? Among writers in all languages, some write more obscurely while others write more clearly. Among the Greeks, what is the difference between Chrysostom and Epiphanius in this regard? Among the Latins, what distinguishes Tertullian from Cyprian? Nevertheless, nobody doubts that even Tertullian can be understood, including by Cyprian, who used to call him "Give me the Master." Among School-Divines, Aquinas and Durand are perspicuous and clear, unlike Scot or Cajetan. Likewise, Alvares is lucid and clear, whereas Navarretus à Dominicanto toils in obscurity like someone struggling with the Gout. Whether he understood himself or not, I cannot say, but it's certain that he torments his reader. However, with sufficient effort and diligent study, the difficulty can be overcome, as I have experienced to some extent. Yet I don't believe that any knowledge from him is worth the same effort. Nowhere else, except perhaps in discussing the Divine Essence (Proverbs 14:16), have I encountered anything more perplexing. The Word of God has taught us that knowledge is easily attainable for those who earnestly seek it. "If you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God" (Proverbs 2:3-5), especially concerning everything necessary for salvation.

3. But even if it were exceedingly obscure throughout, is not God, the Author, capable of instructing us in His own meaning and making us certain of it? Has not our Saviour assured us that if

earthly fathers know how to give good things to their children, the heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? The holy Apostle teaches us this, saying, "As for you, the anointing you received from Him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as His anointing teaches you about all things..." (1 John 2:27). As a result, even Nider, a Papist, acknowledged in his "Consolatorium timoratae Conscientiae" that every child of God has the guidance of the Spirit to lead them into all truth necessary for salvation. Surely the truth of God's Word is infallible, as nothing false can be ascribed to Him.

Regarding certainty from the perspective of the knower:

1. God is capable of working to whatever extent He pleases.
2. Nevertheless, we are aware that in the best of us, the flesh lusts against the Spirit, which tends toward unbelief. However, the better part prevails.
3. As for doubt, it is more a matter of fiducia (trust) than fides (faith). Doubts can be overcome, and the best faith is one that conquers doubts and overcomes temptations.

Thus, I believe the discerning reader may observe the flawed condition of this discourse overall. Yet, we haven't mentioned Scripture much in comparison to other means of assurance. The author either cunningly or simply conceals these other means because he realizes that leaving Scripture to seek assurance elsewhere would ultimately appear to be no different than leaving the fountain of living water to dig broken cisterns that cannot hold water, as mentioned in Jeremiah 2. Consider, should we turn to the

voice of the Church? Consider that the voice of God is the voice of the Church and even more.

1. It is the voice of the Church, specifically, the voice of the best and purest Church, namely, the voice of the Prophetic and Apostolic Church. "For Deus loquitur per Prophetas & Apostolos." This is the Church into whose voice, in Durand's opinion, the final resolution of our faith should be made. Thus, it is more than just the voice of the Church, for holy men spoke "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21). Some might say that the question lies in the meaning of this voice.

I respond:

1. Isn't there as much question about the meaning of the voice of the Church as there is about the meaning of God's Word? Where does the Church speak more authoritatively than in general Councils? Consider the Council of Trent, for example. The Pope was unwilling to confirm it until Cardinal Bon Compagio, the Bishop of Befirice, urged him to do so on the condition that the Pope would issue an edict forbidding anyone to interpret it themselves and commanding them to seek interpretation only from him. Then, he said, "Let us alone to devise a convenient interpretation of it without prejudice to the advantages of the Court of Rome."
2. Furthermore, General Councils can err, as Augustine observed. Earlier councils have been corrected by later ones in some matters.
3. Such councils never attempted to write commentaries on Scripture, and even if they did, Cajetan confessed that an

interpretation may be given congruous to the text, yet different from the mainstream of doctors, and we should accept it.

4. Finally, no matter how I interpret Scripture in any argument, if I am unable to support it with convincing arguments to satisfy every rational conscience, then my proofs should be rejected. However, the manner in which one resists the presented evidence should be considered, as they will be held accountable for it on the day of Judgment, as our Saviour said in John 12:48: "He that refuseth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him, the word that I have spoken, it shall judge him at the last day."
5. It would be easy to provide a variety of testimonies, even from Papists, acknowledging that the final resolution of our faith should be based on the Word of God and that the true Church and its authority are known only through the Word of God.
6. Or will they say that the Pope is the one to resolve the meaning of Scripture? To this, I answer:
7. I don't care who interprets Scripture for me, as long as they truly act as interpreters and demonstrate that their interpretation is indeed the meaning of Scripture.
8. If I fail to do so, I am willing to suffer the loss of that argument, whatever it may be.
9. It has been a rare occurrence for Popes to involve themselves in interpreting Scripture.
10. It is well known that Pope Liberius of Rome subscribed to Arianism; Pope Honorius was a Monothelite; Pope John the

22nd denied that the souls of men live after separation from the body, a belief similar to that of modern-day Socinians. This belief was declared heretical by the sound of a trumpet in Paris.

11. Or should the rule for interpreting Scripture be its congruity with natural reason, as the Socinians claim? This is highly disgraceful and unreasonable, considering:
12. Our natural reason is greatly corrupted by the sin of Adam. "The things of God seem foolishness to the natural man" (1 Corinthians 2:14). Naturally, we are all in darkness.
13. In the state of innocence, do we believe that Adam, through natural reason alone, could have discovered or justified the Trinity of Persons within the Unity of the Deity? We say that God can be known through the light of Nature "Quod attinet ad Unitatem naturae," but not "Quod attinet ad Trinitatem Personarum." God has placed eternity in man's heart (as Solomon said), yet he cannot comprehend the works that God has done from beginning to end (Ecclesiastes 3). If he cannot comprehend God's works, is he capable of understanding God's nature himself? We know that God is said to dwell in a dark cloud.

Discussion:

Some may object that the sects do not follow the Scriptures alone; they add traditions for the Papists, reasons for the Calvinists, and dreams for the Anabaptists.

Response:

They do so in matters that are not clearly taught in the holy Scriptures. However, in the controversies between them and the Lutherans, they do not proceed in this way. They fight against Lutheran tenets using Scriptures that confirm their own beliefs. They use the Scriptures to search for and defend their positions, which the Lutherans condemn using Scriptures. Furthermore, some, such as the Anabaptists, emphasize the literal interpretation of Scriptures even more than the rest. Calvinists use reason to draw arguments from the Scriptures, just as Lutherans do. They never allow their reasoning to contradict the Scriptures.

Consideration:

The author attempts to shape his readers' perception at the outset, making them acknowledge the unassailable nature of his single argument, which I have shown to be weak, ridiculous, and false. However, we maintain our stance, professing to the world that the Scriptures alone, being the Word of God, are the rule of our faith and not the word of man. Papists add traditions, which they consider the unwritten Word of God, but we reject anything as a rule of our faith except the written Word of God.

It is incorrect to say that Calvinists add their reason; rather, they consider it a natural part of being rational creatures. We do not make our reason a rule of faith added to God's Word, but it is the light that God has given us to search the meaning of His Word, discover it through study and observation, and share it with others. We use reason to convict others of the truth based on the text. Does the author's reason go to sleep when he reads and contemplates the Word of God? If it does, he will be no better than a drowsy student, and there is no reason why such a student should not be enamored with dreams, just like the Anabaptists.

1. In his response, he acts absurdly and ridiculously. Firstly, he wrongly assumes that the controversies among Protestant divines concern matters clearly taught in Scripture and that they agree on things not clearly addressed in Scripture but differ only in those things that are clearly laid out.
2. He erroneously suggests that Calvinists do not use reason in controversies with Lutherans but only in other matters. This is untrue and absurd because controversies necessarily involve the use of reason both to support one's own position and to refute the opposing position. Lutherans employ reason in the same way.

The author's claim that Anabaptists emphasise the literal sense of Scripture more than others is false. Both Calvinists and Lutherans rely on the literal sense of Scripture, and they do not depend on dreams, as previously claimed by the author. Protestants depend solely on Scripture, interpreted according to the literal sense, except when a passage is explained by an apostle, making it literal.

2. The author confuses the literal sense with the proper sense of words. We acknowledge that the literal sense encompasses the metaphorical sense, but it is opposed only to the mystical sense. If we interpret a passage metaphorically while our opponents take it in a literal sense, we must prove our interpretation and disprove theirs with convincing arguments. We aim to make our faith evident to all consciences, and if our opponents can do the same, we are willing to abandon our beliefs and adopt theirs.
3. The author speaks without precision when suggesting that Calvinists allow anyone to reason against the Scriptures. To use reason to clarify the meaning of Scripture is not to reason

against it but to reason for it, especially when reason is employed to interpret Scripture.

Discussion:

Objector 2: If it is objected that Calvinists willingly and against their consciences condemn Lutheran tenets and confirm their own, they will respond that it would be a grievous sin, and they should not presume to falsify or corrupt their Lord's letters and commands to His sons and subjects. They argue that it is unlikely that so many hundreds of thousands of people would act maliciously, especially since they confirm their honest intentions with an oath. Without convicting them of malicious willful error, it would be unfair to slander them.

Consideration:

There doesn't seem to be a valid reason to pass such a censure on Calvinists more than Lutherans. In fact, those who are orthodox should more fairly pass such censures on those who are not. Passing such censures on those who are in the right is unjust, and charity should prevent us from making rash judgments about those who are in the wrong. The author's suggestion that a person's oath is required to clear them of going against their conscience in maintaining certain beliefs is questionable. Saying something against one's conscience is akin to swearing to it. These ideas are unproductive and frustrating, taking up precious time that could be better spent on worthier subjects.

Objector 3: It may be objected that Calvinists may have preconceived opinions.

Response:

The author answers by asking how this is possible. If someone says that Calvinists are accustomed to their religion from childhood and forsake the Bible and other books, the author argues that this may be true for Papists but not for Calvinists and others who emphasize the Bible even more than we do. Those who urge the Bible have more freedom to explore other religions. Do Lutheran children not also grow up accustomed to their religion? Do they learn a Popish or Calvinistic catechism before a Lutheran one? A person's religion is often the one they are first exposed to. Besides, no preconceived opinion is so deeply rooted that it cannot yield to clear demonstrations, as acknowledged by all. Therefore, objecting to any religion based on preconceived opinions is futile.

The author further argues that other religions do not lack civil learning. They have learned and intelligent individuals among them, often with better means to advance learning than Lutherans. Papists, in particular, choose the best minds and dedicate them from an early age to study, meditation, and exercises related to their religion. They provide abundant resources to support their intellectual development and remove hindrances. They study the Scriptures and the Fathers diligently, investing time and effort into understanding their own religion and the errors of others. Their methods and manners of learning, comparing scriptures, interpreting them according to the rule of faith, and bringing sense to the scriptures are well-known and not foreign to them.

Consideration:

Who among us is not influenced by preconceived opinions? We are often raised in the religion of our parents, which naturally leads us to follow it until God, through His Spirit of Regeneration, opens our eyes to understand His power and wisdom within it. Without this

spiritual awakening, even in our zealous profession of faith, based on our upbringing and family background, we may prove to be hypocrites and factional rather than truly conscientious in our belief. However, it is possible to maintain our faith with a strong foundation of learning, as far as a natural person is capable.

Even when individuals are brought up in a false way and exhibit as much zeal and factionalism as Saul, who persecuted the Church, the Lord can meet them in their journey, confound them, and strike them with natural blindness to remind them of their spiritual blindness. Later, He can open their eyes and lead them out of darkness into light, transforming them into not only professors but also preachers of the Gospel, as in the case of the great Doctor of the Gentiles, Paul.

Peter wrote to the Jews, stating that they were redeemed from their vain conduct inherited from the traditions of their fathers. This truth extends to both Jews and Gentiles, as Jeremiah prophesied, stating that the Gentiles would come to recognize the falsehoods inherited from their forefathers. Isaiah also conveyed how God was sought by those who did not ask and found by those who did not seek Him, emphasizing how a nation not initially called by His name would come to Him.

In the early days, the Apostles and Evangelists initially refrained from preaching to the Gentiles, and Peter was questioned for preaching to them. However, as they preached the Word to the Jews, some men from Cyprus and Cyrene went to Antioch, speaking to the Grecians and preaching the Lord Jesus. The hand of the Lord was with them, and many turned from idols to serve the living God, rejecting the traditions inherited from their forefathers.

These people were not well-versed in the Bible or other Christian religious texts, similar to the Papists or perhaps even less so. The freedom to explore other religions exists for everyone. Christians can explore Judaism and Islam, and God may even lead some to embrace these faiths. Papists are free to investigate Protestantism, and some, like Vergerius, a Popish Bishop, did so with the intention of refuting it but were led to embrace Protestantism instead.

The author's statement that Calvinists and others emphasise the Bible more than "we do" suggests that the author may not identify as a Calvinist. Similarly, the author's question about Lutherans implies that they may not be Lutheran either. Therefore, it is unclear which religious tradition the author aligns with. Nonetheless, the author's approach, while seemingly serious, may require a more substantial response to address its superficial nature.

It is true that naturally, everyone is inclined to follow the religion they received from their fathers. However, without divine illumination, even if someone is on the right path, they may not have a comforting understanding of it. Through divine illumination, individuals like Saul, who was a persecutor, can become preachers, and the Gentiles can have their eyes opened, transitioning from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. Israel, however, has remained in spiritual blindness for 1600 years, which is a significant duration. It is absurd to claim that we will never be able to refute any religion due to the presence of preconceived opinions. This objection can apply to those on the right path as well as those on the wrong one. It is possible for people to embrace the true way in a wrong manner, as not everyone who is of Israel truly belongs to Israel, as stated in Romans 9. God sometimes threatens to visit the circumcised with the same judgment as the uncircumcised. The

reason for God allowing the Christian world to believe in illusions and lies was because they did not receive the love of the truth.

Regarding civil learning, there was undoubtedly an abundance of civil and natural knowledge among the Gentiles. However, their worldly wisdom led them to regard the Cross of Christ as foolishness, even though it is the power of God for those who are saved. This is in line with the scriptural passage that says, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will cast away the understanding of the prudent." It questions the status of the wise, scribe, and disputers of this world, asserting that God has made the wisdom of this world foolishness. The world, in its wisdom, failed to know God, so God chose to save those who believe through the foolishness of preaching, as described in 1 Corinthians 1:18-21. Therefore, we should not assume that civil learning and natural intelligence make individuals more inclined to receive the grace of God or the Gospel.

Consider the examples of Princes like Trajan and Marcus Antonius, who were renowned for their natural abilities, learning, wisdom, and ingenuity. Despite their remarkable qualities, neither of them became Christians. In fact, both of these Princes persecuted the Church of God. Similarly, consider the case of Pliny the Second, an officer of Trajan, who spoke in commendation of the innocence of Christians. However, even with his learning and position, he did not convert to Christianity. In Athens, where learning was esteemed, only a few individuals, such as Dionysius and Damaris, were converted through Paul's preaching, as mentioned in Acts 17.

Papists are undoubtedly great scholars, not only in logic and philosophy but also in divinity, and that in the most learned manner. Aquinas, a renowned divine, authored what I have heard Doctor Reynolds call the absolute body of divinity in his "Sums." However,

his wit served the interests of the Church in those days, even when it came to maintaining idolatry. He is perhaps the most shameful writer in this regard, as he argued that the image should be worshipped with the same honour as the thing it represents, using an argument drawn from Aristotle, "Dememoria & reminiscentia." This was opposed by scholars like Durand and Picus Mirandula, among others. I recall what Cicero said about the Greeks, "Do illis eruditionem, do Doctrinam; filem & Religionem nunquam Coluerunt," but I won't say the same of the Church of Rome, even though someone may have in the past. I acknowledge that it was once renowned for its faith worldwide in the days of Saint Paul. However, a time of degeneration came, and just as at the initial spread of the Gospel, people turned from idols to serve the living God, so in later ages, including Christians, and Roman Christians as much as any, turned away from the living God to serve idols. The Whore of Babylon, who made all nations drunk with the blood of God's saints, is undoubtedly the Church of Rome, as it is today and has been for many generations. Regardless of their learning, which provides them with advantages for supporting their errors, heresies, superstitions, and idolatries, we have no fear. The Apostle has taught us to value no knowledge but the knowledge of Christ and Him crucified: "Si Christum descis nihil est si caetera nescis, si Christum nescis nihil est si caetera discis." If we do not fear their learning, we have even less reason to fear their wit, wisdom, or any of their projects. None of these should logically commend their religion, for God often confounds the wisdom of the wise. I confess they have advantages over us, but God is not obligated to attach His truth to these advantages, especially if they are not used impartially to seek the truth but are prejudiced to support their own cause, the madness of which has become more apparent in recent days. We test this using the touchstone of God's Word, following God's own counsel: "To the Law and to the Testimonies if they speak not according to

this, it is because there is no light in them," as Isaiah 8 says. Yet, we also study the Scriptures and the Fathers, and we have those among us who yield nothing to them; furthermore, do we not study their writings more than our own? I willingly admit that I have done so all along to become acquainted with their best arguments and strongholds, and in all of this, I find nothing but deceptions in the defence of the doctrines in which we differ from them. Concerning the interpretation of Scriptures, it is well-known that they were compelled to engage in it, as was Cajetan in his old age after he had experienced Luther's approach. Luther would admit no other authority in dispute except the Word of God. Their commentaries, for the most part, consist of collections from others, yet I do not despise them. I am willing to use them as readily as any of our own, not so much to learn from them as to observe how they strain their wits to suppress the light of truth, which shines forth in many places, exposing their errors. They may speak of not imposing any interpretation on the Scriptures, but their practice does not align with this claim.

Discourse: But perhaps God has not granted them His Spirit and grace. I answer that God, when sought through prayer, does not deny His grace and the Spirit of Truth to anyone. Men of other religions also seek from God the enlightenment of their minds and guidance on the right path, no less fervently than ourselves, and perhaps even with greater zeal, as far as we can discern. We should not assume that they ask insincerely or with dissimulation, intending to mock God. Therefore, it is to be taken for granted that the Spirit is present where the fruits of the Spirit are evident, and no one should boast above others in this regard.

Nay more, the understanding of the Scriptures is a unique gift of the Spirit, granted not only to us but also to others. It is true that only he

who has the Spirit that inspired the Scriptures truly understands them, and just as in worldly laws, no doctor's interpretation or decision is valid until approved by the Lawgiver. Yet one who boasts of such approval by the Spirit must demonstrate it, or else be regarded as an ordinary doctor.

Consid. We are commanded to test the spirits to see if they are from God. Now, we have no other means of testing the Spirit of Truth speaking in anyone but through the Word of God. Just as the Bereans tested the doctrine of Saint Paul in Acts 17, the Apostles professed to preach nothing that was not confirmed by the Word of God. Our Saviour also referred the Jews to the Scriptures for the evaluation of His claims, saying, "Search the Scriptures, for in them you think to have eternal life; they are they that testify of me." We now have a more complete rule for testing, including the books of the Old and New Testaments. Saint Paul delivered the whole counsel of God to the Ephesians in Acts 20, and do we think that the whole Scripture lacks any necessary part thereof? I wish that Popery did not plainly contradict the Scripture that is commonly accepted by both of us. If that were the case, I would tolerate their practices in other matters, although we cannot accept anything imposed upon us apart from the written Word, especially Articles of Faith and parts of God's Worship. Through this method of testing, we find that not the spirit of Truth but the spirit of Error has taken possession of them in all points of difference between us.

Prayers (I admit) are the ordinary means to obtain any grace from God, except for one: the Spirit of Prayer, which is the Spirit of Faith. Of all the others, it is true "*fides impetrat & lex imperat*," but with two limitations. First, all knowledge necessary for salvation, as stated in 1 John 2:27 and Nider's (though a Papist) interpretation in his "*Consolatory of an affrighted Conscience*." Second, other graces as

well, in a measure suitable for each person's calling. I believe every Christian should be content with such an indulgence. "If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling?" But God has arranged the members in the body as He pleased. "For if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now there are many members, yet one body," as stated in 1 Corinthians 12:17, 18, 19.

However, men may draw near to God with their lips while their hearts are far from Him. We do not know the state of their hearts, as only God can see them. We are not even privy to their prayers. We examine their doctrines through God's Word, as it was wisely said by Martin Luther, mentioned by Scultetus in his "Story of the first ten years of Reformation": "Solis Canonicis debemus fidem, caeteris omnibus iudicium" (We owe faith to the Scriptures alone, and judgment to all others). I do not deny that all the regenerate who have the Spirit of God (according to Galatians 4:6, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, whereby ye cry Abba Father") seek God to enlighten their minds. God hears them and grants their requests in His own time, within the limitations mentioned earlier. However, we do not know who they are. We are commanded to test the spirits, and we are not acquainted with their fervency and zeal. Surely, it is not for the sake of their fervency that God hears them but for the sake of Christ. Shouldn't they be bound by charity to think of us as we are obliged to think of them? We acknowledge no Spirit of Faith except that which is the Spirit of Truth, at least in all fundamental matters necessary for salvation and in God's holy Worship without Idolatry.

As for the prayers of Papists, they are well known to be exceedingly impure. They used to turn more frequently to saints than to God, and the Bishop of Boss was in doubt whether he should invoke God in the

name of Christ's blood or in the name of the Virgin's milk. He was made to profess in certain verses on the wall that he wasn't sure which of the two to prefer. If God says of any prayers, "Though he makes many prayers, I will not hear" (Isaiah 1), surely the same could be said of these, in my opinion. Don't Turks have their prayers as well as Papists? Can't they be performed with great fervency and zeal? Can't they be as skilled in dramatic gestures as Papists? I once heard of a child trained by her mother in these gestures to a remarkable degree—her countenance composed into a solemn disposition, hands raised first to the level of her breasts, then to the level of her head, and finally above her head, all in silent display without a single spoken word.

Regarding the hypocrisy mentioned here, it is a complex matter. Firstly, hypocrisy is more significant in the right way, not the wrong way. This is because natural men are naturally inclined to embrace false and wicked paths, just as they may hypocritically embrace the way of truth. They may not only profess Christ but also preach Him insincerely, adding afflictions to the bonds of such a holy apostle as Paul was. We have no doubt that Papists are true Papists without hypocrisy. However, I strongly doubt that the vast majority of them are far from being true Christians. They pretend to be, but their pretence is highly hypocritical. This is deeply ingrained in them, inherited from the Mother of Whoredoms, and her symbol is Babylon in a mystery. Even the second beast, though it had two horns like a lamb, spoke like a dragon. In their pretence, they say "In Nomine Domini incipit omne malum" (In the name of the Lord, all evil begins), and it is not necessary for a person to intend to mock God with hypocrisy, if God could be mocked. There is a hidden hypocrisy of which a person's own heart is not aware until God, in His mercy, reveals it. Gross hypocrisy, on the other hand, makes a person a clear atheist.

This author seems captivated by the allure of the Whore of Babylon, as he expresses great affection for Papists and acknowledges that they exhibit the fruits of the Spirit. Consequently, he indirectly admits that they possess the Spirit. To go a step further would be to declare Antichrist as Christ and Christ as Antichrist.

Understanding the Scriptures means grasping their true meaning, and we deny that Papists possess this. Regarding all the points of disagreement between us, which they claim to base on Scripture, they often deviate from the correct understanding of them. Our theologians may also err, and it's likely that, as Mr. Hooker suggests, there are certain depths of Scripture that will occupy us for as long as the world exists. However, I do not deny that a reprobate may possess knowledge of the Scriptures, as it is not a grace of sanctification but of edification. To know that the Scriptures are the Word of God, the Wisdom of God, and the Power of God is something I consider unique to a regenerated spirit in whom the Spirit of God dwells as the source of the life of grace. A child of God may be consciously aware of this indwelling of the Spirit in a comforting manner without boasting.

I find it absurd for anyone to assert that their interpretation of Scripture is sound simply because they have the Spirit. We are ready to engage in debates to prove the meaning we ascribe to Scripture against all opposing views. We do not expect our interpretation of Scripture to be accepted beyond what we can demonstrate as the truth of God to the consciences of those we engage with.

Obj. If anyone should object here that the Scriptures themselves bear witness to their own clarity, as in, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my paths."

I answer: All the commands of God are His Word, and so are all His works that are accomplished through His Word. It is universally acknowledged that God reveals His Word through nature, the creation, signs, wonders, both below and above, and in countless other ways. Additionally, the Scriptures themselves bear witness that many things are neither written nor can be written. Therefore, the term "Word of His Voice" is used in various ways in Scripture, and as a result, everything referred to as "God's Word" should not necessarily be understood as referring to the Scriptures alone. It should be added that, at the time this was written, many parts of Scripture had not yet been written. Consequently, the evidence clearly demonstrates that this statement is not referring to the entire content and text of Scripture. This is evident because figures from the prophecies of the Book of Revelation and numerous other details related to the fulfillment of those prophecies were hidden even from the prophets themselves, and from the Fathers, much less from others. Christ Himself often spoke in parables so that people might hear with their ears but not understand. In fact, the Scripture itself, in numerous places, testifies to the fact that the Word of God is secret, obscure, and hidden, only to be revealed to the Spirit or the godly, to whom God chooses to reveal it. Thus, there are more testimonies to the obscurity of Scripture than to its clarity. However, this does not mean that the Scripture is rejected or disregarded. Even before the Law was given and written, people had a certain light by which they could have discovered the truth more clearly than we can, if they so desired. Although a great light has arisen in the New Testament, we should not assume that there was complete darkness in the Old Testament. This leads us to conclude that it was not considered useful for us to be fully enlightened about all things. While it may not be necessary to know all things, there can still be a certain and infallible method of interpretation that can help us decide most of the necessary controversies. If this method is

employed and tested, it will reveal a clear and consistent understanding of those Scriptures that are considered obscure by some. It is also possible that there may be other methods of illuminating what is obscure, although this untested method should not be relied upon exclusively. Both tested and untested methods may be accepted and used when they yield agreement in spirit and word without contradiction.

Consid. The more I delve into this matter, the less I like my involvement in it. Therefore, I resolve not to engage in such discussions unless I am dealt with openly and know the identity or at least the religious affiliation of the author I am dealing with. Upon reviewing this section, I have some doubts regarding the author's intentions, as he seems to be acting covertly to remain anonymous, which troubles me greatly. Henry VII of England used to say that he desired nothing more than to know his adversary in any encounter. We do not typically buy something without knowing what it is, and in the future, I will not engage with someone whose identity and religious beliefs are unknown to me.

Here, the author returns to argue against the clarity of Scripture, presenting his objections abruptly. However, our Saviour requires us to search the Scriptures, which means to study them diligently and seek the true meaning within them. No one searches for what is right before their eyes. Furthermore, we are commanded to seek wisdom as one searches for gold and silver, and people are willing to search deeply for treasure. It has been said that "in profundo latet veritas," truth lies in the depths. How much more should we be willing to diligently search and dig deep for the treasures of truth that lead to godliness, for the treasures of wisdom that make us wise unto salvation? Additionally, we distinguish between things necessary for salvation and other matters. We assert that things necessary for

salvation are plainly contained in Scripture, while many other things are not.

Here we have an initial response, "All the Commandments of God are his Word, and so are all his Works which are through his Word."

1. To claim that "all his Works" are also his Word initially appears to equate all of God's works with His Word. However, this is corrected by stating that these works are accomplished "through his Word." In the past, I have read in Chrysostom about a twofold Book of God: the Book of His Word and the Book of His Creatures. It was said that God initially taught His creatures through His works, and later through His written Word. It is indeed true that "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy works" (Psalms 19). The invisible attributes of God, His eternal power and divine nature, are evident through creation when considered in light of His works (Romans 1:20). By administering His providence in governing the world, God bears witness to Himself. He provides rain and fruitful seasons, fills our hearts with food and gladness (Acts 14:17). Nevertheless, this knowledge of God, gathered solely through the reasoning of natural intellect, does not guarantee the discovery of God, as some may grope after Him and yet fail to find Him (Acts 17:27). Even the wisest philosophers have denied the concept of creation, asserting that God is a necessary agent. Some who acknowledged the beginning of the world still denied that it was originally created *ex nihilo* (out of nothing). This is why the Apostle tells us that we believe in the creation of the world by faith. Not only are God's commands considered His Word, but also the revelations of the mystery of godliness. These are things that are far removed from our comprehension. As for the law as a rule of life, it is more or less written in the hearts of

all people. It is true that the author of the book "De Vocatione Gentium" discusses a manner of instruction through God's works. However, this method is not as clear as the Word of God. What grounds do we have for the correct interpretation of signs, wonders, both above and below? Astrologers claim to read strange things in the constellations related to people's nativities, but on what basis do we make such calculations? We have not received any information about this from Abraham, the father of the faithful, who is said to have discussed these matters in his astronomical lectures in the plain of Mamre. I know that in holy Scripture, thunder is referred to as the voice of God, and the Lord is said to have spoken to the patriarchs. However, these words are not written. Winds and storms are also said to fulfill His Word, metaphorically, because they accomplish what God wills through them, as if they were obedient and faithful servants to their master, even though they do not know Him any more than the ravens do, although they are said to call upon Him in Scripture's figurative language. Now, we turn to another point, namely, the Scriptures, the written Word of the Prophets and Apostles, and the question concerns their clarity and intelligibility to all who seek to understand. Solomon said, "For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief" (Ecclesiastes 1:18). I believe this refers to knowledge of God by reading the Scriptures, to which our Saviour also referred the Jews. The Apostle Paul warns us not to be wise beyond what is written (1 Corinthians 4:6).

It is true that when "Thy Law is a lamp unto my feet" was written, many later prophets had not yet recorded their prophecies, and the New Testament books had not been written. However, when our Saviour said, "Search the Scriptures, for in them you think to have eternal life, and they are they that testify of me" (John 5), He was

referring to all the books of the Old Testament. As for the books of the New Testament, the Gospels were written so that people could confirm the certainty of the teachings they had received orally (Luke 1:4). This confirmation would not have been possible if the writings were not intelligible to studious readers. When Paul was in prison, he wrote that the whole Scripture is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17). If we deny the intelligibility of Scripture, its profitable nature is completely removed. We know that the apostles converted many through their preaching. Surely, the words they preached were understood by their listeners; otherwise, the conversions would have been based on confusion. We can examine what they preached in the Acts of the Apostles and in their Epistles written to various churches.

The understanding of the figures in the prophecies of Revelation and similar passages is not necessary for salvation. There is a good reason for carrying them in a mysterious way, much like the mysteries surrounding Christ's Person and His mission to crush the head of the serpent, which were veiled in the shadows of types and figures for a long time. Had it been known that the Messiah must be crucified before reigning, the Devil would not have been so eager to influence Judas to betray Him to His enemies to bring about His death. Similarly, the Revelation in the New Testament and many similar prophecies in the Old Testament, concerning the practices of the Devil and Antichrist, may be veiled in mystery to prevent the Devil and Antichrist from understanding them until they are fulfilled.

However, the Lord, through His Spirit that inspired these prophecies, can grant His servants an understanding of their meanings when the appointed time for this knowledge arrives. Many

shall go to and fro, and knowledge shall increase, as if the age of exploration and commerce, coupled with a surge in knowledge, were to coincide. In recent years, we have witnessed remarkable progress in uncovering the mysteries of Revelation and other cryptic prophecies from the Old Testament, to the point of amazement. The timing of the discovery of the first revelation of Antichrist is found in Daniel's numbers, which may explain the ignorance of the Church Fathers on this issue. Just as early Christians, at their conversion from idolatry to the worship of the living God, immediately expected the Son of God's return from heaven to deliver them from the coming wrath (1 Thessalonians 1), there were some in the days of the Apostles who believed it would occur within a human lifespan. Paul addressed this belief in his second letter to the Thessalonians, indicating that an apostasy must come first, and the man of sin must be revealed, and prior to that, the Roman Empire must be shattered (2 Thessalonians 2, compared with 1 Thessalonians 4:15). In Augustine's time, this devout Father suggested that Christ's coming might be 400 years away, or perhaps 500 at most, speculating that the Beast, which slaughtered the Lord's witnesses, would not endure for more than three and a half years. We should not be surprised by these speculations, considering what Daniel has written about it and the great blessing it would be to live at a time when Antichrist is revealed to the world (Daniel 11). At that point, nothing would remain except for him to be destroyed by the breath of the Lord's mouth and utterly abolished by the brightness of His coming.

The reconciliation of Ezekiel's measurements of the new Jerusalem with John's measurements in the Revelation was a great mystery, considered almost impossible. Nevertheless, it has been made feasible and clear throughout. Similarly, the number of the Beast, 666, has baffled the Christian world for a long time. Various interpretations of it have produced a range of ideas, from Irenaeus'

interpretation of the word "Lateinos" to modern scholars revisiting that same interpretation due to a lack of better alternatives. However, the vanity of such interpretations has recently been discovered. Instead of simply resting on the number 666, the revelation is that by calculating this number, we can uncover another number that will significantly reveal the nature of the Beast. In fact, the number 666 is in opposition to the number of Christ's Church, 144. Moreover, the most significant number arising from this calculation is the number 12, which is its root. This distinctive calculation is rooted in the number 25, as discovered in the customary method of arithmetic. This reveals strange mysteries concerning the representation of the Beast, the embodiment of Antichrist, in a remarkable way.

It is not surprising that these mysteries were concealed from the Prophets themselves who wrote these prophecies. Firstly, knowledge of these mysteries was not necessary for their own salvation. Secondly, God had appointed a specific time when the light of these prophecies would break forth to illuminate His Church with immeasurable consolation, precisely when they needed it most, as the fulfillment of these prophecies drew near.

Christ spoke in parables to some, not to all, yet some of His parables were understood even by those against whom they were directed. Some were not understood by the general public, but our Saviour revealed their meanings to His disciples whenever they sought understanding. He also disclosed other mysteries, such as the signs preceding the destruction of Jerusalem, His own coming, and the end of the world, as recorded in Matthew 24.

It is indeed true that the Scriptures contain the mysteries of godliness, which are apprehended not by all, but only by the

Regenerate. However, when it comes to the interpretation of Scripture, it is quite a different matter (which this Author fails to consider). Even a reprobate can grasp its meaning to the extent of becoming a knowledgeable teacher in the Church, maintaining Orthodox beliefs throughout. Such knowledge can contribute to the edification of others, even though the individual may fall short of their own salvation. The secrets of the Lord that He reveals to those who fear Him pertain to the secret of His Covenant (Psalms 25). There is also a secret within Catholic Faith and all the mysteries of godliness, which is known only to the Regenerate. It involves discerning the wisdom and power of God in those who possess true Faith. A reprobate may believe the same things through natural faith alone, and may even act as a diligent teacher while instructing others.

We still affirm that Scripture is sufficiently plain and clear regarding all matters necessary for salvation. This entire discussion is based on distinctions, and to deny that Scripture is fairly intelligible to someone who genuinely seeks to understand it is a significant disservice to the Word of God and a dishonour to God Himself. It would imply either a deficiency in His goodness for not making it clear or a lack of wisdom in His knowledge of how to arrange it, such that people could attain eternal life by searching the Scriptures.

If people before the Law had a source of light that allowed them to find the truth more clearly than we do, it would imply that the earlier times enjoyed greater light and grace than later times. This contradicts the general consensus of the Christian world and universal experience. Just as natural light increases until it reaches perfect day, spiritual light has followed a similar pattern. While the sun of righteousness has not gone backward, and although people may have regressed in their obedience, God has advanced rather

than retreated in the administration of His grace. We do not claim that there was blindness, or any blindness at all, among God's children (although the current discussion pertains to God's progress in illuminating His light). Instead, we assert that the words of the Prophets were sure, and our forefathers wisely regarded them as a shining light in a dark place. However, a long time has passed, and the Gospel is now the day-star that arises in our hearts (2 Peter 1:19). For the same God who commanded light to shine out of darkness has shone in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6). In these days of grace, we all behold the glory of the Lord with unveiled faces, and we are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Corinthians 3:18).

To say that even though all things are not necessary to be known, there can still be a certain and infallible way of interpreting Scripture whereby most, if not all, necessary controversies may be resolved is to introduce an apparent antithesis where there is none. However, this is of little consequence. Here, we witness a shift towards the opposite extreme. Until now, the clarity of Scripture has been pitted against an infallibility of interpretation. But the safest path lies in the middle, and virtue often resides in moderation, which Horace refers to as "auream Mediocritatem" or the golden mean. Since the time of the Apostles, the true Church of Christ does not claim infallible authority in interpreting Scripture. It is sufficient that, in matters essential to salvation, the Lord assures us through His Spirit that we are not deceived. This suffices for a state of grace. As for infallibility, let us be content to reserve it for the state of glory.

I have no doubt that, through study, care, and effort, most controversies can be decisively settled. This should be sufficient either to convince a willing listener to embrace the truth or to convict

a stubborn opponent of their obstinacy. However, I did not anticipate that the beginning of this discourse would lead to such an unsuitable conclusion. Mr. Dury (if I recall correctly) is engaged in a similar method. I sincerely hope it succeeds, but we must be cautious not to disparage all previous efforts as glaring insufficiencies compared to our own new inventions, whether in clarifying controversial truths or elucidating obscure passages of Scripture. We should content ourselves with the measure of knowledge we have attained until a greater light rises above the horizon of our understanding. Whenever it does, I trust we will accord it the respect it deserves and gratefully embrace it, whether in the form of illumination that pleases the senses or the demonstration that justifies reason.

Furthermore, I am not swayed by the objection that it suffices for Lutherans to be assured of the truth of Lutheranism, even if others cannot see or believe it. This is not what I seek. I inquire about how one can be sure, not of their own opinion, but of the truth. If I believe and assert that a particular thing is true, this constitutes my opinion. However, my opinion does not make it the truth, as truth and opinion share no commonality, and unwavering conviction does not alter the essence of the thing one believes in. Otherwise, melancholic individuals, whose opinions are unshakable, would work miracles and endow all their notions with essential status. True knowledge, on the other hand, is demonstrable not only to me or some individuals but to all, eliciting consent from anyone, much like the undeniable fact that two and three make five. When a matter is disputed and understood differently by various people, it cannot provide me with certainty and freedom from doubt regarding whether I possess the truth or not. Those who only know what they believe may be excused from malice and hypocrisy. However, the argument that "I and my

followers are certain of this thing, therefore it is true" is irrational reasoning.

Consideration: Certainly, if I am on the right path, it is sufficient for me to be assured of the truth for my own salvation. However, because I am obligated to seek the salvation of others as well, I must not imitate Cain by saying, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Yet what is enough for me to be assured of the truth I uphold may also be enough for another to bring them to be assured of the same truth. If this sufficiency I speak of is in the way of rational discourse based on the Word of God, then if it is indeed sufficient, it should satisfy anyone capable of it. All such light, being natural light and within the realm of discourse, can be communicated to all rational creatures through rational discussion. However, true faith is brought about by spiritual illumination, which I cannot impart to another; only the Spirit of God can do this, enlightening whom He will, while others are left in darkness and the shadow of death. This is the only way to truly be sure of theological truths.

It is true that what I believe (whatever it may be and in whatever manner it is believed) is not true simply because I believe it. However, if I believe through divine illumination, it is true because I believe it in such a manner. Yet this I cannot convey to another person or make them believe in the same way. I can share natural light with another, but I cannot share spiritual light. Natural light, whether through natural discourse or based on commonly known principles of nature, can be communicated readily. For example, there is a shared understanding that the Scriptures are the Word of God. But when the Spirit of God enlightens me, what I embrace is not just my opinion; it becomes my faith, and my conviction in this faith is steadfast and no less than natural knowledge, if not greater. Spiritual and divine light surpasses natural light, just as knowledge

through the senses is superior to knowledge through reason, with rational knowledge dependent on sensory knowledge. General principles, in fact, arise from experience and the enumeration of particulars.

Theology is said to be non-argumentative, especially when it is supernatural. It is compared to sensory knowledge, such as the sense of sight, where one asks, "Open mine eyes that I may see the wonderful things of thy Law." It is likened to hearing, with phrases like, "He that hath an ear, let him hear," distinguishing between hearing the voice of man and the voice of God. It is akin to the sense of smell, as in 2 Corinthians 2:14, "We are a sweet savour unto God in Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish." There's also a comparison to the sense of taste, as in 1 Peter 2:2, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby; if ye have tasted that the Lord is bountiful." Halensis professes that things of God are apprehended per modum gustus, in the manner of taste. The sense of feeling aptly represents knowledge of God through His works, as seen in Acts 17:27, "That they should seek the Lord, if so be they might have groped after him and found him, though doubtless he be not far from everyone of us." The author of this text appears to pay little attention to these aspects, much like the Socinians of today. This is the glaring flaw I find in Master Shillingsworth's book. Please differentiate between melancholic individuals and the children of God, for God has sent the Spirit of His Son into the hearts of His children. Remember what the Apostle says, "This persuasion is not of God," clearly indicating that the persuasions of Christian Faith are from God. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that this Faith is always grounded in God's Word, and believers should be well-versed in it, ready to provide a reason for their faith when asked. However, an unregenerate person may also be able to do this, and sometimes even better.

When he says that the nature of true knowledge is demonstrable, this is accurate for natural knowledge, but not for Christian knowledge, which is solely based on God's Word. It has never been known that proving something from Scripture is called demonstration. Aristotle denies that Moral Philosophy is susceptible to demonstration; it proceeds only through persuasion. However, for the sake of using Scripture as evidence, he calls it demonstration (ἀποδεικτικός). Yet, keep in mind that no deduction from Scripture can be so clear as to be exempt from all objections. Nonetheless, it has never been known for anyone to object to a truth as clear as the fact that two and three make five. If we can never be free from doubt when something is disputed, for example, a passage of Scripture with various interpretations, what certainty can I have regarding any point of faith I uphold in opposition to Papists, Socinians, or any heretic? Yet I should not expect the disputed nature of a thing to free me from doubt; it is enough that I have strong evidence for it, even if the whole world disputes what I believe. Now, there is no evidence for theological and saving truths that can compare to the evidence that comes from the illumination of the Spirit. It gives me new eyes, so to speak, and opens the eyes of my understanding to perceive and comprehend the things of God. The Holy Spirit can free me from all doubt. Yet, there is another type of knowledge, which is natural, partly derived from natural principles and partly from a skilled interpretation of Scriptures. With this knowledge, we can defend our beliefs against all objectors to their confusion and secure their assent upon sober reflection. However, this knowledge is inferior to the illumination of the Spirit. I can hardly imagine any Christian being so simple or stubborn as to reason thus: "I and my follower are sure of this thing, therefore it is true." If they did, I see no reason why they couldn't take it a step further and say, "I alone think this to be true, and therefore it is true." The Spirit of illumination is given to satisfy those who possess it, not to boast about it (but rather to find

comfort in it), and certainly not to impose it on others. Only natural light can be communicated to others through rational discourse; spiritual light cannot. I cannot convey it to another any more than I can convey my sight, hearing, smell, or taste.

Discussion: Lastly, if we base our religion solely on the Scriptures, the learned will have a significant advantage over the unlearned in matters of faith and religion. They will be more obligated to give thanks to God, and religion will tend to align more with intellectual abilities.

Moreover, many individuals have their senses trained in the Scriptures or are more inventive than others. Therefore, if a person could refute a particular thesis through argument and essentially convince someone to abandon their opinion, becoming the victor, they would also take away that person's religion. The other person would be compelled either to adopt the victor's religion or, against their conscience, maintain their own.

Nor will that answer suffice; our divines and pastors can answer you, although I cannot. For in that case, I would believe with another man's faith, but my faith must be my own, not another man's, or else salvation would also be another man's. If religion is the service of God, it is certainly necessary that I should understand the service I must render to my Lord. Since God will not consider another man's service as mine, and cannot be served by a substitute, we must conclude that controversies are to be left to learned individuals and are not absolutely necessary. It might be argued, then, that religion should also be left to the learned because controversies are an integral part of our religion. Without considering them, there would be no distinction between Papists and Protestants. How much a person knows about controversies is directly related to their

knowledge of their own religion. The state of a person's salvation is determined by their religion and faith. There is only one salvation and one faith. But if controversies are the domain of the learned alone, why have laymen endured so much suffering, distress, and even death for the sake of these controversies? I am aware that a Calvinist doctor, Dr. Bergius, a preacher in Bremen, has stated in his recent sermons that controversies are not absolutely necessary for salvation. He argues that the Scripture is clear about matters necessary for salvation and that there has never been any real conflict among the religious themselves. This seems to be the aim of the Leipzig Colloquy between the Lutherans and the Calvinists.

Consideration: In all professions, whether liberal or technical, the educated have an advantage over the uneducated. What harm is there if this is also true in Christian religion? Doesn't Saint Peter tell us that the uneducated distort the Scriptures to their own destruction? Yet this advantage lies in learning, not in holiness. The uneducated can be just as holy as the educated and have an equal share in sanctifying grace and saving glory. Augustine himself spoke of people like himself, scholars, in comparison to his mother Monica and other holy, though simple, women, saying, "These little women, with their tears, snatch heaven from us. When we have done all we can with all our learning, these women, with their tears, will enter heaven before us." As for holiness, the same applies to faith. An uneducated person can have faith as strong as the learned. In fact, the faith called "fides infusa" can be found in an uneducated person, while the faith of a learned individual may be no better than "fides acquisita," a natural faith. Those who have true faith through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit will not lack spiritual insight. Nevertheless, natural knowledge, even if it is superior because it is based on faith natural, will not make a person learned. And even if a person is highly learned, if they lack grace, their religion will be in

vain. They may be able to defeat others in argument, but they will never be able to undermine the true religion of any child of God, no matter how weak or uneducated, because our faith and religion are not based on clever words, but on the power of the Spirit, as Saint Paul says, "My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power" (1 Corinthians 2:4-5). Even if my faith were purely natural and I had good scriptural evidence for it, which would be no different from the common profession of Christianity, the philosopher tells me that I should not be shaken from my conviction simply because I cannot counter every sophism or argument that is presented against it. The philosopher, in his Ethics, teaches that some people hold onto their opinions, even if they have weak reasons for doing so, just as firmly as others hold onto opinions supported by strong arguments. In every way, it is a misguided notion that the most learned must always triumph over the faith and religion of the uneducated without resorting to the excuse that "our divines and pastors can answer you, though I cannot." However, I am amazed that any thoughtful Christian would argue against basing our religion solely on Scripture, except perhaps with Papists who would introduce traditions or rely on the Church or the Pope's decisions. If we turn away from the Word of God, we would have to rely either on the word of man or on natural reason. I believe that a Christian should find Scripture sufficient to guide us in the service of God. Our Saviour directed the Jews to search the Scriptures to recognize Him.

And if controversies are left to learned individuals, there is no reason why our religion should be left to them as well. Only the defense of it in a controversial manner, maintaining it through various arguments and deductions from Holy Scripture, and resolving contrary arguments brought against it in any specific point of faith, should be

left to them. But the profession of our religion surely belongs to everyone, including those who sit at Gamaliel's feet, as well as to Gamaliel himself. It belongs not only to those who sit at his feet but also to those who follow the ploughtail, women, and children, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as them. Even if no books were written and no sermons preached on controversies or differences between us, Papists would still be Papists, and not Protestants, and Protestants would still be Protestants, and not Papists. The Whore of Babylon would still be the Whore of Babylon and not the Spouse of Christ, and Antichrist would still be a false prophet and not a true prophet. For the faith and profession of a Papist make them a Papist, whether they write controversies or not, as even the smallest part of them can perform this task. Likewise, the profession and protestation of a Protestant against the corruptions of the Church of Rome make them a Protestant, even if they never put pen to paper to contend for the faith once given to the Saints. Although I confess that this is a duty, it is not a common duty for everyone but is a duty peculiarly belonging to the man of God, who should be able not only to exhort with wholesome doctrine but also to convince those who oppose it. Laymen have suffered with great constancy and patience for articles of faith and their profession, but not for controversies, although they have been ready to give a reason for their faith to all who ask and to bear witness to it, as our Saviour did before Pilate, as recorded in the Book of Acts and Monuments, and as Saint Paul did of our blessed Saviour. Dr. Bergius is acknowledged to have said as much, confessing that controversies are not absolutely necessary for salvation, which I interpret to mean that they are not necessary for the existence of the Church but only for her well-being when the Christian faith is opposed by heretics. We acknowledge that there is no difference in fundamentals between Lutherans and Calvinists, as is abundantly evident from the Leipzig Conference.

Consideration: I am convinced that this is very true. If the Holy Spirit had deemed those controversial questions necessary for salvation, it would have clearly and plainly expressed and appointed them in Holy Scripture. Moreover, it seems unlikely that as many articles of faith have been drawn from Scripture as can now be found in catechisms, commonplaces, and theological compilations. There is no fixed number of articles, as some theologians propose more, while others propose fewer. Additionally, some religious denominations have added or removed entire articles over time. After enduring much suffering in defense of certain articles, they have adopted a more moderate stance, considering what was once thought heretical to be tolerable and indifferent. Nonetheless, there are so many articles that one may reasonably question their precise necessity. This seems to be the best solution to untangle and appease perplexed, uncertain, and erring consciences.

Consideration: It is a very unusual statement, stemming from a wild notion, to suggest that God would have clearly and plainly expressed and appointed controversial questions if they had been necessary. The mere proposition of controversial questions, even if delivered ever so clearly and plainly, does not put an end to controversies. It is the clear and substantive resolution of them that ends controversies. What appears to be necessary is not the proposition of these questions but their resolution. It would be absurd to speak of resolving controversies before any controversies have arisen, just as it would be absurd for a physician's wisdom and goodness to prompt them to heal a person before they are wounded. Instead, they should strive to preserve a person's health to prevent them from falling ill. Similarly, God's wisdom and goodness have adequately provided for the health of His Church through the integrity of doctrine contained in His Word. This doctrine is presented in a manner that is sufficiently understandable and clear to those who approach it with

honest hearts and a sincere desire to seek and embrace the truth. However, Saint Paul tells us about opposition to the truth by individuals with corrupt minds, making it clear that they approach God's Word with corrupt minds, twisting it, as Peter states, to their own destruction. They pervert themselves first and then speak twisted things to corrupt others and hinder them from the faith, as found in Titus 1:13.

Saint Peter exhorts us to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). Saint Paul also encourages us not to remain stagnant but to progress toward perfection. We should strive for a fullness and plerophory of faith and knowledge, just as we seek holiness. In this life, our path to heaven requires us to draw nearer to God by acquiring all the knowledge we can from His Word (Deuteronomy 29:29). Scripture is revealed for this purpose, and it is capable of making the man of God perfect for every good work (2 Timothy 3:17). Peter advises us to add knowledge to virtue (2 Peter 1:5), and Paul prays that the Colossians may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding (Colossians 1:9). This knowledge helps us walk worthy of the Lord, be fruitful in every good work, and increase in the knowledge of God (Colossians 1:10). Therefore, we should not take offense at the multiplication of articles. In all professions, those who delight in knowledge are never satisfied. Nothing is more congruous to our intelligent nature than the light of knowledge. As long as we live on earth, we will never attain maturity in Christ. Thus, we must continue to grow and edify ourselves and one another in our most holy faith. The body of Christ must be built up until we reach full maturity. Just as we must increase in knowledge, we are also susceptible to error, so we must strive for greater and greater discoveries. The error of interpreting the number of the Beast, 666, to denote only Nero, has persisted since the days of Irenaeus, which

is from the next age after the Apostles. Recently, the true meaning has been discovered and substituted in its place, a revelation unlike any before. It is commendable for individuals to acknowledge their previous errors. Of all of Augustine's works, none contribute more to his honour and renown than his *Retractations*, in which he retracts the errors of his faith, and his *Confessions*, where he confesses the errors of his life. This is an example of Christian ingenuity, and I believe that no one has been more renowned in this regard than Augustine. It is necessary for every Christian to strive for perfection by the necessity of God's command. However, if someone fails due to negligence, this is a very pardonable sin upon their confession of it. While there are few things necessary for salvation, the knowledge of God and the things of God is sweet to a regenerated soul. Having tasted the Lord's bounty, they are naturally drawn to desire the sincere milk of the Word to grow in wisdom, just as newborn babies desire their mothers' milk (1 Peter 2:2). Regarding perplexed, doubting, and erring consciences, individuals can cause themselves unnecessary confusion, doubts, and errors. Their error is compounded when they pretend to be perplexed and claim that doubts have been imposed on them when, in reality, they have created their own confusion. Such work is least auspiciously performed when individuals use their wits to dispute themselves out of the Lord's realm and circle. It is within this circle that He charms all His Elect after they have strayed. He brings them home, just as the prodigal child returns to his father. Similarly, He returns them to their heavenly Father and restores their sobriety and senses. They can then declare, "Oh, how I love Your law! All the day long my study is in it." The Law of His mouth is dearer to them than thousands of gold and silver. Through it, they gain more understanding than their teachers, for the Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, and it gives wisdom to the simple, a wisdom that leads to salvation (Psalm 119:97-100).

Discussion: Could so many theologians of previous ages have been ignorant of this? Have so many wars been waged for this cause? Could those learned individuals have allowed so many thousands of people to recklessly endanger their bodies and souls for the sake of religion? Have countless misfortunes arisen when it is possible for a person to be saved without religious controversies? If fighting for these controversies is indeed God's command under the threat of temporal and eternal punishment, how can we excuse those who use feeble arguments of faith, religion, and worship? A servant may not withhold anything due to their lord.

Consid. Do not be ignorant of this: ignorant of what? That controversies are not necessary for salvation. How can it be argued that they deserved such censure? But let us not delight in the confusion of things that deserve to be distinguished. A person, indeed, a whole nation, can live in peace without war. But if they are not allowed to live in peace and some enemy invades them, as Aram did before and the Philistines behind, ready to devour us with open mouths, should we sit idly with our hands in our bosoms until these monsters devour us one after another? This is the condition of God's Church and has been so since the days of the Apostles. The mysteries of godliness have been revealed in God's Word. Many cannot accept these mysteries and submit to them in faith. Although they may embrace some truths of the Gospel, they resist others or, while pretending to embrace them, pervert and distort them through corrupt interpretations. In this case, are not the Orthodox compelled to defend their faith, as urged by Saint Jude, and to earnestly contend for the faith once given to the Saints? Should they not strive to defeat error rather than allow error to strangle the holy truth of God, to expose the truth of God, which is in accordance with godliness? Should they not uproot weeds rather than allow them to overgrow the good crop? Thus, we are thrust into controversies

whether we like it or not. However, not everyone is duty-bound in this regard. Many, indeed most, shall be saved without engaging in these controversies. Just as when an enemy invades us, we gather an army to oppose them and drive them out, the rest pray for their brethren but do not take up arms. Yet, through this war, they may have as great a share in the desired peace as those who fight for it. Thus, Chamayar of the French Church has written his "Bella Domini," the Wars of the Lord, against the Philistines, the Antichristian Philistines of the Church of Rome. Few have done the same, yet many sons of that noble Church have valiantly served. Chamayer has surpassed them all. Not everyone girds themselves with a sword at all times, only those who are the Lord's Naunchan, His instructed ones. These overseers and keepers of the Tower of David, built for defense, are well-acquainted with the weapons and know how to use them. They are skilled in the art of war and are willing to risk their lives for the holy cause. As Saint Paul declared, "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

Regarding the shuffling arguments mentioned, when I become aware of them, I will pass judgment as I see fit after due consideration. It is true that one can sophisticate in constructing arguments, but shuffling tactics are usually employed when trying to evade them through an improper resolution. We know that Paul engaged in such disputes, having fought with wild beasts at Ephesus. Similarly, Stephen had his share of struggles when certain individuals from the Synagogue, including Libertines and Cyrenians, disputed with him.

Did he not also engage in debate with them? The text expressly states that they were unable to resist the wisdom of the Spirit by which he spoke. As Paul stated, "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all."

Dis. Let us consider this matter, as it is quite perplexing and has led me and many others into troubled thoughts. For the perplexities of conscience, it is undeniable that a remedy should be sought from those who share Christian compassion. It could be found if all the theologians from both sides who have left the Catholic Church were willing to provide a wise, gentle, and well-founded written response, free from partiality, prejudice, or passion.

Consid. When Boste was taken by the States, there was seen in the wall a Bishop, once of that town, painted with Christ and His blood on one side, and the Virgin Mary with her breasts sprouting milk on the other side. The devout Bishop was depicted in a state of great perplexity and ambiguity, not knowing which to prefer: Christ's blood before Mary's milk, or Mary's milk before Christ's blood. This was expressed in Latin verses, and one of the martial men (so to speak) to put him out of his dilemma said, "Why, you fool, go to God." Who, I ask, was the cause of this man's perplexity? Was it not his own extreme and abominable superstition? If the author of this discourse had presented anything on the other side of Scripture, pretended ambiguity and perplexity, and had to decide which to follow, then the martial man's resolution of the doubt might have been appropriate. However, only Scripture-related doubts are discussed here, addressing how a person should ground their faith on it. I do not know who the author is or whether this is a factual account or a fabrication. The world is full of deception. When we create such doubts for ourselves, do we truly consider God's goodness and wisdom in giving us His holy Word to guide us on the

path to eternal life? If there were genuine cause to complain of a perplexing situation, one in which we did not know whether to embrace it or flee from it, as Moses did when his rod turned into a serpent, it would be a different matter. However, do we find any similar transformation here? Yet, when the Lord instructed Moses to grasp the serpent by its tail, he boldly did so. Surely, God's Word is not a serpent, but we may be considered as such. Only God's Word has the power to enchant us, causing us to purge ourselves of all our erroneous and unholy paths. The Lord Jesus has instructed us to take hold of it, saying, "Search the Scriptures." If anything in my response appears amiss and fails to meet the author's expectations, seemingly tainted by partiality, prejudice, or passion, I must admit that I am prejudiced against such discourses as these, finding them most base and unsuitable for an intelligent and godly Christian. For the rest, attribute it to my ignorance, as I am unsure of the author's intentions and leanings. He does not seem to be Lutheran or Calvinist, and he avoids appearing as a Papist, although I am inclined to think it is the work of some Papist. I know little about his identity or origin.

However, let every sober Christian carefully consider and inquire whether such questions have arisen since the beginning when God's Word was put in writing. It was only in this last and worst age of the world that Cajetan, a great scholastic theologian, first confronted Martin Luther and discovered that only Scriptural authority convinced him. Consequently, he began to study Scripture and wrote commentaries on it in his old age. However, Silvester Prierius of Rome deemed that approach too extreme and advocated for a shorter path. He argued that the Scriptures did not contain all things necessary for salvation, and therefore, to complete the rule of faith, the unwritten Word must be added to the written Word. This unwritten Word was referred to as Traditions. Since then, the Papists

have fortified themselves with the authority of the Church. Nevertheless, they acknowledge that the true Church and its authority cannot be known except through the Scriptures. The Church's resolution ultimately hinges on the Pope's interpretation of Scripture, and they falsely accuse us of resolving our faith through our own private spirit. In contrast, we extend the testimony of the Spirit solely to the satisfaction of each individual, teaching nothing other than what the Papists themselves acknowledge to be true regarding the physical resolution of our faith. I am ready to provide various compelling pieces of evidence, without further ado, to demonstrate this. Now, this light is not of a nature that can be shared with others, so we do not engage in it when debating other points of theology with Papists or anyone else. In these disputes, we follow a logical resolution, either based on accepted principles concerning the Divine attributes or on explicit passages from Holy Scripture. If the meaning of these passages is disputed, we are prepared to defend our interpretation through rational discourse against any opponent. We are confident that we will either convict them of obstinacy for rejecting the clear evidence of truth or, at the very least, they will be judged in their own conscience or the conscience of all sober Christians, as we firmly believe that anyone who resists the evidence of God's Word, claiming it lacks evidence, will find that the Word has enough evidence to judge them on the final day.

This Jesuitical question was sent from Germany while the Assembly of Divines was in session at Westminster and was translated from High Dutch.

FINIS.

MONERGISM BOOKS

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