

other points—should be obtruded upon the world as apostolical traditions, and to be received with like religious reverence as we do articles of faith set down in scripture : this is that [which] we cannot sufficiently abhor, as apparently false, and destructive to Christianity.

The propositions drawn out of the text in this sermon are these :—

1. *Whatever assurance we have of God's preserving us in the truth, yet we are bound to use diligence and caution.*

2. *Our diligence and caution are to be employed about this,—that we may stand fast in the faith of Christ, and the profession and practice of godliness.*

3. *That the means of standing fast in the faith of Christ, and the profession and practice of godliness, is by holding the traditions which were taught by the holy apostles.*

4. *That while the apostles were in being, there were two ways of delivering the truth,—by word of mouth, and writing.*

5. *That now when they are long since gone to God, and we cannot receive from them the doctrine of life by word of mouth, we must stick to the scriptures, or written word.*

## SERMON III. (X.)

BY THE REV. JOHN OWEN, D.D.

FORMERLY DEAN OF CHRIST CHURCH, AND VICE-CHANCELLOR OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE CHURCH IS NOT THE ONLY NOR THE  
CHIEF REASON OF OUR BELIEVING THE SCRIPTURE TO BE  
THE WORD OF GOD.

*They have Moses and the prophets ; let them hear them.—  
Luke xvi. 29.*

As everlasting blessedness (men's greatest and most desirable good) is that which God only can bestow, and the way to it that which he only can discover ; (who knows the Lord's mind like himself ? Who is so sure a guide in the way as he who is himself the end ? Nature can neither direct us to nor fit us for a supernatural happiness ; ) so it is not only our interest to seek it, but likewise to see whether what pretends to be the rule of our walking, in order to our obtaining of it, be indeed the right one ; which we can no otherwise be assured of, than by seeing that it be such an one as is given us by Him to whom alone it belongs to prescribe us the way, and who, being infinitely good, as well as infinitely wise, will no more deceive us, than he can be himself deceived. Now the holy scripture of the Old and New Testament is that which we profess to own as the rule of our faith and life, in relation to our future glory. It is then the wisdom of

every Christian to inquire upon what account he receives this rule ; why he believes it, and submits to it ; whether he be persuaded that it is of God, by God himself, or only by men. For if he can find indeed that he receives it upon the authority of God, he may be secure of the truth and sufficiency of it ; but if only on that of men, they, being liable to mistakes, may lead him into error ; and so he can never be sure that what he owns as his rule is indeed the right one, and of God's own prescribing. Or admit [that] it really be so, yet if it be not received on right grounds, he will be exposed to innumerable fears and fluctuations, and never walk comfortably nor constantly in his way, when he doubts whether it be the right or a wrong one. The superstructure cannot be better than the foundation ; and a well-ordered and comfortable conversation will never be the effect of an ill-grounded belief. It is good therefore in the beginning of our course to be secure of our way, to see both what we believe, and why ; lest otherwise we be either forced to go back, or else upon as light grounds swerve from the way, as we were at first persuaded to engage in it. Our great inquiry, then, in this discourse will be,

## QUESTION.

*Upon what account we believe the scripture to be the word of God ; whether upon the authority of God, or the church : which I ground upon these words, "They have Moses and the prophets ; let them hear them."*

In this parable, whereof these words are a part, we have an account of the different estates of a wicked man, Dives, and a good man, Lazarus, both in this life and the other. In this life, Dives had his "good things," the whole of his happiness, all the portion he was ever to enjoy ; and Lazarus had his "evil things," all the sorrow and misery he was ever to endure. And in the other life, we have Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, a place and state of rest, "entered into peace ;" (Isai. lvii. 1, 2 ;) and Dives in hell, a state of misery, and place of torments. Where, finding so great a change, and being deeply affected with his now woful condition, he is (though in vain) desirous, if not of release, as despairing of that, yet at least of a little ease ; and therefore, addressing himself to Abraham, he entreats him that Lazarus might be sent to "dip" but even "the tip of his finger in water, and cool his tongue ;" (verse 24 ;) but this is denied him as impossible. (Verse 26.) Seeing that would not do, he desires, however, [that] his torments might not be increased by his brethren's coming to him ; whom we may suppose to have been his fellow-sinners, and partakers with him in his riot and luxury. Or, if you will believe so much charity to be among the damned, his request is, that Lazarus might be sent to them, to admonish them for their good, that so they might be brought to a timely repentance, ere they came to an untimely end, and then to endless torments. But this is denied him too, as altogether needless and unprofitable ; (verse 31 ;) and he is told, that God had made sufficient provision for them, given them the most effectual means whereby they might be brought to repentance, in that he had

given them his written word, "Moses and the prophets," by whose writings if they were not persuaded to repent, a miracle would not persuade them: Lazarus rising from the dead would no more be believed than "Moses and the prophets," whose writings were among them; and therefore to them Abraham sends them, as a means sufficient for the end pretended, at least, by Dives to be aimed at: "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." As if he had said, "The will of God concerning thy brethren's duty, and the truth of God concerning future rewards as the great motives to it, are clearly enough laid down in the scripture; and if they believe not these things, and are not persuaded to repentance upon the authority of God in his word, much less will they be moved by the testimony of one coming from the dead." Hence I infer, *that the holy scripture, or written word of God, is sufficient in itself, and most effectually able, to convince men of the truth of those things which are contained in it.* It was so then; why not now? "Moses and the prophets" were so; why are not the apostles and evangelists? Is all the whole scripture grown *Old Testament*, and so old as to be decayed? When and by what means did it lose that life and power, that authority and efficacy, [which] it sometimes had? It had formerly more virtue to convince men than a miracle itself; and now belike it hath less than a council! It could have done more than a man "from the dead;" and now it can do less than a dead man, a sinful pope! For his Holiness of Rome may be very wicked, the Papists themselves being judges.

From the former proposition it will undeniably follow, *that the scripture is sufficient in itself to convince men of its own divineness, or its being itself the word of God, that being one truth [which] it doth so often assert.* The general must comprehend the particular; and therefore if the scripture be sufficient to satisfy the minds of men as to all that it affirms to be truth, it must needs be able to satisfy them as to this too,—that the whole of it is the word of God.

But this our adversaries will not allow; and therefore, instead of taking it for granted, or resting on this single proof, we must here put it to the question, from whence the scripture hath its authority, or upon what grounds we are to believe it to be the word of God. If you will give the Papists leave to answer, they will presently tell you, "Upon the sole authority of the church;" or, "Because the church declares it to be the word of God;" and that "without the determination of the church, it hath very little authority or weight in it," and you are "no more bound to believe the gospel of Matthew, than the history of Livy." Nay, one says plainly,\* that "but for the church, you are no more bound to believe the scripture than Æsop's Fables." And you may be sure [that] the man was in earnest, when you do but consider how many incredible things another of them (alleged at large by our learned Whitaker) musters up out of the scripture, which, he would fain persuade the world, would never be believed, if the church did not interpose her testimony; and yet, as

\* SERDIS. *apud* CHAMIERUM.

broad as the blasphemy mentioned is, another of the same party minceth the matter, and says [that] the words might be "piously spoken." And if a private doctor of the church of Rome may thus transubstantiate blasphemy into piety, or make that pass for pious which is really blasphemous, I see no reason why a pope might not add his authority, and make it canonical too. But, that we may give the best account of the controversy before us,

I. *Some things must be premised by way of explication, for the better understanding of terms.*

II. *The state of the question must be laid down.*

III. *The truth confirmed.*

IV. *Popish objections answered.*

V. *Some application made.*

I. For *explication of terms*, let us see,

1. *What we mean by "the scripture."*—By that therefore is understood "the word of God;" declaring his mind concerning men's happiness and duty, or teaching us what we are to believe concerning God, and how we are to obey him; as it was at first revealed by himself to the apostles and prophets, and by them delivered by word of mouth, and afterward, for the perpetuity and usefulness of it, committed to writing, as we now have it, in the books of the Old and New Testament. So that "the word of God" and "the scripture" are the same materially, and differ only in this, that "the word of God" doth not in itself imply its being written, nor exclude it, but may be considered indifferently as to either; whereas "the scripture" signifies the same word, only with the addition of its being committed to writing.

2. *What is meant by "authority," when we inquire whence the scripture hath its authority.\**—Authority in this business is a power of commanding or persuading, or, as some phrase it, "convincing," arising from some excellency in the thing or person vested with such authority. Whatever hath authority *de facto* ["actually"], so far forth hath esteem and honour, or reverence, yielded to it; as whatever hath authority *de jure* ["rightfully"], hath such esteem or honour of due belonging to it, and answering it as its correlate. And both the one and the other are founded on some excellency: sometimes of nature, both in persons and things; sometimes of office and dignity; sometimes of knowledge; sometimes of virtue and manners; sometimes of prudence, as in persons: according to each of which a suitable respect and honour is due to the authority therefrom arising. And as any man excels in any of these, so he hath authority in that, though he may not in other things. Thus he that excels in the knowledge of the law may have authority in that, though he may have none in physic or divinity, in which he may not excel; and an honest man, that excels in morality, may on that account have the authority of a witness, though not of a judge. Now when we speak of the authority of the scripture, and ask from whence it hath it, we do but inquire whence it is that the scripture persuades, convinces, or binds us to

\* CAMERO *De Verbo Dei.*

believe it, or commands us to assent to it, as the word of God; or whereon its power of so doing is founded,—whether it be not some excellency inherent in itself, or whether it be only something foreign and extrinsic to it.

3. *What we mean by "faith," when it is demanded why we believe the scripture to be the word of God.*—Faith, so far as it concerns the understanding, (for in some acts of faith the will bears part,) is an assent yielded to something proposed under the appearance, at least, of truth, built upon the testimony of another; and therefore, according as the testimony is for the sake of which we believe any thing, accordingly will our faith be: if it be the testimony of a man or men, our faith will be a human faith; but if the testimony be divine, or we believe a thing because God himself asserts it, we call it "a divine faith." Only we must remember, that a truly divine faith hath always God for its author; so that three things concur to the producing [of] the act of such a faith: (1.) The truth believed, which is *objectum materiale*, "the object of it." (2.) The testimony of God concerning that truth, which is *objectum formale*, "the formal reason and ground" of this faith. (3.) The efficiency of God producing it or working it in the mind. Now when we speak of believing the scripture to be the word of God, we speak of a divine faith. A man may upon the credit of his parents, of his minister, of a particular church, or of the church catholic, if such a testimony can be had, believe the scripture to be the word of God; but the question will be, what kind of faith that is, whether such an one as God requires him to receive the scripture with.

4. *What we understand by "the church" in the question.*—"The church" may be taken either for the universality of believers in all places of the world, so as to comprehend private saints, as well as public officers; people, as well as pastors; and those of former ages, as well as the present; prophets themselves, and apostles, and penmen of the scripture. Or we may take it for that part of the catholic church which lives together in the same age, (call it, if you please, "the present catholic church,") comprehending in it all the believers, people as well as pastors, alive at the same time, in the several parts of the whole world. Or else we may understand "the church" in the Popish sense, only for the present church; and that too, for the church of Rome, which they call "catholic;" and that again, only for the pastors of it, excluding the people; and they again may be considered either separately, or in conjunction, as meeting together in a general council; and that, either by themselves without the pope, or together with him; or, lastly, as represented by him, or virtually contained in him: for this great name, "the church," dwindles at last into one only man. But, sure, he is no small one that contains so many in him; for, if we believe the Papists, (not only, though especially, the Jesuits,) the pope, in this controversy, is nothing else but the church catholic compacted, and thrust into a single person, in whom all those several excellencies which are scattered among the members do, as in the head, collectively reside. And so the catholicness [which] they vaunt so much of is crowded into a narrow compass;

for those, whether pastors or members of the church, that lived formerly, are first cut off, and the church is reduced to the present age; then the people, as excrescences, are pared away too, and the bulkiness of the church thereby lessened, the officers or pastors only remaining; and yet these too must be contracted into a council; and that at last epitomized into a pope, who is but the epitome of an epitome, and scarcely so much as a small synopsis of that voluminous thing "the church," [which] they talk so largely of.

II. For the state of the question, these things being premised, take it thus:

1. *In some things we agree with them.*

2. *In some we differ from them.*

1. *In some we agree.*

(1.) That the scripture of the Old and New Testament, which we own (who yet exclude the apocryphal books of one sort or other) is the word of God, is acknowledged by them as well as by us.

(2.) Consequently, that it is in itself true and of divine authority; and that it doth not depend upon the church as to that authority and truth which in itself it hath; or that the testimony of the church doth not make it to be true, or to be the word of God; the Papists themselves (at least the most wary among them) will (be sure, in words) grant. And therefore they have coined a distinction for the nonce; they tell us, that the scripture hath a twofold authority: one in itself, as it is true, and comes from God; the other in relation to us, as it binds us to receive and believe it. The former of these they own to be in the scripture, antecedently to the testimony of the church. The distinction is vain, when all authority is in relation to another, over whom either *de facto*, it is, or *de jure* it ought to be, exercised. But let it pass.

(3.) That every Christian is bound with a divine faith to receive the scripture as the word of God, they grant as well as we do.

(4.) That the Holy Spirit hath a hand in men's believing the scripture to be the word of God, allow the Papists their sense, and they will likewise yield no less than we. That the faith whereby men own the scriptures (if it be a divine one, as they say it is) is wrought in the hearts of men by the Spirit of God, they do grant, and must, unless they will avow themselves to be Pelagians.

(5.) And, lastly, that the church (allow us our sense) may be a help to us, and furtherance to our faith, in receiving the scripture as the word of God, we will grant as well as they. That the universal concurrence of all believers in receiving the scripture, and [that] the testimony [which] they do and in all ages have, in their way and capacity, given to it, is a strong argument to persuade Dissenters to submit to the divine authority of it, we easily yield; and that it is the duty of the present church, during its time, to labour to preserve the scripture pure and entire, and to hold it forth to others, and endeavour to persuade them of its divineness, and so to perform the part of a teacher, we are willing likewise to yield. And so, in a word, we acknowledge the usefulness of the church's testimony, as an exter-

nal help, and that by which some benefit may be reaped by men at the beginning of their faith. For it is the foundation of a human faith, and sufficient for the producing of that. And when a man hath so far yielded as to receive the scripture as God's word, though only on the credit of men, yet coming afterward to peruse and study it, and look more narrowly into it, he may then come to see better and more solid grounds for his belief; and, God working on his heart by the word, he may come to receive it with a divine faith, which at first he did only with a human; as, in John iv., the men of Samaria, who first believed Christ for the woman's words, did afterwards believe him because they heard himself. Thus far therefore there is some agreement between them and us. So that the question is not concerning the object of our faith, the thing to be believed; for both acknowledge it, in this business, to be the divineness of the scripture: nor concerning the efficient cause of that faith; for both will own it to be the Spirit which works this faith in the heart: but concerning the medium or argument whereby the Spirit works it, and so the ground and foundation of our faith, that which is the formal reason why we believe the scripture to be the word of God.

2. This therefore is *the thing wherein we and they differ*: something they affirm which we deny, and something we affirm which they deny.

(1.) They affirm the testimony of the present church (and that must be of Rome only now; for they count that only the catholic one)—that is, of the pastors of it convened in a general council, either with the pope, as some of them say, or without him, as others, or virtually in him, as others—to be the only sufficient ground of men's believing the scripture to be the word of God; and so tell us, that the Spirit bears witness to the divinity of the scripture by the testimony of the church, and makes use of that as the medium or argument by which he persuades men to receive the scripture as the word of God; and that without that testimony, or antecedently to it, men cannot know, nor are bound to believe, the scripture so to be. This we deny.

(2.) We affirm on the other side, that the testimony of the Spirit of God in the word itself—witnessing it to be of God, by that stamp and impress, or, which comes to the same, by those notes and marks of divinity, which everywhere appear in it—is the immediate and principal, and a sufficient, reason of our believing it to be the word of God, and the medium [which] the Spirit useth in working faith in us, or making us assent to the divinity of the scripture. So that as the Spirit, working inwardly in our hearts, moves as the efficient of our faith, so the scripture itself, in its own intrinsical beauty, lustre, power, and excellency, is that which moves us, in the way of an object or medium, to yield our assent to its being of God. By this the Spirit of God, as the author of the scripture, witnesseth it to be of God; and, by an internal application of this to our minds, induceth us to assent to its so being. The testimony of the Spirit in the word is open, public, general, to all, if they have but eyes to see it;

whereas the inward application of it by the efficiency of the Spirit is only to believers.

This they deny ; and this we shall first, though more briefly, prove ; and then disprove (as well as we deny) what they assert.

**ARGUMENT I.** *The Holy Ghost, in scripture, calls us to the scripture itself, and God's authority only in it, and not to the church, for the settling of our belief of its divinity ; and therefore in the scripture itself we have a sufficient argument to move us to believe its coming from God.*—In Isai. viii. 20, we are sent “to the law and to the testimony.” The prophets generally propound what they deliver merely in the name and on the authority of God : their usual style is, “Thus saith the Lord,” and, “The word of the Lord.” They do nowhere send us to the church to know whether it be so or not ; but leave it with us, as being of itself (that is, without the testimony of the church) sufficient to convince us : and if we will not believe it, at our own peril be it. So, in the text, Abraham (that is indeed Christ, whose mind Abraham in this parable is brought-in speaking) sends Dives's brethren to “Moses and the prophets ;” and our Saviour Christ sends the Jews to the scriptures, bids them “search” them. (John v. 39, and so verses 46, 47.) And Luke commends the Bereans, not that they sent up to Jerusalem to the church there, or waited for a general council, to assure them of the divineness of what was preached to them ; but that “they daily searched the scriptures, to see if those things were so.” (Acts xvii. 11.) But all this would be in vain, our labour would be lost in searching the scriptures, and looking into them for the confirmation of themselves, if there were not something in them sufficient to persuade us of their having God for their author, but at last we must have recourse to the church to assure us of it. Why are we sent thus far about, if a nearer way be at hand ?

**ARG. II.** *Those properties which the Holy Ghost in the scripture attributes to the scripture will prove the same.*—It is light : “The commandment is a lamp, and the law is light.” (Prov. vi. 23.) “A lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.” (Psalm cxix. 105.) “A light shining in a dark place.” (2 Peter i. 19.) And, surely, that which is light may discover itself. He that needs another to tell him what is light, wants eyes. It “is quick and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword :” (Heb. iv. 12 :) it enters into the soul, and therefore by its own power and efficacy discovers itself to us as well as us to ourselves. It is “like as a fire, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces.” (Jer. xxiii. 29.) So likewise, 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25 ; and Psalm xix. 7, 8 : from both which we may argue, That word which convinceth men, judgeth them, makes manifest the secrets of their hearts ; that, again, which converts the soul, makes wise the simple, rejoiceth the heart, enlightens the eyes ; is sufficiently able to discover itself to be of God, though the church should not give-in her testimony : But such a word is the scripture : Therefore, &c. And, further, why may not God's word discover its author, as well as his works do ? If “the heavens declare the glory of God,



and the firmament shows his handywork ;” (Psalm xix. 1 ; ) if “even the least creatures preach God to us,” \* they that bear not his image on them, yet have some *vestigia*, some “footsteps” of him ; and much more [if] his greater and more noble works, the glorious fabric of heaven and earth, and man, the most excellent of his creatures on earth, show forth that excellency in them, which manifests itself to be from none but God ; and [if] he hath, in a word, left such an impress of himself upon his works, as that they generally proclaim themselves to be his ; why should it be thought incredible, that God should leave the like notices of himself upon his word, and stamp that upon it which might plainly evidence it to be his ? Nay, if men do commonly make themselves known by their works, writers by their skill, artists by their curious pieces ; if Apelles could have drawn such a picture, Phidias have cut such a statue, Cicero have penned such an oration, that any who had judgment in such things might have said [that] such a man, and no other, was the author of such a work ; surely, then, much more may God in so lively a manner express himself in his word, as clearly to notify to us, that it is his. And if any should say [that] God could have done it, but would not, I desire to know a good reason why God, who hath left us so plain and conspicuous evidences of his wisdom, power, and goodness on his creatures, would not leave the print of himself in the like manner upon his word.

ARG. III. *God’s revealing himself to us in the scripture is the first and highest revelation upon which our faith is built ; and therefore that revelation is sufficient to manifest itself to us, even without the church’s testimony.* †—The reason of the consequence is, because, faith (a divine one, such as we speak of) being always built upon revelation, whatever it be which is the first revelation whereon our faith is built must be sufficient to notify itself to us ; otherwise our faith is not founded upon any revelation at all, if that revelation needs something else which is not revelation to give credit to it : or if that which is the first revelation yet needs another to make it manifest to us, it is not itself the first ; which is a palpable contradiction. And for the antecedent, I thus make it appear : In the business of faith, either we must come to some first revelation, or we must go on from one to another without any end : for either the faith whereby I believe this revelation, that “the scripture is the word of God,” to be divine, is founded upon this very revelation itself, namely, the scripture, (which so many times tells me it is of God,) or upon some other revelation : if upon this itself, then I have what I would,—that this is the first revelation whereon my faith is built ; but if on another, I ask again, Must I believe that for itself, or for some other ? If for itself, then that must be the first ; if for some other, I shall ask again, Am I to believe that for itself, or for another ? And so there will be no end, no first revelation on which my faith is founded ; but I must go higher, and higher, even *in infinitum*.

\* *Præsentem clamat qualibet herba Deum.*  
Turnebul.

† *Vide ROB. BARON. Contra*

Other arguments might be produced to confirm what we assert, and are by our divines. But I intended brevity in these; and the truth we maintain will be more confirmed by what I am, in the next place, to say against the Papists' assertion.

III. *That therefore the testimony of the church is not the only sufficient ground (nor indeed a sufficient one at all) of our believing the divinity of the scripture, I shall prove by several arguments.*

ARGUMENT I. I argue from Eph. ii. 20: "And we are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets." *The scripture is the foundation of the church, and therefore hath not its authority, even in respect of us, from the church; but, on the contrary, the church hath its authority from the scripture, upon which it depends in its very being, and without which it is not the church, nor if built upon any other foundation: it hath no authority but from the scripture, none in itself but as thence it derives it, and we know none [that] it hath but as there we find it.*—And this is spoken of the true church, and not merely the church in the Popish sense. If ever we would find out the nature and definition of the church, we must seek it in the scripture, where alone it is that we see it to be God's will to have a church upon earth, and by what means it is called, and of whom it is constituted, and with what power and privileges it is endowed. He that will question whether the scripture be the word of God, will as easily question whether the church be the church of God, or whether God have any church or not. Now if the church have all its authority from the scripture, by which alone it is a church, and known to be so, how can it be with any reason said, that the scripture hath its authority, even as to us, from the church? For if the church have no authority but from the scripture, then the authority of the church must suppose that of the scripture, and the scripture must be owned, or the church cannot be owned. For who knows what or which the church is, but as the scripture describes it to us? And so the scripture hath not its authority, as to us, from the church. For can the scripture both give authority to the church, and yet receive its own authority from it? Can it authorize the church before it be itself authorized by it? Can it give the church a power to communicate authority to it, and yet have no authority hitherto itself? Nay, can it be consistent with common sense, that the scripture should give the church a power to bind men to the belief of it, and yet have no power in itself to bind the church to the belief of it?

Again: when they say [that] the scripture hath its authority from the church, I ask, How shall I know that there is a church? For if I be one that own no such thing as the scripture, (which the church is persuading me to believe,) withal I own no such society as the church; and how will they prove [that] there is such an one, but by the scripture? For I who am supposed to acknowledge no church, do acknowledge no authority [that] it hath, and shall not take its own word. And yet if I grant [that] there be a church, how shall I know that such a company of men as pretend to be the church are really so?

I shall not take their own testimony ; I am not satisfied in their being witnesses to themselves. And if they will prove themselves to be the church by the scripture, then either the scripture must have authority, as to me, before the church, or else they prove one obscure thing by another. If they say [that] there be certain signs and marks of the church inherent in it by which it may be known ; alas ! I know not those marks but by the scripture which describes the church. If they say [that] the Spirit witnesseth by those marks that this is the church, why may not I say the same of the scripture, and so that be known, without the testimony of the church, to be the word of God, as well as the church to be the church of God ? And yet, after all this, granting this society of men to be the church, yet how shall I know that this church is infallible ? And if I know it not to be so, I am not so mad as to build my faith upon its authority. If they say, " Because it is governed by the Holy Ghost ; " how shall I know that ? For it is not obvious to me that it is. If they say, " Because Christ hath promised that it should ; " I ask, Where ? Where can it be but in the scripture ? Sure, then, the scripture must be owned, and have its authority, as to me ; or their proof is invalid, and they do but trifle instead of arguing.

Before I proceed to another argument, let us examine what is excepted against this. To this text, Eph. ii. 20, it is replied by some of the Papists :—

EXCEPTION I. That " by ' foundation ' is not meant the scripture written by the apostles and prophets, but their preaching."

ANSWER. But, 1. If that were granted, it would not prejudice our cause. What they wrote and preached is the same truth, and differs not essentially, but only in the way of delivery ; one being delivered to their present hearers *vivâ voce*, [" orally,"] and the other by writing transmitted likewise to posterity : " Witnessing both to small and great, and saying none other things than what the prophets and Moses did say should come." (Acts xxvi. 22. So, Acts xvii.)

2. The preaching of the apostles and prophets did last but a while ; whereas Paul speaks of the lasting, perpetual foundation of the church.

3. If he speaks only of the preaching of the apostles and prophets, how comes he to join these two together ? For the prophets were long since dead ; and their preaching, if that only were the foundation of the church, could be the foundation of that church only which lived with them, and heard them.

EXCEPT. II. " He meant therefore," say some of our adversaries, " the New-Testament prophets, who preached at the same time with the apostles."

ANSWER. But that is not so easily proved as said : for though such prophets are mentioned in some places of the New Testament, it doth not follow that they must needs be understood here. For why doth the apostle mention them only, and not evangelists too, nay, pastors and teachers likewise, whom he joins all together in Eph. iv. 11, and who did at the same time preach the same truth which the apostles did ? Beside that, we find, by the doctrine of " the prophets " mentioned in the New Testament, the truth preached and written by the

prophets under the Old commonly understood. So, 2 Peter i. 19 : "A more sure word of prophecy." Heb. i. 1 : "God spake to the fathers by the prophets." So also, Rom. i. 2 ; and Luke i. 70. The apostles, under the New Testament, were the chief that taught, though New-Testament prophets, as likewise evangelists, pastors, and teachers, did preach the same doctrine ; as formerly, under the Old Testament, the prophets that then lived were the chief, though others beside, as the Levites, did teach "the good knowledge of the Lord." (2 Chron. xxx. 22.)

EXCEPT. III. "But," say they again, "the Ephesians were not built upon Paul's writings, which were not then extant, but on his preaching ; and therefore these other kind of prophets must be understood, on whose preaching, together with the apostles', they were built."

ANSWER. The preaching [of] the truth, or writing, it makes no difference ; but still it is the same truth which is the foundation of the church, whether it be written or preached. And though the Ephesians were built on the word *as preached* by Paul, yet what hinders but they might likewise be built on the word *as written* by former prophets, whom though they could not now hear, yet they might read ? And Paul himself proves what he preached by what the prophets had written ; that so both the word preached and written might be propounded to the Ephesians as one and the same foundation of their faith.

EXCEPT. IV. They say that "by 'the church' in this place is understood, not the pastors, but the people ; because the pastors were they that preached ; and therefore if they were meant, it would follow that they should be built upon themselves."

ANSWER I. It is most absurd to say, that the pastors and doctors of the church are not built upon the doctrine of the apostles and prophets. Who ever heard of one foundation for the faith of the teachers, and another for the faith of the people ? It seems then, by their own confession, [that] the pope and his clergy are not built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets ; and if they have not this foundation, I am sure they have no better. The faith of pastors and people is the same ; and why is not the foundation the same too ? Are *they* fit to build up others in the faith of the scriptures *who* are not themselves built upon the scriptures ? And it is idle to say, [that] they are built on the Holy Spirit : for will they separate the Spirit from the scripture ? What doth the Spirit teach but out of and according to the scripture ? To be led by the Spirit, and yet built on the scriptures, are very well consistent.

ANSWER II. It is not absurd to say, that the teachers of the church are built on the doctrine [which] they teach ; though *not as they teach it, yet as they have BEFORE received and believed it*. Indeed they ought to offer nothing to others as the foundation of their faith but what is the foundation of their own ; nor to hazard the souls of their hearers upon any worse bottom, than they would venture their own souls. And it doth not follow from hence, that they are taught by themselves, or are a foundation to themselves ; but only that the

doctrine [which] they have themselves believed and are built upon,—they deliver it to others, that they too may believe it, and be built upon it.

ARG. II. *The doctrine delivered in the scripture doth not, as to our receiving it, depend upon the church; and therefore neither doth the scripture itself; the doctrine of the scripture, and the scripture itself, are really the same, and differ but in an accident of being written, or not written.*—The same doctrines [that] we have in the scripture were published and known before they were written; and they did not then depend upon the authority of the church, and why should they now? Doth the writing of them make them of less authority, or less credible, or less able to convince men's minds, than they formerly were? Upon the authority of what church did Adam, Seth, Enoch, Abraham, &c., receive the word of God, when it was yet unwritten? What council was there, what pope to persuade them of it? And how come the same truths to have less power and efficacy to persuade us than them? Will our adversaries say [that] the patriarchs received the word immediately from God himself? True, some of them did; but what is that to the church and her authority? Or will they say, [that] those patriarchs from whom others received the word were infallible? They will hardly be able to prove it. How came Abraham to persuade his wife to tell a lie, and expose her chastity thereby, for the saving of his life, if he were infallible? And how came other patriarchs to allow polygamy, if they were infallible? And do not the Papists themselves tell us that the church of the Jews was not infallible; and that infallibility is the peculiar privilege of the gospel-church, the promise of it being made only to that?\*

And, to come down lower, Moses received many things of the Lord which were immediately received by the people: as the law of the passover; (Exod. xii. ;) and where the people presently answer, that all the words which the Lord had said, they would do. (Exod. xxiv. 3.) Did the people themselves ("the church in the wilderness," Acts vii. 38) give authority to these laws, or did the council of the elders do it? We find nothing of their being convened together upon any such account, as to consider whether God's laws should be received or not. Or did they receive them on the authority of any other church? If so, which was it, where was it? Or, lastly, was Moses an Old-Testament pope, and the virtual church of Israel? Then, belike, that church was infallible as well as the gospel, contrary to their own doctrine. That Moses was infallibly inspired in all that he commanded the people from God, is sure; but that ever he pressed them to receive the word of God on his own authority, or any but God's, can never be proved. If they say that the people received the word on the account of the miracles wrought by Moses, that is more to our purpose than theirs. And what shall we say of the law written in men's hearts? on whose authority is that received? It is the same for substance with the law written in the word; and must there be the testimony of the church to assure men that even this law

\* BECANI *Man. Controv.* lib. i. cap. 3.

too is of God? Or, if it be acknowledged for its own light and power whereby it manifests itself to be of God, why may not the law written in the word be so acknowledged too?

But come we further down. On whose authority were the sermons of the prophets, after Moses's time, received? When they spoke to the people in the name of the Lord, did they ever cite the testimony of the church to vouch what they said to be indeed from the Lord? Or, did they ever seek the suffrages of the high priests and governors of the church to establish their doctrine as divine? Their ordinary style is, "Thus saith the Lord;" not, "Thus saith the church," or, "The church says, that the Lord saith thus."

Lastly: if we descend to the times of the New Testament, we shall find the same there. When our Saviour Christ himself preached, what he spoke was as much the word of God when he spake it, as now that it is written; but neither did he refer himself as to the divinity of his doctrine to the authority of the church, nor did any believe it on that account. He did not refer it to the church; for he did not receive testimony from men; (John v. 34;) no, not from John Baptist himself, though of no small authority in the Jewish church, and generally taken to be a prophet. Though John, as his duty was, did bear witness to Christ, and point to him: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world;" (John i. 29, 36;) yet Christ had no need of this testimony to make himself [to] be received as the Messiah, or what he preached, as the word of God; as if the one or the other could not have been received without it. He therefore tells the Jews, that he had "greater witness than that of John:" (John v. 36:) first his works; then his Father himself; (verse 37;) then the written word: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they that testify of me." (Verse 39.) All this while here is not one tittle of the church and its testimony; and if that be the only means whereby men can be assured of the divineness of the word, how comes Christ to overlook it? And that they who believed Christ's doctrines did not believe it on the authority of the church, is clear; for the church of the Jews was generally corrupt, erred in many things, and therefore was unfit. And it was, especially as to its guides and officers, generally against Christ; and therefore unwilling to give testimony to him. It neither owned him nor his doctrine; so that they who received and believed Christ's preaching, did it on some other account than the testimony of the then present church. If the Papists shall say, [that] they received his doctrine on the account of Christ's own divine authority, I would inquire, how they came to know [that] he had any such authority. For that Christ was the Messiah, and consequently had this divine authority, were some of the truths he preached. If they say, that Christ's doctrine was received either upon the account of his miracles, or of its agreement with the scripture of the Old Testament; they say more for us than for themselves, and either way desert their cause.

And if we look to the apostles that followed Christ, and preached

the same doctrine, we shall see that it was not received on the account of the church, no more than commanded to the hearers thereon. In Acts ii. 41, upon Peter's preaching, three thousand believed: "They gladly received the word;" they did not, it seems, expect the testimony of the church to tell them whether it were the word or not. In Acts iv. 4, we read of either five thousand more, or so many as made up the whole five thousand. And in Acts viii. the Samaritans receive the gospel on Philip's preaching; and afterward the eunuch. And, to pass by others, the Bereans and Thessalonians receive the word, in Acts xvii. Of the former it is said, that "they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." (Verse 11.) Of the latter Paul testifies, that "they received the word, not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the word of God." (1 Thess. ii. 13.) All this while, here is no church interposing its authority, or asserting the divineness of what Peter, or Philip, or Paul preached. On what account then did these people believe the word preached by the apostles? "On the authority of the church," say the Papists. But what church? "Why," says a great one among them,\* speaking of the Thessalonians, "the voice of Paul was the voice of the church, when he preached to the Thessalonians; and so they in receiving the word on Paul's authority received it on the authority of the church." Say the same of Peter and Philip.

Paul, it seems then, was the church; or else how could Paul's preaching be the voice of the church? What kind of church then was Paul? Was he the church virtual? Was he a pope, and was Peter, and Philip, and the rest of the apostles and evangelists, so too? A blessed church, sure, that had so many popes! or rather, a miserable one, that either had no visible head, or had so many! If they say, [that] Paul's voice was the voice of the church, because he was an officer of it, by whom the church published the doctrine [which] she believed and was to propagate: Paul was indeed an officer of the church; but yet made so by Jesus Christ himself, not an apostle of men, nor by man. (Gal. i. 1.) And the doctrine [which] he preached was no otherwise the doctrine of the church, than as it was the same which the church believed, but never taught it him; for he "received it not of men, neither was taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." (Verse 12.) And therefore they might more reasonably have said, that the voice of Paul was the voice of Christ; the word he preached being more properly the word of Christ who was the author of it, than the word of the church who only received it of Christ. But what will become of this fine invention of our Jesuit, if the Thessalonians did not receive the word on the authority of Paul himself, whether in his single or representative capacity, or call it as you please? And, surely, they did not: for then his authority must be owned, ere on the account of that his preaching could be believed. But both Paul and his authority, whatever it were, were unknown to the Thessalonians when he first preached among them; and therefore

\* STAPLETON.

could not induce them to believe what he taught. The same we may say of the other apostles, in their first planting [of] the gospel when they came to the Gentiles; they were unknown till they made themselves and their authority known by their preaching. And when they came to the Jews where they were known, yet they were not trusted, nor their apostolical authority acknowledged. And so it could prevail neither with the one nor with the other till their doctrine was first believed.

ARG. III. *The scripture hath its authority in relation to us before the church pass its judgment concerning it; and therefore it hath not that authority from the church.*—This will appear,

1. By the concession of the Papists themselves, who acknowledge that the church only declares the scripture to be authentic, but doth not make it so. Surely then it was authentic in itself before that declaration of the church, which is only a pronouncing [of] that to be which was before. And if it be in itself authentic, it is so to us too; that is, it hath in itself a power of binding us to the belief of it, so soon as we come to hear of it, whether the church hath declared its authenticity or not.

2. If the scripture hath not its authority as to us before the judgment of the church, then either it must be a private or public judgment of the church which gives it that authority. A private one it cannot be: for when we speak of the authority of the scripture *as to us*, it is understood of all Christians every where; and it is not fit that a private judgment of the church, or, which is the same, the judgment of a private church, should give laws to all the rest. Nor can it be the public testimony, or that of the catholic church; for none such can be produced by the Papists from whence the scripture hath its authority. Let them, if they can, show us the first general council that ever declared the scripture to be the word of God. The council of Jerusalem, in Acts xv., if it were a general one, is the first we read of; and that toucheth not the point in hand, doth not declare the scripture to be authentic, but takes it for granted. They that were there met cite the scripture of the Old Testament, and thereby own its authority; but do not then first establish it. And Peter and the rest do the like in their preaching. (Acts ii., iii.) And dare the Papists say, then, that the Old Testament was not authentic before this council? Had the church hitherto no certain canon, nor authentic scripture, to be the rule of its faith? After this council we find no general one till that of Nice. And was the church of God all this while too, for three hundred years, without the canon of the scripture? to say nothing that the council of Nice itself did never define which it was; but acknowledged it as already received.

3. If a council meets to declare the divine authority of the scripture, we would know by what authority it meets. If the several pastors of the church come together on the authority and by the command of the scripture itself, then it hath its authority before they meet; else it could not make it their duty so to do. If by some



revelation or impulse of the Spirit without the scripture, what kind of spirit is that which acts in separation from the scripture? And if the Papists will affirm this, let them no more call themselves good Catholics, but even the worst of fanatics.

ARG. IV. *The authority of the church is not more certain or clear, as to us, than that of the scripture; and therefore the scripture cannot have its authority from it.*—That which proves another thing must itself be more clear and better known. But that the authority of the church is not better known to us than that of the scripture, will soon appear; for whatever authority the church hath, she must prove it either from herself, or from something else.

If from any thing else, it must either be from the testimony of those that are out of the church; but they know not the church, nor any authority it hath: or from the scripture; but then the authority of the scripture must be more known than that of the church: or from the Spirit; but how will they make it out that they have the testimony of the Spirit for them, otherwise than by the scripture, in and by which he is wont to bear witness? If they say [that] the Spirit witnesseth to the authority of the church inwardly, so as to persuade the minds of dissenters that the church is the church of God; this is merely begged and not proved, and yet will not satisfy, neither. For we ask not, "What is the efficient cause of men's believing the authority of the church?" but, "What is the argument whereon that belief is grounded, and whereby the church persuades men of its own authority?"

Or else, on the other side, if the church prove its authority from itself, then the same thing shall be proved by itself. But yet I ask, What judgment of the church is it whereby its authority is proved? They say, "Both the testimony of the ancient and of the present church." But how can the testimony of the ancient church be known, but by the writings of those that formerly lived, the books of fathers, and decrees of councils? But we would know how we shall have greater assurance that those books were written by those fathers whose names they bear, and those decrees made by those councils to which they are ascribed, than that the scripture is the word of God. How came we to be more certain that Cyprian's or Austin's works were written by them, than that the four Gospels were written by the four evangelists, or Paul's Epistles by him? And if the present church prove its authority by the ancient church, it must prove it but to very few: for they are but few that ever saw, and yet fewer that ever read, the writings of the ancients; and many perhaps have never heard of them. And besides, the ancient church was some time the present church; and when it was so, from whence might it prove its authority? From some more ancient, no doubt, according to our adversaries' discourse, it must be. But from whence did the first church prove its authority, (for we must come to a first,) when there was none before it to prove it by?

Lastly: the authority of the present church cannot be proved by the testimony of the present church. For then it must be either by a

part of it; but that cannot be; for a part of the present church is inferior to the whole of it; and he that questions the authority of the whole, will no less question that of a part: or else, by the whole church; and then the authority of the whole church must be proved by the authority of the whole church; we must believe [that] she is the church, because she says [that] she is the church.

ARG. V. *If we are to believe the divinity of the scripture merely on the church's authority, then that faith can be but a human faith, because founded on no better than the authority of men.*—Our faith can be no better than its foundation; a divine faith cannot be built upon human testimony. But the Papists themselves are ashamed to own a thing so grossly absurd, as that the faith whereby we believe one main article of religion, the divineness of the scripture, should be but a human faith.

EXCEPTION. To this therefore they say, that “the faith whereby we believe the scripture to be the word of God is a divine faith, and built on the testimony of God; and that testimony is no other than the testimony of the church.”\* We easily reply,

ANSWER 1. That the church's testimony is no otherwise the testimony of God than as it agrees with the word of God; and when it doth so, we are to believe what the church says, not merely because the church says it, but because God says it. And if the church holds forth to me any divine truth, and I yield my assent to it merely because the church declares it to me; though what I believe be a divine truth, yet the faith with which I receive it will be but a human faith: the truth is of God, but my faith is in man. Whereas if I believe any truth because God speaks it, though not by the church, nor any officer of it, but some private person; yet my faith is a divine faith, and the testimony of a private person speaking what the scripture speaks, is as really the voice of God as the testimony of the church.

2. Some of the most learned of the Papists themselves † make a great difference between the testimony of God and of the church. The former they grant to be altogether divine; the latter, *modo quodam*, “after a sort” divine. The former they reckon to be the primary foundation of faith; the latter, but the secondary. Nay, some of them acknowledge that faith which rests only on the authority of the church not to be divine; and some, the church's testimony to be but the *conditio sine quâ non*, “the condition without which we cannot” believe the divinity of the scriptures; which surely they would scarcely do, if they thought the testimony of the church to be the testimony of God. And if the testimony of the church be but “in some sort” a divine testimony, the faith which is built upon it can be but “in some sort” a divine faith. And if the testimony

\* *Dæus per ecclesiam loquens non aliter loquitur, quàm si immediatè per visiones et somnia, aut quovis alio supernaturali modo revelandi, nobis loqueretur.*—STAPLETONUS. “When God speaks by the church, he speaks no otherwise than if he were himself speaking to us immediately in visions and dreams, or in any other supernatural mode of revelation.”—EDIT. † BELLARMINUS; BECANUS *apud* ROB. BARON.; MELCHIOR CANUS, Hb. II. cap. 8.

of the church be but the secondary foundation of faith, how comes it to be (according to Stapleton) the testimony of God himself, which surely they will allow to be the primary foundation of faith?

3. Before they can evince the testimony of the church to be the testimony of God, they must first prove the church to be absolutely infallible, and see [that] they agree among themselves about it; lest we be still at a loss how to know what is that church whose testimony is the voice of God himself. And,

4. If I do but deny the testimony of the church to be the testimony of God, (as we do,) how will they prove it? "By the testimony of the church." I shall not take its word. Or will they say [that] it hath such notes of its being the voice of God in it, as thereby to manifest itself to be his voice? They will get nothing by that; for I am ready to say the same of the scripture. Or, lastly, will they prove it by the scripture? Then they plainly give away their cause, and own the authority of the scripture to be before the testimony of the church.

ARG. VI. *If we must believe the scripture to be the word of God, only because the church determines it to be so, then we must believe all things in it to be of God for the same reason only.*—That "Christ came into the world to save sinners;" (1 Tim. i. 15;) that "whosoever believeth in him, shall have everlasting life," &c. (John iii. 16.) And all the promises of the gospel must be believed to be made to us by God, only because the church tells us they were; and the truth of them, as to us, depends merely on the church's authority; and so all the comfort of our hearts, and the hopes we have of heaven, must be primarily derived from the authority of the church, and ultimately resolved into it. What a case had we been in, if it had not pleased the church to receive these promises into the canon! And if the Papists say true, she might not have received them: for, as we shall see by and by,\* it depends wholly upon the church what books shall be canonical, and what not; and, by the same reason, what parts of those books; and, consequently, whether all the promises of the gospel shall be canonical or not. And so we owe all our hope to the church's charity; and must count her a good-natured mother for not cutting off these "breasts of consolation;" (Isai. lvi. 11;) but leaving something for her poor children to hang upon, to keep them from perishing. Belike it is the church's favour that all the world is not damned. I am sure [that] the best promises in the scripture, if the Popish doctrine take place, can afford but cold comfort. For if I be asked what ground I have for my hopes of salvation; I answer, The promises of God. If I be asked again, "Are these promises true?" I answer, Yes. "But how doth that appear?" Why, because God made them. "But how do I know [that] God made them?" Well enough; for the church says [that] he did. Here the authority of the church is the first foundation of all my hopes: and poor ones, God knows, they are, if no better grounded, and little comfort I am like to have in them. It is to little purpose to tell me [that] the testimony of the

\* See the Papists' Objections, pages 629—640.

church is not merely human ; for is it merely divine ? If it be not, it cannot found a faith which is merely divine. And when my soul and the everlasting salvation of it lie at stake, I think I am concerned to see that my faith and hopes have a sure foundation ; and *that*, I am sure, none can be which is not merely divine.

ARG. VII. *If the testimony of the church is necessary, and the only sufficient reason of our believing the divineness of the scripture, then it will certainly follow, that no man who is out of the church can be called into the church by the scripture.*—Which is pretty strange doctrine ; and yet I see not how possibly the Papists can evade it. For they that are called into the church by the scripture are persuaded by the scripture, and convinced by it, that it is their duty to join themselves to the church ; but this can never be if the scripture be of no authority with them.\* Whatever convinceth or persuades a man must certainly have some authority with him ; and if therefore the church persuades men by the scripture, that scripture must needs be received and owned, ere they be joined to the church ; the scripture being the very reason and argument whereby they are persuaded. The conclusion will not be yielded to, if the medium from whence it is inferred be not first granted ; and in this case the scripture is the medium [which] the church makes use of in persuading men to embrace her society. Thus it was in the beginning of the gospel-church : Peter disproves the conceit [which] some of the Jews had of him and the rest of the apostles, that they were “ full of new wine,” (Acts ii. 13,) by the testimony of scripture, prophesying concerning the pouring-out of the Holy Ghost in the latter days. (Joel ii. 28—32.) Then he proves the resurrection of Christ by Psalm xvi. 8, &c. ; and his ascension into heaven by Psalm cx. 1 ; and his being the Christ promised to David to be of the fruit of his loins, by Psalm cxxxii. 11. And hereupon follows the bringing into the church [of] three thousand of the hearers, who, “ when they heard these things, were pricked in their hearts.” (Acts ii. 37.) And so, in Acts iii., how often doth Peter cite the prophets, particularly Moses ! (Verse 22.) And Philip thus preacheth to the eunuch out of the prophet Isaiah ; (Acts viii. 27—39 ;) and Peter again to Cornelius out of the prophets ; (Acts x. 43 ;) and Paul, in Acts xiii., where we find some both Jews and Gentiles wrought on by his preaching, and brought into the church. And was it the authority of these apostles (that is, in the Papists’ style, the church) that persuaded thus many ? Alas ! they that heard them did not once dream of their being the church ; and therefore did not believe on that account.

ARG. VIII. *No law receives its authority of binding men to subjection to it from those that are merely subject to it, and did not make it ; therefore the scripture hath not its authority from the church, which is merely subject to it as a law, and is not the author of it.*—The whole church is so, and not only pastors but people ; and if the pope himself be not under the scripture, as the law by which

\* *Vide* CHAMIERI *Panstratia*, de Can., lib. vi. c. 18.

he is to be ruled, well may he pass for *ὁ ἀνομος*, "that wicked or lawless one" spoken of in 2 Thess. ii. 8. True, indeed, a law may be made known by a herald that proclaims it; but who can say it receives its authority of binding the subjects from him, when he himself is one of them, and as much bound to it as any else? Allow the church to be the herald which proclaims and publisheth this law, must she therefore give authority to it? Put [a] case: a subject hears of a law, though not by a herald: is he not bound to submit to it, because he did not hear it proclaimed? Suppose a man come to the knowledge of the scripture some other way than by the ministry of the church, in the Popish sense, that is, the pastors of it; (as it is storied [that] the Indians and the Iberians did, by the help of private persons;) is he not bound to submit to it? Must he suspend his belief till he have the testimony of the church to assure him that the scripture is of God?

If it be said, that "a law doth not bind till it be promulgated, and the promulgation of it is the church's business;" I answer: God hath published his law sufficiently in the scripture, and to it all must be subject to whom the scripture comes, whether the church further tells them that it is the word of God, or not; as in the case mentioned it was received and submitted to. I wonder how the church was the herald that proclaimed the law of God to the Iberians, when they received it from a poor captive woman. Stapleton (before) tells us, that when Paul preached to the Thessalonians, his voice was the voice of the church: and, I pray, was this poor woman's voice the voice of the church too? By my consent, let her even be the church itself, virtual, infallible, a mere pope Joan I. But, further: if the church publish this law [which] we speak of, and it doth not bind till published by her, upon what account did she herself believe it when she first published it? (Let the question be concerning the herald himself, why he believes the law which himself proclaims.) Doth the church believe the scripture to be the word of God at all antecedently to her own publishing and propounding it to others, or not? Is her faith wrought in her by the testimony she herself gives to the scripture, or by something before? I suppose the Papists will scarce be so mad as to say the former; for what kind of faith must that be, when a man believes merely upon his own testimony? And how can the church be the church before she believes? If they say [that] the church's faith in the scripture was wrought in her before her own testimony concerning its divineness, I would fain know what that is by which it is wrought. If it be any thing in the word itself, or be the testimony of the Spirit, why may not I, or any man else, believe the scripture before the church give in her testimony concerning it, upon the same account that she herself doth? But if she believe the divinity of the scripture upon the testimony of the former church, I would know again what better assurance she hath of the testimony of the former church, than of the scripture itself; seeing she can know it only out of the writings of the ancients; and whoever questions the authority of the scripture, may upon

much better grounds question the writings of fathers, and decrees of councils, as was said before.

**ARG. IX.** *They that believe not the scripture to be the word of God, when propounded to them as such, though they have not the testimony of the church to confirm them in it, yet sin in their not believing it, and are therefore bound to believe it antecedently to the church's testimony; (for if they were not bound to believe it, they should not sin in disbelieving it;) and consequently the scripture hath its authority in itself, and before the testimony of the church, and therefore not from it.*—That men sin in not believing the scripture even without the church's testimony, is proved from Acts xiii. 46, 51, where Paul shakes off the dust of his feet against the unbelieving Jews, and tells them [that] they “judge themselves unworthy of eternal life.” See Acts xxviii. 24, &c., where he declares their actual unbelief to be the effect of their hard-heartedness; which though it might be judicial, they being left of God to themselves and their own lusts, yet withal it was sinful too, and contracted by themselves. And will any man say, that these Jews in refusing the gospel did not sin? I suppose, the Papists themselves scarcely will. If they say, as formerly, that Paul's testimony was the testimony of the church; I answer: Those Jews owned no such thing as a gospel-church, nor any authority it had to bind them to the belief of the gospel; and consequently could not own Paul as an officer of that church, his apostleship being merely a gospel-office; which a man could not submit to who did not first receive the gospel by which he was constituted an apostle. If they say, [that] they might know him to be an apostle by the miracles [which] he wrought; I answer again, that when he preached at Antioch in Pisidia, we have no mention of any miracle he there wrought; yet some both Jews and Gentiles believed. (Acts xiii. 14, 42, 43.) And therefore they neither received himself nor his preaching upon the account of his miracles; nor could miracles make it the duty of the unbelieving Jews to submit to Paul as an officer of the gospel-church, when no miracle was wrought by him. If it be said that he was known by the fame of his miracles elsewhere wrought, which gave credit to him; then it will follow, that Paul was to be believed for his miracles' sake, as well as the gospel for his sake; and thence again, that the gospel was not to be believed merely for Paul's own authority, but principally for his miracles, it being for their sake that he himself was owned as having any authority. And if so, either Paul's authority was not the authority of the church, or the authority of Paul as the church was not supreme: for that of his miracles was above it; that which procured credit to him was of greater authority than himself. Upon the whole it seems, by this reply of the Papists, that miracles were the great thing which procured credit to Paul's preaching; and if they did, the authority of the church did not; unless, as before they made Paul and the church the same, so here they will make miracles and the church the same.

**ARG. X.** *It cannot be certainly known by the testimony of the*

*church, that the scripture is the word of God; and therefore it hath not, as to us, its authority from the church.*—If it may be certainly known that the scripture is the word of God by the testimony of the church, then either it must be by the testimony of the universality of believers, or of the pastors. Not the former: for, (beside that the Papists themselves exclude them, and say that the scripture is to have authority *with* them, but not *from* them,)\* either we speak of the multitude of believers separately and disjunctively; and so they cannot give credit to the scripture, when they are all of them fallible and liable to error: or else all together and in conjunction; but so likewise they cannot certify us of the divineness of the scripture, because they never did, never will, meet together to do it. And we may stay long enough ere we believe the divinity of the scripture, if we tarry till all the believers in the world meet together to give in their verdict concerning it. If we speak of the church merely in the Popish sense, for the pastors of it, there will be as much uncertainty as in the other: for either we must consider them separately too, or in conjunction. If separately, they are all liable to error; and, according to the Papists themselves, they do all believe the scripture on the authority of the church, and therefore cannot give authority to it. If we consider them all together, when did, or when will, the pastors of all the churches in the world meet together to give their joint testimony to the scripture? And if they should, why are we bound to believe them? They were not infallible singly, nor can they be any more so conjunctly. If all the several parts of the integral, the church, be liable to error or corruption, why is not the whole? But suppose the pastors meet by their delegates in a general council, will that mend the matter? Not at all, that I see; for it is not yet determined by the Papists themselves where the supreme authority, which should give testimony to the scripture, doth reside, whether in pope, council, or both. And so we are left at uncertainties, and know not to whom to go, whose word to take; but must suspend our belief of the divineness of the scripture, till it be agreed upon among our adversaries whose authority is indeed supreme, and to be relied upon.

Yet put [the] case, [that] a general council be the chief which gives testimony to the scripture: how shall we know that this council hath not erred in determining the scripture to be the word of God? Shall we know it by the scripture? It is supposed [that] we doubt concerning that, and so its testimony is not valid. Or by the testimony of the church? Why, this council is the church itself, which determines in its own case; and so we must believe this council hath not erred, because it says it hath not erred. If the pope be the church virtual, and we must receive the scripture on his credit, the same objection will be against him; for how shall we know [that] he doth not err? By the scripture? But it is yet in question. Or by the testimony of the church? The pope himself is this church; and then we must believe he hath not erred, only because he saith he

\* *Vide Syntagma Thesium in Acad. Salmurien.*

hath not erred. Lastly : let pope and council both together be this church : how shall we know they both together do not err? Not by the scripture ; for that is not yet owned : nor by the testimony of the church ; for pope and council together are this church, and their testimony concerning themselves is not to be received. And, to conclude : how shall we know that pope and council are the church? Not because they themselves say so, nor because the scripture doth ; for that is not yet believed. Not by the testimony of the Spirit ; for why shall that bear witness any more to the church that it is the church, than to the scripture that it is the word of God? Nor yet by notes or marks inherent in the church ; for why may not the same be allowed to the scripture? And how shall we know these marks to be true, but by the scripture, by which alone we can judge of the nature and properties of the church? And yet still it is supposed that the scripture is not believed.

IV. This may suffice to show the absurdity of the Popish doctrine. Let us in the next place see *what grounds they have for it, and how they oppose the truth*. I shall only speak to the chief of their arguments, and reduce them to as few heads as well as I can. Any that would see them more largely handled may consult several of our Protestant divines, who speak more fully to this point than the shortness of a sermon will permit.

OBJECTION I. "Either," say they, "the authority of the scripture must be known by the church, or by the scripture itself, or by the testimony of the Spirit : But it cannot be known [by] either of the two latter ways : And therefore can only [be known by] the first."

First. That it cannot be known *by the scripture itself*, they prove, because "neither the whole scripture can be proved by the whole, nor one part of it by another. For if a man deny the whole scripture, it will be in vain to attempt the proof of one part by another, when such an one doth no more receive the authority of one part than of another. And the whole cannot be proved by the whole : for then the same thing should be proved by itself ; and whereas that which is brought to prove another thing should itself be more clear than that which it is to prove, in this case one obscure thing should prove another ; or rather an obscure thing be brought to prove itself ; for the whole scripture cannot be said to be more clear or better known than itself."

Before I propound the other part of their proof, I shall answer to this.

ANSWER. The divine authority of the scripture may be known by the scripture itself. For,

1. *The authority of one part of it may be proved by another part, to those that do not deny the whole*.—Some there have been, and still may be, who have received some part of the scriptures, and not others ; to such we may prove that part which they deny, by that which they allow. The Sadducees acknowledged the Five Books of Moses, but not "the prophets ;" our Saviour Christ therefore, when he had to do with them, did not cite the prophecy of Daniel to prove the resurrection of the dead, but Moses's writings. (Matt. xxii.) But when he dealt with others of the Jews who received the whole Old Testament,



he proved what he spake out of other parts of it, out of the prophets themselves ; and so bids them more generally "search the scriptures." (John v. 39.) Why may not we do likewise ? We shall see how the Old and New Testament prove each other ; so that we may argue with men that acknowledge the one, so as, by that [which] they allow, to prove that which they deny.

(1.) *The Old Testament is proved by the New.*—Christ divides the whole Old Testament into Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms ; and thereby declares them all to be canonical. (Luke xxiv. 44.) That was then the usual way by which the Jews did divide the Old Testament. And here in the text, Abraham sends Dives's brethren to Moses and the Prophets. And Christ, mentioning a place out of the Psalms, bears witness to the whole Old Testament under the name of "the scripture : " "The scripture cannot be broken." (John x. 34, 35.) And we find particular parts of the Old Testament proved in the New. In Matt. v., Christ confirms the law of Moses, as to its divine authority, when he explains it ; beside other places in which he speaks of some particular laws. In Matt. xii. 39—42, and Luke iv. 25—27, and especially Heb. xi., the historical part of the scripture is confirmed. And how many testimonies have we out of the Psalms and Prophets everywhere which do the same ! The twelve lesser prophets are at once proved by Stephen's alleging them, in Acts vii. 42 : where the testimony cited is out of Amos, but Stephen mentions the "book of the prophets ;" that is, that volume of the smaller prophets which among the Jews was reckoned as one book.

(2.) *The New Testament is confirmed by the Old.*—For how often do Christ and his apostles prove their doctrine out of the Old Testament ? When they quote the Old Testament, it is a good proof of its authority to any that own the New ; and when by those quotations they prove their own doctrine, it is a good argument for the proof of the New Testament to them that believe the Old, as the case was of the Jews at that time. And therefore our Saviour Christ refers them to the Old Testament, particularly Moses, (John v. 45, 46,) for the proof of the great doctrine he held forth to them,—that he was the Messiah that should come into the world. So Peter, in Acts iii. 22, 23, refers to Deut. xviii. 18, 19, to prove what he was preaching : "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up to you," &c. The same we may say of the types of the Old Testament,—that they confirm the New, in which we find them fulfilled. If any say, "We find no particular confirmation of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther in the New Testament ;" I answer : They are confirmed by our Saviour Christ in his general division of the Old Testament, according to the Jewish account, into the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, under which these books were contained, the whole volume of the Hagiographa going under the name of "the Psalms."

2. "But now, what, if we have to do with *those that deny the whole scripture, admit no part of it ?* how shall we convince them that it is the word of God ?" I answer,

(1.) Not by the church, [to] be sure ; for if they have no reverence for

any part of the scripture, they will have as little for the church, which hath no being as a church but from the scripture. And therefore it will be a most vain thing to attempt a proof of the scripture, either in part, or in the whole, by the church, which is as unknown in the nature of a church to them that question the scripture, as the scripture itself is.

(2.) *We would prove the whole scripture by the whole*, as well as one part of it by another.—For as the whole system of God's works in the creation proves itself to be of God, and to have him for its author, (Psalm xix. 1, &c.,) by all those eminent signs and effects of God's goodness, power, and wisdom which are to be seen in the whole ; so likewise doth the whole scripture prove God to be the author of it, by all those signs and evidences of his wisdom, goodness, power, and holiness which appear in the whole, and manifest it to be of God. Nor doth it follow from hence, that if the whole scripture prove itself, it is, as the Papists say, more known than itself, simply and absolutely, though, in some respects, it certainly may be so ; as a man in one respect may be more known than himself in another. A man, when he hath given some eminent proofs of his learning, is thereby more known than without them he is ; so the scripture too, considered with all those evidences of God's goodness, wisdom, holiness, &c., which appear in it, is more known than itself when these are not considered. How do we prove the sun to be the sun but by the glory of its light, which so far excels the light of other stars ? And is not the sun, considered with its light, more known to us than considered in itself ? How do we come to the knowledge of the nature of things in the world, but by considering their properties, qualities, effects, &c., which plainly declare what their nature is, seeing such properties, &c., could not be but where such a nature is ? So likewise here, there are those properties in the scripture, those excellences, which could be from none but God, and therefore make it appear that that writing which hath those excellences in it is of God. To speak of these distinctly is not my present business, not having to do with them that deny the scripture.

Secondly. "We cannot," say the Papists again, "know the scripture to be the word of God *by the testimony of the Spirit*. For either it is by the public testimony, which is that of the church ;" (and if this be granted, they have enough ;) "or its private testimony. But then," they say, "it will follow, 1. That our faith in the scripture is enthusiasm. 2. That if the private testimony of the Spirit be questioned, it cannot be proved but by the scripture ; and so the scripture being proved by the Spirit, and the Spirit again by the scripture, we shall run in a round, which is no lawful way of arguing."

ANSWER. To this I answer, that we know the scripture to be of God by the public testimony of the Spirit ; but I deny his public testimony to be his witnessing by the church. It is indeed his witnessing by the scripture itself, when he witnesseth it to be of God by those excellences of it which evidence it so to be : and this he witnesseth to all that have their eyes open to see it ; and in that respect it may be called "public." And when he witnesseth the same thing by the same means

in the hearts of particular believers, and so applies his public testimony to private consciences, enlightening and enabling men to believe upon his public testimony, you may if you please call that "his private testimony." This clearly cuts off all that the adversaries object; and no such things will follow as they pretend upon what we maintain. We know no other private testimony of the Spirit but this particular application of his public one; and then I am sure there is no danger of enthusiasm. For that is properly enthusiasm, when God reveals any thing to men's minds immediately and in an extraordinary way, and without the intervention of the usual means whereby he is wont to make himself known to men; as in former times he did to the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles: (and the enthusiasm [which] both the Papists and we find fault with is, when men pretend to this which yet they have not:) but when God makes known his will in an ordinary way, by the use of instruments and means for the conveying of spiritual knowledge to them, this is not enthusiasm; as when "faith comes by hearing." (Rom. x. 17.) And so it is in the case before us: when the Spirit witnesseth to the hearts of private believers that the scripture is the word of God, he doth it in an ordinary way, working in them a faith of the scripture, by those arguments of divinity which are in the scripture itself; and makes use of them as means to induce them to believe. As the light and brightness of the sun is the medium whereby it is known to be the sun, so that divine light and power which is in the word is the very medium and argument whereby the Spirit, enabling us to perceive it, persuades us that that word is the word of God. And I would ask our adversaries, Can a private man believe the divinity of the scripture merely on the authority of the church, without the Spirit's witnessing it to him by that authority? If they say, "Yes," then they must acknowledge that faith to be merely human, because not wrought by God. If they say, "No," (as they must if they be constant to themselves, in holding that the Spirit witnesseth by the church,) then, when the Spirit witnesseth to the conscience of a private believer by the church, why is not that enthusiasm too? For when he witnesseth to a private conscience by this application of his public testimony, here is as much a private spirit and a private testimony as any we speak of. The only difference is in the medium [which] the Spirit useth in this private work; which they say is the testimony of the church, and [which] we say is the scripture itself. Both of us agree that it is the Spirit's public testimony; but they call one thing so, and we another. If they say, that yet this is not enthusiasm, because here is no immediate revelation, but means are made use of; I say the same of the Spirit's witnessing to the divinity of the scripture in the heart of a private believer by the scripture itself, or those notes of divinity which are apparent in the word. This is no more immediate than the other, nor any less by the intervention of means.

And for the other consequent [which] they would infer from the private testimony of the Spirit,—that then "we shall run in a round, and prove the scripture to be the word of God by the testimony of

the Spirit, and prove the Spirit again by the scripture ;” \* there is as little fear of this as of the other. For we bring not the private testimony of the Spirit in our consciences, (against which only this objection is made,) or his applying his public testimony to us in a way of illumination and conviction of our minds, as the argument inducing us to believe ; but that, we say, is his public testimony in the word, when he witnesseth its divinity to us by that excellency, light, and power which is in the word itself, and makes use of that to persuade us to believe. The Spirit indeed is the efficient of our faith, or the agent which causeth us to believe, enlightening our minds, and drawing our hearts to consent to the truth ; but the evidences of divinity [which] we see in the scripture, through the Spirit’s enlightening us, is the reason or motive of our believing : they move us to believe objectively, but the Spirit effectively. So that here is no danger of a circle in our discourse, or proving *idem per idem* [“the same thing by itself”]. For if I be asked, how I know the scripture to be the word of God ; this question may have a double sense : for either it is meant of the power and virtue whereby I believe ; and then I answer : By the power and efficiency of the Spirit of God, opening the eyes of my understanding, and enabling me to believe : or it is meant of the medium or argument made use of, and by which, as a motive, I am drawn to believe : and then I answer : Those impressions of divinity [which] the Spirit hath left on the word, and by which he witnesseth it to be of God, are the argument or motive persuading me to believe. Now when they ask how I know the Spirit who witnesseth in my conscience to the divinity of the scripture to be the Spirit of God, the question is plainly, by what means or argument I am persuaded that it is the Spirit of God ; and then I answer, By those properties of the Spirit which the scripture mentions. And so the question, how I know the scripture to be the word of God, either is concerning the *efficient* of my belief of the scripture, or else it is not to the purpose ; (for I do not allege the efficiency or inward operating of the Spirit as the *motive* of my faith ;) and the latter is concerning the *objective cause* or *argument* inducing me to believe the Spirit to be the Spirit of God. The mistake is this : they would fasten upon us, that we make the Spirit in his inward work upon our hearts to be the motive to our faith ; whereas we only make it to be the efficient of our faith.

To conclude this answer to their first argument : let us see if it may not be retorted upon themselves. If the church’s testimony give authority to the scripture, as Papists say, then if a man deny the authority of the church, how will they prove it ? For neither one part of the church can give credit to the other, when the whole is questioned ; nor can the whole church give credit to itself ; for then the whole church will be more known than itself. Or if we ask, How comes the church to believe the scripture ? Is it by its own testimony ? But, surely, it must believe it ere it can give testimony to it. Or is it

\* Vide R. BARON. *Contra Turneb.* ; CAMERONEM *De Verbo Dei* ; et TURETINUM *De Cr. Pontif.*

by the testimony of the Spirit? If so, is it by the public testimony of the Spirit? That cannot be; for, according to them, that is no other than the testimony of the church itself, the absurdity of which hath been already shown. Or if it be the private testimony of the Spirit; then they by their own arguing will run into enthusiasm, as well as we. And indeed they do plainly run into a circle, in their proving the scripture by the authority of the church, and the authority of the church again by the scripture; for with them the authority of the church is the motive or argument whereby they prove the divine authority of the scripture, and that again is the motive or argument by which they prove the authority of the church. And so both the church and the scripture are more known than each other, and yet less [known] too: more known, because they prove each other; and less known, because they are proved by each other. Here they are themselves in a noose. But it is no matter; the pope's omnipotency can easily break it, or the church's authority [can] make her logic canonical, though all the Aristotles in the world should make it apocryphal!

OBJECT. II. "It is necessary for us in religion to have the canon of scripture certain: but this we cannot have otherwise than by the church; because its authority is most certain, and the only one which is sufficient to remove all doubts concerning the divineness of the scripture out of our minds; both because God speaks by the church, and because the church best knows the scripture: she is Christ's bride, and therefore best knows the voice of the Bridegroom; she hath the Spirit of Christ, and therefore can best judge of his word and the style of it."

ANSWER. We deny that the canon of the scripture cannot be known but by the church, and the contrary hath been already proved: the scripture hath been owned and received where no such judgment of the church hath been. And it is as false that the authority of the church is the greatest and most certain; for that of the scripture, upon which the church and her authority depend, is above it. God speaks in the scripture, and by it teacheth the church herself; and therefore his authority in the scripture is greater,—the authority of him that teacheth, than of those by whom he teacheth: as the authority of a king in his laws is greater than that of an officer that proclaims them. A king may by his council or judges acquaint his subjects with his laws; but will it therefore follow [that] because he speaks his mind, which is in those laws, by such officers, that their authority is greater than that of those laws themselves? God speaks by the church; (the true church, we mean;) but he speaks nothing by her but what he speaks in the scripture, which she doth only ministerially declare to us; and therefore the authority of God and his law is above hers, who though she publish yet did not make it, but is herself subject to it, and by that law only stands obliged to publish it to others. And for what they say of the church's ability to judge of the scripture, we answer, that she cannot judge of the style of the scripture otherwise than by the help of the Spirit, and by the

same private Christians may judge too; and there be no means whereby the church can know the scripture to be the word of God, but particular believers may know it by the same. And if the church's authority be so great, in our adversaries' opinion, because she can so well judge of the style of the scripture, how much greater is that of the scripture, which is able by its style to manifest itself to the church!

EXCEPTION. "But," say they, "we do not know the voice of Christ in the scripture but by the church; therefore her authority is greater."

ANSWER. This is both false and inconsequent: *false*; for it hath been sufficiently evinced that the voice of Christ may be otherwise known, and hath been too; *inconsequent*, in that it follows not that the authority of the church is therefore greater than that of the scripture. John Baptist directed many to Christ: and suppose [that] without his direction of them and witnessing to Christ they had never come to him, will it thence follow that John's authority was greater than Christ's? The church, we grant, may be a mean whereby many are brought to the belief of the scripture, who yet afterward do believe upon better grounds, as being persuaded by the word itself.

OBJECT. III. "We can no otherwise know the scripture to be the word of God than as we know what books are canonical, and what not; what were written by inspired penmen, and what were not; but this we can know only by the authority of the church. This is proved, because some books which at first were not received as canonical, the church did afterward receive, as Ecclesiasticus, Tobit, Susanna, the books of Maccabees, &c.; the epistle to the Hebrews, the second of Peter, second and third of John, and the Revelation. And books which are not canonical, are therefore not canonical because the church would not allow them as such; namely, the revelation of Paul, the gospel of Peter, Thomas, Matthias, &c. And, lastly, some books written by prophets and apostles are not canonical, because the church hath not determined that they are so."

ANSWER. To let pass what a learned Protestant \* largely proves; namely, that it is possible to know the scripture to be the word of God, and yet not know which books are particularly canonical and written by inspired penmen; that it may be known that the doctrine contained in those books is of God, though it be not known whether it were written by such as were immediately inspired themselves, or had it from those that were: in the primitive times, some not only good men, but churches too, did deny some of those books to be canonical which we now generally receive; and yet they did receive the word of God, and the doctrine contained in those books, though they questioned whether those books themselves were written by such as were immediately inspired or not. And do not the Papists themselves tell us, that the canon of the scripture was not established for a long time after the apostles' days, till it might be done by general

\* CAMERO.

councils? And yet surely the church did in the mean time own the word of God, and know the voice of Christ.

We say then that it may be known which books are canonical, and which are not, otherwise than by the church; for the church herself knows them otherwise than by herself, or her own authority. When she declares them to be canonical, she believes them to be canonical; and her believing them to be canonical is antecedent to her declaring them to be so. She must learn herself, before she can teach others: she believes them therefore to be canonical, because she sees the stamp of God upon them, and that they are such as can be of none but God. (The same way likewise private believers may know them.) And when the church sees this stamp of God upon a book, she thence concludes it to be divine, and then declares it to be so.

EXCEPTION. "But how then comes it to pass, that some books of canonical scripture were not so soon received as others, if all have such an impress of divinity upon them?"

ANSWER. I answer, that these notes of divinity, which are sufficient in all the several books of scripture to demonstrate them to be of God, yet may be more clear and illustrious in some than in others; as God's power and wisdom may be more apparent and conspicuous in some of his works than in others of them. Or else it may be from the different degrees of illumination afforded to different persons, and in different ages. When some doubted of some books of scripture, all did not: and they that did not, had a greater measure of the Spirit, as to that at least, than others had.

Now, to their particular proofs of the minor proposition in their arguments, we answer particularly,

1. That those books annexed by the Papists to the Old Testament, and called by them "deuterocanonical," and by us no better still than "apocryphal," such as the books of Maccabees, Esdras, Tobit, &c., never were received into the canon by the ancient church, nor can they produce the decree of any one ancient council wherein they were owned; as for modern councils, we matter them not. They say that these books were doubted of at first, and afterward received. Belike, then, the church at first did not know them to be the word of God; and if she be the bride of Christ, who best of all knows the Bridegroom's voice, how came she for so long time not to know it? Here certainly, in spite of infallibility, the church must be in an error: for if she doubted of the divinity of these books when yet they were really divine, she erred in so doubting; and if she did not know them to be of God, and yet did not receive them, she was more than erroneous, that is, she was plainly rebellious. As for the epistle to the Hebrews, the second of Peter, and those others which we all own as canonical, though some particular persons or churches might doubt of their authenticity, yet it doth not appear that all ever did. Some of the Papists themselves confess, that the epistle to the Hebrews was generally acknowledged, unless by two or three of the Latin fathers; and Jerome reckons both that and the Revelation as generally acknow-

ledged for canonical.\* However, when these books were owned as canonical, it was not on the bare authority of the church. For how came the church herself to acknowledge them? How came she to know that they were written by inspiration? Did she believe it on her own credit? Or did she not rather receive them as canonical, because she found them canonical, perceiving the stamp of God upon them? And surely the same reason might make us receive them, though the church had not testified concerning them.

2. To the second thing [which] they allege, concerning the revelation of Paul, the gospel of Peter, &c., or any book written by philosophers or by heretics; I answer, that if the church did reject them, she did do but her duty; and it will not follow from her rejecting them, that there was no other way of knowing them not to be canonical beside the church's disowning them. For upon what grounds did the church disown them? upon her own authority? Then she rejected them because she rejected them, judged them not to be canonical because she judged them not to be canonical. If she did disown them because she saw not that dignity and excellency in them which she saw in the books of the Old and New Testament, and which might persuade that they were of God; surely, then, it was not merely the church's authority which made them not to be canonical; and on the same grounds that the church rejected those books, we likewise may do it. Sure I am, [that] Eusebius reckons those books not only "as forged," but as something worse; that is, "absurd and impious." †

3. When they say that "some writings of the prophets and apostles themselves are not canonical; and therefore not so, because not acknowledged by the church to be so:" I answer, that some things the prophets and apostles might write as private men, and not by the inspiration and special direction of the Holy Ghost; and such never were to be received into the canon of the scripture, nor were written with any intent that they should. But those things which they wrote as prophets and as apostles, by the immediate inspiration and special direction of the Spirit, and for this end,—that they might be the rule of the saints' faith,—were all received into the canon. If they deny this, let them produce any such writing of prophets or apostles not yet received as canonical. For what they say, out of 1 Chron. xxix. 29, of the writings of Samuel, Nathan, and Gad, how will they ever make it evident that they were other than the books of Samuel, written partly by himself while he lived, and partly by Gad and Nathan after his death? And so likewise, 2 Chron. ix. 29, the writing of Nathan, Ahijah, and Iddo; and 2 Chron. xiii. 22, Iddo again; 2 Chron. xx. 34, Jehu: how will they ever prove them to be other than what we

\* Speaking of both: *Et tamen nos utramque suscipimus, nequaquam hujus temporis consuetudinem, sed veterum scriptorum auctoritatem sequentes, qui plerumque utriusque utuntur testimoniis, non ut interdum de apocryphis facere solent, &c.—Epist. ad Dardan.* "And yet we receive both of them, uninfluenced by the custom of the present age, but following the authority of ancient writers, who have usually employed the testimony of these two; not citing them only occasionally or seldom, as was their practice with regard to the apocryphal writings."—ΕΔΙΤ. † *Ὅθεν οὐδ' ἐν τοῖς αὐτὰ κατὰ κτεον, ἀλλ' ὡς ἀποκα ψαυτη και δυσσεβη παραιτητεον.*—Lib. i. cap. 25.



have in the books of Kings? It is true, too, that mention is made of some writings of Solomon which are not in the canon; but how will it appear that they ever ought to be there, or were ever written for that purpose? As for any writings of the apostles which are not in the scripture, the chief insisted on is the epistle, as they would have it, of Paul to the Laodiceans, mentioned Col. iv. 16; which we deny to have been written by Paul, nor will the words enforce any such thing: "the epistle *from* Laodicea" is one thing, and "*to* Laodicea" another.\* It is most likely to have been some letter written by the Loadiceans to Paul, in which there being some things that concerned the Colossians, the apostle adviseth them to read that epistle. Jerome saith of this epistle, that "some do read it as one of Paul's; but *it is generally rejected.*" † And for other books which they mention, they have been as generally disowned by the church as fictitious, and not written by the authors whose names they bear. The same father cashiers several of them together, that went under the name of Peter, "as being all apocryphal." ‡

OBJECT. IV. "We cannot confute heretics who deny the scripture or part of it, but by the authority of the catholic church, which receives it."

ANSWER. Those heretics that will acknowledge the church may be confuted by its authority, but not have faith wrought in them: they may have their mouths stopped, but not their minds enlightened, by it. And though we may make use of the authority of the church with such, yet not as the chief, and much less only, argument to persuade them of the divinity of the scripture; but even by the same way whereby believers are persuaded of it, may heretics be persuaded too. And if we meet with such heretics as pay no more reverence to the church than to the scripture, we are in a fine case, if we have no other way of dealing with them but by urging the authority of the church: surely, they that deny the divinity of the one, will not stick to deride the testimony of the other.

OBJECT. V. To pass by other testimonies, [which] they cite out of the ancients, one they mainly triumph in,—that saying of Austin, that he had not believed the gospel, had not the authority of the church moved him to it. §

ANSWER. Austin speaks, when converted and orthodox, of himself as formerly a Manichee; and shows that he had then been moved by the authority of the church to receive the gospel. When he was a Manichee he was a heretic, not a Heathen, and so might have some esteem for the church; or if he had no respect for the church as the church, yet he might—even by the confession of Papists themselves, so far as he saw the consent of so many nations, and the prescription of so long time, and other like arguments in the church to induce him to—reverence it.

\* It is in the Greek, *εκ Λαοδικειας*, not *προς Λαοδικειαν*. † *Παρα τωντων εκβαλλεται.*—*De Script. Eccles.* ‡ *Ως αποκρυφα οντα αποδοκιμαζεται.*—*Ibid.*  
§ *Ego non crederem evangelio, nisi me ecclesia catholica commoveret autoritas.*—*Crederem et commoveret for credidisset, et commovisset*, as is a frequent way of speaking with that father. See CHAMERL *Panstr.*, lib. ii. cap. 11, at large.

## V. APPLICATION.

USE I. From what hath been spoken, we may conclude,

1. *The mischief and danger of Popery as to this particular doctrine.*—How dishonourable and injurious to God is this doctrine of the Papists, and how destructive to religion!

(1.) *How dishonourable to God, for the credit of his word to depend upon the testimony of men, and not to be able of itself to discover its author!*

(i.) *A dishonour it is to his wisdom*, if he could not otherwise assure men of the divine original of the scripture, than by having men bear witness to it; if he knew no other way of certifying us of his will, and making known his laws to us, but by the help of our fellow-creatures, who, as well as we, are subject to those laws. Can God make “the heavens declare his glory,” and cannot he make the scripture do it? (Psalm xix. 1.) Can he make himself “known by the judgments which he executes,” and not by the statutes [which] he establisheth? (Psalm ix. 16.) Can he show forth his wisdom, power, and goodness by the things [which] he doeth, and not by the things [which] he speaks; and so make his works praise him, but not his word? (Psalm cxlv. 10.) Nay, can men so write, so speak, as thereby to discover themselves, and what wisdom, or knowledge, or skill they have; and cannot God do as much? Is God less wise and able than they are; or is he wise in some things, and not in others? How came “the Spirit of the Lord” to be thus “straitened,” (Micah ii. 7,) as to have but this one way of making known the word to us; and that such an one as [that] he must be beholden to his creatures for it? It is certain that formerly he had other ways; and why hath he not now? How comes he to be less wise than he was? Surely, if there be “no variableness” in God, “nor shadow of turning,” (James i. 17,) he must be as unchangeable in his wisdom as in any other attribute, and there can be no diminution of it.

(ii.) If God can otherwise make known the divineness of his word than by the testimony of the church, and yet will not, *it looks* (to say no worse) *very like a reflection upon his goodness*, to leave men a more uncertain way of coming to the knowledge of his will and their duty, when he could give them a more sure one; to leave his people no better helps against their weakness and doubtings than the uncertain authority of a man, or a company of men, who may as easily be deceived in the testimony they give, as others may in the faith they yield to it! And if God did formerly give his people a better and more sure foundation for their faith than the authority of mere men, weak men, fallible men, (as hath been proved,) how comes his goodness to fail now, and to be less to saints under the gospel than to those under the law, or the patriarchs before it?

(iii.) *This doctrine of the Romanists greatly derogates from God's sovereignty.*—It degrades his authority, and lifts up the church into his place: it doth worse than make princes go on foot, and servants ride on horses. (Eccles. x. 7.) If what the Papists teach in this

point be true, the Holy Ghost is in a worse condition than his apostle was, who needed not "letters of commendation" to or from the churches; (2 Cor. iii. 1;) he must be fain to canvass for the votes of men, or seek their testimonials; God himself cannot establish his laws without the church's leave; Jesus Christ shall not be King of saints, not sway his sceptre, nor rule his house, without the good-liking of the pope and council. What is this but what was said of old?—*Nisi homini Deus placuerit, Deus non erit*; \* "God must be concerned to please men," at least, the Papists: "for if he doth not, they know how to be quit with him; for then He shall not exercise his authority over them," not bind their consciences, not command their faith, not prescribe them their duty, not govern their lives: the church will not give their approbation to his laws, and so he shall not be their Sovereign, he shall not be their God. What can be more injurious to God's supremacy than this doctrine, which subjects the authority of God in his word to the pleasure of his creatures? What sovereign prince upon earth will endure to be so dealt with, to have the authority of his laws suspended upon the testimony of those that publish them, of those that are themselves subject to them? I dare say, the pope scorns to have it said that his decretals have their force from him that divulgeth them, or his Bulls from him that posts them up. He would not endure, if he sent out his orders to a church or council, that they should sit upon them, and subject them to their judgment, and approve or disallow of them as they saw fit; he would expect that they should be received, and submitted to, upon the account of his stamp upon them, and seal annexed to them. Why may not the scripture be allowed as much, which hath God's stamp so fairly impressed on it, and had the seal of so many miracles to confirm it?

(2.) *This doctrine of the Papists is prejudicial, indeed destructive, to Christian religion.*—It leaves us only the name of Christianity, and no more. What is all religion, if God be not the author of it? and, if the Papists say true, we can never be sure that God is the author of that which we call Christian. This one doctrine of the Romish synagogue puts us into a worse condition than the Jewish one is in; which hath some foundation for its faith and worship, whereas this leaves none at all for ours. It is, in a word, most perniciously contrary to and destructive of a Christian *faith* and *comfort* and *obedience* all at once.

(i.) *It is destructive to our faith.*—It leaves us no firm footing for it, when it must be first founded upon, and lastly resolved into, the authority of men; and [when] we can never know the scripture to be the word of God, without either the concurring votes of all the Christian world to assure us of it, or at least the definitive sentence of a pope or council, and have no better assurance of its being divine, than their say-so: What can ruin our faith, if the undermining of it do not? And what is it to undermine it, if this be not? It takes away the very foundation of it; and, instead of the infallible veracity of the God of truth, puts us off with the uncertain testimony of, at least, a company

• TERTULLIANUS.

of fallible men ; who may every one of them be deceived ; and therefore so may we too, for company, if we rely on their authority. Indeed, it leaves us little (if any at all) more certainty for our religion than the Turks have for theirs : for why may not they as well require us to believe that God speaks to us in the Alcoran because they say He doth, as the Papists require us to believe [that] He speaks to us in the scripture merely because the pope or council says so ? Nay, how little difference doth this cursed doctrine make between the great mysteries of the gospel, the articles of our faith, and the ridiculous fables of the rabbins, or abominations of Mahomet ! For if some writings are not canonical scripture merely because the church, that is, pope or council, hath not canonized them, and some are because it hath ; [if] the Acts of Peter and the Revelation of Paul are not the word of God because the church would not so far dignify them, and the Epistles of Peter and Paul are therefore of divine authority because it so seemed good to the church to determine ; why might not the same church, if she had been so pleased, have added the Talmud to the scripture, ay, and the Alcoran too ? And they cannot say [that] it is because these books contain not only innumerable fopperies, but notorious lies, unless they will eat their own words, and recede from one of their chiefest arguments ; namely, that the apocryphal books [which] they themselves do not receive, are therefore only not canonical because the church hath not received them, when the rest are because she hath.

(ii.) *It is as destructive to our comfort.*—When our great comfort proceeds from our faith, such as the one is, so will the other be too : an ill-grounded faith can never produce a well-grounded comfort : the foundation being shaken, the building must needs totter. What will become of that “comfort of the scripture” [which] the apostle speaks of, (Rom. xv. 4,) that “joy and peace in believing,” (verse 13,) that hope in God’s word [which] David mentions, (Psalm cxix. 81 ; cxxx. 5,) if we can no otherwise be sure that it is God’s word, but only because men tell us it is so ? How will our hope and comfort fail us, and our hearts fail us, when we come to consider, that that testimony of man which is the ground of our faith, and therefore of our comfort, for aught we know, will, sure enough may, fail us ! How should we stand, if our foundation sink under us ? If the rain should descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon us, what shelter, what fence should we have ? How great would our fall be ! (Matt. vii. 27.) If temptations should arise, and assault and shake our faith, how should we maintain our comforts ? Would it not be sad for us, or any of us, to say within ourselves ?—“ I have ventured my soul and its eternal welfare upon the scripture, and the promises I there find ; but how do I know that this scripture is the word of God ? How do I know [that] I am not mistaken ? Am I as sure [that] I am not deceived, as I am certain of being miserable if I be ? Here is indeed a company of men that call themselves ‘the church :’ but that is a hard word ; I never meet it anywhere but in their mouths, and in this book which they have put into my hands ; and yet these are the only men that tell me it is the word of God. But what reason

have I to believe them? They say indeed [that] they are infallible, and cannot be deceived; but how shall I know that? They say [that] the scripture says so. Suppose it doth, what know I but [that] they make it say so; and [that] the scripture and they are agreed together to gratify one another, and speak for one another? I see not that they are the church unless the scripture makes them so; and yet they tell me, that the scripture is not the word of God to me unless they make it so. I know no authority [which] they have to bind me to believe them but what this book gives them; and they know none [that] it hath to bind me to believe it but what they give it. And thus I am quite at a loss, if either this thing called 'the church' be not honest, but will cheat me; or be not infallible, but may deceive me. How vain, then, and flattering have all my hopes been hitherto, how uncertain my faith, how deceitful my joys and comforts! Farewell 'glory, and honour, and peace!' Farewell 'life and immortality!' Farewell 'the inheritance of the saints,' and the 'crown of righteousness!' Fine things, if I knew where to have them!" (Rom. ii. 10; 2 Tim. i. 10; Col. i. 12; 2 Tim. iv. 8.) How would you like this, Christians? Do ye not even tremble at the thoughts of such dismal temptations? What think you then of the religion of the Papists, which exposeth all that embrace it to such uncertainties? It is no wonder [that] they allow no certainty of salvation to believers, when they leave them at so great uncertainties for the very foundation of their faith.

(iii.) *It is as destructive to our obedience as to either of the other.*—Gospel-obedience is the fruit of faith; and therefore such as is the faith [which] we have, such will be the obedience [which] we yield. If our faith be not right, our obedience can be no better. A human faith is not sufficient to found our duty to God upon; and that obedience which proceeds only from such a faith, will neither be acceptable to God, nor available to us. And yet such is the faith, and no higher, which causeth our obedience, if it be grounded only, or firstly, in the testimony of man, and resolved into it. "Without faith it is impossible to please God;" (Heb. xi. 6;) and that faith, surely, is a divine faith, such as rests on God's own authority. But if we believe the scripture to be of God only because men say it is, that faith cannot be divine; and therefore nor the obedience which flows from it acceptable. In this case, the same testimony of the church which would be the foundation of our faith, would likewise be the cause of our obedience. We should believe duty to be duty, with the same kind of faith with which we believed the command of it to be of God, and that would be no other than men's telling us that it is; and so the result of all would be, that we must obey God, because they tell us he commands us to obey him; and so we first show a respect to men in believing, before we show any to God in obeying him. And then, not only we must be beholden to the church for the knowledge [which] we have of our duty, but God must be beholden to her too for our performing of it.

2. *How much better a religion is ours than that of the Papists!*—We are the veriest fools upon earth, if ever we change our own for theirs.

(1.) *We have more certainty in our way than they have, or ever can have, in their way.*—Our faith is built upon no worse a bottom than the infinite veracity of Him who is the truth itself revealing himself to us in the scripture of truth, and not on the sandy foundation of any human testimony: it leans upon God, not upon men; upon “Thus saith the Lord,” not “Thus saith the church.” Though we despise not the true church, but pay reverence to all that authority wherewith God hath vested it; yet we dare not set it up in God’s place. We are willing [that] it should be a help to our faith, but not the foundation of it; and so should do its own office, but not invade God’s seat, nor take his work out of his hands: that would neither be for his glory, nor our own security. Our faith is a better than such an one would be: we receive it not from churches, from popes, from councils; but from God himself, that cannot lie to us, and will not deceive us. If we are beholden to men, parents, ministers, &c., for putting the Bible into our hands, and directing us to the scripture; yet when we read it, hear it opened, and are enlightened by it, and see what a spirit there is in it; when the word enters into us, as the sunbeams into a dark room, and gives us light; (Psalm cxix. 105;) we see its excellency, are ravished with its beauty, taste its sweetness, feel its power, admire its majesty: when we find it to be such a word as searcheth our hearts, judgeth our thoughts, tells us all that is within us, all that ever we did in our lives, (John iv. 29,) awakens our consciences, commands the most inward spiritual obedience, sets before us the noblest ends, and offers us the most glorious reward, an unseen one, an eternal one; then we come to acknowledge that of a truth God is in it, no mere creature could be the author of it. And so we believe it, not because men have ministerially led us to the knowledge of it, or have persuaded or commanded us to receive it, or told us [that] it is of God; but because we ourselves have heard and felt him speaking in it. The Spirit shines into our minds by the light of this word, and speaks loudly to our hearts by the power of it, and plainly tells whose word it is, and so makes us yield to God’s authority in it. Take a Christian whose faith is thus bottomed, and overturn it, if, you can: you must first beat him out of his senses,—persuade him [that] he hath no eyes, no taste, no feeling, no understanding, no affections, no reflection upon himself, no knowledge of what is done in his own soul, and so indeed that he is not a man, but a brute or a stock,—ere ever you can persuade him that the scripture is not the word of God. Whereas, on the other side, the Papists’ religion is built merely on men, and their faith hath no more certainty than those men have infallibility. Ask them what is the great, nay, the only convincing reason why they believe the scripture to be the word of God; and they will tell you, “The church’s testimony concerning it,”—they believe it because the church commends it; that is, the pope doth so, or a general council, or somebody, they know not who.

And here they are at a loss already; for, as much as they fill our ears with a great noise and din of “the Church!” and can scarcely talk of any thing but “the church! the church!” yet they are not so much

agreed among themselves what this very church is upon whose authority they build their faith, and would have us build ours. In several countries they have several churches, several supremacies, several infallibleships : a council is the church, and supreme and infallible, in France ; and the pope is the same in Italy. And so, (amongst the Papists,) if you do but change your climate, you must change your faith too ; if you but cross the Alps, you must translate your faith, and shift it from a council's shoulders to the pope's. A strange, variable thing you will find it, which must be calculated according to the meridian you are in, and will not serve indifferently for all places ; so that you must be sure to fix your habitation ere you can settle your belief. And yet if this were agreed upon, you would still be at an uncertainty as to the infallibility of whatsoever they call "the church:" for you are likely to have nothing but their own word for it ; and if you will take it so, you may ; or if they prove it by the scripture, they desert their cause, and own the scripture as above them, and authentic without them ; and so while they would establish their infallibility, they lose their authority.

And so, to conclude, there is nothing certain, nothing solid, among them, nothing able to bear the weight of an immortal soul, nothing upon which a man can venture his everlasting salvation. I see no such thing as a truly divine faith among them, unless it be therefore divine, because built upon the authority of their lord god the pope. They call the pope *ecclesiæ catholicæ principem et sponsum*.\* In the Mass at the election of him, they apply that to him which is said of the Holy Ghost : "I will pray the Father, and he will send you another Comforter." (John xiv. 16.) And in the time of Leo X. it was disputed in their Schools, among other blasphemies, whether the pope were a mere man, or *quasi Deus*, "as it were a God ;" and whether he did not partake of both the natures of Christ. (MORNÆI *Myster. Iniquit.* p. 636.)

(2.) *Our religion is more comfortable as well as more certain.*—Our faith being built upon the truth of God himself, and our comfort upon our faith, so long as our foundation remains immovable, we need not fear our superstructure. If our faith have good footing, our hopes and comforts will keep their standing. Faith in the promises is that from whence all the comfort of our hearts, and our "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God," doth proceed. (Rom. v. 2.) A Christian's joy is joy in believing, and his peace "the peace of God," (Phil. iv. 7,) and his comforts the comforts of the Holy Ghost : but this can never be, if our faith be founded immediately on the testimony of men, and not of God ; or if we believe the promises of the word to be made by God, because men tell us he made them. So long as we hold to the "sure word," (2 Peter i. 19,) we have sure hopes and sure comforts, and no longer ; and therefore a Papist can never have any "strong consolation" by his faith, (Heb. vi. 18,) when his faith itself hath so weak a foundation. How can they ever rejoice in hopes of heaven, when they believe [that] there is a heaven with no better a

\* "The prince and husband of the Catholic church."—EDIT.

faith than they believe a pope or council to be infallible? It is to little purpose to say, [that] they believe there is a heaven (say the like of other articles) because God in the scripture tells them so; when they would not have believed one tittle of that very scripture, if a pope or a council had not bid them believe it: for then their hopes and comforts are all resolved into the authority of this church, (whatever it be,) as well as their faith is; and both the one and the other rest not on the real infallibility of the God of truth, but on the pretended infallibility of one single prelate at Rome, or a convention of them at Trent. From such a foundation for our faith, and such comforters of our consciences, the Lord deliver us!

By this you may gather what you must do, if you would be Papists. You must renounce your reason and faith too, if you would embrace their religion; you must enslave your consciences to the authority of men, and so put out your own eyes, that you may see with other men's. You must not be "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets," (Eph. ii. 20,) but of popes and councils; it may be, of a single pope; and so hazard your eternal peace and welfare on the credit of a man who may be himself a murderer, an adulterer, a sodomite, a necromancer, a blasphemer, a heretic; and may be so far from being saved himself, that he may, as some Papists acknowledge, carry whole cart-loads of souls to hell with him. Yet still he is infallible, an infallible murderer, an infallible sodomite, an infallible sorcerer, &c. ! And you must believe him to be infallible all this while, by himself, or with a council; or you cannot be saved, among them. The church, to be sure, you must believe and adore, whatever it be, either representative or virtual; you must not ask a reason for your faith, neither, but tamely submit to its tyrannical dictates. And if it should ever come to this, would it not be as hard a chapter as the third of Daniel? Would not Smithfield be as hot a place as the plain of Dura, if every one that would not fall down and worship this great golden-idol,—holy church,—should be cast into the burning fiery furnace?

USE II. And therefore, to prevent this; and that your faith may be firm and immovable, as standing not in the authority or wisdom of men, but the power and truth of God; that your hearts may be full of comfort, your lives full of holiness, your deaths full of sweetness; and that you may be "more than conquerors" over all those temptations whereby the wicked one may at any time assault your faith; *be sure to see that it have a good foundation, see that you believe the scripture upon solid and lasting grounds.*—Trust the authority of no mere man, nor company of men, in the world, in a business on which the everlasting blessedness or misery of your soul doth depend. Hear Moses and the prophets; hear the apostles and evangelists. We are sure [that] God spake by them, and they never err. As for popes and councils, we are sure [that] they have erred, and so may do again. And so may your parents that first instructed you: masters, teachers, churches, all may err. And though *de facto* ["actually"] they do not err in this, when they tell you [that] the scripture is the word of



God ; yet, they being but men, and having no promise of absolute infallibility, and being liable to mistakes in other things, when you find that, you may come to question whether they were not mistaken in this too, and so think [that] you have been deluded all this while, and taken that for the word of God and rule of your lives which is nothing less. And then you will either cast away your faith, or you must seek a new foundation for it. And if you come in a Papist's way, and hear talk of Peter's successors; Christ's vicars, catholic churches, general councils, infallibilities, long successions, apostolical traditions, you do not know what kind of spirit such conjuring words may raise up in you. You may be apt to think, [that] the major part (as you will be told, though falsely, it is) must carry it; and so determine your faith by the votes of men; that is, not so much change the foundation of it, as enlarge it; and whereas before it was built upon the credit of a parent or a pastor, now build it upon the credit of a great many, or a great one in the name of all the rest; or if it rested before on a particular church, now it shall rely on that which you are told is the catholic one. For my part, I shall never wonder to see ill-grounded Protestants easily turn Papists: they are semi-Papists already; and they may soon be wholly such. They have a pope at home; and if they do not like him, they may easily exchange him for another abroad. He that pins his faith upon one man's sleeve may soon do it upon another's; he is already a church-Papist, and may soon be a Mass-one.

And therefore, to conclude, whoever thou art, if thou have not formerly done it, search thyself now, ere Satan sift thee; try thy faith in the scripture, that it may be approved; see whose image and superscription it bears, what foundation it hath, what answer thou canst give to any one that asks thee a reason of it; nay, what answer thou canst give thyself. Ask thyself, "Why do I believe the Bible to be the word of God? How do I know it was not the invention of man? By what arguments, by what authority, was I induced to give my assent to it? Do I take it merely on the credit of those of whom I was born, among whom I was bred, with whom I have conversed? Is this a sufficient foundation for my faith? Dare I venture my soul upon such a bottom? Is this to build my house upon a rock? How near the Papists am I come, ere I was aware of it! I spit at them, and defy them, and yet act like them, if not below them, and can scarcely say so much for my faith as they can for theirs." If this be thy condition, [begin] to work anew for shame, and begin quickly too, and get thy faith well settled, and upon its right basis; or, I dare say, thou wilt never keep thy faith at the expense of thy life, but rather turn ten times than burn once. If thou hast therefore any regard to the constancy of thy faith, to the comfort of thy life, the honour of God, or the salvation of thy own soul, labour immediately to get thy belief of the word better founded: read the scripture constantly, study it seriously, search it diligently, hear it explained and applied by others, meditate on it thyself, and beg of God an understanding of it, and a right faith in it; that he would

give thee "an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear;" (Deut. xxix. 4;) that he would "open thine eyes to behold wondrous things out of his law;" (Psalm cxix. 18;) that he would give thee his Spirit, that thou mayest "search the deep things of God;" (1 Cor. ii. 10;) that he would cause thee to hear his voice in that word which thou hast hitherto taken to be his, and direct thy heart into the surest grounds of believing it.

And, be sure, hold on in such a way of painful endeavours for the getting thy faith settled, till it be done, and what thou hast hitherto received on the account of man, thou now believest for the sake of God himself. I deny thee not the testimony of the universal church of Christ in all ages, so far as thou art capable of knowing it, as well as of the present church, or any particular one to which thou art any way related, as a help to thee: make the best thou canst of it, only rest not on it. But especially take notice, if thou see not the stamp of God upon the word, characters of divinity imprinted on it, as well as external notes accompanying it, consider the antiquity of it, the continuance of it, the miracles that confirmed it, the condition of the men that penned it, their aims, their carriage and conversation, God's providence in keeping it and handing it down to thee through so many successive generations, when so many in all ages would have bereaved the world of it. And, further: consider the majesty and gravity, and yet plainness and simplicity, of its style; the depth of the mysteries it discovers, the truth and divineness of the doctrine it teacheth, the spirituality of the duties it enjoins, the power and force of the arguments with which it persuades, the eternity of the rewards it promises, and the punishments it threatens; the end and scope of the whole,—to reform the world, to discountenance and extirpate wickedness, and promote holiness and righteousness, and thereby advance God's glory, and lead man on to everlasting blessedness, &c.

And, be sure, leave not off, till thou find thy faith raised from so low a bottom as the authority of men, and fixed on God's own testimony; till thou canst safely and boldly say, "I believe the scripture now to be the word of God, not because I have heard men say so, but because I hear God himself in this very scripture bearing witness to it; his Spirit hath given me new eyes, and enabled me to see the divineness of it. I know, and am sure, that this is the word of God: never mere man spake at such a rate; never did the word of man work such effects. The entrance of it hath given light to my soul, which was before in darkness, not knowing whither it went. How many glorious mysteries do I see in it! what purity, what spirituality, what holiness! &c., all which speak the wisdom, and power, and goodness, and holiness, and truth of the Author of it. What sweetness have I tasted in it! It hath been as the 'honey and honey-comb' to me. (Psalm xix. 10.) What power, what life, what strange energy, have I experienced in it! What a change hath it wrought in me! What lusts hath it discovered and mortified! What duties hath it convinced me of, and engaged me in! What strength hath it furnished me with! How hath it quickened me when I was

dead in sin, revived my comforts when they were dying, actuated my graces when they were languishing, roused me up when I was sluggish, awaked me when I was dreaming, refreshed me when I was sorrowful, supported me when I was sinking, answered my doubts, conquered my temptations, scattered my fears, enlarged me with desires, and filled me 'with joy unspeakable and full of glory!' (1 Peter i. 8.) And what word could ever have wrought such effects but that of the eternal, all-wise, all-powerful God? And therefore upon his alone authority I receive it; him alone I adore in it, whose power I have so often found working by it. I durst venture a hundred souls, if I had them, and a hundred heavens, if there were so many, upon the truth and divine authority of this word; and should not stick, not only to give the lie to the 'most profound,' and 'most resolute,' and 'invincible,' and 'irrefragable,' and 'angelical,' and 'seraphical' doctors,\* nay, and 'infallible' popes, and councils too, but even to say 'Anathema' to angels themselves, and seraphims, if they should tell me the scripture were not the word of God."

Christian, get but such a faith of the word as this into thy heart, and then thou mayest defy scoffers, atheists, Papists, and all their works. If they deride thee, let them mock on; thou wilt not easily be laughed out of thy senses, nor overcome by men's jeers to disbelieve what thou hast seen and felt. If they will not believe as thou dost, yet thou shalt never be brought to play the infidel as they do; no more than cease to behold and admire the glory of the sun, because birds of the night, owls and bats, care not for looking on it: thou wilt never deny what thou plainly seest, because others do not who have no eyes. Sure I am, if they see not what thou dost, it is either because they wink against the light, or look off from it; or God hath not yet in mercy opened their eyes, or hath in judgment closed them up: "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." (2 Cor. iv. 3.)

\* Such titles the Papists give their Schoolmen.