

DISPUTATION 1

ON THE AUTHORITY AND CERTAINTY OF THE SACRED SCRIPTURES

RESPONDENT: BERNARD VESUKIUS

I. The authority of Scripture is nothing else but the worthiness according to which it merits (1.) CREDENCE, as being true in words and true in significations, whether it simply declares anything; or also promises and threatens; and (2.) as a superior, it merits OBEDIENCE through the credence given to it, when it either commands or prohibits anything. Concerning this authority two questions arise, (i.) Whence does it belong to Scripture? (ii.) Whence is it evident, or can be rendered evident to men, that this authority appertains to Scripture? These two questions shall be discussed in their proper order. ([1 Tim. i. 15](#); [2 Pet. i. 19](#); [John v. 39](#); [Heb. vi. 18](#). [Rom. i. 5, 6](#); [2 Cor. x. 5, 6](#); [xiii, 3](#); [xii, 12](#); [Gal. i. 1, 12, 13](#), &c.)

II. The authority of any word or writing whatsoever depends upon its author, as the word "authority" indicates; and it is just as great as the veracity and the power, that is, the auqenti<a of the author. But God is of infallible veracity, and is neither capable of deceiving nor of being deceived; and of irrefragable power, that is, supreme over the creatures. If, therefore, He is the Author of Scripture, its authority is totally dependent on Him alone. (i.) Totally, because He is the all sufficient Author, all-true and all-powerful. (ii.) On Him alone, because He has no associate either in the truth of what he says, or in the power of his right. For all veracity and power in the creature proceed from him; and into his veracity and power are resolved all faith and obedience, as into the First Cause and the Ultimate Boundary. ([Gal. iii, 8, 9](#); [1 John v. 9](#); [Rom. iii. 4](#); [Tit. i. 2](#); [Psalm i. 1-23](#); [Gal. i. 1, 7, 8](#); [John v. 34, 36](#); [Rom. xi. 34-36](#); [xiii, 1](#).)

III. This is proved by many arguments dispersed throughout the Scripture. (1.) From the inscriptions of most of the prophetical books and of the apostolical epistles, which run thus, "The word of the Lord that came to Hosea, to Joe], to Amos," &c. "Paul, Peter, James, &c., a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ." (Hosea, Joel, Amos; [Rom. i. 1](#); [James i. 1](#); [1 Pet. i. 1](#).) (2.) From the introductions to many of the prophecies: "Thus saith the Lord," "That which I have received of the Lord, I have also delivered unto you." ([Exod. v. 1](#); [1 Cor. xi. 23](#).) (3.) From the petitions, on the part of the ambassadors of God and of Christ, for Divine assistance, and from the promise of it which is given by God and Christ, such aid being necessary and sufficient to obtain authority for what was to be spoken. ([Exod. iv. 1](#); [Acts iv. 29, 30](#); [Mark xvi. 17, 20](#).) (4.) From the method used by God himself, who, when about to deliver his law, introduced it thus: "I am the Lord thy God!" And who, when in the act of establishing the authority of his Son, said, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye Him." ([Exod. xx. 1](#); [Matt. xvii. 5](#).) This is acknowledged by the general consent of mankind. Minos, Numa, Lycurgus and Solon, were fully aware of it; for, to give some validity to their laws, they referred them to Gods or Goddesses, as the real authors.

IV. When this authority is once known, it binds the consciences of all those to whom the discourse or the writing is addressed or directed, to accept of it in a becoming manner. But whoever they be that receive it as if delivered by God, that approve of it, publish, preach, interpret and expound it, that also distinguish and discriminate it from words or writings which are supposititious and adulterated; these persons add not a tittle of authority to the sayings or writings, because their entire authority, whether contemplated separately or conjointly, is only that of mortal men; and things Divine neither need confirmation, nor indeed can receive it, from those which are human. But this whole employment of approving, preaching, explaining and discriminating, even when it is discharged by the Church Universal, is only an attestation by which she declares, that she holds and acknowledges these words or writings, and these alone, as Divine. ([John xv. 22, 24; viii, 24; Gal. i. 8, 9; Ephes. ii. 20; Rev. xxi. 14; John i. 6, 7; v, 33-36; 1 Thess. ii. 13.](#))

V. Therefore, not only false, but likewise implying a contradiction, foolish and blasphemous, are such expressions as the following, employed by Popish writers: "The Church is of greater antiquity than the Scriptures; and they are not authentic except by the authority of the Church." (ECCL Enchir. de Ecclesiastes) "All the authority which is now given to the Scriptures, is necessarily dependent on that of the Church." (PIGHIUS de Hierar. Eecles. lib. 2, c. 2.) "The Scriptures would possess no more validity than the Fables of Aesop, or any other kind of writing whatever, unless we believed the testimony of the Church." (HOSIUS de Author. Script. lib. 3.) But that "the Church is of greater antiquity than the Scriptures," is an argument which labours under a falsity in the antecedent and under a defective inference. For the Scriptures, both with regard to their significations and their expressions, are more ancient than the Church; and this former Church is bound to receive the latter sayings and writings of Isaiah, Jeremiah, &c., of Paul, Peter, &c., as soon as their Divine verity has been demonstrated by sufficient arguments according to the judgment of God. ([Matt. xvi. 18; 1 Cor. iii. 9, 10.](#))

VI. But by the very arguments by which the Scriptures are Divine, they are also [proved to be] Canonical, from the method and end of their composition, as containing the rule of our faith, charity, hope, and of the whole of our living. For they are given for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction, for correction, and for consolation; that is, that they may be the rule of truth and falsehood to our understanding, of good and evil to our affections, either to do and to omit, or to have and to want. ([Deut. xxvii. 26; Psalm cxix. 105,106; Rom. x. 8, 17; Matt. xxii. 37-40; 2 Tim. iii. 16; Rom. xv. 4.](#)) For as they are Divine because given by God, not because they are "received from men;" so they are canonical, and are so called in an active sense, because they prescribe a Canon or rule, and not passively, because they are reckoned for a Canon, or because they are taken into the Canon. So far indeed is the Church from rendering them authentic or canonical, that no assemblage or congregation of men can come under the name of a Church, unless they account the Scriptures authentic and

canonical with regard to the sum or substance of the Law and Gospel. (Gal. vi. 16; 1 Tim. vi. 3, 4; Rom. xvi. 17; x, 8-10, 14-17.)

VII. The Second Question is, How can a persuasion be wrought in men, that these Scriptures are Divine? For the application of this question some things must be premised, which may free the discussion from equivocations, and may render it more easy. (1.) A distinction must be drawn between Scripture, (which, as a sign, consists of a word and of the writing of that word,) and the sense or meaning of Scripture; because it is not equally important which of the two is necessary to be known and believed, since it is Scripture on account of its meanings, and because there is a difference in the method of proof by which Divinity is ascribed to the writing itself and to its significations. (2.) A distinction must likewise be drawn between the primary cause of Scripture, and the instrumental causes; lest it be thought, that the same necessity exists for believing some book of Scripture to have been written by this or that particular amanuensis, as there is for believing it to have proceeded from God. (3.) The ratio of those meanings is dissimilar, since some of them are simply necessary to salvation, as containing the foundation and sum of religion; while others are connected with the former in no other way, than by a certain relation of explanation, proof, and amplification. (John viii. 24; v, 39, 46, 36; 1 Cor. xii. 3. 2 Corinthians ii. 4, 5; iii, 7-9; Matt. x. 20; 2 Cor. iii. 11, 12; Phil. iii. 15, 16; Col. ii. 16, 19.)

VIII. (4.) The persuasion of faith must be distinguished from the certainty of vision, lest a man, instead of seeking here for faith which is sufficiently powerful to prevail against temptations, should require certainty which is obnoxious to no temptation. (5.) A difference must be made between implicit faith by which this Scripture without any understanding of its significations is believed to be Divine, and explicit faith which consists of some knowledge of the meanings, particularly of those which are necessary. And this historical knowledge, which has only asfaleian mental security, [or human certainty, Luke i. 4,] comes to be distinguished from saving knowledge, which also contains wlhroforian full assurance and we-poiqhsin confidence, on which the conscience reposes. This distinction must be made, that a correct judgment may be formed of those arguments which are necessary and sufficient for producing each of these kinds of faith. (6.) A difference must also be made between those arguments which are worthy of God, and those which human vanity may require. And such arguments must not here be demanded as cannot fail to persuade every one; since many persons denied all credence to Christ himself, though he bore testimony to his own doctrine by so many signs and wonders, virtues and distributions of the Holy Ghost. (7.) The external light, derived from arguments which are employed to effect suasion, must be distinguished from the internal light of the Holy Spirit bearing his own testimony; lest that which properly belongs to the latter, as the seal and the earnest or pledge of our faith, should be ascribed to the strength of arguments and to the veracity of external testimonies. (1 Cor. xiii. 9, 12; Gen. xv. 6, 8, with Rom. iv. 19-21; Judges vi. 36- 39; Heb. xi. 32, 33; John iii. 2, 10; James ii. 19;

John v. 32-36; Matt. xiii. 2; Heb. vi. 11; x, 22; Ephes. iii. 12; Matt. xii. 38, 39; xvi, 1; Luke xvi. 30, 31; Matt. xxvii. 42; John xii. 37; Luke xxiv. 27, 44, 45; 2 Cor. i. 22; Ephes. i. 13, 14; John iv. 42.)

IX. (8.) A distinction must be drawn between (i.) those who heard God or Christ speaking to them Himself, or addressing them through angels, prophets, or apostles, and who first received the sacred books; and (ii.) those who, as their successors, have the Scriptures through their delivery. (Judges ii. 7, 10; Heb. ii. 3; John xx. 29.) For the former of these classes, miracles and the actual fulfillment of predictions, which occurred under their own observations, were capable of imparting credibility to the words and writing. But to the latter class, the narration, both of the doctrine, and of the arguments employed for its confirmation, is proposed in the Scriptures, and must be strengthened by its own arguments. (Isa. xliv. 7, 8; 1 Cor. xiv, XXII.) (9.)

A distinction may indeed be made between the truth of Scripture and its Divinity, that progress may be gradually made through a belief of the former to a belief in the latter. But these two can never be disparted; because, if the Scriptures be true, they are of necessity Divine. (John iv. 39- 42; 1 Pet. i. 21.) (10.) Lastly. We must here reflect, that the secret things of God, and the doctrine of Christ in reference to its being from God, are revealed to little children, to the humble, to those who fear God, and to those who are desirous to do the will of the Father; (Matt. xi. 25; James iv. 6; Psalm xxv. 14; John vii. 17; 1 Cor. i. 20, 27;) and that, on the contrary, to the wise men of the world, to the proud, to those who reject the counsel of God against themselves and judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life, to foolish and perverse men, and to those who resist the Holy Ghost, the mystery of God and the Gospel of Christ are hidden and continue unrevealed; nay, to such persons they are a stumbling-block and foolishness, while they are in themselves the power and the wisdom of God. (Luke vii. 30; Acts xiii. 46; vii, 51; 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4; 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.)

X. These remarks being premised, let us see how we are or can be persuaded into a belief that the Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament are Divine, at least with regard to their essentials, that is, the sum or substance of the Law and Gospel, without faith in which, salvation can have no existence. Three things principally serve to produce this persuasion. (i.) The external testimony of men. (ii.) The arguments contained in the Scriptures themselves. (iii.) And the internal witness of God. The first of these, by procuring, after the manner of men, esteem and reverence to the Scriptures, prepares [or makes a way for] faith which is resolved into the two latter that are truly Divine, and, through them, is fully completed.

XI. 1. In adverting to human testimony, we shall omit all enemies, also the Mahometans who have embraced the dregs of a religion which is compounded of a corruption of Judaism, Christianity and Paganism. But the testimony of those who acknowledge the Scriptures is twofold. That of the Jews, who testify concerning the doctrine and the books of the Old

Testament; and that of Christians who bear witness to those of the whole body of Scripture. (1.) Two circumstances add strength to the testimony of the Jews. (i.) The constancy of their profession in the very depths of misery, when, by the mere denial of it, they might be made partakers of liberty and of worldly possessions. (ii.) Their hatred of the Christian religion, which transcribes its own origin, increase, and establishment from a good part of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and with so much confidence as to be prepared to stand and fall by their evidence and judgment alone. ([Acts xxvi. 22; 9, 2 Pet. i. 19, 20; Acts xvii. 11.](#)) (2.) The testimony of Christians. distinguished by the same mark of constancy, ([Rev. vi. 9; xii, 11,](#)) we will consider in three particulars: (i.) That of the Church Universal, which, from her own foundation to the present age, having professed the Christian as a Divine religion, testifies that her religion is contained in these books, and that they have proceeded from God. (ii.) That of each of the primitive Churches, which, being founded by the apostles, first received not only the whole of the Old Testament, but likewise the Epistles which were addressed either to them, to their pastors, or at least to men who were well known, and who delivered them by the same title to their successors and to other Churches. ([Col. iv. 16.](#)) (iii.) That of the Representative Church, as it is called, consisting of pastors and teachers, who, possessing skill in languages and in Divine things, pronounce their judgment after having instituted an examination, and confirm it [by arguments] to the flocks that are severally committed to their care. ([Ephes. iv. 27.](#)) On reviewing these diviunes, we place the Roman Pontiff below the lowest parochial priest in the Romish Church who may be more learned than his holiness.

XII. 2. The arguments contained in the Scripture are four, and those of the utmost importance. The quality of its doctrines, the majesty of its style, the agreement of its parts, and the efficacy of its doctrine. Each of these, separately considered, possesses much influence; but, when viewed conjointly, they are capable of inducing every one to give credit to them, if he is not blinded by a spirit of obstinacy, and by an opinion preconceived through inveterate habits. The Quality of the Doctrine is proved to be Divine. (1.) By the precepts delivered in these books, which exhibit three marks of Divinity. (i.) The high excellence of the actions prescribed, in self-denial, and in the regulation of the whole life according to godliness. ([Matt. xvi. 24, 25; Rom. viii. 12, 13.](#)) (ii.) The wonderful uncommonness of some actions, which amount to folly in the estimation of the natural man; and yet they are prescribed with a fearless confidence. Such as, "Unless thou believest on Jesus, who is crucified and dead, thou shalt be condemned; if thou wilt believe on him, thou shalt be saved." ([1 Cor. i. 18, 24; ii, 2, 14; John viii. 24; Rom. x. 9.](#)) (iii.) The manner in which they are required to be performed, that they be done from conscience and charity; if otherwise, they will be adjudged as hypocritical. ([Deut. vi. 5; 1 Cor. xiii. 1; James iv. 12; Rom. viii. 5; 1 Pet. ii. 19.](#)) In the first of these three is perceived a sanctity, in the second an omnipotence, and in the third an omniscience, each of which is purely Divine. (2.) By the promises and threatenings, which

afford two tokens of Divine worth or validity. (i.) The manifest evidence, that they could have been delivered by no one except by God. (ii.) Their excellent accommodation, which is such that these promises and threatenings cannot possibly prove influential upon the conscience of any man, except upon his who considers the precepts, to which they are subjoined, to be Divine. (3.) The admirable attempering of the justice of God by which he loves righteousness and hates iniquity, and of his equity by which he administers all things, with his mercy in Christ our propitiation. In this, the glory of God shines forth with transcendent luster. ([Rom. v. 15](#).) Three particulars in it are worthy of notice. (i.) That, except through the intervention of a reconciler and mediator, God would not receive into favour the sinner, through love for whom as his own creature he is touched with mercy. (ii.) That his own dearly beloved Son, begotten by Himself and discharging an office of perfect righteousness, God would not admit as a deprecator and intercessor, except when sprinkled with his own blood. ([2 Cor. v. 19](#); [Ephes. ii. 12, 16](#); [Heb. viii. 5, 6](#); [ix. 7, 11, 12](#).) (iii.) That he constituted Christ as a saviour only to those who repent and believe, having excluded the impenitent from all hope of pardon and salvation. ([Heb. iii. 8, 19](#); [v. 8, 9](#); [Luke xxiv. 26](#); [Rom. viii. 29](#).) (4.) A most signal and decisive proof, which serves to demonstrate the necessity and sufficiency of this doctrine, exists in this fact, that Jesus himself did not enter into his glory except through obedience and sufferings, that this was done for believers alone who were to be conformed to him, ([Heb. x. 21, 22](#); [iv, 14-16](#); [John xvii. 2, 8](#).) and that, on being received into Heaven, He was constituted Governor over the house of God, the King of his people, and the dispenser of life eternal.

XIII. The Majesty of Their Style is proved. (1.) By the attributes which the Author of the Scriptures claims for himself; the transcendent elevation of his nature, in his omniscience and omnipotence; ([Isa. xliv. 7, 8](#); [xli, 12, 25, 26](#); [Psalm i. 1](#).) the excellence of his operations, which they claim for Him as the Creator and Governor of all things; the preeminence of power, which they claim for Him as the King of kings and Lord of lords. (2.) By the absence of all "respect of persons" which is not under the influence of favour and hatred, of hope and fear, and by which God declares himself to be the same towards all men, whatever station they may occupy, uttering his commands and prohibitions, his promises and threatenings, to monarchs, ([Deut. xviii. 15, 16](#); [1 Sam. xii. 25](#).) as well as to the meanest among the people, to whole nations and to single individuals, and even to the rulers of darkness, the princes of this world, Satan and his angels, and thus to the whole universe of his creatures. (3.) By the method which he employs in making a law and in giving it his sanction. It has no other introduction than, "I Jehovah am thy God;" no other conclusion than, "I Jehovah have spoken." "Be strong, for I am with thee; fear not, for I will deliver thee." Either He who speaks, truly claims these attributes for himself, and so his discourse is Divine, ([Exod. xx. 2](#); [Josh. i. 9](#); [Isa. xliii. 5](#); [Jer. i. 8](#); [Deut. iv. 5](#).) or (let no blasphemy adhere to the expression,) it is of all foolish speeches the most foolish. Between these two extremes no medium exists. But in

the whole of the Scriptures not a single tittle occurs, which will not remove from them by an invincible argument the charge of folly.

XIV. The Agreement Between Each And Every Part of The Scriptures, prove with sufficient evidence, their Divinity, because such an agreement of its several parts can be ascribed to nothing less than the Divine Spirit. It will be useful for the confirmation of this matter to consider (1.) The immense space of time which was occupied in the inditing of it, from the age of Moses, down to that of St. John, to whom was vouchsafed the last authentic revelation. (Mal. iv. 4; Jer. xxviii. 8; John v. 46.) (2.) The multitude of writers or amanuenses, and of books. (3.) The great distance of the places in which the books were severally written, that tendered it impossible for the authors to confer together. (4.) Lastly and principally, the institution of a comparison between the doctrine of Moses and that of the latter Prophets, as well as between that of the Old and that of the New Testament. The predictions of Moses alone concerning the Messiah, the calling of the Gentiles, and the rejection of the Jews, when compared with the interpretations and with the addition of particular circumstances which are found in the Prophets and the Psalms, will prove that the perfect agreement which exists between the various writers is Divine. (Gen. xlix. 10; Deut. xxxii. 21; Dan. ix. 25, 26; Mal. i. 10, 11; Psalm 2, 22, 110 132; Matt. 1, 2, 24, 27; Luke i. 55, 70; xxiv, 27, 44.) To the Divinity of the agreement between the writings of the Old Testament and those of the New, abundant testimony will be afforded even solely by that sudden, unexpected and miraculously consentaneous accommodation and befitting aptitude of all the predictions respecting the Messiah, the gathering of the Gentiles to Him, the unbelief and rejection of the Jews, and lastly concerning the abrogation which was to be made of the ceremonial law, first by its being fulfilled, and afterwards by its forcible removal. Whether these predictions were foretold in words, or foreshown by types of things, persons, facts and events; their accommodation to the person, the advent, the state, the offices, and the times of Jesus of Nazareth, was consentaneous even to a miracle. (Psalm cxviii. 22, 23; Matt. xxi. 42; Isa. lxv. 1; Acts xi. 18; Psalm xl. 7, 8; Dan. ix. 25, 26.) If the Old Testament alone, or only the New, were now extant, some doubts might be indulged concerning the Divinity of each. But their agreement together excludes all doubt respecting their Divinity, when both of them are thus completely in accordance, since it is impossible for such a perfect agreement to have been the fabrication of an angelic or of a human mind.

XV. Lastly, the Divinity of Scripture is powerfully demonstrated by The Efficacy of Its Doctrine, which we place in two particulars. In the credit or belief which it has obtained in the world, and in the destruction of remaining religions and of the entire kingdom of Satan. Of this destruction two most signal tokens were afforded, in the silencing of the Heathen Oracles, and in the removal of Idols. (1 Tim. iii. 15; Zech. xiii. 2; Zeph. ii. 11; Acts xvi. 16, 17.) This efficacy is recommended, (1.) By the peculiar genius of the doctrine, which, independently of the Divine power which accompanies and assists it, is calculated to repel every

one from giving his assent to it, on account of the apparent absurdity in it, and the concupiscence of human passions which is abhorrent to it. For this is the manner in which it speaks: "Unless thou dost believe in Jesus the Crucified, and art prepared to pour out thy life for him, thou shalt lose thy soul." (Isa. liii. 1; 2 Cor. i. 2; 2 Tim. iii. 12.) (2.) By the persons through whom the doctrine was administered, and who, in the estimation of men, were few in number, mean in condition, and full of infirmities; while in God's sight, they were possessed of invincible patience and mildness, which were so conspicuous in Him who was the Prince of all, that He asked some of his familiar disciples who were offended at his doctrine, "Will ye also go away?" (Luke vi. 13; Matt. iv. 18, 19; 2 Cor. 4, xii, 12; 2 Tim. iv, 2; John 6, 67.) (3.) By the multitude, the wisdom, the authority, and the power of the enemies who placed themselves in opposition to this doctrine. Also by their love for the religion of their own country, and their consequent hatred of this novel doctrine, and by the result of both these, in their infuriated and outrageous eagerness to extirpate the Christians and their doctrine. It was opposed by the Roman empire itself nearly three hundred years, during which the rest of the world lent their assistance. This continued opposition was excited by the Jews, nay by Satan himself, who had fixed his throne in that empire. (1 Cor. ii. 8; Acts iv. 27; ix, 2; Matt. x, 1 8-22; John xvi. 2; Ephes. vi. 12; Rev. ii. 10, 13.) (4.) By the infinite multitude of men of every description, nation, age, sex and condition, who have believed this doctrine, and confirmed their belief by enduring intolerable torments even unto death. This cannot be ascribed, except through an ambitious insanity, either to ambition or to fury in such a multitude of persons of various descriptions. (Rev. vi. 9-11.) (5.) By the short time in which, like lightning, it pervaded a great part of the habitable world; so that Paul alone filled all the places between Jerusalem and Illyricum with the Gospel of Christ. (Col. i. 6; Rom. xv. 19.)

XVI. 3. These suasions are of themselves alone sufficient to produce an historical faith, but not that which is saving. To them, therefore, must be added the internal suasion of God by his Holy Spirit, which has its scope of operations, (1.) In the illumination of the mind, that we may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God; that we may know the things which are freely given to us of God, and that Jesus Christ is the wisdom and the power of God. (1 Cor. iii. 7; Ephes. i. 17, 18; Rom. xii. 9; 1 Cor. ii. 12; i, 24; xii, 3.) (2.) In inscribing the laws of God upon our hearts, which consists of the infusion of a desire and of strength for their performance. (Heb. viii. 10.) (3.) In sealing the promises of God on our hearts; under which term, that by which we are sealed to the day of redemption is called a seal, and an earnest. (2 Cor. i. 22; Ephes. i. 13,14.) In this manner he who inspired the sacred Scriptures into holy men of God, who constituted in the Church, Bishops, Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers, who put the word of reconciliation into their mouths, is the Author of that faith by which this doctrine is apprehended unto righteousness and eternal salvation. (Acts xx. 28; Ephes. iv. 11; 2 Cor. v. 19; Rom. viii. 16.) Since his testi-

mony is distinct from that of a man's own spirit, and since it is said to be concerning those things which are necessary to salvation, and not concerning words, letters, or writing, the Papists act most perversely in confounding these testimonies, and in requiring through the witness of the Spirit [of God] the distinction between an apocryphal verse, and one that is canonical, though the former may in reality agree with the canonical Scriptures.

XVII. But, that we may comprise in few words the force of these three proofs, we declare, 1. concerning the force of human testimony which ascribes our Scriptures to God, that the author of no composition which ever was published or is now extant can be proved with such lucid evidence as the author of these Scriptures; and that the importance of all other compositions sinks far beneath the dignity of this, not only with regard to the multitude, the wisdom and the integrity of the witnesses, but likewise with regard to the uninterrupted evenness, the constancy and the duration of the testimony. The reason this is, that the religion contained in these Scriptures has been preached to immense numbers and varieties of people, and for a very long period; which circumstance, in itself, contains no small argument of Divinity. For it is most equitable, that religion, which alone is truly Divine, and which, without any respect of nations, it is God's will that men should receive, ought also to be preached generally to all mankind. ([Matt. xxviii. 19, 20](#); [Mark xvi. 15](#); [Rom. x. 12-18](#).)

XVIII. 2. We assert, that the arguments which, contained in the Scriptures, prove the Divinity of the religion prescribed in them, are so full and perfect, that no arguments can be derived for the defense of any religion which are not comprehended in these, and in a more excellent degree. ([2 Cor. iv. 2-6](#).) They are indeed of such high value that the truth of the Christian religion is established by them as strongly, as it is possible by any other arguments to prove that there is any true religion at all, or that a true one is possible. So that to a man who is desirous of proving, that there is any religion which is true, or that such a religion is possible, no way is more compendious and easy than to do so by these arguments, in preference to any other which can be deduced from general notions. But the most wonderful of all is, that the very thing in the Christian religion which seems to be one of the greatest absurdity, affords the most certain proof of its Divinity, it being allowed to be a very great truth—that this religion has been introduced into the consciences of men by a mild suasion, and not by the power of the sword. ([1 Cor. i. 29-xxiv](#), ; [2 Cor. v. 11](#); [Luke ix. 54, 55](#).) Of a similar tendency is the argument formerly used by St. Augustine: "If the Christian religion was established by the miracles which are related in the Scriptures, it is true; but if it was not, the greatest of all miracles is, that it has been able to obtain credit without miracles." For the internal suasion of Him who alone can work miracles, ought to stand in the place of miracles outwardly performed, and to be equally potent. ([Rev. ii. 17](#).) And thus the very narration, contained in these books, of the miracles which were performed in the early ages in proof of the doctrine, is now, through a most beautiful vicissitude of

circumstances, proved to be true by the Divinity of the doctrine when subjected to examination.

XIX. Although the inward witness of the Holy Spirit is known to him alone to whom it is communicated, yet, since there is a mutual relation between the veracity of the Testifier, and the truth of the thing which is proved, an examination may be instituted respecting the testimony itself. This is so far from being injurious or displeasing to the Holy Ghost, that by this method His veracity is rendered in all possible directions more eminently conspicuous, as being the Author not only of the internal testimony and the external word, but likewise of the significations concerning which he bears witness to both; on this account also, he has commanded us to "try the spirits whether they be of God," and has added a specimen of such a "trying." (1 John iv. 1, 2.) It will therefore be as easy to confute the man who falsely boasts of having the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit, as to be able to destroy that religion to which he professes himself to be devoted. From this it is apparent, that the inward witness of the Spirit is calculated to impart assurance to him to whom it is communicated, but not to convince any other person. Wherefore those who reckon this among the causes why they account the Scriptures Divine, are foolishly said by the Papists to beg the question, since they never employ it themselves in convincing others.