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[This text requires further editing which may include proofing, supplying illegible text, the insertion of Greek/Hebrew text and the addition of marginalia. An editable file can be supplied upon request for those wishing to make corrections or additions to this text.]

[Transcribed by John Van Voorhis]

THE
SCRIPTURES SUFFICIENT
To Determine
All Matters of Faith,
Made good against the PAPIST:

OR

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

By that Great and Famous Light of Gods Church,
William Twisse D. D.

And Prolocutor of the late *Assembly of Divines*
July /?/ LONDON

Printed for *Matthew Keynton*, at the Fountain in *S. Pauls Churchyard*. 1656.

SIR,

I Have read this learned and satisfactory Answer to the Perplexing Question and Doubtfull Case of Conscience, in the life time of D. *Twisse*, and if you shall please to give it your *Imprimatur*, I think it may be advantageous in this juncture of time. I rest,
Yours,

J. A. Cranford.

May 3, 1652.

Imprimatur,

Edm. Calamy.

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THE
APPROBATION
OF

That Reverend Father of the
Church, *Joseph Hall*, Bishop. of
NORWICH

In a Letter to his worthily respected friend, Mr. W. S

Worthy Sir,

Return you many thanks for the favour you have done me, in affording me the view of this solid and seasonable piece of Dr. *Twisse*, in full answer to this pretended Questionist; who under the colour of a *Perplexing Case of Conscience* from a Preacher of the Gospell, sends forth a

// foolish kind of challenge to all Protestant Divines. Had you not named the Author of the satisfactory Answer, and seconded it by anothers attestation, I could both known and avouched him. There is a face of a style, by which we Scholars know one another, no less than our persons by a visible countenance; whosoever hath read the witty & accute exercitations of this Author upon the writings of Doctor *Jackson*, will easily find him in this Tractate both for form and matter. This sculking and disguised Chalenger could not have met with a meeter Combatant; a man so eminent

// in School Divinity, that the Jesuits have felt, and (for ought I see) shrunk under his strength, in their *Scientia Media*; and whom the States of the *Netherlands* out of the fame of his worth, would fain have tempted away with large profers to a Publick Professorship in one of their Universities. I onely wish he had met with a more able Adversary: For certainly, as I intimated to you in my last, this Beagle, whosoever he be, whether out of misprision or craft, hunts counter, and runs all the while upon a wrong ground; vainly supposing, that differences in points not fundamentall, make a // diversity of Religions; and weakly conceiving, that because there are many false claims to Truth in the world, God hath not left us means enough in his revealed Will to distinguish Truth from Error; as if, because there are store of counterfeit coyns abroad, it could not be safe for a man to receive, or possible to discern currant money: whereas, if his wit would have served him, he might have considered, that all, both *Agenda* and *Credenda* necessary to salvation (which only can difference Religion) are clearly laid down in the sacred Oracles of Scripture, with which if any refractory soul will // unjustly quarrell, he may by those helps which God hath left to his Church, be either convinced, or shamed, in the mean while it is no reason that his absurd obstinacy should cast any blemish upon the clear face of truth, or be any prejudice to others, who are blessed with better apprehensions, whose not-forestalled souls, out of that judgment of discretion, which God hath endowed all wise Christians withall, upon due search may be those good means which God hath held forth to us, give himself so ful satisfaction in all important Truths, as wherein he may securely rest, with a resolute // defiance of all oppositions.

Had this Questionist but consulted with learned Bishop *Davenant's* irrefragable Discourse, *De judice ac norma fidei*, he had forborn the blurring of his Paper, and spared the labor of this his perplexed and shuffling proposall of his pretendedly-perplexing Question, which in very truth is no other than a stale and often exploded Cavill, newly

furbushed over with a false colour of a tenderly-conscientious irresolution. The man will finde himself here over-answer'd, and receive too much honour from such an Antagonist, in that // it may be said of him, *Aenae magni dextra cadis*. Now since you are pleased to desire my Opinion of the whole work: to speak freely, One or two passages, I confess, to meet with in this learned and weighty Discourse, (as concerning the name and number of the Apocalyptical Beast, 666) which doe not altogether carry my assent. That Mysterie must and will lye still closed, after all the scanning of the sharpest Wits and Judgements. But for all the Doctrinall points, I cannot but applaud them as worthy of the Authour, and // and satisfactory to the Reader, and convictive of the Adversary. Farewell, from your much devoted

Higham, April 29, 1652.

J. H. B. N. //

A
Perplexing Question
OR
A doubtful Case of
CONSCIENCE,
Of a certain Preacher of the
GOSPEL

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

But now there ariseth a great doubt to me, and other of the simpler sort of Christians, Whether it be possible for us to have an infallible certainty of our Faith out of the holy Scriptures, and // so consequently to rely on and trust to this faith, as to an unshaken foundation?

The reason of our doubting is this, Both Papists and Calvinists holding contrary opinions, do maintain and prove by the holy Scriptures (as they suppose) the contrary to that which the Lutherans hold; serious affirming, that in the Scriptures the Lutheran religion is condemned, and theirs confirmed. Which thing no man will deny, to be an evident Argument of the obscurity of the holy Scriptures. If there be two Physicians of equall learning, and of the same intent in curing the sick, that is, alike desirous to cure the disease, and if these Physicians should out of one and the same Book gather, the one that a Fever is cured with wine, and the other, that wine is as bad as poyson to them that have the Fever, how, I pray, shall we know which of these two to take part withall? A man can gather nothing, but that the remedy for that disease is obscurely // expressed in that Book.

Some may object, The Sects doe not follow the Scriptures onely, but they add their traditions; the Calvinists add their reason, the Anabaptists their dreams.

I answer: They do so, in those things which are not clearly taught in the holy Scriptures, but in the controversies between them and Lutherans, they proceed not so, but by Scriptures they fight against Lutheran Tenents, which are confirmed by the Scriptures, and indeavour by the help of the Scriptures to fight for, and defend their own, which the Lutherans by Scriptures do condemn. Nay more, there are some (viz, the Anabaptists) that urge the Scriptures in the very letter more than the rest. The Calvinists use their reason, and out of the Scriptures draw Arguments, which thing the Lutherans also doe, never suffering any of theirs to reason against the Scriptures.

2. If it be objected unto them, that they, // wilfully, and against their consciences do condemn the Lutheran tenents, and confirm their own: They will answer, That this were a very grievous sin, and that men ought not to presume that they would falsifie and corrupt the Letters and Commands of their Lord to his sons and subjects, much less that they do maliciously erre and lead themselves and others into the danger of their salvation; and to say the truth, it is not likely that so many hundreds and thousands of men would come to that pitch of malice, though one should, especially seeing they dare confirm their honest meaning with an Oath; wherefore unless they be convinced of maliciously-wilfull error, we shall seem injuriously to slander them.

3. It may be objected, Perhaps they before-stalled with preconceived opinions. I answer. How? You will say they accustom themselves from their cradles to their own

Religion, forsaking the Bible and other Books.// I answer. This is true in Popery, but not in Calvinists, and others which urge the Bible more than we do. These have more freedom than we have to the other Religions. Do not the children of the Lutherans also inure themselves to their Religion from their childhood? Do they learn a Papists or Calvinisticall Catechism, before they have learned a Lutheran one? Is not that a mans Religion to which he accustoms himself? How doth a child or a Lay-man, that hath been taught no Religion, know what is Lutheranism, or Calvinism? Doth he not take that Scripture which is first offered to him? Besides, no fore-conceited Opinion is so fast rooted, but that it will give place to clear demonstrations, which is confessed among all. Therefore we shall never be able to confute any Religion with the Objection of fore-conceived opinions.

What shall I say more? Doe other Religions want civill learning? There are found amongst them sufficiently learned// and ingenious men, and oftentimes they have much better and fitter means for the advancement of Learning, than the Lutherans have; especially the Papists, who make choice of the best wits, whom they imploy in a manner from their cradles to their full age in nothing else but study, meditation, and continuall exercises, and do abundantly supply them with all things which serve or seem to serve for their furthering and forwarding, and with all care and diligence do remove and take away whatsoever causeth, or seems to cause any hindrance of their course. They study the Scriptures and Fathers night and day, and refuse no labour in learning the foundation of their own Religion, and in knowing and understanding the Errors of others. Nay, the method and manner of learning, of comparing the Scriptures, of interpreting according to the /GREEK/ of Faith, of bringing no sense to the Scriptures, and such other rules, cannot be unknown to them.

Obj. But perhaps God hath not granted them his Spirit and this grace.

I answer: God being sought unto and solicited by prayers, denies to no man his grace and Spirit of Truth. Now men of other Religions crave of God the inlightning of their minde and direction in a right way, no less than our selves, nay (as far as we can discern) perhaps with a greater fervency and zeal, neither are we to think that they ask it out of hypocrosie and with dissimulation, and that so they would mock God. Therefore it is to be taken for granted, that the Spirit is where the fruits of the Spirit are found, of which none ought to boast above others. Nay more, the knowlege of understanding the Scriptures is a peculiar gift of the Spirit, which is granted no less to others than to us. It is true indeed that he onely understands the Scriptures, which hath the Spirit that dictated the; and (as it is in worldly Laws)// no Doctors interpretation or deciding doth justifie, till the Law-giver approve that deciding. Yet he that boasteth of such approbation of the Spirit is bound to shew it, unless he will be counted but an ordinary Doctor.

Obj. If any should here object, that the Scriptures themselves bear witness of their own cleerness, according to that, Thy Word is a Lanthorn to my feet, &c. and you have a more sure Word, &c.

I answer: All the Commands of God are his Word, and so are all his Works which are through his Word; for it is confessed by all, that God sets forth his Word by Nature, the Creature, Signs, Wonders, beneath, above, and by infinite wayes; also the Scriptures witness that many things neither are nor can be written. Therefore the V Vord of this Voice is taken diversly in the Scriptures, and so by consequence, all that is called

Gods Word is not necessarily to be understood of the Scriptures. Hereunto add, // that at that time many parts of Scripture were not yet written; wherefore the evidence of the thing manifestly proveth, that his is not spoken of the whole Argument and Letter of the Scripture, for as much as the Figures of the Prophecy of the Apocalyps, and infinite other things belonging to the fulfilling of those Prophecies, were hidden from the Prophets themselves, and the Fathers, (much more then from others) and are yet hidden. Christ himself speaks in parables, to the end that men may hear with their ears and not understand. The Scripture it self in very many places witnesseth that the Word of God is secret, obscure, hidden, and discovered onely to the Spirit, or to the Godly onely, to whom God reveals it, so that in the Scriptures there are more testimonies of their obscuritie, than of their cleanness; yet is not the Scriptures hereby either rejected, or slighted. For even before the Law was given and written, men had a certain // light, by the help whereof they might (if they would) have found out the truth more clearly than we; and although in the New Testament a great light be risen, yet must we not think that in the Old Testament there was a ineer blindness. Whence we may reason, that God thought it not usefull for us to reveal all things to us, but though all things perhaps be not necessary to be known, yet nevertheless there may be had a certain and infallible way of interpreting, by the help whereof the most, and most necessary Controversies may be decided; of which if triall be made, a cleer light and meer harmony may be shown, in such Scriptures, as according to the opinion of many, are obscure. It is possible also, that there should be not a few other wayes of illustrating that which is obscure, although this ill tried way be not used alone, for there may both be admitted and used, agreements coming from the same Spirit and word, sometimes where there is no demonstration.//

Nor am I moved with that Objection, that it is enough for the Lutherans, that they are assured of the truth of Lutheranism, though others cannot see and believe it. For this is not that which I would have. I inquire, how a man may be sure not of his own opinion, but of the truth: Now if I believe and determines that such a thing is true, this is my opinion, yet is it not therefore the truth, seeing truth and opinion have nothing in them alike. A stedfast perswasion changeth not the essence of the thing whereof a man is perswaded. For then might melancholick persons, whose opinion is unmovable, work miracles, and make all their conceits essentiall. The nature of true knowledge is this, to be demonstrable, not to me, or some men, but to all, and to win a consent from any man, as two and three makes five. A thing controverted, and which some understand one way, some another, can never make me certain and free from doubt, whether I have the // truth in me or no; and he that knowes no other than what he determines may be excused of malice and hypocrisie. But this reasoning, I and my follower are sure of this thing, therefore it is true, is unreasonable reasoning.

Lastly, If we build our Religion onely upon the Scripture, the learned shall have a great Prerogative above the unlearned in the matter of Faith and Religion, and shall be more engaged in thankfulness to God than they; and so Religion shall favour and cleave to good wits. Also many have their senses exercised in the Scripture, or are more inventive and ingenious than others; therefore if a man could by disputing and reasoning confute some Thesis, and as it were take away a mans opinion from him, and become Conqueror, he should also take away his Religion, and the other should be constrained either to take up this Conquerors Religion, or against his conscience to keep his own.//

Nor will that Answer serve the turn, Our Divines and Pastors can answer you, though I cannot: for then should I believe with another mans faith; but faith must be mine, not another mans, else should salvation also be another mans. If Religion be the service of God, surely it is necessary that I understand that service which I must perform to my Lord. Seeing God will not reckon another mans service for mine, and cannot be served by a Substitute, it remains that wee conclude, Controversies are to be left to learned men, and are not so very necessary It may be answered, Then also Religion is to be left to learned men; for Controversies are our very Religion, for (saving the consideration of them) there is no difference, but Papists are Protestants, and Protestants are Papists; look how much a man knowes of Controversies, // so much doth he know of his own Religion. The state of a mans salvation is such as is his Religion and his Faith: Now there is but one Salvation, nor but one faith. But if Controversies belong to the learned onely, wherefore have the Lay-men indured so many afflictions, distresses, nay and death it self, for those Controversies sake?

I know indeed that a Calvinist Doctor, one Doctor Bergius, a Preacher at Bremen, affirms in his late published Sermons, that Controversies are not meerly necessary to salvation; That the Scripture is plain and clear in those things which are necessary to salvation, and there was never any contrariety between the Religions themselves. At which also the Leipsich-Collation between the Lutherans and Calvinists seems to /?/.

This I am perswaded is very true, that had the Holy Ghost judged these // Controverted Questions necessary to salvation, it would have expressed and propounded them in the holy Scripture clearly and plainly, seeing those Epistles were sent to simple and Lay-men especially. Nor doth it seem likely to be true, that ever there were so many Articles of Faith drawn out of them as are now to be read in the Catechisms Common-places, and Compend of Divines. As yet there is no certain number of them determined, seeing some Divines have propounded more, and some fewer; and some Religions have in process of time, either added or abated whole Articles, and after many miseries indured for the defence of some of them, entring a way of moderation, they have determined that for tolerable and indifferent, which before they thought damnable. But howsoever, there are so many of them, that a man may deservedly call in // question the precise necessity of them. And this seems the best Solution to disintangle and appease perplexed, doubtfull, and erring Consciences.

But could so many thousand Divines of former Ages be ignorant of this? Have there not so many Wars been undertaken for this cause? Could those learned men suffer so many thousands of men to run headlong, both by doing and suffering, into the hazard of body and soul for Religions sake? and so many unspeakable mischiefs to arise, when as it is possible for a man to be saved without the Controversies of Religion? But if this be the command of God under pain of temporall and everlasting punishment, to fight for those Controversies, how can we excuse those shuffling agreements of Faith, Religion, and Gods Worship? A Servant may not abate any thing of the Lords due.

Let this thing be considered, seeing it // is so intricate, and leads me and many others into disquiet of minde; for which perplexities of Conscience, none will deny that a remedy is to be sought at the hands of those that have Christian fellow-feeling, and might be found if all the Divines of those sides that have left Popery, would vouchsafe to afford

me a wise, milde, and solid Answer in writing, not favouring of partiality, prejudice, or passion.//

THE
Doubting Conscience
Resolved.

In Answer to a (pretended)
Perplexing Question

Consideration.

It is an old saying, that *Universus Mundus exercet histrioniant*, but I think never more verified in any Age than in this. There was a time when the Devill plaid his part in the shape of Dragon with seaven heads and ten horns, *Rev.* 12.3, 7, 9. But after the war in /1/ heaven between *Michael* and his Angells on the one side, and the Dragon and his Angells on the other, the Dragon was cast out into the earth, and his Angells were cast out with him. But he continued to play the part of an old Serpent still which deceiveth the whole world, *Adversarius qui in apertis inefficax persecutionibus tecta nocendi arte desavit*; and no marvell if intelligent spirits are very subdalous and full of craft, *eum nimis astutum fecit tam natura subtilis, quam longa exercitatio malitiae ejus*. And afterwards he found as powerfull means to doe mischief to the Church of God, *Gladio oris*, by the sword of the mouth, as formerly he had done *ore Gladii*, by the mouth or edge of the sword, even by another Beast who had two horns like the Lamb, *Rev.* 13.11, 13. but speake like the Dragon. And this /2/ Beast first was operative by deceit: For he did great wonders, so that he made fire to come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceived them that dwelt on earth by the means of his miracles. This is that Man of Sin St. *Paul* speaks of, whose comming was in the effectuall power of Satan, in signs and lying wonders, and in all deceivableness of unrighteousness, *2 Thes.* 2.9, 10. and by his cunning practices got at length as many heads to his body, and horns to his head, as the Dragon had, and got him amistress too like like himself, the Whore of Babylon, whom *John* saw *Rev.* 17.6. drunken with the blood of the Saints, and with the blood of the Martyrs of Jesus: Witness the slaughters made, and barbarous outrages comnitted upon the *Waldenses*, who first proclaimed to the world that *Rome* was the Whore of *Babylon*, and the Pope /3/ Antichrist. But in these later days the Lord hath blasted that Man of Sin with the breath of his mouth, and broken off many horns of the Beast, which hath provoked those Antichristian Generations in a very high degree, *Rev.* 12. and the Devill undoubtedly hath now greater wrath than ever, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. Now of late years his greatest Proctors the Jesuits have not spared to profess despair of prevailing in their cause by disputation, as appears by *Westons* Preface to his book, *De triplici hominis statu*; The Gordian knot of Controversies in Religion must be cust asunder by some *Alexanders* sword. Belike this sect was privy to some intentions on foot for the raising of such Meteors as at length have broken forth into those storms which since have exercised all *Germany*, if not all Christendom in the West: And I have read a discourse /4/ written by one who was sometimes Secretary to the Pope, discovering the practices of those times, and relating a counsell for the propagating of Religion, erected and instituted by *Clemens Octavus* that whining Pope, thereby concealing the bloody and barbarous intention of his heart; some say that for all his whining he was as impure as bloody. Now these courses wherewith they travelled many

years, being now brought forth unto the light, I wonder not a little that they persist in their motive learning, which of all others is of the basest allay, and hath more of the nature of a charm than of a medicine to cure Error in a rationally way. For I cannot be perswaded otherwise, but that some vile Jesuite hath an hand in this Argument to style himself a Preacher of the Gospell; for though he holds the Pope to be judge of Controversies, yet I presume when he /5/ preacheth he doth not take his Text out of the Popes Canons, but out of the Word of God; and we know there are Dutch Jesuits, as well as Spanish Jesuits, and I have heard, that when the Arminian quarrells were rife in the Netherlands, some Jesuits have insinuated themselves amongst them, and preached in their Congregations, to promote the Arminian cause, though not known to be any other than their own Ministers.

The Preacher of the Gospell shapes his discourse at pleasure, calling it a *Perplexing Question*, or a *Doubtful Case of Conscience*, whereas it contains nothing but a threed-bare and old worn-out Argument; he was ashamed to say that it proceeds concerning the Scripture, lest the conscience of every sober Christian should rise against it, therefore he balks that, and shapes it to proceed, Concerning /6/ the foundation of the Religion of the Protestants and others which have made a separation from the Pope. Now this foundation is no other than the Scripture of the Prophets and Apostles, which St. *Paul* calls the foundation whereupon the Church is built. And the *Perplexing Question* and *Doubtful Case of Conscience* comes to this, *Whether the Scripture or the Pope be the foundation upon which the Church is built?* I do not well understand what he means by distinguishing those who have made a separation from the Pope, into Protestants and others; for none separate from the Pope, but by reason of the corruptions they finde in the Church of *Rome* in the way of Error and Heresie, Superstition and Idolatry, and their bloody and barbarous disposition against all those that cannot brook her abominations; and Protestants have their name from their /7/ protestation against these their courses.

And for the Question, *Whether any Christian bee altogether and infallibly certain of his Faith and Religion by the holy Scriptures, and safely rely upon it against all tentations and objections?* Is this the *Perplexing Question*? Is this the *Doubtfull Case of Conscience*? It is now above 1600, years since Christs Resurrection, and the comming down of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost; who ever was known to make question of this in the Church of God, untill this last hundred years, wherein so great and generall a separation hath been made, not from the Church of God, but from communion with the Church of *Rome*? After Christs practice in incountring Satan, and that after a manner competent to every simple Christian, not discovering the Devills adulterating the /8/ Text, *Psal. 91. He shall give his Angells charge over thee to keep thee in all thy wayes*, which last clause in *all thy ways*, the Devill omitted, but replying, (*Mat. 4*) *It is written, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God;* and reprehending the Sadduces for not knowing the Scriptures and the power of God, imputing their error to this their ignorance; and shewing how little need there is that any man should rise from the dead to tell men of that place of torment in case they have *Moses* and the Prophets, and that who so will not believe *Moses* and the Prophets, neither will they believe though a man rise from the dead, *Luk. 16.* and counselling the Jews to search the Scriptures, *Joh. 5.* and justifying them in their opinion, thinking them to be sufficient to direct them unto everlasting life: Afterwards the Apostles submitted their Doctrine to be examined by the Word of God. /9/ The Bereans being commended for this, (*Act. 7*) and professing that the

Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, 2 Tim. 3.15. After the antient Fathers have called the triall of Controversies to the Word of God, and *Constantine* at the Council of *Nice* referred all the Bishops there assembled to proceed according to this; and both *Chrysostome* and *Austin* have professed that all things necessary to salvation are clearly set down in Scripture; and in the Controversie between *Hierome* and *Austin* about *Pauls* reproving *Peter*, whether it were done seriously, or in pretence only, *Hierome* pleading variety of Fathers for his way, and *Austin* opposing the clear evidence of the Text against them all. And Papists themselves, many of the more ingenious sort of them, having been found to confess that the /10/ last resolution of our faith ought to be made into the Word of God; and the contradictory nature of the Popish Tenet in proving the true Church by the Scriptures, and the Scriptures by the Church, having been made manifest to the world by Divines. After all this, I say, that a Preacher of the Gospell should be brought upon the Stage to propose such a Question, as *Whether any Christian can bee certain of his faith by the holy Scriptures*; nor propose it onely, but to call it *A Perplexed Question*, and a *Doubtfull Case of Conscience*, is so unshamefast a course, as in my judgment it becometh none but such an one as hath whores forehead, and cannot be ashamed.

Yet I consider the condition of these present times in *Germany*, where the Antichristian Congregations have confederated themselves, and taken counsell against Gods Secretaries, and as *Pharaoh* pursued /11/ the *Israelites* thinking to overtake them, and that their lust should be satisfied upon them, so these have not onely thought so, but done so; it is not impossible but that some weak Preacher of the Gospell may fall into their hands, and be so charmed with fears, or hopes, or both, as to be drawn into their lure, and brought to do them this piece of service, as to propose such a Question, and name the child after this manner: For these times are the very hour and power of darkness, and Satan is not yet bound, though we trust his binding is not far off. And it is not strange that men should be given over to believe lies, and to become some Jesuits Proctor, calling men to relieve a scrupulous and perplexed conscience, and to intreat all Christians (especially the Calvinists Divines and Preachers) with all due respect to give a Solution to this /12/ proposed Question, and this in Dutch, whereas I had thought that this Question had neither being, life, or motion in any other part of the Christian world, but onely in this our England. Well, let us consider wherein the perplexity of this Question consists, or what it is that makes it.

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

Consid. The first proposition, That our Religion is our Faith, is brought in to no purpose, the Argument here used subsists well enough without it, such as it is. The faith that saves is an act in man; but that which is to be proved, is no act in man, but the object of that act, the thing believed; what conscience the Author of this discourse had I know not, but I doubt he will appear to be but of little wit. /13/

Disc. *But now there ariseth a great doubt to me, and others of the simpler sort of Christians, Whether it be possible for us to have an infallible certainty of our Faith out of the holy Scriptures, and so consequently to rely and trust to this faith as to an unshaken foundation.*

Consideration. Let my Faith be never so certain, and my Repentance and good works never so sincere, I trust neither to the one nor to the other; Christ is the Rock and foundation whereupon Gods Church is built, upon which we are built by the knowledge of Christ, and faith in Christ, and in him alone I trust both for the keeping of me in this knowledge and faith of Christ, and for the bringing of me thereby unto salvation, as *Paul* saith, 1 *Cor.* 1.20. *I know whom I have trusted, and I know that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him.* And 1 *Cor.* 1.30. *God hath made him unto us /14/ wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption.*

Who so doubts whether it be possible to have any certainty of faith out of the holy Scriptures, I demand of him, whether he doubts of the possibility for a man to have any certain faith at all, or no; if he doubts whether this be possible, who seeth not that it is more fit this Question should be proposed in the first place, and upon the solution thereof, and not afore, to proceed to inquire by what this certainty may be had; if he doubts not but that this is possible, let him shew us how or by what means he is assured hereof, as namely, whether by naturall reason, or by the word of the Pope, or by the word of an Angell. And indeed if the Question were proposed indifferently and fairly with distinction, we should soon perceive how little cause there is to call this a Perplexed Question, or /15/ a Doubtfull case of Conscience, though these forms savour of no learning, nor judgement; for the perplexity that is found in this Argument is not in the Question, if it be, it is the meer fault of the propounder exhibiting it in perplexed terms, the meaning whereof cannot be easily unfolded; but rather in finding out the truth thereof, and that is onely in case the reasons be of equall moment on both sides, wherewith the truth is incombred; so that the light and convincing evidence thereof cannot easily break forth and appearl. Then as for a case of Conscience that is a very alien notion, and ill applied in this place: for cases of Conscience are onely touching what we ought to doe in a certain case; but this is onely touching possibility of assurance, as, Whether we can have any certain faith by the holy Scriptures. But let us proceed distinctly, and /16/

1. Let us inquire, Whether a man can have any certain faith at all? I answer. 1. They may; for many have had it, as it is defined by *S. Paul, Heb.* 11. to be the evidence of things not seen, the ground of things hoped for; and there the Apostle reckons up a Catalogue of many that had such a faith. I presume the propounder of this, if he be a Christian, makes no question hereof: And that *Abraham* the Father of the faithfull, *Rom.* 4.18, 19, 20. was such a one, who against hope believed in hope, and being not weak in faith, he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and that all the true children of *Abraham* have the like faith as *Abraham* had. 2. But then let us distinguish when we treat of possibility, this may be understood either in reference to the power of Nature, or in respect of the power of /17/ God; and according to this distinction I answer, That it is utterly impossible to believe this by power of Nature, *Mat.* 16. *Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven;* and 1 *Cor.* 2.14. *The naturall man perceives not the things of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned;* And *Esa.* 53.1. *Who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of God been revealed?* And *Joh.* 12.39. *Therefore they could not believe, because Esaias saith again, he hath blinded their eyes, and hardned their hearts, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and i should heal them;* And *Rom.* 8.8. *They that are in the flesh cannot please God, and*

consequently they cannot have faith, for surely by faith we please God. But then on the other side, it is most true, that by the power of /18/ God a man may believe, *Act. 18.27. They believed through grace. And Phil. 1.29. To you it is given not onely to believe in him, but suffer for him,* and to believe and find mercy at Gods hands are all one, *Rom. 11.30.*

Now if it be granted that faith may be had in what degree of certainty soever, what sober Christian can make doubt but that if question be made about the means whereby we may have it, it may be had by holy Scripture as well as by any other means? yea and far better, considering that faith is in the proper notion thereof the assent to somewhat from the authority of the speaker, and if the speaker is but a man, it is no better than faith human; if the speaker be God, that and that alone makes it to be faith divine. Now we all confess, that the holy Scripture is the Word of God, and therefore if by any word faith may be had in what /19/ degree of certainty soever, sure it may be had by the Word of God; yea, and that no other way can Divine Faith be had but by the Word of God, not by the word of the creature, whether man or Angell. And if faith may be wrought by the power of Gods Spirit in the heart of any man, he that makes question whether this may be done by the holy Scriptures, had need of some good measure of Ellebore to purge his brain, for he seems to me to be in the next degree to a mad-man; for seeing faith is no faith, unless it depend upon some word, that God should work his faith by another word than his own, is as uncouth and contradictious assertion I should think as ever was heard among the learned. But it may be this Author through the confusion of his wits, hath not hitherto been so happy as to deliver himself fairly of his own meaning: Therefore /20/ let us take notice of the Discourse it self, whether it may bear any better state of the Question than yet we have been acquainted with: For I guess that in the issue the state of the Question will come to this,

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

Disc. The reason of our doubting is this, Both Papists and Calvinists holding contrary opinions, do maintain & prove by the holy Scriptures (as they suppose) the contrary to that which the Lutherans hold; serious affirming, that in the Scriptures the Lutheran Religion is condemned, and theirs confirmed Which thing no man will deny to be an evident Argument of the obscurity of the holy Scriptures. If there be two Physicians of equall learning, and of the same intent in curing the sick, that is, alike desirous to cure the disease, and if these Physicians should out of one and the same Book, /21/ gather, the one, that a Fever is cured with wine, and the other, that wine is as bad as poyson to them that have the Fever, how, I pray, shall we know which of these two to take part withall? A man can gather nothing, but the the remedy for that disease is obscurely expressed in that book.

Confid. The sum of all this is, that the Scripture is obscure; and that which the Author would infer from hence is this, therefore it is impossible to be sure of the meaning of it; whereby now I perceive the *Perplexed Question* and *Doubtfull case of Conscience* comes but to this in plain terms, Whether it be possible for a man to be sure of the meaning of Scripture; the Author maintains the negative, & proves it, because the Scripture is obscure, and the obscurity of Scripture he proves by this, that men differ in the exposition of it: Now this I will examine in order, and first observe the dodging disposition /22/ of this Author, and manifest evidence of his corrupt affection, and that

he comes to this work with an intention not to seek the truth, but to circumvent it rather: For whereas the force of his Argument to prove that the Scripture is obscure, is but this, that Divines differ in the interpretation of Scripture, yet it served his turn rather to instance in Papists and Calvinists joyning together in the interpretation of Scripture contrary to the Lutherans. Might he not as well give instance in Papists and Lutherans holding together in interpretation of Scripture contrary to the Calvinists? Might he not as well have instanced in Lutherans and Calvinists joyning together in the interpretation of Scripture contrary to the Papists? undoubtedly he might, for it is but an indefinite proposition, and the matter is clearly contingent. Now /23/ an indefinite proposition in a contingent matter is confessed in Schools to have not greater force than of a particular proposition: As much as to say, they differ one from another in the interpretation of some Scriptures. Now this may very well be true, not onely of Papists differing from Protestants, but of Papists differing from Papists, as *Maldonate* from *Jansenius*, and Protestants from Protestants, not onely Lutherans from Calvinists, but one Lutheran from another, and one Calvinist from another in the interpretation of some places of Scripture. Nay, doth not one Father differ from another after this very manner? And do not modern Divines, even Papists as well as Protestants, take liberty of dissenting from all the Antients, in the interpretation of some places of Scripture? Witness *Maldonate* in the interpretation of that *Mat. 5. Blessed are the poor in Spirit*, /24/ who takes a way of interpretation different from all the Antients, by his own confession. And *Cardinall Cajetan* when he was put upon the study of Scripture by occasion of his conference with *Martin Luther*, who would hear nothing but Scripture, see what a profession he makes in his entrance upon writing Commentaries on the Scriptures, *Si quando occurrerit novus sensus Textui consonus, nec a sacra Scriptura, nec ab Ecclesia Doctrina dissonus, quamvis a Torrente Doctorum sacrorum alienum, aequos se praebeant censores*: And when *Austin* takes notice of the multiplicity of translations of the Scripture, he was so far from being offended thereat, that he professed there was more profit than damage redounding thereby to the Church; and why may it not be so by different interpretations also? it being more easie to judge which of them is the right, /25/ or by refuting them all to find out the true interpretation, than at the first dash to find out the true meaning.

2. Observe the absurd and malicious carriage of this Author. 1. In shaping different Religions, according to different interpretations of Scriptures, whereas i shewed, that the force of the proposition is onely a particular, namely, that they differ in the interpretation of some places of Scripture, which difference I have shewed may be found, and ever have been found more or less, even amongst them that are of the same Religion, as amongst none have been more different interpretations of Scripture found, than amongst the Antients; yet what Christian is found to be so impudent and immodest, as to lay to their charge that they differed in Religion; and look how many different interpretations of Scripture /26/ were found amongst them, so many different Religions there were amongst them? he might as well profess, that the Papists amongst themselves, the Lutherans amongst themselves, and the Calvinists amongst themselves are of different Religions.

3. We acknowledge different opinions between Lutherans and Calvinians; so not doubt there are different opinions among the Lutherans themselves, and the Calvinians themselves, but we utterly deny that there are different Religions. The Lutherans we hold to be true Churches, agreeing with us in the fundamental points of faith, and likewise in

being free from Idolatry; for albeit they have Images in their Churches, which we conceive to be a very dangerous thing, yet they doe not worship them; and although they hold reall Presence in the Sacrament, yet they do not adore it. /27/

So that albeit we think some of their opinions are contrary to the Scripture, and they think the like of some of ours, yet neither we say of their Religion, nor they of ours I trow, that it is contrary to the Scripture, much less that it is condemned in Scripture.

But come we to the main scope of this Authors Discourse, which is to prove that the Scriptures are obscure, and from thence to infer, that we can have no assurance of the true meaning of it. To this we answer,

1. By denying the consequence, which is this, Divines differ in the interpretation of Scripture, therefore the Scripture is obscure.

And I prove the absurdity, anhd untruth, and weakness of it.

1. It is weak; for at the uttermost it proves that it is obscure but in some places: For this difference of interpretation is but of some places, as I have shewed, and the /28/ force of the proposition I have shewed to be of no greater than the force of a particular.

2. It is absurd; for by the same reason I may prove, that the Scripture is clear, thus: That Scripture is clear in the interpretation, wherein men of different opinions and different Religions doe agree; But men of different opinions and Religions do agree in the interpretation of divine Scripture; therefore the divine Scripture is clear; and indeed it will be found that we agree in the interpretation not of some onely, but of many places of holy Scripture. Now what absurd a course is it for a Disputant so to dispute, as that his Argument may be retorted with as good force against him; yea, and much more? For when men of different opinions are bound to differ about the interpretation of a Scripture, it may be this ariseth from the love of their own opinions, which makes /29/ the Scripture seem to sound the same way, but when they agree in the interpretation of Scripture, notwithstanding their other differences, this argues the Scripture to be clear enough: Nay, we know *Bellarmino* will dislike an opinion, and *Maldonate* an interpretation of Scripture, for *Calvins* sake, striving to differ from such as they hate, though without all just cause, and to wrest the Scriptures to serve their turns.

3. Lastly, the Consequence is as untrue, as it is weak and absurd; for the cause of this difference may be in the darkness of their understanding, who take upon them to interpret it, rather than in the darkness of the Scripture itself, which whether we consider the Law or the Gospell, each of them is termed light by the Spirit of God. *Thy Law is a Lanthorn to my fee, and a light unto my pathes*, saith *David*, *Psal.* 119. And of the Gospell /30/ our Saviour speaks, *Light came into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light*, *Joh.* 3. the greater will be their condemnation.

And for the instance proposed to prove the Consequence, of two Physicians, 1. The particular proposed is most inficete, and a meer fiction without all colour.

2. Yet I doubt not but *Galen* and *Hipocrates* in divers places may admit different interpretations: Therefore I answer,

1. This also may arise not so much from the obscurity of the Text, as from the fault of the Interpreter.

2. It a most alien course, to compare the Word of God, and the word of Man together; for man may contradict himself, God cannot; man may forget one time what he delivered at another, God cannot.

3. There is a vast difference between /31/ the things of men and the things of God; so that whereas naturall reason and naturall instruction may be sufficient to inable a man to understand the writing of another man, yet onely supernatural illumination is sufficient to inable a man to discern the things of God; yet I confess, on this particular some judicious reader may think to find a flaw, yet I presume that upon serious consideration that attempt will prove but vain, and none but a Socinian will oppose in this, who denies all *fide infusa*, and acknowledgeth none but *acquisita*, faith naturall, and shrewd suspicions that way are betrayed by Mr. *Chillingsworth*, as if he acknowledged no faith, but faith naturall.

2. But be it granted, that the Scripture is obscure. 1. Consider the force of this proposition, it is but an indefinite, and the matter is apparently contingent; for undoubtedly /32/

it was at the good pleasure of God to speak after what manner he thought good: Hence it followeth, that the force hereof is but the force of a particular proposition, as much as to say, that the Scripture in some places is obscure, or some places of Scripture are obscure. And indeed *Gregory* of old hath professed that the holy Scripture is like unto a ford, wherein a Lamb may wade, and an Elephant may swim; and before him *St. Paul* tells us, that it contains both milk for babes, and strong meat for men; there is enough, and that plain enough, to satisfie the hungry; and there is also enough, and that obscure enough, to prevent non-sealing, especially in the Prophecies for the times to come. The first promise of the Covenant of Grace was this, *the seed of the woman shall break the serpents head*: Here is a double mystery in general notions carried, the one the mystery /33/ of Christs Person expressed by the seed of the woman, but implied to be somewhat more, yea much more, even such a one as should break the Serpents head; the other the mystery of his Office, carried onely in this generall notion of breaking the Serpents head. In this time of grace we know this to have been brought to pass by his dying for our sins, and his rising again for our justification. Had this been known to Satan, as now it is to us, is it credible that hee would have perswaded *Judas* as he did to contract with the high Priest to betray him into their hands? that were *Judas* like after he had betrayed his Master to goe forth and hang himself: For we know that upon the Cross he spoiled Principalities and Powers, and made a shew of them openly, and triumphed over them. They day of Christs Resurrection undoubtedly was a day of extreme confusion /34/ to the Devill, and all his Angells of darkness: So the Jewes had they known this mystery of his Person, *they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*, 1 *Cor.* 2.8. but this wisdom of God in a mystery was hid from them, 1 *Cor.* 2.7. and because *they knew him not, nor the words of the Prophets which were read every Sabbath day, they fulfilled them in condemning him*, Acts 13.27. But if all things necessary to salvation are plainly set down in holy Scripture, as both *Chrysostom* a Greek Father, and *Austin* a Latine Father, have concurrently delivered, what are we the worse for the obscurity of the same? 2. But suppose all were obscure, yet are there not degrees of obscurity? Amongst Writers in all Languages there is this difference, some write more obscurely, some more clearly, as amongst the Greeks, what difference between *Chrysostome* and *Epiphanius* this way? /35/ among the Latines between *Tertullian* and *Cyprian*? yet who doubts but even *Tertullian* may be understood, and that by *Cyprian*, who was wont to call for him in these terms, *Da mihi Magistrum*; so amongst School-Divines, *Aquinas* and *Durand* are perspicuous and clear, not so with *Scot* or *Cajetan*; so *Alvares* fair and clear, *Navarretus* a *Dominicanto*, but along labours of

obscurity as a man doth of the Gout; whether he understood himself or no, I know not sure I am he torments his Reader, yet by pains and intention of study the difficulty may be overcome, as I have found in part, but I do not think any knowledge in him worthy to be redeemed with the like labour; never any thing tormented me more unless unless it were the construing of Dr. *Jacksons* English, yet no where els that I know sace in treating of the *Divin* /36/ of God hath taught us that knowledge is easie to him that will understand. *If thou callest after knowledge, and criest for understanding: If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and finde the knowledge of God,* Prov. 2.3, 4, 5. especially as touching all things necessary unto salvation. 2. But suppose it were very obscure throughout, is not God the Author able to instruct us in his own meaning, and make us assured of it? And hath not our Saviour assured us, that *if earthly Fathers know not to give good things to their children, much more shall the heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him.* The holy Apostle teacheth us this saying, 1 *Joh.* 2.27. *That annoynting which ye received of him dwelleth in youi, and ye need not that any man teach you, but as the same annoynting teacheth you all things,* ---/37/

Hereupon *Nider* a Papist, in his *Consolatorium timoratae Conscientiae*, acknowledgeth, that every childe of God hath the direction of the Spirit to lead him into all truth necessary to salvation. And certainly the truth of Gods Word is infallible, *Cui non potests subesse falsum* As for the certainty *ex parte Scientis*, 1. That God can work in such a measure as he pleaseth. 2. Yet we know in the best there is the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and that swayes to infidelity, but the better part masters it. 3. And as for doubting, that is rather on the part of *fiducia*, than of *fides*, and those doubts are mastered, and that is the best faith that masters doubts, and overcometh tentations.

Thus I presume the sober Reader may observe the rotten condition of this Discourse throughout, yet we have spoken nothing of the Scripture, in comparison to other means /38/ of assurance which this Author subdolously, or simply conceals, because to leave Scripture, and to seek forth for assurance elsewhere, he perceives that this would manifestly appear in the end to be no better than to leave *the fountain of living water*, and to dig unto ourselves *pits*, even *broken pits that can hold no water*, Jer. 2. For consider, shall we fly to the voyce of the Church, and more. 1. It is the voyce of the Church, yea of the best Church, and purest Church, namely, the voyce of the Prophetical and Apostolicall Church For *Deus loquitur per Prophetas & Apostolos*. And this is that Church into whole voyce the last resolution of our Faith ought to be made, in the opinion of *Durand*; then it is more than the voyce of the Church, for *holy men speak*, /GREEK/ *as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*, 2 Pet. /39/ 1. *uit*. You will say, but all the question is about the meaning of it.

I answer, 1. May there not be as much question about the meaning of the voyce of the Church, as about the meaning of Gods Word? Where doth the Church speak more authentically than in general Councils? See the Council of *Trent*, the Pope was unwilling to confirm it, till Cardinal *Bon Compagio* Bishop of *Eestrice* urged him thereunto upon this ground, That withall he should publish an EDICT, forbidding all men to take upon them the interpretation thereof, and commanding them to seek that from him, and then (saith he) let us alone to devise a convenient interpretation of it without prejudice to the advantages of the Court of *Rome*.

2. Again, General Councils may /40/ erre, as *Austin* observes, the former have been corrected by the later in some things.

3. Such Councils never went about to write Commentaries upon the Scripture, & if they should, *Cajetan* confesses, an interpretation may be given congruous to the Text, yet different from the Torrent of Doctors, notwithstanding which we ought to receive it.

4. Lastly, after what sense soever I interpret Scripture in any Argument, if I am not able to make it good by convincing arguments to every sober conscience, let my proofs be rejected, but withall let him look to it after what manner he resists the evidence brought, as he will answer for it at the day of Judgement, according to that of our Saviour, *Joh. 12.48. He that refuseth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him, the word that I have spoken, it shall judge him at the last day. /41/*

5. it were easie to produce variety of testimonies, even of Papists acknowledging the last resolution of our faith ought to be made into the Word of God, and that the true Church, and the power which it hath, is not known but by the Word of God.

2. Or will they say the Pope is to resolve us as touching the meaning of Scripture. To this I answer, 1. That I care not who interprets Scripture to me, so he performs the part of an Interpreter indeed, and make it appear to be the meaning of it. 2. And if I doe not so, I am content to suffer the loss of that Argument whatever it be.

3. Then it hath been a very rare thing for Popes to set themselves to interpret Scripture. 4. It is well known that *Liberius* Pope of *Rome*, subscribed to Arianism; *Honorius* was a Monotholite; Pope *John* the 22. denied that the souls of /42/ men lived after separation from the body, like to the Socinians of these dayes, whose opinion was cried down at *Paris*, and openly proclaimed hereticall by the sound of a Trumpet.

3. Or shall the Rule of interpretation of Scripture be the congruity of it to naturall reason, as the Socinians make it? This is most shamefull and unreasonable, considering, 1. That our naturall reason is much corrupt by the sin of *Adam*, *The things of Go seem foolishness to the naturall man*, 1 Cor. 2.14. naturally we are all darkness. 2. In the state of innocency, do we think that *Adam* by naturall reason was able to find out or justifie the Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Deitie? We say God may be known by light of Nature, *Quod attinet ad Unitatem naturae*, but not known *quod attinet at Trinitatem Personarum*. God hath set the world in mans heart (saith *Solomon*) yet can he /43/ not finde out the works that he hath wrought from the beginning to the end, *Eccl. 3.* and if he cannot finde out the works of God, is he able to find out the nature of God himself? we know he is said to dwell in a dark cloud.

Disc. Obj. *Some may object, The Sects do not follow the Scriptures onely, but they add, the Papists their Traditions; the Calvinists their Reasons; the Anabaptists their Dreams.*

I answer: They do so, in those things which are not cleerly taught in the holy Scriptures, but in the controversies between them and Lutherans, they proceed not so, but by Scriptures they fight against Lutheran Tenents, which are confirmed by the Scriptures, and indeavour by the help of the Scriptures to fight for, and defend their own, which the Lutherans by Scriptures doe condemn. Nay more, there are some (viz. the Anabaptists) that urge the Scriptures in the very Letter /44/ more than the rest. The Calvinists use their reason, and out of the Scriptures draw Arguments, which thing the Lutherans also doe, never suffering any of theirs to reason against the Scriptures.

Consid. This Author will have the making of his own bed, and shapes his Reader at the first encounter to yeeld, acknowledging the uncontradictable nature of his former one onely Argument, which yet I have shewed to be both very weak, very ridiculous, and very untrue: But we keep our ground, professing to the world, that the Scriptures alone being the Word of God, are the rule of our faith, and no word of man; Papists add Traditions, which yet they account the Word of God unwritten; we abhor to make any thing the rule of our faith but the written Word of God. it is falsly said, that Calvinists add their Reason, they rather suppose Reason than add /45/ it, the Word of God being given to none but reasonable creatures. Neither doe we make this Reason of ours a rule of faith added to Gods Word, but it is that light which God hath given us wherewith to search into the meaning of his Word, and by studious inquisition and observation to discover it, and make it known to others, and by good reason out of the Text to convict others of the truth. And doth this Authors reason go to bed, and sleep when he comes to read and studiously to consider the Word of God? If it doth, he will prove no better than a drowsie Student, and I know no reason but such a one may be in love with dreams as well as Anabaptists.

1. In his Answer he carrieth himself most absurdly and ridiculously. For, 1. Most insipidly he supposeth that the Controversies, amongst Protestant Divines, are about /46/ such things as are clearly taught in Scripture, as if they agreed in those things which are not clearly set down in Scripture, and differ onely about things which are clearly delivered there.

2. He supposeth that Calvinists do not use reason in the controversies between them and the Lutherans, but onely in other things, which is most untrue, and absurd withall; for controversies cannot possibly be mannaged without reason, both as touching the proof of their own Tenet, and touching the disproof of the Tenet opposite: And this must needs be the guise of the Lutherans also.

It is false which he saith of Anabaptists, that they urge the very letter of Scriptures more than the rest. For both Calvinists and Lutherans insist wholly upon the literall sense of Scripture, and more than the Anabaptist in case they (as formerly by this Author said) did depend /47/ in dreams, for so doe not Protestants but on Scripture only, and that according unto sense literall, not at all according to sense mysticall, save onely in case the sense mysticall be expounded by some Apostle, and thereby made literall. 2. But herein this Authors ignorance discovers itself, that hee confounds sense literall with the proper sense of the words. We acknowledge sense literall to comprehend sense Metaphoricall as well as proper, and to stand in contradiction onely to sense mysticall: But in case we take that in a metaphoricall sense which our adversaries in any point take in a sense proper, if we doe not approve the sense wherein we take it, and disprove theirs by convincing Arguments, we will allow the liberty to reject our Tenet, and follow their own; for we desire to make our faith evident to the consciences of all opposites, and if they can make /48/ their Tenets in like manner evident to us, we will renounce our own and imbrace theirs. 3. And this Author speaks at random, and he knows not what, when he would have his Reader believe the Calvinists permit any to reason against the Scriptures; for by reason to clear the meaning of Scripture, is not, I trust, to reason against it, but for it rather, especially considering that by reason of Scripture onely we dispute the meaning of any place.

Disc. Object. 2. *If it be objected unto them, that they wilfully and against their consciences do condemn the Lutheran Tenets, and confirm their own, they will answer,*

Ans. This were a very grievous sin, and that men ought not to presume that they would falsifie and corrupt the Letters and Commands of their Lord to his sons and subjects, much less that they do maliciously erre, and lead themselves and others into the /49/ dangers of their salvation; and to say the truth, it is not likely that so many hundred thousands of men would come to that pitch of malice, though one should, especially seeing they dare confirm their honest meaning with an Oath; wherefore unless they be convicted of maliciously wilfull error, we shall seem injuriously to slander them.

Consid. I see not reason why such a censure should be passed upon the Calvinians more than upon the Lutherans, more speciously it should be passed by them that are Orthodox upon them that are not, though I justifie not this censure whosoever makes it; and certainly there is not just cause to pass it upon them who are in the right, and charity will forbid us rashly to pass this censure upon them who are in the wrong. An as I finde defect of love in them who pass such censures hand over head upon their opposites; so I finde want of judgment /50/ in this Author, who puts it upon a mans Oath to clear himself of going against his conscience in the Tenets he maintaineth; for the that saith a thing against his conscience is next door by to the swearing of it. But these are such idle and addle conceits that it causeth no small indignation in me to wast precious time in them, which might be better spent on worthier subjects.

Disc. Obj. 3. *It may be objected, Perhaps they may be forestalled with preconceived opinions.*

Ans. I answer, How? You will say, they accustome themselves from their cradles to their own Religion, forsaking the Bible, and other Books. I answer. This is true in Popery, but not in Calvinists, and others which urge the Bible more than we do. These have more freedom than we have to trie other Religions. Do not the children of the Lutherans also inure themselves to trie Religion from their /51/ their childhood? Do they learn a Popish or Calvinisticall Catechism, before they have learned a Lutheran one? Is not that a mans Religion to which he accustoms himself? How doth a child or a Lay-man, that hath been taught no Religion, know that is Lutheranism, or Calvinism? Doth he not take that Religion which is first offered to him? Beside, no fore-conceited Opinion is so fast-rooted, but that it will give place to clear demonstrations, which is confessed among all. Therefore we shall never be able to confute any Religion with the objection of fore-conceived opinions.

What shall I say more? Doe other Religions want civill learning? There are found amongst them sufficiently learned and ingenious men, and oftentimes they have much better and fitter means for the advancement of Learning, than the Lutherans have; especially the Papists, who make choice of the best wits, whom they imploy in a manner from their cradles to their full /52/ full age in nothing else but study, meditation, and continuall exercises, and do abundantly supply them with all things which serve or seem to serve for their furthering and forwarding, and with all care and diligence do remove and take away whatsoever causeth, or seems to cause any hindrance of their course. They study the Scriptures and Fathers night and day, and refuse no Labour in learning the foundation of their own Religion, and in knowing and understanding the Errors of others. Nay, the method and manner of learning, of comparing the Scriptures, of

interpreting according to the /GREEK/ of Faith, of bringing in sense to the Scriptures, and such other rules, cannot be unknown to them.

Consid. Who is not forestalled with preconceived opinions? Is not every one brought up in the Religion of his Parents? which yet breeds but a naturall complying with it, be it the best Religion, untill /53/ God by his Spirit of Regeneration opens their eyes to apprehend the power of God, and the wisdom of God therein, without which in their most zealous profession of it, for their fathers sake, and their education sake, they will prove no better than hypocrites and factious, rather than conscionable in the maintenance of it, which yet may be done with as great strength of learning, as a naturall man is capable of. And though it be a false way wherein they have been brought up and bred, and they as zealous and factious in maintaining it as ever *Saul* was, who made havock of the Church, and entred into every house and drew out both men and women and put them in prison; yet the Lord in the middest of his persecutions met with him in the way, and confounded him, and struck him with blindness naturall, to minde him thereby of his blindness /54/ spirituall, but afterwards opened his eyes, and brought him out of darkness into light, and made him not onely a Professor of that way of the Gospell, which before he persecuted, but a famous Preacher of it also, even the great Doctor of the Gentiles. So saith *Peter* of the Jewes to whom hee wrote, that they were redeemed from their vain conversation received by Tradition of their Fathers: And as this was true of the Jewes, so of the Gentiles also, as *Jeremiah* prophesied, *Jer.* 16.19. *The Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the world, and shall say, Surely our fore-fathers have inherited lies and vanity wherein there was no profit. And Isaiah also, I have been sought of them that asked not, I was found of them that sought me not, I said, Behold me, behold me, to a Nation that was not called by my Name.* Some while the Apostles and Evangelists abstained from /55/ preaching to the Gentiles, and *Peter* was called in question for going in and preaching Christ, unto the Gentiles, *Act.* 11.19. *And they that were scattered abroad because of the persecution that arose about Stephen, went throughout till they came unto Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the Word to no man, but the Jews only; v. 20. Now some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which when they were come to Antioch, spoke unto the Grecians and preached the Lord Jesus; v. 21. And the hand of the Lord was with them, so that a great number believed and turned unto the Lord.* See how suddenly they turned from Idolls to serve the living God, quite contrary to the Traditions received from their fore-fathers. So true is that of *Leo*, *Ubi Deus Magister est quam cito dissitur quod docetur.*

So that these were as little trained up in the Bible and other Books of Christian Religion as the Papists; /56/ yea, and far less. Any man hath freedom to try other Religions, have not we Christians freedom to try the Religion of the Jews and of the Turks? and abandons some to turn Turks; and Papists have liberty to try our Protestant Religion, *Vergerius* did so, a Popish Bishopk, with a purpose to refute it, but the hand of God was with him to open his eyes, as with *Saul*, and he turned Protestant. By these words, *Calvinists and others urge the Bible more than we doe*, it appears this Author is no Calvinist; so by the words following, *Do not the children of the Lutherans also inure themselves to their Religion from their childhood also?* do argue that this Author is no Lutheran; so that what to make of him I know not, for he would not seem to be a Papist; it seems he is yet to choose his Religion: And yet if this course of his be serious, it is

considerable, but he needs not go far /57/ for an Answer to so superficially a Discourse as this.

It is true, naturally every one is apt to be of the Religion he received of his Fathers, but without illumination divine, though he be in the right way, ye shall he have no comfortable apprehension of it, and by illumination divine *Saul* of a Persecutor shall become a Preacher, and the Gentiles shall have their eyes opened, and be brought out of darkness into light, and from the power of Satan unto God, though blindness come upon *Israel*, as they have been held under it now for 1600. years. A very absurd thing it is to say, we shall never be able to confute any Religion with the objection of fore-conceived opinions: For this may be objected to them that are in the right way, as well as to them that are in a wrong way; and undoubtedly the true way may be imbrac'd in a wrong manner, *For they are not all /58/ Israel that are of Israel*, Rom. 9. God threatens sometimes to visit the circumcised with the uncircumcised, and the reason why the Lord gave the Christian world over to illusions, to believe lies, was because they received not the love of the truth.

As for civill learning, surely there wanted not both civill and naturall knowledge among the Gentiles more than enough; for this made them esteem *the Cross of Christ* foolishness, which yet to them *that are saved, is the power of God: For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will cast away the understanding of the prudent. Where is the Wise? Where is the Scribe? Where is the Disputer of this world? Hath not God made the wisdom of this world foolishness? For seeing the world by wisdom knew not God in the wisdom of God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe*, 1 Cor. 1.18, 19, /59/ 20, 21. And shall we now think that civill learning and naturall ingenuity prefers men to the grace of God, or makes them the more fit to receive the Gospell? Of Princes, who more famous for naturall parts, learning, wisdom, ingenuity, than *Trajan* and *Marcus Antonius*? of inferiour condition, than *Plinie* the second, the Officer of *Trajan*, who speaks in commendations of the innocency of Christians, yet neither of these became a Christian; nay both these Princes were persecutors of the Church of God; and at *Athens* for all their learning, which made them renowned throughout the world who were converted by *Pauls* preaching there, but *Dionysius*, and *Damaris*, and some other, Act. 17. last.

Papists are great Scholars undoubtedly, not in Logick and Philosophie onely, and that in all kindes, but in Divinity also, and that /60/ in the most learned way, *Aquinas* a great Divine, his Sums, I have heard Doctor *Reynolds* call it, that absolute Body of Divinitie, but his wit served him to serve that Churches turn in those days, and in maintaining Idolatry he is the most shamefull Writer that ever was, for he will have the Image worshipped with the same honour that is due to the thing represented by it, and that by an Argument drawn out of *Aristotle*, *De memoria & reminiscencia*, opposed herein by *Durand* and *Picus Mirandula*, and others; I remember what *Cicero* said of the Grecians, *Do illis eruditionem, do Doctrinam; fidem & Religionem nunquam Coluerunt*: yet I will not say so of the Church of *Rome*, though one sometimes did. I know it was renowned for faith all the world over in the dayes of *S. Paul*, but a degenerate time came, and as the first preaching of the Gospell men turned from Idolls to /61/ serve the living God, so in after Ages even Christians and Roman Christians as much as any, if not more, turned from the living God to serve Idolls; and the Whore of *Babylon* who made all Nations drunken with the blood of Gods Saints, is clearly the Church of *Rome*, as it is at

this day, and hath been for many generations, whatsoever their learning be, the greater advantage they have for the countenancing of their Errors, Heresies, Superstitions and Idolatries, which yet we nothing fear. The Apostle hath taught us to esteem no knowledge but his, even *of Christ and him crucified, Si Christum /?/ nihil est si caetera /?/, si Christum /?/ nihil est si caetera /?/*: And if we fear not their learning, much less have we cause to fear their wit or wisdom either, or whatsoever projects of theirs; likewise none of these should in common reason commend their /62/ Religion, God usually infatuating the wisdom of the wise. They have all furtherance, I confess, beyond us, yet God hath not tied himself to annex his truth to these furtherances, least of all if they be employed not indifferently to the investigation of truth, but prejudicately to support their own cause, the madness whereof hath been in these later dayes made known to the world more than ever. The triall whereof we make by the Touch-stone of Gods Word, according to the counsel of God himself, *o.h: Law and to the Testimonies if they speak not according to this, it is because there is no light in them*, Esai. 8. Yet we study Scriptures and Fathers too as well as they, and we have them amongst us that yeeld to them not a jot; nay do we not study their writings too, much more than our own? I willingly profess, I have done so all along, that I might come acquainted with their /63/ best strength and fastness, in all which I find nothing but illusions in the maintenance of those Tenets wherein we differ from them. As for interpreting of Scriptures, it is well know they have been brought into it *per force*, so was *Cajetan* in his old years, after he had talked of *Luthers* course, who would admit of no other Authority in dispute but the Word of God. And their Commentaries for the most part, are but a Mass of Collections out of others, yet I despise them not, I am content to use them as soon as any of our own, not so much to learn by them as to observe how they strain their wits to quench that light of truth, which in most places breaks forth to the discovering of their Errors. Well they may talk of bringing no sense to the Scriptures, but their practice is nothing answerable.

Discourse. *But perhaps God hath not granted them his Spirit and his grace. /64/ I answer, God being sought unto and solicited to by prayers, denies to no man his Grace and Spirit of truth. Now men of other Religions crave of God the enlightning of their minde, and direction in a right way no less than our selves; nay as far as we can discern perhaps with a greater fervency and zeal, neither are we to think that they ask it out of hypocrisie, and with dissimulation, and that so they would mock God; therefore it is to be taken for granted that the Spirit is where the fruits of the Spirit are found, of which none ought to boast above others.*

Nay more, the knowledge of understanding the Scriptures is a peculiar gift of the Spirit, which is granted no less to others than to us: It is true, indeed that he onely understands the Scriptures which hath the Spirit that dictated them, and (as it is in worldly Laws) no Doctors interpretation or deciding doth justifie, till the Law-giver approve that deciding. Yet he that boasteth /65/ of such approbation of the Spirit is bound to shew it, unless he will be counted as an ordinary Doctor.

Consid. We are bid to try the spirits whether they be of God: Now we have no other triall of the Spirit of Truth speaking in any, but by the Word of God, so the *Bereans* tried the Doctrine of *Saint Paul*, Act. 17. and the Apostles professed to preach nothing but what they confirmed by the Word of God. And our Saviour referred the Jewes hereunto for the triall of himself, *search the Scriptures for in them you think to have eternall life,*

they are they that testifie of me. Now we have a more compleat rule of triall, the Books both of the Old Testament, and of the New: Saint *Paul* delivered the whole counsell of God to the *Ephesians*, Act. 20. and doe we think that the whole Scripture doth fail in some necessary part thereof? But I would /66/ Popery did not plainly contradict that Scripture which is generally received by us both, if so, I would bear with them for the rest, though in two things we cannot indure that ought should be imposed upon us besides the written Word, namely, Articles of Faith, and parts of Gods Worship. Now by this course of triall wee finde, that not the spirit of Truth, but the spirit of Errorhath possessed them in all points of difference between us.

Prayers (I grant) are the ordinary means to obtain any grace at the hands of God, save one, and that is the Spirit of Prayer, and that is the Spirit of Faith, of all the rest it is true *fides impetrat & lex imperat*, but with a limitation, or two. 1. All knowledge necessary to salvation, according to that 1 *Joh.* 2.27. and *Nider* (though a Papist) his interpretation thereof in his /67/ *Consolatory of an affrighted Conscience*. 2. Other graces also, and that in such a measure also as shall be found fit for each mans calling: And I think every Christian should rest contented with such an Indulgence. *If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But hath God disposed the members every one of them in the body at his own pleasure: For if they were all one member, where were the body? but now are there many members, yet but one body,* 1 *Cor.* 12.17, 18, 19.

But men may draw neer to God with their lips, when their hearts are estranged far from him; and how their hearts stand affected we know not, God alone beholdeth their heart; nay we are not so much as privy to their prayers: but we examine their Doctrines by Gods Word, according to that, /68/ *Sunt certi libri dominici*, and it was a worthy saying of *Martin Luther* mentioned by *Scultetus* in his Story of the first ten years of Reformation, *Solis Canonicis debemus fidem, caeteris omnibus judicium*. I do not deny but all the Regenerate who have the Spirit of God (according to that, *Because ye are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, whereby ye cry Abba Father,* Gal. 4.6) do seek unto God to enlighten their mindes, and God hears them, and grants their requests in his good time, according to the limitations formerly mentioned, but who they are we know not; and we are bid to try the spirits; nor what their fervency and zeal is are we acquainted with, yet surely it is not for their fervency sake that God hears them, but for Christs sake. And are not they as far bound in charity to think of us, as this Author would shape us to /69/ be obliged to think of them? we acknowlege no Spirit of Faith, but that which is the Spirit of Truth, at least in all Fundamentalls necessarily required unto salvation, and to Gods holy Worship without Idolatry.

As for the Prayers of Papists, they are well known to be shamefully foul, they were wont more frequently to run to Saints than to God, and the Bishop of *Boss* was to seek whether he should run to God in the name of Christs blood, or in the name of the Virgins Milk, for he was made to profess in the wall in certain verses, that he knew not well which of the two he should prefer; nay, if of any prayers God saith, though he make many prayers I will not hear, *Esa.* 1. surely he should say as much of these in my judgement. Have not Turks their prayers as well as Papists, and may they not be performed /70/ with great fervency and zeal? and may they not be as great expert in tricks of gesture, as the Papists? as i have heard once of a child trained up to it by her mother, even unto admiration; the countenance composed unto a sad and solemn

disposition, and hands lift up first to an equall height with the breasts, after a while to an equall height with the head, and lastly above the head, and all this in dumb shewes without one word of ejaculation.

As for hypocrisie here mentioned, I doubt it is delivered hand over head: For first, Hypocrisie is most considerable in a right way, and not in a wrong way; the reason whereof is, because naturall men are naturally apt to imbrace false wayes and lewd wayes too too truly, and as apt they may be to imbrace the way of truth hypocritically, and not only to profess Christ, /71/ but to preach him in pretence, that is not chastly, even to add afflictions to the bonds of so holy an Apostle even as *Paul* was; so we nothing doubt but Papists are true Papists without hypocrisie, but I much doubt that the greater part of them by far are too far off from being true Christians, and this I willingly confess they pretend, but very hypocritically, this runs with them in a blood, they have it from their Mother, even the Mother of Whoredomes, and her Arms are Babylon in a mystery. And the second beast though he had two horns like the Lamb, yet he spake like the Dragon; we know all their proceedings in pretence are *In nomine Domini incipit omne malum*, neither is it necessary that by hypocrisie a man should think to mock God, if God could be mocked; for there is a secret hypocrisie which a mans own heart is /72/ is not conscious of, untill God be pleased in mercy to discover it; and as for gross hypocrisie it makes a man a plain Atheist.

This Author seems to be taken with the beauty of the Whore of *Babylon*, he is so much in love with Papists as to obtrude upon us an acknowledgement that they have the fruits of the Spirit, and consequently without any deniall that they have the Spirit. To proceed one degree further, were to profess Antichrist to be Christ, and Christ Antichrist.

To understand the Scriptures is but to acknowledge the true meaning of them, and this we deny that Papists have; as touching all the points of difference between us, which they pretend to ground upon Scripture, yea and in many other particulars they are wide of the right understanding of them; so may our Divines be also, and like /73/ enough, that as *M. Hooker* saith, there are some depths of Scripture, the searching out whereof will hold us as long as the world lasts. Yet I deny not that a Reprobate may have the knowledge of the Scriptures as well as an Elect, this being no grace of Sanctification, but of Edification; but to know the Scriptures to be the Word of God, the Wisdom of God, and the Power of God, that I take to be peculiar to a regenerate spirit in whom the Spirit of God dwells as teh fountain of the life of grace, of which in-dwelling of the Spirit a child of God may be conscious in a comfortable manner without boasting.

I count it an absurd course for any to justifie his interpretation of Scripture to be sound, because he hath the Spirit; we are ready to dispute the meaning we give of Scripture, and to prove it against all /74/ opposites made against it; and we look not that any interpretation of Scripture we give should be received any further than we make it appear to be the truth of God to the consciences of them we deal with

Obj. *If any should here object, that the Scriptures themselves bear witness of their own cleanness, according to that, Thy Word is a Lanthorn to my feet, and a light unto my paths.*

I answer: All the Commands of God are his Word, and so are all his Works which are through his Word; for it is confessed by all, that God sets forth his Word by Nature, the Creature, Signs, Wonders, beneath, above, and by infinite wayes; also the Scriptures witness that many things neither are nor can be written. Therefore the Word

of his Voice is taken diversly in the Scriptures, and so by consequence, all that is called Gods Word /75/ is not necessarily to be understood of the Scriptures. Hereunto add, that at that time many parts of Scripture were not yet written; wherefore the evidence of the thing manifestly proveth, that this is not spoken of the whole Argument and Letter of the Scripture, for as much as the Figures of the Prophecy of the Apocalyps, and infinite other things belonging to the fulfilling of those Prophecies, were hidden from the Prophets themselves, and the Fathers (much more then from others) and are yet hidden. Christ himself speaks in parables, to the end that men may hear with their ears and not understand. The Scripture it self in very many places witnesseth that the Word of God is secret, obscure, hidden, and discovered onely to the Spirit, or to the Godly onely, to whom God reveals it, so that in the Scriptures there are more testimonies of their obscuritie, than of their cleanness; yet is not the /76/ Scripture hereby either rejected, or slighted. For even before the Law was given and written, men had a certain light, by the help whereof they might (if they would) have found out the truth more clearly than we; and although in the New Testament a great light be risen, yet must we not think that in the Old Testament there was a meer blindness; whence we may reason, that God thought it not usefull for us to reveal all things to us; but though all things perhaps be not necessary to be known, yet nevertheless there may be had a certain and infallible way of interpreting, by the help whereof the most and most necessary Controversies may be decided, of which if triall be made, a cleer light and meer harmony may be shown in such Scriptures, as according to the opinion of many are obscure; it is possibly also that there should be not a few other wayes of illustrating that which is obscure, although this ill-tried way be /77/ not used alone; for they may be both admitted and used, agreements comming from the same Spirit and word, where there is no demonstration.

Consid. The further I wade in this business, the worse I like my employment, and hereupon I resolve I will no more be employed in any such business, unless I am fairly dealt withall, that I may know who is the Author I am to deal with, at least of what Profession he is in Religion; for upon the perusing of this Section some doubts arise within me concerning the intention of the Author, carrying himself in a covert manner that he may be unknown, which doth much move me. *Henry* the seventh of *England* was wont to say, hee desired nothing more than that he might know his Adversary that encountred him; we do not use to buy a pig in a poke; nor will I hereafter /78/ encounter with I know not whom, nor of what profession he is.

Here the Author returns to oppose the cleerness of Scripture, considering it hand over head, and so opposing it, whereas our Saviour requires that we should search the Scriptures, that is, study them wel, and inquire after the true meaning of them. No man searchest after that which is before his eyes, yea, we are commanded to search for wisdom as we search after gold and silver, and a man will be content to search deep for treasure. It was wont to be said, that *in profundo latet veritas*, Truth lies deep, how much more should we be content to search diligently and dig deep for the treasures of that truth which is according unto godliness, after the treasures of that wisdom which makes us wise unto salvation? Then again, we distinguish between /79/ things necessary to salvation, and other things: Things necessary to salvation, we say are plainly contained in Scripture, many other things are not so.

Here we have a wilde answer at the first, *All the Commandments of God are his Word, and so are all his Works which are through his Word.*

1. To say, *so are all his Works*, is to say, *all his Works are his Word*, which yet forthwith is corrected, by saying they *are through his Word*: Yet of old I have read in *Chrysostome* of a double Book of God, the Book of his Word, and the Book of his Creatures, and that God at the first did teach his Creatures /GREEK/ by his Works, afterwards /GREEK/ by his Written Word. It is most true, *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy works*, Psal. 19. *And the invisible things of God, even his eternall Power and God-head /80/ are seen from the Creation, being considered in his works*, Rom. 1.20. So by the administration of his providence in governing the world, *He leaves not himself without witness, giving us rain and fruitfull seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness*, Act. 14.17. Yet the knowledge of God hereby being gathered only by discourse of naturall reason, men may fail of finding God though they grope after him, Act. 17,27. and the wisest of Philosophers hath denied the Creation, and maintained God to be a necessary Agent; And they who granted and acknowledged the beginning of the world (as all they who were before) yet utterly denied that the world was made originally out of nothing; and therefore the Apostle tells us, that by faith we believe the world was made. Not only Gods Commands are his Word, but the revelations of /81/ the mystery of Godliness, and these are the things most remote from our capacities. As for the Law as a rule of life, that is more or less written in the hearts of all men. It is true, the Author of the Book *De Vocatione Gentium*, talks of such a manner of instruction by Gods Works, but (I pray) do not compare that in clearness to the Word of God; what ground have we for the right interpretation of signs, and wonders, beneath, above? Astrologers would make us believe they read strange things in the Constellations referred to mens Nativities, but what ground have we for this Calculation? what *Abraham* the father of the faithfull discoursed thereof in his Astronomically Lectures read by him in the plain of *Mamre*, we have received no tydings hereof from the hill *Amarath* in *Ethiopia*. I know that in holy Scripture Thunder is /82/ called the voice of God; I know also that the Lord spake unto the Patriarks, but that word is not written; winds and storms also are said to fulfill his Word, by a Metaphor, because what he will have done by them, is done by them, as if they were most obedient and faithfull servants unto their Master, whom yet they know not any more than Ravens doe, though in Scripture-phrase, and by a figure of speech, they are said to call upon him. Now we are upon another point, namely, as touching the Scriptures, the written Word of the Prophets and the Apostles, and the question is about the clearness of them, or the intelligible nature of them to all such as will understand: And to such saith *Solomon*, knowledge is easie, which I take to be spoken of the knowledge of God by the Scriptures, whereunto I am sure our Saviour refers /83/ the Jewes, and the Apostle would not have us affect to be wise/GREEK/ above that which is written.

It is true, when that was delivered, *thy law is a Lanthorn unto my feet*, none of the later Prophets had committed their Prophecies unto writing, much less were the Books of the New Testament written then: But in reference to all the Books of the Old Testament our Saviour spake, when he said, *Search the Scriptures, for in them you think to have eternall life, and they are they that testifie of me*, Joh. 5. And as for the Books of the New Testament, the Gospels were written that men might acknowledge the certainty of those things whereof they had been instructed by word of mouth, *Luk.* 1.4. which could not be were they not intelligible by a studious Reader, and *Paul* was in bonds when he wrote of /84/ the whole Scripture, that it was profitable to teach, to convince, to correct,

to instruct in righteousness, that the man of God might be made absolute, being made perfect to all good works, 2 Tim. 3.16, 17. Now if we deny the intelligible condition of Scripture, the profitable nature of it therewithall must utterly be removed. The Apostle we know by preaching converted many, surely the Word preached was understood by the hearers, otherwise it had wrought but a wilde conversion: Now look what they preached that is committed to writing in the *Acts of the Apostles*, and in their Epistles written unto severall Churches.

The knowledge of the figures of the Prophecies of the *Revelation* and the like, is not necessary to salvation; and great reason they should be carried in a mysterious way, like as the mysteries of Christ's Person /85/ and of his Office, in breaking the Serpents head, were carried a long time in the clouds of types and figures; had it been known that the Messiah must be crucified before he reigned, the Devill would not have been so forward to possess the heart of *Judas* with a project of betraying him into the hands of his enemies to procure his death. So the Revelation in the New Testament, and many the like nature in the Old concerning the Devills and Antichrists practice, no marvell if they be mysteriously carried, that neither the Devill nor Antichrist should understand them untill they were accomplished. Nevertheless the Lord by his Spirit which dictated them, can inspire his servants with an understanding heart to know the meanings of them when the time comes appointed for the communication of this /86/ knowledge; many shall pass to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased; as if the opening of the world by Navigation and Commerce, and the increase of knowledge, should meet together in one time and age, as one wittily observeth; we have seen in late yeers a strange progress made in opening the mysteries of the Revelation, and other mysterious Prophecies of the Old Testament even to admiration: The time when first Antichrist should be discovered and protested against is found out in *Daniels* Numbers, lest we should wonder at the Fathers ignorance hereof: For as Christians at their first conversion from Idolls to serve the living God, did forthwith *look for the Son of God his comming from heaven to deliver us from the wrath to come*, 1. *Thes.* 1. last Yea, and some were of opinion in the Apostles dayes, that it should /87/ be within the age of a man, whereupon *Paul* wrote his second Epistle to the *Thessalonians*, wherein he gives to understand, that an Apostacy must come first, and the man of sin must be revealed, and before that the *Roman* Empire must be broken. 2 *Thes.* 2. compared with 1 *Thes.* 4.15. So in *Austins* dayes that good Father projects that the comming of Christ might be 400. years off, nay, suppose 500. he would not go further, presuming that the Beast which slaughtered the Lords witnesses, should not continue above three years and an half. Now we have no cause to wonder at this, when we consider what *Daniel* hath written concerning this, and how blessed a thing it should be to live at that time when Antichrist should be proclaimed to the world and revealed, *Dan.* 11. For then nothing remained to be looked for but the blasting /88/ of him with the breath of the Lords mouth, and the utter abolishing of him by the brightness of his comming. The reconciling of *Ezekiels* measures of new Jerusalem with *Johns* measures in the Revelations, is a great mystery, and held to be desperate, yet now it is made feisible, nor so onely, but cleared throughout. So the number of the Beast 666. how long hath the Christian world groped after the meaning of it, as a blind man after his way? What various notions hath the investigation hereof produced in mens brains, after that of *Irenaeus* accommodated to the word /GREEK/, and at length for want of a better the best Students in these mysteries driven to come back thither again. But now the vanity thereof

newly discovered, and that at full, even by every Text calling us expressly to calculate this, which is not to rest in this /89/ number, but by Calculation of this to finde out another number, which will notably decipher unto us that Beast: And indeed the number of the Beast 666. is opposed to the number of Christs Church, 144. and the number most momentous arising by the Calculation thereof, is the number 12. the root thereof, and no other calculation belongs to a single number than that which is called the extraction of roots, and the number 5. found to be the root of 666. so far as it comes to be said in the usual way of Arithmetick, to have a root, discovering strange mysteries concerning the delineating of that Beast the Body of Antichrist in a wonderful manner.

No marvell if these mysteries are hidden from the Prophets themselves, who wrote those Prophecies, for first the knowledge of them was nothing necessary to /90/ their salvation. 2. God had appointed a certain time when the light of them should break forth to irradiate his Church with unspeakable consolation, when they stood most in need thereof, the accomplishment of those Prophecies drawing neer.

Christ spake in parables to some, not to all, yet some of his parables were understood by them even against whom they were spoken in particular: Those that were not understood by the multitude, our Saviour revealed to his Disciples as often as they sought it, yea, and other mysteries too, namely the signs fore-going the destruction of *Jerusalem*, his own coming, and the end of the world, *Mat. 24.*

It is true the Scriptures contain the mysteries of godliness, which are not apprehended according to their condition, but by the Regenerate; but as for the meaning of /91/ the Scripture, it is quite of another nature, (which this Author considers not) and is incident to a reprobate, yea, in such a measure as to make him an able Doctor in the Church, and Orthodox throughout, which may tend to the edification of others, when in the mean time such a one shall fall short of the salvation of his own soul. *The secrets of the Lord which he reveals to them that fear him, is the secret of his Covenant, Psal. 25.* There is a secret also in Faith-Catholike, and in all the mysteries of godliness, which is peculiar to the Regenerate only, and it is to discern the wisdom of God, and the power of God in them which have true Faith. A reprobate may believe the same things by a naturall faith onely, yea believe it, and carry themselves like good scholars too while they instruct others therein.

Still we say, that the Scripture is /92/ plain and clear enough, as touching all things necessary to salvation, and all this discourse is plausible only through distinction, and to deny the Scripture to be fairly intelligible to one that is desirous to know the meaning of it, is a great disparagement to the Word of God, and dishonour to God himself, disparaging either his goodness that would not, or his wisdom that he knew not how to order it, so that by searching the Scriptures they might have eternall life.

If before the Law men had a light whereby they might finde the truth more clearly than we, then the former times were times of greater light and grace than the later; but this is contrary both to the generall judgment of the Christian world, and to universall experience. For as light naturally increaseth more and more untill it be /93/ perfect day, so it hath been with light spirituall; yet the Sun the fountain of light naturall, hath sometimes gone backward ten degrees, not so the sun of righteousness; men have gone backward, I confess, in the course of their obedience, but God hath gone forward rather than backward in the course of administration of his grace. We doe not say there was a meer blindness, or blindness at all in Gods children, (although in present discourse not of

mans blindness, but of Gods progress in causing the irradiation of his light) but this we say, that the word of the Prophets was a *most sure word, to which our fore-fathers did well to take heed, as to a light that shineth in a dark place*; but now a long time day hath dawned, and the Gospell is *the day-star that ariseth in our hearts*, 2 Pet. 1.19. *For that God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, /94/ is he which hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*, 2 Cor. 4.6. And in these dayes of grace, *we all behold as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord with open face, and are changed into the same Image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord*, 2 Cor. 3.18.

To say, that though all things be not necessary to be known, yet nevertheless there be had a certain and infallible way of interpreting, whereby the most and necessary Controversies may be decided, is to represent a shew of Antithesis where there is none. But that is little materiall, but here is a declination to the contrary extreme; hitherto the clearness of Scripture hath been opposed, here in infallibility of interpreting is introduced; but *Medio tutissimus ibis*, and vertue usually consists in a /95/ mediocrity, which *Horace* calls *auream Mediocritatem*. Since the Apostles days the true Church of Christ challengeth to her self, no infallible authority of interpreting Scripture, 'tis enough that in things necessary to salvation the Lord assures us by his Spirit that we are not deceived, that is sufficient for the state of grace, and as for infallibility, let us be content to have that condition reserved for the state of glory. I nothing doubt but by study and care and pains, most Controversies may be so clearly decided, as shall be sufficient either for the converting of a capable Hearer, to the imbracing of it, or for the convicting him of obstinacy in withstanding it; but I little looked that the beginning of this discourse would have so unfutable an end. Mr. *Dury* (as I remember) is occupied about some such methode as this, I wish heartily /96/ it may succeed well, but take heed we do not cry down all performances that have gone before us, as if they were palpable insufficiencies, in comparison to our own new inventions, whether in clearing truth controversial, or obscure places of Scripture. Well, we shall rest contented with that measure we are arrived unto, untill a greater measure of light arise above the Horizon of our Sphere, and whensoever it comes I trust we shall give it that respect which it deserves, and right thankfully entertain it, whether in the way of illustration which best pleaseth the sense, or in the way of demonstration, which most justifieth the judgment.

Disc. *Nor am I moved with that Objection, that it is enough for the Lutherans that they are assured of the truth of Lutheranism, though others cannot see and believe it, for this is not /97/ that which I would have, I enquire how a man may be sure, not of his own opinion, but of the truth. Now if I believe and determine that such a thing is true, this is my opinion, yet is not therefore the truth, seeing truth and opinion have nothing in them alike, and stedfast perswasion changeth not the essence of the thing whereof a man is perswaded; for then should melancholick persons, whose opinion is unmovable, work miracles, and make all their conceits essentiall. The nature of true knowledge is this, so be demonstrable not to me, or some men, but to all, and to win a consent from any man, as two and three make five. A thing controverted, and which some understand one way, and some another, can never make me certain and free from doubt, whether I have the truth or no; and he that knowes no other than what he determines, may be excused of malice and hypocrisie: but this reasoning, I and my follower /98/ are sure of this thing, therefore it is true, is unreasonable reasoning.*

Consid. Surely if I am in a right way, it is enough for me to be assured of the truth, for me, it is for my salvation; yet because I am bound to seek for the salvation of others also, No man must imitate *Cain*, in saying, *am I my brothers keeper?* yet that which is enough for me to be assured of the truth which I maintain, may be enough for another also, to bring him to be assured of the same truth: For if this sufficiency I speak of be in the way of rationally discourse out of the Word of God, if it is it self sufficient, it is sufficient for the satisfaction of any that is capable thereof, and all such light being light naturall, and in the way of discourse, is of a communicable nature to all rationally cratures by a rational discourse: /99/ But true faith is wrought by spirituall illumination, which is not in my power to communicate unto any other, onely the Spirit of God can do this: this, enlightning whom he will, while others are suffered to sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death. And this is the onely saving way to be sure of Truths Theologicall. It is true, that which I believe (whatsoever it be, and in what kinde soever it be believed) is not therefore truth, because I believe it; but if I believe by illumination divine, it is therefore true, because I believe it after such a manner, though this I cannot communicate to another, or make another hereby bee perswaded of it himself, or be perswaded that I am after such a sort perswaded of it. Light naturall I may communicate unto another; light spirituall I cannot; and light naturall either in way of naturall discourse /100/ is communicative of it self from commonly-known principles by the light of nature, or from principles on both sides agreed, as namely, that the Scriptures are the Word of God: Now when the Spirit of God inlightens me, the thing I embrace is not my opinion, but my faith; and my perswasion herein is in stedfastness, and nothing inferiour to naturall knowledge, but superiour rather, light spirituall and divine being superiour to light naturall, like as knowledge by sense is superiour to knowledge by reason, rationally knowledge depending upon knowledge sensitive: For generall principles doe arise from experience and enumeration of particulars. And as I remember, *Theologia* is said to be *non argumentiva*, to wit as it is supernaturall, and compared rather to sensitive knowledge; as to the sense of seeing, *Open* /101/ *mine eyes that I may see the wonderfull things of thy Law*; and to the sense of hearing, *He that hath an ear let him hear*; for it is one thing to hear the voice of a man, another thing to hear the voice of God; one thing to see work wrought, another thing to behold the hand of God in it; one thing to discern the meaning of a Scripture-passage, another thing to discern the wisdom of God, and the power of God in it. So it is comparing to the sense of smelling, *2 Cor. 2.14. We are a sweet savour unto God in Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish*; and where the body is, there will the Eagles bee gathered together: Sometimes to the sense of tasting, as *1 Pet. 2.1. As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby, if ye have tasted that the Lord is bountifull*: So *Halensis* professeth, that the things of God are apprehended *per* /102/ *modum gustus*. The sense of feeling doth fairly represent the knowledge of God by his works, *Act. 17.17. That they should seek the Lord, if so be they might have groped after him and found him, though doubtless he be not far from every one of us*. This Author seems to take no notice hereof, no more than the Socinians doe in these dayes, and that is the foul spot I finde in Master *Shillingsworth* Book: And bee pleased, I pray, to put a difference between melancholike persons, and the children of God, who because they are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into their hearts; remember that of the Apostle, *This perswasion is not of God*, plainly giving to understand, that the perswasions of

Christian Faith are of God; yet I confess, this Faith is grounded alwayes upon Gods Word, wherein they should beso expert, as to be ready thence at all /103/ to render a reasopn of their faith to any that should demand it. But that may an unregenerate person be able to do as well, yea and many times better too.

When he saith, the nature of true knowledge is demonstrable, this is true of knowledge naturall, not of knowledge Christian, which is grounded onely on Gods Word, and it was never known that to prove a thing out of Scripture was called demonstration. *Aristotle* denies that Morall Philosophie is capable of demonstration, it proceeds onely by perswasion: but it may bee for the evidence of the Scripture aptly alleged, he calls it demonstration /GREEK/, yet consider, no deduction out of Scripture can be so clear, as to be exempted from all cavillings; but never was it known that any man cavilled with a truth as clear as this, that two and three makes five. /104/ If we can never be free from doubt if the thing be controverted, as for instance a passage of Scripture, some understanding it one way, and some another, what certainty can I have of any point of Faith I maintain in opposition to Papists, to Socinians, to any Heretike? yet I should not look that the thing controverted should free me from doubt, it is enough that I have good evidence for it, though all the world run a madding in controverting that which I believe. Now no evidene of truths Theologicall, and saving truths, is comparable to the evidence which proceeds from the illumination of the Spirit, giving me new eyes (as it were) and opening the eyes of my understanding, that I may see and discern the things of God, and that holy Spirit is able to free me from all doubt, yet there is another knowledge which is natural, /105/

partly derived from naturall principles, and partly from a dextrous interpretation of Scriptures, which we shall be able to make good against all Cavillers to their confusion, and upon sober consciences to their assent; but this is inferiour to the illumination of the Spirit. I can hardly think any Christian to be so simple or wilfull to reason thus, *I and my follower are sure of this thing, therefore it is true*; if they should, I see no reason but they might proceed one step further, and say, I my self along think this to be true, and therefore it is true; but the Spirit of illumination is given onely to satisfie them that have it, not to boast of it, (but to comfort themselves with it rather) much less to obtrude it upon others, onely light naturall is communicable unto others by rationally discourse, light spirituall is not. I cannot more communicate that to /106/ another than my seeing or hearing, or smelling, or tasting.

Disc. Lastly, If we build our Religion only upon the Scriptures, the learned shall have a great prerogative above the unlearned in the matter of Faith and Religion, and shall be more ingaged in thankfulness unto God than they, and so Religion shall favor and cleave to good wits.

Also many have their sense exercised in the Scriptures, or are more inventive than others; therefore if a man could by disputing and reasoning confute some Thesis, and as it were take away a mans opinion from him, and become conqueror, he should also take away his Religion, and the other should be constrained either to take up his Conquerors Religion, or against his conscience to keep his own.

Now will that Answer serve the turn, Our Divines and Pastors can answer you, though I cannot: for then should I believe with another mans /107/ faith; but faith must bee mine, not another mans, else should salvation also be another mans. If Religion be the service of God, certainly it is necessary that I should understand that service which I

must perform to my Lord. Seeing God will not reckon another mans service for mine, and cannot be served by a Substitute, it remains that wee conclude, Controversies are to be left to learned men, and are not so very necessary. It may be answered, Then also Religion is to be left to learned men; for Controversies are our very Religion, for (saving the consideration of them) there is no difference, but Papists are Protestants, and Protestants are Papists; look how much a man knowes of Controversies, so much doth he know of his own Religion. That state of a mans salvation is such as his Religion and his Faith. Now there is but one salvation /108/ and but one faith: But if Controversies belong to the learned onely, wherefore have Lay-men indured so many afflictions, distresses, nay and death it self for these controversies sake? I know indeed that a Calvinist Doctor, one Doctor Bergius, a Preacher at Breme, affirms in his late published Sermons, that Controversies are not meerly necessary to salvation, that the Scripture is plain and clear about those things which are necessary to salvation, and that there was never any contrariety between the Religions themselves. At which also the Leipsich-Collation between the Lutherans and the Calvinists seems to aim.

Consid. In all professions, whether liberall or mechanicall, the learned have a prerogative above the unlearned, and what inconvenience is there if it be so in Christian Religion also? Doth not S. Peter tell us that the unlearned pervert the Scripture to their own destruction, /109/ 2 Pet. 3. yet this prerogative is in learning onely, not in holiness, the unlearned may be as holy as the learned, and have as great an interest both in sanctifying grace and in saving glory. What said Austin of himself, and such like Scholars in comparison of his mother *Monica*, and such like holy, though simple women, *Mulierculae istae lacrimis suis caelum nobis traeripiunt* /?/, when we have done all we can with all our learning, these women with their tears will get heaven before us. And as for holiness, so for faith, an unlearned man may have faith as wel as the learned; nay, that faith which is called *fides intusa*, may be found in a man unlearned, when the faith of him that is learned is found to be no better than *fides acquisita*, a faith naturall; and they that have true faith by the inspiration of the holy Ghost shall not want gracious wits; howsoever that /110/ Religion which is by faith naturall, be accompanied with better naturall wits; yet an idle wit, be it never so good will hardly prove learned, and be it never so learned if it be without grace, such a mans Religion will prove but vain, and though he be able to worst another in disputaton, yet shall he never pull true Religion in any childe of God (be he never so weak and unlearned) out of socket, because our Faith and Religion consists not in wisdom of words, but in the power of the Spirit, as S. Paul speaks, saying, *My word and my preaching stood not in the inticing speech of Mans wisdom, but in plain evidence of the Spirit and Power; That your Faith should not be in the wisdom of Men, but in the power of God*, 1 Cor 2.4, 5. Nay, were my Faith only naturall, and I had good evidence out of the Scripture for it, though that /111/ knowledge be not other than such as is annexed to the common profession of Christianity; yet the Philosopher tells me, that I must not be beaten out of my hold in such a case, because I am not able to answer every Sophism or Argument that is brought against it: Nay, the Philosopher in his *Ethicks* teacheth me, that some are as tenacious of their opinions, for which they have but weak reasons, as others are of their opinions which they hold confirmed with great strength of Argument; so that every way it is an inficete fiction, that the most learned must always conquer the Faith and the Religion of the unlearned without flying to any such sculking hole, as to say, *Our divines and pastors can answer you*

though I cannot. But wonder much that any sober Christian upon any pretence should dispute against the building of our Religion /112/ onely upon Scripture, unless with Papists, hee would bring in Traditions, or rely on the Church, or on the decision of the Pope: For if we fly from the Word of God, we must rest either upon the word of Man, or upon naturall reason. A Christian, I conceive, should think the Scripture sufficient to direct us in the Service of God: Our Saviour directs the Jews to the searching of Scripture for the discerning of him.

And if Controversies be left to learned men, yet there is no cause why our Religion should, but onely the defence of it controversially, maintaining it by a variety of Arguments and deductions out of holy Scripture, and solving contrary Arguments brought against it in any particular point of Faith; but the profession of it surely shall belong to him that sits at *Gamaliels* feet, as well as to *Gamaliel* himself, /113/ nor onely to such as sit at his feet, but to such also as follow the plowtail, yea, and to the weaker sex of women, and to children too; for even to such belongeth the Kingdom of God. And were there no book at all written, or Sermon preached in any point of Controversies or difference between us, yet Papists should be Papists still, and not Protestants, and Protestants should be Protestants still, and not Papists, and the Whore of *Babylon* should be the Whore of *Babylon* still, and no Spouse of Christ, and Antichrist a false Prophet still, and no true Prophet. For the faith and profession of a Papist makes him a Papist, whether hee writes Controversies or no, the smallest part of them being able to perform the task; so the Protestants profession and protestation against the corruptions of the Church of *Rome* makes him a Protestant, /114/ tho' he never set pen to paper to contend for the Faith once given to the Saints; though this be a duty, I confess, but no common duty belonging unto all, but peculiarly appertaining to the man of God, able not only to exhort with wholesome doctrine, but also to convince them that say against it. For Articles of Faith and their profession of them, Lay-men have suffered with great constancy and patience, but not for controversies, though they have been ready to give a reason of their Faith to all that asked it, and witness a good confession of it, as our Saviour did before *Pilate*, as the Book of Acts and Monuments recordeth of them, and *S. Paul* of our blessed Saviour. Doctor *Berghius* is acknowledged to say as much, confessing the Controversies are not very necessary to salvation, which I interpret thus, not necessary to the being /115/ of the Church, but onely to her well-being, when the Christian Faith is oppugned by Heretikes: Between Lutherans and Calvinists we acknowledge there is no difference in fundamentalls, as appeareth sufficiently at the Conference at *Leipsich*.

Disc. *This I am perswaded is very true, that had the Holy Ghost judged those Controverted Questions necessary to salvation, it would have expressed and propounded them in the holy Scripture clearly and plainly, seeing those Epistles were sent to simple and Lay-men especially. Nor doth it seem likely to be true, that ever there were so many Articles of Faith drawn out of them as are now to be read in the Catechisms, Common-places, and Compounds of Divines; As yet there is no certain number of them determined, seeing some Divines have propounded more, and some fewer; /116/ and some Religions have in process of time, either added or abated whole Articles, and after many miseries indured for the defence of some of them, entring a way of moderation, they have determined that for tolerable and indifferent, which before they thought damnable: But howsoever, there are so many of them, that a man may deservedly call in question the*

precise necessity of them. And this seems the best solution to disintangle and appease perplexed, doubtfull, and erring Consciences.

Consid. It is a very uncouth speech, proceeding from a wilde conceit, to say, that God would have expressed and appointed Controverted Questions plainly and clearly, if they had been necessary. It is not the proposition of Controverted Questions, though never so plainly and clearly delivered, that sets an end to Controversies, but the clear and substantiall /117/ solution of them; for herein that which hath any shew of being necessary, is not the proposing of them, but the deciding of them: and it were a very preposterous course to talk of deciding Controversies before there were any Controversies moved, right as if a Physitians wisdom and goodness should move him to heal a man before he is wounded; rather he should take care to preserve a mans health that he might not fall into sickness. And so Gods wisdom and goodness hath sufficiently provided for the health of his Church through the integrity of Doctrine delivered in his Word, and that in a manner sufficiently intelligible and plain to them that come with honest hearts, and studious desires to seek after truth and to imbrace it. But *S. Paul* tells us of oppositions to the truth made by men of corrupt mindes, plainly giving /118/ us to understand, that they came with corrupt mindes to the reading of Gods Word, and so pervert it as *Peter* speaks, and thereby pervert themselves first, and afterwards they speak /GREEK/ wrested things to the corrupting of others, and hinder them from that /GREEK/ to be found in the faith, *Tit.* 1.13.

S. Peter exhorts us to *grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ*, 2 *Pet.* 3.18. And *S. Paul* would not have us stand at a stay, but grow forward unto perfection. There is a plerophory and fulness of faith that we should strive unto, and of knowledge as well as of holiness: For this life is our way to heaven, and still we must draw neerer thitherwards, by knowing all that we can know by the Word, *Deut.* 29.29. It is revealed to that purpose, and it is *able to make the man of God perfect* /119/ *to every good work*, 2 *Tim.* 3. last. *Add unto vertue knowledge*, saith *Peter*, 2 *Pet.* 1.5. and *Paul* prayes on the behalf of the *Colossians*, that *they might be fulfilled with the knowledge of Gods Will in all wisdom and spirituall understanding*, *Col.* 19. *that they might walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, fruitfull in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God*, v. 10. Why then should we take offence at the multiplying of Articles? In all professions men that delight in knowledge are never satisfied, nothing is more congruous to our intelligent natures than light of knowledge, while we live here on earth we shall never come to ripeness of age in Christ, therefore we must be growing still, and edifying our selves, and one another in our most holy faith; the body of Christ must be edified till we come to fulness of age; and as we /120/ must increase in knowledge, so being obnoxious to error, it behoves us to labour for the discovery of it more and more. That error in taking the number of the Beast 666. to denote onely /GREEK/ hath indured ever since the days of *Ireneus*, that is from the next age after the Apostles; and it is now lately discovered, and the true meaning substituted in the place thereof, as never the like before; and it commendable for men to see their former errors, much more to confess them. Of all *Austins* works there are none more tending to his honour and renown than his *Retractions*, wherein he retracts the errors of his Faith, and his *Confessions*, where hee acknowledgeth the errors of his life, and this is most Christian ingenuity, and I think never was any man more renowned in this kinde than he. It is necessary for every Christian to strive /121/ forwards unto perfection, *necessitate Praecepti*, by necessity of

Commandment, but if he fail through negligence, this is a very pardonable sin upon our confession of it. As for things necessary for salvation they are but few, but the knowledge of God and the things of God is so sweet to a regenerate tast, having already tasted how bountifull the Lord is, that he will be carried as naturally to desire the sincere milk of the Word, that he may grow thereby, as new born babes do desire the milk of their mothers breasts, 1 *Pet.* 2.1. As for perplexed and doubting, and erring Consciences, men may perplex themselves, and raise doubts causlesly, and erre in this, and this error will be the greater, when after all this they pretend preplexity and doubts made unto them, when they are onely the mists which themselves have raised to blear their /122/ own eyes, and such a work, I think, is never more inauspiciously performed than when they set their wits on work to dispute themselves out of the Lords verge, and circle, within the compass whereof alone he useth to charm all his Elect, after they have run their wilde race and compass, and bring them home like the prodigal child to his father, so them to their heavenly father, and therewithall to the sobriety of their wits, and intregity of their senses, that they may say, *Oh, what love have I to thy Law! all the day long is my study in it; the Law of thy mouth is deerer to me than thousands of gold and silver: by this I have more understanding than my Teachers.* Indeed the Law of the Lord is a perfect Law converting the soul, the testimony of the Lord is sure, and giveth wisdom to the simple; yea, and such wisdom as maketh wise /123/ unto salvation, and what should we desire more?

Disc. But could so many Divines of former Ages be ignorant of this? Have there not so many Wars been undertaken for this cause? Could those learned men suffer so many thousands of men to run headlong, both by doing and suffering, into the hazard of body and soul for Religions sake? and so many unspeakable mischiefs to arise, when as it is possible for a man to be saved without the Controversies of Religion? But if this be the command of God under the pain of temporall and everlasting punishment, to fight for those Controversies, how can we excuse those shuffling arguments of Faith, Religion, and Gods Worship? A Servant may not abate any thing of his Lords due.

Consid. Be ignorant of this; of what? That Controversies are not necessary to salvation; how doth /124/ that appear they deserved any such censure? but let's not please our selves in confusion of things that deserve to be distinguished: A man, year, an whole Nation, may live in peace without war, but if they are not suffered to live in peace, but some enemy or other invades them, as *Aram* before, and the *Philistins* behinde, ready to devour us with open mouth, shall we sit still with our hand in our bosome, till these monsters devour us one after anothers? as *Polyphemus* intended to deal with *Ulysses* and his souldiers, though he shewed him this favour, that he should be the last that should go to pot: This is the condition of God Church, and hath been from the very dayes of the Apostles inclusively, the mysteries of godliness, being now revealed in Gods word. Many there be that cannot digest these mysteries and submit unto them /125/ them by faith, but though they imbrace the truths of the Gospell in som particulars, yet they resist it in others, or pretending to imbrace it, they pervert & wrest it by corrupt interpretation. In this case are not the Orthodox driven to hold their own, and (as *S. Jude* exhorts them) *to contend earnestly for the faith once given to the Saints*, and to indeavour to kill error, rather than to suffer error to strangle the holy truth of God, open the truth of God which is according unto godliness; rather than to root out weeds, than to suffer them to overgrow the good corn. Thus we are cast upon Controversies whether we will or no, yet this

is not a dutie that belongs to all, many, yea most shall be saved without it; like as when an enemy invades us we gather an Army against them to oppose them and drive them out, the rest pray for their fellow-brethren, but /126/ do not fight, yet by this war they may have as great an interest in the desired peace, as those that fight for it.

Thus *Chamayar* of the *French Church* hath written his /HEBREW/ *Bella domini*, the Wars of the Lord, against the Philistines, the Antichristian Philistines of the Church of *Rome*, scarce one hath done the like yet many sons of that honourable Church have done valiantly, but *Chamayer* hath surmounted them all; every one doth not gird himself with the sword upon the thigh at all, but onely those who are the Lords Naunchan, his instructed ones, for these who are overseers and keepers of the Tower of *David*, built for defense, a thousand shields hung therein, and all the Targets of the strong men, *Cant.* 4.4. and these are well acquainted with them, and know how to use them, yea and to handle the sword /127/ too as expert in war, and in this holy war they will be content to hazard their life, as *S. Paul* professeth, saying, *and now I go bound to Jerusalem in the Spirit, not knowing what things shall come unto me there, save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every like saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me, but I pass not for these things, neither is my life deer unto me, so I may fulfil my course with joy, and the Ministration which I have received of the Lord Jesusto testifie the Gospell of the grace of God.*

As for the shuffling Arguments here spoken of, when I know them I shall upon due consideration pass my judgement on them as I see cause. A man may sophisticate I confess, in making Arguments, but shuffling courses commonly have place in shifting them off by an undue solution: Wee know what *Pauls* course was, he fought with Beasts /128/ at *Ephesus*, and *Stephens* fortunes too, when certain of the Synagogue which were call Libertines and Cyrenians, disputed with *Stephen*, did not he also dispute with them? The Text saith expressly, they were not able to resist the wisdom of the Spirit by which he spake; *If am offered up (saith Paul) upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoyce therein, and will joy.*

Dis. *Let this thing be considered, seeing it is so intricate, and leads me and many others into disquiet of minde; for which perplexities of Conscience, none will deny that a remedy is to be sought at the hands of those that have Christian fellow-feeling, and might be found if all the Divines of those sides that have left Popery, would vouchsafe to afford me a wise, milde, and solid Answer in writing, not savouring of partiality, prejudice, or passion.* /129/

Consid. When *Boste* was taken by the States, there was seen in the wall a Bishop sometimes of that town, painted with Christ and his blood on the one side, and the Virgin *Mary* and her breasts sprouting milk on the other side, and the devout Bishop was represented there in the gesture of a man in great perplexity and ambiguity, not knowing well which to prefer, whether Christs blood before *Maries* milk, or *Maries* milk before Christs blood, and this expressed in Latine Verses, and one of the Martialists (as it were) to put him out of his mood and perplexity, *Why thou Sott (quoth he) get thee to Gott.* Who, I pray, was the cause of this mans perplexity, was it not his own extreme superstition most abominable? If the Author of this Discourse had proposed anything on the other side to the Scripture, and pretended ambiguity and perplexity, /130/ which of them he preferred according whereunto to order his faith, that Martialists resolution of the doubt might have been congruous enough: But onely concerning the Scripture-doubts are here proposed how a man should ground his faith thereupon; what he is, I know not, and

whether this be *res gesta*, or *ficta*, I am to seek, for the present world is full of juggling. But when wee make such doubts unto our selves, do we well consider the goodness and wisdom of God in giving us his holy Word to direct us in the wayes of everlasting life? if still there were just cause to complain of a perplexed condition, whereinto we were cast, not knowing whether we shall take hold of it, or run away from it, as *Moses* did from his rod when it was turned into a Serpent. But do we finde any the like Metamorphosis here? /131/ yet when the Lord bid *Moses* take the Serpent by the tail, he was bold to do it; surely Gods Word is no Serpent, but we rather, and his Word alone hath power to charm us, and make us vomit all our poyson of erroneous and unholy ways, and the Lord Christ hath bid us to take hold of them, saying, *Search the Scriptures*; yet if any thing in this my Answer seem amiss, and not answerable to the Authors expectation, but savouring (as he thinks) of partiality, prejudice, or passion, I confess prejudice against such discourses as these, accompting them most vile, and nothing becomming an understanding and godly Christian; but as for the rest let him impute it to my ignorance, that know not so much as what is the way of his passion, for he seems to me to be neither Lutheran nor Calvinist, and would not seem to bee a Papist, though I am most prone /132/ to conceive it to be the trick of some Papist; least of all doe I know his person or Countrey.

But let every sober Christian consider well, and inquire, whether that since the beginning that Gods Word was committed to writing, there were at any time any such questions moved untill this last and worst Age of the world, when *Cajetan* the Cardinall, a great School-Divine, first encountred with *Martin Luther*, and found that no Authority prevailed with him but Scripturall, hereupon hee was moved to study Scripture, and wrote Commentaries upon it in his old age. But *Silvester Prierius* of *Rome*, he thought that way too far about, and therefore took a shorter course, and maintained that the Scriptures contained not all things necessary to salvation, and therefore the rule of faith to be made compleat must be pieced up with the /133/ unwritten Word added to the written Word, which unwritten Word they called Traditions. Since that the Papists have strengthened themselves with the Authority of the Church, yet confess the true Church cannot be known to be a true Church, nor the Authority thereof known, but by the Scriptures, and the issue of the resolution of the Church must bee the resolution of the Pope concerning the true interpretation of Scripture, shamefully obruding upon us that we make the resolution of our faith into our own private spirit, whereas we to the contrary extend the testimony of the spirit onely to each private mans best satisfaction, and teach no other herein than the Papists themselves acknowlege to be most true, as touching the resolution physicall of our faith, as I am able to prove by variety of pregnant evidences /134/ ready at hand without any more adoe than the bare transcribing of them. Now this light being not of a nature communicable unto others, we meddle not with it in disputing upon any other point of Divinity with Papists or any other. But therein walk in all our disputations by way of Resolution Logically, either into some confessed principles as concerning the Attributes Divine, or into expressed passages of holy Scripture, the meaning whereof if it be excepted against, we are ready to justify it by rationally discourse against all adversary, nothing doubting but we shall either convict him of obstinacy in shutting his eyes against the clear evidence of truth, and make him condemned in his own conscience, or at least in the conscience of all sober Christians, being well assured that whosoever resisteth /135/ the evidence of Gods Word upon pretence of inevidence, that Word shall be found of evidence enough to judge him at the last day.

This Jesuiticall Question was sent out of Germany when the Assembly of Divines were sitting at Westminster, and was translated out of High Dutch.

FINIS